

Some Answers are Blowing in the Wind

By Cathy Dausman



Peter Kendall helps Charles Correll don safety equipment prior to leaf blower test Photos Cathy Dausman

Sophia Aguilera and Charles Correll, students in Barbara Denny's AP Environmental Science class at Miramonte High School, have taken their work outside.

Volunteer work at the Chabot Space and Science Center prompted Aguilera, a senior, to enroll in Denny's class. She says she wants to major in the environmental sciences in college. Correll is a junior with a background in public speaking and debate. Recently Denny asked Aguilera and Correll to test leaf blower noise and particulate pollu-

tion at their school. They conducted two studies, a week apart. The first measured the noise levels of a gas powered and electric leaf blower. The second week, the level of "micro particles" blown into the air was measured. That test was completed using only the gas leaf blower.

Originally, Denny was approached by Katharine Barrett, the wife of Berkeley professor Reginald Barrett, who asked if Denny could have students measure the effects of leaf blowers.

Having neither a decibel or par-

ticulate meter, or a leaf blower, Denny was referred to Lawrence Hall of Science's Tony Marks-Block, who provided an air quality sampler (aka particulate meter), and Orinda Quiet's Peter and Susan Kendall, who loaned leaf blowers and a sound meter.

Denny feels the study reinforces her course material on how people sharing common areas can affect those areas, and how governments manage those commons. She sees the study as a chance to "examine what will happen in Orinda as it pertains to leaf blowers and their possible regulation."

Orinda Quiet is lobbying for a cutback in the use of leaf blowers. "I am not taking a position on the issue," says Denny, "I just want the students to generate data."

The students, however, took sides. Correll and Aguilera spoke before the October 4 Orinda City Council meeting to voice their concerns over what Correll termed the city's "dangerous love affair" with blowers. Test results showed that while noise readings were within manufacturer's specs, how the blower gets used changes the noise level perception. During the particulate study, Denny noted the "particles stayed high" throughout the time the blower was on. While test results may not make their way into scientific journals, they certainly ruffled a few dead leaves.



From left: Tony Marks-Block, Sophia Aguilera and Barbara Denny

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Orinda Takes the Lead in Mapping Lamorinda AVA

By Sophie Braccini



Victoria Smith (left) and Emmanuel Ursu (center) taste local wine with LWGA President Susan Captain (right) Photo Sophie Braccini

The social scene at the Moraga Barn on a late September evening was as diverse and festive as all of the monthly wine tasting meetings of the Lamorinda Wine Growers Association (LWGA). Among the usual aficionados one could spot a few newcomers including Orinda's Mayor Victoria Smith

and Planning Director Emmanuel Ursu, who were invited by the LWGA to meet the group, talk to Orinda growers and make a critical evaluation of the local wine production.

As grape growing and wine making take off in Orinda, Smith and Ursu wanted to show their sup-

port and start asking questions about the impact this activity could have on their city.

"When I recently saw the LWGA map, with all the Lamorinda property where grapes are grown, I was struck by the number of properties in Orinda," said Smith. Planting grapes in one's backyard does not require a permit of any sort. The city only hears from the grower when (s)he wants to be legally allowed to produce and sell wine under his or her own name (becoming a bonded winery). When Smith got an invitation to come to the monthly LWGA libation at the Moraga Barn she decided it was time to get better acquainted with them.

"We had a wonderful time," said both Smith and Ursu. The City of Orinda is coming out in support of the Association in their quest for getting an official Lamorinda appellation (becoming an American Viticultural Area or AVA).

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