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Sunrise over Lamorinda Photo Andy Schreck

Ten Challenges for your New Year

By Cathy Dausman

The sun has risen on a brand new year – you’ve been given a clean slate, and a chance to make good on your best intentions. Here come the resolutions – fast, furious and often futile. Diet. Exercise. Clean clutter. Read more. Learn a new skill. Really... haven’t we heard it all before?

Let’s consult Time magazine’s list of most-forgotten resolutions, and tackle them all without leaving Lamorinda:

1. Lose weight

To lose weight, eat less (see #4) and exercise more. For exercise,

get outside in Lamorinda. Hike Briones Trail, Mulholland Ridge, run the Rez, or bike the St. Stephen’s or Lafayette Moraga Trail.

2. Quit smoking

With California’s “spare the air” attitude, it’s tough to even find places to smoke nowadays. Smoking is banned in most public places, including state and county owned buildings and vehicles. If you’re caught smoking where you shouldn’t, fines are \$50 to \$200, and repeat offenders are subject to \$500 fines. You may as well give it up now, and get a head start on item 5.

3. Learn something new

Take a class, for love of learning. Read something written by a local author. Head to lectures or performing arts presentations at St. Mary’s College, or by Orinda’s Starlight Players or Cal Shakes; attend a California Independent Film Festival showing or a live play at Lafayette Town Hall Theater. Enroll in a Lamorinda community center class. You could learn to play the ukulele, speak a foreign language, take an outdoor exercise “boot camp” or cook something new. ... continued on page A10

Quote of the Week:

"There are so many reasons for my abiding love for this place I call home..."

Read Letters to the Editor, page A8

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Local Schools Transition Kindergarten Entry-Age

By Andrea A. Firth

Kindergarten teacher Bess Inzeo describes the move to raise the entry-age for kindergarten in California’s public schools to five years old by September 1st as “the gift of time.”

“Students need to be socially and developmentally ready for the academic rigors of today’s kindergarten classroom,” says Inzeo, who has taught kindergarten at Moraga’s Donald Rheem Elementary School for twelve years.

Until recently, children entering kindergarten in California could turn five as late as December 2nd, more than three months into the school year. But starting with the 2012-13 school year, Lamorinda’s schools, like schools across the state, will phase-in the new age requirement over three years. (See Table page A9)

While parents are not required to send their children to kindergarten, attendance in Lamorinda is the norm. And locally, holding back students with fall birthdays is not uncommon and happens even more often with boys. Inzeo has had a limited number of students with fall birthdays who turn five in

her classroom. She has found that many families opt for an additional year of pre-school. In fact Inzeo, whose son has a November birthday, chose this option.

California was one of just a few states remaining that had not already adopted a September 1st birthday cut-off for kindergarten. In addition to the entry age change, the California Legislature’s Kindergarten Readiness Act provides the youngest, fall-birthday students—those born after 9/1 and on or before 12/2—with a transitional kindergarten, an extra year of kindergarten that uses a modified curriculum. Like traditional kindergarten, enrollment is optional.

“Exactly how the transitional kindergarten program will be structured is still to be determined,” says Lafayette School District Superintendent Dr. Fred Brill. “Looking at the current kindergarten class [in the Lafayette School District], there were only eight students across the four grade schools who had November birthdays and turned five.” The current kindergarten population in the Lafayette

School District is 357.

How to structure the transitional program and where to house the class(es) will be driven by enrollment and the district is exploring options, says Brill. One option would be combination classes at each school with younger, transitional kindergarten students and “regular” kindergarteners in the same class. The teachers, all well versed in differentiation teaching methods, says Brill, would work with a modified curriculum for the transitional students. A second option would be to have a single transitional kindergarten class housed at a single school site. “We have to look at the enrollment numbers before we can make any decisions,” explains Brill.

“This is new for all schools in California,” say Courtney Guinn, the Director of Educational Services and Instructional Technology for the Moraga School District. “Right now we don’t know how many students in the district will qualify for transitional kindergarten.” But as Inzeo’s experience at-tests, parents have already been holding kids back.

... continued on page A9

Life in Lamorinda B1-B10

Lamorinda Teenagers on Air

Rosylyn Aragonés Stenzel talks to local teens who have an international audience. B1



Sports C1-C4

Saint Mary’s Men’s Basketball Perfect in WCC Play



The SMC men’s basketball team opens conference play by defeating powerhouse BYU. Caitlin Graveson reports. C1

Our Homes D1-D8

Starting Fresh!

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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:

www.lafayettechamber.org

Townhouse Development Moving Forward

By Cathy Tyson



View from the interior of the proposed development. The three bedroom townhouses will include a two car garage on the ground level, be screened from the street with substantial landscaping, and feature decorative elements like trellises, window boxes, and wood corbels and trim.

Image courtesy of City of Lafayette Staff report and Hunt Hale Jones Architecture.

The Hungry Hunter's days are probably numbered. If all goes according to plan, the semi-subterranean decommissioned restaurant at the corner of Mt. Diablo and Pleasant Hill Road will finally be demolished and in its place twenty-three townhomes will sprout up. Signature Development is in the final stretch of getting a land use permit and Major Subdivision approval from the City that would allow them to go forward with their plans for the site.

City staff, the Planning Commission, and Design Review Commission have been reviewing the project for some time. The developer significantly revised the design multiple times in response to feedback from

these groups, ultimately resulting in a modern Craftsman style in medium to dark paint colors. When complete, the project will have five three-story buildings around the perimeter and a shared central green space.

"The variety of forms, articulation, colors and materials do a good job of avoiding what could be a very monotonous, repetitive appearance," writes Senior Planner Greg Wolf in the December 12 Staff Report. "The proposed earth tone colors and natural (and) natural-appearing materials are appropriate to the design style and to the site, helping the buildings recede into the broader landscape of the site and broader East End."

Tom Quaglia, Project Manager of

Signature Development, sees the project as appealing to three groups of buyers: young professionals, older "downsizing" residents and some young families. The developer has "worked closely to design and propose a well thought-out development that will be an asset to the Lafayette community," noted Quaglia in a letter that listed the fourteen meetings to date with interested parties that started in June, 2010.

Because the parcel is bordered by Mt. Diablo Boulevard, Pleasant Hill Road and the Highway 24 off-ramp, there were some challenges to create

a livable enclosed community. While the Planning Commission has generally supported the project all along, issues arose about the usability of the central space, viability and care of existing redwood trees, concerns of a cookie-cutter look and circulation in and out of the project.

"It's come a long way," said Planning Commissioner Tom Chastain. The project is scheduled to be heard at a January 17 Planning Commission meeting at which staff has recommended approving the project subject to conditions.

Sidewalk Improvements Start Next Week

Downtown Lafayette's sidewalks are getting a facelift. Kind of an eventual holiday gift to pedestrians - once the dust from the demolition and construction has cleared - funded primarily from a Transportation for Livable Communities grant. Crews will commence beautification on the downtown streetscape that will include new landscaping and paver sidewalks along Mt. Diablo Boulevard from Oak Hill Road to Mountain View in sections. Phase One will start January 9, and is slated to run until January 30 from the Round Up to Postino on the south side of Mt. Diablo Boulevard. The entire project will create some challenges for drivers and pedestrians for approximately the next six months. C. Tyson

Streetscape schedule:

- Phase 1** - Round Up to Postino (South side of Mt. Diablo Blvd.)
January 9 - 30
- Phase 2** - Postino to Bank of the West
January 20 - February 17
- Phase 3** - Lafayette Circle to Happy Valley Rd.
February 15 - March 19
- Phase 4** - Happy Valley Road east to Baja Fresh
March 14 - April 6
- Phase 5** - Celia's east to Chevron Gas Station
April 4 - May 1
- Phase 6** - Happy Valley Road to CVS Pharmacy
April 26 - May 22
- Phase 7** - Remainder to be completed

Police Report

... will be back next time.

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Third Time's the Charm for Mayor Federighi

By Cathy Tyson



Photo provided

mony for the Lafayette Library and Learning Center, which is obviously now completed and open for business.

"We have a Farmers Market in Lafayette now, and some additional great new restaurants. We've added to our pathways and trails...and there's a new stage at the Lafayette Reservoir. Our last road measure was defeated at the polls, but we have made progress in addressing our backlog of repairs by squeezing to pave," said Federighi. "We have strengthened senior services, but have been unsuccessful to date in obtaining the requisite financing for new affordable senior housing. We face more challenging economic times than before."

Like a fine wine getting better with age, the trio of Lamorinda mayors that were serving their citizens in 2007 are back in the saddle again, serving as mayors for 2012, perhaps with a little more gray hair, and experience under their respective belts. All are getting the same staggering compensation they did back in the day; that would be zero dollars for countless hours of work to keep the municipalities running.

With generally stable city councils composed of five members, seems like everyone gets a turn in the mostly ceremonial role of being mayor every handful of years.

Similarly the staff and management at the Lamorinda Weekly will also be celebrating an anniversary of sorts, 2012 marks our fifth year of bringing all the local news fit to print to Lafayette, Orinda and Moraga.

"I'd like to think I haven't changed much in five years," said new mayor Carol Federighi, who has served on the city council since 1999. She has served a mayor twice before, in 2003 and 2007. "I still believe in strong fiscal management, open government, a lively and attractive downtown, recreational opportunities for our citizens, support for senior services, civil discussion of our differences, and the protection of our hillsides and ridgelines."

Key staff members are the same, fellow city council members are the same and unfortunately, "I am again becoming mayor on the heels of another defeated road measure, but Lafayette continues to be healthy fiscally as staff and the Council have pursued conservative policies," said Federighi.

While change does not come quickly in Lafayette, there have been some notable new additions in the last five years. When she was mayor in 2007, Federighi participated in the groundbreaking cere-

Federighi figures she has made progress on goals set in 2007, but has more work to do, "Without more revenues than we realistically anticipate, we will be unable to repair all of our failed residential roads. We haven't yet adopted a Downtown Specific Plan, but we are close to it. In 2007, Lafayette was in the national spotlight with the Crosses of Lafayette. One of my goals was to revise our sign ordinance in a fashion that met Constitutional scrutiny but protected our residential neighborhoods. We adopted a new ordinance in 2008 but have postponed addressing signs in the downtown until a Specific Plan is adopted. Another of my goals in 2007 was to increase communication with our commissions and task forces and with our neighboring communities." Now the three communities have yearly joint meetings.

Topping this year's to do list is beginning the process of revitalizing the businesses facing Plaza Park by adopting a Plaza Park Overlay District, as reported in the last edition of this paper. "The overlay proposes to provide incentives to participating owners to redevelop their properties in a way that preserves and maintains their historical character and addresses the chronic parking shortages and poor circulation in the block." She also hopes to revise the downtown sign ordinance and look at opportunities to develop a pedestrian and bike pathway on the EBMUD right-of-way land.

Getting out her crystal ball to look five years into the future, Federighi sees the revitalization of the Plaza Park businesses, more housing and new retail in the downtown. She adds, "Hopefully, we will also have a more vibrant economy than we have now and that the Downtown Specific Plan will guide some positive initiatives and public amenities."

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Moraga Civic News

Public Meetings

Town Council

Wednesday, January 11, 7:00pm
Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School,
1010 Camino Pablo

Planning Commission

Tuesday, January 17, 7:00 pm
Moraga Library, 1500 Saint Marys Rd

Design Review

Monday, January 9, 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

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Police Report

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New Mayor Reflects and Sets Objectives

By Sophie Braccini



Photo provided

Moraga's new mayor, Mike Metcalf, is all about roads – maybe not too surprising for a retired engineer. This is Metcalf's second term wielding the gavel; he was first elected to the Council in 2004 and was the mayor five years ago, in 2007; coincidentally, that same year the Lamorinda Weekly first landed in, or near, your driveway.

Metcalf is known for his direct approach. His voting record suggests that he is a fiscally conservative member of the community, someone who sincerely loves his town, and is wary of anything labeled 'green.' He recalls his first year in the mayor's seat as he prepares for 2012.

"The local government's environment has changed since I was first Mayor," says Metcalf, "that Council had difficulty working well together—there were personality issues and unhealthy tension, which made it difficult to make things happen."

Metcalf remembers 2007 as a period of very low expectations. "There were some mistakes, like the speed bumps (on Camino Pablo). We tried new things to improve the Town's management such as TSAC (Traffic and Safety Advisory Committee) and the Finance Committee."

Metcalf's view is that five years ago the way the Town managed its finances was substandard, the manner special funds were handled was sloppy, and it was difficult to follow the budget, "the Finance Committee we established that year improved the

visibility of finance, and the Committee is still in place," he says.

Five years ago, then-Town Manager Phil Vince projected that the Town would be bankrupt within 5 years. Moraga was determined to not let that happen.

"On the revenue side, sales taxes are up, the 'Shop Moraga First' campaign has had an impact, people are thinking of Moraga as an alternative—as a result we are starting to see improvement in the occupancy of the Rheem Center that is very encouraging," says Metcalf. "On the expense side, staff has found a lot of savings, positions have been cut, and management compensation is being set more thoughtfully."

The Mayor notes that the Town has significantly decreased its energy consumption and water and electricity usage.

"There is a systematic review of where money goes and things that do not make sense are eliminated," he says. "We also revised our fee structure; we cannot give away services anymore."

Metcalf is proud that the Parks and Recreation Department now generates more money and he hails the creativity of the Hacienda Foundation for generating revenue with the Cinco de Mayo and Oktoberfest events. "Not only does it raise money for the Hacienda de Las Flores, but those are community building celebrations, such as our ever successful 4th of July," he notes.

Metcalf keeps going, he says, because he enjoys working with people that are professional. "You need a thick skin, to be very tolerant, and it is a lot of work," he adds, but doing things that he believes are good for the community makes it all worth it.

Metcalf firmly believes that the biggest thing that can be done for the

community next year is to decide how to improve Moraga's infrastructure.

"I have been involved with RECON (Revenue Enhancement Community Outreach to Neighborhoods), along with Howard (Harpham) since April of 2010. In 2012, the Town Council will have to decide whether or not to go to the ballot with a new funding mechanism to stop the worsening of our roads," says Metcalf, who knows that asking for more money is not a popular agenda. "I'd rather do the right thing and tell to the people, here is your choice: do you want to fix the roads or will you let them fail?"

He believes in telling the unvarnished truth, "We have a problem nationwide, we have so much infrastructure and never planned adequately to maintain it," Metcalf

continues, "Our roads are deteriorating every day, like Fernwood Drive, that was beautiful and is starting to crack." Metcalf hopes that the Council will come up with a long-term plan that will incorporate the total cost of ownership of the infrastructure, will take charge of the back-log, and include long term maintenance.

Nonetheless, he does not want to give up on Moraga's philosophy of minimum government established by its founders "One of my guiding principles is to control the scope and expense of local government," he says, "but since Prop 13 Moraga is getting less than it gives to the State system. It's not that we are wasteful, it's that managing a Town is an expensive business."

Mayor Metcalf's Priorities for 2012

1: Secure revenue for the roads. Continue outreach to inform residents of the worsening conditions of local roads. Determine what infrastructure improvements the community feels are necessary.

2: Parks and sports field improvement. Finish redesign at Rancho Laguna Park. Look at Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School sports fields with the School District. Work with the Hacienda Foundation on needed improvements. Support the Park Foundation's improvements at the Commons Park.

3: Town offices and community meeting room. Complete the project and make sure that staff gets out of the Hacienda if possible. Adopt video streaming of public meetings.

4: Finance and budgeting. Support new Finance Director in developing a strategic plan. Formalize the creation of an infrastructure replacement funds, same with asset replacement fund.

5: Economic development planning. Define and fund a part time position for an economic development planner. Advance planning of the Rheem area. Review commercial zoning. Maintain engagement with Saint Mary's College as high priority.

6: Public safety. Push emergency planning effort along with Lafayette and Orinda, including having drills. Re-introduce the Slow Down Lamorinda campaign. Update the traffic calming guide. Improve bike and pedestrian safety around schools.

How Moraga Monitors Its Energy Cost

By Sophie Braccini

The Town of Moraga applied for an Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant (EECBG) in 2008, viewing the available funding as an opportunity to reduce its operating expenses by increasing the energy efficiency of its municipal buildings. Tied to the grant was a requirement to report energy usage outcomes. The Town elected to use the Environmental Protection Agency's Portfolio Manager as a means to collect energy usage data.

Moraga was the first Contra Costa city to set up the interactive energy management tool that allows users to track and assess energy and water consumption across an entire portfolio of buildings. To begin the process, Staff Engineer John Sherbert attended an informational workshop offered by Contra Costa County Climate Leaders (4CL) in partnership with PG&E.

"This free workshop provided Moraga and other Contra Costa County cities with the basics to get started with Energy Benchmarking municipal buildings," says 4CL founder Lynda Deschambault.

"With limited staff, there just isn't time to review and track energy usage manually. Energy Star Portfolio Manager is a tool that supports the monitoring process without a lot of support," says Sherbert, adding that he is glad to have completed the process that resulted in a new, streamlined procedure to help track energy use and monitor and report on additional opportunities for reducing energy and saving costs. "For example, we just added in all of our streetlight accounts since we are upgrading to LED lighting and need to track the usage changes," notes Sherbert.

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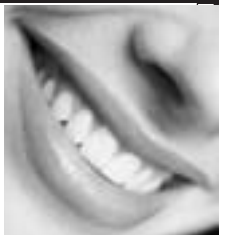
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Moraga Gets Two New Police Officers

By Sophie Braccini



City Clerk Marty McInturf swears in new Police Officers Tyler Olson and Krista Koppinger as Police Chief Bob Priebe looks on. Photo Will Grant

Moraga Chief of Police Bob Priebe is pleased. This year his Department will have a full time detective position, filled by Will Davis, something Priebe has been looking forward to for years.

The detective slot is made possible by the hiring of two new officers, one to replace a recently vacated post, and a 13th position that is funded by a Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) State grant.

a senior officer in Moraga and will hit the streets on their own within a few months.

"When we started our testing process we got some very qualified candidates," says the Chief, "the trick is to find the right fit for the Moraga community."

"I was an officer for two years in Susanville, a little town north of Reno," says Olson, "it was a bit smaller than Moraga, with different demographics. We had two prisons there and a lot of parolees."

"I was first hired by the Sacra-

mento Police Department, but was let go as part of their budget cuts a month later," explains Koppinger, "I was attracted to Moraga because I want to work in a town where I can build a relationship with the community."

Both new officers say that working in a small department where you can handle your cases from the first phone call up to the District Attorney's office is a great environment in which to learn and grow.

"Everybody has been very welcoming here," says Olson. He enjoyed the warm welcome at the swearing ceremony during the December 14 Town Council meeting and added that the Chief made his transition very easy.

"My training officer, Randy Pacheco, is letting me handle calls that he feels are appropriate," says Koppinger, "the Chief has also been very welcoming, he is a wealth of knowledge and experience."

... continued on page A8

New Mailboxes at Moraga Center



George Fisher at the new mail boxes. Photo Sophie Braccini

"It's a Moraga Movers' project," says George Fisher of the new mailboxes that were recently installed in the parking lot of the Moraga Center near McCaulou's.

Moraga Center, to see if a convenient and safe mail drive-through could be found."

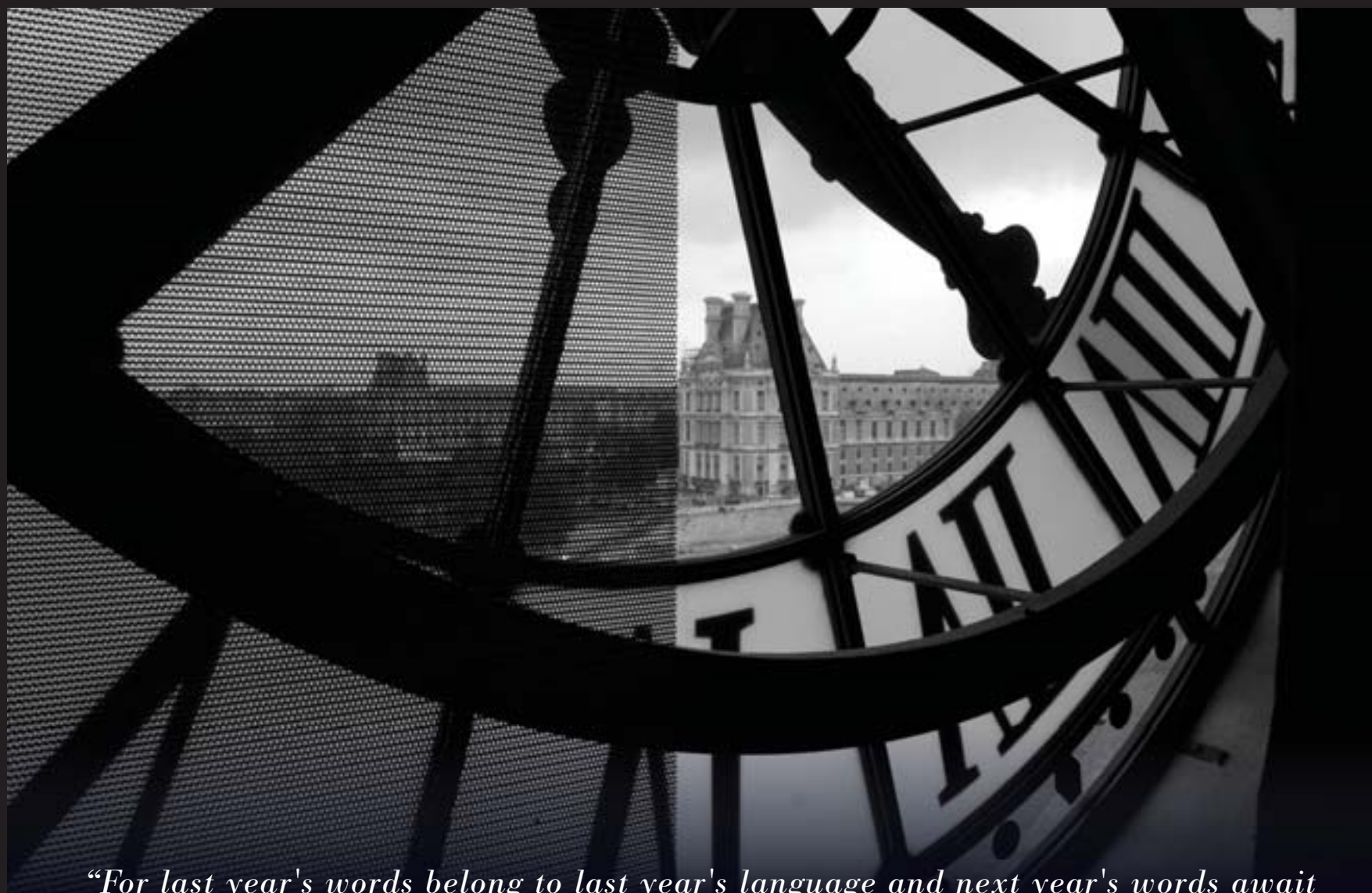
The location was found, approved by Moraga's Postmaster Dorothy Lewis, and brand new boxes were quickly installed. "We were happy to provide this much easier and more convenient service for the community without having to journey to the Rheem Center just to mail a letter," said Joan Bruzzone.

S.Braccini

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"For last year's words belong to last year's language and next year's words await another voice. And to make an end is to make a beginning." ~ T.S. Eliot

Happy New Year



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

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Police Report

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Coming Together as Neighbors

Mayor reflects on past, speaks about role of citizenry in a democratic society

By Laurie Snyder



Photo provided

Steve Glazer, unanimously re-selected by the Orinda City Council to serve another term as the City's Mayor, recently reflected on life in Orinda.

Glazer, upon his swearing in December 19th, thanked his family and Council colleagues for their support and also commended the City's staff. "They make our job so much easier—so we can do our volunteer jobs well."

He later continued to praise City staff and his fellow Council members.

"Our staff provides critical services to making our City run smoothly and efficiently. They are not recog-

nized enough for their contributions to our quality of life," said Glazer.

Regarding the governance and public service work performed year round by the Orinda City Council, he said, "We come together as neighbors," and called his fellow Council members "citizen volunteers."

"My colleagues on the Council and the more than 60 plus residents on City commissions volunteer their time. There is not much glory in the work except for the satisfaction that we are making life better for our residents."

As he reflected on his interactions with Orindans during his past seven years on the Council, Glazer observed that most "are courteous and thankful during their engagement with the City," but also noted that "it is always healthy to remind everyone that we are just their neighbors trying to do the best we can."

"I've learned a lot in the last seven years on the Council so knowing the history on issues helps in the decision making."

What has changed in the five years since you were last Mayor?

"We have greater citizen involvement in the affairs of the City. We

have reprioritized street repair funds on the roads most traveled. Zoning changes at Theater Square have resulted in much higher occupancy rates on the ground floor, bringing renewed life to the area. We have also taken charge of a variety of infrastructure problems that have been stuck in neutral for a while. These include the replacement of the Manzanita Bridge, repair of a big Glorietta storm drain, numerous hill slides and the elimination of an abandoned home that was a magnet for crime."

Glazer went on to say, "The best part of Orinda is the lack of changes in the residential areas. We remain one of the safest cities in the state with one of the best school systems."

He also expressed pride in the City's recreational services, describing them as "fantastic."

When asked what Orinda will look like in five years, Glazer replied: "I don't think you will see a lot of changes because the heart of the City is our friendly and unpretentious residents."

"You will likely see the Wilder and Pine Grove developments start to fill in. The physical appearance of downtown might enjoy a few up-

grades if property owners feel they have community support to make improvements."

What do you hope to achieve during this term that you were unable to accomplish last time?

"Most importantly, I will work with my Council colleagues and City staff to continue our conservative approach to financial affairs. This requires constant vigilance. I also hope to continue to educate our residents on the stark choices in regard to future road repairs. We have some of the worst roads in the region and they will not get better unless we are willing to tax ourselves. No one will help us except ourselves."

Citing Orinda City Council's history of "friendly and constructive problem solving," Glazer gave residents further food for thought. "Citizen decision making is one of the great virtues of our democracy and we get the benefit and burden of solving our own problems in a collective way."

"It is an honor and privilege to serve the City as Mayor," he said in closing. "I'm hoping for a fun and enjoyable year ahead. Let's do some serious work but not take ourselves too seriously."

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Wilder Playfields: Timeline Changes Proving Costly

By Laurie Snyder



Photo Andy Schreck

The Orinda City Council learned at its final meeting of 2011 that milestones continue to be missed and met as the new Wilder playfields grind on toward completion.

"Substantial progress has been made toward completing Playfields 1 and 2 yet they remain unfinished and construction of the maintenance facility has not yet begun," according to the staff report.

Those delays are adding strain to an already stressed budget. By the City's calculations, Orinda is losing roughly \$30,000 for every quarter that the playfields remain undone—a projected minimum net loss set to

reach \$120,000 based on a new estimated playfield delivery date of June 1, 2012.

The good news is that the developer, OG Property Owners, LLC (OGLLC), is offering "to make the City whole for this loss in income" by upgrading the planned Maintenance Facility—"the actual and reasonable cost of which will be determined with staff once the final design and installation is complete"—and paying "the City the difference upon transfer of Phase I of the fields to make the City whole for lost revenue and rents."

Staff has requested a new time-

line from OGLLC listing milestone dates originally set by the City, their current completion status, explanations for the delays, and a revised schedule for finishing the outstanding project components.

The Mixed News

Light poles at the playfields are now up and functioning. It is estimated that PG&E will deliver power permanently by the end of January. Lower parking area lighting is also scheduled to be completed by this time. A study will verify that City specifications for lighting at ground level have been met.

... continued on next page

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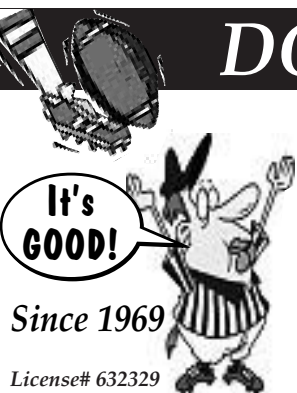
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Frank Woodward



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Wilder Playfields: Timeline Changes Proving Costly

... continued from page A6

Mowbands and curbs were installed by October 6th, as was the under-playfield installation drainage.

Planning Director Emmanuel Ursu reported that water meters are also now installed. A fire flush inspection must still be completed by the East Bay Municipal Utility District and the Moraga Orinda Fire District.

Council members peppered staff and the developer with questions regarding whether or not drinking fountains will actually be operational by January 2012.

Scott Goldie, a partner with Brooks Street, the firm handling sales and marketing for the Wilder project, stated that the drinking fountains were operational. When asked how this was possible since the installation of the sanitary sewer system is not yet finished, Goldie confused listeners when he said that anything requiring sanitary system hookup would not be usable until that system is finally completed.

Mike Stallings, Interim Parks and Recreation Director, clarified: The drinking fountains and bathrooms are not yet connected to the sanitary sys-

tem and will likely not be operational in January.

Several aspects of the project are expected to be finished by June 1, including the Quercus Creek restoration, now 90 percent complete, and the construction of the maintenance facility. The picnic, barbeque areas and tot lot are nearly complete.

The playing surfaces and fencing for both fields are ready; however, staff asked the developer to make more than 25 safety and aesthetic improvements, detailed on pages 5-7 of the staff report, which is available on the City's web site: www.ci.orinda.ca.us/.

The largest point of contention was the developer's request to modify the original plan, which called for a bridge over Quercus Creek linking the lower and upper parking areas to allow "two-way car access, pedestrian and ADA access between Field 1 and Field 2." Instead, developers hope to build a "culvert crossing due to cost, appearance and maintenance/replacement costs."

According to the original Development Agreement (DA), "OGLLC

is required to bridge creek crossings." Those bridges must "be 'clear span' and subject to City review."

Staff was given a preliminary design of the newly proposed culvert. Advising Council members that this plan could work but would require amendment of the DA, staff asked "that in exchange for the requested modification, the developer reinstate the pedestrian path and bridge alignment with a more direct access between Playfield 1 and 2."

The developer pointed out that "the approved improvement plans do not include a separate pedestrian bridge," and offered to complete the upper parking lot, associated trailhead parking, and vehicular creek crossing by this summer rather than June 2013 if the Council agrees to the culvert crossing.

"Our motivation is very much in opening these fields," said Goldie. "We're just here to provide a first-class playing facility for the City."

Council members advised staff that more information was needed before they could consider modifying the Development Agreement.

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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:

Dear Lafayette friends & neighbors,
 As 2011 comes to a close, I find myself thinking a lot about how lucky and grateful I feel to be living in Lafayette heading into 26 years of residency here. There are so many reasons for my abiding love for this place I call home, 3,000 miles away from my childhood days in Connecticut.

Chief among them are the active support and commitment shown to our top-rated public schools (in spite of underfunding at State level), and our dream-come-true two-year-old Library and Learning Center. These essential institutions serve all people, young and not so, of every race, religion, color and creed. Nothing is more important than keeping these community cornerstones healthy. With ongoing support, we prove again and again what we value.

I tip my hat with heartfelt thanks to school district board members and school volunteers, the Library Foundation Board, Friends Board, and hundreds of library volunteers as each strive to make these public institutions available for all.

It is my continuing privilege to serve our community on the Library Foundation Board. I love witnessing fellow residents, especially the youngest among us, along with friends and neighbors from across Lafayette's borders, stream through the wide-open Library doors -- 1500 or so a day, 750,000 people since opening in 2009.

Support for these public institutions paves the way for a future we all hope for, and work to provide, and, if we're really lucky, we catch a glimpse of as we watch our youth grab hold of vast and not-yet-known possibilities and promises afforded them only through our shared commitment and financial support.

So to you, my friends and neighbors, known or unknown to me, I thank you for making Lafayette the special and beloved place that I believe it is. I am so proud to be a resident here among all of you.

From my family to yours, I send you best wishes for the New Year. I look forward to seeing you around town as we support our local businesses, we see our children attending our local schools, and we walk through the Library and Learning Center open doors.

Karen Mulvaney
 Lafayette

Editor:

Moraga's Rancho Laguna Park has NOT always worked well as a place to allow dogs to run off-leash, contrary to assertions by several people. Aggressive dogs have intimidated me after several trail runs while I was walking on the paved pathway or stretching at a bench. Writers Tina Brier and David Shapiro (Letters to the Editor, Dec. 21) suggest that I use the park "during hours when dogs are not off-leash." It does not suit me to run at other times

of the day. I once remarked to the Moraga Town Council that off-leash dogs should be kept separate from other park users. I do appreciate that there is a place where dogs can run off-leash. Just allow other park users to enjoy their time at the park without the threat of intimidation or worse.

Stan Oberg
 Moraga

Editor:

The scheme approved by the Council for the "imprisonment" of Rancho Laguna Park, as shown in the Lamorinda Weekly, is absurd to the nth degree. Because:

1. A fence behind the turf area destroys the "grain" of the park - its idyllic openness.
2. A fence around the east playground & the adjoining BBQ/picnic areas that allows dogs free rein throughout the day is absolute madness for people trying to have a picnic. Just picture food all over the tables & dogs running around. Is that an atmosphere for a peaceful picnic? Or is it a madhouse?
3. A fence around the group picnic area on the west side will make these picnickers feel that they are in a compound.

The people of Moraga requested that this "jewel" of a park be maintained in its rustic tranquility. Why the government of this city does not listen to its citizens is beyond belief.

I am, & have been, a user of the park & its picnic areas for many years. I am not a dog owner. I have never had a problem with the "off leash" arrangement that has been in place. I do not understand why the city has to destroy something that is currently working & enjoyed by park users. If the State requires that the playground areas require fencing for safety reasons, then fence the 2 areas & leave it at that. If the city has more money it should spend the money on repairing & widening the walk path. I expect the representatives of the City of the Town of Moraga to not carry on like the idiots in Sacramento & Washington! If they are no better they should be un-elected immediately.

J.P. Duffy
 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.

Civic News Lafayette, Moraga

Lafayette Kindergarten Preparedness Meeting Next Week

By Cathy Tyson

Entering kindergarten is a big step for young families, to make the transition just a bit easier the Lafayette School district will be hosting, "A Roadmap to Kindergarten."

"The information night is a great way for parents to get the District's take on Kindergarten readiness - straight from a Kindergarten teacher - and hear about 'a day in the life' of a kindergartner. This is certainly information every preschool parent will be interested to hear," said mother of three, Melissa Lee, who volunteered to help get the word out.

What does it take to be ready for kindergarten? Mary Maddux, Principal of Lafayette Elementary, can spell it out for newbies. Parents will also learn what their child can expect in kindergarten and throughout the school year, and about all of the partnerships in the community that help support Lafayette's schools.

Also up for discussion, the District will be introducing its planning for the new Transitional Kindergarten program that is set to start in fall 2012. With the passage of SB 1381, the Kindergarten Readiness Act, the State of California is moving the kindergarten birthday cutoff from December 1 to September 1, phased in over three years. The current cutoff for the 2012-2013 school year has moved from December 1 to November 1. For "young fives" whose kindergarten may be delayed, the bill creates a transitional kindergarten that provides a bridge between preschool and traditional kindergarten. It's estimated that the change could translate in \$700 million in state wide cost saving resulting from having fewer children entering school.

For the 2011 - 2012 school year, California children as young as four years and nine months could start

kindergarten. According the Legislative Analyst's Office, "Data suggest children who are older when they start kindergarten tend to perform better on standardized tests."

The Roadmap to Kindergarten will have information on the Kindergarten registration process and dates of the Open Houses at each of Lafayette's elementary school, and feature a range of speakers including Kindergarten teacher Joan McClure, Superintendent Dr. Fred Brill and representatives from the Parent Club/PTA and Lafayette Partners in Education (LPIE).

Come as you are, crayons not required on Tuesday January 10 from 6:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. at the Lafayette Elementary Multipurpose Room, 950 Moraga Road, Lafayette. For more information on Transitional kindergarten, go to www.preschoolcalifornia.org.

Moraga Gets Two New Police Officers

... continued from page A5

Recently, Koppinger went with her training officer to oversee the Breakfast with Santa event and, according to Moraga Parks and Recreation Director Jay Ingram, she was beaming with joy as she performed her new

duties.

"The COPS money that we used to hire a 13th position is not a guarantee," says Priebe, "we saved last year's allocation (2010), so with this year's money we can finance two

years of employment. If the funds dry out, the Town will choose to either fund that position from the General Fund or eliminate it." Priebe notes that, so far, the COPS grants have not been on the State's chopping block.

FREE YOGA CLASS

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MOFD Board Approves Building Purchase, Revises Purchase Method

By Lucy Amaral

At its December 28 meeting, the Moraga-Orinda Fire District (MOFD) Board of Directors formally approved the purchase of an office building to house the District's administrative staff. After extensive public comment and further discussion by the Board members, the Board voted three to two to move ahead with the acquisition of 1150 Moraga Way.

Since April, 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 MOFD 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. The Board had considered 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.

Most of the residents attending that night spoke out against the purchase of the building. Some likened it to real estate speculation using tax-payer money and questioned the need for such a large space, while others doubted the accuracy of the building's appraisal. Many noted that the District's unfunded pension liability should take priority over a new building.

Orinda Mayor Steve Glazer, who said he was in attendance as a private citizen, was against the purchase and advised the Board to move with caution, encouraging them to rethink the recommendation and wait for the right circumstances and timing.

Those speaking in favor of the purchase felt that the real estate market was currently at the bottom and now was the best time to purchase the building.

The Board continued to be split regarding the purchase. Dick Olsen and Brook Mancinelli again voted against the proposal, with Mancinelli stating that purchasing the building would not get an engine to any part of the District any faster nor does it make any fire fighter do CPR any better.

Frank Sperling, Fred Weil and

John Wyro voted in favor of the purchase. Weil cited improved overall efficiencies and long term benefits. Wyro, who said he considers himself a fiscally conservative person, felt this purchase would have a positive impact on the operations of the District. "I am convinced that that based on all the information we have and the opportunity we have, that this will prove to be a good decision," he said.

How MOFD will purchase the building again changed at this meeting. Originally, the Board considered purchasing the building outright, but that idea was voted down due to cash flow concerns. A lease/purchase option was brought back to the Board as a way to finance the purchase of the building while addressing the need for a controlled cash flow.

During this meeting, MOFD Fire Chief Randy Bradley requested that a new option be considered and approved by the Board. Citing the opportunity for more flexibility with the office building, Bradley recommended that the building at 1150 Moraga be purchased with cash, and that a lease/purchase loan be taken out using Station 42 as security to pay for the rebuilding of Station 43.

Bradley stated that if the office building were paid in full, MOFD would have the flexibility to obtain a lower interest rate, lease space to a for-profit entity (which is not allowed if the lease/purchase agreement were against the office building), or even sell a portion of the building if that option became available.

Bradley offered information regarding a 20-year lease/purchase agreement and in his staff report reiterated that with efficiencies gained by consolidating the staff, costs will be offset.

Again, the Board was split in their opinion of this option. Mancinelli said he had doubts as to the financing options being presented, felt it was a 'bait and switch' with the new proposal and opposed the idea that the District would mortgage one of the fire stations to essentially finance the administrative building.

Olsen, the other Board member who voted against the purchase, requested more time to review this new financial option. Board President Wyro said that while they have one financial package in front of them, they do have some time to consider options and charged Bradley to see if a

better financing package can be put together. Wyro requested this item be put on the agenda for the January meeting. The Board passed the financing option with 3 voting in favor and 2 abstaining.

The next Board meeting will held January 18, 2012 at the Moraga Library.



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 January 18, 2012 7:00 pm at the Moraga Library, 1500 St. Mary's Road (go to www.mofd.org as the meeting date approaches for more information)

Local Schools Transition Kindergarten Entry-Age

... continued from page A1

In the current school year, there are 18 kindergarten-students district wide in Moraga who had November birthdays—15 entered the school year as five-year olds and turned six in November, and three students started at age four years and turned five.

Enrollment numbers will determine how and where the transitional

kindergarten program will be held in the Orinda Union School District as well, says Kathy Marshall, the Director of Curriculum and Development. While the district is looking at a single transitional kindergarten class, Marshall says everything is dependent on enrollment.

Brill believes the addition of the

transitional kindergarten program will be essentially cost neutral to his district, but he sees other benefits. "Developmentally I think it will be beneficial for students to be older when they start kindergarten," he says adding, "Our kindergartens are not just developmental, these are academic programs. We do much, much more."

Kindergarten Readiness Act of 2010

School Year	Kindergarten Entry Age	Transitional Kindergarten Eligible
2011-12	Five by December 2	Not required
2012-13	Five by November 1	Five between 11/2 and 12/2
2013-14	Five by October 1	Five between 10/2 and 12/2
2014-15	Five by September 1	Five between 9/2 and 12/2

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

Registration will take place at the Lafayette School District's four elementary schools in January. An informational meeting will be held on January 10, 2012, 6:00-7:00 p.m. at Lafayette Elementary School (see article page A8).

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.

For more information 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

Registration will take place at the Orinda Union School District's four elementary schools in February.

February 6, 7, 8, 9 (Monday thru Thursday), 2012, 9:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.

- Del Rey Elementary, 25 El Camino Moraga (258-3099)
- Glorietta Elementary, 15 Martha Road (254-8770)
- Sleepy Hollow Elementary, 20 Washington Lane (254-8711)
- Wagner Ranch Elementary, 350 Camino Pablo (258-0016)

For more information go to the district's website at www.orindaschools.org.



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...from Front Page

Ten Challenges for your New Year

... continued from page A1



Walk the dog. Play like a kid at a park, playground or trail. Grind, carve or perform ollies at a skatepark. Play like an adult with a round of Petanque or Bocce on local courts. Play disc golf. Watch a free outdoor movie or attend a concert in the park during summer, or splash around in a high school swimming pool.

9. Volunteer

Give your time and talent to a local school – it's what makes Lamorinda consistently great. Give blood, drive seniors to appointments, make or deliver meals, teach a skill or craft and help others learn something new. Join your neighborhood watch, work with scouts, or help out at community events.

10. Drink less

Dare we say that in an area with up and coming vineyards? Instead, let's just say drink discerningly, and substitute quality for quantity. Keep it local. It goes without saying to keep it legal too—don't drink and drive, and don't let others do that either.

There's your list. Pick a favorite or tackle them all, and get back to me in 365 days (2012 is a leap year). I'll be the thinner, non-smoking, erudite, eating-right, debt-free, fun-with-family, Lamorinda-travelled, stress-free, light-drinking volunteer you'll see around town!

4. Eat better/diet

What better way to do that than by treating yourself to fresh produce at one of Lamorinda's weekly farmer's markets. In the bargain, you get fresh air and a chance to socialize. Lafayette Farmer's Market runs May through September, Thursday, 3:30 to 7:00 p.m., in the Plaza, Mt. Diablo Blvd. and Moraga Road. Orinda Farmer's Market in Orinda Village runs April through November, Saturday, 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Both are Contra Costa County Certified Farmer's Markets. The Moraga Farmer's Market is a member of the California Farmer's Markets Association. The market runs year round on Sundays, 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. out of the Moraga Shopping Center.

Pocket that BART fare when you casual carpool to work! Run errands around town on bike and save gas. Shop for gently-used clothing and household goods at local stores. Find a good read at a fraction of the cost at the Lafayette, Moraga or Orinda Friends of the Library used book store.

6. Spend more time with family

Explore items 3, 8 and 9 with them.

7. Travel

It's nice in Lamorinda, so take a "staycation" instead. Eat out locally—your choice of American cuisine, or Italian, Thai, Chinese, Japanese, Mexican, French. Find a new neighborhood and explore it on foot. Travel back in time by visiting your community's historical society.

5. Get out of debt/save money

8. Be less stressed

Lamorindans Resolve for 2012

Compiled by Cathy Dausman



In the photo: Couples from Lafayette and Walnut Creek celebrate New Year's Eve at the Round Up. From left: David Jordan resolves to, "Be better to my wife;" Stacey Robbins' (his wife) resolution is, "To be the best Maid of Honor to my sister;" David Huddleston resolves to "Conquer Skyrim;" while fiancé Kelly Robbins vows to, "Plan my wedding!"

Here is what some other locals said when asked about their own New Year's goals:

Fix Orinda's Roads in 2012! *Victoria Smith, Orinda*

My New Year's resolution is to go horseback riding where ever my travels take me. *Nancy D. Brown, Lafayette*

Keep the history of Lafayette alive and available to our community. *Mary McCosker, Lafayette*

I'm going to give up eating hákarl (fermented shark) in 2012. *Erik Ólafsson, Canyon*

In 2012 I resolve to not drink caffeine on City Council meeting nights! *Michele Olsen, Orinda*

My resolution is to establish mindfulness in my day-to-day life... and have more fun too! *Sophie Braccini, Moraga*

Tough....hopefully my dentist will read this --- floss more, more concerts, slightly fewer cookies. *Cathy Tyson, Moraga*

To laugh and dance more! *Laura Zucker, Lafayette*

Mine is to travel back East to reconnect with my cousins. *Laurie Snyder, Orinda*

A healthier life style. *Doug Kohen (Lamorinda Weekly photographer)*

I'll stop swearing like a sailor. *Martina Cistaro, Moraga*

I want to start going to yoga again on a regular basis. *Wendy Scheck, Moraga*

My New Year's resolution is to not make any resolutions to exercise more or lose weight. I might actually be able to keep this one. *Barry Hunau, Lafayette*

My New Year's resolution is to be more technologically savvy. I need to keep up with generation Y! *Todd Skinner, Lafayette*

I resolve to use alternate modes of transportation in 2012—I will try to walk and ride my bike more rather than drive my car. *Dennis Rein, Lafayette*

I vow to sweep the clutter from my life...in my office, closets and cupboards. The Oakland Museum White Elephant folks will be glad to see me coming on donation days! *Patti Witalis, Orinda*

I'm not a New Year's resolution kinda guy. I haven't made a resolution in over 30 years. I just try to live and enjoy a good life, it is sooo short; to be fair and honest with all my friends and to whomever I meet... *Rob Omo*

May I remember that 'the older I get the faster I was!' May I forget the speed at which I now propel myself is fast approaching 'the speed of dark.'" *John Fazel, Orinda*

To read more and walk more on Lamorinda's many trails. *Ginger Wadsworth, Orinda*

Be quoted more in the local paper. *Mason Walters, Lafayette*

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Lamorinda Teenagers Host International Internet Radio Show



By Rosylyn Aragon Stenzel



From left: Host & Administrator Steven Zhou, Field Reporters: Courtney Cheng, Rachel Glass, Vivien Lee, and Alex Pawlakos.

Photo Cynthia Brian

Taking internet radio by storm, the teen radio show *Express Yourself* featuring Lamorinda teenagers recently hit the airwaves with the first show debuting on November 22 to over 132 countries.

Hosts Steven Zhou and Chan Dara Paschal, along with field reporters Courtney Cheng, Rachel Glass, Vivien Lee, Eric Pawlakos, Jacqueline Tao and Courtney Tran, discuss and report on topics interesting to teens.

So far the teens have covered a variety of themes including, "Out Into the World" (life after high school), "Finding Our Special Gifts," "Branding" (launching products, services and self), and "Hip Hop, Radio Star, Glee & Movie Secrets."

With the hosts and reporters calling in from different locations using Skype, *Express Yourself* airs on Voice America Kids Network every Tuesday at noon. Zhou, a senior at Miramonte, is based in Moraga, while Paschal, a 17-year-old college student, reports from Los Angeles. Field

correspondents report in a variety of topics from finding the best apps for your smart phone to college campus living. Most of the reporters are high schoolers with the exception of Glass who calls in from the University of Oregon and Tao from Stanford University.

Zhou hopes the show will reach out to teenagers and inspire them, "For me, it's not so much about meeting famous people, but the show is a way for me personally to get to know other people who are fulfilling their dreams, and use their inspiring stories to reach out to other people and motivate them."

It all began with the *Express Yourself* website (www.BTSYA.com) where teenagers have a forum to "voice and publish creative works and positive media for the young-at-heart." The popularity of the website led to the creation of the radio show.

In addition, the website and radio show originated from the Moraga-based *Be the Star You*

Are literacy charity founded by Cynthia Brian. Along with producing the radio show, Brian has worked with and mentored the teens in volunteering with the charity.

Now with several shows already produced, plans for future shows will include guests from other countries as well as adding field reporters from Europe and Asia. Themes are evolving too; covering tough issues such as parents divorcing, drugs/alcohol, sexual issues and etc., anything that teenagers may be going through. "Musicians, educators, authors, and entrepreneurs are all included in this global campus of youth voicing opinions and experiences. Nothing is taboo and nothing is off limits. If kids are talking about it, so are we," says Brian.

Next steps, besides production of future shows, says Brian, are to find sponsors for the radio show. For more information on *Express Yourself* and for links to archived shows on Voice America, visit www.ExpressYourself-TeenRadio.com.

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Color on Canvas and Wearable Art

By Cathy Dausman



Photo provided

A kaleidoscope of colors and wearable art spills out this month at Moraga Art Gallery's (MAG) new show, Kaleidoscope, as the gallery moves a few doors down to its new location at 522 Center Street in the Rheem Center. The show features the work of gallery member and local artist Angelica Samame along with guest artist and jewelry designer Karin Lechner.

Samame, a 28-year Lamorinda resident, paints in acrylic on canvas (and has for 10 years) because it is "easy to correct." Her colors are vibrant, with some paintings reminiscent of a Peter Maxx style, others with a softer Monet-like brush stroke. Samame talks of throwing paint

at the canvas and starting with the colors and "a face." She has included a few of her papier mache creations for good measure.

Lechner, also a Lamorinda local, makes one-of-a-kind beaded jewelry. She says she draws on her training as an interior designer to make her jewelry, "Choosing unusual elements and combining them with regard to color, texture and scale."

Kaleidoscope at MAG opens January 10, with a reception from 3:00 to 5:00 p.m. January 14. The show runs through March 17. Moraga Art Gallery is a collective of 16 local artists and artisans; it is open from noon to 5:00 p.m. Tuesdays through Sundays.

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Districts Welcome New Directors for
Special Education**

By Courtney Bennett

In the summer of 2011, both the Lafayette and Orinda Union School Districts welcomed new special services directors, when, by coincidence, the former directors for both districts retired with a combined 26 years of service between them. Lafayette Union School District's new Director of Student Services is John Egnor, and Orinda Union School District's new Director of Special Services and Personnel is Brian Inglesby. Working closely with the community, staff and administration, the Directors oversee the development, delivery and evaluation of special education services to students in their districts.

**John Egnor –
Lafayette's New Director**

He may have only been in his new position as special services director for five months, but John Egnor is already impressed with



From left: Brian Inglesby and John Egnor

Photo provided

Lafayette's level of support for education. "I have never worked in an area before where so many people are committed to supporting the school district," he says. And according to Egnor, the feeling is mutual, with administrators to teachers conveying a genuine appreciation for the community's support.

Egnor brings almost two decades of experience in special education to his new position. He first worked directly with students as a school psychologist in Southern California before transitioning to special education administration. Most recently he served as Coordinator of Special Education for a school in Big Bear, California. He earned a master's in education from Azusa Pacific University with an emphasis in school psychology. As an undergraduate at Rochester College in Michigan, he majored in religious studies.

When asked what drew him to special education, Egnor said that different life experiences and relationships with people who were dealing with disabled family members compelled him to work with students with disabilities. Part of his motivation is rooting for the underdog; another part is wanting to provide equal opportunity for all individuals. "I feel a lot of satisfaction when I'm in a meeting with a parent or teacher and can help them think of different ways to provide information to a student with a different ability level," he says, "and then watching that student grow."

In all the districts where Egnor has worked, he believes that he has strengthened the relationships between administration and teachers, teachers and parents, and teachers and students. In his last district, for example there was no type of parent-teacher alliance between parents of kids with disabilities and educators. Egnor instituted monthly meetings with parents, teachers and support staff to provide a forum to discuss trends and research in the field of special education, and to think about creative ways to meet students' needs. He says that he's most proud of his efforts to help people understand and work alongside each other to benefit students. "Ultimately that's what educators care about – how to help students reach their potential," he says. "By working together we focus on our students and they thrive in that environment."

Lafayette School District Superintendent Fred Brill describes Egnor as a "thoughtful individual, skilled listener and knowledgeable practitioner," and says he is impressed with Egnor's system-wide capacity building approach. "John is going beyond the critical work of meeting the individual needs of children with special needs, by also trying to build capacity among the instructors, aides and staff

in the District," says Brill, who also calls Egnor's outreach to parents "impressive." Brill notes, "He wants to meet with people and learn what we're doing well and what we can improve."

A West Virginia native, Egnor married his high school sweetheart, who also worked as a school psychologist. Together they traveled extensively and lived in Europe before moving to California, where they've lived for about 12 years. While they visit family in West Virginia often, they are happy to live in California. "My wife and I joke that once you spent a winter in California you can't go back," Egnor says, adding that they particularly appreciate California's diversity and physical beauty.

Egnor says that his biggest challenge at this point is simply being the new kid on the block, with a much-loved predecessor who had held the position for 14 years. He admits that it's "hard to come in as a new person and garner trust with school staff and community. No one knows me and I have to spend a lot of time building relationships and getting to know people," he says. "I'm not trying to fill my predecessor's shoes, I'm trying to set my own course." His ultimate goal is to build on what's worked in the past and to give a voice to all the different stakeholders. "I want to create a culture of openness among teachers and parents, and all the other stakeholders, and empower everyone involved," he says.

**Brian Inglesby –
Orinda's New Director**

Being an educator isn't just a profession for Orinda's new Director of Special Services and Personnel, Brian Inglesby, it's a family tradition. Both of his parents were East Bay teachers. His mother taught elementary school in Pleasanton, and his dad taught high school biology and coached football in Dublin and Pleasanton. As teachers, his parents reinforced the importance of patience, caring, and looking for the positive in every student. "They also emphasized the need for perseverance and practice, practice, practice, in order to excel – whether it's math, writing, reading, spelling, basketball, music, or football," he says.

Inglesby brings two decades of experience of working with children in special education in Northern California schools. For 16 years he worked directly with children as a school psychologist in San Mateo County. Before taking the job in Orinda, he was the education services director for Woodside Elementary School. Inglesby says that he still uses the "lens of a school psychologist" to inform his work as an administrator.

... continued on page B5

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The World is Big at the International Film Showcase

Winner of the California Independent Film Festival 2009

Best Picture award comes to local theaters

By Sophie Braccini



Film poster

Provided

The *World is Big*, also known as *The World is Big and Salvation Lurks Around the Corner* (the complete translation of its Bulgarian title, Светът е голям и спасение дебне отвсякъде) is a 2008 movie by Stefan Komandarev, from Ilija Trojanow's novel of the same name. With the end of the Bulgarian communist regime, state subsidies for movies dried up and film production in Bulgaria fell into a black hole. But a few recent releases suggest that the lean years are ending.

The World is Big is the most ambitious Bulgarian movie produced since 1989; four countries contributed to its making: Bulgaria, Germany, Slovenia and Hungary. In 2010 the movie made the shortlist of nine semi-finalists to the 82nd Academy Awards for Best Foreign Language Film. The film can be described as a tragic-comedy in which humor and drama intertwine to tell the stories of two parallel journeys – of fleeing one's country in the 1980s, and of coming back home today.

After a car accident Alexander, a 30-year-old young German of Bulgarian origin, loses his parents and his memory. Arriving from Bulgaria, his grand-father, Baï Dan, (played by Miki Manojlovic, a leading actor in the Balkans and Europe) decides to take him on a trip to the Bulgarian village where he was born and spent his first years. The film gradually becomes a road movie as the two men journey toward the Balkans, through Europe, on a tandem bicycle.

The old man, a backgammon champion, takes his grandson on a spiritual journey toward his past

and his family, while teaching him the rules of backgammon. Manojlovic gives a great performance as an aging Balkanic sage with a twinkle in his eye. In parallel to the contemporary trip, the movie uses flash-backs to transport the spectator to the '80s and the saga of a Bulgarian family forced to exile in Italy and Germany by a government that was very close to Moscow's politics at the time. The film gives only glimpses of life in the Eastern bloc under authoritarian rule—the oppressive power structure, the difficulty of fleeing, life in the migrant camps in Italy that turned out to be even more repressive, and life in Germany are barely touched upon.

Some might find that there are one too many transitions between the present and the past, and that this somewhat disrupts the viewer's ability to identify with the characters—the lyricism of this story, the reunion between the old Bulgarian and the grandson he had lost for 25 years, has difficulty blossoming. By the same token, life in Bulgaria and in the camps is not given enough depth to completely convince the viewer. Komandarev didn't want to underplay one period to highlight the other, but there is not enough time in a single movie to fully develop the characters and involve the audience.

It is nonetheless a powerful movie that asks simple and important questions common to most human beings. Where are my roots? Who am I? It is also a movie about the desire of freedom and the capacity to fight back, about the difficulties of living in a foreign country and the choice between staying there and leaving.

The film will play at the Orinda Theater, January 6-12, and at the New Rheem Theatre, January 13-19, kicking off the second year of the International Film Showcase. The Showcase was created by Orinda residents Efi Lubliner and JoAlice Canterbury. Every month they bring an internationally acclaimed foreign film, which has never been released commercially in the Bay Area, to Lamorinda. For more information, tickets and show times go to <http://www.lfef.org>.

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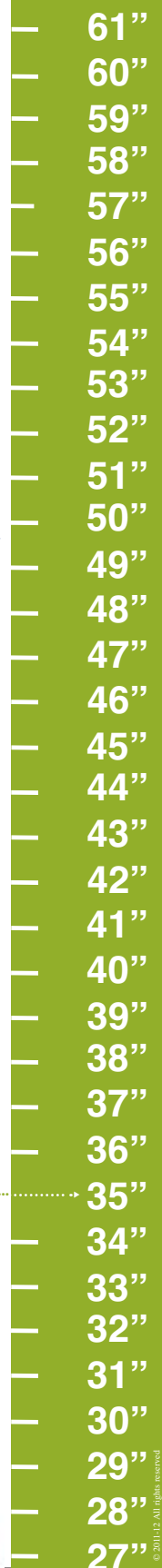
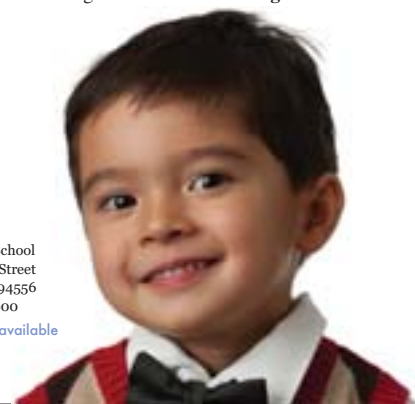
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Michael Frazier
Vice-President, Portfolio Manager
and Moraga Resident

New Year, New Businesses, and for Store Owners, New Adventures

By Sophie Braccini

Lamorinda may not be immune to the economic crisis—a few businesses have closed and we've seen some home foreclosures—but for the most part, the three communities remain active and vibrant. Sales tax revenue is showing modest improvement and some local stores are doing very well. Featured here are a few businesses that recently opened in the Lamorinda area, and there are more.

Tiny Feet
2 Theater Square, Orinda
317-3062



Milena Mitkin in Tiny Shoes

Milena Mitkin just opened Tiny Feet in Orinda's Theater Square with her husband, Marko. Nicely located across from Sweet Dreams, the tastefully decorated boutique offers a selection of quality and creative infant and children's shoes from all over the world, with brands such as Chooze, Garvalin, Primigi, and the adorable American-made Joyfolie Shoes. "We wanted to bring high-end kids shoes to Lamorinda," says Mitkin.

This business is the couple's first retail venture. He is an attorney, she was in the insurance business, and they are raising their two young boys in Moraga. "We were welcomed and supported by Theater Square's management as soon as we presented our project," says Mitkin, "everyone believes that there is a need for such a store, that savvy and sophisticated parents are looking for the durable and unique selection we offer here."

Glamorous
1048 Brown Avenue, Lafayette
284-5636

In Lafayette, Eliza Jambokian just opened her first fashion boutique. Glamorous is a special occasion and cocktail dress store where mothers-of-the-bride and women who want an elegant look can find an assortment of shapes, fabrics and colors that will accommodate many tastes. An Acalanes graduate, the young woman's shop is next to her father's Creative Alteration and Dry Cleaning at 1048 Brown Avenue. "There is a good



Eliza Jambokian in Glamorous

synergy between our two businesses," she says, "and the business community on Brown is growing, creating a very good environment for retail." The seasonal boutique is currently offering a collection geared to the holidays and the cold weather. "Come February I will have bridal dresses, then I will add the spring and summer fashions in the same spirit of special occasions," says Jambokian, who was a design specialist at Nordstrom, and worked for five years as a visual merchandiser and manager in retail stores. For her own store she's done extensive research into brands that would appeal to local women; tailored, classy outfits with a bit of sexiness, and she tried to keep it reasonably priced. She carries brands such as Due Per Due and Sangria, among many others. "As soon as I started bringing dresses into my father's store, even before I could open my own, they started selling," says Jambokian. "I am very excited for my first business—I am expressing my creativity here and believe it will be very successful."

L Silhouettes
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Gabriel Torres in L Silhouettes

A few doors from TJ Maxx, a new gift/toy store, L Silhouettes, opened just in time for the Christmas season. Owner Lulu Tor-

res' brother, Gabriel, was in the store when we paid them a visit. "The Christmas season has been good for the business," he said, "it was like we were the talk of the town!" The store is quite large and still has ample room for more merchandise. "We wanted to have more things for Christmas, but we were so new that we couldn't get all we wanted," says Lulu Torres. Right now the store has a nice assortment of games such as Legos, stuffed animals, porcelain collectibles and jewelry for different age groups. "We've had parents coming in for gifts for teens and tweens and we suggested Hello Kitty jewelry, or some of our very nice watches," says Torres, adding that many people are asking for more toys and that she's happy to hear suggestions from customers. "We are getting Japanese crystal 3D puzzles in the coming days, and more. People should check us out and we'll get what they want if we don't have it already!" says the eager young businesswoman who, with L Silhouettes, is starting her first business in Moraga.

Wonderful Spa
450 Center St., Moraga
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Coco Zhang and Joel Schaffer in Wonderful Spa

Photos Sophie Braccini

Open for just a few months, Wonderful Spa is already creating a customer base with clients such as Orinda resident Joel Schaffer. We found him conversing in fluent Mandarin with owner Coco Zhang after a relaxing treatment in the little massage parlor nestled between TJ Maxx and Tuesday Morning in the Rheem Center. "We have quite a lot of foot traffic from people who come to the big stores," says Zhang, "and we are growing from repeat customers and word of mouth." This Moraga business, which is not affiliated with the Wonderful Spa Center in Orinda, does have a sister establishment located in Danville. Wonderful Spa specializes in foot massage, also known as reflexology, as well as full body massage. The cost for an hour of reflexology is \$25 and for a full body massage, \$40.

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

Orinda Chemist Elected 2013 President of ACS

Marinda Li Wu was elected last month the 2013 American Chemist Society (ACS) President. The long time Orinda resident will serve as president-elect in 2012, president in 2013, and immediate past-president in 2014 of the ACS Board of Directors. ACS, with 163,000 members, is the world's largest scientific society. Wu was elected after what she considered a fierce battle in which her main rival was a scientist from the National Research Center (NRC) in Washington D.C. "Scientists are not used to running campaigns," said Wu, "but after I was asked by many different people to run for president and I decided to start a campaign last year."

Wu is known in Lamorinda for her advocacy for scientific education. "I started the Family Science Night at OIS in 1997," explains the woman who's raised two kids in Orinda, "there are so many labs and scientists in the Bay Area—it is easy to find volunteers ready to help." The chemist also started the Science Café geared for adults in Orinda that is now operating every month in Lafayette through a partnership with the Lafayette Library and Learning Center Foundation.

Wu believes that kids should be introduced to science at an early age. She launched the non-profit Science Is Fun! that conducts after-school and summer camp science education in Lamorinda. With her new global responsibilities (Wu wants to increase ACS ties around the world), she will not have a lot of time for local advocacy, but she wants to continue supporting on-going science awareness.

Chamber's Jay Lifson is Lafayette's Business Person of the Year

The Marquis Business Person of the Year award is given to an individual who supports the Lafayette Chamber of Commerce's mission: To promote and maintain the healthy business climate and to preserve and enhance the quality of life in Lafayette. The 2012 awardee is none other than Jay Lifson, the Chamber's Executive Director. "Jay took over the helm of the Lafayette Chamber of Commerce in 2005 as the Executive Director and his leadership has been exceptional" says Steve Cortese, Chamber past president and board member. "Since 2005, the Cham-



Jay Lifson

ber's revenue has increased 65 percent and membership has increased 42 percent. This success has been vital in allowing the Chamber to continue its role of promoting business and enhancing the quality of life in our great City." Cortese points out that Lifson's involvement with the Chamber and the city goes way beyond expectations, "There are few Planning Commission or City Council meetings that Jay doesn't attend," says Cortese. "In the early morning hours you might not recognize the guy fixing the strand of twinkle lights on Mt. Diablo Blvd. that went out the night before, but that's also Jay. And if you're a business needing help with a governmental matter, or a government official needing assistance solving a particular problem for a business, it seems Jay is the one to call." The celebration for Lifson will be on Friday, January 20th at the Lafayette Park Hotel & Spa. Cocktails at 6:00 p.m. and dinner at 7:00 p.m. To register, please visit www.lafayettechamber.org.

News from the three Chambers of Commerce will be back next time.

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

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Location, Location...Plein Air

By Cathy Dausman



The Orinda landscape painting group at an old pear orchard in Moraga last spring. Photo courtesy John Finger

When it comes to class descriptions, art teacher John Finger likes to call it like it is. Because of that the Orinda landscape painting class he's led for the past couple of years will likely undergo a name change from Location Painting to the better known (at least in art circles) name of Plein (fresh) Air. The class once headed by Pam Glover still has a loyal following. Finger, who currently teaches the class, says the group of mostly oil-based painters strives to recreate the beauty of California's hills, trees, nostalgic buildings, streams and bays. They have been meeting Wednesdays in the field from 10:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. for the past quarter century to do this. Most "come early and stay late," he says, and enjoy being outdoors encountering bugs, sun, wind and wandering art critics. The fruits of their labor will be on display in the Orinda Library Gallery through the month of January. A reception is planned from 3:30 to 5:00 p.m. January 8. Shows at the Orinda Library Gallery are sponsored by the Orinda Arts of California's hills, trees, nostalgic

Share your thoughts, insights and opinions with your community.

Send a letter to the editor:

letters@lamorindaweekly.com

Lafayette and Orinda Union School Districts Welcome New Directors for Special Education

... continued from page B2

"School psychologists do a lot of analysis and detective work to determine the particular learning strengths and needs of a student, and then put that plan into action with the necessary pieces - such as the methodologies, curriculum, and support personnel," he says. As a psychologist, he has worked with children across the age and developmental spectrum, which gave him a strong understanding of specific developmental milestones, while also teaching him to look ahead and think about how to prepare students to succeed later in school.

Although Inglesby is new to Orinda, it's a home coming of sorts

for the East Bay native, who was born in Walnut Creek and grew up in Pleasanton. Inglesby studied psychology as an undergraduate at UC Santa Cruz, earned a master's in school psychology at San Francisco State University, and is currently working on a doctorate at UC Berkeley's School of Education. His dissertation focuses on school principals and their experience with special education services, because Inglesby believes that principals are the key to success with special education services in schools. "I have learned that principals arrive with a wide range of experience with special education services," he says. "Some have a lot of experience with

services such as IEPs (Individualized Education Plans), while others need more support." One of his primary roles as Special Services Director is to consult with principals and serve as a resource for them, as well as for school staff and families.

Another important part of Inglesby's job is overseeing personnel for the Orinda Union School District. As personnel director he oversees the hiring, regulations, policies, practices for both certificated (e.g., teachers, specialists) and classified (e.g., aides, maintenance, office support staff) personnel.

As special services director, Inglesby participates in many meetings

that bring together teachers, students, parents and specialists, and it's this team aspect of special education that he particularly enjoys. Inglesby notes that complicated cases can have 20 people contributing to a child's education. "It's a powerful experience when a group of people work together over an extended period of time and pool their resources to help a child succeed," he says. "I enjoy building teams and facilitating that process." Orinda parent Anna Tague, who founded a support group for parents of children in special education in the Orinda Union School District, has noticed and appreciated his engagement and willingness to be a team player.

"I appreciate the energy and enthusiasm Brian brings to his role," she says. "At our first meeting he was genuinely interested in learning as much as he could about my daughter so he could help her receive the support she needs."

When asked what professional accomplishment he points to with pride, Inglesby says that in the districts where he's worked, he has been part of collaborative team that helped to significantly increase STAR scores for students with disabilities. He also highlights his work creating a more coherent and comprehensive plan for aligning special education services with regular education standards.

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Options Weighed for Future of Lafayette Girl Scout Camp

By Cathy Tyson



Twin Canyon Camp

Photos provided

Even non-profit organizations have to take a hard look at revenues and expenses to keep their doors open. For the Girl Scouts of Northern California (GSNorCal) donations are down, expenses are up and cookie sales don't quite make ends meet.

Faced with this challenging financial situation, the GSNorCal Board and Property Task Group have been evaluating their twenty-nine properties looking to maximize efficiency and reduce losses. "GSNorCal is fortunate to have magnificent properties, but we cannot afford to operate and maintain all of these properties, unless we make significant cuts in other service areas," stated a member update from September of this year. The correspondence went on to explain that as part of its strategic plan the organization has a goal of establishing a six month reserve of at least \$4.7 million to satisfy the minimum Girl Scout requirement, and to end deficit spending.

The group analyzed the six offices, two service centers, eight program centers that serve as meeting space, four outdoor centers that include Lafayette's Twin Canyon, and nine camps for weekend and summer camping spread from Chico to Santa Cruz.

GSNorCal spends approximately \$1.7 million per year, net of

rental income, operating the properties spread across the region. They also estimate \$454,000 per year should be spent or reserved for capital repairs to meet health and safety requirements. Cookie sales and donations fund these expenses. The Board and Finance Committee concluded that just to keep up with inflation and expenses they need to reduce by 25 percent what they spend on these properties and use the properties to build an emergency reserve. It may be possible to raise money via selling conservation easements on some of the properties that could help jump-start a reserve account.

Preliminary recommendations included in an August 2011 report separate the camp properties that best meet GSNorCal's outdoor program goals. Four Tier One camps demonstrated opportunities to increase revenue and reduce expenses. Three camp properties fell into Tier Two – that management feels can realistically move to break even operations. Unfortunately Lafayette's own Twin Canyon camp was questionable - falling into Tier Three.

"I have two meetings scheduled with volunteers during January to work on a plan to get Twin Canyon's operations closer to break even," said Marina Park, CEO of Girl Scouts of Northern California. "I


am optimistic we will be able to accomplish that goal. The volunteer-run day camp at Twin Canyon is looking into increasing the fees it charges to help cover more of the costs of operating the camp property, and other volunteers have expressed interest in being part of a fundraising campaign to establish a reserve fund that will generate income to help pay for operations and repairs on the property. We are taking some time to explore these possibilities with interested volunteers and community members."

Since 1954, Twin Canyon has been hosting scores of happy campers for outdoor retreats, troop camping and training courses. The sprawling original 65-acre site off of Springhill Road was purchased outright through a special fund drive, cookie sales and calendar sales; clearly land was cheaper back in those days. Fast forward to 1978 when a 35-acre portion of Twin Canyon was deemed too hilly for camping use was sold at \$1,000 per acre to the East Bay Regional Park District. As the city has grown up around it, Twin Canyon has remained a favorite destination for Girl Scouts past and present. Local supporters are making a concerted effort to save the camp.

Looking forward, the Board and Finance Committee have concluded that they could reduce the property subsidy through a combination of revenue growth, expense reductions and donations and can raise the reserve funds in several ways, including property sales. CEO Park has been authorized to continue working on conservation easements of two properties in the Santa Cruz mountains.

There will be a Town Hall meeting to discuss options for Twin Canyon, for interested parties, on January 18 from 6:30 – 8:30 p.m. at Grace Presbyterian Church, 2100 Tice Valley Boulevard in Walnut Creek.

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Cub Scouts Visit the Bridge Project

Submitted by Heather O'Donnell



Photo provided

Moraga's Cub Scout Pack 54, Den 2, took to the docks to learn about a giant engineering project in Oakland—the retrofit of the Bay Bridge. The retrofit includes the creation of the world's longest self-anchored suspension span (SAS). The scouts learned the main cable is almost one mile long, extends over one 525 foot tower (that is actually 4 legs), and is longer than five football fields. The

scouts were able to climb into a sample "tower" leg and see a cross-section of the 30 inch cable that is made up of over 17,399 wires and weighs over 10.6 million pounds. As part of earning their Engineering pin, the scouts built their own model suspension bridges with toothpicks and marshmallows, attempting to meet all the parameters that the new Bay Bridge must meet as part of modern earthquake safety guide-

lines. The Bay Bridge was opened in 1936 and is celebrating its 75th anniversary throughout 2012. The new Self-Anchored Suspension Span will be painted a "sparkly" white and will be a beautiful addition to the Bay area skyline.

The westbound deck of the Bay Bridge will be closed during Presidents Day weekend in February. For more information go to www.baybridgeinfo.org.

Building a Strong College Application: An Engineering Example

By Elizabeth LaScala, PhD

Building a strong college application takes thought, time and preparation. Starting in junior year, and most certainly by senior year, students are often asked, "So what are you going to major in when you go to college?" Well-intentioned though it may be, this question puts most students in an awkward position. Young people are smart, smarter than most people give them credit for, and they often are at a loss for how to respond. Sometimes they do have an idea about what they are interested in, but they know as soon as they mention a possible area of interest, they may be peppered with further, ever more specific queries about their future plans.

This column is dedicated to young people and those who are prone to ask them questions about their future plans. I would like to suggest that the better question to ask is, "How are you preparing for your possible major or area of interest?" This inquiry is more to the heart of the matter. Colleges also ask students what academic area draws their interest. But colleges



Elizabeth LaScala Ph.D. guides college, transfer and graduate school applicants through the complex world of admissions. She develops best match college lists, offers personalized interview and essay coaching, and tools and strategies to help students tackle each step of the admissions process with confidence and success. Elizabeth helps students from all backgrounds to maximize merit and financial aid awards. Visit www.doingcollege.com; call (925) 891-4491 or email at elizabeth@doingcollege.com

tion to one possible area of interest. This indicates that the student is capable of analytic thinking and shows maturity and good judgment.

Adults who care about young people can better support them by showing an interest in how students are learning more about a possible major or career; some adults, like those in certain professions such as journalism, law or medicine, as well as teachers and counselors, may be able to offer concrete support and guidance with the process itself. The example of engineering serves as an actual illustration. With some thought and a bit of research, it is should be easy to extend the example to any academic subject or career path.

Students who are thinking about majoring in engineering should understand what engineers actually do. Begin by researching what engineering is all about. Here are some tips to help you learn more about the field of engineering and its specialties:

- Research colleges with strong engineering programs. Go through their engineering departments' website to learn as much as you can about the programs. Try to arrange visits to a few of colleges that appeal to you, and talk to engineering advisors. Try to combine these discussions with a regular college tour and information session; be sure to register for the tour and the make a definite appointment with the engineering advisor. Planning ahead will work to your benefit.
- Shadow engineers. Talk to them about their jobs and what they do each day. Get a feel for the differences between mechanical, electrical, chemical, civil and bioengineering. There are quite a few other specialties to read about and begin to understand.
- Look into internships. Try to participate in one or more opportunities before your senior year. Future engineers can research op-

portunities such as the UC Apprentice Researcher (6 weeks with a local UC grad student) or COSMOS. And Google Engineering Research Opportunities for High School Students and you will get many leads to follow up on.

- Enroll in an academic enrichment course at a community college.

Engagement in enrichment activities demonstrates intellect, passion, and curiosity; in the engineering example, these activities will reveal your aptitude in engineering, computer science or science in general. Computer science is important since all engineering programs include programming languages as skillsets. And many engineering programs require honors chemistry and or physics for admission.

A great resource for all students is the Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Handbook. Check it out by visiting www.bls.gov/oco to learn about hundreds of different types of jobs. The handbook is a wonderful resource and tells you about the training and education required for various careers, earnings, expected job prospects and more.

In addition to exploring engineering as a possible career path, keep in mind that a strong engineering applicant will have:

- Completed a calculus series in high school.
- Have a strong SAT or ACT math score.
- Earned excellent grades in math and science throughout high school.

Scored well on the SAT Math Level II Subject Test as well as Physics or Chemistry SAT Subject Tests.

- Completed a number of AP courses to show the ability to handle the rigor of college-level coursework.

Whatever academic interests you have, it is wise to start learning more about them early in your high school career. The strongest college applications are submitted by students who have done some systematic research and found ways to get exposure to and direct experience in possible majors and career paths.

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THE APP RAP

By Eric Pawlakos

Two Great College Finance Apps Borrowing for College
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For: iPhone, iTouch, iPad

Student Loan Calculator
Developer: Business Compass
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For: Androids

Many teens are faced with the prospect of taking out loans for college. In fact, student loans this year are going to surpass one trillion dollars. I found two apps that make it easier to understand the financial obligations you may be encountering and the debt you may face at the end of your college enrollment.

Two of my favorite apps can help you decide how much your college education is going to cost while giving you concrete information to help you know how long it will take to repay any loans. The first app is *Borrowing for College*. It is available for the iPhone, iTouch and iPad. What I found most interesting with this app is that it requires the student to contemplate the expected employment salary after graduation. It calculates the amount of money you need in three simple steps. First, input what you guess your starting salary will be in your future career. Next, estimate what percentage of your paycheck can be used towards paying off the loan. Finally, add in the loan interest rate and term length. Assuming you will earn \$50,000 and intend to use 10% of that to reduce your loan payments, over ten years your monthly repayment amount will be \$416.00 at the standard student loan rate of 6.8%. With this calculation, you wouldn't want to exceed a loan of more than \$5,000 annually.

Now you probably would like to know what the actual cost of your loan will be. The second and equally helpful app, available only for the Android, is called the *Student Loan Calculator by Business Compass*. This app also needs only three pieces of information and definitely makes you think twice before assuming loan debt. The app requires input of the term, loan balance, and interest rate. For a student who needs \$60,000, the monthly payment is almost \$700.00 per month at the standard 6.8% interest rate. Over the ten year lifetime of the loan, a total of \$85,000 will be required to complete the repayment. Paying that extra \$25,000 may encourage students to forget the loans and instead apply for grants and scholarships.

According to the University of California web site, (<http://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/accountability/index/3.7>) currently, 27.5% of University of California students graduate with twenty to over thirty thousand dollars of debt. These apps really give us ammunition to realize the amount of money we need for school and the salary we must attain to repay any loans. Information is power and could keep you out of student debt.

Eric Pawlakos is a senior at Miramonte High School and on-air reporter for the teen radio program, *Express Yourself!*TM

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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. See article page B1.

Orinda Community Church invites the public to view Karl Schonborn's "Peace on Earth" art show. Schonborn is an Orinda resident, sociologist and professor whose art deals with issues of conflict, inequality and charisma. His paintings have included renderings of Ghandi, Jesus, St. Fran-

cis, Martin Luther King, Jr. and A.J. Muste, five men who he says "shared a commitment to nonviolence." "Peace on Earth" runs through January 22 in the church's Doug Adams Sanctuary Gallery, and is open by appointment weekdays, 8:30am to 4pm. Call (925) 254-4906 for details.



Gandhi walking

Lafayette Gallery's winter show "Heartfelt" will run January 10 - March 3. The exhibition features unique sculpture, ceramics, paintings, prints, glasswork, jewelry and photography, created by local artists. The public is invited to meet the artists at a free reception on Friday, February 3, 6:30 - 8:30pm. The Gallery is located at 50 Lafayette Circle, Lafayette (across from Chow). Hours: Tues - Sat, 11am-5pm; www.lafayette-gallery.net; (925) 284-2788.

Plein Air works will be on display at the Orinda Library Gallery through the month of January. A reception is planned from 3:30 to 5:00 p.m. on January 8. See article page B5.

MUSIC

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.

Bach to Gershwin with poetry set to music in between: 8pm on Jan. 10th in Walnut Creek. Preludes and Fugues from The Well-Tempered Clavier; Dickinson, Cummings, Whitman and Frost as you've never heard them before, and a piano and bass tribute to the "Piano Man," all in beautiful Grace Presbyterian Church. 2100 Tice Valley Blvd, Walnut Creek. More information and full program at www.CCPAS.org.

Kick off the New Year right with a free concert at the Moraga Library January 12 at 7pm 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.ccclib.org to preregister or call the Moraga Library at (925)376-6852. For more information about the artists go to <http://houstonjones.com/>.

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 Mary's Rd in Moraga. For more information call (925) 376-6852, ext 200.

Class Act Big Band at Saint Mary's College Thursday, January 19th. Dance 7-9pm. Dance Lesson 6-7pm. Soda Center; free Admission.

Petty Theft, "the ultimate tribute to Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers" comes to Town Hall Theatre in Lafayette on January 21 as part of the Town Hall Music Series. For details and ticket information go to www.thtc.org or call the box office at (925) 283-1557.

Rossmoor Big Band Ball Room Dance & Show on Friday, February 3, Veterans Memorial Building, 3780 Mt. Diablo Blvd, Lafayette. Come swing with your friends and neighbors or just watch the show. Doors will open at 7pm for dance lessons with Gail Enright. The dance begins at 8pm. Tickets \$10 each -available at the Lafayette Chamber of Commerce. Call (925) 284-7404 for reservations.

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: LeFevre Theatre, Saint Mary's College, Moraga. Cost: \$8. INFO: (925) 631-4670 or go online to: brownpapertickets.com.

LECTURE & LITERATURE

"The Global Impact of Social and Mobile Technology" is the topic Marty Beard, President and CEO of Live Ops, has chosen for First Friday Forum taking place January 6 at 1:30 pm in the Sanctuary of Lafayette-Orinda Presbyterian Church, 49 Knox Drive, Lafayette. Beard's talk will center on the huge impact social and mobile technologies, like Twitter and SMS, are having on the business environment. Beard is a resident of Orinda, a graduate of UC Berkeley, and holds an MBA from Georgetown University in Washington, D.C. Refreshments will be served at 1pm in Fellowship Hall. For further information call (925) 283-8722 or click on lopc.org - in the Search Site box enter First Friday Forum.

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. Garotto (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.

Explore the amazing career of Orinda's icon of science fiction Poul Anderson (1923-2001). Consider and discuss Anderson's probable influences on the highest-grossing Hollywood blockbuster of all time - Avatar. Presenter Sean Nye is a Ph.D. student and research fellow in the Department of Cultural Studies and Comparative Literature at the University of Minnesota. He has published articles on Science Fiction, technology, and popular music history. Nye grew up in Orinda. January 10, 3-5pm, Orinda Books, Village Square, Orinda; (925) 254-7606.

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@stmaries-ca.edu.

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.

OTHER

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.

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.

Creating a Peaceful School Conference on Saturday, February 4, 2012 from 8:30 to 3:30 at Acalanes High School, 1200 Pleasant Hill Road, Lafayette. The Mt. Diablo Peace and Justice Center in Walnut Creek is sponsoring an innovative and inspiring all-day conference for anyone who works with young people in middle and high school: Teachers, Administrators, Classroom aides, School personnel, After-school program providers. Participants will learn to create peace in their world, in the lives of your students, in the classroom, the school and the community. Registration is \$25 if you register by January 15, 2012, \$35 after January 16. Lunch is included. Five instructional hours of Continuing Education Credit (.5 CEU) are available through St. Mary's College for \$25. Details are available at www.mtdpc.org.

CLUBS

Sons in Retirement Lamorinda Branch 171 meets the first Wednesday monthly at Holy Trinity Culture Center, 1700 School St. Moraga. Social hour 11am, lunch 12pm. For membership information, call Larry at (925) 631-9528.

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.

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 Asmaty, 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.

Please submit events to: calendar@lamorinda-weekly.com

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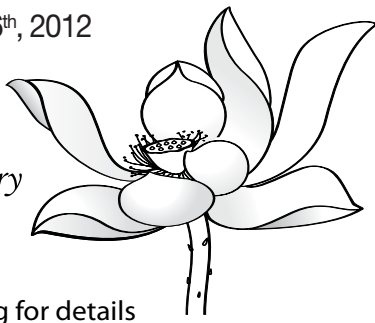
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Upcoming Special Events at:



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 16th, 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

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Calling All Crab-Lovers!

By Susie Iventosch

In January and February of each year, many local philanthropies host crab feeds. So, be on the lookout for these wonderful gatherings, where you can not only indulge your craving for this seafood delicacy, but support local organizations through your eating efforts!

Just in case you are sent home with some leftovers, or if your crab desires need satisfying sooner, Northern California crab is now available at local markets and is also available at the Moraga Farmers' Market.

Right now, the Dungeness crab is look-

ing really good according to the "meat guy" Tim Ouimet of Diablo Foods.

"We are offering the two-pound crabs from local waters," he said. "There's nothing like the local product!"

Here are a couple of recipes for crab-stuffed mushrooms. The stuffed Portobello is large enough for an entrée, and smaller stuffed mushrooms make a perfect side dish or appetizer. I've included one recipe with a Gruyere cream sauce filling, while the other is seasoned with lemon juice, sautéed shallots and grated white cheddar.



Joel offers one if his crabs at the Moraga Farmers' Market

Photo Andy Scheck

Stuffed Mushrooms with crab, lemon juice and white cheddar



(Serves 6)

Photo Susie Iventosch

INGREDIENTS

- 6 large Portobello mushrooms
- 1½ pounds crab meat
- 2 shallots, finely diced
- 1-2 tablespoons olive oil
- ½ cup panko (Japanese bread crumbs)
- ½ teaspoon white pepper
- Juice of ½ lemon
- ½ cup grated sharp white cheddar cheese

DIRECTIONS

Wash mushrooms and remove stems. Brush mushroom caps with olive oil, sea salt and pepper. Roast in 400° oven for 10 minutes or until softened. Remove from oven and set aside.

In a large sauté pan, heat olive oil and sauté shallots until translucent. Add panko and cook until slightly browned. Season with white pepper. Remove from heat and cool, before adding crab meat and grated white cheddar. Mix well.

Stuff cavities of Portobello mushrooms with crab filling and bake at 400° for about 10-15 minutes or until hot and cheese is melted. Serve hot!

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.



Crab-Stuffed Portobello Mushrooms with Gruyere Cheese Sauce

(Serves 6)

INGREDIENTS

- 6 large (4 to 5-ounce) Portobello mushrooms
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 3 medium-large shallots, finely diced
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1 teaspoon sea salt
- ¾ teaspoon ground white pepper
- 1-2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- ¼ cup dry sherry (or white wine)
- 1 tablespoon fresh squeezed lemon juice
- ½ cup milk
- 1½ pounds lump crabmeat
- ½ cup grated Gruyere
- ½ cup Panko bread crumbs
- 1 tablespoon butter (for browning Panko)

DIRECTIONS

Preheat the oven to 400°.

Clean mushrooms and remove stems. Finely chop stems for use in stuffing. Brush mushroom caps with olive oil and sea salt and roast in oven for about 10 minutes, or until mostly cooked. Remove from oven. Meanwhile, make crab stuffing.

In a large sauté pan, heat butter and olive oil over medium-high heat. Add shallots and garlic and sauté until translucent. Add chopped mushroom stems and cook until soft. Add flour and cook in shallot mixture for about 1-2 minutes, to slightly brown the flour. Slowly add sherry and lemon juice, stirring with a whisk or wooden spoon to integrate, and then add the milk and cream and continue to cook just until thick and creamy. Add Gruyere cheese and cook just until melted. Remove from heat and cool to room temperature, before adding crab to complete the stuffing.

In a sauté pan, melt 1 tablespoon butter and add panko. Cook until bread crumbs are toasted. Set aside.

To Assemble

When ready to serve, fill mushroom caps with crab filling and sprinkle bread crumbs on top. Bake at 400° for about 15 minutes, or until filling is hot and bubbly. Serve with a wedge of lemon.

Lamorinda Weekly

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

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LAMORINDA SPORTS

Saint Mary's Men's Basketball Perfect in WCC Play

By Caitlin Graveson

Saint Mary's opened conference play with a strong statement by defeating conference newcomer and predicted title contender BYU and following it with a blowout win over Pepperdine. With the wins, the Gaels improve to 13-2 on the season and 2-0 in the WCC.

Playing in front of a large contingent of BYU fans at McKeon on December 29, the Gaels recorded an impressive 98-82 win.

"Great college basketball atmosphere [tonight] which is the cool thing about BYU being in our league," head coach Randy Bennett said of the unusual crowd.

Both senior forward Rob Jones and junior guard Matthew Dellavedova had double-doubles in the effort. Jones finished with 25 points and 14 boards. Dellavedova had 18 points and 12 assists.

The Gaels had four players finish in double digits. Sophomore guard Jordan Page started in place of injured senior guard Clint Stienidl and put up 13 points and five assists.

"Tonight we played well, both halves," Bennett said. "I thought it was just a shoot-out. Both teams played well offensively. We were able to separate and that was the difference."

Saint Mary's went into the locker room up ten points on BYU (11-4), 53-43. They opened the second half with a 13-2 run to extend their lead 66-45 with 15:46 to play.

Jones was a major contributor in the run, knocking in two three's and recording a block.

He got off to a slow start in the first half, shooting just 2-12 from the field. The second half was a different story. Jones went 4-6, 2-3 and notched eight rebounds.

"You can't play one half. The game is two halves so I just knew I had to come out the second half and finish," Jones said.

Despite being down by 20 points, the Cougars refused to quit. BYU battled to within 10 points, 80-70, with 6:20 to play.

"We always knew that they would come back and make a run," Dellavedova said.

The Gaels were ready for that run. Dellavedova helped to put an end to it with a big three to bring the lead to 13.

Minutes later, redshirt freshman forward Brad Waldow scored a bucket and was fouled. He hit the free throw to extend the lead to 16 points, 86-70, with 5:03 to play.

The Gaels carried the lead to the finish, winning 98-82.

Saint Mary's was sparked by sophomore guard Stephen Holt in the first half.

BYU won the opening tip and notched a quick bucket and the Gaels seemed in for a battle.

Then, Holt nabbed a steal and ran back for a dunk. He was called for a technical, but remained undeterred. Just two minutes later, Holt hit a step back three for a 7-5 lead.

"I got a lot of momentum when I got that steal and dunk. It got me juiced out there. Then I hit that three and I knew it was going to be a good game for us," Holt said.

Holt tied his career-high with 16 points in the first half off of 6-7, 4-5 shooting. He finished with 21 points.

Forward Brandon Davies had 28 points for the Cougars. BYU bounced back from the loss by routing San Diego 88-52 on Saturday.

Saint Mary's rode their win to Pepperdine on Saturday to take on the Waves (7-6, 1-1). The Gaels walked away with a solid 74-45 win. Dellavedova led all scorers with 16 points. Holt and Page added 14 each.

Saint Mary's returns to action on January 5 against San Diego.



Photos Tod Fierner



Jordan Page had 13 points as a starter against BYU.



Rob Jones had 25 points and 14 rebounds in the win over BYU.

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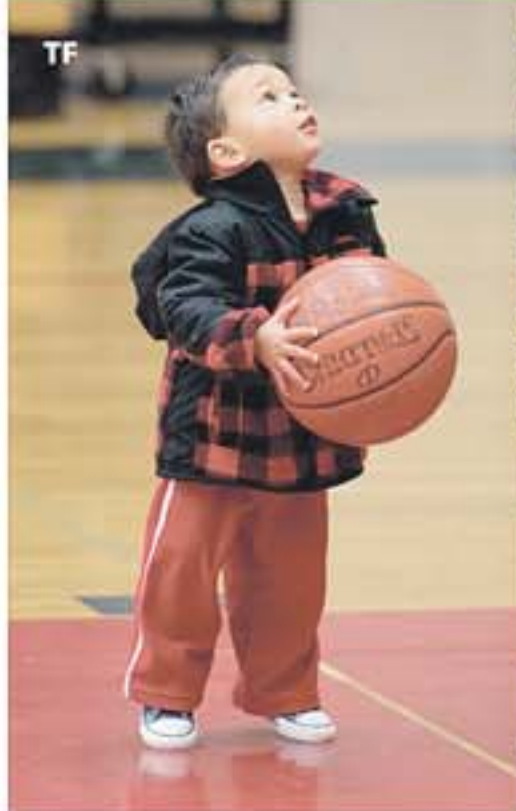
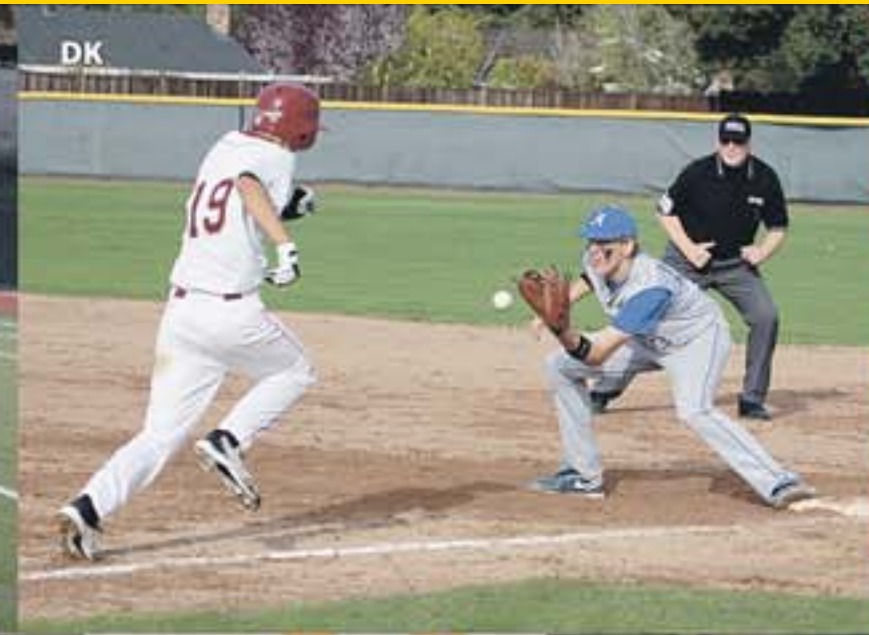
LAMORINDA SPORTS 2011 Publisher's Pick

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For every photo we print, dozens of great choices are left unused, mostly because they didn't match the related article content. Please enjoy some favorites from our archives.

Tod Fierner (TF)
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Doug Kohen (DK)

Page: C3
Andy Scheck (AS)
Lenny Monge (LM)



SPORTS LAMORINDA'S LOCAL SPORTS



Lamorinda Gamecocks Win Lacrosse Tournament

Submitted by Jim Tory



Photo provided

A team of Lamorinda high school juniors and seniors won the 510 Challenge lacrosse tournament held at Bishop O'Dowd High School on December 17-18. The Gamecocks have been competing in the Challenge for several years and claimed the silver medal last year. Eager to avenge the loss in the 2010 finals, the team practiced on weekends.

In their first game, the Gamecocks prevailed 9-7. Victories in the two remaining games in

the preliminary round earned them the second seed going into the final day of the tourney. Decisive wins by scores of 10-1 and 12-2 over other all-star teams set the stage for a rematch with last year's winner from Monte Vista. Led by tournament MVP Nick Sheehan, the Gamecocks closed out the weekend undefeated with a 9-3 victory in the final game.

In the JV division, the Gamecocks Bantam earned second place honors.

Lamorinda United U12 Boys Win NorCal State Cup Championship

Submitted by Cathy Martinsen



Photo Dagmar Ortman

The Lamorinda United U12 boys, in the Silver 1 Division, have been working their way up through the multiple rounds of the NorCal State Cup since September. Earlier this month they won games in the quar-

terfinal and semifinal. The LMSC team played in the championship game against Hayward YSC Real Azteca on December 17. Led by coach Jasko Begovic, United beat Hayward 3-0.

Lamorinda CYO Holiday Rivalry

Submitted by Junaid Khan



Back row, from left: Doug Zeller, Nick Watson, Carson Essabhoy, Osker Hodder, Chris Watson, Liam McBride; front row: Nick Acevedo, Dylan Hirst, Ryan Banisadr, Amir Khan. Photo provided

Santa Maria 4th grade boys' "Mad Hoops" team beat St. Perpetua, 22-8, at the consolation championship at the

Saint Mary's Rugby Earns Fifth Place at Collegiate Seven's Championship

Submitted by: Tony Samaniego



Back row, from left: Tony Samaniego (Coach), Mark Bass (Coach), Garrett Brewer, Kelly Harris, Anthony Suizio, Andrew Cook, Jake Holquin, Nick Wallace, Chad Clark, Bubba Jones, Kingsley McGowan, John Tyler (Coach); front row: Joe Brophy, Robert Carlson, and Mike Haley. Photo provided

Saint Mary's men's rugby competed in the first Collegiate Seven's Rugby National Championship at Texas A&M University in mid-December. Out of 24 teams from throughout the country, the Gaels finished in fifth place with a 5-1 record.

The Gaels' only loss came against Central Washington University. Central Wash-

ington qualified for the finals but lost to Life College of Atlanta.

Both Bubba Jones and Kingsley McGowan qualified for the USA Rugby All-tournament team. Ten of the twelve players on the team scored tries. Saint Mary's totaled 177 points during the tournament, more than any team

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Lamorinda OUR HOMES

Lamorinda Weekly Volume 05 Issue 22 Wednesday, January 4, 2012



Going Solar-one way to cut your electricity bill ...read on page D7

Digging Deep with Cynthia Brian

Starting Fresh!

By Cynthia Brian

"Every man should be born again on the first day of January. Start with a fresh page!"

Henry Ward Beecher



Winter waves with the beauty of barren bark on deciduous trees.

Photo Cynthia Brian

Over the holidays, our family engaged in our revered tradition of watching family videos on Christmas Eve. How quickly we forget what we looked like, talked about, wore, and how we acted one, two, three, or more decades ago! Every year we look forward to this ritual filled with laughter, cheers, jeers, and tears as we meander down memory lane. Perhaps because I was in the movie business, or perhaps because I didn't want to miss a moment of my children's youth or the changes in my garden, it appears I lived with a video camera at the ready. Everything from pulling weeds and planting seeds, to my kids rescuing ducks, deer, goats, and dogs was captured on celluloid.

The one central theme that stood out throughout the years of filming was that we are an outdoor family. I was blessed with farmer parents who lived their lives in the fields and I fostered this love of time in nature in my own offspring.

... continued on page D4



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Lamorinda Home Sales recorded

City	Last reported:	LOWEST AMOUNT:	HIGHEST AMOUNT:
LAFAYETTE	6	\$675,000	\$1,360,000
MORAGA	3	\$480,000	\$1,400,000
ORINDA	3	\$435,000	\$1,395,000

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

- 3302 Glenside Drive, \$1,360,000, 5 Bdrms, 3041 SqFt, 1942 YrBlt, 11-30-11;
Previous Sale: \$1,570,000, 07-11-07
- 3357 Mildred Lane, \$745,000, 4 Bdrms, 1543 SqFt, 1953 YrBlt, 11-23-11;
Previous Sale: \$470,000, 01-24-03
- 3368 Mildred Lane, \$675,000, 4 Bdrms, 1534 SqFt, 1954 YrBlt, 11-30-11;
Previous Sale: \$725,000, 10-28-09
- 502 Silverado Drive, \$834,000, 3 Bdrms, 1851 SqFt, 1966 YrBlt, 12-7-11;
Previous Sale: \$800,000, 07-18-03
- 3333 St. Mary's Road, \$1,300,000, 3 Bdrms, 3719 SqFt, 1946 YrBlt, 11-28-11;
Previous Sale: \$525,000, 07-30-93
- 1014 Sunnybrook Drive, \$1,260,000, 5 Bdrms, 3183 SqFt, 1948 YrBlt, 12-2-11;
Previous Sale: \$1,250,000, 10-21-09

MORAGA

- 7 Baltusrol Street, \$480,000, 2 Bdrms, 1743 SqFt, 1979 YrBlt, 12-5-11;
Previous Sale: \$777,000, 08-25-05
- 34 Brandt Drive, \$1,400,000, 3 Bdrms, 3586 SqFt, 1989 YrBlt, 11-23-11;
Previous Sale: \$1,450,000, 11-19-04
- 217 Rheem Boulevard, \$695,000, 3 Bdrms, 1610 SqFt, 1955 YrBlt, 11-30-11;
Previous Sale: \$580,000, 09-26-01

ORINDA

- 60 Claremont Avenue, \$435,000, 3 Bdrms, 1732 SqFt, 1949 YrBlt, 11-23-11;
Previous Sale: \$115,000, 03-03-78
- 38 La Cuesta Road, \$675,000, 2 Bdrms, 1873 SqFt, 1954 YrBlt, 12-6-11
- 258 Sundown Terrace, \$1,395,000, 4 Bdrms, 3616 SqFt, 1988 YrBlt, 12-2-11

Lamorinda Foreclosures recorded

LAFAYETTE

- Brown Avenue, 94549, Ing Bank, 11-30-11, \$543,353, 2120 sf, 3 bd
- North Thompson Road, 94549, Bank of America, 12-05-11, \$1,108,200, 2427 sf, 4 bd

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Address	Party	Sold Price
Springhill Manor	Seller	\$2,400,000
Crofton Court	Buyer	\$1,775,000
Samantha Drive	Buyer	\$1,750,000
Eagle Point Road	Buyer	\$1,700,000
Michael Lane	Seller	\$1,635,000
Las Huertas Road	Buyer	\$1,500,000
Powell Drive	Seller/Buyer	\$1,470,000
Read Drive	Seller	\$1,340,000
Via Nueva	Seller/Buyer	\$1,339,000
Rossi Street	Seller	\$1,328,500
Woodside Court	Seller	\$1,276,000
Rimrock Road	Seller	\$1,250,000
Castello Road	Seller	\$1,250,000
Glenside Circle	Seller	\$1,220,000
Castle Court	Seller	\$1,170,000
Old Jonas Hill Road	Seller/Buyer	\$1,149,500

SOLD

Address	Party	Sold Price
Lucas Circle	Buyer	\$1,100,000
Hawthorne Drive	Seller	\$1,019,000
Walnut Lane	Buyer	\$955,000
Woodview Drive	Seller	\$806,000
Warner Court	Seller	\$735,500
Foye Drive	Seller	\$690,000
Rahara Drive	Buyer	\$685,000
Quandt Road	Buyer	\$670,000
Victoria Avenue	Seller	\$655,000
Sibert Court	Buyer	\$550,000

PENDING

Address	Party	Offered at
Happy Valley Road	Buyer	\$2,950,000
Las Huertas Road	Seller	\$1,399,000

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Starting Fresh!

... continued from page D1



Fabulous ferns perk up a shady walkway.

Photos Cynthia Brian A cheery container of red and white cyclamen, blue pansies, and white alyssum signal the Presidential election year of 2012.

Today, kids are bombarded with so many technological gadgets, that it's hard to get them unplugged and outside. Instead of medication for hyperactivity, we exercised our excessive energy with building forts, hanging tree swings, and running through the hills pretending to be explorers. Now, more than ever, every family needs to start with a fresh page of al fresco renewal.

According to the Mayan calendar, 2012 portends the end of the world as we know it. Being a history major taught me that although it is important to learn from the past, it is up to us to forge our futures. Every January we have the opportunity to begin anew. I predict that 2012

is the beginning of an era of awakening and starting fresh. With that thought in mind, my gift to readers this year will be improved health in body, mind, and spirit with regular tips on how you and your family can discover the wonders of the natural world by getting outside with unstructured open-air activities to allow the imagination to run wild and creativity to soar.

Whether it's pruning roses or walking in the woods, by exchanging screen time for green time, your internal clock will regulate your body to be alert during the day and tired at night. Numerous studies show that gardening fights obesity as well as sleep deprivation by offering a full

body workout that builds strong muscle mass while improving cognitive skills, providing relaxation, increasing stress reduction, and developing deeper sleep patterns.

This year, let's plan and plant our meals for year-round plot to plate, potager to pot, patch to platter originality. Put in peas, kale, Swiss chard, broccoli, lettuces, and Bok Choy to reap the riches of vitamins, antioxidants, and minerals, low in calories and packed with nutrients everybody craves. When we teach kids how to grow their own dinners, we introduce them to a whimsical wonderful world of wellness and wealth through the joys of garden sowing and harvesting.



A basket of freshly picked Meyer lemons makes delicious tea rich in vitamin C to ward off colds.



Tillandsia, a genus in the Bromeliad family, is an air plant. They are wonderful specimens for terrariums.



A spider weaves its magical web while protecting the garden from intruding pests.



Cymbidium orchids bloom in the January outdoors.

Let 2012 be the year that you tap into the power of plants, grow your own food, and nurture your natural instinct to bond with the land. By being mindful of our fragile earth connection, we restore balance to our neighborhoods and community. It's time to get off the couch, power down the phones and computers, turn off the flat screen, and let our surround sound be that of the chirping birds, howling winds, and trickling creeks.

Get up, get out, and get dirty. It's Digging Deep time and we're starting fresh. Welcome to a bright new year.



A calla lily grows by the babbling brook.

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Cynthia Brian's Gardening Guide for January

"If we had no winter, the spring would not be so pleasant." Anne Bradstreet
1612-1672, Poet

As winters dark cloak blankets January days, gardeners are given the luxurious time to contemplate their spring and summer gardens. Curled up in front of the fireplace with a cup of herbal tea, we sift through our piles of catalogues, dreaming of fragrant blossoms, tasty herbs, and sweet vegetables in the months to come. After a snooze, it's time to leap into tomorrow by getting yourself and your children outside for some face time with Mother Nature.

- **SPRAY** your fruit trees and roses with the final dormant spray of horticultural oil to kill overwintering insect eggs.
- **PICK** a sunny window in your kitchen and plant an all season herb garden to star in your culinary creations.
- **SAVE** trees by recycling Christmas cards as gift tags or tree decorations for next year.
- **PRUNE** crepe myrtles and roses this month. Canes from the roses may be shared with friends. I will again be offering complimentary rose canes to anyone who is interested at the end of January. Email me for information at Cynthia@GoddessGardener.com.
- **TERRARIUMS** have made a fashion come back. I remember making terrariums for friends and families when I was in college! Soil-less tillandsia, humid loving orchids, and rainforest ferns are terrific terrarium selections.
- **HEIGHTEN** harmony with nature by reducing or eliminating chemical usage in your yard.
- **CREATE** a backyard habitat for birds, butterflies, and beneficial bugs.
- **REPLENISH** bird feeders with nutritious seeds keeping our avian visitors nearby while supplementing their dietary requirements during the cold season.
- **MULCH** your beds with three inches of organic matter.
- **PLANT** bare roots now, including roses, fruit trees, berry bushes, and vines.
- **PERK** up the dreary landscape with color spots of primroses, violas, and pansies.
- **STUDY** plant catalogues for ideas on new specimens to order or buy at your garden center.
- **COMPOST**, compost, compost. You'll enrich your garden while saving the environment, too.
- **CELEBRATE** Three Wise Kings Day on January 6th (also known as the Epiphany) by surprising the children with fresh oranges and tangerines plucked from your tree. It's been a family custom in our household for over a century.
- **SPROUT** onions and chives in your kitchen by cutting the greens, then putting the roots in a glass of water. Within a week you'll have fresh greens for your salads and soups. This is a simple, fun growing opportunity for kids! (Change the water daily)
- **START** a new garden project plan. Consider trellising for vertical growing.
- **RECORD** your landscaping escapades by writing in a garden journal this week. Save your journals to track trends and seasons.
- **REDUCE** watering on houseplants as they rest for a winter's nap.
- **RESOLVE** to spend a minimum of thirty minutes per day outside. Studies indicated that every person needs at least fifteen minutes of outdoor sunlight daily for necessary Vitamin D replenishment. An additional fifteen is for frolicking.
- **TAKE** oodles of videos and photos of your garden and children. When you look back in a few years, you'll be shocked at how quickly both have grown and changed.
- **THANKS** to reader Jo for emailing me this note regarding our feathered friends: "When the birds eat the berries in the winter and then are seen flying "drunk", they are, in fact, not drunk on fermented berries. Birds are like airplanes with specific weight/balance properties. When they stuff themselves in a feeding frenzy, they are out of balance and haven't learned to fly straight with the change in center of gravity."



After cutting shallots or small onions, put the roots in a glass of water. Delicious, edible green sprouts thrive. Photo C. Brian

Wishing everyone a bright, cheery, healthy, wealthy 2012 as we grow into the people we are meant to be. My gratitude to you all for the role you play in the creation of my garden stories. Happy New Year!

Happy Gardening to You!

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Cynthia Brian

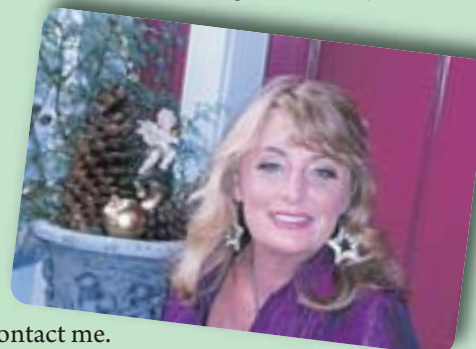
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Green and Greener Going Solar!

By Dave Rochlin



Measuring the roof

Photo provided

In sunny climates - like most of Lamorinda - your roof might actually be a valuable piece of real estate. This year, we decided to put ours to use and go into the renewable energy business... by putting up solar panels.

Solar power is not cheap. But neither is traditional electricity, if you use more than the bare minimum. If you study your bill, you'll notice that PG&E sells you both low-priced electricity (enough to keep your lights on and food cold), and really expensive energy (the juice you might be using to power your plasma TV, hot tub, pond, air conditioner, desktop computers, and cable box). In our house, the first 330 kWh/month cost only \$40. But the last 330 kWh? That runs us another \$120. And if you are thinking about getting a plug in Prius or Chevy Volt (350 kWh per 1000 miles), or adding a hot tub - you'll be paying a lot, even with special off-peak rates available for electric vehicles.

So if you hate paying big energy bills, or simply feel badly about gobbling up more than your share of the grid, you can either conserve like crazy or add solar.

It turns out that going solar is both maddeningly complicated and surprisingly easy. There are quite a few variables to consider - including which solar panels and inverter, how big a system, how much sun your roof gets, whether your electrical panel is suitable, tax credits, utility subsidies, upfront investment vs. discounted future cash flow, and so on. Fortunately, there are a number of entrepreneurial firms that want to make solar easier for consumers, by removing the risk and taking on the gauntlet of complexity. Some of the leading firms are Solar City, Sungevity, Sun Run, and the Solar Company. They all follow the same basic business model, acting as a "one call does it all" system designer, master contractor, and financing specialist.

We contacted two companies. Each has a website that asked for our typical electrical bill and basic roof info, and used Google-earth style mapping software to determine if we were good candidates, and how big a system would be needed. The key is that they don't just calculate how much energy you can produce, but also compare it to both the costs and

government incentives associated with the system.

Here's where a word of caution is necessary: Virtually all solar firms make aggressive assumptions in calculating your savings/benefits vs. costs. The most common practice is to assume that your energy bill will rise 4 to 5% per year over the next 10-20 years, which is a plausible possible scenario, but by no means the only one, particularly as appliances, heating, and lighting become more energy efficient. At least one solar firm also factors in the expected increase in the home's value - the same fool's gold that has launched a thousand other home improvement projects.

Oddly, one company said our location was too shaded to generate enough power, while another was quite confident that we could. To start the process we gave them our last 12 months of energy bills, and they sent an inspector out to look at our roof (you need to have enough roof life left, enough space, and the right angles.) They then designed a system and generated several quotes for us for different leasing and purchase options. We chose a 10-year prepay lease, since this option made them responsible for system maintenance, gives us flexibility down the road, and included a guaranteed minimum output, which was particularly important given the mixed messages we received about our location.

The process took several months, including getting sign off from our neighbors (as part of our HOA), system design, city permitting, applying to PG&E, and an inspection of our

electrical system. The actual installation only took a few days, but was followed by another month of waiting for meter hookup and PG&E approval.

Now, we get the pleasure of our meter telling us when we are feeding rather than consuming from the grid, and an oddly satisfying web monitoring tool, which tracks our production by the hour.

The impact on climate change

is moderate (the equivalent of driving 4000 miles less per year), as is the expected financial return (more or less like buying a 10-year CD that pays 4% interest.) But we are hedged against any price/energy shocks, and have the psychic benefit of knowing that we are in a small way helping build a green economy.

Information on all of the solar companies mentioned is available on the web.



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Best wishes to our families, friends and neighbors for a happy, healthy and safe 2012.



Your Village Associates: *Top Row left to right: Dexter Honens II, Steve Smith, Jeff Snell, Hal Kaufman, Margot Kaufman, Joan Evans, Clark Thompson, Sue Layng, Art Lehman, Patty Battersby, Sue Olsen, Terri Bates Walker, Lynda Snell, Kurt Piper, Marianne Greene, Dan Weil, Ignacio Vega*

Seated left to right: Tara Rochlin, Debbie Johnston, Linda Ehrich, Joan Cleveland, Ann Ward, Joan Eggers, Linda Friedman, Pamela Halloran, Karen Murphy, Judy Schoenrock, Ashley Battersby, April Matthews, Margaret Zucker

Not pictured: Charles Levine, Ben Olsen, Ann Sharf

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