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Oktoberfest: Family Fun and Lofty Goals

By Sophie Braccini



Bavarian Dancers will return to the Hacienda to perform at this year's Oktoberfest Photo provided

The Hacienda Foundation hosts its third annual Oktoberfest in Moraga on the third Sunday in October, featuring traditional German food, music, dancers and drinks, as well as kids' activities, on the beautiful grounds of the historic Hacienda de las Flores.

Events such as Oktoberfest and Cinco de Mayo help the Foundation draw people to the Hacienda, a local treasure that the Foundation has been charged, by the Town, to improve so it becomes self-sustaining. "These events are important for the community to enjoy the Hacienda and to build the support to keep the building fixed up," said Board member Judy Dinkle. To that end, after long discussions, the Foundation's Board decided to charge a nominal fee for Oktoberfest of \$2 per person and \$5 for a family.

After missing last year's event, members of the Golden Gate Bavarian Dancers will return to the Hacienda this month to provide entertainment. Bratwurst and other sausages from Saag's, plus authentic German foods and beverages, will be available for purchase. Activities for children will include jumpy houses, pumpkin painting, and chalk drawing. "Saag's is our corporate sponsor and their executive chef will be at the Hacienda all afternoon cooking with us," added Dinkle.

"We are very pleased to offer this event to the community once again," said Foundation president Claire Roth. "We invite the Lamorinda community to come enjoy the festivities and to see the recent improvements that have been made to the Hacienda."

The mission of the Foundation is to 'enhance, protect, and preserve' the property that used to be Donald Rheem's family mansion at the beginning of the 20th century and that was purchased to become a public park in 1973. There is a lot to say for the beauty, charm and historic value of the Hacienda, but much work remains to make it self-sustaining financially.

"The Hacienda's revenue comes primarily for wedding rentals, which can only be accommodated outdoors at this time," explained Dinkle, "the Foundation is working on a Master Plan that will be presented to the Town, probably at the beginning of 2012, which will show the road map for capital improvements." For example, the Pavilion's kitchen needs repair so the facility can be used as a second wedding spot; and, once amended, the Casita could become a large meeting place for the Town and the community.

"We have been in the process of raising money and have received a major gift from a private source," says Dinkle, "we need matching funds or grants to undertake the major renovation projects that are needed." In the meantime, the Foundation has already renovated many of the rooms, including the Lady's Lounge and the Fireside Room. The facility will be open on October 16th for visitors to appreciate.

The 3rd annual Oktoberfest celebration is on Sunday, October 16, 2:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m. The event will be held at the Hacienda de las Flores, 2100 Donald Drive. Free parking will be available at AAAAA Storage on Moraga Road. A free shuttle will ferry festival-goers between the parking lot and the Hacienda during the hours of Oktoberfest. Admission is \$2 per person, \$5 for a family.

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