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Quote of the Week:

"With competing definitions for 'insanity' I wondered what my dictionary might offer."

Read Letters to the Editor, page A8

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Campolindo Football Falls in State Championship

By Leland Gordon

The magic ran out for the Campolindo High School football team but not before they qualified for the State Championship for the first time in program history. The Cougars traveled to the southland but dropped the Division III CIF State Bowl game Saturday at the Home Depot Center in Carson. They lost a tight match, 21-16 to Washington Union High of Fresno.

In typical Campo fashion, the underdogs battled to make their opponents earn the win.

The Cougars (14-1) fell behind 14-0 less than nine minutes into the game and then had to claw back into the contest. Campolindo made a run of it until the very end in front of a hearty contingent of Lamorinda supporters in the stands.

With 44 seconds left, they got close to an upset. Junior wide receiver Mason Windatt had a spectacular 19-yard catch off of a pass from junior quarterback Brett Stephens to score a touchdown. ... continued on page C3



After the game the Cougars greeted the fans who made the trip to Carson; about 40 Campo students boarded a bus at 3:00 a.m. Saturday morning to support their team. Photo Lenny Monge

LAMORINDA WEEKLY

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Lamorinda Nouveau – First Impressions of the 2011 Harvest



After a cool summer, Lamorinda winegrowers discuss this year's grape harvest with Sophie Braccini. Page B5

Sports C1-C4

Prep Soccer Season Heats Up Before Winter Break



Acalanes and Campolindo recently met in a rematch of last year's NCS soccer championship game. Marissa Harnett has the details. Page C1.

Our Homes D1-D8

Mayor Days be Merry!



Food writer Susie Iventosch checked in with Lamorinda's outgoing mayors to find out what will be on their holiday tables. Page D4

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Lafayette Civic News

Public Meetings

City Council

Monday, January 9, 7:00 pm
Lafayette Library & Learning Center,
Community Hall, 3491 Mt. Diablo Blvd

Planning Commission

Tuesday, January 17, 7:00 pm
Lafayette Library & Learning Center,
Community Hall, 3491 Mt. Diablo Blvd

Design Review

Monday, January 9, 7:00 pm
Lafayette Library & Learning Center
in the Arts & Science Discovery
Center at 3491 Mt. Diablo Blvd.

School Board Meetings

Acalanes Union High School District

Wednesday, January 11, 7:30 pm
Board Room AUHSD Office
1212 Pleasant Hill Rd., Lafayette
www.acalanes.k12.ca.us

Lafayette School District

Thursday, January 12, 7:00 pm
LAFSD Office
3477 School Street, Lafayette
www.lafsd.k12.ca.us

Check online for agendas, meeting notes and announcements

City of Lafayette:

www.ci.lafayette.ca.us

Chamber of Commerce:

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Police Report

You have been chopped, 11/27/11 "Chop Chop!" "Who's there?" "Wood!" "Wood who?" "Wood you like a tree cut down?" Someone called police when they heard a chopping noise outside their residence. A look around failed to reveal Paul Bunyan, but they did notice a small tree had been cut near their property—the felled tree was actually on city property. No leads, no suspects. No Babe the Blue Ox either.

Water ways, 11/27/11 Someone threw a filled gallon water jug at a victim's parked car and broke the left rear tail light. Gives a whole new meaning to "water park" doesn't it? Damages are estimated at between \$300 and \$600, which will surely dampen your enthusiasm.

Party time, 11/27/11 Did you hear about the burglars who broke into a Lafayette residence? They stole some things (valued at \$2700), yes, but they liked the place so much they stayed to party. The intruders caused an additional \$1150 worth of damage while entertaining themselves. I would definitely cross them off my guest list.

Slick job, 11/28/11 Thieves broke into a work place on Mt. Diablo Blvd. and absconded with 30 cases of oil, plus a battery charger. More than two grand in cash and checks were taken too. Oil gone in a jiffy.

Pulling the old switcheroo, 11/28/11 A 2007 Prius was stolen in Lafayette. Perhaps the oil thieves grew weary of their wares? Half an hour later police recovered a 2004 Beemer, parked next to where the Prius was stolen.

Confronting the Growing Demand for Wireless

By Cathy Tyson

Let's make an ordinance! Turns out - that's easier said than done. In response to increasing requests for wireless communications facilities in the city, an expert was hired to give advice to the Planning Commission about the specifics of crafting an ordinance. With technology constantly changing, and an alphabet soup of regulations that govern wireless towers, the Planning Commission heard a complete review about everything from soup to nuts regarding wireless at a recent meeting.

Currently the City of Lafayette doesn't have a wireless ordinance, however there are existing rules about land use permits, but height limit rules don't apply to "devices for the transmission of telephone and telegraphic messages," according to a staff report on the subject.

Consultant Jonathan L. Kramer,

Esquire is uniquely qualified to outline the dos and don'ts of a proposed ordinance. He splits his time between his telecommunications-focused law firm and his technology consulting firm. In addition, he has a background as a radio telecommunications engineer and holder of a General Radiotelephone Operator License from the Federal Communications Commission (FCC).

He promised right off the bat to not torture the Planning Commission and the audience with "death by Powerpoint." Instead, he delivered on his goal of providing a guide to help the Planning Commission find its way through the regulatory jungle.

He reviewed relevant case law, the role of the FCC, defining what a Joint Pole Authority is and how it functions, the amazing growth of technology, and Distributed Antenna

Systems - all factors to consider in writing a wireless ordinance. He advises, "What you get out of the process is what you put in the ordinance" and suggested integrating design elements to come up with something "that's aesthetically appropriate for the community."

That nugget especially resonated with the many residents who turned out for the meeting and are concerned about living next door to an ugly cell tower.

The highlight of the presentation was a variety of photos of cell towers from around the country. Some were hiding in plain sight - like the fake mono-palm located near a group of real palm trees, or camouflaged in bell towers, or incorporated into a McDonald's structure, or the gigantic metal bison on a windswept hilltop in Colorado, that hid wireless equipment. But some were just

plain ugly.

Comments from the audience were limited, but supported the concept. Angela Lucas said, "There are twelve ordinances for putting a satellite dish on your house, and nothing for cell towers."

Wireless technology is in everything - getting an electronic book for your Kindle, streaming Netflix movies, to the shoe department at Macy's, to vending machines sending messages about restocking soda and emptying the coin box. As Kramer pointed out, it took twenty-five years to build the first 200,000 wireless sites, and it's estimated the country will need 200,000 more in the next nine years to keep pace with demand. Writing an ordinance to control the process may hold some appeal for many Lafayette residents, but the complexity of the issue suggests this won't happen overnight.

New Mayor for the New Year in Lafayette

By Cathy Tyson

It's that time of year again. Before the Menorah is lit or Santa comes down the chimney, the City Council does its annual reorganization. The new Mayor and Vice Mayor are elected from the current members of the City Council, to mostly ceremonial positions. In their usual civilized manner, everybody takes turns. Freshly former Mayor Carl Anduri who served for 2011 stepped down, and former

Vice Mayor Federighi got "promoted" by a unanimous vote to serve as Mayor for 2012, her third time since joining the City Council in 1999. Mike Anderson will serve as Vice Mayor.

"You have been a terrific mayor," said Federighi, "Doing your homework, listening and asking good questions." She cited his terrific leadership on a range of issues from protecting open space and

ridgelines to serving senior citizens.

As a token of appreciation the former mayor, now just a regular City Council Member, received a lovely cutting board with a small personalized plaque. He graciously thanked all of the City staff, commission, committee and task force volunteers, the Chamber of Commerce and the Homeowners Council. "It's a joy to serve the city," said Anduri, describing the experienced senior people within the City Council and the city staff that help things run so smoothly.

City Manager Steven Falk opined that the cutting board could refer to a number of things; the former Mayor's "cutting wit, or perhaps his willingness to cut off people who go over their allotted speaking time, and cutting the budget."

After changing seats, new Mayor Federighi thanked her supportive husband, terrific staff and many community volunteers and



Carol Federighi Photo Cathy Tyson

concerned citizens that help make Lafayette wonderful. "It's largely a ceremonial role. I'm honored to represent the city in all kinds of ways - I hope I can represent you well," she said.



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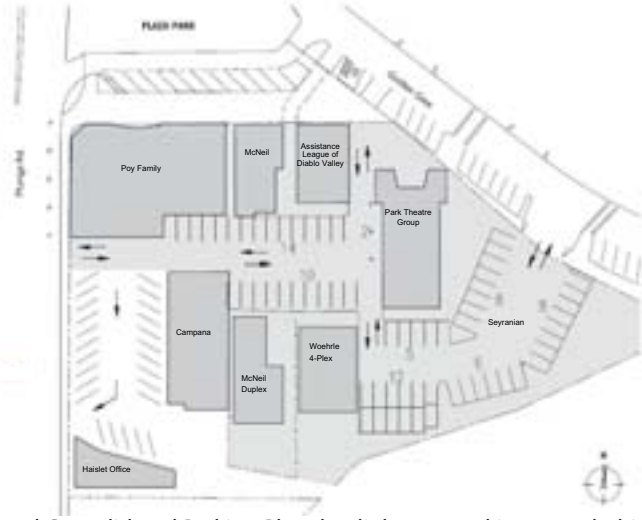
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Proposed Parking Solution for Theater and Beyond

Who doesn't like ice cream?

By Cathy Tyson



Proposed Consolidated Parking Plan that links rear parking areas behind Plaza Way businesses and the Park Theater, with access via Golden Gate Way and Moraga Road. Graphic provided

It was more than just the holiday spirit in the air for the Fenton's love fest at a recent City Council meeting. Supporters young and old came out to encourage the City Council to find a way to solve the parking dilemma facing the historic eatery that would like to expand into the Park Theater.

In July the City got the ball rolling in response to requests from Fenton's, the Park (Theater) Development Group and the Poy family for relief from the parking requirements along Plaza Way. The parcel owned by the Poy family houses Squirrel Coffee Shop, Plaza Way Tailor, and formerly Handlebar Toys, A-1 Photo lab, and the Non-Conformist Boutique. A subcommittee was formed to look into solutions.

Meeting once a week for two months, the subcommittee sought to address parking and circulation issues while respecting the historical importance of the area. Although the lack of parking in Lafayette is no secret, the Park Theater and the block of shops along Plaza Way – from Squirrels to the Wayside Inn – has been around since before the advent of the automobile. Presumably there was adequate parking for Pony Express horses back when the mail service stopped in Lafayette during the 1860's, but not so much now for SUV's and mini-vans.

"The properties on Plaza Way do not now and never have provided the parking spaces required by code," according to a December 12 staff report.

The subcommittee recommended a two-fold approach: recognizing the unique character of Plaza Way and creating a new historical overlay just for that block that would be completely voluntary. Property owners will be able to get certain concessions from the City in exchange for: updating facades along Plaza way, and constructing parking in the rear of the property consistent with the Consolidated Parking plan, requiring employees to park off-site and finally granting an easement to the City over driveways and parking areas.

To hold up their end of the bargain, the City will design and develop a Consolidated Parking Plan for properties in the Overlay and reduce parking requirements for restaurants and more. For all the details, see lengthy staff report available on the city's website.

Of the six property owners, most had participated in the subcommittee meetings and as of mid- December, four of the six were agreeable to the proposal; two had no development plans and voiced concerns.

City Council members unanimously approved the request for \$40,000 to complete the next steps for the proposed project that include completing Plaza Way design guidelines, obtaining a survey of the properties and creating a formal Vision Consolidated Parking Plan Map. "We've got a real good start on a solution - we could have a vibrant area if we can put these parcels together," said Council Member Mike Anderson.

Despite giggles, sisters Kayli and Sierra Harley, ages seven and ten, who came to the podium to state their case, couldn't be happier. They feel a neighborhood Fenton's is a good place to eat and a terrific place for a birthday party, way closer than Oakland.

Lafayette matriarch Joan Bruzzone also offered encouragement to the City Council, "I have to tell you about romance, sixty years ago I had my first date with my future husband Russ at Fenton's. You could be responsible for somebody else's romance."

If all goes well, The Park Theater Group has proposed keeping and improving the front façade of the theater, allowing outdoor dining on the front patio and installing windows on both sides of the building, transforming the historic theater into a 4,700 square foot restaurant with 4,000 square feet of office space on the upper floor. The Poy family owns six tenant spaces; they propose a mixture of retail and restaurant uses and restoring the front facades to emphasize Lafayette's small town ambiance.



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Moraga Civic News

Public Meetings

Town Council

Wednesday, December 28, 7:00pm
Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School,
1010 Camino Pablo

Planning Commission

Tuesday, January 3, 7:00 pm
Moraga Library, 1500 Saint Marys Rd

Design Review

Tuesday, December 27, 7:00 pm
Moraga Library, 1500 Saint Marys Rd

School Board Meeting

Moraga School District

Tuesday, January 10, 7:30 pm
Joaquin Moraga Intermediate
School Auditorium
1010 Camino Pablo, Moraga
www.moraga.k12.ca.us
See also AUHSD meeting page A2

Check online for agendas, meeting notes and announcements

Town of Moraga:

www.moraga.ca.us

Chamber of Commerce:

www.moragachamber.org

Moraga Citizens' Network:

www.moragacitizensnetwork.org



Police Report

Tis the season, 12/10/11 For violating the "Person Responsible for a Loud or Unruly Party" ordinance. It was after 10:00 p.m. and officers could hear the boisterous racket of approximately forty unwanted party-goers at a Paseo Bernal residence from thirty feet away. Alerted by a neighbor's complaint, the party was definitely over after they issued a warning of a violation of the Moraga Municipal Code.

Major litter, 12/11/11 Cops noticed a large projection TV abandoned on an Ascot Drive curb. Oddly enough no one was in the vicinity to claim the trash TV. Moraga Public Services was advised of the semi-early Christmas gift to the sidewalk.

Missing a bike? 12/12/11 Moraga Public Works employees' found an apparently abandoned bike at 1425 St. Mary's Road. The Giant – that's the brand, not the size, MTX250 bicycle had no identification and was booked into Moraga PD evidence. Visit the police department if it's yours.

School vandalism, 12/09/11 Sometime between Friday and Sunday some pesky unknown suspects pulled up several live plants from three wooden planter boxes next to classrooms at Los Perales Elementary School. Not surprisingly, the plants died. Estimated value about \$50.

Burglary, 12/12/11 A Via Granada homeowner contacted police to report that someone entered his home and stole an undetermined amount of jewelry and a handgun by forcing open the front door.

Asleep at the wheel, 12/15/11 Perhaps it was the late hour – nearly 1:30 a.m. – when cops responded to a report of a person asleep in a running vehicle that was parked in the middle of Sea Pines Road. The driver told cops she fell asleep while getting her mail. Paramedics came and took a peak, determining she was not under the influence and escorted her home. A request for a re-evaluation form was submitted by police to the DMV.

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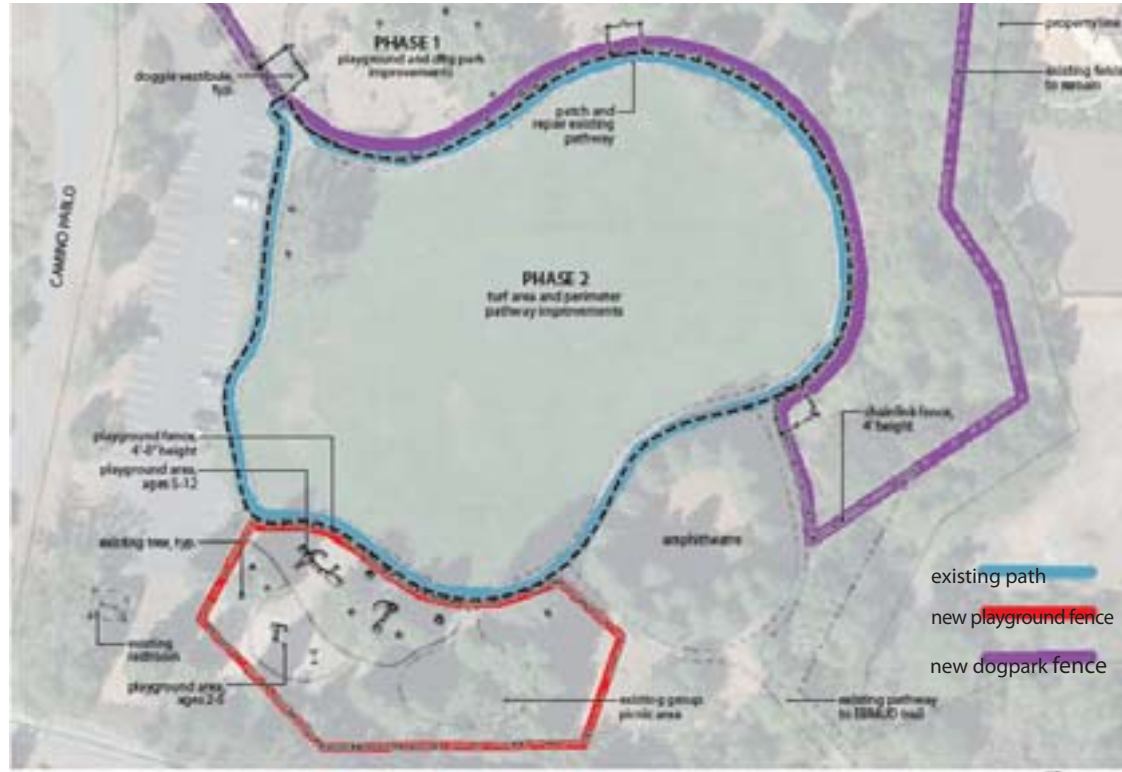
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December Decision Resolves Dog Park Debate

By Sophie Braccini



Rancho Laguna Park Improvements
Moraga, California
October 21, 2011
Park and Recreation Commission Recommended Conceptual Design
Courtesy Staff Report

The Town of Moraga's outgoing mayor, Karen Mendonca, can claim that the long-running debate involving off-leash dogs at Rancho Laguna Park was finally resolved during her tenure, as the issue went to a vote of the Town Council prior to the annual passing of the gavel.

After 32 months of intense discussions and a few dramatic turns of event, on December 14 the Council decided on a 3-2 vote to adopt the Park and Recreation Commission's recommendation to

implement a spatial separation between off-leash dogs and the rest of the parks' users. Council Member Dave Trotter and then-Vice Mayor Mike Metcalf cast the dissenting votes.

The partition approved by the Council will create a 1.1 acre dedicated dog park along one side and the back of the municipal property, a woody area that has no grass at this time. The timing of the implementation of the new park configuration will depend on finding an adequate funding source.

The organization Lamorinda Dogs was not happy with the decision. "We are the main users of the park," said Lamorinda Dogs member Chris Gerding, who added that the group estimates the park gets 57,000 visits by dog owners per year. "Your first priority should be to construct a tot lot and not to incur additional expense by changing the configuration of the park," Gerding stated. Lamorinda Dogs also presented the Council with a petition signed by 111 people supporting the view that the space at Rancho Laguna should remain open.


Off-leash supporters were hopeful when the Council's debate began with Trotter's statement that he would support not changing the park. "I am fiscally conservative and would be happy with a Phase 1 that would just create and fence a tot lot according to AB 1144 (California Playground Regulations Update)," Trotter said, "let's not cut the park, but let's make it safe for small children."

But Trotter was the only Council member opposed to modifying the park. "I have no problem cutting the park in half," said Metcalf. He explained that his priorities were to separate kids from dogs, that the park should provide multi-use for Moraga residents, and that he had no interest in turning the park into a sports field. "This is a place for informal play and general enjoyment," he said. Metcalf supported an option that would have included some of the existing turf area on which dogs could run.

Mendonca, along with Council Members Howard Harpham and Ken Chew, supported the Parks and Recreation Commission's plan. "We have different constituencies with different needs and they have to share a scarce resource," said Mendonca, "we want to provide access to everybody all through the day." Under the new plan, dog owners would be able to let their dogs run off-leash in the dedicated area all day long.

Bill Cosden, of Lamorinda Dogs, later commented, "It's surreal," he said, "the system (off-leash hours at Rancho Laguna) worked for decades – it has enriched the life of countless people. I can't justify why they are spending the money to fix something that is not broken. I hope we can fight this decision."

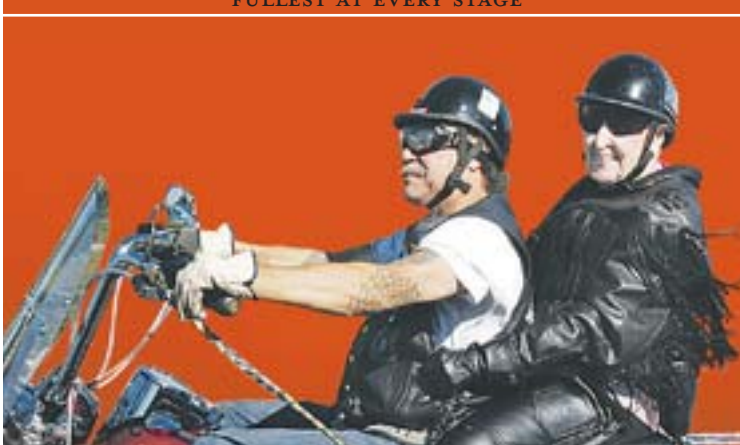
After the meeting, Jay Ingram discussed the implementation of the plan. His cost estimate is \$143,300 to \$155,300 for a first phase that would see the construction of a new kids' playground and a fence separating the north side of the park from the lawn. If the Town wants to clear the brush, sod for turf and create a new path, it would have to spend another \$29,075. "We have money left from the WW fund measure," said Ingram, "we have to submit a plan by March 31 to the East Bay Regional Park District. Our objective is to bring a contract for Council's approval in February."




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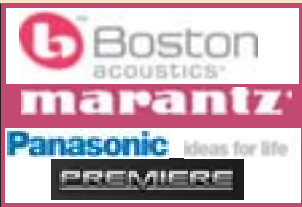
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Passing the Gavel, with a Twist

By Sophie Braccini



From left: Mayor Mike Metcalf, Vice Mayor Howard Harpham, and immediate past Mayor Karen Mendonca, who holds a plaque and gavel she received as a gift. Photo Sophie Braccini

Very late in the evening on December 14 the Moraga Town Council embarked on its annual reorganization process, and the determination of who would serve as the next Mayor and Vice Mayor. Predictably, Vice Mayor Michael Metcalf was nominated to become Mayor and elected by his peers unanimously. The evening's surprise came with the nomination and election of the Vice Mayor. An unwritten tradition, which sends the highest vote-getter to the gavel via the Vice Mayor's seat, was broken when Council Member Howard Harpham was elected Vice Mayor.

"It's been a privilege to serve the Town as Mayor," said Karen Mendonca, concluding her mayoral year. "I owe a lot of gratitude to our Town Manager Jill Keimach, the very competent department heads and great staff."

Vice Mayor Metcalf was then elected to the Mayor's seat and he and Mendonca switched chairs, passing

the gavel. Metcalf has been preparing to take the helm.

"I have met with Jill (Keimach) and discussed my list of objectives for the year," he said, "she met with her department heads to assess what they thought was feasible." Metcalf presented a list of detailed objectives within several categories: Secure a revenue measure of some type for the roads; improve parks and recreation infrastructure; finalize the plan for the Town offices; maintain financial stability and introduce strategic financial planning; continue to work on the economic development of the Town; and maintain public safety as a high priority item.

Metcalf reassured his colleagues that they would have a say regarding the list and that it would be discussed and prioritized at the up-coming goal setting session that is scheduled for the morning of Saturday, January 28.

Metcalf called for the election of a Vice-Mayor.

It is a long-standing but unwritten

tradition in Moraga that the Mayor's seat goes to each Council member in sequence, since the position rotates every year. Seats on the Council come up for election every two years; two in one year, and three in the next election two years later. Since members serve for four years, one of the group of three does not get to be Vice Mayor and then Mayor. The unwritten rule has been that the one who gets the most votes in the public election will be the Vice Mayor. According to that tradition, it would have been Dave Trotter's turn. But when Metcalf put out the call, Mendonca nominated Howard Harpham.

"I nominated Howard because he tries to listen to everyone and does what he believes in his heart is in the best interest of the town," said Mendonca. Harpham was unanimously elected as the new Vice Mayor. Because his four-year term ends in 2012, he will only have the opportunity to become Mayor if he is re-elected.

Planning Director Looks at Reshaping Moraga

By Sophie Braccini

Moraga Planning Director Shawna Brekke-Read received support from the Town Council to apply for a Priority Development Area Designation for the Rheem neighborhood. The request represents the first step in the new Director's plan to make Moraga more business, pedestrian, bicyclist and student-friendly, and ultimately a more vibrant town.

Brekke-Read told the Council that future grant funding from regional agencies is expected to become increasingly competitive and largely limited to Priority Development Areas. The plan she wants to implement is the direct result of the report of the Economic Action Team that worked with the community to determine how to best develop the neighborhood around the Rheem Shopping Center. "We will need grant money to create a pedestrian-oriented, mixed-use area, consistent with Moraga's General Plan and what residents want," she said.

Brekke-Read also worked with Senior Planner Rich Chamberlain who, over his many years of service to the Town, has experienced the elements in the code that have nourished Moraga's business-unfriendly reputation.

"What businesses like best is predictability," believes Brekke-Read,

"at this time in commercial areas we have a list of permitted uses that are subjected to findings that are discretionary. This process is in fact unpredictable." She would rather have a list of fixed criteria and standards; businesses that would satisfied those would know they could quickly get a permit without having to go through Planning Commission hearings that can require unpredictable amounts of time and money; businesses that did not fit the Town's approved sets of criteria and standards would have to follow an application process that would involve a public review.

Brekke-Read also wants to review the Town's appeal process. "I have heard frustration over how appeals have gone historically," she says, "should Council and Commission members be able to appeal without paying a fee? Usually elected officials can call up an issue, and then the whole body votes on whether or not the item should be appealed."

The zoning ordinance is also on her list of action items. For example, the strip of land across from the Rheem Center along Moraga Rd, where 5A Rent-A-Space has its office, is zoned 'agriculture.' "Town Clerk Marty McInturf suggested that we work on our zoning ordinance one chunk at a time," said Brekke-Read, "this year we will start with the wine

growers (see side bar), and we will be looking at commercial zoning districts related to the permitted uses."

The Town's General Plan will be due for its ten-year review in 2012.

Revisiting Winemaking Regulations

"Moraga's winemaking activity started as small vineyards in backyards," explains Planning Director Shawna Brekke-Read when asked why regulations should be revisited in regards to local winemaking. "They stay under the agricultural use that is usually permitted. A few have become wineries (making their own wine under their own label) that have grown as a home occupation business, and that is also allowed. The issue going forward is whether they are going to remain small, more than a home occupation, or will they start to appear to be a business."

The municipal code indicates that a home occupation should remain an incidental and accessory use in residential land use districts under conditions that will ensure that the use is and remains compatible with the residential character of the neighborhood. Brekke-Read, who says that she has experience working with wholesale, distribution and winegrowing businesses, says she will meet with local winegrowers in early January.

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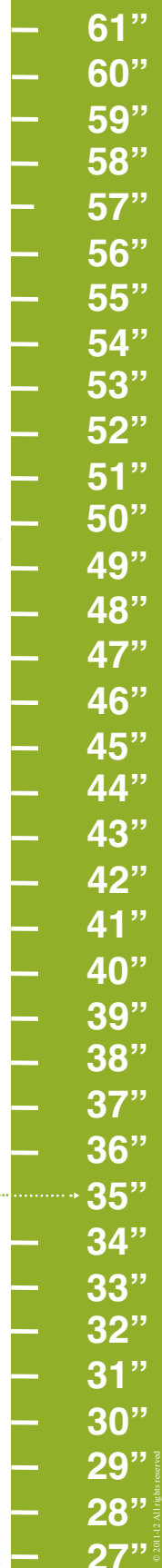
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More Moraga Civic News on Page A10



Orinda Civic News

Public Meetings

City Council

Tuesday, January 17, 7:00 pm
Auditorium, Orinda Library,
26 Orinda Way

Planning Commission

Tuesday, January 10, at 6:00 pm
Workshop Garden Room,
Library, 26 Orinda Way

Historical Landmark Committee

Tuesday, January 24, 3:00 pm
Gallery Room, Library
26 Orinda Way

School Board Meeting

Orinda Union School District
Monday, January 9, 6:00 pm
OUSD Office
8 Altarinda Road, Orinda
www.orindaschools.org

See also AUHSD meeting page A2

Check online for agendas, meeting notes and announcements

City of Orinda:

www.cityoforinda.org

Chamber of Commerce:

www.orindachamber.org

The Orinda Association:

www.orindaassociation.org



Police Report

Open Sesame, 12/1/11 An Orinda resident inadvertently made it easy for a thief when said thief first stole a garage door remote from an unlocked car. The perp later let himself into the garage, where he heisted a stereo. From there it was smooth sailing into the house (the door from garage being unlocked) and a camera went missing. Thoughtful thief did close the garage door on the way out, though. No prints or leads, and police are advising burgled homeowner to re-code his garage door.

A day in the park gone bad... 12/1/11 Imagine coming back from your Lafayette Reservoir hike and not finding your car. You didn't forget it, though. Thorough thieves stole the car and later burgled the owner's Orinda home, presumably gaining entry the same way "open sesame" did, above. They took \$5,000 in goods from the residence, but did "return" the car—leaving the formerly stolen vehicle at the scene of the home crime! If only they'd return the stolen loot as well...

Car to Police: "I tried to tell you!" 12/3/11 The car sounded the alarm; still, a late model Toyota had its window broken (\$200 damage) and a purse snatched (\$280 value) from the front seat. We suspect there'll be more in monetary damages, as a credit card went missing and was later used in Antioch. No leads yet.

No eggnog for you, 12/8/11 It's the most happiest time of the year. Unless you're the 39 year old male driver who was pulled over, given a field sobriety test (failed that), administered a breathalyzer (.140 says he failed that too), volunteered to take a blood/alcohol test (what do you want to bet the results will be?), and transported to Martinez Detention Facility, where he was booked. And his vehicle was towed away, too.

Rock n' rolling, 12/8/11 Burglars used a rock for breaking and entry into an Oak Drive home, where they helped themselves to jewelry, the cost of which is still being tallied. They caused \$700 just breaking in, and fled in a white Ford Taurus.



Maureen Wilbur

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A Year of Shared Sacrifices

Orinda Mayoral Transition Offers Leaders and Residents Time to Reflect

By Laurie Snyder

Orinda's December 6th City Council meeting was brief, but informative for the nearly 45 community members in attendance.

Former Orinda mayors Bill Judge and Bobbie Landers joined with leaders from Orinda's business and non-profit communities to thank outgoing Mayor Victoria Smith for her service and witness the election of Council Members Steve Glazer and Amy Worth as Mayor and Vice Mayor, respectively.

Glazer and Worth thanked their colleagues for their unanimous support and observed how much they were looking forward to serving the citizens of Orinda in the coming year.

Glazer then got the ceremonial ball rolling by praising Smith for her efforts. Council Members Worth and Sue Severson echoed his comments and the newest member of the team, Council Member Dean Orr, thanked Smith for her guidance. Each member then took turns reading from a joint resolution honoring the outgoing mayor.

Thanking her family and staff, Smith said, "It has been a really great year," as she gave high marks to City staff for the job they have done during challenging economic times.

She also thanked her fellow Council members, explaining that each brings specific strengths to the governing table. Describing Glazer as having, "political acumen beyond compare," Severson as "the guiding force" behind the Orinda Community Foundation, and Worth as "the mother of the fourth bore of the Caldecott Tunnel," she also praised Dean Orr for his "complete depth and knowledge" in the planning and development arena.

Recalling difficult fiscal reductions that forced the use of employee furloughs – without a corresponding reduction in the needs of Orinda's citizenry – it was, Smith said, "A year of shared sacrifices for everyone."

Orinda's deteriorating infrastructure was also much on her mind, but all was not doom and gloom. Noting that the first of the Wilder homes are now on the market, Smith announced that Wilder's playfields are nearing completion.

Smith also delivered the heartening news that Orinda's Theatre Square area is now 95 percent occupied, and credited its new management company with the rapid, nine-month turnaround. "It's the place to be," she said as she talked

about teens flocking to the area after school and adults taking part in new events, such as the Orinda Jazz Festival.

Among the City's successes Smith cited the diverse offerings of the Parks and Recreation Department, noted that Orinda is "the safest city of our size in the entire state of California," and praised the impending arrival of affordable senior housing, stating that the Eden project "will be a great addition to our town."

In a follow-up interview, Smith further explored concerns about the City's deteriorating infrastructure. "When I ran seven years ago," she said, "we needed to fix the roads." That, she said, remains the major headache.

The City is projecting a three percent drop in assessed property valuation, something that has never happened before in Orinda's history, according to Smith. Saying that she and her colleagues are "keeping a close hand on the budget," she put things in perspective, however, comparing the small drop in Orinda's valuation to the 20 percent drop experienced by other communities across the Bay Area.

Smith also stressed the role that

volunteers play in Orinda. "Just the sheer number of people," she said, is key. "Having so many people with so many talents – artists, architects," sets Orinda apart. "I think it's probably the high point every year," she said, stating that Orinda would never be able to do what it does if it had to pay for everything it offers its citizens.

Pointing to Theatre Square's 95 percent occupancy rate as another high point of the year, Smith noted that many residents may not realize all of the good that has been happening. The City modified its zoning to enable businesses such as optometric services to open their doors. Kids feel more comfortable and welcome, and the owners of Table 24 plan to open a new Mexican restaurant.

Thanking Orindans for their support, Smith urged everyone to remain engaged – as will she. She plans to start working on a new recycling and garbage franchise agreement. "Our rates have not been as stable as I would have liked." And, she said, the City is also working on a new plastic bag pick-up program to tackle the problem of unwanted shopping bags. She also encouraged residents to "shop and eat Orinda."

Orinda's 2011 Best Architectural Design Nods Honor Both Businesses and Homes

By Laurie Snyder



Flying A gas station Photo Andy Scheck

For the first time since the inception of the Mayor's Award for Excellence in Architecture, business owners working to improve the face of Orinda's retail community are being honored side-by-side with owners of some of the city's most stunning homes.

Victor Ivry and Michael Karp, co-owners of Table 24, were recognized for bringing life back to 2 Theatre Square – a retail space that has been a veritable revolving door of restaurants.

Allen Pennebaker, long-time owner of Orinda Motors, was honored for his transformation of the Valero station at 22 Bryant Way into Flying A Gasoline, a brightly-colored facility easily visible from Highway 24 where customers can now have their windshields cleaned and gas pumped for them by the hands of Pennebaker's employees.

The following residential winners were also recognized for 2011:

Minor:
(Awarded for residential additions under 1,500 square feet and remodels)

10 Crestview Court
Lupita Sutton, homeowner
Fred Hyer, architect

19 Via Hermosa
Susan and Howard Warner, homeowners
Robin Pennell and Cindy Chan, Jarvis architects

1 Crestview Court
Mark and Karissa Bohon, homeowners
The Bohon Group

Major:
(Awarded to new single family homes)

14 Meadow Park Court
Ian and Lani MacKenzie, homeowners
David Fagerstrom, architect

2 Honey Hill Court
Dan and Jennifer Lyons, homeowners
Peter Golze, architect

Participants were presented with their awards by Mayor Victoria Smith at the Orinda City Council meeting on December 6, 2011. The purpose statement of the annual Mayor's award, recently revised to reflect the addition of the new Downtown improvement category, now reads: "To recognize excellence in residential design and downtown property improvements which make an extraordinary contribution to the character and livability of Orinda neighborhoods and the vitality of the downtown." Details about the award and the 2011 award winners are available on the City's web site: www.ci.orinda.ca.us.

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History Warms Hearts, Spurs Smiles

Annual Historical Society Dinner offers trip down Memory Lane

By Laurie Snyder



Brooks and Brad Stubblefield, co-owners of Loard's ice cream parlors in Orinda and Moraga, share their memories at the Orinda Historical Society's annual holiday dinner on December 7th. Photo Laurie Snyder

Goodwill abounded in the Fellowship Hall at the Orinda Community Church on December 7th when 80 friends of the Orinda Historical Society gathered together for the organization's annual holiday party.

Guests were greeted by images of

the Orinda Theatre and a pink-cushioned chair and bistro table from Loard's, and dined on Filet Mignon with Bordelaise Sauce, Butternut Squash Lasagna, and Chicken with Tarragon Dijon Sauce as Lucy Hupp Williams, the Historical Society's

President, welcomed the crowd. The sweetest treat of the entire evening, for many, came as memories of times gone by were shared by the event's honorees and those in attendance.

Brooks and Brad Stubblefield, co-owners of the Loard's Orinda and Moraga ice cream shops, were the first to speak. "It's a lot of work and a lot of fun," said Brooks, as she talked about life and work.

Born and raised in Orinda, the Stubblefields attended and fell in love at Miramonte High School. Brooks' first job was at the Orinda Theatre; Brad worked there, too. Later, when one daughter landed an after-school job at a local Loard's, they realized they wanted to be part of a much-loved Bay area tradition.

Generations have stopped by Loard's parlors scattered across the Bay Area to sample the now nearly 40 flavors, the three most popular of which are chocolate mint, chocolate showers, and mocha chip.

... continued on page A10

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Letters to the Editor



Share your thoughts with our community! Opinions in Letters to the Editor are the express views of the writer and not necessarily those of the Lamorinda Weekly. All published letters will include the writer's name and city/town of residence -- we will only accept letters from those who live in, or own a business in, the communities comprising Lamorinda (please give us your phone number for verification purposes only). Letters should be 350 words or less; letters of up to 500 words will be accepted on a space-available basis. **email: letters@lamorindaweekly.com**; Regular mail: Lamorinda Weekly, P.O.Box 6133, Moraga, CA 94570

Editor:

We write about the Moraga Town Council meeting on December 14, at which the Council decided to significantly change Rancho Laguna Park. Rancho Laguna is an open and beautiful park. Until recently, it had play structures, but the Town removed them. For about 30 years, people have walked their dogs off-leash in the morning (7a-9a) and just before the park closes. About two years ago, the Recreation Director decided we should alter the Park and fence part of it as a dog park.

On December 14, the Council voted to adopt the Recreation Director's proposed plan by a vote of 3-2. That vote was opposed by people at the meeting and by 150 people who signed a petition presented to the Council.

The Council members who voted to change Rancho Laguna (Harpham, Chew, and Mendonca) claimed that a dog off-leash might someday bite someone and that dog "poops" are a significant problem. Anyone can avoid the possibility of being bitten by an off-leash dog by using the park during hours when dogs are not off-leash. As for dog "poops," those who use the park with their dogs mostly pick up after their dogs and police others to do the same.

The plan adopted by the Council will require the removal or relocation of trees, the ground cover bark, shrubs, the barbecues, and the picnic tables. That is too extreme. Moreover, the Council has never tried to determine the will of the people through a ballot measure or scientific survey. The Council shrugged off the petitions we presented.

For those who use the park in the early morning and evening, it is a time for people and dogs to socialize. About 30 people use the park in the morning and in the evening, 350 days a year, which totals 21,000 visits per year. The number of visits by picnickers, campers, and soccer players pales in comparison.

Changing the park will change what has worked well for 30 years -- and for no good reason. If the park remains as is, others who have used the Park will be unaffected: when people reserve Rancho Laguna, the Town posts a notice and dog walkers don't allow their dogs off-leash.

We urge Lamorinda citizens to: (1) come to Rancho Laguna one morning or evening and see how well the park operates; (2) visit the park at other times -- you won't see much use at all; (3) let the Council members know they made a poor deci-

sion; and (4) attend a Council meeting and keep track of what your representatives are doing -- they are our representatives. Moraga does not now have enough money to pay for both new play equipment and a dog park. The money should be spent on children and not on changing the character and beauty of Rancho Laguna.

The videotape of the December 14 meeting is available at www.livestream.com/moragacc.

Tina Brier and David Shapiro
Moraga

Editor:

Don't Let Orinda Crumble -- A Great Community needs Good Infrastructure.

As a 22 year resident, I know Orinda is full of wonderful, committed people that value our location, our great schools and the friendly nature of the community. At the same time almost everyone is frustrated with the state of our residential roads and storm drainage. It's easy to hear complaints all over town but it doesn't seem easy to get the community to fully understand the engineering and funding realities. Many residents believe the City is somehow diverting money that should go to roads. Many harbor concerns or frustrations about other issues -- past and present -- that they have strong feelings about such as City Hall or the Moraga-Orinda Fire District.

As both a licensed civil engineer and a current member of the City's Infrastructure Oversight Commission I can reliably testify to key facts that I hope all Orindans will continue to educate themselves about. Orinda's overall road network is one of the worst in the Bay Area. Our roads are fifty plus years old; past their useful life and require major rehabilitation and replacement. They deteriorate further every day.

Despite any criticisms of City governance, in the last five years the City has done an amazing job of improving our main thoroughfares using the limited funding available. Priorities and policies have been set to deliver the most benefit possible for the community at large. Each year the City is able to spend about \$1 million on infrastructure out of a total annual budget of \$10-11 million. That total budget is very modest considering that it includes our police services and all other needed activities. In recent years tax revenues have dipped and, like most entities, the City has had to cut back virtually everywhere.

The City is working hard to maintain the major roads but there is absolutely no budget for residential road improvements.

Getting our roads and drainage to the condition that we would like requires nearly \$60 million. Extensive details about the topic are available on the City's website at www.ci.orinda.ca.us. The entire City budget isn't enough to solve our problem without new funding sources. Federal and state money for our residential roads is non-existent. The only solution is for Orindans to decide that there are some taxes worth paying ---- that we care about our infrastructure and want to invest in our home and our future.

Darlene K. Gee
Orinda

Editor:

What's next For MOFD?

How about spending \$2.2 million taxpayer dollars for Administrative offices for 12 Administrative staff members?

The Moraga/Orinda Fire District (MOFD) Board is continuing negotiations to buy a burned out building at 1150 Moraga Way in Moraga. Since this 9,147 square foot building is over 2 times the 4,300 sq. ft. the Board feels is needed, the Board reasons they can fix up this vacant shell, and rent any empty space. There seems to be no concern there are many vacant rental spaces in Moraga. The Board lacks experience in the speculative commercial real estate business.

A citizens analysis shows MOFD has obligated tax payers with hundreds of millions of dollars for unfunded liabilities. Instead of purchasing a 9,147 sq. ft. building, the Board should start reducing taxpayers' huge unfunded liability debts.

When the Orinda City Council in 1997 convinced voters to detach from county services and form MOFD, it was for emergency services only. We did not vote to use taxpayer funds to invest in speculative real estate.

Orinda's fair share for MOFD costs is 58% but we are financing 65% of the revenue which amounts to a \$1.2 million annual subsidy for Moraga's emergency services. Since the formation of MOFD 14 years ago, Orinda has wasted approximately \$16 million subsidizing Moraga. That \$16 million could have fixed many Orinda roads.

Since Orinda cannot afford to continue subsidizing Moraga with \$1.2

million annually something needs to be done, and time is of the essence.

Solution: The Orinda City Council should follow the lead of the 1997 City Council. Our council should detach from MOFD and form an Orinda Fire District. If we had our own fire district, we would not subsidize Moraga. We could add that \$1.2 million annual Moraga subsidy to Orinda's road budget.

Janet Maiorana
Orinda

Editor:

I am writing to raise a red flag about the dangerous parking situation at the Whole Foods/McCaulou's parking lot in Lafayette. Today I was walking across the parking lot from the Bank of America to enter Noahs Bagels and was almost hit by a driver going well over 20mph in front of McCaulou's. I visit this area 2-3 times a week and have seen several near misses between pedestrians crossing the traffic lane and cars going way too fast for this busy parking lot. Somebody is going to get hurt or worse. Drivers enter at Whole Foods and pick up speed as they drive the straight shot down to McCaulou's. Drivers are either not paying attention and/or driving way too fast. Pedestrians play russian roulette when they cross over the traffic lanes, especially in front of Whole Foods. The retailers who occupy the retail spaces and the City of Lafayette need to organize and protect the people who shop at those stores. The parking lot needs crosswalks and speed bumps to slow drivers down. Diablo Foods provides traffic monitors at peak shopping times as does the WholeFoods in Walnut Creek. Lets not wait until a terrible accident happens like the one last year in front of the post office to fix this. Please contact Whole Foods, McCaulou's and other retailers in the mall to get them to pay attention to this.

Heidi Schmidt, Lafayette

Editor:

With competing definitions for "insanity" I wondered what my dictionary might offer. Not surprisingly, it showed a picture of a bicyclist riding uphill on Moraga Road. Recently, while driving downhill on that road I saw two bicyclists puffing up the hill, their feet spinning 100 miles per hour and their bikes traveling 100 feet per

hour. I mention this for those who drive up the hill from Lafayette and who prefer not to attach "10-speed hood ornaments" to their autos. Please watch out for cyclists.

Edward C. Hartman
Moraga

Editor:

My husband and I attended the Chamber of Commerce Holiday Party hosted by Moraga Royale in early December. As one of over 125 attendees, I felt I was attending a "royal" party. To start with, we were greeted by Santa and Mrs. Claus in the lobby where a group of musicians filled the air with seasonal tunes. The upbeat music inspired several to swing into dancing! Decorations were superb, complete with a Festival of Trees Room holding 6 unique trees for community bidding to benefit Moraga's Rescue One Foundation, as well as garlands of greens and colored balls tastefully decorating the walls of all the rooms.

And what a feast for our palate! The staff passed tasty and abundant appetizers, poured wine and chilled punch, and served festive desserts. Moraga Royale's activity director, hostess and MC, Loto Rickman, took off her shoes at one point to dance gracefully and professionally one of her many Samoan dances. Hats off to Dianne Wilson, Executive Director of Moraga Royale, Al and Karen Pyne, Directors of Transportation and the Clauses, Chris and Nancy Berg, owners of Moraga Royale, and the whole staff for their gracious, generous hospitality to Moraga's Chamber of Commerce members and guests. You surely live up to your name - Moraga Royale!

Ellen Beans
Moraga

Join our Public Forum

If you have significant knowledge about an issue facing Lamorinda, or one of its communities, that requires more than the 350 words to which we must limit Letters to the Editor, don't despair! You can submit your letter to our Public Forum section. Just send your letter to letters@lamorindaweekly.com and let us know you'd like to be considered for the Public Forum. We will not accept Public Forum submissions regarding a current ballot measure or candidate for public office. Opinions expressed in Public Forum are the express views of the writer and not necessarily those of the Lamorinda Weekly.



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MOFD Revives Building Purchase Concept

By Lucy Amaral



Moraga Orinda Fire District

Board of Directors Meetings
Meetings of the MOFD Board of Directors are open to the public and take place on the third Wednesday of each month in the Board Room, Administration Building, 1280 Moraga Way, Moraga.

Next meeting:

Next regular MOFD Board meeting TBD,
Station 41
(1280 Moraga Way, Moraga),
(go to www.mofd.org as the meeting date approaches for more information)

year term or more, with payments adjusted accordingly. According to staff reports, a five-year term payment would be \$219,915 semi-annually, a ten-year semi-annual payment would be \$119,091, and a 20-year semi-annual payment would be \$75,373.

Board debate this time around shifted enough to pass the lease/buy option by a 3/2 vote, but concerns about the current economic climate, cash flow and public perception remained.

Board members Brook Mancinelli and Dick Olsen continued to be against the purchase option, preferring to look at leasing from the City of Orinda or the construction of a modular building. Frank Sperling, who voted against the concept last time, opted to support the idea at this meeting, citing the improved cash-flow options, the benefits of owning versus renting and the opportunity to facilitate an improved level of fire service.

Fred Weil, who voted for the purchase last time, continued his support, noting that if the bottom floor (which would be available) could be leased quickly, that, combined with the improved efficiencies of staffing, would help with cash flow, and at the end of the term, the building would be owned free and clear.

Wyro, who has been a proponent of the purchase all along, said that the lease/buy option would serve MOFD's needs the best, offering a cost-effective way to provide service to the community.

The other options on the table, leasing from the City of Orinda, building a modular office building behind Station 41, or leasing office space in Moraga was also debated again. Board members who were against these options argued that leasing only delayed the long-term administrative housing issue, and building a unit on the area currently used for MOFD firefighter training, would require more land to be purchased in the near future, adding to the overall costs.

Once voting was complete, the Board charged Bradley to return to the negotiating table to finalize details, then bring the completed proposal back for Board review and possible approval. The next board meeting will be held on December 28.

MOFD Elects 2012 Officers

At the December 8 Board of Director's meeting, Fred Weil was nominated and elected to serve as Board President for 2012. Weil served as Vice President in 2011 and his new term will begin on January 1. John Wyro, the outgoing Board President, will return to a general Board member.

Other nominated and elected Board positions include: Brook Mancinelli as Vice President, Dick Olsen as Secretary, and Frank Sperling as Treasurer. On Wyro's recommendation, all committee appointments will be done after the first of the year, when the new Board convenes.



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At its December 8 meeting, the Moraga-Orinda Fire District (MOFD) Board of Directors revived the concept of purchasing the empty building located at 1150 Moraga Way as the new home for the District's Administrative offices.

For months, the Board has been searching for an adequate site to house the combined administrative staff of MOFD. Currently, the staff is split, with half located at Orinda's Station 45 and half at Moraga's Station 41. A facilities committee report stated that Station 41 was in need of seismic, gender and space upgrades, and by combining the administrative offices offsite, this would allow MOFD to repurpose the existing space for use by firefighters. In order to repurpose the building, the current administrative offices must first be moved out. Options the Board considered included renting space from the City of Orinda or in an office building in Moraga, building a modular office space behind Station 41, and purchasing the building at 1150 Moraga Way, which is located next to Station 41.

At the September 27 Board meeting the proposed purchase of the 1150 building was defeated on a 3-2 vote, with dissenting Board members voicing concern about cash flow issues and the current economic climate, followed by the request to research the other options. At the November 16 meeting, a lease/buy option to purchase 1150 Moraga Way was introduced by Board President John Wyro.

According to Fire Chief Randy Bradley, with a lease/buy contract, a third party (bank, finance or bond company) purchases the property and makes it available to the Local Government (such as the Fire District) in return for semi-annual or annual payments consisting of principal and interest. This public finance tool is used because state law does not permit local government to encumber funds for more than one year to purchase facilities or equipment. When the contract is completely paid, the Local Government (Fire District) owns the property free and clear of any lien or restriction.

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Civic News Moraga, Orinda

New Sports Field at Camino Pablo Elementary

By Sophie Braccini



Students help to cut the ribbon

Photo Cathy Dausman

The bell rang at 10:55 a.m. on Thursday, December 8. Like a flock of birds taking over a newly-seeded field, the children of Camino Pablo Elementary (CP) in Moraga ran running and screaming, on that crisp and bright morning, across the new sports field. The grass took it well.

Officials from the Town of Moraga, the School District and the East Bay Regional Park District (EBRPD) looked on in delight – they had just finished an inauguration ceremony for the new field.

“What is nice about this field

is that it can be used in different configurations for different sports,” said Harry Crouch, Park and Recreation Commissioner and LMYA parent. The field at CP had ceased to be a viable alternative for sports team in the area, which are always hungry for good practice surfaces, due to drainage and grass quality issues.

The complete renovation of the field cost the Town of Moraga over half a million dollars. It was made possible by a Measure WW grant; the bond measure was approved in 2008 by residents of Contra Costa and is administered and redistributed by the EBRPD.

“We are thrilled that the renovation went so well,” said Moraga School District Superintendent Bruce Burns, “this cooperative project with the Town went very well and we’d like to see more.” The Town Council decides on the use of Measure WW money, which must go toward parks and recreation. The choice of renovating the School District’s property was made because it seemed the best way to serve the recreation needs of the community.

About \$100,000 remains of the bond allocation to fund other recreation projects in Moraga.

History Warms Hearts, Spurs Smiles

... continued from page A7

The vanilla ice cream, which was donated for the evening’s dinner and is Loard’s main staple, is used in everything from sundaes to single scoop cones.

“That’s the real deal,” Brad announced as wait staff rolled out carts with dishes of vanilla ice cream.

Orinda Theatre – Heart and History

Opened by Donald Rheem on December 27, 1941, nearly three weeks to the day after the attack on Pearl Harbor, the Orinda Theatre quickly became the gathering place for a community worried and wearied by World War II. News reels that were shown with movies of the time offered both reality and respite. Saved from demolition in the mid-1980s, the theater retains the original art deco touches of architect Alexander Aimwell Cantin.

Three of the Theatre’s former ushers, Colette Kersten, Malia Martin, and Shellie Abbes Kirby, remembered special times spent there, prompting laughter and broad smiles from audience members.

Abbes Kirby, now a realtor associate with Coldwell Banker

in Orinda, started at the theater in 1966 as high school freshman. Tickets were \$1.35 for adults and 35 cents for kids during her tenure, which lasted until 1971.

“We were called usherettes,” she said. “We really worked for our money.” Her dad, Frank Martin, made the “Coming Soon” fixtures in the theater that are still familiar to today’s audiences.

“You Only Live Twice,” “Valley of the Dolls,” “The Graduate,” and “Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner” were favored flics back then.

Kersten held the prized job of ticket taker, helping late arrivals find their seats with the help of her trusty flashlight. Describing the usherettes’ uniforms and Go Go boots, she also recalled an unwritten rule – friends of the usherettes were permitted to snag free popcorn and Cokes.

“I was so impressed by the art,” she said. Now an Energy Advisor with the California Public Utilities Commission, Kersten avidly collects Orinda Theatre memorabilia. “To this day, I can see the marquee outside my window.”

“The whole place is a work of art,” said Martin, part of the Santa Maria school’s first graduating class and now owner of the licensed Orinda daycare, Baby Central. Calling the bathrooms “a whole other social experience,” she described how high school girls would watch each other put on makeup from the sitting room area of the women’s restroom. “I love the fact that the same chairs are still there. I’m so glad they have preserved that.”

Kersten mused that she took up skiing after seeing “On Her Majesty’s Secret Service,” and inspired a few head nods as she said, “I think I saw Woodstock probably 20 times.”

Multiple members of the audience offered their own choice memories, including clues to the theater areas designated by teens – and maybe a few adults over the years – as “make-out sections.”

As audience members gradually filtered out, many remained behind swapping stories. Afterward, Williams commented that the evening had been one of the Society’s most successful activities presented to date.

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Winter Nights and High Holidays at Temple Isaiah



By Cathy Dausman

Strength. Inspiration. Renewal. Those words are often bandied about in December. Yet while many of us frantically scrounge for “the perfect gift,” Lafayette’s Temple Isaiah taps hundreds of volunteers to care for homeless families through the Contra Costa Interfaith Alliance’s Winter Nights program.

The temple is hosting families for the eighth year, December 20 through January 1. While many local churches also volunteer for this event, Communications Director Deb Phillips says, “Temple Isaiah traditionally hosts during the Christmas holiday because it is a less busy time here than it is in the local churches.” Their congregation is so committed to the program they’ll do it even though all eight nights of Hanukkah fall within their obligation this year. Hanukkah began at sundown December 20th.

Not to worry, says temple Winter Nights coordinator Rebecca Calahan-Klein. Admittedly, “it’s gonna be a busy time,” but she says temple members observe their major celebrations (Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur) in the fall. Calahan-Klein, along with husband Jonathan Klein, and Jeff and Tina Goodfriend work to house, feed and support nearly three dozen visitors, more than half of them children, at the temple for two weeks, 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m. weekdays and around the clock on weekends and holidays. That means preparing some 3500 meals and filling 700 volunteer job slots. And they’ll do it in true interfaith style.

Winter Nights meal standards call for only cold breakfasts (plus a sack lunch and hot dinner), but Temple Isaiah provides hot break-



From left: Carol K, Carrie Paulus, Jill Jacobson

Photo Michael Fox Photography

fasts. All meals are served on temple dishes and flatware, making each occasion an oneg (joyful meal). Program participants will take outings to the San Francisco Exploratorium and the Oakland Zoo. There are Hanukkah and Christmas celebrations too -- December 23 (Hanukkah) and December 24 and 25. Christmas celebrations include a gift “shop” and Santa Claus himself. “You rarely see a synagogue celebrating Christmas in this way,” says Phillips.

At the end, there’s a New Year’s Eve party featuring kosher catered food donated by a Lafayette owned catering business.

Rabbi Judy Shanks and her colleague Rabbi Roberto Graetz are both active members of the Interfaith Council of Contra Costa County (<http://interfaithccc.org/>).

... continued on page B4

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Winter Nights Hosts in Lamorinda

Nine Lamorinda faith communities are part of Winter Nights this year:

- St. Anselm’s Episcopal Church, Lafayette (co-hosts: Lafayette United Methodist Church and Lafayette Christian Church) October 10-24, 2011
- Our Savior’s Lutheran of Lafayette (co-hosted at Episcopal Church of the Resurrection, Pleasant Hill). October 24-November 7, 2011
- Lafayette-Orinda Presbyterian Church November 21-December 5, 2011
- Temple Isaiah, Lafayette December 19, 2011-January 2, 2012
- St. Stephen’s Episcopal Church, Orinda, (co-hosted at St. John Vianney Catholic Church, Walnut Creek) January 23- January 30, 2012
- Santa Maria Catholic Church, Orinda (with co-host Orinda Community Church) February 27-March 12, 2012

For program information e-mail eye4cee@aol.com or call (925) 933-6030.

Source:
Gwen Watson, Executive Director, Winter Nights Shelter

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Miramonte Art Students re-Paint Picasso

By Cathy Dausman

Miramonte High School visual art students are getting a feel for the depth and breadth of Pablo Picasso's paintings by observing, re-creating and then interpreting some of his works in a project they call "Homage to Picasso." Over thirty student-created works in charcoal, oil, acrylic, pen and ink, pastel or water color enliven the loft walls at the school's Art Center. Among the transformations, a woman becomes a dog, a giraffe or a cobra, and a rooster becomes a bull. Ipods and IVs make anachronistic statements. It began last summer when students from advanced art classes viewed a selection of Picasso's works at San Francisco's de Young Museum.

Once school started, students copied a selected work. After understanding its palette, content and style they were challenged to create an original painting in a similar style. Teacher Deborah Hovey-LaCour said this last step was a process which went "beyond duplication," showing their skill in the media while keeping the essence of Picasso. The students spent four weeks of class time on the project.

Senior Sofie Woodlee chose "The Frugal Meal" and updated it in a char-



From left: Art students Katherine Gunn, Liana Notini, Emma Trevarthen, Sofie Woodlee Photos Cathy Dausman

coal rendering with what she says are "more modern issues." Picasso's original work shows a gaunt couple seated by a wine bottle and an empty plate. Woodlee, who normally draws landscapes and positive subjects, says she liked the forms but that "this piece was a giant step out of my comfort zone." The result is silent commentary on more modern issues, such as serious illness: the man is tethered to an IV bag and the woman seated beside him smokes nervously while pain pills spill from her purse. Woodlee hopes to major in art conservation in college and says this work will become part of her portfolio.

Liana Notini not only re-invented a Picasso acrylic still life, she designed Picasso cookies for her classmates to enjoy. The senior looks forward to a career in art, doing gallery work. Notini, who acted as publicity director for the show, was enthusiastic over the "tons of [Miramonte] people" who attended the lunch hour opening on December 7.

Hovey-LaCour is pleased with the results, and proud of her students, saying they "curated, promoted, mated and hung the show themselves." The display is open to the public during school hours through January 6. For details, call Miramonte High School at (925) 280-3930.



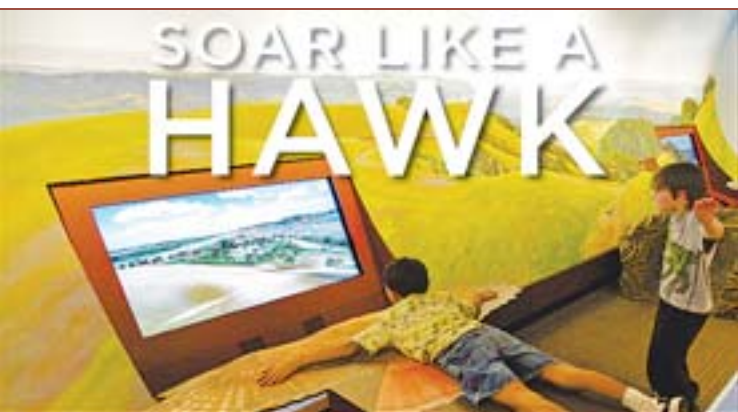
Michelle Lee
Asleep (1932) Untitled (Sleeping Women)
"White is the fastest to go. One is never done."



Emily Beeman
Le Baiser (The Kiss) (1925)
The Embrace
"It was a good experience to take on elements from the master and work on a surreal subject."



Even the refreshments were artsy! MHS Senior Liana Notini was inspired to make these Picasso cookies. Notini is in A.P. art class



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Town Hall Meeting Educates Citizens on State of Schools

By Cathy Tyson

With an all-star line-up of speakers who really know the dirt on the current state of California education, a good sized audience comprised mostly of parents with school-aged kids got a thorough snapshot of what's going on at a recent Town Hall on Education meeting at Stanley Middle School.

Jean Follmer kicked things off as the moderator with a brief introduction about the goal of the grass roots organization that she co-founded, Lafayette for Education, "We want stable funding for all schools in California," she stated. Dr. Fred Brill, Lafayette School District Superintendent and the first speaker of the evening echoed that theme, "You are the warriors fighting for education (referring to the parents in attendance). There's a growing equity issue that we must confront."

Dr. John Nickerson, Acalanes Union High School District Superintendent spoke about the fiscal crisis, "We are barely making it at AUHSD. He explained that parents step up in a big way: 20% of the budget is paid by an existing parcel tax, and the Parents Club contributes 4%, but calls that formula unsustainable. "The State of California is not adequately funding education," said Nickerson. He asked if public education is a core value in this state. Funding from Sacramento has been cut approximately 18% over the past few years.

Next up on the agenda, Craig Cheslog, Principal Advisor to State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Tom Torlakson speculated about the reasoning behind academic financial challenges, "70% of California voters do not have a child in a public school. These people don't understand the depth of the problem." His solution:

"In 2012, education reform equals revenue."

Founder of "Close the Loophole," San Francisco Assessor Recorder Phil Ting proposed an interesting solution. With an intimate knowledge of property taxes, he pointed out tough structural changes that he feels need to be made to solve the problem. Proposition 13 limited the rate of increase of property taxes for both commercial and residential properties. While the cost of real estate since the measure passed in 1978 has gone up, much like long-term homeowners, land owners of commercial properties that have not changed hands or have been passed down to owner's descendents, pay a significantly lower property tax rate than new property owners. He calls for a market value approach, so that all commercial land owners pay their fair share.

Nancy Skinner, Assemblymember representing the 14th district and Mark DeSaulnier, California State Senator from the 7th district, along with Crystal Brown, Co-Founder and President of Educate Our State, rounded out the panel of the Town Hall meeting.

"We were incredibly pleased to see so many individuals from Lafayette and its neighboring cities seeking to learn more about education funding in California. Our attendees clearly recognize both the value and importance of adequate funding for all California public schools," said Follmer. "We plan to begin a speaker series after the first of the year and encourage those who are interested to visit our website, <http://lafayetteforeducation.weebly.com/>, frequently. We also update our Facebook and Twitter accounts daily."

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Turning Gold into a Good Deed

By Cathy Tyson



From left, Cathy Tyson, Wendy Scheck, Mary Bruns, Norine Helms, driver extraordinaire Eddie Carvalho, Esther Sprunger, Bill Brochier and Cathy Dausman. Photo Andy Scheck

Like most journalists and publishers, Lamorinda Weekly staffers had some extra gold and silver lying around the house. Thinking that we could do a little recycling – precious metals cause such clutter – and make some money to donate to a worthy cause for Christmas seemed like a terrific idea. So with a box of fairly tarnished silverware, a gold dental crown (without the tooth of course), a necklace, a ring and a couple of funky silver tea pots, yours truly headed to Goldfellow in downtown Lafayette. No – it's not an old James Bond movie, it's a relatively new business that buys gold, silver and platinum.

Although I may know the best place for a grilled cheese sandwich in Lafayette, I was a little hazy on the price of an ounce of gold. The market price continually fluctuates, but lately it's over \$1,700 dollars per ounce for pure 24 karat gold, so I'm feeling confident we can make a huge donation. I had a couple of lessons to learn, however. The Goldfellow folks pay by the penny weight, \$29.46 per pennyweight – and there's twenty pennyweight to a troy ounce. After testing, grading and weighing, our acceptable goodies were 14 karat gold, meaning 14/24 pure. The

teapots and tarnished silverware were silver plated, so Goldfellow wouldn't take them. Helpful Assistant Manager Yecenia Rosano suggested I could still try to sell them at a consignment store.

"It's an easy way to recycle," said Rosano, "This is the perfect place to come with items you don't know what to do with," like a single earring or that circa 1983 gold chain that will never again see the light of day.

After taking down information from my driver's license and my filling out a brief Pawnbrokers Dealer Form – complete with thumbprint – soon I was walking out the door with a check for \$197 that will go to the Spirit Van program. Because the Lamorinda Weekly covers Lafayette, Orinda and Moraga, we wanted the "found" money to go to a cause that served the three locations.

With fifteen walk-in offices, and roughly double that number open by appointment only, business is good. Rosano was recently at a couple of selling parties - think of the reverse of a Tupperware get together. Instead of asking guests to buy containers, they can sell unwanted treasures. Goldfellow even works fundraiser parties for sports teams - it's the same idea as a private party but a team

hosts the event and earns ten percent of all purchases. Potentially way more profitable than a car wash.

Although it's not a huge donation, Spirit Van Coordinator Mary Bruns was very happy to receive it. The Spirit Van serves seniors with and without disabilities, helping them live independently in their own homes for as long as possible. The van takes them to medical appointments, and to run errands, and drivers offer door through door service – helping seniors bring groceries or packages from the van to their homes.

Last Thursday, the Spirit Van picked up regular lunch customers Esther Sprunger and Bill Brochier at Chateau Lafayette to take them to the café at the senior center in Walnut Creek. Esther, at 93 years old says she, "feels terrific," and adds, "this is the best lunch you can imagine for \$2." They both enjoy the meal, camaraderie with other seniors and the opportunity to get out of their respective apartments. Donations to the Spirit Van are always welcome, tax deductible checks can be made out to the City of Lafayette, write "Lamorinda Spirit Van" on the memo line, or call for more information (925) 283-3534.

A Windsor in our Midsts

A Lamorinda resident recounts a day with Prince Richard

Submitted by Paul Martin



From left: Hayden Wells (Stanley Middle School), HRH Prince Richard and Will Martin (Campo class of '14) at Grace Cathedra Photo provided

Imagine my surprise when I, a resident of the relatively placid "shires" of Lamorinda, was asked to give a senior member of the British Royal Family a tour of San Francisco in early November.

Prince Richard (His Royal Highness, The Duke of Gloucester, Earl of Ulster and Baron Culloden) arrived in San Francisco on November 3rd to preside at the annual Investiture ceremony of the Most Venerable Order of the Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem at Grace Cathedral.

Shortly after his arrival at the

Mark Hopkins, we were whisked away to our first stop, St. Mary's Cathedral. The prince, who studied architecture at Cambridge, showed a keen interest in the innovative Nervi design and was delighted with the tour given by Monsignor John Talesfore.

After visiting the cathedral, we were driven to the Legion of Honor, Lands End and the Golden Gate Bridge. It was one of those characteristically beautiful late fall afternoons and the prince marveled at the world-renown vistas and natural beauty of the Golden Gate and sur-

rounding headlands.

During his four day stay in the Bay Area, the prince also visited Pixar, Dolby Labs, UC Berkeley's School of Environmental Design, the Cable Car Museum and the Getty manse.

My vivid and lasting impression of this senior member of the House of Windsor was his warmth, insatiable curiosity and wicked sense of humor.

On Saturday, November 5th, His Royal Highness presided over the ancient Investiture ceremony of the Order of St. John at Grace Cathedral where 80 people from across the USA were invested or promoted into the international order of chivalry founded in the 11th Century to offer medical care and security to pilgrims in the Holy Land. Resplendent with pomp and beauty, the ceremony was attended by over 500 members and guests and honors were bestowed on 80 new and existing members of the Order, including Frederick Rutledge of Orinda.

The American Priory of the Order of St. John raises approx \$1M a year for the St. John Eye Hospital in East Jerusalem and satellite West Bank eye clinics in Gaza and Hebron where eye diseases are 10 times higher than in developed nations.

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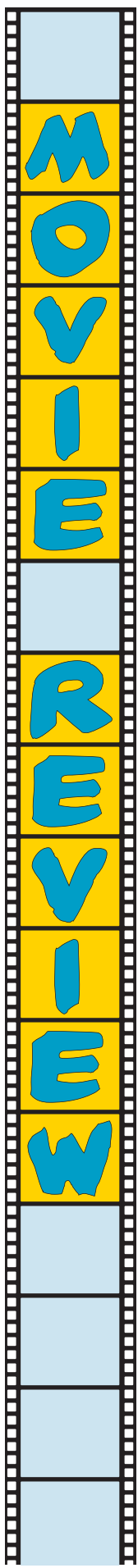
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Beau/Derek on Holiday Picks from Beau/Derek

Everyone has their favorite holiday movie. Some choose the traditional classics, such as *It's a Wonderful Life*, but my holiday favorite is *Home Alone*.

We watch it every holiday season and it still fits the festive bill, seeing eight-year-old Kevin (Macaulay Culkin) throwing a temper tantrum on the eve of a holiday family vacation trip to Europe. Exiled to his room, Kevin wishes that his family would disappear. He awakens to learn his wish came true finding himself home alone. Kevin quickly learns to defend himself across two bumbling burglars. The ending is heartwarming and touching! I give it three out of four gingerbread cookies! – **Derek Zemrak**

My favorite Christmas Holiday film is *It's a Wonderful Life*. Like *Home Alone*, it has the elements of "feel good" movie. In addition, it is a fable that has a moral luster which director Frank Capra effectively captures through the film's protagonist, George Bailey, played by James Stewart.

Undoubtedly, *It's a Wonderful Life* imparts the wisdom that all of us could make an immeasurable difference in this world regardless of fame, money and power. Hence, one of the best sanguine lines in the cinematic history is borne: "What would this world be like if I had never been born?" On a personal note, this wisdom serves as my catharsis on a day-to-day basis.

I highly recommend this movie. Not only does it strike a sentimental chord in all of us, but it leaves us begging the crux of the question of our own existence. I give it four out of four gingerbread cookies for a holiday movie favorite. – **Beau Behan**

(Derek Zemrak is a filmmaker and the president of the California Independent Film Festival Association (CAIFFA); Beau Behan is a member of the CAIFFA Board and director of the Lamorinda Theatres.)





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Family Focus

Abusive Teen Relationships

By Margie Ryerson, MFT

Maya was sixteen and in love for the first time. Her boyfriend, Graham, was a senior with a funny, charming personality. They agreed to be together exclusively and Maya became sexually active for the first time with Graham. The only problem was that as time went on, Graham began to belittle Maya. He would tell her that one of her best friends was really hot or that Maya could lose a few pounds. At times he would take a long time to text her back or would show up late if they had plans. Since Graham was popular and well-liked, Maya took everything he said to heart and made allowances for his behavior. She had never had a boyfriend before and thought that maybe she was being too demanding at times.

During Spring break Maya took a trip with her family. One of her friends told her that she saw Graham at a party being affectionate with another girl. When Maya confronted Graham, he denied being more than friends with the other girl. Soon afterwards, Maya heard through the grapevine that Graham had been sexually intimate with yet another girl. Although she was broken-hearted, Maya was determined to make their relationship work. She was so consumed with Graham that she couldn't imagine not being with him.

Graham continued to disparage Maya by calling her controlling, insecure, and jealous, and often found

fault with her. But at times he reverted back to his charming self, and then all was well.

I first got involved when Maya's mother contacted me. She was worried that Maya was unhappy much of the time and was yelling and argumentative at home. Maya wouldn't come in for therapy by herself, but she was willing to come in with her mother to work on their relationship.

After several family sessions Maya agreed to see me alone. She disclosed the nature of her relationship with Graham and how it affected her. She felt off-balance and unable to be her former confident, fun-loving self. Maya realized she was taking out her unhappiness on her family, the only ones who loved her unconditionally.

Over time, Maya was able to reflect on her relationship with Graham more rationally and less emotionally. Maya needed to consider what qualities she liked and admired in herself and how to maintain them. She also needed to think about ways that she wanted to improve herself. Then she could look at her relationship with Graham to see how it worked for her. Obviously there were benefits, but were they worth the sacrifices to her self-esteem? And did she recognize the ways that Graham undermined her self-confidence? Could she see the discrepancies between how she wanted to be treated by a boyfriend and how she really was being treated? One question I like to ask is, "If your best friend complained to you about her boyfriend exhibiting these same words and actions, what would you want for her and how would you advise her?"

An emotionally abusive relationship contains insults, betrayals, inconsistencies, manipulation, attempts to control, disrespect and disregard. It causes a person to doubt oneself frequently, be fearful of another's reaction, ignore one's own needs in a constant effort to please another person, and to feel disparaged and degraded.

A physically abusive relationship

usually contains all of the above in addition to unwanted physical contact. This contact may involve shoving or grabbing and isn't necessarily physically painful, but it still crosses a personal barrier of being touched without permission. And when we say "no" or "stop" and are ignored, the other person is violating our basic freedom to control our own bodies.

If you see your child exhibiting signs of emotional or physical abuse, it is important to mention your concerns immediately. Give examples of symptoms and how you see your child's demeanor changing. Ask if she or he wants to talk to you or anyone else about it.

Typically, a victim of abuse is both embarrassed and in denial. It may take your insisting on some family therapy sessions, as Maya's mother did, to get your child the necessary help. Occasionally, families need to plan an intervention with family members and close friends of the victim to confront her with their concerns, observations, and strong requests that she obtain help. The good news is that after a teen is able to recognize and get treatment for an abusive relationship, he or she will usually come out much stronger and better equipped to evaluate future relationships.



Margie Ryerson, MFT, is a marriage and family therapist in Orinda and Walnut Creek. Contact her at 925-376-9323 or margierye@yahoo.com. Her new book, *Treat Your Partner Like a Dog: How to Breed a Better Relationship* is available on www.amazon.com and at Orinda Books.

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Winter Nights and High Holidays at Temple Isaiah

... continued from page B1

The Winter Nights rotating family shelter is a project of the Council's social justice alliance. Rabbi Shanks explains that helping the homeless helps fulfill the Jewish tenant of Tikkun Olam, which is the Hebrew phrase for healing the world one broken

piece at a time.

Calahan-Klein says working with the Winter Nights program allows volunteers and clients alike to experience being "in a sacred space." She says "we forget how simple and essential this [food and shelter] is."

Homelessness Prevention at Shelter, Inc.

After Winter Nights, what next? The answer might be Shelter, Inc. a homelessness prevention program, which aims to support and empower its clients. "It is a hand up, not a hand out," explains Executive Director and Lafayette resident Tim O'Keefe. Shelter, Inc. collaborates with Winter Nights and their clients first by offering transitional housing – normally apartments where the displaced pay a portion of their income toward rent—and then moving families into affordable permanent housing. The program teaches people to navigate the network of social services and requires each family to develop their own, individualized plan. O'Keefe says it is cost-effective: "Servicing homeless families [costs] \$10,000 to \$25,000 per year, [whereas] homelessness prevention [costs] an average of under \$1,100 per household."

Only a very few Shelter Inc. inquiries originate in Lafayette, Moraga and Orinda, but O'Keefe says "the community has very generously supported Shelter, Inc.'s programs for more than 25 years," and "most of our financial support, in-kind donations and volunteer commitments are from the Lamorinda area." Nevertheless, O'Keefe warns, "homelessness is in our community." To learn about Shelter, Inc. go online to <http://shelterincofccc.org.presencehost.net/>. **C.Dausman**



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Lamorinda Nouveau – First Impressions of the 2011 Harvest

By Sophie Braccini



Photo provided by Bill Scanlin

The monthly gathering of local winegrowers and friends on December 15 was a cheerful affair, and despite the cold weather guests drifted between the courtyard and warmer interior of the Moraga Barn, the women in festive holiday attire and men in casual chic.

Local wines were tasted, many of them made from the 2011 harvest, the wine 'nouveau' – by reference to the Beaujolais nouveau, the French wine ritually sold mid-November, two months after the harvest. Although 2011 has been reported as a bad yield year in the neighboring Napa Valley due to cold weather, the mood of Lamorinda winegrowers did not appear to be dampened.

Carol Haag was not the last winegrower to brag about her first 'Nouveau' at the Lamorinda Libations that night. "This is our first 'Nouveau' and our first wine," said the Moraga resident and owner of Rheem Valley Vineyards— Haag lost her harvest to raccoons last year but was able to bring in 700 pounds this year.

"My harvest this year was better than last year," said Mary Leigh Miller, who produces wine under her Bare Ash label, "2010 was my first harvest; my vineyard is only three years old."

Susan Captain of Captain Vineyards has been a keen observer of the local grape and wine markets for some time. The industry's

grape production was very light this year, she said, "Grapes in general were in demand and wineries were scrambling after growers for their grapes...normally it is the other way around." She added that Captain Vineyards harvested five and a half tons of grapes this year, down from eight tons last year. "For us, dry farming and the nature of the year did affect our quantity, but, I believe the quality will be amazing," said the enthusiastic winegrower.

Deer Hill Vineyards' owner Bill Scanlin has been harvesting in Lafayette for more than 10 years. This year's harvest was 90% of his maximum. "Like last year, we had a cool summer and some early rain a couple weeks before we harvested," he said, "but the clusters were very nice, well formed and full, and the grapes tasted good. The sugar percentage was about 24, so we may have a little less alcohol— which is okay and in the right range anyway."

Dave Parker, of Parkmon Vineyards, may have been more impacted by the cold in Moraga, like the Captains. "Our yield was about 30% less than last year, and the sugar content is also lower," said Parker. "We had a damp and cool winter last year, the bud-breaking (when little leaves start appearing on the bare vine shoots) was two to three weeks late," he recalled, "with the cool and mild summer we fell further behind and by Au-



Photo provided by Susan Captain

maturity, at the risk of stormy weather in October. Luckily, warmer days finally arrived in mid-August and September that really helped the maturation process. "What we harvested is very high quality," said Parker, who is happy to produce wines that will have a lower alcohol content but more flavor. "As my palate develops I appreciate more this type of wine, closer to the European wines, and they go fantastically well with food."

According to industry predictions, less grapes and less wine mean higher prices. "If the market supports it, the price of wine will go up within 18 months to two years when we release these wines," says Parker. "Everybody in the area has seen a drop in quantity. The evolution of the market might also be impacted by how the climate affected the southern hemisphere; we might see more wines coming from South Africa or Australia." But Parker is not concerned for the Lamorinda growers. "Beyond the appeal of drinking a

local wine, our products sell well because we win a lot of prizes, including gold medals, at blind-tasting events," says the winemaker.

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Ask Jeff

Staying between the Lines

Dear Jeff: During my recent visit to the tire shop for some new tires, the service attendant asked me if I wanted a wheel alignment. My car drives straight (I think). How would I know that my car needs a wheel alignment?
Signed, Mary from Orinda

Dear Mary:

Let me respond first with a question, What would happen if you gave an Olympic long-distance runner two different types of athletic shoes to run his next race? Chances are his performance would suffer. The same can be said about your car's driving potential if its alignment isn't correctly positioned. When vehicle alignment is not proportioned correctly, two issues may occur:

- Driving becomes more expensive
- Driving becomes more dangerous

Driving in a vehicle without proper alignment is an expensive enterprise. Not only does flawed alignment decrease gas mileage and tire life, it also adds stress to other vehicle components, including steering equipment and overall structural damage. Ideally, your vehicle's wheels should be perpendicular to the ground and parallel to each other. Adjusting the angles of the wheels so

that they meet these criteria is how service professionals ensure your vehicle is properly aligned.

Driving in a vehicle without proper alignment is a dangerous idea. A car that is out of alignment can pull or drift away from a straight road, resulting in a possibly fatal situation. Excessive tire wear—another result of bad car alignment—can lead to tire blowouts and poor traction, which also has potentially disastrous consequences. That is why it is imperative you let an alignment specialist make sure you're driving smoothly and safely. So, how does it happen?

Your vehicle's alignment can be impacted by a variety of factors. An obvious indication that your vehicle requires a computerized alignment service is a major or minor collision that results in physical damage to your vehicle's frame. Steering problems or the presence of uneven wear patterns on your tires are clear signs that demand immediate attention. But alignment problems don't only occur by collisions and accidents; problems can arise by something as small as driving over a pothole, or grazing over a curb.
Dear Jeff: After I visited the tire shop



Jeff Joyce

and my alignment is now correct. What can I expect now?
Signed, Mark from Moraga

Dear Mark:

When your wheels are properly aligned, you'll get:

- Tires that last longer
- Easier steering
- Improved gas mileage
- Smoother ride
- Safer, more secure driving

Don't just remember your wheel alignment when you get new tires, have your alignment checked annually. In the long run, it will save you money and keep you safe.

Any Questions??

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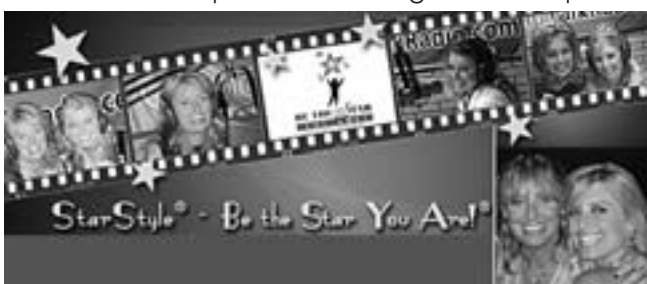
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2012-2013 Kindergarten Registration

Lamorinda's wonderful elementary schools will soon be registering next fall's Kindergarteners. To be eligible for Kindergarten, a child must have been born on or before November 1, 2007. For the new Transitional Kindergarten, a child must turn five between November 2, 2012 and December 2, 2012. You should register your Kindergartener at the school he or she will attend in the 2012-2013 school year:

Lafayette

The Lafayette School District's 2nd annual Preschool Information night will be held on January 10, 2012, 6:00-7:00 p.m. at Lafayette Elementary School. Parents of preschool aged kids in Lafayette are welcome to come learn about Kindergarten readiness, the new Transitional K program and other school programs.

Kindergarten registration will take place at the Lafayette School District's four elementary schools in January.

Tuesday, January 24, and Wednesday, January 25, 2012

- Burton Valley Elementary, 561 Merriewood Drive (927-3550): 9:00-11:00 a.m. and 1:00-3:00 p.m.
- Happy Valley Elementary, 3855 Happy Valley Road (927-3560): 8:30-11:30 a.m. and 1:00-3:00 p.m.
- Lafayette Elementary, 950 Moraga Road (927-3570): 9:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.
- Springhill Elementary, 3301 Springhill Road (927-3580): 9:00-11:00 a.m.

Registration packets can be obtained from the schools prior to registration,

beginning January 9, however the earliest day in which completed packets will be accepted by the schools is January 24, during registration times. For more information about kindergarten registration, please go to the district's website at: www.lafsd.k12.ca.us

Moraga

Families new to the Moraga School District are invited to attend a Kindergarten Information meeting on February 2, 2012 at Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School Auditorium, 7:00-7:45 p.m. This meeting will provide information regarding enrollment in both Kindergarten and Transitional Kindergarten. Registration of students entering kindergarten for the 2012-2013 school year will be held at the Moraga School District's three elementary schools in February.

Thursday, February 9, and Friday, February 10, 2012, 9:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m.

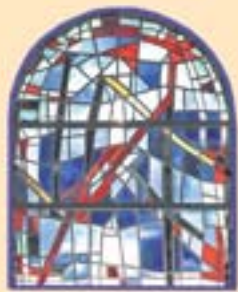
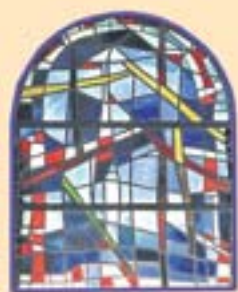
- Los Perales Elementary, 22 Wakefield Drive (631-0105)
- Donald Rheem Elementary, 90 Laird Drive (376-4441)
- Camino Pablo Elementary, 1111 Camino Pablo (376-4435)

For more information about kindergarten registration, please go to the district's website at www.moraga.k12.ca.us.

Orinda

Information for the Orinda Union School District will be included when it becomes available.

Lamorinda's Religious Services



Sing We Noel

Christmas Eve
Saturday, December 24
5pm, 9pm, and 11pm Services

Christmas Day
Sunday, December 25
one service at 10:30am

New Year's Day
Sunday, January 1
one service at 10:30am



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Lynn's Top Five

Four Extraordinary Women Offer you Great Year-End Advice!

By Lynn Ballou, CERTIFIED FINANCIAL PLANNER™

It's always exciting when I am able to participate in the last Lamorinda Weekly issue of the year and I really didn't want to waste this year's opportunity! So, I reached out to four super sharp Lamorinda professional women and asked them for one shining nugget --- that "if you do NOTHING else do this!" sort of thought --- to share with you as this year comes to a close. I think they've come up with really great actionable items for you to do now --- okay, right after that mistletoe comes down! I know you'll find these helpful --- enjoy!

1) Colleen Callahan, CLU, CASL, LUTCF, and partner of Lafayette's Kosich and Callahan, works tirelessly to make a complex subject accessible. Here's what she had to share: "January, New Year, new beginnings and a new medical insurance deductible! It's a good time to plan preventative visits. Under the new health care rules annual preventative care, using an in network provider is covered at 100% (before the deductible). Take advantage of this valuable benefit!" Another great point she makes for those over 65 and still working, "Be sure to meet with a professional agent

to explore coverage options before retiring. If you are over 65 COBRA is NOT a good option, in fact when COBRA is exhausted, options are limited for enrolling in Medicare Part B and a Medicare Supplement.

2) Linda LaHonta, CPA, in Lafayette, had several great ideas. First she points out that in 2012 we need to "beware the AMT!" There's still no patch for that wicked alternative minimum tax. If no patch is forthcoming soon, this could have a large and negative impact on our 2012 tax liabilities. Another great idea: "If you are still someone who files a traditional paper return, now is the time to go electronic!" Significant cutbacks on IRS staffing could result in delayed processing, higher error rates and longer refund waits. Linda says "E-file along with direct deposit is a safe and efficient way to get your money in a very short amount of time."

3) Susan Rothenberg, Team Rothenberg Real Estate, in Lafayette, has two very timely pieces of advice for us starting with "Don't delay your baby-boomer downsizing while you wait for the real estate market to come back." It's not going to

"come back" anytime soon. In most cases you'll be downsizing into an area where prices have been much more impacted than in Lamorinda, and you can benefit from the lowest mortgage rates in recent history." Regarding home improvements you are contemplating, she points out that it's important to "plan ahead, get an expert opinion about what improvements your home actually needs before selling." She notes that "if you plan far enough in advance, you might even get a chance to enjoy the improvements prior to moving!"

4) Paula Leibovitz Goodwin, Leibovitz Law Group, has offices in Orinda. Her first piece of advice is timeless: "Life insurance policies, retirement plans, IRAs and annuities pass at death in accordance with a beneficiary designation attached to that asset. This will usually TRUMP what your will or living trust says!" It's always extremely important to check the beneficiary designations on these assets. She also shares with us that it's important to meet with your lawyer to decide if the formula clauses that were put into your estate plan, if drafted before this year's \$5

million exemption came into play, still make sense. She advises: Check the language in your estate planning documents. "Is there a phrase like 'the trustee shall divide the trust estate into the following shares' or other phrases like 'that portion' or 'that fraction'?" This formula amount may pass to a trust that is no longer needed or cause less money to go to your spouse or more money to your children than you want. Paula emphasizes that "the only way to know whether a formula clause in your document still makes sense it to check with your estate planning lawyer."

5) And my two cents, since it is Lynn Ballou's Top Five! It's never too early and it's never too late to start planning! We are still doing active planning with our wonderful 97 years "young" client (you can read about her in my December Blog at www.ballouplum.com) and we set up 529 plans for newborns routinely. If you've gleaned nothing else from my columns, get help, get started --- you'll see the benefits now and for years to come!

I hope these remarkable women have inspired you to action! Reach

out to them if they can be of help. I'm looking forward to expanding on their thoughts next year in future columns. Happy Holidays!



Lynn Ballou is a CERTIFIED FINANCIAL PLANNER™ professional and co-owner of Ballou Plum Wealth Advisors, LLC, a Registered Investment Advisory (RIA) firm in Lafayette. Lynn is also a Registered Principal and Branch Manager with LPL Financial (LPL). The opinions voiced in this material are for general information only and not intended to provide specific advice or recommendation for any individual. Financial Planning offered through Ballou Plum Wealth Advisors, A Registered Investment Advisor. Securities offered through LPL Financial, member FINRA/SIPC. Colleen Callahan, Linda LaHonta, Susan Rothenberg and Paula Leibovitz Goodwin are not affiliated with, nor endorsed by, LPL Financial.



Giving Opportunities this Holiday Season

Provide Troops with Free Calls Home

J. Rockcliff Realtors and the non-profit Cell Phones for Soldiers Inc. are asking Contra Costa County residents to help troops call home by donating gently-used cellular phones. Residents can donate to this cause in four Lamorinda locations:

- Moraga Country Club Tennis Shop, Country Club Drive, Moraga, 94556
- Moraga Hardware and Lumber, 1409 Moraga Way, Moraga, 94556
- J. Rockcliff Realtors, 3799 Mt. Diablo Blvd., Lafayette, 94549
- J. Rockcliff Realtors, 89 Davis Rd., Suite 100, Orinda, 94563

The holidays are a great time to think of service personnel far from home and their loved ones---our troops and their families all benefit from this program. Funds raised from the recycling of cellular phones are used to purchase prepaid international calling cards. On average, Cell Phones for Soldiers distributes 12,000 calling cards each week to bases around the world, care package programs, deployment ceremonies and VA hospitals. For more information, contact Marian Krochka or Margaret Price at (925) 253-7000.

A LibraryALIVE...EVERY dollar, every donor, every volunteer matters! Since opening November 2009, the Lafayette Library and Learning Center has been ALIVE, serving 765,000 patrons, open 58 weekly hours, 7 days a week and providing programs every day for every age and interest.

And here is a little known fact...the Lafayette Library and Learning Center Foundation funds a stunning 53% of the costs to keep the doors open, programs abundant, and the physical building well maintained! This is no small challenge, and we cannot succeed without YOU!

- \$50 funds 2 children's science books
- \$200 funds 1 hour of library services
- \$600 funds 3 Consortium programs
- \$1,500 funds updated technology
- \$5,000 funds a Distinguished Speaker

So, every gift, your charitable gift of any size, makes a difference! Become a member of the LibraryALIVE Annual Fund by check, online at LLLCF.org or call 925-283-6513.

The Moraga Police Officers Association along with S.A.F.E. (Stuffed Animals For Emergencies) is collecting new or gently used stuffed animals to help children through traumatic experiences. The stuffed animals are given to local police and fire departments, which distribute them to children they encounter who have been affected by traumatic events. S.A.F.E also facilitates the distribution of donated stuffed animals for a variety of charitable purposes to help children. This year's annual holiday collection drive begins on 11/23 and ends on 12/27. New or gently used stuffed animals can be dropped off in the collection area located in the lobby of the Moraga Police Department, 329 Rheem Blvd. Thank you for your support!

Make a difference in the lives of women, families, and teens by making a tax-deductible donation to Be the Star You Are!® charity in Moraga. New books are being shipped to groups and families across the US who have suffered in recent natural disasters. Checks of any amount may be sent to Be the Star You Are!® 501c3, PO Box 376, Moraga, Ca. 94556. Or make donations online via PAYPAL at

<http://www.bethestaryouare.org/donate.htm>. \$25 provides 5 books, \$50 provides 12 books, and \$100 provides 28 books. Thanks for caring. Everyone counts!

Donations are needed to fund the final construction of the Lafayette Community Stage at the EBMUD Reservoir. The new permanent stage, initiated by the Lafayette Rotary, will be used for community events like the annual "Concert at the Res" (which funds music programs at our local schools) and many other outdoor performing events. Please send your tax-deductible donations via check to the Lafayette Community Foundation, c/o "Rotary Stage", PO Box 221, Lafayette, CA 94549-0221 or donate online with a major credit card at www.LafayetteCF.org.

Safeway: Help Us End Hunger Holiday Food Drive from November 16 - December 24. Purchase a \$10 prepacked bag of groceries which will be donated to the Food Bank. In store barrels will be available to drop off the donation, it's quick and easy.

Whole Foods: From Now until December 31, donate non-perishable items while shopping at the Lafayette Whole Foods store to support the Food Bank, or make a cash donation at the register while checking out. Look for pallets of healthy items on display. You can't miss the bins to collect donated non-perishable items.

Company C Contemporary Ballet is partnering with the non-profit Educational Foundation of Orinda to offer tickets to select performances of the 10th Anniversary Season Winter Program that benefit EFO and the Orinda schools. For every full priced benefit ticket sold to an EFO supporter, the Company will donate \$10 of the ticket price to EFO. Benefit tickets are priced \$45 orchestra seating, available for the following Winter Program performances: Leshner Center for the Arts, January 20-21 and the Novellus Theater at Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, February 17 and 19. Most appropriate for children 7 and older. Benefit ticket buyers must use the code "ENRICH" when ordering tickets. Details may be found at www.companycballet.org.

Thanks to the ongoing generosity of our donors, Trust in Education has grown in its capacity to help Afghan families rebuild their lives and country. We began with a few neighbors in 2003. Now our grassroots organization is supported by thousands who have donated time and money. A critical mass of supporters is essential to our challenge to educate. After all, today's third grader will be a fourth grader next year. Education is the greatest gift we can give a child. Join us by contributing what you can and volunteer your time.

To make a secure online donation go to www.trustededucation.org/get-involved/make-a-donation/
Send a check to: Trust In Education, PO Box 936, Lafayette, CA 94549

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The Fabric of Families

By Sophie Braccini

What do Jesse Jackson, Leo Tolstoy and Steve Jobs have in common? They were adopted children. Adoption is no longer a family secret, but continues to be a delicate issue that touches upon primal emotions. To guide adopting and birth parents during the process there is a Lafayette law firm where the two partners, Diane Michelsen and Megan Cohen, have lived the process personally; one adopted children, the other gave her first born up for adoption. Today their firm, Family Formation, claims to have completed more than 5000 adoptions.

"Over ten years ago we decided to adopt a second child because I could not get pregnant after my first child was born," says Orinda resident Mindy Becker. "We worked with Diane Michelsen, and this changed my life so much that when I recently decided to go back to work I looked for a position in the adoption/foster family field."

Today Becker works as a case manager for Family Formation. She describes the process she and her husband went through as a smooth one, in which they felt listened to and respected in their choice. "I did my homework," she says, "There are different avenues to go about adopting a child. But after hearing Diane (Michelsen) give a presentation and starting to build a rapport with her, we decided to work with her law firm."

Family Formation not only performs all the legal work pertaining to an adoption process, they are also able, through the network they've created over the years with hospitals, social workers and referrals, to locate babies who will

be placed for adoption. Michelsen indicates that the delay to find a match between an adopting family and a birth parent varies from a few weeks to about six months. "We started working with Diane in May of 2000 and had our baby in October of that year," says Becker, who sends a yearly letter and pictures to the birth mother.

Megan Cohen found her way to becoming the second partner of Family Formation from her counterpart role in the adoption equation. As a 20-year-old college student she decided that she could not raise her first born son and found Michelsen to help her along the way.

"I later became a high school English teacher, got married and had two other children," says Cohen, "then I decided to go back to law school to work in the adoption field. When I got my degree I contacted Diane and we decided to work together." The adoption of Cohen's child was, like Becker's, an open adoption process, meaning that the birth mother and the adopting parents meet each other and decide on the level of interaction they want to have.

Michelsen, who is an adopting parent herself, is very passionate about open adoption. "The desire for secrecy is based in fear," she believes, "and if parents are afraid, the children will feel it. It is not healthy."

Another important part of Family Formation's practice is the facilitation of surrogate pregnancies. Surrogacy is a technique through which a woman bears a child for a couple that cannot do so themselves. There are two types of surrogacy, traditional and gestational. The traditional form involves the surrogate mother



The staff of Family Formation enjoys a holiday party

Photo Sophie Braccini

providing the ova – Family Formation does not deal with this type of procreation. For a gestational surrogacy, the intended family provides the embryo that is implanted in the surrogate's uterus. "Under California case law, the surrogate is bound to a contract," explains Michelsen, "the intended parents who provided the genetic material are parents from birth."

According to Cohen, parents who choose that route rather than adoption are those who want more control over the process. It is also more costly since the surrogate is compensated. "Being a surrogate is not for everyone," ac-

knowledges Cohen, "but the first motivation of these women is to help others form a family. They often also have financial needs." The screening process is part of Family Formation's services. "We work on 20 to 25 such cases per year," says the lawyer, "and we always find surrogates. We are not about volume, we build families, one at a time."

Lamorinda Weekly business articles are intended to inform the community about local business activities, not to endorse a particular company, product or service.

business briefs

Numia Offers Free Accounting Software for Small Businesses

www.Numia.biz
Nicholas Gerber, who made a name for himself as a candidate in the US Senate election of 2008, is now offering a free, 'in-the-cloud', accounting software for small businesses. "Anyone can access our site at numia.biz, create a company and start using our software for free," says Gerber, "an unlimited number users from the same company can be located on different continents, they can be given access to see or edit all or part of the data, that are always available 'in the cloud'." "The National Association of Accountants does not endorse 'cloud-accounting' for security reasons," notes local CPA Kathy Macchi, "but as security improves, that position might change." "We chose to have our server in England because the privacy laws are better there, the data is encrypted too; it's an 'https' address," says Gerber. Right now Numia is for service-based business, not retail, Gerber adds, "Still, we already have 3000 clients, 1/3 in India, 1/3 in United States and the last third in the rest of the world."

New Sales Associate at Coldwell Banker, Orinda

Coldwell Banker Residential Brokerage
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(925) 253-4600
Coldwell Banker announced that Chad Morrison has joined the company as a sales associate in its Orinda office. In his new position, Morrison will specialize in residential sales throughout the East Bay. Prior to joining Coldwell Banker Residential Brokerage, Morrison was president of the real estate development company, C.E.M Development Inc. He recently completed an intensive training program through Allied, which emphasized the principles and techniques of real estate. Morrison may be reached directly at (925) 253-4650 or via email at Chad.Morrison@camoves.com.

News from the three Chambers of Commerce



Jay Lifson, in the Santa mobile, launches the 3/50 Shop Local campaign at La Fiesta Square. Photo Robin Fox

Lafayette 3/50 campaign was launched by Executive Director Jay Lifson on Sunday December 11, in Santa's own car, along the streets of Lafayette's business district. Residents were handed cards on which they could pledge to spend \$50 in at least three different local businesses during the holiday season, then send their receipts to the Chamber before January 6th to be entered in the "Thanks for Shopping Lafayette Raffle" – the grand prize is a \$500 gift card. "Driving in Santa's Lafayette caravan was fun," said Social Media Coach and Chamber volunteer Robin Fox, who accompanied Lifson in the back of the GTO convertible. "People on the street were surprised. We waved. Cars honked. Then, when we pulled into La Fiesta Square, what looked like a birthday party suddenly emerged. The kids saw Santa in the red and white Nash and broke into smiles.

All fun!" Contact the Chamber for information, (925) 284-7404, 100 Lafayette Circle, Suite 103, Lafayette, CA 94549.

Moraga

The Chamber of Commerce needs help. In 2011 your Moraga Chamber of Commerce brought to its Membership instructional, interactive lectures, educational seminars and forums, great booth participation at Town-sponsored events and enjoyable mixers complete with music, food, beverage and great networking opportunities. As the Chamber moves into 2012, it needs everyone to find an event/program to volunteer, even if only for an hour. Contact kathe@moragachamber.org.

Free Holiday Wrapping at 5A-Rent-A-Space: December 1st through the 23rd, Santa's Secret Wrapping Room at 5A Rent-A-Space features everything you need from tables and chairs, lots of colorful wrapping paper, ribbons and tape. What to do with the kids? Bring them along! There will be fun coloring and crafts to keep them busy.

Orinda

Mark your 2012 calendar: The Chamber's Orinda Country Club Luncheon is scheduled for Friday, February 24, noon to 1:30pm at the Orinda Country Club, 315 Camino Sobrante. The cost is \$30 per person. The luncheon's speaker will be award-winning weekend anchor for NBC Bay Area News, and Orinda resident, Diane Dwyer.

If you have a business brief to share, please contact **Sophie Braccini** at sophie@lamorindaweekly.com

Lamorinda Weekly

is an independent publication, produced by and for the residents of Lafayette, Moraga and Orinda, CA

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- Nutcracker Story Time Enchants Little Ballerinas
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- Pearl Harbor Memories Still Burning Bright
- Dads Play Water Polo for Fun, Exercise
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Digging Deep with Cynthia Brian

If you wish to view any of the stories above go to www.lamorindaweekly.com and click the link below the story.



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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.

Silver Award for Troop #32790

Submitted by Heidi Felt



Photo provided

The girls of Lafayette Girl Scout Troop #32790 just completed their Silver Award project by collecting enough donated items to create over 40 gift baskets that were raffled off at the annual International Refugee Committee (IRC) Feast in Oakland.

The troop's 11 Girl Scouts collected donations from family members, neighbors, classrooms and a variety of other techniques. They took their school holiday on November 11 to assemble and wrap the baskets, and on November

17 brought 40 baskets to the IRC event so that every family left with a gift basket.

The girls also were responsible for coordinating an art/craft table for children ages 2-20. They brought supplies for coloring, making friendship bracelets, and the assembly of turkey fridge magnets.

It was an amazing experience for the troop. The families and children looked so happy and thrilled. For the Girl Scouts, the experience was life changing and memorable.

Hacienda Accomplishments and Launch of Vehicle Donation Program

Submitted by Sharron Sue



From left: Outgoing president Claire Roth and board member Sharron Sue

Photo provided

Claire Roth, the outgoing President of The Hacienda Foundation of Moraga, recently received an award in recognition of her service. 2011 was a tremendous year for Hacienda de las Flores, both through building community and improvements to the facility itself. The Foundation hosted Cinco de Mayo, Oktoberfest and the Wine and Art Social to bring our community together. Through funds generated through such events, the Park Foundation, and individual donations, the Fireside Room was completely updated, the single bath has a sparkling new period look, and visitors are thrilled with progress-to-date on the Ladies Lounge. Much has been accomplished, but there is much to do.

Towards that end, the Hacienda Founda-

tion of Moraga is launching its vehicle donation program. Vehicles are picked up free of charge at your home, office, or even repair shop. By donating your vehicle, running or not, you can help the Hacienda Foundation continue to make improvements to the Hacienda. You will receive documentation of the price for which your vehicle sold at auction (or \$500, whichever is greater) for tax deduction purposes; you provide money to the Hacienda even if your vehicle has mechanical problems.

The Hacienda Foundation's vehicle donation program is in partnership with Donate For Charity. More information is available at <http://haciendafoundation.org/donate.php> or call toll free at (866) 392-4483.

See's Success

Submitted by Karen Reed



From left: Kiwanis president Karen Reed; Tim Freeman, past president and chairman of the See's project; former Moraga mayor Cherie Grant
Photo Andy Schreck

Dale Walwark of the Moraga Kiwanis Club is delighted to report that the success of the Moraga Kiwanis Club's sales of See's Candy this season will produce more money than last year for its charitable contributions. All of the net proceeds go to the many good causes Kiwanis supports, from the three Lamorinda education foundations to the Food Bank, and from the Crisis Nursery to scholarships. The money raised flows through the organization to meet community needs.

Kiwanis offers many thanks to its customers, to Kimco for use of the space in the Rheem Center, and to CVS for permitting the See's sale at its Rheem store.

Cleaning up the Res

Cigarette butts, bottle caps and diapers, oh my!

Submitted by Kim Jinnett



From left, front: Josie, Kendall, Jessie; back: Ranger Greg, Kiera, Kyra, Lola, Kenna, Maria, Emilie, Juliet, and Clare

Photo provided

As part of a series of community service projects, Girl Scout Cadette Troop 30072 from Moraga helped beautify the Lafayette Reservoir by picking up litter around the edges of the water, on the docks and near the picnic areas. Their efforts have made the environment more pleasant for the ducks, birds, squirrels, rats, fish, dogs and other animals (including humans) that enjoy the Reservoir.

Some treasures found included fishing lures, bottles and bottle caps, tennis balls,

cigarette butts, plates and utensils, broken glass, a dirty diaper and lots of other items that are harmful to the environment. Ranger Greg Francek provided terrific instruction and support throughout the day and helped the girls identify the best spots to do their work and avoid poison oak.

Ranger Supervisor Rod Tripp exclaimed, "Thanks for your help keeping the park clean!" The Girl Scouts hope to be back in the spring to continue their clean-up efforts.

Baskets for the Lafayette Nursing Home

Submitted by Mary Beeler



Photo provided

The Suburban Woman's Club of Lafayette has been making Christmas baskets for residents at convalescent hospitals in Lafayette since 1998 and this year are delivering them to the Lafayette Nursing Home. Betsey Young is chairman of the craft group that meets at her home once a month to put sequins on baskets and

beards on Santas. Residents are delighted to receive the baskets filled with cookies.

If you would like to join us in the making of the Easter and Christmas baskets and also get more information regarding the club and our other community activities please call Jean Cappa at (925) 283-2759.

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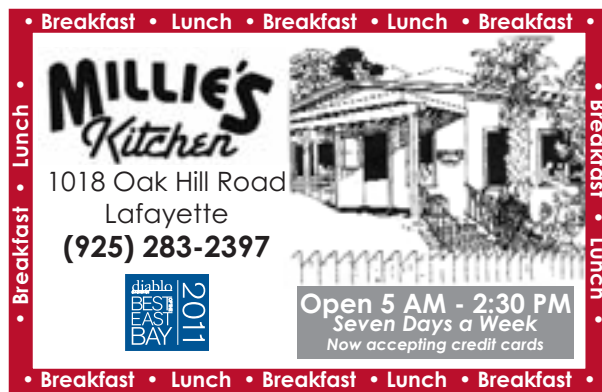
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ART



Moraga Art Gallery will celebrate its Grand Re-opening at #522 Center St in the Rheem Center by featuring the work of Gallery Member & local artist Angelica Samame, painter, as well as guest artist, Karin Lechner, jewelry designer, in its new show, Jan. 10, 2012. The public is invited to view Angelica's art and Karin's jewelry along with gallery members' work at the show's opening reception & Grand Re-opening celebration, Jan.14, 3-5 p.m.

MUSIC

Kick off the New Year right with a free concert at the Moraga Library January 12 at 7 pm featuring local sensation Houston Jones. This high-energy quintet of acoustic musicians from the San Francisco Bay area play an original blend of folk, blues, bluegrass and gospel; they often have their audiences up and dancing. This concert is FREE and open to the public, but pre-registration is required. Visit the calendar of events at www.cc-club.org to preregister or call the Moraga Library at (925)376-6852.

Come to an exciting afternoon of African music and dance with master percussionist Ben Ofori and the Bodac Cultural Group, an international African performing arts group that originated in West Africa, on Saturday, January 14 at 2pm. This all-ages program is free and pre-registration is not required. The Library is located at 1500 Saint Marys Rd in Moraga. For more information call (925) 376-6852, ext 200.

AUDITIONS

Placement Auditions for Contra Costa Children's Chorus. Children who like to sing –inspire the artist within and join an internationally known chorus recognized for excellence, vocal training and performance skills. There are choir levels for all boys and girls ages 6-15 yrs. with local performances, and touring opportunities for advanced choirs. Artistic Director, Dr. Martin Benvenuto, conductors Laryssa Sadoway and Julie Fischer. Choirs rehearse at Our Savior's Lutheran Church, 1035 Carol Lane, Lafayette. Auditions will be held on Tuesday, January 3rd. Call for an appointment, 925 945-7101 x3, or email Frontdesk@childrenschorus.org.

WomenSing is holding auditions on January 10, 2012, and by appointment for experienced singers. All voice parts are welcome. Contact us by email at audition@womensing.org, call our voice mail (925) 974-9169, or go to www.womensing.org for more info. Scholarships are available for qualified singers.

THEATER

Saint Mary's College Performing Arts Department presents a

stage adaptation of the classic fairytale Hansel & Gretel. The story has the audience travel to the Black Forest to see two abandoned children cope with all the changes that come with being on their own. This tale by the Grimm Brothers is a traditional fairytale of good and evil. The barely two page story is elaborated into a magical hour of child-focused entertainment. When: Wednesday, January 25 at 7pm; Thursday, January 26 at 4pm. Where: LeFevreTheatre, Saint Mary's College, Moraga. Cost: \$8. INFO: (925) 631-4670 or go online to: brownpapertickets.com.

LECTURE & LITERATURE

So You Want to Write a Book: Author Panel - four local authors discuss their writing journeys and offer tips for aspiring writers on Saturday, January 7, 2pm, Moraga Library 1500 St. Mary's Road, Moraga; (925) 376-6852. The panel of authors includes: Barbara Bentley (A Dance with the Devil: A True Story of Marriage to a Psychopath), Jon Cory (A Plague of Scoundrels), Alfred J. Garrotto (The Saint of Florenville: A Love Story), Judith Marshall (Husbands May Come and Go but Friends are Forever). Q & A session to follow. Free and open to the public.

Saint Mary's College Speaker Series brings provocative speakers from the worlds of art, politics, science and technology to the campus and the entire community at free public lectures during the month of January. The featured guest speakers for 2012, which explores the theme of "Crossing Borders," includes: Jeanne Woodford, who after carrying out four executions as the Director of California's Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR), now heads up a national organization opposing the death penalty (speaking Tues, Jan 10, 7pm); San Francisco cultural historian Rebecca Solnit, who will explore how borders between public and private life are policed, ways they break open in crisis, and what happens when people cross over to live together in public, as in the Occupy Movement (speaking Tues, Jan 17, 7pm); and Oakland-based hip hop artist, community activist and playwright Ariel Luckey, who will offer insights on the consequences of seeing history only through the prism of white privilege (speaking Tues, Jan 17, 7pm.) All lectures are free and open to the public and will be in the Soda Activity Center at Saint Mary's College of California, 1928 St. Mary's Road, Moraga. For more information contact the Jan Term office at 925-631-4771 or janterm@stmarys-ca.edu.

OTHER

The importance of women receiving a quality education will be the focus of the January meeting of the American Association of University Women, Orinda, Moraga, Lafayette Branch (AAUW/OML). Betty Marvin, an architectural historian, will bring the famous 19th century female architect, Julia Morgan, to life, by dramatizing the challenges Ms. Morgan faced getting her engineering degree at the University of California in the 1890's. The second speaker, Yalda Asmatey, will speak about her current research, "How Green is My Valley: An Ethnographic Inquiry of Man-Made Toxic Disasters in the San Joaquin Valley." The meeting begins at 9am on Tuesday, January

17, 2012 at the Holy Trinity Serbian Cultural Center, 1700 School Street, Moraga. The public is invited to attend. For further information, visit www.aauwoml.org.

Lafayette Community Center Will be offering a FREE Introduction to Yoga class on Saturday, January 7, 11am-12:15pm with yoga instructor Howard VanEs. This is the perfect way for people to try out yoga with a highly experienced instructor without having to make a commitment first. The class is free but space is limited. Call (925) 284-2232 to reserve your spot today.

On Friday, January 20, 2012 Gary Bogue, who is a writer and whose daily column on pets, wildlife and environmental issues has appeared in Contra Costa newspapers since 1970, will speak on "Creatures of the Urban Wilderness - Your Backyard". Mr. Bogue has also been Museum Curator at the Lindsay Wildlife Museum and Executive Director of Tony LaRussa's Animal Rescue Foundation. The program is at 10:30am with a plant sale and refreshments starting at 9am. The event is free and the public is cordially invited. The event is held at the Orinda Community Church, 10 Irwin Way, Orinda.

Lafayette resident John Kiefer will again offer workshops on "How to Raise Your Own Chickens." Topics will include raising young chicks, laying hen maintenance, and sustainable coop construction. Workshops are free and will be held from 1-3:30 pm, Sunday, Jan.22, Feb. 5 & 19. Reservations are required. Contact: jhkiefer@comcast.net.

Knights of Columbus Council's Annual Crab Feed will be held on Saturday January 28, 2012 in St. Monica's Peace Room, Moraga. Appetizers and no-host cocktails will be served beginning at 6pm. Dinner will be served at 7:30pm and will include salad, pasta, French bread, fresh cracked crab and dessert. Chicken is available when ordered in advance. Tickets are \$55 each. You may contact Karl Anderson at (925) 283-3679 or mail your checks to Karl at 510 Florence Drive, Lafayette.

CLUBS

"Valley Stitchers Guild's January 2 meeting will feature a presentation by Carol Larson, a long time creative seamstress. Carol's love of color, texture, and pattern led to a lifetime of interest in wearable art, hand-weaving, knitting and needlepoint. Today she works in mixed media using multiple layers of dyes, selective dye removal and screen printing with original imagery. Layers of stitching complete her work which can be seen in corporate offices, museums, galleries and private collections in the U.S., Europe and Asia. The meeting will be on Monday, Jan. 2, 10am, Faith Lutheran Church, 50 Woodworth Lane, Pleasant Hill. \$5 for guests. Contact Francine for more information (925) 689-6311.

My Adventures as a Commercial Pilot—Jess Williams recalls his days of flying to Vietnam, Europe, Africa, and North American cities at the Lafayette Christian Church, 584 Glenside Dr., Lafayette, for the Men's Breakfast Club Saturday, January 7. Doors open at 7:30am, breakfast at 8, and the program at 8:40. \$5 donation suggested. For reservations, call Richard (925) 283-8376.

Upcoming Special Events at:



Orinda Theatre

January 14th, 7 PM

California Independent Film Festival and Diablo Magazine's Classic Film Series – **The Godfather II**, hosted by Peter Crooks



Rheem Theatre

January 9th, 7 PM

CAIFF Members 2012 Film Festival Preview Night
Get a sneak peek of the 14th Annual California Independent Film Festival February 10th - 16th
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January 17th, 4 PM

Moraga Movers' Classic Film Series: **Laura**

January 20th, 9 PM

The Queen's Slumber Party
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January's movie is "Bikini Planet". Cast and Crew will be attending!

January 21st, 7 PM

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February 10th, 2012

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Library Critter Tree

Submitted by Marcia Fisherkeller



Photo provided

What does Moraga have in common with the White House, Smithsonian and the Brandywine Museum in Pennsylvania? A Critter Tree – that is a Christmas tree decorated entirely with critters, made from scratch from natural materials growing in our yards, nearby trails and fields, and even the seashore, and assembled into fanciful, beguiling little characters that hang on the Moraga Library Christmas Tree.

Teasels, nuts, dried weeds, pine cones, are all grist for our glue guns. The Moraga Garden Club has created this special tree

with its ornaments each year and occasionally get together to make new additions or replacements for worn decorations.

Originating at the Brandywine Museum in Chester County, Pennsylvania back in the early 1980's the idea for the tree was brought here from the east coast by a mother of one of the Garden Club members, Jamie Bonetto. This year Phyllis Reed, who is in charge of decorating the library, gathered members to create new ornaments and put up the tree which will be on display during open hours at the library.

Please submit:

- Events: calendar@lamorindaweekly.com
- Stories: storydesk@lamorindaweekly.com
- Letters: letters@lamorindaweekly.com
- Opinion: letters@lamorindaweekly.com

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LAMORINDA SPORTS

Verdon Repeats at State

By Nina Mohan



Carrie Verdon Photo Tim Fong

In the four years that Campolindo's Carrie Verdon has been running, she's emerged as a top talent and scored some impressive wins. Most recently, Verdon won the 2011 CIF State cross country championship.

This was her second straight win at state and, like last year, it was tough race. At the 2.5 mile mark, Verdon was in second place, eight seconds behind Karlie Garcia of Oakmont-Roseville. But she picked up her pace to beat Garcia by one second, finishing the 3.1 mile race in 17 minutes and 19 seconds.

She clocked the fastest Northern California girls' time and the second fastest time for all the girls' divisions at the CIF meet.

Verdon had given no thought to running until her brother suggested that she try out for Campolindo's cross-country team. He told her that it was a "fun thing to do."

Running comes naturally to Verdon, but great talent is not a without practice for Verdon, and she's constantly working to improve.

"You have to get in good weeks and months of training to keep getting better, you have to stay consistent," said Verdon.

"Right now I'm building endurance. We're in our off-

season and we're working on our mechanics, and drills to warm up and cool down. We're working on our abs and legs. The strength training works with the mechanics to make you better and faster," she continued.

Focus and attitude are also essential to Verdon's success: "Going into a race you really have to prepare mentally," she said.

"I always think that half is physical and half is mental. Going in, I think about myself, not the other competitors. I think 'what can I control to make this the best?' and focus on myself and on my team."

Verdon worked to mentally prepare for this year's CIF championship.

In 2010, Verdon also came from behind to win, that time after a fall. The pressure for a repeat win, plus the fear of another fall might faze some, but Verdon was focused on the tough competition.

"I wasn't worried about a second fall. This year, we had a lot of new competition going in, a lot of really good competition, and that was really exciting because you knew you had to push yourself harder to get a better time."

This fall Verdon will run for the University of Colorado at Boulder. Her decision to go Boulder was based on a gut instinct.

"Boulder is a really awesome town. I landed in the airport and I just knew, I just had this feeling. I visited a lot of other schools and I didn't have that same feeling, so I think it was a really good choice."

The coach and the team confirmed her feeling. "[They were] really amazing, everyone was really nice and welcoming, and they have a really good program," she said.

Verdon is also looking forward to how running at a high altitude will help her improve.

"Actually, altitude training is proven to be really good for you, but definitely the first couple of months are going to be tough," she said.

"I went up for my recruiting visit and did a long run and it was pretty rough. But there have been a lot of girls from California who've gone up there and dealt with the altitude change and they've been fine so I'm not nervous, it'll just take some getting used to."

Along with competing at the college level Verdon also plans to train for the 2016 Olympics and hopes to make a career of running.

"I want to become a professional runner, and compete in the Olympics in 2016. Things could change in college, things could happen, but it's definitely a goal to be a professional runner, and to go the Olympics."

Prep Soccer Season Heats Up Before Winter Break

By Marissa Harnett

December marked the beginning of league competition for high school soccer. All three boys' Lamorinda teams recorded wins in their opening games. Miramonte defeated Dublin, 2-1. Campolindo beat Alhambra, 5-3. Acalanes outlasted Las Lomas, 2-1.

The second game of the season brought an early season challenge for rivals Campo and Acalanes. Acalanes has been a strong force in boys' soccer in Lamorinda. Campo finished in the middle for several previous seasons, but the 2010-2011 season saw the Cougars rise to the top and capture the #1 DFAL ranking. Last year, the two teams boasted identical records of 8-1-3, losing only to each other. They went on to compete in the NCS championship where the Cougars captured a 3-2 win.

December 9th was the first official meeting for Campo and Acalanes since the championship and the final score reflected the fact that it is tough competition, the teams tied at 1-1.

Acalanes coach Paul Curtis predicted that the rematch would be challenging. "In order to play well, our boys will need to execute on the plan. That is always our goal, no matter the opposition. We look to improve ourselves and our abilities."

The frigid Friday night game hosted by Campo started out with fast-paced aggressive play by both sides.

Both teams had other scoring opportunities, but neither team could convert. Six minutes into the game, Campo netted the ball off a cross with a textbook header into the top corner of the net. However, the referee called it a "no goal," because of a foul on the defender. Minutes later Acalanes executed a nearly identical play with a header that missed.

At half-time, the game was a scoreless tie.

The second half brought the teams back to the field with increased intensity and determination. Emotions flared with every referee's whistle.

With just eleven minutes remaining, Acalanes lucked into a goal. A cross-kick from the right wing sailed into perfect scoring position. Campo freshman defender Ryan Donat, positioned in front of the goal, attempted to clear the ball. Instead, he inadvertently tipped the ball into his own net to give the Dons a 1-0 lead.

Undeterred by the mishap, Campo capitalized on an opportunity to even the score with just six minutes left. Senior co-captain Nick Palano touched the ball into the goal to tie the game 1-1 off of an assist from his twin brother and co-captain, Sam Palano.

With five minutes left on the clock, Acalanes had their best opportunity to score the go-ahead goal with a penalty kick by junior Dan Glascock. Campo goalkeeper sophomore

Jeff Lefcourt stopped the kick to preserve the tie. Lefcourt recorded seven total saves in the game.

As a younger team comprised mostly of underclassmen, Campo coach Shane Carney admits that inexperience is a weakness for the team. "This year, our major challenge will continue to be the younger players maintaining a consistently high level of play. I trust my guys though and have no problem playing any player on my team, regardless of age or size."

Despite the age and experience disadvantage, the Cougars still feel confident that they can make a play to reclaim the NCS title this year which could likely be a rematch against Acalanes. "For us to beat them, we need to stick to our style of play and maintain control of the ball."

Carney said that in the Friday match-up the team was too excited. "We got a little anxious and forced a lot of things, which resulted in the tie."

Miramonte Records an Upset

Across town on that Friday night, Miramonte got a confidence boost. Dublin came to the game with a 5-1 record to Miramonte's 1-2. After being down at the half, 1-0, the Mats came back to score twice in the second half, winning 2-1.

Back at Miramonte after a five year hiatus, coach Fabian Amezaga is challenged with trying to piece back together a program that has lacked structure in recent years. "They are used to being on the bottom tier, but they're starting to believe that they can achieve more," said Amezaga of his team. He is hoping to create an opportunity for his team to make a rise in the standings similar to Campo's. The Mats were frequent winners of the NCS championships in the early 2000s. Amezaga's goal is to have a chance to play in the NCS tournament this season.

Records as of December 16:

Boys	Acalanes	3-0-1 (in DFAL)	5-0-3 (overall)
	Campo	2-0-1 (in DFAL)	8-0-1 (overall)
	Miramonte	1-0-1 (in DFAL)	2-2-1 (overall)
Girls	Acalanes	0-2-1 (in DFAL)	0-3-1 (overall)
	Campo	2-0-0 (in DFAL)	4-1-1 (overall)
	Miramonte	1-2-0 (in DFAL)	2-3-0 (overall)

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Season Review: How They Got to State

By Alex Kozela



Photos Tod Fierner

For a Campolindo Cougars team that was picked to finish last in its own division at the beginning of the year, the season was undoubtedly a huge success.

"There was something magical this year, about these kids, these fans, and the school," said Cougars' head coach Kevin Macy.

Campolindo (13-1) lost to Washington Union-Fresno (14-0) in the state championship 21-16, last Sat-

urday, but the Cougars' crowning achievement was the week prior against Marin Catholic in the North Coast Section Division III championship game on December 10.

Christian Antezana kicked a 21-yard field goal as time expired to give the Cougars an upset 20-18 win. With the kick, the Campolindo faithful on hand at O.co Coliseum were sent into a frenzy.

"To think about all we've gone

through the whole year and what we've done, it just feels amazing," said Antezana moments after the winning kick. "It was perfect."

Just after Marin (13-1) took its first lead of the game on a field goal with 2:18 remaining in the fourth, Cougars quarterback Brett Stephens pushed for a 64-yard scoring drive. Stephens found junior wide receiver Mason Windatt on a 44-yard pass which paved the way for Antezana's

last-second kick.

"You dream of situations like that, and we took advantage of it," said Stephens, who finished 17 of 27 for 246 yards.

"We had one more drive just to show them what we could do," said sophomore wide receiver Griffin Piatt, who had eight catches, 109 yards, and a touchdown on the day. "We knew we could do it. We've had so much heart all year."

The game was a culmination of a Cinderella playoff run for the Cougars. Campo defeated Hercules 58-21 in the first round. In the second round they defeated Bishop O'Dowd, 34-17. In the semi-finals they upset #2 Cardinal Newman 35-24 and avenged last season's loss.

"Cinderella doesn't hang around this late in the football season," Macy said. "We had to go through three loaded private schools. There's something special about this group of kids."

"This is the closest knit team I've ever been a part of," said Stephens. "Everyone loves each other."

The team also remained undefeated throughout the course of the regular season, one that included blowout wins over local rivals Acalanes, 42-7 and Miramonte 42-6.

"You really can't put it into words," said Piatt. "No one thought we were going anywhere in the pre-season, and every game we had something to prove, played as a team, and we just went out there and gave it our all."

Macy acknowledged the sheer immensity of the game, held at the 63,026-seat O.co Coliseum, home of the Raiders. He spoke of how it resonated with his players and how they will forever cherish the moment.

"You can see how special this night was, the best spirit, the electricity. It's just a big celebration for our community and this is once in a lifetime."



Mason Windatt (#5) made the catch to set up the field goal.



Brett Stephens (#9) threw for 246 yards.



Griffin Piatt (#7) breaks a tackle.



Christian Antezana (#44) celebrates making the game winner. Photos Tod Fierner

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Campolindo Football Falls in State Championship

... continued from page A1



Photo Lenny Monge

The Cougars, down 21-16 tried to regain possession off of an onside kick, but the Panthers (14-0) recovered the ball and officially squashed the comeback bid.

"That is kind of how we played our whole season," said senior wide receiver Griffin Piatt, who caught four passes for 59 yards and a touchdown. "We always come back there in the end and they get scared that we're still hanging around."

The Cougars struggled to get back in the game because they did not take advantage of scoring opportuni-

ties. Campolindo recorded a fumble, an interception and had to settle for a field goal while in Washington territory.

"It was just mental mistakes. We shot ourselves in the foot a lot inside the 20. We had to convert those points," Piatt said. "All year long we never let those mistakes take over the game and we fought through them."

Washington Union got on the board first when All-American receiver Deonte Greenberry jumped over two defenders to haul in a 26-yard touchdown. With the touchdown



Karl Thornton #2

Greenberry became the national touchdown leader with 33. The Panthers scored again on a 3-yard run to make it 14-0.

Sophomore Christian Antezana's field goal chopped the deficit to 14-3 after an 11-play, 74-yard drive. Later, Piatt found his way into the end zone from 36 yards out to make it 14-10 with 2:57 left in the third quarter.



Connor Rosenbaum #32

Piatt weaved up the center of the field for the touchdown, fighting off five defenders' attempted tackles.

"Unfortunately those first two possessions, we put ourselves in a bad position. We said we can't let them get a lead on us," said head coach Kevin Macy. "I knew we would need some time to adjust to their speed."

Washington Union scored a 1-yard touchdown with 8:18 left to make Campolindo's road to victory much more difficult, and even the Cougar's last-minute touchdown wasn't enough to end the unforgettable season on a happy note.



Reiner Ebarle #21

"We always joked about making it to state, but never thought it would happen," said Windatt, who caught five passes for 72 yards and pulled in two interceptions on defense. "It was a great accomplishment. It's just too bad we didn't finish it up."

Stephens finished 25-for-40 with 264 yards, but also had four interceptions. Senior Karl Thornton was the team's leading receiver with 10 grabs totaling 83 yards. Senior running backs Reiner Ebarle and Connor Rosenbaum ran for 30 yards in nine carries and eight carries totaled 26 yards, respectively.



The team left last Friday with police escort to the Oakland airport.

Photo Karen Drinkwater

**Find more photos on our web site
www.lamorindaweekly.com**



Campolindo faithful cheer on their team.

Photo Lenny Monge



Campolindo fans followed the game on the big screen at the New Rheem Theatre.

Photo Andy Scheck



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SPORTS LAMORINDA'S LOCAL SPORTS



Lamorinda United U13 Girls on a Win Streak

Submitted by Chris Easter



The Lamorinda United U13 girls picked up steam as they headed toward the end of the year.

The team is on a six-game win streak that began with a 1-1 tie against the Pleasanton Rage. Cecilia Gee punched in the goal that started Lamorinda's successful run.

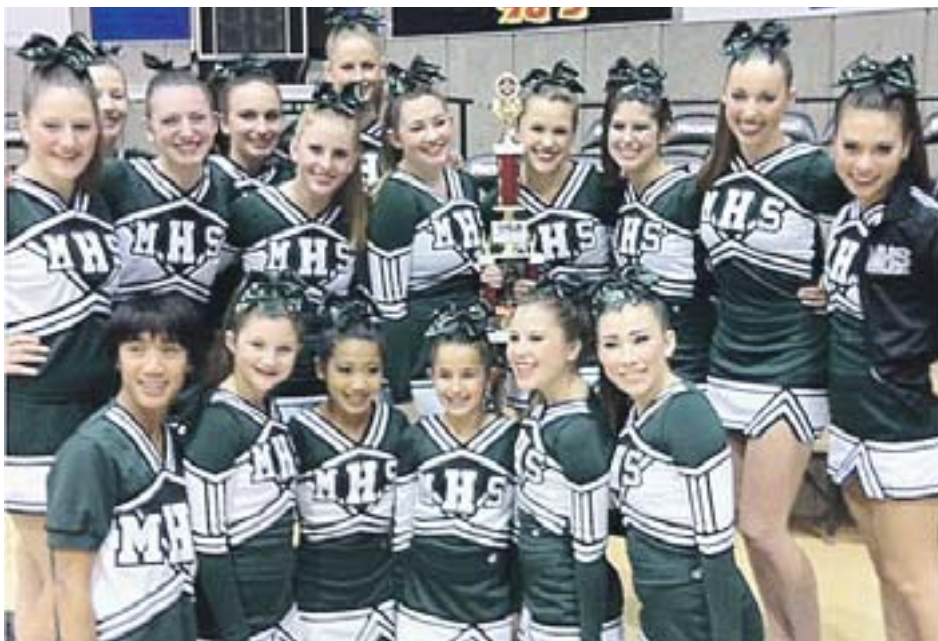
The team then posted a 2-0 victory against Alameda Bay Oaks, tied the first-place, undefeated Walnut Creek and Union City, 1-1. United then defeated Walnut Creek in a rematch, 4-3, off of a penalty kick.

Lamorinda took on the Santa Rosa Rampage for the State Cup match. They handily defeated the Rampage 3-1 to end the year on a six-game win streak.

Maggie McGuire makes a pass out of midfield against rivals Walnut Creek. Photo Ben Sadoff

Miramonte Varsity Cheer Team Earns Second Place Victory

Submitted by Mary Requa



From left, bottom row: Ricky Samoranos, Emily Friese, Taylor Wong, Julia Gomes, Maddie Scrittwieser, Brianna Rieser; top row: Julia Young, Vanessa West, Kelly Martin, Jamey Abeles, Carrie Requa, Dominique Hoover, Emelia Hildreth, Tatyana Belinsky, Ariela Araquistain, Taylor Nielsen, Cassidy Waters. Photo provided

On December 4 the Miramonte High School Varsity Cheer Team competed in the United Spirit Association Nor Cal Holiday Classic at the University of the Pacific in Stockton. In the Varsity Show Cheer Novice Division, Miramonte placed second in a field of nine teams from northern California. This victory also qualifies them for the opportunity to compete at the USA National Competition in Anaheim in March.

Photo provided

Miramonte Wrestling Competes at Golden Gate Invitational

Submitted by Robert Becker



With only five varsity wrestlers at the Golden Gate Invitational in San Francisco, Miramonte was able to finish 15th out of 37 teams. Individual standouts included Micah Spalding, placing second, Kaie Shimoko, taking fifth, and Phil Hoxie (pictured) earning eighth.

Photo Tom Spalding

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Lamorinda OUR HOMES

Lamorinda Weekly Volume 05 Issue 21 Wednesday, December 21, 2011

Preparing Your Home for Winter Weather

By Sophie Braccini, Cathy Dausman and Cathy Tyson



Sales Associate Alex Villa with furnace filters in Moraga Hardware.

Photo C. Tyson

The holidays are a time for celebration and fun – nobody wants to see them disrupted by a failing furnace or a bursting pipe. Finding a chimney-sweep on Christmas Eve when the house smells like smoke, instead of Noble fir, sugar cookies and hot cocoa, may not be an easy task. So as you organize those family activities,

don't forget your home and garden—with a little attention ahead of time, being home for the holidays will be festive, not frustrating.

So it's winter solstice. It's not too late to get your house ready for the cold and wet that's still ahead of us. You, of course, cleaned out your gutters weeks ago, right? If not, get that ladder up there



Mayor Days Be Merry! By Susie Iventosch ...read on page D4

fast; and it's a good idea to clear the roof as well. According to contractor Daniel Leleu, of Lamorinda Construction and Consulting, leaves and debris left on the roof can create slippery deposits that will damage your shingles and can be treacherous if you have to walk on the roof. If decomposition has already started, you might have to use a pressure hose to get rid of it.

With our recent spell of freezing temperatures, chances are that if trouble were going to happen, it already has. It's best to insulate exposed pipes with form-fitting neoprene foam or insulating wrap and tape, all available at your local hardware store. Don't forget the above-ground sprinkler system that is often made of plastic. If it cracks, your garden may flood.

Always cover vulnerable trees and bushes if a freeze is predicted, and check the weather-stripping around doors and windows that help keep your home warm and dry.

Also water-related – make sure that the drainage system around the house is still efficient. Especially in an older home, the underground drainpipes can rot, become damaged by roots that grow through the pipe and end up blocking the passage of water. According to Leleu, the best way to make sure that the drainage is working is to go under the house and check for moisture, especially after a rain. If that crawlspace is seriously wet, it's time to seek professional services.

S.Braccini

...continued on page D6

Happy Holidays & Happy New Year



2011 was a great year for me, with caring and loving friends and family, loyal clients, and all while being able to live in wonderful Lafayette.

Best wishes to all for a healthy and prosperous 2012!



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City	Last reported:	LOWEST AMOUNT:	HIGHEST AMOUNT:
LAFAYETTE	1	\$325,000	\$325,000
MORAGA	5	\$270,000	\$878,500
ORINDA	4	\$765,000	\$1,635,000

Home sales are compiled by Cal Resource, an Oakland real estate information company. Sale prices are computed from the county transfer tax information shown on the deeds that record at close of escrow and are published five to eight weeks after such recording. This information is obtained from public county records and is provided to us by California Resource. Neither Cal Resource nor this publication are liable for errors or omissions.

LAFAYETTE

3276 Marlene Drive, \$325,000, 3 Bdrms, 1160 SqFt, 1972 YrBl, 11-16-11;
Previous Sale: \$505,000, 07-20-06

MORAGA

1952 Ascot Drive, \$299,000, 2 Bdrms, 1234 SqFt, 1972 YrBl, 11-16-11;
Previous Sale: \$315,000, 06-09-08

875 Camino Ricardo, \$878,500, 4 Bdrms, 2160 SqFt, 1967 YrBl, 11-9-11;
Previous Sale: \$719,000, 03-01-01

527 Chalda Way, \$270,000, 2 Bdrms, 1114 SqFt, 1974 YrBl, 11-10-11;
Previous Sale: \$359,000, 12-22-03

1843 St. Andrews Drive, \$830,000, 3 Bdrms, 3424 SqFt, 1982 YrBl, 11-18-11
312 Tharp Drive, \$640,000, 3 Bdrms, 1857 SqFt, 1965 YrBl, 11-10-11

ORINDA

11 Arroyo Drive, \$765,000, 3 Bdrms, 1588 SqFt, 1955 YrBl, 11-22-11;
Previous Sale: \$224,000, 01-23-87

2215 Manzanita Drive, \$774,500, 11-18-11

361 Tahos Road, \$1,358,000, 6 Bdrms, 4774 SqFt, 1962 YrBl, 11-15-11;
Previous Sale: \$1,255,000, 02-23-01

20 Wood Acres Court, \$1,635,000, 4 Bdrms, 3812 SqFt, 1987 YrBl, 11-15-11;
Previous Sale: \$1,697,500, 06-17-04

Lamorinda Foreclosures recorded

LAFAYETTE

Donegal Way, 94549, RRS Ventures, 11-09-11, \$377,775, 1548 sf, 3 bd

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Year in Review

by Andi Peterson Brown

It's no surprise that this year's local real estate market was affected by both national and global economic uncertainty. But all in all, how did we do?

Trending this past year:

The Springtime Surge. The 2011 Lamorinda market was in like a lion, out like a...mouse. Attracted by historic affordability, buyers came in droves this past spring. Compared to 2010, we experienced a 13% increase in sales volume during the first half of year. But come August, the market pulled back due to (you guessed it) economic uncertainty, and we are ending the year with near identical sales volume to 2010.

Low Inventory. "Is that it?" a client asked me in June as we were out touring homes. Across the board, Lamorinda inventory was down about 15%. For various reasons, many move-up buyers decided to stay put and the market felt their absence. And the springtime surge, coupled with the tight inventory, meant homes that were priced accurately and showed well sold within a matter of days and oftentimes with multiple offers. Many buyers were surprised to experience that level of competition.

Mid-Year Price Adjustment. After the market's stellar springtime performance, pricing adjusted down about 5%. And that's not that bad, all things considered. We seem to be bouncing along the bottom of the market, and I am hopeful that we will bounce back up a bit next spring.

And as we gear up for next year, it's important to remember that regardless of what the national news says, there are still many opportunities in Lamorinda for smart buyers and smart sellers. And if you just read this column, you're already smarter.



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Cleaning and thinning your trees may reduce the potential storm hazards without compromising the shade. In some situations the risk of failure cannot be reduced without removal of branches. Remember that healthy structurally sound trees are generally wind fast even when mature.

Storm damage is usually, but not always, related to structural problems that could have been addressed with proper structural training when the tree was young. Co dominant (two trunks with a narrow angle of attachment) trunks account for many trees failures. The hazard of wind damage is higher on the regrowth of trees that have been "topped".

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Mayor Days Be Merry!

By Susie Iventosch



Karen Mendonca and Victoria Smith

Photo Doug Kohen

It's that cheery time of year when kitchens are bursting with the wonderful aroma of holiday baking! Cookies and candies, jams and breads, roasts and rubs and all the trimmings are being prepared for family gatherings, holiday teas, cocktail parties and Santa's trek back up the chimney! We thought it would be fun to take a peek at what our 2011 mayors have in store for the Christmastime food and festivities.

Orinda's Mayor Victoria Smith shared a few of her family's fun holiday traditions as well as her recipes for scrumptious zucchini nut bread and her sons' fabulous fudge. Mayor Karen Mendonca of Moraga offered two delicious recipes, and a little insight into her Christmas festivities. Unfortunately, we could not collect any recipes from Lafayette Mayor Carl Anduri due to his heavy travel schedule, however his traditional Swedish Christmas Eve fare sounded very intriguing indeed!

For Mendonca, Christmas has always been the time of the year when her family reunites with loved ones they don't get to see every day.

"Traditionally, we attend vigil services early in the evening on Christmas Eve, and then return to open presents and enjoy a nice dinner with the immediate family," the mayor said. "Then, on Christmas Day, we enjoy a large breakfast of omelets, fresh fruit and 'potica,' an Austrian yeast bread."

Then the formalities begin of setting the Christmas table, preparing the meal and welcoming family and friends for the holiday feast.

Smith and her family always make time to attend a concert, play or other holiday event together, so as to enjoy the festive spirit of the month.

"And, we always read 'The Night Before Christmas' every Christmas Eve!" she said.

It has always been important to her family to give back during the holidays. When the mayor's own sons, Will and Daniel, were young Scouts they worked at the Food Bank or the Books for Barrios program. More recently, Smith and her husband, Wick, have donated gifts for the Juvenile Hall Auxiliary.

"This helps to provide some small gifts (and good cheer) to young people in juvenile hall, many of whom don't receive any other gifts," she pointed out.

"Enjoy your families and your time together this year," said Smith. "And, during these tough economic times, if you can, please contribute with your time, or financially, to those who may not be as fortunate this holiday season. Happy holidays, Lamorinda!"

Mayor Mendonca's Steamed Persimmon Pudding with Lemon Sauce

Persimmon Pudding

INGREDIENTS

2 eggs
 1¼ cups granulated sugar
 1¼ cups sieved persimmon pulp
 (about 3-4 large,
 ripe persimmons)
 ¼ cup melted butter
 1½ cups sifted all-purpose
 flour
 1½ teaspoons baking powder
 ½ teaspoon salt
 ½ teaspoon cinnamon
 ¾ cup milk
 1 cup seedless raisins
 ½ cup chopped pecans
 ¼ cup brandy

For Garnish: 1 cup heavy cream, whipped and flavored with powdered sugar and pure vanilla extract



Photo Susie Iventosch

DIRECTIONS

In a large bowl beat eggs until light and foamy, then beat in sugar until smooth and lemon-colored. Combine persimmon pulp and melted butter and stir into egg mixture. Sift dry ingredients and stir into egg mixture alternately with milk, beating well after each addition.

Add raisins, pecans and brandy. Transfer to a well-buttered mold (I used a soufflé dish) and cover tightly with foil.

To cook the pudding, place the mold (soufflé dish) on a rack in a large deep kettle and add water to come halfway up the sides of the mold. Bring water to a gentle boil, cover pan, lower heat, and continue to cook (steam) for about 2½ hours.

Remove pudding from water and let cool for 15 minutes. Unmold onto a serving plate. Serve warm with lemon sauce and a very generous dollop of whipped cream.

Lemon Sauce

1 cup sugar
 2 cups water
 2½ tablespoons corn starch
 ½ cup fresh squeezed lemon juice
 1 tablespoon grated lemon zest
 2 tablespoons butter

Combine sugar and cornstarch in a saucepan and gradually add water, blending with a whisk until smooth. Cook over medium heat, stirring constantly, until mixture becomes thick and clear. Remove from heat and stir in lemon juice, zest and butter. Stir until well-blended. Serve warm or chilled over persimmon pudding.

Susie Iventosch is the author of Tax Bites and Tasty Morsels, which can be found at Across the Way in Moraga, www.amazon.com, and www.taxbites.net. Susie can be reached at suziventosch@gmail.com.

These recipe is available on our web site

www.lamorindaweekly.com

If you would like to share your favorite recipe with Susie please contact her by email or call our office at 925-377-0977.



Will and Daniel's Fabulous Fudge

INGREDIENTS

- 3 cups sugar
- ¾ cup margarine or butter (1½ sticks)
- 5 oz. evaporated milk (one small can)
- 12 squares of semi-sweet chocolate, chopped into small pieces
- 7 oz. jar marshmallow cream
- 1¼ cup chopped walnuts
- 1 teaspoon vanilla



Photo Susie Iventosch

DIRECTIONS

Bring margarine (or butter), sugar and evaporated milk to a full boil on medium heat, stirring constantly. Boil for 4 minutes, continuing to stir constantly. Remove from heat, add semi-sweet chocolate and marshmallow cream and stir until melted. Stir in nuts and vanilla. Pour into 9-inch square pan lined with foil. Let cool and cut into squares. Makes 3 pounds.

Mayor Smith's Zucchini Nut Bread

INGREDIENTS



Photo Susie Iventosch

- 2 cups grated zucchini (I squeezed the liquid out using a dry towel)
- 1 cup salad oil
- 3 cups sugar (I used 1 cup brown and 2 cups granulated sugar)
- 1 cup chopped walnuts
- 3 eggs
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon baking powder
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 3 teaspoons cinnamon
- 3 cups flour
- 1 tablespoon vanilla extract

DIRECTIONS

Beat the eggs; add oil, sugar, vanilla and zucchini. Add the remaining ingredients and mix well. Pour into two greased and floured loaf pans. Bake at 350 degrees for 1 hour.

Mayor Mendonca's Stuffed Roast Loin of Pork

(Note- the photo shows a much smaller version of the crown pork roast. You will need about 13 ribs in order to make the full circle crown.)

INGREDIENTS

- One 6-pound pork loin roast (have butcher saw through the backbone of the pork loin between chops)
- 2 teaspoons salt
- ½ teaspoon pepper
- 1 recipe Cranberry-Apricot Stuffing (below)
- 1 cup beef broth
- 2 tablespoons cider vinegar
- 1 tablespoon cornstarch
- Reserved apricot liquid from stuffing



Photo Susie Iventosch

DIRECTIONS

Trim excess fat from pork roast and cut down about 2 inches between ribs to partially separate roast into chop to make it easier to form the "crown".

Rub meat with salt and pepper and place in a roasting pan, rib bones down. Roast at 350° for about 1½ hours.

Remove pork from oven and let stand until cool enough to handle. Forcing ribs apart, push a generous amount of stuffing into the cuts between ribs. Mound stuffing slightly above the meat. Return meat to oven and roast 30-45 minutes longer, or until a meat thermometer registers 170° F.

Remove meat to a serving platter and let stand 20 minutes before carving. Drain excess fat from roasting pan. Add broth and vinegar to brown bits from the bottom of the pan. Mix cornstarch with reserved apricot liquid and stir into pan drippings and broth, simmering until thickened, then strain.

To serve: cut roast between ribs to separate into chops. Serve each chop with some of the stuffing and sauce.

Cranberry-Apricot Stuffing

INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup dried apricots, cut into small pieces
- 1¼ cup water
- ¼ granulated sugar
- 1 cup fresh or frozen cranberries
- ½ pound pork sausage
- 1 medium yellow onion, chopped
- 2 cups corn bread crumbs or pieces
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- 1 teaspoon dried sage

DIRECTIONS

In a small bowl, combine apricots with 1 cup of the water. Allow to sit for about 15 minutes. Combine the remaining ¼ cup water with sugar in a small saucepan and bring to a boil, stirring to dissolve sugar. Add cranberries to syrup and boil for about 2 minutes. Remove from heat and let cranberries cool in the syrup.

In a frying pan, brown sausage with onion, breaking up sausage with a fork. Drain drippings, leaving about 4 tablespoons in the pan. Drain cranberries and apricots. Reserve liquid from apricots and set aside. Add fruit and corn bread crumbs/cubes to sausage. Toss to mix well and season to taste with salt, pepper and sage.

Preparing Your Home for Winter Weather

... continued from page D1

Sweeping Changes for your Chimney

While winter nights may conjure up chestnuts roasting on an open fire, it might also be a good time to have your chimney cleaned and inspected. Whether your house has a masonry chimney, a pre-fabricated chimney, an insert or a wood stove, they all need cleaning, says Sal Russo of Russo's Chimney Sweep. The National Fire Protection Association recommends an annual inspection. Russo suggests chimneys should be cleaned after burning through a cord and a half of wood or after using 30 manufactured logs. He says the hotter the fire, the cleaner the flue, and oak or almond wood burns cleanest of all. When using manufactured fireplace fuel, a chemical free variety prevents buildup and chemical odors. Santa should note that cleaning is done from the roof down if it's a masonry fireplace, and from the inside up the flue if the fireplace is pre-fabri-

cated. Gas log fireplaces, too, need an inspection, although the frequency varies with use. If a gas fireplace is used only sparingly, an inspection every 10 years or so is adequate. Frequent, near-daily use of a gas fireplace calls for more frequent inspections to avoid the buildup of carbon monoxide and soot. Take care of the damper as well, to prevent carbon monoxide buildup in the home. A fireplace should be inspected only after a cleaning. There are no chimney sweep services within Lamorinda, but the online Prime Buyers Report, (<http://www.primebuyersreport.org/ca/walnut-creek-chimney-fireplace.html>) offers a list of "Top 10 Chimney Cleaning Services in Contra Costa County." The Chimney Safety Institute of America (<http://www.csia.org/HomeownerResources/ChimneySafetyInfo/ChimneyInspections/tabid/116/Default.aspx>) has a list of certified chimney sweeps in the outlying area.

C.Dausman

It's Time to Clear the Air

Winter even in our little corner of paradise means the furnace is on. Most residents aren't losing sleep worrying about the last time the furnace filter was changed, but perhaps after all the holiday hubbub, it's worth a few minutes to check it out. According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the air inside your home can be twice as bad, or worse, as the air outdoors. Nobody likes houseguests that stay too long; same with dust, pollen, mold spores and pet dander.

Filter manufacturers recommend for maximum effectiveness changing filters every three months, however more frequent changes should be considered if you have dirty ducts, construction work in progress, furniture and drywall sanding in progress, pets or smokers in the house.

Bill Snider, the owner and operator of Moraga Hardware, recommends for those who have the air conditioning on in the summertime changing the filter every three months. He says six months is generally the norm for those families without central air conditioning. "You want electrostatic filters – they're the best kind," said Snider, he's such a believer that he's discontinuing the older non-electrostatic versions in the store. Electrostatically charged means the filter fibers are both positively and negatively charged. Particulates in the air passing through the filter are also positively or negatively charged. The charge helps pull more particles from the air.

Filters come in various sizes, depending on the type of furnace, and in differing performance ratings. Higher ratings are better for folks with allergies and help keep your home much cleaner, according to Snider.

Performance levels vary from 300 MPR – Microparticle Performance Rating that helps reduce dust, pollen, mold and pet dander to 700, 800, and 1000 for the middle of the road models up to 1200, 1500, and 1900 for the best performance. The easiest way to change your filter is to bring your old one in to the hardware store to match the size exactly.

C.Tyson



Up on the rooftop: Sal Russo of Russo's Chimney Sweep

Photo Cathy Dausman

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MORAGA

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Charm abounds in this 867 sf cutie on .20 ac lvl lot nr all Lafayette Village conveniences. 1bd/1ba with exceptional curb appeal. Attn to detail thruout, Fr drs to gardens & decks.

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LAFAYETTE

3398 Ridge Road
Special Lafayette Trail 4bd/3ba home nestled among oaks w/views of hills on .29 acre. Easy walk to downtown, shopping, restaurants & 9 yrs. of schools. Backs to bike trail.

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LAFAYETTE

3286 Sweet Drive
Lovely 3150 sf home, flex floor plan, updated thruout, granite kitchen. Sweeping views, 2 master bdrms, plus 2 more bdrms & 4 baths in Burton Valley. Guest set-up w/sep entry.

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www.2950WindtreeCt.com

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LAFAYETTE

1847 Reliez Valley Road
Newly renovated w/high style & fully updated amenities & quality features. Lg new Chef's kitchen w/adj family rm & formal liv/din rms. Stylish master suite. Lots of bedrooms, new baths.

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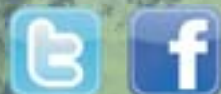
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