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Community Service

We are pleased to make space available whenever possible for some of Lamorinda's dedicated community service organizations to submit news and information about their activities. Submissions can be sent to storydesk@lamorindaweekly.com with the subject header In Service to the Community.

Local Book Club Project Helps Homeless in Hawaii

Submitted by Christi Higgins



The girls at one of the libraries, from left: Maddie Higgins, Kellen Scanlan, Kimi Klein and Mollie Swan Photo provided

For nine years, four Lamorinda girls, Maddie Higgins (Orinda), Kimi Klein (Lafayette), Mollie Swan (Orinda), Kellen Scanlan (Moraga) and their mothers have gotten together to participate in a mother-daughter book club. Because the girls are graduating next year, they decided to celebrate their time together with a capstone project supporting literacy.

Through friends they learned about Hope Charities, an organization that supports and runs several homeless shelters on the big island of Hawaii. With the high cost of living, limited employment opportunities and few resources, helping the homeless is a major undertaking on the islands. But because of its reputation as a vacation destination, Hawaii's underprivileged population often fails to receive the appropriate aid that it needs. Working around sports, volunteer work and summer studies, the foursome and their mothers coordinated a literacy project for two shelters.

Soliciting help from friends, family, and Glorietta Elementary School, the girls gathered over 1,000 books with the intention of setting up two libraries in the shelters. In June, they met with program directors, planned the required space, and flew to the island to build book shelves and install the donated books. The majority of the books went to an adult shelter in Kona, and the remaining third went to a shelter in Hilo, adding to its existing Keiki (children's) room.

Kimi Palacio, volunteer coordinator for Hope Charities, had kind words for the group: "Thank you so much for the book donation for our West Hawaii Shelter! Our shelter residents have really enjoyed the access to so much variety of reading material. Our residents have even started a small book club, which is so beneficial for them to partake in! We can't thank you enough for all that you have done for us. People always say they want to help, but very few come through. We will never forget you."

Moraga Garden Club Continues to Grow

Submitted by Marcia Fisherkeller



Moraga Garden Club members at their last garden study. From left: Martina Alexandre, Nell Sellers, and holding one of her home grown squashes, Diane Feldhammer Photo Marcia Fisherkeller

An unprecedented 23 new members will be welcomed in to the Moraga Garden Club's first meeting of the year on September 15. Held at the Holy Trinity Cultural Center on School St. in Moraga, attendees will be treated to a demonstration of floral arranging by Kren Rasmussen of Bloomsters in San Jose.

The new members will join others in the Club in civic beautification projects, enjoying horticultural presentations, excursions, workshops, and social activities. Meetings are held on the third Thursday of the month at 10:00 a.m. The Club's new president, Mardi Potts, is enthusiastic about plans for the new year which include mass daffodil planting, garden study meetings, partnerships

with local schools, tending our community gardens, the highly anticipated Spring Salad Luncheon, and the traditional Holiday Luncheon.

We grow dahlias the size of dinner plates, unbelievable squashes, learn how to care for roses and other plants, propagate succulents, tame pests in the garden and, perhaps best of all, make new friends. Those interested in any aspect of gardening are welcome to join us at the meeting. Please call Marcia at 376-3296 for more information.

Board members for the 2011-2012 year include Judy Ayres, Hol-lace Gertmenian, Wendy Neilsen, Marilyn Smith, Joan Cole, Janet Grant, Margard Egeland, Lucille Zammiti, Jean Roberts, and Joan Webb.

Local Girl Scouts Provide Day Camp for Concord Kids

Submitted by Sharon Maher



From left: Katie Coates, Sharon Maher, Juliet Rosso Photo Kamille Nixon

Three Lamorinda Girl Scouts recently ran a day camp for low-income children in the Monument Corridor area for their Silver Award Take Action Project. Campolindo High School Freshmen and Moraga residents

Sharon Maher, Katie Coates, and Juliet Rosso put on a camp to provide constructive and creative summer activities for low-income children at the Lakeside Apartment Complex in Concord.

At Camp Silver kids played

games, including "Sharks and Minnows" and "Sprout." In addition, the campers made several art projects. The younger children used watercolors and wax crayons to find hidden "Spy Messages" on paper. They also made creative masks using an assortment of media. Older campers made household coasters using materials such as cardboard, transparencies, and construction paper. A free lunch was provided—sandwiches and fruit—and the children were kept well hydrated with water. The Scouts spent approximately fifty hours planning and executing their project.

The campers were given a chance to form new friendships and strengthen previous ones, and received sports equipment and art supplies for all Community Center visitors.

Teens Travel to Zimbabwe

Submitted by Kathi Torres



Devon Bruzzone gets a hug from children in Zimbabwe Photo provided

Can witnessing a child's smile actually change a person's life? For a group of Lamorinda teens, the answer is yes. Several students recently spent part of their summer vacation in Zimbabwe in southeastern Africa, where they volunteered on behalf of the J.F. Kapnek Charitable Trust. The Lafayette-based Trust operates the largest pediatric HIV/AIDS prevention program in Zimbabwe, supporting thousands of vulnerable and disabled children through its preschools, orphanage and health clinics.

The teens journeyed halfway around the world and then spent several days doing construction, renovation, and maintenance

work on classroom facilities in the town of Chegutu, an economically-challenged town south of the capital of Harare. They also worked with local staff to distribute donated supplies, including dozens of soccer balls which were brought to Vimbainesu Orphan's Village. One of the student volunteers, Haley Cassriel of Orinda, reflected, "The excitement was tangible when we donated the balls. The orphans were so thankful to receive such a small donation. It showed me how so little can go so far."

In Zimbabwe, the AIDS pandemic has orphaned nearly a million children, a trend which is sharply declining thanks to crucial work by the Kapnek Trust.

Yet in their 78 preschools across the country, many young children have lost one if not both of their parents. The preschools provide meals, regular health checks, and most importantly, the opportunity to play and learn in a stable, nurturing environment. This provides them the best emotional support possible to overcome their devastating loss.

Despite the difficulty of their circumstances, the children of Zimbabwe had something significant to give to the students from California: a deeper perspective of themselves and their place in the world. As volunteer Devon Bruzzone, from Lafayette, put it, "(What) stood out to me most when we were traveling through rural areas in the Kapnek van was that the villagers would smile and wave enthusiastically and I felt as though our presence and work through Kapnek was welcomed and appreciated entirely. It struck me how happy and gracious the community members were despite having so little of the material items we place such a value on."

These young volunteers brightened the lives of countless children and were in turn positively impacted, carrying this experience in their hearts forever. As Cassriel said, "We felt just as much gratitude and thankfulness as they did!"

...from Front Page

WoW: Meet the SMC class of 2015

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With an attendance of 2621 undergraduates, Saint Mary's prides itself on being a small, tight-knit community, and new students have come to embrace that aspect of the liberal arts college in Moraga.

"The best way to describe it is togetherness," said freshman Stephanie Romo. "They try to get you to stay involved."

At the start of the 2011-2012 school year, the freshman class has 630 members, while as many as 200

transfer students have chosen Saint Mary's as their new school.

This year has been one of the most competitive in recent memory with nearly eight applicants for each place in the freshman class.

The Class of 2015, which is 39 percent male and 61 percent female, includes students from Australia, England, Canada, the Philippines, and the People's Republic of China, as well as states such as Hawaii, Washington, Montana, New Hamp-

shire, and Florida. Out-of-state students make up 12 percent of the freshman class.

The sense of optimism on campus is infectious, and with classes only starting Monday, the mood is not likely to die down anytime soon.

"A lot of the people here seem really excited and motivated to be here and it's cool to be a part of it," said freshman James Scolamieri. "I'm really looking forward to it."