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Chinese New Year 2011 at Buddha Gate Monastery

Photo provided

## 新年快樂 (Happy New Year!)

## Rejoice! It's a Dragon!

By Sophie Braccini

Many Lamorinda households and businesses are making preparations. At Uncle Yu's restaurant in Lafayette, special menus for the holiday eve on January 22nd are being prepared; Catherine and Cheng Liao are shopping for the fish and vegetables they will cook themselves; the

home of Ken and Aly Chew is sparkling clean; Stephanie Hom got her red envelopes, and the crisp, new money to go in them, at the Moraga branch of Wells Fargo bank; the children of Zhan Li are expecting to get their own red packages in a few days; Nancy Hom is getting ready for a big family

dinner at her father's home in San Francisco; while at the Buddha Gate Monastery in Lafayette, the Abbess and the nuns are gathering all the elements for the ritual offerings of Chinese New Year.

... continued on page A10

**Quote of the Week:**

"Unbeknownst to me this seemingly efficient use of downtime to practice oral hygiene would lead to a bizarre thirty minute confrontation..."

Read Letters to the Editor, page A8

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## Hundreds of Millions at Stake in Securities Fraud Lawsuit

By Cathy Tyson



Former office of R.E. Loans and Mortgage Fund '08 in Lafayette.

Photo Cathy Tyson

A recently filed class action lawsuit for over \$700 million dollars centered in Lafayette could potentially be the largest case of its kind in California's history. The lawsuit alleges securities fraud and breach of fiduciary responsibility for over two thousand investors. Four related private lending groups - R.E. Loans, B-4 Partners, Mortgage Fund '08 and Bar-K, Inc., along with the owners and managers of those funds, Walter Ng, and his sons Barney Ng and Kelly Ng—Dr. Bruce Horwitz, Wells Fargo Capital Finance, and Greenberg Traurig, LLP are the named defendants in the case. As the complicated drama unfolds, investors will have to wait and see if they can recover even a fraction of their original investments.

The FBI and the SEC are currently

investigating the tangled web of companies that appears to be a house of cards that collapsed. Plaintiffs allege the financial disintegration of Ng family companies: R.E. Loans - a mortgage brokerage, B-4 Partners - which acted as manager for R.E. Loans along with Bar-K - a mortgage broker and loan servicer for loans originated by R.E. Loans, had been raising funds illegally in violation of federal and California securities laws. It will be up to the court to decide if market forces drove the companies into the ground, bad investment decisions were made, or less than legal choices led to demise of the investment firms.

"The Fund managers operated R.E. Loans and Mortgage Fund '08 in tandem as a Ponzi scheme.

... continued on page A2

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**Life in Lamorinda B1-B12**

### Indie Film Fest Promises to Be the Best Yet

Andrea A. Firth tells you what not to miss! B3



**Sports C1-C4**

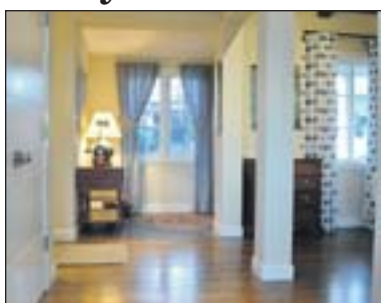
### Campolindo, Miramonte Girls Tied for First in DFAL

The ladies play hard - Conrad Bassett has the story. C3



**Our Homes D1-D8**

### Every Home Needs a Heart



Laurie Snyder visits a winner of the Orinda 2011 Mayor's Award for Excellence in Architecture. D1

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## Lafayette Civic News

### Public Meetings

#### City Council

Monday, January 23, 7:00 pm  
Lafayette Library & Learning Center,  
Community Hall, 3491 Mt. Diablo Blvd

#### Planning Commission

Monday, January 30, 7:00 pm  
Lafayette Library & Learning Center,  
Community Hall, 3491 Mt. Diablo Blvd

#### Design Review

Monday, January 23, 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

Monday, January 23, 6:00 pm  
Special Governing Board Meeting  
Next reg. meeting Wed. Feb. 1, 7:30 pm  
Board Room AUHSD Office  
1212 Pleasant Hill Rd, Lafayette  
www.acalanes.k12.ca.us

##### Lafayette School District

Wednesday, February 8, 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

## Transition for the Lafayette Redevelopment Agency

By Cathy Tyson

In limbo no more. The Lafayette City Council was waiting to see what the bottom line on the possible dissolution of the city's Redevelopment Agency would be for some time now. In late June of 2011, Assembly Bill 1 X 26 was signed into law by Governor Jerry Brown. Just a few weeks ago, in late December of 2011, the California Supreme Court upheld the validity of the new law.

With a deadline of Friday, January 13, the Council was forced to make a quick decision on who will handle the wind down of the Redevelopment Agency (RDA) – either han-

dling it themselves or opting out of the role and allowing the County to manage it. Neither Orinda nor Moraga has a Redevelopment Agency.

City Attorney Mala Subramanian spelled it out in a detailed staff report. "The successor agency is the community that created the redevelopment agency, unless the community expressly elects not to serve as the successor agency by passing a resolution making such election and filing a copy of this resolution with the county auditor controller no later than January 13, 2012."

Responsibilities of the successor

agency include continuing to make payments on enforceable obligations made by the RDA—those obligations include the Mercantile Building and the Lafayette Library and Learning Center—along with several administrative requirements associated with winding down the affairs of the agency. Actions taken by the successor agency will be reviewed and approved by an oversight board.

"It's pretty clear to me that we should become the successor agency," said Council Member Don Tatzin, explaining that the move would help retain local control.

Council Member Mike Anderson agreed, "Everyone should be made whole – eventually."

"We appreciate your predicament," said Steve Cortese, developer of the Lafayette Mercantile Building. "From our side of the fence we'd rather work with you than someone else. We'd love to see the City step in."

Library representatives met earlier in the day and also voiced their support of the decision. With a unanimous vote, the City Council approved becoming the successor agency.

## Hundreds of Millions at Stake in Securities Fraud Lawsuit

... continued from page A1

Funds raised from Mortgage Fund '08 investors were loaned to R.E. Loans in order to pay distributions and other expenses of R.E. Loans," writes Nance Becker, of Chavez & Gertler, LLP, one of the attorneys for the plaintiffs in the class action complaint.

The lawsuit claims that R.E. Loans promised investors returns of between 7.5% and 12.5% annually. More than \$700 million was raised by early 2007. However, in the following months operating capital was paid out to close friends and family members, and by the summer of 2007 R.E. Loans faced a liquidity crisis. To prop up funding of RE Loans, a \$50 million dollar line

of credit was arranged from Wells Fargo. Plaintiffs allege that, "within days after securing the Wells Fargo Line of Credit, the Company's management drew down over \$43 million...and paid out nearly \$25 million of that amount in additional preferential distributions to themselves, family members and business associates."

News of the investment opportunity that had in years past made money, spread via word of mouth to many in the community, especially those who were nearing retirement – enticed by the reassurances that their money was safe and secure. "It's quite tragic," said Becker.

The outlook for investors went from bad to worse with Walter Ng, Kelly Ng and Barney Ng along with Bruce Horwitz, R.E. Loans, Mortgage Fund '08 and B-4 Partners filing for bankruptcy in the months following the filing of the class action suit.

To add another wrinkle to the matter, attorneys for R.E. Loans filed a motion to have their case heard in Texas Bankruptcy Court. Jeff Krause, attorney with Stutman, Treister & Glatt, representing R.E. Loans, had no comment.

Attorney Becker has filed a motion asking the Court to consolidate her clients' claims with another similarly situated class action

group. "Everything else is currently on hold until some of the bankruptcy proceedings move forward," she said. Becker believes that Texas is not the proper venue since most of the defendants, as well as the investors and the properties that secured the loans, are in California.

"We believe they targeted a group of susceptible clients," said Becker. She explained their firm's strategy is to look for relief from Wells Fargo and Greenberg Traurig, stating, "You're allowed to develop creative solutions to help your clients, but not to knowingly mislead third parties."

The former office of R.E. Loans and Mortgage Fund '08 at 201 Lafayette Circle is dark – with only boxes of documents visible through the tinted windows. A small sign taped to the locked door re-directs clients to an office building on Camino Diablo, home to Bailey, Elizondo, Brinkman. Bill Brinkman is the Responsible Individual who was retained by Mortgage Fund '08 to provide restructuring advice and to manage the company after an involuntary bankruptcy case was filed against it on September 12, 2011. "We are attempting to make the best of a bad situation, and we hope to return money to the note holders as quickly as possible," said Brinkman.



### Police Report

Car in "recovery", 12/29/2011 Someone finally figured it out. A property manager filed a police report about a vehicle that had been "parked" on Carol Lane for several months. Police found it was stolen from Concord last August. The owner gets a year end "gift" – a new car (his old one).

Who's on first? 12/27/2011 Two cars collided along Deer Hill Road. The accident was deemed a "failure to yield." One person injured a wrist but declined medical help.

Chair-man of the Board (-ed up building), 12/26/2011 Chairs, hand tools and "various items not yet listed" were taken after a forced entry/burglary of a vacant commercial building on Mt. Diablo Blvd.

Macho men, 1/2/2012 Thieves recently cut a lock and stole heavy construction equipment (emphasis on the "heavy") from a Mount Diablo Blvd location, taking a pump, jumper jacks, a generator, tow jack hammers and drill traffic signs. They probably chucked the lot into the bed of the Ford F450 truck, which they also stole.

Seeing red, 1/7/2012 One driver became an unwilling witness to a smash and grab on her own car parked ever so temporarily along Happy Valley Road. A red car pulled alongside the victim's parking space, and was gone an instant later. Gone, too, was the victim's purse, wallet and Ipod. In its place was a smashed window. Damages estimated at \$350; with \$525 in missing goods.



## City of Lafayette Current Volunteer Vacancies

- Bicycle Pedestrian Advisory Committee
- Circulation Commission
- Community Center Foundation
- Design Review Commission
- Downtown Street Improvement Implementation Committee (DSIMPIC)
- Environmental Strategies Task Force
- Senior Services Commission

Individuals interested in these volunteer positions may obtain an application from the City's website at www.ci.lafayette.ca.us or in person at:

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## Improving the Streetscape, Piece by Piece



Photo Cathy Tyson

**P**hase One of a major renovation of Lafayette's downtown sidewalks is well underway. The first phase - from the Round Up to Postino - is slated to be complete by January 30. Fear not, happy hour patrons at the Round Up, the contractor will maintain pedestrian access for the bar and other businesses. Where jackhammers are now, imagine lovely paver sidewalks and new landscaping similar to the attractive and inviting

streetscape in front of the Mercantile Building. Sudhish Mohindroo, a partner in SZFM Design Studio, worked on the renovation of La Fiesta Square and the Mercantile Building and is also the designer of this streetscape project. According to the contractor's schedule, by late June, working in phases, most of the downtown section of Mt. Diablo Boulevard will be transformed, and the work is substantially paid for by a federal grant. *C. Tyson*

## Path Posts Re-Striped



Photo Cathy Dausman

**L**afayette's Pleasant Hill Road upgrades between Mt. Diablo and Olympic Boulevards are proceeding nicely, but foot traffic and cyclists who use the off-street multi-use path may notice the posts centered along the route are easier to spot. That's because they've been re-striped with reflective tape. Those posts "prevent people from doing what they know they shouldn't be

doing," says Associate Engineer Matt Luttrupp, namely: driving or parking on the path, which ends up blocking residents' driveways.

Project Engineer Farzaneh Sanders says the posts were installed four years ago, but over time the reflective tape has been peeled away. A few new posts will be placed near the creek overpass (west side of Pleasant Hill Road, south of Station). *C.Dausman*

Share your thoughts, insights and opinions with your community.

**Send a letter to the editor:**  
letters@lamorindaweekly.com



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| 392 SPRINGFIELD PL | 1024 LARCH AVE    | 2135 ASCOT DR #28   | 30 ROSS DR          |
| 83 MARIE PL        | 1148 LARCH AVE    | 2135 ASCOT DR #17   | 3 WOODFORD DR       |
| 132 WHITETHORNE DR | 1204 LARCH AVE    | 2135 ASCOT DR #20   | 19021 SCHUESTER DR  |
| 8 LOUISE CT        | 1056 LARCH AVE    | 2135 ASCOT DR #27   | 3628 BICKERSTAFF    |
| 1203 RIMER DR      | 1090 LARCH AVE    | 2135 ASCOT DR #26   | 67 LA CRESTA        |
| 1218 RIMER DR      | 6 LARCH LN        | 2087 ASCOT DR #224  | 895 STONEGATE CIR   |
| 1224 RIMER DR      | 1843 JOSEPH DR    | 2087 ASCOT DR #124  | 31 COLORADO         |
| 1236 RIMER DR      | 9 FLUETI DR       | 2083 ASCOT DR       | 210 CARMEL          |
| 133 SHUEY DR       | 679 MORAGA RD     | 2091 ASCOT DR       | 529 OAKSHIRE PL     |
| 89 SHUEY DR        | 656 MORAGA RD     | 1018 RIVER ROCK LN  | 1729 RELIEZ VALLEY  |
| 70 SHUEY DR        | 139 PASEO DEL RIO | 94 G ELDER          | 2211 TICE VALLEY    |
| 24 CARR DR         | 1426 DE LA CRUZ   | 1409 CAMINO PERAL   | 1348 NAVELLIER      |
| 39 BUCKINGHAM DR   | 107 NATALIE DR    | 1403 CAMINO PERAL   | 1715 139TH ST       |
| 1076 SANDERS DR    | 257 SANDRINGHAM   | 1418 CAMINO PERAL   | 2277 STAR AVE       |
| 24 FREITAS DR      | 238 SANDRINGHAM   | 1405 CAMINO PERAL   | 4255 WILSON LN      |
| 4 WANDEL DR        | 235 SANDRINGHAM   | 1437 CAMINO PERAL   | 2 AGHALEE LN        |
| 149 WALFORD DR     | 1072 COUNTRY CLUB | 1416 CAMINO PERAL   | 1018 RIVER ROCK LN  |
| 108 WALFORD DR     | 1080 COUNTRY CLUB | 1475 CAMINO PERAL   | 1919 YGNACIO VLY DR |
| 4 SPARROW CT       | 398 BIRCHWOOD DR  | 1515 A CAMINO PERAL | 309 CORTE GABRIEL   |
| 11 KETELSEN        | 268 BIRCHWOOD DR  | 236 VALLEY GLEN     | 3545 BOYER CIRCLE   |
| 8 PIMENTEL CT      | 13 DONALD DR      | 180 VALLEY GLEN     | 938 MOHR LN         |
| 133 WESTCHESTER    | 1924 ASCOT DR     | 205 VISTA GLEN PL   | 3569 BADDING RD     |
| 15 BRECK CT        | 1939 ASCOT DR     | 950 OAK VISTA       | 3 ROBERTS CT        |
| 830 AUGUSTA DR     | 1977 ASCOT DR     | 565 PALO ALTO PL    | 459 FERNWOOD DR     |
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## City seeks volunteer for vacancy on the Design Review Commission

The Lafayette City Council is soliciting applicants to fill one vacancy on the Design Review Commission.

The five-member body is responsible for matters relating to aesthetics and the physical appearance of the city. The commission advises the staff, planning commission, and city council and acts on applications for design review including residential and commercial development projects. Members of the design review commission are selected on the basis of education, training and experience in the fields of architecture, landscape architecture, design, city planning or a related field.

Individuals interested in this volunteer position may obtain an application from the City's web site at [www.lovelafayette.org](http://www.lovelafayette.org) or in person at:

City of Lafayette Offices  
3675 Mt. Diablo Blvd., Suite 210  
Lafayette, CA 94549

To learn more about these volunteer opportunities and to obtain an application visit the City's website [www.ci.lafayette.ca.us](http://www.ci.lafayette.ca.us). Positions open until filled.

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## Moraga Civic News

### Public Meetings

#### Town Council

Wednesday, January 25, 7:00pm  
Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School,  
1010 Camino Pablo

#### Planning Commission

Tuesday, February 6, 7:00 pm  
Moraga Library, 1500 Saint Marys Rd

#### Design Review

Monday, January 23, 7:00 pm  
Moraga Library, 1500 Saint Marys Rd

#### School Board Meeting

##### Moraga School District

Tuesday, February 14, 7:30 pm  
Joaquin Moraga Intermediate  
School Auditorium  
1010 Camino Pablo, Moraga  
www.moraga.k12.ca.us  
See also AUHSD meeting page A2

Check online for agendas, meeting notes and announcements

#### Town of Moraga:

www.moraga.ca.us

#### Chamber of Commerce:

www.moragachamber.org

#### Moraga Citizens' Network:

www.moragacitizensnetwork.org



## Police Report

Domestic dispute, 1/8/12 A call came in to police reporting a Moraga Road couple yelling at each other. A second call came in as a 911 hang up; a man could be heard yelling "no, no, no," in what sounded like a scuffle. Cops went to check it out and determined that the "lady of the house" was the primary aggressor in a physical altercation with her fiancé. She was arrested for domestic violence. Doesn't sound like a match made in heaven.

Not so much love in the air, 1/9/12 A Hardie Drive husband and wife were verbally fighting over financial concerns and long standing family issues. The husband voluntarily packed up a few things and left the home, agreeing to attempt to resolve the dispute at a later time.

D.U.I. 1/9/12 A minor traffic incident happened at the Moraga Country Club; Club security personnel helped the two parties exchange information. One car simply backed into another, the unnamed person who reported the fender bender said that the driver "really seemed out of it" and was possibly intoxicated. The 49-year old woman took a breathalyzer test and scored more than three times the legal limit.

Loud noise, 1/8/12 A complaint came in after midnight about loud noise coming from a Camino Peral apartment. Tenants were cooperative and told their roughly twenty-five guests that the party's over. Cops told hosts about possible repercussions if it happens again.

please...



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## Jill Mercurio Leaves Moraga – El Cerrito Comes to the Rescue

By Sophie Braccini

Town Manager Jill Keimach announced on January 11 that Public Works Director and Town Engineer Jill Mercurio accepted a position with the City of Vallejo and will leave Moraga on January 19.

Mercurio was hired five years ago to do work that had previously been done by contractors. It was believed at the time that a full time Public Works director would be

able to pursue grant opportunities. Her experience in that area allowed the completion of numerous projects. "We will be hiring someone to replace her since her position is critical to ensure we continue to bring in grant funds and watch expenditures for maintaining the Town's infrastructure," confirmed Keimach.

In the short term, Mercurio will leave a very important vacant

seat on the Revenue Enhancement Community Outreach to Neighborhoods committee. That group is finalizing a study of the local infrastructure and establishing a plan to improve its overall performance. The proposed measures and the subsequent funding needs were supposed to be ready in the spring. In order not to delay this project, Keimach found a temporary solution.

"EL Cerrito made a similar effort on roadway planning, they are sort of the poster child for doing it right, and they have completed their plan under budget. We asked to partner with their city engineer to act as a consultant for our project," said Keimach, "he will be meeting with Jill (Mercurio) next week and will assist any way he can."

## Concern over Fire Safety in the Bluffs

By Sophie Braccini

In the aftermath of a late-December house fire on Joseph Drive, some residents of the relatively remote Bluffs neighborhood questioned the adequacy of the water supply in the steep hills and the tools provisioned to the firefighters of the Moraga Orinda Fire District (MOFD), and expressed concerns for their safety.

MOFD Division Chief Darrell Lee was the Incident Commander the night of the fire. "We were informed of a chimney fire on December 27 at 11:26pm," he says. "We had a fire engine patrolling the Bluffs at that time and they immediately responded to the call." Five other engines, one truck and one Medic were dispatched as well to contain and extinguish the fire that started in the master bedroom where a chimney was located.

"I went over when the fire started," says neighboring property owner Sal Captain, "water was leaking from the hoses that were connected to a hydrant positioned lower and away from the house." Captain felt that he was walking in a situation where firefighters were struggling to get enough pressure for their hose, while the property owner was fighting the fire with a garden hose.

Lee explains that the closest fire

hydrant was located in a nearby cul-de-sac, 700 feet away and 80 feet lower than the house. "The pressure of that hydrant should have been between 50 and 120 pounds per square inch (psi)," he says. "We measured it at 50psi that night. The fact that it was 700 feet away and 80 feet lower reduces the effective pressure at the head of the hose. In cases like that, we put one of our engines at the fire hydrant and boost the pressure by relay pumping. This is a technique that we use routinely in Orinda where homes can be located at the end of long driveways, far from the hydrants."

The home's original developer had built a redwood water tank above the house to be used in case of fire. The Town had the property owner dismantle it later because it was visible from the scenic corridor. According to Bluffs resident Frank Compelli, the Planning Department had the owners install a standpipe adjacent to the house. "When we arrived the owner informed us of the presence of the standpipe, but we measured only 10psi pressure there," remembers Lee. "There are rural areas where water tanks are beneficial, but we prefer to rely on our own water first."

It turned out that night that using the East Bay Municipal Utility District (EBMUD) hydrant was not necessary. "We had enough water in the engines that came to Joseph to put out the fire," says Lee. "But we had nonetheless laid out and filled 700 feet of hoses, to be ready if things had gotten worse. 700 feet of hoses filled with water can weigh a ton and the pressure can make it difficult to unscrew from the hydrant, so the firefighters cut the hose to relieve the pressure. This gave birth to the rumor of fire hoses bursting." According to Lee the fire was put out in 20 minutes.

Lee believes that the Bluffs have a sufficient municipal water supply system. The locations that concern him are rural areas and steep terrain with limited access to fire apparatus. "There are sufficient EBMUD fire hydrants in the bluffs," he says, "long driveways create a challenge, but nothing we can't overcome. We have some lower pressure hydrants in the Fire District, but none where water does not come out of when opened."

Captain says that he wants to find out more about the adequacy of the fire prevention and firefighting equipment. "We live very

close to open space," said the property owner, "some large expanses of land are left unkempt. It would be a nightmare if a fire were to start up there."

Compelli also wants 100% certainty regarding the efficiency of the firefighting infrastructure, "particularly in light of the presently ongoing evaluation of a development plan for 100+ homes in Bollinger Canyon in very similar terrain," he notes.

Coincidentally, a second fire ignited in the Bluffs two weeks later, on January 11th. A garage and the cars in it were destroyed in the flames. The MOFD's report indicates that it took 18 minutes to circumvent the combustion. "These incidents are getting the neighbors talking together and this is good," says Lee. "We are going to conduct FireWise meetings in that neighborhood and educate residents about creating a sensible defensible space around their homes."

FireWise is a free home assessment audit offered by MOFD to all interested residents. For more information, go to [www.mofd.org](http://www.mofd.org) and [www.lamorindaweekly.com/archive/issue0513/Firestorm-Prepare-Your-Home-FireWise-home-assessments-offered-by-MOFD.html](http://www.lamorindaweekly.com/archive/issue0513/Firestorm-Prepare-Your-Home-FireWise-home-assessments-offered-by-MOFD.html)

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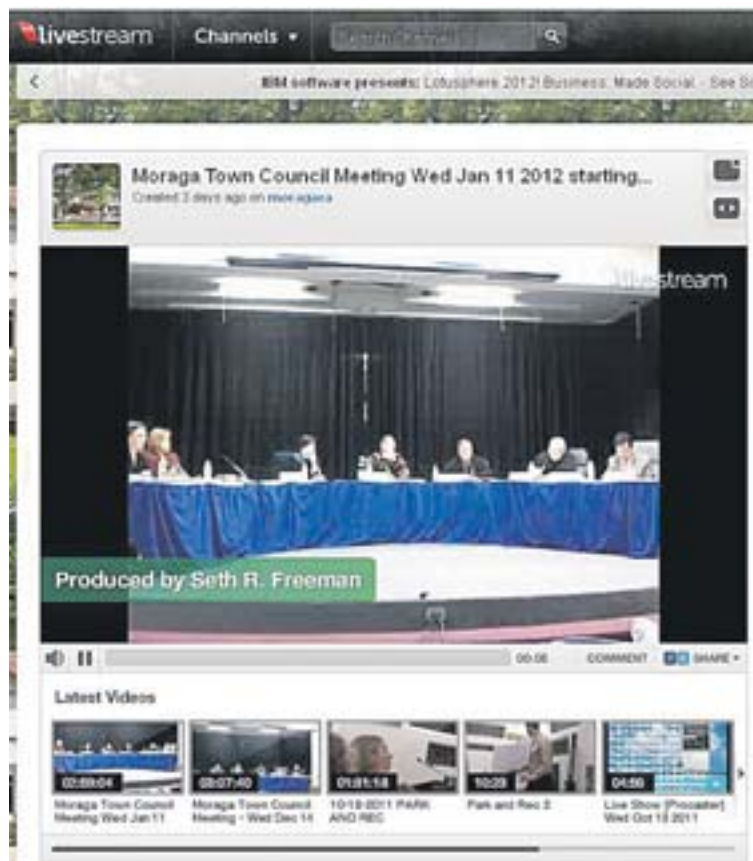
*Mother/Daughter Tea on Feb 11.*



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## Moraga Council Meetings Online

By Sophie Braccini



screen shot www.livestream.com/moragaca.

Concerned that the Moraga Town Council meeting may run until midnight but still interested in hearing first hand what was said? Now it is possible, thanks to one man's initiative.

Moraga resident Seth Freeman is recording the meetings of the Moraga

Town Council and the Parks and Recreation Commission. "It is free to do," says Freeman, "and it is free to view."

The meetings are streamed live on the Internet, and are also archived for later viewing. To watch, go to [www.livestream.com/moragaca](http://www.livestream.com/moragaca).

## Friends of the Library Get New Bins

By Sophie Braccini



From left: Beth Girshman, Virginia Tracy, Wendell Baker, Stephen DaRodda, Anna Evans  
 Photo Andy Schreck

Virginia Tracy and Anna Evans sort through the bags of books scattered over the porch near the entrance of the Moraga library. Every week, the two petite volunteers receive around a thousand books donated to the Friends of the Moraga library.

The volumes are left in large plastic bins inside the library when it is open, but residents don't stop giving during off hours and books are often left on the patio. New bins for the outer area would have been expensive had not an aspiring Eagle Scout, Steven DaRodda of Troop 234, contacted the library in search of a project. "We asked him to build new bins and he did it beautifully," said Friends' President Nancy Hom as she received the carriages on January 10.

DaRodda, a freshman at Campolindo High School, designed the new wooden bins himself. "I constructed them in plywood and made them with pivoting wheels so they'd be easily maneuverable," he said. He painted them the same color as the furniture in the library's lobby.

The new bins will ultimately be left inside, while the plastic ones are set to go outside. "The building belongs to the Town, we need to ask them permission to do so," said Hom. Having bins outside will greatly improve the tidiness of the front porch.

This troop supports the library in many ways. "Troop 234 has adopted the library," said Hom. "They come every time we have a book sale to help move and set up the thousands of books."

"The library is seriously enriched by volunteers like Stephen, to make things we couldn't even imagine," said Moraga Senior Librarian Beth Girshman.

Tracy and Evans sort the donated books into five categories and store them in labeled boxes that are stacked in two huge storage crates at the back of the library where they await the next Friends of the Library book sale – the next sale will be on February 4th from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. The sale is a major funding for the Friends, who in turn support most of the recreational programs the library offers.

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## Orinda Civic News

### Public Meetings

#### City Council

Tuesday, January 31, 7:00 pm  
Auditorium, Orinda Library,  
26 Orinda Way

#### Planning Commission

Tuesday, January 24, 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, February 13, 6:00 pm  
OUSD Office

8 Altarinda Road, Orinda  
www.orindaschools.org

See also AUHSD meeting page A2

Check online for agendas, meeting notes and announcements

#### City of Orinda:

www.cityoforinda.org

#### Chamber of Commerce:

www.orindachamber.org

#### The Orinda Association:

www.orindaassociation.org

## ORINDA POLICE

### Police Report

A jewel of a heist, 12/8/2011 Perpetrators used a stone to smash a window and gain entry into a house on Oak Drive. The damage alone was estimated at \$700; missing items have not been tallied. Suspects fled in a White Ford Taurus. Police are coming up empty handed even after running the vehicle's address.

Trouble brewing, 12/11/2011 One young man found his stop at a local Starbucks cost him more than just a cuppa Joe. Police made a pedestrian stop and arrested him on an outstanding warrant. They took him to Ellis Juvenile Hall and informed the father of his son's arrest. No word whether Dad bailed or bawled junior out...

Door to door to deputy, 12/14/2011 Two women were cited for soliciting without a permit. One also had a warrant trailing her unsullied name. The pair was cited and released and their sales call paperwork confiscated.

Front door pick-me-up, 12/23/2011 One man and one woman were charged with petty theft when it was discovered they took packages from a Moraga Via doorstep. Police interceded as they drove away. Although claiming the packages were "purchased from the store," the pair could produce no receipts, and a field lineup ID'd them both. The man was driving on a suspended license and the woman was on probation. Both were taken to Martinez Detention Facility for booking. There was no stopping for other packages on front doorsteps on the way.

Under age and under the influence, 12/23/2011 An 18-year old male driver had an argument with a stationery fence, and lost. Could he have been influenced by the marijuana found in his car? He was transported to Contra Costa County Regional Medical Center, which, conveniently, is just minutes away from the Martinez Detention Facility.



**Maureen Wilbur**

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## Orinda Residents to Answer the Call, Yet Again

### Roads polling calls to begin shortly

By Laurie Snyder

Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates (FM3) will launch its fourth telephone survey of Orinda residents since 2006 within the next several weeks, said a representative of the firm during a special meeting held by the Orinda City Council on January 11.

The firm is being paid approximately \$16,350 from the City's general reserves to gauge the level of support by Orindans for a potential sales tax increase or bond measure that would raise funds in support of road and infrastructure repair. The poll will also assess residents' moods regarding the quality of City services provided to the community.

The potential sales tax increase would be one-half cent; the bond measure may ask to raise as much as \$20 million.

The City Council held the special meeting in order to review the proposed questions that will be used during the poll. Several Council members asked FM3 to make significant revisions in order to ensure that residents are not only asked for their feelings regarding the proposals, but are given information about the continuing deterioration of the City's drains and roads.

Council Member Sue Severson, who serves on the Council's Roads Subcommittee with Mayor Steve Glazer, observed that "There is no perfect vehicle to accomplish what we need, especially because the problem is so great."

Several community members also commented in writing in advance of the meeting and in person during the public forum portion of

the program also recommending changes to the questions, with one urging that residents be given a clear idea of how much a sales tax increase could bring in to City coffers.

Rather than trying to fund the entire \$60 million that has been estimated will be required to fix both Orinda's drains, which are reaching the end of their lifespan, and roads that need to be brought from poor to fair or good condition, City leaders are now looking at tackling the problem incrementally.

Council Member Victoria Smith urged that FM3 include in its polling an explanation to residents of what levels of repair can be achieved with the funds raised by the proposed measures. Vice Mayor Amy Worth also suggested replacing several of the questions about community serv-

ices with additional questions and information relating to the condition of the roads to get as much detailed feedback from residents as possible.

Orindans may also be asked about how frequently they use various communication tools that are available to them currently, or which may be made available in the future. This is being done, said City Manager Janet Keeter, to help City staff determine the most effective ways for staff to communicate with residents.

Four hundred residents will be called during the polling period. The callers have been instructed to identify themselves as representing "FM3, a public opinion research company."

The analysis will be presented by FM3 to the Council by early February.

## Orinda Weighs Blight vs First Amendment

By Laurie Snyder

Signs – visual clutter or free speech? This question was on the minds of the Orinda Planning Commission recently as it discussed amending the City's Sign Code to ensure that area signage will not diminish the community's character – an issue made thornier since the American Civil Liberties Union of Northern California (ACLU) advised City leaders in 2010 that their efforts to avert the proliferation of temporary signs were unconstitutional.

"To prevent visual clutter, the Ordinance No. 10-05 only permits one temporary sign on a residential property without a permit," accord-

ing to the detail-rich staff report available on the City's web site: www.ci.orinda.ca.us. This ordinance also "restricted the placement of temporary signs in the public right-of-way to Tuesday, Saturday and Sunday between the hours of 8:00 am and 6:00 pm and only in residential districts."

Those regulatory specifics, among others, did not sit well with several Orindans during the 2010 campaign season, prompting the ACLU to advise the City:

"This severe limitation on Orinda residents' right to engage in political speech violates the First Amendment. Speech through resi-

dential signs is a 'venerable means of communication ... the Supreme Court has accordingly afforded it a high level of First Amendment protection.' The ACLU also noted that "the court invalidated [a Virginia] ordinance that was in fact more permissive than Ordinance 10-5."

In response, the City Council directed staff to draft new regulations. Those were presented to the Planning Commission on January 10. The proposed ordinance would create a new one-day sign category and place temporary signs in a separate category including sandwich boards and other signs for political campaigns, garage sales, and real estate.

For temporary signs in the public right-of-way, reads the proposed ordinance, "any number of portable temporary signs can be posted at the eight key intersection [sic] designated by the City" – as long as those signs comply with 13 general restrictions relating to the signs' size, construction and design, and location. Content would not be regulated for non-commercial signs.

Planners were mindful of the need for businesses to advertise and expressed support for the free speech process, but were also concerned about the possible implications of Council's decision to allow the unlimited placement of signs in designated areas, citing not only the potential visual impact to public and private property but also the possibility that backers of a single political candidate or ballot initiative could actually hinder freedom of speech because they would be permitted to take over a public right-of-way to exclusively promote one candidate or issue.

The City Council will formally review the draft ordinance at its February 7 meeting.

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## The Orinda News Turns 25



Photo Andy Scheck

Time flies when you're having fun and doing great work. *The Orinda News* is celebrating a quarter century of publishing. Here's to the next 25 years! Pic-

tured from left are: feature writer Elana O'Loskey, editor Sally Hogarty and former assistant editor and current business writer Valerie Hotz.



### Join us for an informative Canine CPR Class.



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**Thursday, February 9th**  
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— Victoria Robinson, Piedmont

Sheena, Founder of Living Lean

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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](mailto:letters@lamorindaweekly.com); Regular mail: Lamorinda Weekly, P.O.Box 6133, Moraga, CA 94570

Editor:

A Moragan's Salute to David Trotter & Michael Metcalf: Kudos to Councilman Dave Trotter and Mayor Mike Metcalf for listening to the people of Moraga and voting to preserve the sanctity of Rancho Laguna Park as a community gathering point. We salute you for willing to explore compromise with other members of the council and for ultimately sticking to your guns rather than succumb to political pressure.

For over three years the city council has sought to split this open, rustic park in two and turn it into a commercial enterprise to rent out for different uses. In doing so, they have split the tranquil hamlet of Moraga into two distinctly separate camps -- "dog people" versus "non-dog people".

Throughout this arduous process Councilman Trotter and Mayor Metcalf were the only members to both listen to the desires of the community and to seek compromise with the remaining members of the council based upon this community input. Regrettably, the majority of the council refused to embrace this opportunity and instead held steadfastly to a decision to split the park in two. Ultimately Councilman Trotter paid dearly for his brave support of Rancho Laguna Park as he was passed over for the position of Vice Mayor, a position he was in line for under longstanding council tradition.

In closing I want to personally thank Dave Trotter and Mike Metcalf for all of their considerable efforts at preserving the sanctity of our town park as a rustic, informal gathering place and I encourage all Moragan's to remember these brave public servants when we go to the polls on election day. Here's to preserving Rancho Laguna Park as the special place it is today rustic and open for all in existence to enjoy, including those with four legs.

Barry Behr  
Moraga

Editor:

I couldn't believe what I saw today in the parking lot between 24 Hour Fitness and Chef Chao.

One of the guys working for the gym covering up a simple request that gym members not use the 10 to 12 parking spaces near the restaurant between the hours of 4 and 7 pm. Granted, it is a public parking lot, but the gym has selfishly taken over all parking in the front of the gym and now the side lot as well. In fact, St. Mary's College offices had the same issue with their parking when the gym moved from in front of CVS Pharmacy to their current location.

Instead of putting another tenant out of business, why can't the town insist that 24 Hour Fitness share parking. It's only for the three hours of dinnertime that the restaurant requested.

As a member of the gym, I am embarrassed for them, as I also enjoy a Chinese meal on occasion. I sure hope that the signs that the restaurant installed were not thrown out and will reappear for the three hours it so deserves. Shame on you 24 Hour Fitness!

Suzanne Wells Parsons  
Lafayette

Editor:

On December 27th 2011 I had a very unprofessional encounter with an Orinda Police officer. I had parked in the BevMo parking lot in Orinda in order to meet a friend, not wanting to waste time waiting I decided to brush my teeth in my car. Unbeknownst to me this seemingly efficient use of downtime to practice oral hygiene would lead to a bizarre thirty minute confrontation with the Orinda Police Department. I spotted the officer in my rear view mirror, but I kept brushing my teeth because I was not sure what the police officer was doing. The officer approached and inquired to why I was brushing my teeth. She asked what I was doing and for my ID. I gave her my ID and told her I was waiting for my friend. She asked where my friend lived and I told her on the other side of Orinda. Officer Richardson then told me that my story did not "add up" to why I was meeting him in a public space and why I did not know his exact address. Officer Richardson asked if I was on drugs and I told her I had about four cups of coffee but nothing else. She then asked if she could search my car to which I replied that she could not search my car. Immediately she asked my why she couldn't and I informed her that I have rights and I do not think that someone brushing their teeth in a public space is reason to search ones person. She then said that it was perfectly reasonable because if I "robbed BevMo and she saw me brushing my teeth, it would make her look bad." To me her tone

seemed like she was accusing me of being a criminal which I am not, and furthermore I still do not think that "acting weird" by doing something as benign as brushing my teeth is probable cause to violate my personal space. After about 30 minutes she gave me a "fix it" ticket for a crack in my windshield. I told her what I thought of the event and she placed the ticket under my windshield so I was forced to leave my car, a blatant sign of disrespect.

The entire event was very surreal to me. I felt violated by the police; furthermore they treated me as a criminal and did not show me the respect that I had tried to show her. Especially in a community as small as Lamorinda it seems to me that the police should treat citizens with respect rather than as criminals. She did not go in to the situation with a neutral mindset. The entire situation disturbed me, and being falsely by authority is an incredibly scary feeling. Naturally I am filling a formal complaint against Officer Richardson, and I hope to see the Orinda Police Department take some action to stop this type of treatment of citizens in the future.

Joe Noonan  
Moraga

Editor:

I just saw the Box office numbers went down for the second year in a row at North American movie theatres in 2011 and I would like to see International films to be a part of Americana just like movies that come from Hollywood to a theatre near you. I would like to see a conscious effort from the Bookers that work with Hollywood to get International movies into the Theatres and not have theatres owners to do this on their own. I know for a fact that Bookers don't want Foreign movies into theatres and that has to stop.

Jonathan I Winchell  
Lafayette

Editor:

Lafayette - unfriendly to walkers who dare to cross in the crosswalk!

I moved to Lafayette over a year ago and thought I was moving to a great place to retire. I didn't know then how dangerous it could be if you have the nerve to cross Mt. Diablo Blvd. in the crosswalk. I am a 64 year old who walks with a cane and enjoys walking my dog on a leash three times a day. I cross Mt. Diablo Blvd. at Stuart St. and Hampton Rd. crosswalks as the lights on Brown St. and Carol Lane are too far. Tires have screeched, cars have swerved and I have been yelled at for crossing. I give oncoming cars time to stop and watch carefully - but people still believe they need to get where they are going regardless of the danger to myself or my dog. Don't blame the young people or college students, it was only once that a young person swerved so they didn't have to stop. It's the adults between 30 - 70, yes the good citizens in their nice cars. It's not random, it happens 2 - 5 times a day. Today was the last straw when I was in the middle of Mt. Diablo Blvd and a mother in her minivan speeded up then swerved in another lane so she didn't have to stop. Well, I smacked her car with my cane so if she has a little dent too bad - it could have been much worse - because she could be in jail tonight held for manslaughter and her children given to social services. Yes, good residents of Lafayette and surrounding area - if you see me in the crosswalk PLEASE STOP under California law in the crosswalk I have the right-of-way. My neighbor and I have called police and they come periodically. Maybe putting in reflectors will help remind people - I don't want to be your cities casualty - and if that happens Lafayette and good people you will have a casualty too in your pocketbook.

Nancy Collins  
Lafayette

... continued on next page

### 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](mailto:letters@lamorindaweekly.com) and let us know you'd like to be considered for the Public Forum. We will not accept Public Forum submissions regarding a current ballot measure or candidate for public office. Opinions expressed in Public Forum are the express views of the writer and not necessarily those of the Lamorinda Weekly.

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## Letters to the Editor

... continued from page A8

**MOFD**

Editor:  
These comments were originally intended to be delivered in person, but I am unable to make the meeting, and I am highly annoyed and insulted at the timing of this meeting as it was clearly designed to bypass the majority of public opinion and get lost in the Holiday season. I will make every attempt to get my views out to the community as well using the local media.

1. I believe Board VP Mr Weil made the following comment as a justification for this transaction: "Markets will only go up". Clearly they don't, because if they did this "historic" opportunity would not exist. Besides, this is a fire department, not a real estate speculator, using one man's opinion of the market is just ignorant. Market analysis strongly suggests the target project is over-valued by \$300,000 or more dollars, but price is really a secondary consideration compared to the next point.
2. Far more troubling, no entity, public or private, or government, should EVER invest their liquid reserves in an illiquid asset. NEVER. If funds have been raised and set aside for this purpose perhaps, but that is another discussion. This action is a violation of the fiduciary trust entrusted to the board. Personally, if one of my company management teams presented me with a project like this they would quickly be looking for new employment.
3. Add-on to an existing station if you must, use modular trailers until the funds have been raised to complete the construction project. Does admin space really trump the unfunded pension issues, existing station and equipment needs? Can you really make this argument? No, you can't.
4. Finally, I want to know who on the board, or the fire department, or both, is going to personally benefit from this transaction. A project such as this only lives and gets finagled through in the holidays because some person or group has a under-the-table benefit to make it happen. This project clearly violates every fiduciary and commonsense evaluation of capital allocation and risk management. I live on Crestview, the neighborhood that had to raise its own money to pave our street precisely because of long-forgotten decisions like this. As a community, as long as we are still digging a hole we can't begin to get out.

Glenn Millar  
Orinda

Editor:  
Emergency Service Not Top Priority for Morinda FD Directors . . . but speculating on commercial property IS !  
MORAGA-ORINDA FIRE DISTRICT (MOFD) Directors are using taxpayer dollars to speculate on commercial property.  
Yeah, ok, Orinda city already has a \$700 million unfunded liability that the city council seems to have no interest in paying down. So worrying about a two million dollar pittance may be a waste of time . . . But the number one priority for citizens should be emergency services - in which re-building the St. Stephens Fire Station is vitally important.  
The MOFD Directors have decided, though, that the first priority should be for administrative offices - NOT rebuilding the St. Stephens fire station.  
The MOFD Board will spend over TWO MILLION DOLLARS to buy a less than 10K ft2, burned-out, building in Moraga - in order to house twelve admin staffers.  
Orinda pays 65% of the MOFD revenue, so Orinda taxpayers may soon be on the hook for nearly one-and-a-half million dollars for this Moraga building, but Moraga pays only \$770,000. Equitable?  
And, Orinda will still not have its sub-standard (St. Stephens) fire station rebuilt.  
The Directors, however, ARE proposing borrowing the money to fix the St. Stephens Station. Of course, Orinda taxpayers will ONLY pay 65% of the cost of the borrowed money. Moraga will pay 35%. Are we at equitable, yet?  
The Orinda City Council COULD form an Orinda Fire District. Then its admin staff could be housed in unused space in the recently-built City Hall. That would save Orinda taxpayers nearly a MILLION FIVE HUNDRED THOUSAND - since we would not have to buy the 9000 ft2 building in Moraga.

Orinda has already allowed \$16 million tax dollars, that might have been used for our roads, as a subsidy for emergency services in Moraga. Is this equitable?

The \$16 million pot-hole grows, and Orinda has less and less money for roads - AND still has sub-standard fire-response times into some parts of the town.

Wayne Phillips  
Orinda

Editor:  
The Moraga-Orinda Fire District Board of Directors has, by a 3 to 2 vote, decided to waste \$2.2 million of our taxpayer dollars in buying a burnt-out Moraga building and refurbishing it solely for the convenience of its 12-person administrative staff. This 12-person administrative staff is currently housed in two offices, one in Orinda and one in Moraga. The two-office locations have never had any problem communicating by telephone and e-mail or by a short 4-mile drive when necessary. The majority of the MOFD directors are spendaholics. This \$2.2 million could have been used to build a new St. Stephens fire station to replace the existing run-down station. Instead, the MOFD directors will take out a mortgage on an existing fire station to supply the money for St. Stephens. Thus we add \$2.2 million to the \$24 million debt the MOFD already has to pay for its exorbitant employee benefits. In our current economy the last thing we need is waste of our taxpayer money.

If you object to this waste of our money, send an e-mail to the Fire Chief expressing your disapproval and asking that he pass it on to all of the Board of Directors of the MOFD. Send it to rbradley@mofd.org.

Clyde Vaughn  
Orinda

Editor:  
Moraga/Orinda Fire District Board Scams Taxpayers Again  
The focus for MOFD should be (a) emergency services and (b) paying off the huge underfunded liability problem Directors have created for taxpayers. Instead, the Directors plan to use money dedicated to rebuild St. Stephens Station in Orinda, as a Christmas present for the owner of a burned out Moraga building. The Directors approved the purchase of this 9,000 sq. ft. building which has been vacant for 2 years to house 12 Administrative MOFD staffers. The cost to taxpayers is \$2.2 million.

If Directors did not want to spend the \$2.2 million on their emergency services priority, they should have spent the money to pay down the huge underfunded liability problem.

The Directors give their reasons for going into the speculative commercial real estate business.

1. Directors believe it is a good time to buy because prices are low, and the building will appreciate \$60,000 per year.

Fact: Prices are now where they would have been without artificial Federal interference and manipulation. There is no justification to speculate on \$60,000 annual appreciation.

2. Directors believe they can rent the unused space for \$70,000 annually.

Fact: Directors need to look at empty store fronts in Moraga and Rheem.

It is easy for Directors to spend other peoples' money. If they were financially responsible for their decisions they would not throw taxpayer money away on pension spiking, illegal lawsuits, and other financially irresponsible decisions too numerous to mention here.

Orinda taxpayers are on the hook for 65% of MOFD Directors financially irresponsible decisions. It is up to the Orinda City Council to look out for Orinda citizens. Before the Orinda City Council asks voters to approve a road bond, they should detach from MOFD. An Orinda Fire District would save tax payers money that could be spent on Orinda roads.

Bruce Nicolai  
Orinda

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**...from Front Page**

**新年快樂 (Happy New Year!)  
Rejoice! It's a Dragon!**

... continued from page A1



Striking the Monastery bell

Photo provided

The Chinese New Year celebrations start with the new moon in the first month of the year and continue for 15 days until the full moon appears. The celebration is believed to have originated thousands of years ago when the people lit firecrackers to scare away Nian, a mythical beast that swallowed people and other animals. According to Chinese astrology, each year is represented by a different animal, and January 23rd will mark the transition from the Year of the Rabbit to the Year of the Dragon.

"Some people consider the Dragon to be a beneficial animal, it is powerful and magnanimous, some go as far as holding off having babies in order to give birth to a baby-dragon," says Venerable Master Liang Cheng, Abbess of the Buddha Gate Monastery. The Abbess does not care much for the astrological beliefs, however, the Monastery celebrates the Chinese New Year.

"The New Year is a time of renewal and celebration," she says, "every year about 400 people come to the Monastery on the first day of the Lunar Year to participate in our ceremony and make presents to the Buddha." During the service that starts at 9:30 a.m., the Monastery bell is struck to wake everyone from

their delusions. Each participant can also strike the bell as well as make offerings of flowers, lamps or incense to the Buddha for the New Year.

Zhan Li, the Dean of the School of Economics & Business Administration at Saint Mary's College and a Lamorinda resident, remembers celebrations full of symbolic rituals as they happened in the northeastern Chinese province of HeiLongjiang. "We used to completely clean the house before the New Year," he remembers, "we also wore new clothes starting on the first day of the year, so we wouldn't carry something old in the New Year." Li's understanding is that the tradition was born in a country that was mostly rural, celebrating the coming of longer days and the spring.

It's all about sweeping out the old and letting in the new and good luck. So if getting the house clean before the New Year is essential, it is also imperative not to sweep out anything the first day so the good luck stays in. "My wife, who is from Vietnam, stopped me a few years ago when I started to sweep something in the kitchen," recalls Moraga Council Member Ken Chew. He was born in Malaysia, and remembers that everyone got a

three-day vacation for the Chinese New Year so they could celebrate and visit friends and family.

Nancy Hom, the President of the Friends of the Moraga Library, used to follow the traditions that her parents, Chinese immigrants, respected without always explaining the meaning to her. "For my parents, who immigrated in the 50's, this was very important," she says, "but they didn't explain the meaning to us. I researched and found *Good Luck Life: The Essential Guide to Chinese American Celebrations and Culture*, by Rosemary Gong, and I learned a lot." The color red for example, that is seen everywhere for the new year, is a sign of good luck because red symbolizes the fire that purifies, the sun, and the lifeblood that the demons fear most. Red is often the color of the lanterns that are lit on the 15th day to symbolize the light and warmth of the coming spring.

Some of the traditions incorporate symbolic elements that play on homophonous words. "One of the ritual foods for the New Year is fish," says Li, "because of the sound of the word fish is close to that of the word that means abundance. We also eat tofu, because of the fu character. Displayed upside down it becomes homophonous of the word 'arrive' that symbolizes the arrival of prosperity."

Food and sharing it with family on the eve of the New Year, and with friends and more distant relatives the following days, is a big part of the celebration. "We prefer to cook it ourselves on New Year's Eve," said long-time Lamorinda resident Cheng Liao. In addition to fish and tofu, traditional foods include poultry, long leafy greens and long grain rice or noodles.

"On New Year's day, however, a vegetarian menu is in order as killing animals is not a good idea," warns Stephanie Hom, Moraga's new Administrative Services Director.

As for the coming Dragon itself, it should be a good omen for the planet since it is a most powerful animal. "But if you are a Dragon yourself (born in 1928, 1940, 1952, 1964, 1976, 1988, 2000), you should wear something red all year long for protection," says Li semi-seriously, "it could be a challenging year for you."

The famous San Francisco Chinese New Year parade will take place on Saturday, February 11th from 5:15 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

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# SMC Gets in the Swing



By Lou Fancher



Saint Mary's students in the JanTerm course, 'If You Ain't Got That Swing,' learn Lindy Hop and Swing basics with guest dance instructor Pat Doyle (center) Photo Andy Schreck

When Saint Mary's College told Professor Rebecca Carroll to go out on a limb with her Jan Term class, she swung out as far as her dancing bones could travel.

Carroll, Chair of the college's Department of Business Administration and a long-ago ballroom dancer, took SMC's intense pack-an-entire-term-into-one-month assignment to heart. She devised a course that begins with slavery and ends with a dance craze that swept the United States in the 1920's, 30's and, in resurgence, the 1980's.

If the five minutes—yes, that's just five little minutes—that it took for the course registry to fill after it was posted is any indication, swing dance is on the rise again in 2012.

The only person who wasn't surprised is Carroll.

"I'm not surprised; I'm delighted," she said, in an interview just three days into the class. "Most of the students told me they loved the history of the period, the music, the dress. Some of them said they liked the idea of moving through January term. They spend the rest of the year sitting in class."

The class meets four times each week, with a 90 minute lecture session followed by a one hour dance class. Patrick Doyle, a popular teacher from Mendocino County, provides instruction. Carroll said he jumped at her invitation to come down to "her" college and teach 20-year olds.

"He calls himself a drill sergeant: the students who are athletes say he's like their coach, only louder," Carroll laughed.

Doyle is careful and respectful of the students' proper form. He begins with simple tension and compression exercises to gain comfort with the leader/follower roles social dances require.

"They were just absorbing this culture and are so willing to put themselves out there and try this," Carroll exclaimed. "By day three, they were already smoothing out their movements."

Swing Dance allows for a more grounded, relaxed movement vocabulary than ballroom's upright posture, and its definition has grown to include the Lindy Hop, Charleston and East Coast/West Coast Swing patterns.

"It came on slave ships. They put the Africans on the deck and had them dance. It wasn't because they were kind: it was to keep them in better physical condition to get more money for them," Carroll explained.

The one thing she has learned, unexpectedly, is how unaware the students are about how much African culture has contributed to American music and dance. "The same steps those Africans were doing are the steps we are doing today. We talk about jazz being an American art form and that's true, but that's only because we don't think of all the imports."

Carroll teaches courses in rhetoric, when not indulging in her passion for dance and its historical origins.

"I have a PhD in arguing," she joked, describing how one student, when asked to offer his definition of rhetoric, raised his hand and announced, "Lies!"

Instead, rhetoric emerges from classic, Aristotle-drenched discourse, in which opinions are not mistaken for arguments. She is proud that SMC recognizes the importance of the distinction.

"I mostly teach argument to business students. How do we write well, how do we speak well: most colleges don't teach this. You need to be able to make your point, to state your business," she said.

Due to the popular appeal of the *If You Ain't Got That Swing* class, a free, open dance party has been scheduled for Thursday, January 19th. Starting at 6:00 p.m., a one-hour instructional session will heat up Saint Mary's Soda Center. Immediately following the class, at 7:00 p.m., the 17-piece Big Band orchestra *Class Act* will accompany a two-hour swing, sway, tuck turn, and rock-step extravaganza.

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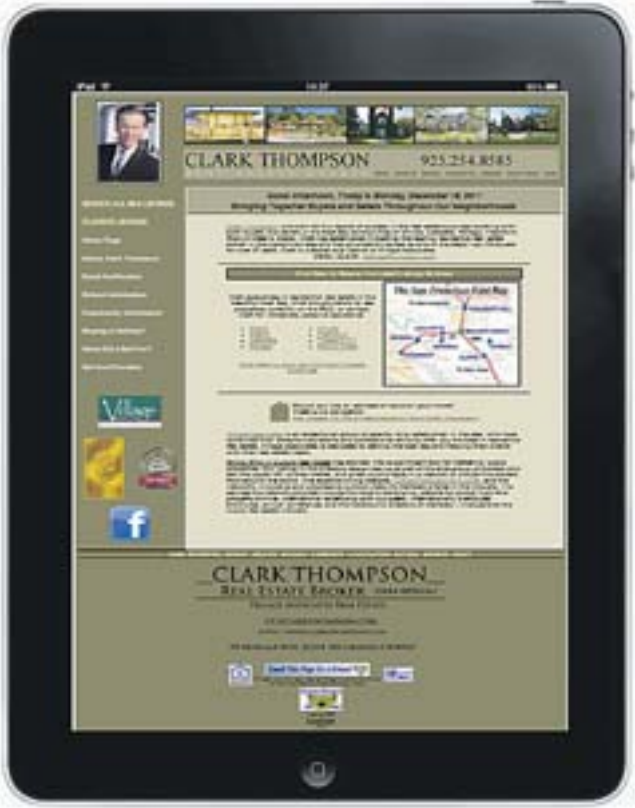
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**Beau/Derek on The Iron Lady**

★★★★☆

**T**he *Iron Lady* is a film that attempts to synthesize and dissect biographical snippets from the life of the first woman prime minister of Great Britain, Margaret Thatcher.

The précis is basically the message that Thatcher was raised to be a formidable creator of her own destiny, under the auspices of determination and courage. The film tries to convey her conviction that feelings could shroud and dilute the crux of the question, and that they could leave you tetch and derailed when making decisions. This is the iron-clad epitome of her leadership as a person and as a successful political leader.

Meryl Streep's performance, like Thatcher's leadership, is unequivocally commanding. It is poetic with a very convincing tone of eloquence and parlance. It is superbly syncopated with the right beat of British accent, mannerisms, and above all, the pearl necklace and the helmet of hair. In other words – *Brava!*

As for the direction of the film, I must say that director Phyllida Lloyd's attempt is rather weak and lackluster. I am afraid that I could even hear Thatcher characterize it as "absolutely not." However, we also know that it is almost impossible and even implausible to win the nod of any discerning biopic critic.

Come to the Lamorinda Theatres and see Meryl Streep take you to her own, and only own, par on excellence!

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



**Bentley Debater Takes First Place**

Submitted by Clare Durant



Photo Logan Brog

**C**lare Durant, 17, of Lafayette's Bentley School, won first place in varsity Impromptu Speaking at the prestigious Santa Clara University Dempsey-Cronin Speech and Debate Tournament in Santa Clara, CA. Durant is coached by National Forensic League double-diamond coach Bruce Jordan, one of the state's winning-est debate coaches.

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# CA's Indie Film Fest Promises to Be the Best Yet

By Andrea A. Firth



Program Director Beau Behan at last year's opening night  
Photo Doug Kohen

"In the 14 years that the California Independent Film Festival has been held, this is our best film line up yet," says CAIFF Program Director Beau Behan. "I can't pick one single favorite, there so many really fine films in the program."

The Festival received over 400 entries from which the judges have chosen the best feature films (11), documentaries (7), and short films (23) to be screened over the course of the seven-day festival to be held from February 10th through the 16th. Three Oscar-nominated films will be shown, including the opening night feature, *Monsieur Lazhar*, which will screen at the Sundance Film Festival just days before it airs in Moraga.

The CAIFF, which moved to Lamorinda three years ago, first launched at the Orinda Theatre in 2010, then moved to the New Rheem Theatre in Moraga last year. This year the Festival will screen films in both locations. The opening weekend events and closing night will be held at the Rheem in Moraga. And the festival schedule from Monday (2/13) through Wednesday (2/15) will be shown at alternate times at both the Rheem and Orinda Theatres to give movie-goers more options.

Like previous years, the festival will include a host of day and evening screenings and social events. See the sidebar for Festival highlights. Go to the Festival website for show times and ticket details, [www.caiff.org](http://www.caiff.org).

## 2012 CAIFF—Not to be Missed

### Iron Filmmaker is Back

Registration is open for the 2012 Iron Filmmaker Competition, a favorite among Lamorinda's filmmakers who have garnered top honors in the past two years. Once again contestants will have 24 hours to create a three-minute short film including all of the "secret ingredients" that contestants will be given at the contest kickoff on Saturday, January 28th at 10:00 a.m. the Rheem Theatre. Completed films must be submitted by 11:00 a.m. the next day. All of the films will be shown on the big screen at the Rheem Theatre on Sunday, February 12th starting at 11:00 a.m., and the winners will be announced at the conclusion. For more information and to register go to [www.caiff.org](http://www.caiff.org).

### Celebrity Watch



Burt Young

Look for veteran actor **Burt Young** (remember the rough-edged, unshaven brother-in-law Pauly that he portrayed in the film classic *Rocky*?) who will be at the Rheem Theatre on Saturday, February 11th for an 8:00 p.m. screening of the film followed by a Q&A session. The evening kicks off at 5:30 p.m. with an award ceremony (don't forget your red carpet apparel) where Young will receive the CAIFF's Lifetime Achievement Award.



Margaret O'Brien in *Meet Me in St. Louis*

Oscar winner **Margaret O'Brien**, who played Tootie, Judy Garland's younger sister in the movie *Meet Me in St. Louis*, will make a guest appearance at the Orinda Theatre on Wednesday, February 15th for a special screening of 1949 version of *Little Women* (she played Beth.) And on the closing evening of the Festival the next night, February 16th, O'Brien will be at the Rheem Theatre for a screening of *Meet Me in St. Louis* when she will be awarded the 2012 CAIFF Diamond Award.



Jon Gries

A native of Glendale, CA, veteran actor **Jon Gries** has appeared in a number of feature films including *Real Genius*, *Running Scared*, *Get Shorty*, *Jackpot*, and *The Astronaut Farmer*. Jon is perhaps most recently best known for his role of Uncle Rico in *Napoleon Dynamite*, in which he was nominated for an Independent Spirit Award. Gries will be honored at the screening of

Five Time Champion opening night, February 10th.

### Family Day at the Rheem Theatre

On the Saturday of the Festival's opening weekend (2/11) two sessions of children's film programming, a short followed by a feature, will be screened at the Rheem starting in the morning at 10:00 a.m., and again in the afternoon starting at 12:30 p.m.

### Short Film Lovers, Come See Sapporo

The CAIFF continues its connection with the Sapporo International Short Film Fest. Winning shorts from the Sapporo Festival held in the fall will be screened at the Rheem Theatre on Sunday (2/12) and Monday (2/13).

### Seminar—How to Maximize Your Film Audition, with Joie Landeaux

Saturday, February 11th, 10:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. and again from 3:00 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. at the Rheem Theatre  
Film and theatre director, acting coach and instructor, Joie Landeaux will teach aspiring actors how to professionally audition to get a call back and role. Break a leg. Space is limited, go to [www.CAIFF.org](http://www.CAIFF.org) to register.

## Year of the Dragon Storytime at Moraga Library



Chin with "Year of the Dragon"; 7th in a series of 12 Photo Cathy Dausman

Author Oliver Chin engaged Moraga library patrons with his colorful presentation, (complete with vocal exclamations and sound effects) of Dominic the dragon. His latest book, *Year of the Dragon: Tales from the Chinese Zodiac* celebrates the upcoming Chinese New Year. This is his seventh release in a series of children's books for each of the Chinese celestial signs. He started in 2006 with the year of the Dog (his sign). Chin admits he "didn't necessarily want to work for 12 years" but he is committed to completing the series. He also believes his is the first such collection written in English for Asian Americans.  
*C.Dausman*

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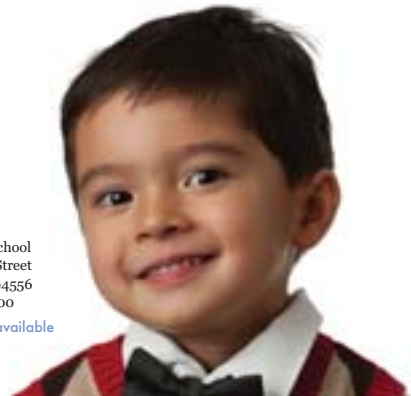
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## Moraga School District Plans May Parcel Tax

By Sophie Braccini

After a convincing presentation by the Campaign Committee, the Governing Board of the Moraga School District voted unanimously on January 10th to set an amount of \$225, with no sunset, for a new parcel tax to support low class sizes and strong academics in its three elementary schools and one middle school. A \$275-per-parcel tax was proposed by the Revenue Committee earlier, but concerns over the approval rate and uncertainty of State funding led the committee to propose the lower amount. Moraga residents will be asked to vote on a mail-in ballot on May 8th rather than on the June or November ballot to avoid confusion with other tax measures that are anticipated for the fall.

"We would rather pass a \$225 parcel tax in May of this year, than take the risk of asking for \$275 as the Revenue Committee recommended," said Campaign Committee member Dave Miller. "\$225 may already be a stretch; we are concerned that failing this May would result in the need for a second effort in 2013 that would be very costly to the District and the volunteers."

Superintendent Bruce Burns began his comments that night by reiterating the facts that the reduction of State funding has had a dra-

matic impact on the district over the last eight years and that the trend continues to be uncertain. The need for a parcel tax has been on the Board's radar since last year. Residents already pay a \$325 tax to the Moraga School District, but the funds generated will no longer fund expenses in 2013-2014, according to District staff.

The five members of the Board, whether or not they previously favored a \$275 tax, all rallied around the new figure and the May ballot. "I recently ran into Council Member Dave Trotter and he mentioned that the Town might have a measure on the November ballot for the roads," said School Board Vice-President Charles MacNulty. Board Member Dennis Kelleher agreed that avoiding confusion with other tax measures such as what the State might propose in November was a better option.

A parcel tax needs the approval of a 2/3 majority of voters. The last one was passed with a narrow margin of 66.8% in 2004. When residents were polled at the beginning of 2011, the recommended amount was \$169. However, during his presentation, Miller seemed confident that residents placed enough value on small class sizes and quality education to support the measure.

## 2012-2013 Kindergarten Registration

Lamorinda's public 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. The Transitional Kindergarten (TK) program may fall to the State's budget ax - please check with your district if you were planning to register for TK. 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.

### 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. Registration will take place 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)  
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## Binding Authors and Writers at Moraga Library

By Cathy Dausman



An overflow crowd in Moraga Library listens to So You Want to Write a Book  
Photo Cathy Dausman

It was a best-seller event, judging from the turnout.

Sunny and 70's outside weather did not deter aspiring authors from crowding into Moraga Library's community room one recent Saturday afternoon as four East Bay authors discussed their writing journeys with a raptly attentive audience.

Librarian Melanie McCallum estimated the standing room only crowd at 95. She said a show of hands revealed some 30 attendees had a finished manuscript, 40 were working on a manuscript and another 25 were aspiring writers. Barbara Bentley, Roger Paulson (writing as Jon Cory), Alfred Garrotto and Judith Marshall devoted 90 minutes to discussions on the art and craft of writing, from building scenes, dialogue and character development, to film options, self-promotion, legal aspects and the value of networking.

The authors themselves agreed

the audience size was an unexpected bonus. In comparison their visit to a similar event hosted on a "rainy Monday evening" in Clayton drew only 60 attendees.

Sallie Doull is not an author yet, but thinks she might like to write "someday." She filled the library flier with notes from her perch on a table just outside the conference room. "They had a lot of good information," said the Moraga resident, adding that she came to event because it was "so close."

The Friends of Moraga Library sponsored the event. Another writing presentation, "Turn Your Expertise into a Successful Book", with authors Patricia Evans, Catherine Accardi and Nannette Rundle Carroll will be held January 22, 2:00-4:00 p.m. in the Lafayette Library and Learning Center's (LLLC) Arts and Science room. The event is sponsored by the Friends of LLLC.

## Bang the Drum Slowly...

By Cathy Dausman

Taiko is Japanese for "drum", but it's not that simple. Taiko is singular concentration in a high decibel environment. The drums are so noisy that a visitor is offered earplugs. It is frenetic, controlled, high-energy precision with a large dose of passion, and utmost respect for its Japanese roots. It's a performance combining martial arts with a pulsing rhythm that reaches into your soul, pulling out perfection. It is mentally, physically and spiritually exhausting...and its students love it!

Kensuke Sumii is the Sensei (teacher) of two taiko classes at Orinda Community Center. His students include a former Moraga mayor and other Lamorinda residents, as well as those from surrounding communities. Some follow Sumii to different locations for additional classes.

The taiko ritual begins before Sumii's students ever touch a drum. They bow and greet their teacher in Japanese upon arrival, dressed in comfortable, stretchy clothing. Some wear two-toed Japanese tabi socks; others are barefoot. None wear watches or jewelry. Class starts with yoga-like warmups, with the focus on loosening shoulder muscles, neck and fingers. Then bachi drumsticks in hand, students strike a pose beside the drum: legs apart and bent at the knees, arms poised. Sumii takes his place with a smaller gong-like drum and counts off the beat: "ichi, ni...ichi, ni, san-- hai!"

The room fills with what student Mary Beth MacLennan calls "the resonance of drums playing in unison." Taiko classes, says MacLennan "are a way of actualizing my Japanese heritage."

Student Lynda Deschambault loves "the workout and the focused concentration." But taiko's physical workout is only one component.

Leslie Morelli says "it's a good brain exercise. There is no written music, so you have to memorize everything." She says it took the class almost a year to learn a seven minute routine. She compares playing taiko to learning martial arts, as she tries "to execute whole-body movements with the expected level of control and sharpness."

Drew Tamaki saw his first taiko group in southern California, and now attends related activities like the North American Taiko Community conference at Stanford. "They had a variety of drumming workshops as well as several taiko concerts," he said. He also recommends finding the Taiko Community on Facebook.

Lovelle Yano feels "something deep, internal and spiritual that occurs when playing," and finds that "the drum vibrations go deep into the soul."

Over and over, students strive to hit the same spot on the drum head. Seven drummers strive for perfect unison. Sumii corrects their efforts a vocal chant: "do-ko, do-ko, don, don."

Taiko originated in Japan as a way to summon villagers or send messages to armies on the battlefield. It became a performance art fifty years ago and migrated to the United States. The first US groups were established in San Francisco, Los Angeles and San Jose. Cirque du Soleil's *Mystere* features taiko drumming, as does the music soundtrack of TV's *Battlestar Gallactica*.

So bang the drum slowly, students, because taiko, like karate, says Lovelle Yano, is "a lifelong process." It is easy to get started, says Bruce Fukayama, and definitely helps in stress relief. And, he cautions: "watch out, you might get hooked."

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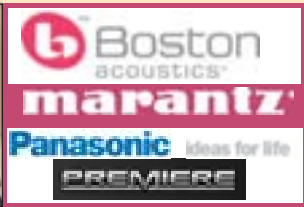
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## Stepping Up to Serve the Library Foundation

By Cathy Tyson



Seth Hamalian



Suzy Pak Photos provided

Funding 53% of the Lafayette Library and Learning Center's (LLLC) operating expenses is no easy task. That's the role of the Lafayette Library and Learning Center Foundation (Foundation), which was established to support the construction and operations of the Library with the help of only four Foundation staff members. Recently some of the original members of the Foundation Trustees stepped down: Anne Grodin, Teresa Geringer, Bret Peterson and Jack Jenkins-Stark. Seven community-minded volunteers offered to step in and fill those positions; the new Board members will play active roles on committees, fundraising and in leadership positions for upcoming events. "They are also our spokespersons in the community," said Executive Director Kathy Merchant.

The new Foundation Trustees - Victoria Bjerke, Seth Hamalian, Todd Jacobson, Sid Luckenbach, Suzy Pak, Laurie Phillips and Denise Zetter-

baum, join thirteen existing members to form a full roster of twenty - the maximum allowable.

Despite the demands of his day job as a principal of Mission Bay Development Group in San Francisco, where he is responsible for strategic planning, marketing and finance, Seth Hamalian stepped up to serve on the Foundation Board. "I felt my experience in fundraising and working with public private partnerships and redevelopment agencies could be valuable in helping the LLLC to thrive," said Hamalian. "Lafayette's library is unique in that, instead relying on property taxes the way most libraries do, its operations are highly dependent on donations and the generosity of individuals and local businesses."

He adds, "I want to see the Lafayette Library and Learning Center do well because libraries hold a special place in my heart. Growing up, I spent hours in the Berkeley public library and developed my love of

reading and research there. I remember vividly the great satisfaction that came with finding locations in the stacks that contained whole new area of interest, and then pouring through that section, looking for the best books and checking out the maximum allowed on each visit. I want to tackle how, in an age of digital books and the internet, a physical space like the library can still provide that spark for a love of reading and promote intellectual curiosity. In addition, I want to build on the library's success in providing an important and unique gathering space that grows the fibers of community in Lafayette."

Fellow new board member Suzy Pak also has many demands on her time, with two young children, now in fourth and first grade respectively, a full time job with an asset management firm in San Francisco and as one of the founders of grassroots group, Lafayette for Education. "It's important to recognize that the community extends beyond school," said Pak. Her mother was a children's librarian, so she understands the importance of reading and libraries.

"The LLLC has an amazing breadth and depth of services and collaborations (with the Glenn Seaborg Consortium), it's really an impressive program," said Pak, "I'm excited to be a part of it." She feels fortunate to live here and wants to make sure the library keeps going for future generations, "it's a vital part of the community."

## SMC and MCC Partner to Renovate Driving Range

By Sophie Braccini



Brother Ron Gallagher (right) and Donald Maddison inaugurate the range

Photo Andy Schreck

Clear sky, crisp light, warming sun and green grass— Friday the 13th of January was a perfect day to play golf. Brother Ronald Gallagher, President of Saint Mary's College, and Moraga Country Club Board President Donald Maddison, holding their best drivers, aimed to be among the first to practice on the new driving range that reopened that morning. The men associated in play as their respective institutions associated in financing the complete renovation of the driving range that included drainage, irrigation, the addition of new sand holes, and new grass.

"We have a great relationship with the Country Club," said Scott Hardy, Saint Mary's College (SMC) golf coach, "the students practice here all the time; it's a win-win for my team." "We helped the financing of the range's renovation with the fees we pay to

the Club," added Gallagher, who also said that it was nice to see the range reopen after almost four months.

Frank Melon, the Moraga Country Club's (MCC) Executive Director, agreed, "We are very proud to have the students practice here," he said, "the members enjoy seeing them around, the kids are always very polite when they come here, and we follow their results. Saint Mary's had a very successful golf season last year."

Hardy indicated that the golf team has 11 students, most of them on scholarship and coming from all over, from South California to Norway. "We won two games last year," said Hardy, "one at Notre Dame and one at Firestone. Our present rank is 28th out of 300 teams and we hope to improve our ranking this year."

Mark Orr, SMC's Director of

Athletics, came to the inauguration still beaming from the previous night's win by the basketball team against Gonzaga by a merciless 83-62. "The golf team has been practicing here for almost 20 years," he said, "there is no place to practice on campus, this partnership works very well for us."

On the day of its reopening, the new range's grass looked a bit thinly sown. "This is normal for this type of grass," said Luis Ballesteros who, according to Melon, is the best golf superintendent in the nation, "we used a mix of Bermuda grass and perennial rye to create a drought resistant field that will recover and grow fast all summer long."

Melon indicated that MCC and SMC had just signed a renewed agreement for the next 20 years—a partnership that clearly seems to work for both parties.



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## Consign of the Times: Furniture Consignment Stores Growing in Lamorinda

By Sophie Braccini



Kat Moody (left) and Nicole Berzins in the new Yesterday's Treasures store Photo Sophie Braccini

Nicole Berzins rearranges the objects in the window of the new store Yesterday's Treasures in Lafayette, a store that is part of one of the fastest growing segment of American retail: Resale. Berzins, a Lafayette mom, is a recent hire of Terry Ketchel, the owner of the store that opened on January 5 at 996 Moraga Road, next to the Squirrels Coffee Shop. Orinda's Hilton House, the grande dame of furniture consignment in Lamorinda, confirms that local shoppers love to browse consignment stores in search of a treasure or a bargain; while others, from all walks of life, needing cash or more room in their home, are happy to let go of some of their belongings.

According to the National Association of

Resale Professionals, NARTS, resale remains healthy with new stores entering the industry and current establishments opening additional locations, at approximately a 7% net growth a year for the past two years.

"But some are closing too," warns Ketchel, "since the industry is growing, many think that it is the right business to get into, but you also need the right spot and business model to make it a success." Yesterday's Treasures is Ketchel's third boutique; she also has locations in Antioch and Brentwood.

The stores use a similar consignment system. Owners who want to sell an object or piece of furniture offer it to the store and a price is set. At Hilton House, it remains on display for 45

days; at Yesterday's Treasures, it can stay as long the owner desires, with the possibility of getting it back after 90 days if it has not sold. Hilton House will ask the owner if they want to lower the price after the first period; if the item still does not sell, the proprietor needs to take it back or it will go to charity. According to NARTS, shops pay the owners from 40 to 60% of the selling price.

According to Hilton House, what moves fastest in Orinda are the knickknacks, the silver objects; the small unique pieces that sometimes people have been looking for forever.

Kat Moody, the manager of Yesterday's Treasures, on the other hand, sells furniture faster than trinkets. "We are quite selective with the pieces we take," she says, "we ask for photographs first, make sure that the house had no smokers or cats (for the allergy factor), and on a scale of 1 to 10, where 10 is brand new, we never take something below 8." Moody adds that they prefer name brands and want to create an eclectic mix of styles.

A particularity of Yesterday's Treasures is that they accept layaway for the larger furniture items. "With 25% down the clients can purchase what they want and we work with them on a series of weekly payments, charging no fees or interest," says Moody.

According to Ketchel, she and her employees will go to great lengths to satisfy their customers. They also consult in staging, decorating, and color matching. "It is full service and it is a lot of fun," says Berzins, who started working for Ketchel a few weeks ago at her first full time job since having her two boys, who are now at Stanley Middle School.

According to NARTS, consignment is blossoming thanks to value conscious customers.

After all, consignment is the ultimate recycling.

### Consignment stores in Lamorinda

#### Furniture:

Hilton House  
21 Orinda Way, Orinda  
254-1113

Yesterday's Treasures  
996 Moraga Road, Lafayette  
283-8549

Chameleon Consignment  
1003 Blackwood Lane, Lafayette  
299-1994

Collector's Choice Antiques  
3574 Mt. Diablo Blvd., Lafayette, 299-9400

Collector's Choice is an antique store. Some of their merchandise is made of consigned pieces. They only accept objects and furniture that are at least 30 years old.

#### Clothing:

Rosie's Upscale Consignments  
1020 Brown Avenue, Suite B, Lafayette  
283-6540

Cheryl's Closet  
21 Orinda Way, Suite E, Orinda  
254-4442

They Grow So Fast  
Consignment store for children's clothing  
3413 Mt Diablo Blvd, Lafayette  
283-8976

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

### Sewnow! Moves to a Brand New Studio in Lafayette. 3534 Golden Gate Way www.sewnow.com.

Susan Goldie and her team have relocated, opening a larger Sewnow! on Golden Gate Way, between the Library and Plaza Park in Lafayette. The inauguration coincided with the celebration of the 5th anniversary of a business that has brought to Lafayette a specialized studio for fashion design and sewing. Clients can come to design, embroider, and sew anything they can imagine. Sewnow! supports them with expert advice, instruction, and materials. The business also offers fashion design and sewing classes, sewing camps, specialty workshops, open studio time, birthday parties, private sewing lessons. Visit the website above for ongoing and upcoming classes.

### Orinda Taxi Gets Green Business Award

From the get-go five years ago, Julian Juricevic paid close attention to the impact his new business had on the environment and bought only hybrid vehicles. Now the expanding Orinda business that serves Lamorinda and beyond was recognized by the Contra Costa Green Business Program and received a Green Business Certificate on December 15. "Orinda Taxi has successfully demonstrated full compliance with local environmental regulatory services and taken action to conserve natural resources and protect the environment," said Robin Bedell-Walte, Green Business Program Coordinator. This award follows an already impressive list of public recognition this business has won, such as Orinda Business of the Year in 2011 and the Contra Costa Best Small Business in Orinda in 2010.

**LamorindaWeb's Home Expo '12** on Saturday, January 28 LamorindaWeb is organizing their first annual Home Expo on Saturday, January 28 from 10am to 4pm at the Lafayette Events Center (formerly the Veteran's Memorial Building). The show includes, but is not limited to, kitchen and bath remodeling, flooring, interior design, home security and solar products as well as the latest landscaping options. It will feature local remodelers, builders, and design professionals. The event is free to the public and will include speakers, workshops, seminars, food for purchase by Huckleberry Cafe to Go, and kids activities by Diana O'Daniels and 4th grade Girl Scout Troop 33005 (supporting Foster a Dream). Talk directly with local experts and get the advice you need to help you with your home improvement projects. RSVP online at www.lamorindaweekly.com/homeexpo.

### ACI Celebrates 20th Anniversary

Association Communication Inc., the Moraga based company that manages Homeowner Associations in California and beyond, is inviting the community to celebrate 20 years of expansion and continuous services. ACI's owner, Caroline McCormick, wants to take the opportunity to show off the company's new location at 533 Moraga Road, across from the Rheem Center. "We look forward to seeing the clients and vendors that helped ACI reach this important milestone," she said. The party will be held in suite 200, 3-6pm, on Friday January 27th.

### News from the three Chambers of Commerce Lafayette



Jay Lifson and Tom Courtright drawing the winners Photo A. Scheck

On Thursday, December 12, Chamber Executive Director Jay Lifson drew the winners of the Try Lafayette First holiday campaign 3/50. The campaign was a great success as residents turned in their receipts for \$50 or more from at least three different Lafayette businesses. The three winners are Micheline Reeder, Larry Blodgett and Helen Ann Licht. Micheline was very happy to give them each the Visa gift cards they received as prizes.

Business Person of the Year Dinner Honoring Jay Lifson on January 20th at the Lafayette Park Hotel & Spa Also on the agenda are the State of the City address by Mayor Carol Federighi and the introduction of the Lafayette Chamber of Commerce 2012 Board of Directors. Reception at 6pm, dinner at 7pm. Reservation on the Chamber's web site is required, www.lafayettechamber.com.

### Moraga

First Business Meeting of the year on Friday, January 27th at the Hacienda de las Flores. Networking begins at 7:30am with warm scones and coffee provided by Terzetto Cuisine. Frank Melon will launch his first meeting as President at 8am with opening remarks and then turn the floor over to the Members.

### Art Gallery Relocates



On Saturday, January 14 Wenda Pyman cut the ribbon inaugurating the new location of the Moraga Art Gallery. The new place, next to TJ Maxx, may be a bit smaller than the previous spot at the Rheem Center, but the warm lights and thick carpet make the gallery warm and inviting.

### Orinda

The Chamber's Orinda Country Club Luncheon is scheduled for Friday, February 24, noon-1:30pm at the Orinda Country Club, 315 Camino Sobrante. The cost is \$30 per person. The luncheon's speaker will be award-winning weekend anchor for NBC Bay Area News, and Orinda resident, Diane Dwyer. Reserve your seat by calling 254-3909, or e-mail the Chamber at info@orindachamber.org

If you have a business brief to share, please contact **Sophie Braccini** at [sophie@lamorindaweekly.com](mailto:sophie@lamorindaweekly.com)

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# The Whole Enchilada

By Susie Iventosch



Front row, from left: LeeAnn Martini, Eileen Tarrab, Terry Kolhede, Constance Clayburn, Constance Pinckert, back row from left, Jamie Ertola, Meggin Schlinkert, Robyn Varellas, Juli Cunningham, Brenna Long, Jamie Bonetto and Fran Miller. Photo provided

Now that the holiday teas and cookie exchanges are over, it's time to refocus on real food for our monthly meetings and social gatherings! Of course, after eating all of the cookies and fudge from those holiday parties, we've all made New Year's promises to eat low-calorie foods ... at least for a while. But, combining delicious and low-cal is not necessarily an easy feat. Alas, for the 3Bs (Bunco, Bridge and Book Clubs) we must venture forth!

This year, I received another email from Constance Clayburn of Moraga, who was planning ahead for her January Bunco gathering. She was hoping to find a recipe for just such a low-calorie dish. She thought perhaps a soup and salad, or maybe a crockpot dish that could be served in a bowl with a side salad would be nice. She also said she has a pretty silver holder for a casserole dish, so that could work too. But there is always that dam caveat ...

Something low-calorie and healthy," she said. "It's January and everyone is resolved to get thin!"

So, I put on my thinking cap, and remembered how much everyone loves these chicken enchiladas made with Ortega chilies and fresh cilantro. They can be made with reduced fat cheese, nonfat sour cream or plain yo-

gurt and avocado as an accompaniment. And, even though avocados may be fattening, they have the good kind of monounsaturated fat, the kind that, according to many nutritionists, actually lowers cholesterol levels! That is music to my ears, because I adore avocados.

Over the holidays I brought these enchiladas to my friend Fran's house, and to go along with them she made a fabulous salad, combining butter lettuce, dried cranberries, fresh pear, blue cheese and toasted pecans all tossed in her divine stone-ground mustard-rice vinegar dressing. This salad will accompany all sorts of dishes, but it went particularly well with the enchiladas!

When Constance reported back on her party fare, she told me that she picked up a "to-go" bag of tortilla chips, salsa, guacamole and blue cheese dip for an easy appetizer.

"It was the perfect appetizer to go along with the dinner," she noted.

And, when I looked at the photos of the Bunco group assembled at Constance's party, lo and behold, not only was Fran's salad featured, but Fran was also there!

"Yes, I had the 'salad lady' herself at the party," said Constance. "We had a good laugh over the coincidence!"

## Chicken Enchiladas

(Makes 12)

This is the dish I love to deliver to friends and family when they need a little extra help getting food on the table, whether it's because they have a lot of family in town, they're throwing a big potluck party, or they've been sick and out of cooking commission. The recipe makes a lot and can be easily doubled, and it stores well in the refrigerator or freezer!

### INGREDIENTS

12 large flour tortillas (can use corn, but will need about 16 corn tortillas)  
1 recipe chicken filling (recipe follows)

1 recipe Marilyn Greco's Enchilada Sauce (below) or, substitute canned sauce  
2 1/2 cups grated taco blend cheese (Monterey Jack and medium sharp cheddar, and can also use low fat cheese or feta)  
2 teaspoons paprika for garnish  
1 can (3.5 ounces) sliced ripe olives  
3/4 cup plain nonfat yogurt for garnish  
Fresh cilantro sprigs for garnish  
Fresh avocado slices for garnish  
\*Serve with refried beans and/or rice and guacamole.

### Chicken filling

2 1/2 pounds chicken breast tenders or boneless, skinless chicken breasts  
1 cup medium-hot salsa  
2 cups water-or enough to cover chicken in pot  
1/2 yellow onion, coarsely chopped  
1 teaspoon salt  
1 teaspoon pepper  
2 large cans mild Ortega chilies diced (fire roasted or roasting your own are excellent, too)  
1/2 cup chopped fresh cilantro  
1-2 tablespoons Louisiana hot sauce (more or less, depending on your heat tolerance!)

### DIRECTIONS

Place chicken tenders in a large, frying pan, at least three inches deep. Pour salsa and water over chicken. Add onions and salt and pepper. Cover and bring to a boil. Reduce heat to low, and simmer on stovetop for approximately 20-25 minutes, or until tenders are completely cooked through. Remove from stove and cool. Once cooled, remove tenders and discard liquid. Shred chicken using two forks. Place chicken in large bowl. Add 1/2 cup grated cheese, 1/2 cup enchilada sauce, Ortega chilies, cilantro and hot sauce. Mix well. Add salt and pepper as needed to taste.

### To Assemble:

Heat tortillas in microwave for one to two minutes just enough to make them pliable. Lay tortillas on flat surface and spoon about 1/4 cup of chicken filling on each tortilla. Spoon just a teaspoon or two of extra cooled enchilada sauce over filling and sprinkle one tablespoon of extra cheese over sauce. Roll tightly into a log. Place in greased or sprayed casserole dish side by side. (Can be made a day or two ahead, and refrigerated or kept frozen for several weeks, but do not cover with remaining enchilada sauce until ready to heat and serve.)

### To Serve:

Pour remaining sauce over enchiladas and sprinkle evenly with remaining cheese. Dust the top of each enchilada with paprika for color. Bake at 400°F for 15-20 minutes, or until cheese is bubbly and slightly browned. Garnish each enchilada with a dollop of plain yogurt, sliced black (or green) olives, a sprig of cilantro and serve with guacamole and refried beans on the side.

## Marilyn Greco's Enchilada Sauce

If you haven't tried homemade enchilada sauce before, you'll be surprised at how easy it is. I had always wondered how to make it, when one day Marilyn told me she makes a great enchilada sauce. She was right. This is heads and tails above the canned version.

**INGREDIENTS** - can double for extra sauce to serve on the side

2 tablespoons canola oil  
3-4 tablespoons chili powder (this makes the huge difference for the sauce ... make sure you pick a chili powder that is not too terribly hot!)  
2 tablespoons flour  
3/4 teaspoon salt  
1/2 teaspoon garlic powder  
1/4 teaspoon dried oregano  
1/4 teaspoon cumin powder  
2 teaspoons cider vinegar  
2 cups water

### DIRECTIONS

In a medium pot, heat oil and with a wire whisk add chili powder, flour, seasonings and spices and brown slightly over medium heat to open up the flavors. Slowly add hot water, stirring all the while with a whisk to keep from clumping. Bring to a boil and continue on low boil for about 10 minutes, adding more water as necessary for desired thickness. Stir in vinegar. Cool and refrigerate until ready to use. Can store for several weeks in the refrigerator.



Photo Susie Iventosch



Constance's chicken simmers in a large frying pan. Photo provided

## Frannie's Harvest Salad

(serves 6)

### INGREDIENTS

1 large head butter lettuce, torn into pieces  
1/2 cup dried cranberries  
1 pear, cut into bite-sized pieces  
1 ripe, but firm avocado cut into bite-sized pieces (optional)  
1/3 cup toasted pecans pieces  
1/4 cup crumbled blue cheese  
1 recipe Frannie's stoned-ground mustard vinaigrette (below)  
Vinaigrette  
1/3 cup rice vinegar  
1/2+ cup extra-virgin olive oil  
1-2 teaspoons lemon juice  
1-2 tablespoon stoned ground Dijon  
Salt and Pepper, to taste

### DIRECTIONS

Mix all and shake well! Toss over salad. (Adjust oil, vinegar and mustard to your own tastes - while some like a more tart dressing, others prefer more olive oil.)

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.



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**ART**

**Moraga Art Gallery's new show, "Kaleidoscope"**, features the work of Gallery Member & local artist Angelica Samame, painter, as well as guest artist Karin Lechner, jewelry designer, through March 17. The Gallery is now located at #522 Center St. in the Rheem Center, Moraga.

**Lafayette Gallery's winter show**



**"Heartfelt"** will run through 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.lafayettegallery.net; (925) 284-2788.

**Plein Air works will be on display at the Orinda Library Gallery** through the month of January.

**MUSIC**

**Campolindo High School Chamber Singers** will present an A Cappella Showcase concert at 7:30pm on Thursday, January 26 at the Campolindo High School Performing Arts Center. The Showcase will feature contemporary popular songs arranged for voices alone and be followed by a dessert reception. Tickets are \$10.00 and may be purchased at the door starting at 6:45pm. Arrive early for best seating and parking availability. For questions or more information, visit campochoir.com or contact sherrydies@aol.com.

**The Big Band of Rossmoor invites you to join the Band at the Rheem Theatre**, 350 Park Street, Moraga on Friday, February 3. The doors will swing open at 6:30pm. Brush up your moves with dance instructor Gail Enright beginning at 7pm. Then at 8pm, get ready to be entertained by the 31 piece band that includes musicians from 10 years old to 92. Tickets are available for \$10 per person at the Lafayette Chamber of Commerce, the Rheem Theater or at the door. You can call and reserve tickets by phone ((925) 284-7404) for pick up at Will Call.

**Community Drumming with Jeni Swerdlow**, Thursday, February 9 at 4pm, Moraga Library. No experience is necessary to participate. This is a children's event, but all ages are welcome. Register with staff or self-register by visiting our calendar of events at ccclib.org. San Francisco Bay Area percussionist and art therapist Jeni Swerdlow is a dynamic and engaging facilitator, trainer, presenter, and performer and her interactive, rhythmic events have captivated many thousands of participants at several hundred events in the U.S. and abroad.

**Fondettes at Aegis of Moraga. On Saturday February 18th**, the retirement community celebrates the 40's and invites the community to join in the free event that will feature The Fondettes, a vocal trio with rich three part harmony and jazzy tone quality. The three young ladies, who have found this activity to be a great way to pay for college, sing almost solely Andrews Sisters' repertoire. Their goal is to restore and carry on the music of the time. The event will start at 6pm with

wine, cheese and hors d'œuvres. The Fondettes will perform from 7 to 7:45pm. RSVP required by calling 377-7900 or email Candice.Moses@AegisLiving.com.

**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.

**Company C Contemporary Ballet presents Company C Contemporary Ballet Opens 2012 10th Anniversary Season** on Friday, January 20, at 8pm, and Saturday, January 21, at 3pm and 8pm, at Leshner Center for the Arts, 1601 Civic Drive, Walnut Creek. Company C Contemporary Ballet's tenth anniversary season opens in Walnut Creek with three performances January 20th and 21st. Cost: \$23, 35, and 45. For more info see http://www.companycballet.org or call (925) 708-0752.

**The 14th Annual California Independent Film Festival ("CAIFF")** will be held from February 10th – 16th, 2012 at the Lamorinda Theatres (Orinda Theatre and Rheem Theatre). The seven-day event will open with the award winning film "Monsieur Lazhar" which will also screen at this month's 2012 Sundance Film Festival, only a few days before opening this year's CAIFF. Other notable Oscar entries screening at the 14th Annual CAIFF are "Tilt," --an award winner at the Seattle International Film Festival, and Bulgaria's official 2012 Oscar entry for Best Foreign Language Film. Also screening will be "Hermano-- Best Picture award winner at the Moscow International Film Festival, and Venezuela's 2011 Oscar entry for Best Foreign Language Film. Tickets are available for purchase at the Lamorinda Theatres' Box Offices or at the festival's website (www.caiff.org). (See article page B3)

**LECTURE & LITERATURE**

**Why Pakistan Matters: Dr. Neil Joeck will draw on his experiences** in the Nat'l Security Council to discuss policy issues in the region. Presented by World Affairs Council - East Bay on Thursday, January 19th, 7:00–8:00pm. \$8 members. \$10 nonmembers. L.L.C. For more info see www.worldaffairs.org.

**What to do with your new e-reader: A hands-on workshop** on Wednesday, January 25. Elizabeth Knepfel, who is a professor, academic librarian and a former technology journalist, will demonstrate the benefits and challenges of each reader, and will show you how to get the most out of which ever device you choose and also how to download free eBooks and eAudio-books from the Contra Costa County website using Overdrive. 7pm in the Garden Room of the Orinda Library, 26 Orinda Way in Orinda; (925) 254-2184. It is free to all and no registration is required.

**Mt. Diablo Peace and Justice Center Presents: The Tibet Oral History Project** by Marcella Adamski, Ph.D., founder and Executive Director plus the West Coast Video Premiere of our film "With My Own Eyes" at Mt. Diablo Unitarian Universalist Church, Owl Room 55 Eckley Lane, Walnut Creek on Thursday, January 26, 6-

9 pm. Potluck dinner starts at 6 pm. Presentation begins at 7pm. Cost: \$20 (suggested donation) and a dish for the potluck dinner, if participating. Reservations advised. Email info@tibetoralhistory.org or leave a message at (415) 292-3202.

**Book Sale: Friends of Orinda Library. Inexpensive, gently used books** for all ages and interests on sale, Thurs. Feb 2, 10am to 1pm at the Sorting Room and Book Shop located at the Library, 26 Orinda Way, Orinda.

**Orinda's Robert Etheredge will discuss and sign copies of The American Challenge: Preserving the Greatness of America** in the 21st Century at Orinda Books on Saturday, February 11 at 1pm. Orinda Books is located at 276 Village Square. For more information: (925) 254 -7606; www.orindabooks.com.

**KIDS, PARENTS & TEENS**

**Applications for Sister-to Sister's NEW program** for seventh and eighth grade girls are due Sunday, 1/22/12. For the first time ever, middle school girls will be included in the planning of the Sister-to Sister Summit, an award-winning program presented by the Orinda-Moraga-Lafayette branch of AAUW (American Association of University Women). Cost of \$95 includes four Sunday afternoon sessions plus the summit day. Girls wanting to work with high school girls to plan a girls' summit should visit sister2sister.info immediately and fill in the application. Program begins 1/29/12. For more information call Valerie Burgess, (925) 997-0118 or email vvburgess@gmail.com.

**Lindsay Wildlife Museum presents Animals Underground** at the LLLC on Thursday, February 2, noon–12:30pm. Ms. Jenna will read a book about underground animals at 11:30am, Lindsay will arrive at noon with various animals to see and experience. Ages 2 1/2 - 5, cost: \$5/child; reserve@LLLCF.org.

**GARDEN**

**Montelindo Garden Club January Meeting:** Friday, January 20, Gary Bogue will speak on "Creatures of the Urban Wilderness - Your Backyard." The program is at 10:30am. The event is free and the public is cordially invited. The event is held at the Orinda Community Church, 10 Irwin Way, Orinda.

**The Moraga Garden Club meeting will be held** at the Holy Trinity Church, 1700 School St., Moraga at 9:30am on Thursday, January 19. Noted rosarian and master gardener Joan Goff will speak on great roses for the bay area climate and innovative ways to use them. Interested parties are welcome for the 9:30 social time, marketplace table, and meeting at 10am.

**Pruning class on January 21st, 11am-1pm at Mt Diablo Nursery & Garden:** no fee, hands-on techniques in pruning dormant roses, perennials, vines and fruit trees. 3295 Mt Diablo Blvd, Lafayette # (925) 283-3830; email: mtdiablonursery.com.

**Winter Rose Pruning Workshop: McDonnell Nursery, Saturday January 28, 10am.** This workshop is a must for rose lovers. Rejuvenate your rose bushes and encourage beautiful new canes that produce the best blooms. Please call 254-3713 or email info@mcdonnellnursery.com to reserve a seat.

... continued on next page

please...



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

◆ Not to be missed ◆ Not to be missed ◆

**OTHER**

**The Orinda Woman's Club is currently accepting** applicants for its major beneficiary awards in 2012. Appropriate applying agencies must be non-profit 501(c)(3), serving women and children in need, be Alameda and/or Contra Costa County based and have an annual income of less than \$1,000,000. Application forms can be acquired from Adeline McClatchie, Beneficiary Chair at (925) 254-1162 or Adeline@mcclatchie.com. The deadline is March 5th 2012, 7pm.

**Looking for a few good readers to read to children.** Volunteers interested in a rewarding opportunity are needed to read to groups of children ages 3-5 in preschool child care centers in Concord, Pittsburg and West County. Volunteers will need to attend one 3-hour training session offered by the Contra Costa County Library in Concord, Pittsburg or San Pablo. Books and resources will be supplied by the library. For additional information contact Maureen Kilmurray, Contra Costa County Library, (925) 927-3288.

**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.

**Science Cafe: The Science of Steinway and Sound** on Tuesday, January 24 from 7-8pm at the LLLC. Concert pianist Justin Levitt will discuss the science behind the creation of the concert grand piano from 12,000 individual parts. Dueling pianists perform! Cost: \$5; reserve@LLLCF.org.

**Twirl, chat, and tap your feet to the beat at the weekly Social** for all-level, all-style dancers, music lovers, and observers Wednesdays 12:30 to 2:50pm at Lafayette Community Center located at 500 St. Mary's Road. The event, with continuous, professionally recorded music, is held in the big, bright Live Oak Room. On the first Wednesday of each month, professional dance duo Karen and Michael give lessons. A map, additional Dance Social details, and any upcoming skip dates are posted at: sites.google.com/site/lafayetteadance. \$2 for members of Lafayette Senior Center, \$4 for non-members. Just \$10 yearly to join the Center, and enjoy the complete range of activities.

**Miramonte High School's Public Speaking Annual Showcase** featuring nationally recognized high school speakers, debaters, and performers! \$5 entrance fee at the door, 100% going to support the Public Speaking Team. Refreshments provided after the show! Thursday and Friday, January 26th-27th; 7:00pm at the Miramonte High School Theater.

**Interested in renovating or remodeling your home,** but don't know where to begin? Come meet leading remodelers, builders, and design professionals at LamorindaWeb's first annual Home Expo '12 on Saturday, January 28, 10am-4pm at the Lafayette Events Center (formerly the Veteran's Memorial Building). Over 40 local businesses. The show includes, but is not limited to kitchen and bath remodeling, flooring, interior design, home security and solar products as well as the latest landscaping options. The event is FREE to the public and will include speakers, workshops, seminars, food for purchase and kids activities. A current list of ex-

hibitors can be found at www.lamorindaweb.com/homeexpo.

**Oakland Museum of California presents the 11th annual Lunar New Year Celebration** on Sunday, January 29, 12 noon to 4:30pm, at Oakland Museum of California, 1000 Oak Street, Oakland. Celebrate Lunar New Year at OMCA! Enjoy a fun-filled family day welcoming the Year of the Dragon. Free with Museum admission. Cost: Included with Museum admission. For more info see http://www.museumca.org or call (510) 318-8400.

**Greenbelt Alliance & Sustainable Lafayette present:** Protecting Open Space and Providing for Future Generations on Tuesday, January 31, 7-8pm at the LLLC. Alison Hill and Matt Vander Sluis will provide the current local and regional perspective. greenbelt.org. Cost: Free. www.LLLCF.org.

**On February 4 at 7pm there will be a "Love for Ryan" concert** featuring Shawn McDonald and Paul Johnson to benefit Ryan Buchanan. The event will take place at Creekside Community Church in Alamo CA. All proceeds from this event go direct to the Ryan Buchanan Trust Fund. Buy tickets at www.ryanbuchanan.org.

**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.

**Please join us for the annual OIS Diverse Abilities Awareness Week Open House** on Wednesday, February 8 from 6:30-8:30pm at Orinda Intermediate School, 80 Ivy Drive, Orinda. Hands on learning stations, community group representatives sharing support resources, and an exposition wheelchair basketball game. Come ready to learn and have fun! All are welcome; family participation is encouraged. Free admission. For more information, please contact Anna Tague: Tague6@comcast.net.

**If you are thinking about getting your first puppy or have concerns** about taking care of an ill or aged family dog, you are invited to attend a free and informative Canine CPR Class on Thursday, February 9th, 6:30-8pm. Ron VanderHeiden, a first aid/CPR instructor for over 20 years, will provide a free CPR class for your canine. Ideal for dog owners, trainers, sitters and anyone who just loves their furry friends, this class includes an opportunity for hands-on practice with a life-size dog mannequin. Perfect for all ages, it will only take 40 minutes. Space is limited. Please RSVP to Candice.moses@aegisliving.com or call (925) 377-7900.

**Girl Scouts USA is turning 100 March 12, 2012 and Lafayette Girl Scouts are** throwing a Birthday Party Dance, Monday, March 12, 5:45-7:30pm at the Veterans Memorial Hall, 3780 Mt. Diablo Blvd, Lafayette. Hosted by: Lafayette Service Unit and 2nd grade Brownie Troop 30577 from

Lafayette Elementary School. Cost: \$5 includes patch, dancing, pizza, cupcake decorating, fun activity, singing, and candle ceremony at 7:12pm which is when Juliette Low started her first troop in Savannah 100 years ago. RSVP to tanyaparmelee@mac.com by Feb 9 to receive a patch. Cost at the door: \$10. All 800 Lafayette Girl Scouts from K to 12th grade are invited.

**CLUBS**

**Lamorinda Republican Women, Federated club luncheon program,** Thursday, January 19; Orinda Country Club, 315 Camino Sobrante, Orinda. 11:15am Check-in, social time, 12:00 noon Luncheon. The guest speaker is Sharron Angle, who is a Tea Party leader, former member of the Nevada State Assembly, and 2010 U.S. Senate challenger to House Majority Leader Harry Reid, will begin at 12:25pm. Tickets: Online at www.lamorindarepublican-women.org or call (925) 459-6768.

**Lamorinda Toastmasters provides a mutually supportive and positive learning environment** where members develop communication and leadership skills, improving self-confidence and personal growth. We meet every Tuesday at 7:30pm-9pm at Temple Isaiah, 3800 Mt. Diablo Blvd, Lafayette. See our web-site: http://lamorinda.freetoasthost.net/.

**CRAB FEEDS**



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

**Soroptimist International of 24-680's annual Crab Feed & silent auction,** Saturday February 11, 5:30 pm, Lower Court Oakwood Athletic Club, Lafayette, \$40 per person. Tickets must be purchased in advance. Soroptimist International's mission is to improve the lives of women and girls in local communities and throughout the world. For tickets & information: (925) 285-7797 or si24-680@soroptimist.net.

**Kiwanis Club of Moraga Valley 12th annual Crab Feed,** February 18th at St Mary's College Soda Center. Silent auction, dancing. 6pm cocktails, 7pm dinner. \$50 ticket price. For tickets contact Ed Beatson @ (925) 376-3201. All proceeds benefit local charities for children.

**Crab Feed & Dance, Saturday, February 25, 6-11pm,** Holy Trinity Cultural Center, 1700 School Street, Moraga. Music provided by popular DJ. Dinner & dance \$37.50; Dance only \$10. For non-crab lovers: Chicken available by special advance order request. Dinner tickets MUST be purchased in advance. For info & reservations call (925) 672-6799.

Please submit events to: calendar@lamorinda weekly.com

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**Tickets \$10 at the door** or at the Lafayette Chamber of Commerce Call 284-7404 for reservations

**Upcoming Special Events at:**



**Orinda Theatre**

**February 15th, 2012, 6:30PM**

**Q & A with Margaret O'Brien**  
Special Screening in Honoree of Oscar Winner Margaret O'Brien: **LITTLE WOMEN**  
Movie: 6:30PM - 8:30PM



**Rheem Theatre**

**January 20th, 9 PM**

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

**January 21st, 8 PM (doors open 7 PM), Tickets \$12**

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**February 3rd, 7 PM**

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**14th Annual California Independent Film Festival, Feb 10th - Feb 16th, 2012**



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**February 10th, 2012, 5:30PM**

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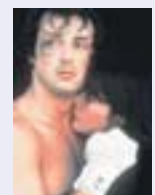
**February 10th, 2012, 9:30PM**

**Q & A with Jon Gries**  
Five Time Champion  
Movie: 9:30PM



**February 11th, 2012, 6:00PM**

**Q & A with Burt Young**  
Special Screening in Honor of Oscar Nominee Burt Young: **ROCKY**  
VIP Reception: 6:00PM, Movie: 7PM - 10:30PM



**February 16th, 2012, 6:30PM**

**Closing Night with Margaret O'Brien**  
Meet Me in St. Louis followed by Q & A with Margaret O'Brien



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# LAMORINDA SPORTS

## SMC Wins Seven-Straight, Breaks into Top 25

By Alex Kozela



Junior guard Matthew Dellavedova scored 26 points against Gonzaga.

Photo Tod Fierner

The Saint Mary's men's basketball team keeps on winning.

The Gaels maintained their undefeated WCC record by thoroughly routing perennial conference rivals Gonzaga, 83-62, last Thursday night at McKeon Pavilion. Two days later, the team improved to 6-0 in WCC with a 69-61 home win over Portland.

But it was the huge win over the #21 Zags that elevated the Gaels to conference favorite. It was Saint Mary's third win over Gonzaga in their last five meetings and it snapped the Zags' eight-game win streak.

"I think Gonzaga has a really good team, and I think this team is better than last year's," Gaels head coach Randy Bennett said. "I thought we played at a high level tonight."

Junior guard Matthew Dellavedova hit five 3-pointers, scoring 26, one point shy of his career high. Freshman center Brad Waldow contributed with a double-double of 17 points and 10 rebounds to help the Gaels (17-2, 6-0) down the Zags (14-

3, 4-1) at home for the first time since 2008.

"It's a really big rivalry game," said Dellavedova. "We're happy to get a win and keep it going in conference."

Senior forward Rob Jones, who averages almost 15 points a game for the Gaels, didn't score until the second-to-last minute of the game, but grabbed 11 boards and dished out 8 assists in addition to his two points.

"I think Rob Jones probably played the best game I've ever seen anyone play without scoring until the end," said Bennett.

Jones contributed to a defensive effort that limited the Zags to 40 percent shooting and star center Robert Sacre to only four points.

"It's the most complete game we've played," said Bennett. "We were very consistent on both ends of the floor. They frustrated us defensively for spurts, but for the most part we were pretty consistent. You have to do a really good job of limiting them to the points they had tonight."

Junior forward Elias Harris led the Zags with a 17 point, 11 rebound performance. Freshman Kevin Pangos added 12 points.

The Gaels, still feeling the momentum from the previous game, went on to defeat Portland two days later, a 69-61 home victory that improved the team's record at McKeon this season to 13-0. Sophomore guard Stephen Holt tied his career high with 21 points, while Jones added a double-double with 10 points and 11 rebounds to lead the Gaels to their seventh consecutive win.

The big wins last week propelled Saint Mary's into the top 25. The Gaels are now ranked #24 in the AP poll and #23 in the ESPN/USA poll. Saint Mary's looks to defend their position with a home game against Pepperdine on Thursday before hitting the road for a three game road trip at Santa Clara, Loyola Marymount, and Brigham Young. The Gaels will face Gonzaga in a rematch of WCC favorites on February 9 in Spokane.



Senior forward Rob Jones had 11 rebounds and eight assists for the Gaels.

Photo Tod Fierner

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# Saint Mary's Loses to USD, Defeats Portland and #23 Gonzaga

By Brandon Duran



Sophomore forward Danielle Mauldin had 11 points in the upset of #23 Gonzaga.

Photo Tod Fierner

After a rocky start to open the season, the Saint Mary's women's basketball team hit its stride. The Gaels started 3-3, but has since won the last 11 of last 12 games to improve to 14-5, 5-1. The stretch included a seven game winning streak, the longest since the 2000-2001 season.

Saint Mary's returned from a recent trip to face Northwest rivals Portland and #23 Gonzaga, going 2-0 for the first time in ten years. Saint Mary's has not won in Spokane since 2002. Gonzaga has not lost in the WCC since 2009.

The Gaels defeated Portland, 75-71 on January 12. They followed up the close victory with another down-to-the-wire, 66-63 win over the Bulldogs on Saturday, January 14. Saint Mary's is now tied for first with newcomers BYU.

The Gaels started the road-trip coming off a disappointing loss to Southern California rival, the University of San Diego (9-3, 0-0) on January 7.

Saint Mary's opened the game feeding the ball into the low post to sophomore forward Danielle Mauldin and freshman forward Carli Rosenthal. The Toreros tried

to take advantage of their speed by getting buckets in transition. Five minutes into play the score remained tied, 10-10.

The Gaels' offensive catalyst

was junior guard Alex Carbonel, who took control of the game by penetrating the defense and recording an easy layup or a pass out to the perimeter.

Around the nine minute mark the Gaels went cold, missing their next nine shots, and falling behind by 10 points. Saint Mary's went into halftime trailing by 12.

They came out in the second half and scored a few baskets to keep pace with the Toreros but couldn't get the deficit down to less than 11. The Gaels failed to get any semblance of an offense going, and San Diego shot the lights out, getting the lead up to 21 with around twelve minutes left. Ten minutes in, SMC made a 10 point run but couldn't sustain it.

A frustrated SMC head coach Paul Thomas watched as the clock ran out with the score showing 77-60 USD.

After the game, coach Thomas summed up his team's play, "We played out of character today. We simply didn't execute the way we need to, to win. We'll get back onto the floor Monday and practice hard."

When asked how they'll bounce back Carbonel responded, "We come back Monday and practice harder. That's the best thing about college basketball, there's always another opportunity to wash [a loss] off." Carbonel had a career-high 24 points in the loss.

The practice paid off, and the Gaels look to continue their success on Saturday, January 21 when the Pepperdine Waves visit McKeon Pavilion.



Senior guard Alex Carbonel (#5) had a career-high 24 points against USD and team-high 18 points against GU.

Photo Tod Fierner

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# Campo Leads Lamorinda in Standings

By Conrad Bassett



Tyler Garrison(33) is defended by Acalanes' Kevin Huber (2) Photos Andy Scheck

The 2011-2012 Lamorinda boys' basketball teams came into the season with uncertain expectations. Last year, Las Lomas won the Diablo Foothill Athletic League title and both Miramonte and Campolindo lost players to football playoffs. Still, this did not stop any of the teams from having successful pre-season records.

The first of the rivalry games between the three schools got off to a rousing start before a packed gym at Acalanes High on January 6. The Campolindo boys' beat the host Dons 63-56.

The boys opened the varsity doubleheader with Campo scoring first on a layup from Griffin Piatt. Piatt has made the quick adjustment from Campolindo's North Coast Section football championship team to the court in relatively short order.

The first quarter opened back-and-forth. Senior Kevin Huber tied it right back up for the Dons with a layup of his own before Cougar junior John Schmitz scored and was fouled for a traditional three point play. Huber hit a three midway through the period to tie the game at nine. Cougar junior Jack Evans followed with a jumper and an 11-9 Campo lead that they would never relinquish.

The Cougars ended the first period on a 9-0 run for a 22-11 lead.

Dons senior James Griffin nailed a three to start the second period and end their scoring drought, but Campo freshman Matt O'Reilly hit a layup followed by a Matt McCue basket and the Cougars had what would turn out to be their largest lead of the game at 26-14.

The Dons did not give up and cut the lead to a little as five on three occasions in the fourth period. Each time they got close, Cougar junior

Tyler Garrison ended up at free throw line to extend the lead. Garrison hit seven of ten from the charity stripe including five of six in the last two minutes to keep the Dons at bay.

"We had ball handlers and free-throw shooters in the game," said Campolindo coach Matt Watson.

The Dons got outstanding play from sophomore center Buster Souza who contributed eight points, four blocks, and 15 rebounds. Huber and Griffin each had 14 points to pace Acalanes while sophomore Noah Orlik added ten.

Schmitz and Piatt had 12 each to lead a balanced Campolindo attack, and Evans added 11. Piatt also had eight rebounds, five assists and four steals.

In the games that followed, Acalanes won its first DFAL game whipping Alhambra 82-52 to go to 1-3 (12-6 overall.) Souza led a balanced Dons' attack with 14 points. Griffin and Huber had 12 and 10, respectively.

Campo won its next two and is at 3-0 and in first along with Dublin High. They won last Friday over Las Lomas by 75-57. Schmitz scored 20 and Evans chipped in 12.

Miramonte is at 2-1 in the DFAL after their first three games, losing only to Dublin. They had a bye last Friday, and pounded Alhambra, 75-55 earlier in the week. On Saturday, they outscored Drake (San Anselmo) by a score of 66-56 to bring their record to 12-4. Junior Kirin Shastri had 20 points and sophomore Joey Goodreault added 17.

The boys' Lamorinda rivalry continues on January 23 when Acalanes hosts Miramonte and then on January 25 when Campolindo hosts Miramonte.



Acalanes' Buster Souza (1) had 15 rebounds in the loss.

# Campolindo, Miramonte Girls Tied for First in DFAL

By Conrad Bassett



Laura Hickey (#32) had a team-high 18 points for Campolindo. Photos Andy Scheck

The Diablo Foothill Athletic League was one of the toughest in Northern California a year ago and the Lamorinda rivalries are just as intense this year. This was evident when Campolindo traveled to Acalanes on January 6.

The Acalanes Dons and Campolindo Cougars battled for the first sixteen minutes with several lead changes. But Campo pulled away in the second half to win, 71-50.

The first period ended in a tie, 13-all. The second quarter ended just as close. With five seconds left in the first half, a three pointer from sophomore Ashley Ewing gave Campo a 31-30 lead.

Campolindo head coach Elgin Leslie said at halftime that he wanted his team to pick up the intensity. "I asked them to play more aggressively on the defensive end of the floor, that in turn would help the offense get going."

The Cougars opened the second half on an 11-2 run and never looked back. Junior Laura Hickey was all over the court contributing assists, rebounds, blocks and scored six of her team high 18 points in the quarter.

"Laura has stepped up for us this year by scoring, but also with her defensive presence and her rebounding. She had one of her better games of the season against Acalanes," said Leslie.

The Lady Cougars led by 49-37 entering the fourth quarter.

Campolindo scored the first eight points of the fourth period to extend the lead to 20.

Dons' senior Sophie Taylor led all scorers with 28 points and junior Jamie Jacobs added 11 for Acalanes.

"For a player of her (Sophie's) caliber, her attitude and work ethic are great, and she remains coachable. Sophie is not a big vocal leader, but she definitely leads by example," said Acalanes head coach Chris Russell.

Campo junior Courtney Seyranian recorded 18 while Ewing had 13. Hickey added 13 rebounds and four steals to her 18 points.

Acalanes is now 2-2 (11-6 overall) in

the DFAL with a bye coming up this coming Friday. They bested Alhambra last Friday, 60-34 behind Taylor's 20 points.

Campolindo is at 3-0 (7-7). The Lady Cougars led Las Lomas by 23-5 after one period last Friday on their way to a 69-45 win. Ewing again scored 13.

Campolindo is tied with Miramonte for first place in the DFAL standings. Miramonte is enjoying an outstanding season. They are 16-0 overall and 3-0 DFAL. Miramonte recorded a huge come-from-behind win last Friday against two-time defending DFAL champion Dougherty Valley, 72-69.

The Lady Matadors were down by as many as 12 in the first half but fought back within seven at the half and finally caught up mid-way through the fourth period. Sophomore Megan Reid had 17 points, nine steals, and eight rebounds. In another game, last week they scored 61 first half points on their way to whipping Alhambra 79-26.

Miramonte has wins over several top teams including Casa Grande (Petaluma) who is 17-1 and St. Francis of Mountain View. They are one of only four undefeated teams in the state's Top 100 ranked teams.

The rivalries continue next week as Miramonte will face both Acalanes and Campolindo on Monday, January 23 and Wednesday, January 25, respectively.



Sophie Taylor (20) had a game-high 28 points in the loss.

## Lamorinda Weekly

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- Letters to the Editor
- Local Schools Transition Kindergarten Entry-Age
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- 2012-2013 Kindergarten Registration
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If you wish to view any of the stories above go to [www.lamorindaweekly.com](http://www.lamorindaweekly.com) and click the link below the story.

# SPORTS LAMORINDA'S LOCAL SPORTS



## Top Spot Up for Grabs in High School Soccer

By Marissa Harnett

At the mid-way point of the high school soccer season, the Lamorinda boys' teams had secured the top three spots in the DFAL standings. Acalanes found their stride with five wins and one tie. Campolindo, a close second, boasts the best overall record at 11-2-1 and a 4-1-1 record in league. Miramonte captured third place for a while but slipped to fourth place in the DFAL standings after two consecutive losses. The Mats lost to Acalanes 2-0 on January 8 and then

again to Campo 3-0 on January 11. In Miramonte's first rivalry match-up, Acalanes quickly established dominance by managing ball possession. They subjected Miramonte's defense to near constant pressure.

Half way through the first half, after multiple attempts, Dons' junior midfielder Dan Glascock penetrated the Mats' defense and drilled the ball into the lower corner of the goal. Not discouraged, Miramonte continued to

fiercely protect their net producing key saves to each of Acalanes' attempts. The Mats defense was led by Miramonte goalkeeper, junior Michael Akay.

With just four minutes remaining in the half, Acalanes earned a corner kick. Glascock, positioned in front of the goal, recorded his second goal of the night with an unstoppable header into the top left corner.

The second half saw play much the same as the first.

Miramonte's offense gained control at points and produced scoring opportunities. Their best chance came off a corner kick in the first ten minutes, but the Dons' defense denied the Mats the goal.

The Mats kept Acalanes from scoring again in the second half, but could not even score, losing 2-0.

Acalanes head coach Paul Curtis credited his team with playing as they had practiced. "The boys had a high work rate and executed on

the game plan." Curtis pointed to Jacob Carroll, Kevin Park, Graham Lindgren, Nick Warren and goalkeeper, Jackson Foote as playing key roles in the game. "Our defensive unit played well to earn a shutout."

Miramonte's defense also played well to hold Acalanes to just two goals, but Miramonte coach Fabian Amezaga admits they have some things to work on. "It was a good test for us," said Amezaga. "It's a good indication of the bar that's been set."

Miramonte's game against Campo on January 11 was more contentious. The play was highly physical and emotional. Tempers flared with every referee whistle, penalty kick, and yellow card. In the end, Campo outplayed Miramonte, 3-0.

Campo coach Shane Carney pointed to ball control as key to their success. "The 3-0 win was big for our team. Everyone really pitched into the team effort, and we were able to control the ball for the majority of the game as a result. When we control the ball as much as we did, it becomes nearly impossible to beat us."

Amezaga concedes that the Mats' defense was lacking against Campo. "We've had some injuries in our back line. We look forward to getting healthy and being more cohesive in the back."

Despite two consecutive rivalry losses, Amezaga said his team is doing well. "We're comfortable with where we are. We hope to have a fighting chance to be in the NCS tournament."

**Next rivalry match-ups:**  
**January 25 -**  
 Campo at Acalanes - 6:15 p.m.  
**February 8 -**  
 Acalanes at Miramonte - 6:15 p.m.  
**February 10 -**  
 Miramonte at Campo - 6:15 p.m.

In girls' soccer, Campolindo extended their lead in the DFAL standings with their fourth straight win on January 13. They improve to 6-0-1. Dublin challenges their lead with their record of 5-2-0. Miramonte holds the fifth position with a 2-4-0 record. Acalanes currently stands at 1-3-2.

**Future Lamorinda games:**  
**January 25 -**  
 Acalanes at Campo - 6:15 p.m.  
**February 8 -**  
 Miramonte at Acalanes - 6:15 p.m.  
**February 10 -**  
 Campo at Miramonte - 6:15 p.m.



Acalanes Dan Glascock (8)



Photo Andy Scheck Jessica Tuan (24)



Ari Migdale (11), Graham Lindgren (17)



Kayla Sigaroudi (2)



Sam Palano (25), Taro Kyllonen (7)



Maddie Wheeler (21)

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# Lamorinda OUR HOMES



Lamorinda Weekly Volume 05 Issue 23 Wednesday, January 18, 2012

## Every Home Needs a Heart

By Laurie Snyder



*Great food. Great conversation. Great view. Unbeatable combination. The Warners' kitchen is truly the heart of their home.*

*Photos Andy Scheck*

A mid-century ranch style residence that had lost its heart seems like an unlikely choice to receive one of Orinda's 2011 Mayor's Awards for Excellence in Architecture. Unlikely, that is, until you learn about the collaboration of love between the home's owners, an architect from an award-winning firm known for its soulful restoration designs, and the Orinda-based contractor who made their dreams real.

The residence, on Via Hermosa, received an award in the category for minor residential additions under 1,500 square feet and remodels. Like other winners this year, the Via Hermosa remodel was recognized for outstanding "property improvements which make an extraordinary contribution to the character and livability of Orinda neighborhoods."

... continued on page D6



## 2012 Lamorinda Real Estate Guidebook



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## Lamorinda Home Sales recorded

City	Last reported:	LOWEST AMOUNT:	HIGHEST AMOUNT:
LAFAYETTE	9	\$514,000	\$1,252,000
MORAGA	2	\$492,000	\$740,000
ORINDA	7	\$210,000	\$1,789,000

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

- 144 Castle Court, \$1,170,000, 3 Bdrms, 2282 SqFt, 1967 YrBlt, 12-16-11;  
Previous Sale: \$1,170,000, 12-16-11
- 3803 Quail Ridge Road, \$650,000, 3 Bdrms, 1892 SqFt, 1971 YrBlt, 12-8-11;  
Previous Sale: \$13,000, 08-07-70
- 1751 Reliez Valley Road, \$1,120,000, 5 Bdrms, 3731 SqFt, 1997 YrBlt, 12-13-11;  
Previous Sale: \$390,000, 08-30-95
- 3176 Rohrer Drive, \$750,000, 3 Bdrms, 2104 SqFt, 1953 YrBlt, 12-16-11;  
Previous Sale: \$750,000, 12-16-11
- 3217 Sharon Court, \$1,252,000, 4 Bdrms, 2367 SqFt, 1956 YrBlt, 12-15-11;  
Previous Sale: \$248,000, 02-03-88
- 1202 Vacation Drive, \$514,000, 3 Bdrms, 1243 SqFt, 1960 YrBlt, 12-15-11
- 3306 Victoria Avenue, \$655,000, 2 Bdrms, 1511 SqFt, 1949 YrBlt, 12-8-11;  
Previous Sale: \$274,000, 09-30-88
- 3133 Withers Avenue, \$742,500, 4 Bdrms, 2644 SqFt, 1972 YrBlt, 12-8-11;  
Previous Sale: \$345,000, 01-09-95
- 3365 Woodview Drive, \$806,000, 4 Bdrms, 2547 SqFt, 1969 YrBlt, 12-16-11

### MORAGA

- 1403 Camino Peral, \$492,000, 3 Bdrms, 1709 SqFt, 1972 YrBlt, 12-14-11;  
Previous Sale: \$675,000, 03-30-07
- 125 Hazelwood Place, \$740,000, 4 Bdrms, 2160 SqFt, 1966 YrBlt, 12-12-11

### ORINDA

- 67 Brookwood Road #2, \$210,000, 2 Bdrms, 897 SqFt, 1963 YrBlt, 12-16-11
- 115 Coral Drive, \$700,000, 3 Bdrms, 1340 SqFt, 1958 YrBlt, 12-9-11;  
Previous Sale: \$315,000, 09-24-93
- 11 El Verano, \$835,500, 3 Bdrms, 1706 SqFt, 1941 YrBlt, 12-16-11
- 99 La Cuesta Road, \$1,064,000, 4 Bdrms, 2720 SqFt, 1979 YrBlt, 12-9-11;  
Previous Sale: \$1,169,000, 06-16-11
- 618 Moraga Way, \$670,500, 5 Bdrms, 2146 SqFt, 1955 YrBlt, 12-8-11;  
Previous Sale: \$985,000, 05-02-06
- 9 Southwood Drive, \$935,000, 3 Bdrms, 1960 SqFt, 1950 YrBlt, 12-13-11;  
Previous Sale: \$839,000, 10-26-07
- 5 Woodcrest Road, \$1,789,000, 4 Bdrms, 3802 SqFt, 1955 YrBlt, 12-8-11;  
Previous Sale: \$1,000,000, 08-13-99

## Lamorinda Foreclosures recorded

### LAFAYETTE

- Mosswood Drive, 94549, US Bank, 12-16-11, \$605,000, 1376 sf, 2 bd
- Silverhill Way, 94549, RWW Properties, 12-16-11, \$714,922, 3473 sf, 5 bd
- Via Media, 94549, Citimortgage, 12-20-11, \$849,900, 2893 sf, 3 bd

### MORAGA

- Camino Peral #A, 94556, Harborview Mortgage, 12-14-11, \$298,800, 1281 sf, 2 bd
- Francisca Drive, 94556, HSBC Bank, 12-06-11, \$674,778, 1847 sf, 2 bd
- Paseo Bernal, 94556, Bank of New York, 12-12-11, \$562,275, 2117 sf, 3 bd



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## Open House Dos and Don'ts

by Andi Peterson Brown

The 2012 spring real estate market is just around the corner and you've decided: this is your year to jump in. You've found yourself using terms like Zestimate and DOM on an hourly basis, and every front yard Coming Soon sign seems to be speaking only to you. This can only mean one thing—you're ready for the next level. The Open House. Believe it or not, there is an art to perusing other people's homes, and below are some tips to help you make the most of your Sunday afternoons.

**Do** have a game plan. While it's easy to hop in the car and follow random signs, finding your next home is not a scavenger hunt. Do research ahead of time.

**Do** bring business cards. If you already have an agent, hand their business card over to the hosting agent. If you haven't selected one yet, open houses are a good time to check agents out. Picking your agent early on is one of the smartest things you can do.

**Do** open doors. Checking closet and storage space is important.

**Don't** rummage through any personal belongings.

**Do** ask questions, **don't** forget to take notes. After a day of house-hunting, houses tend to blend together.

**Do** set up a follow up appointment. Got a feeling that this might be the one? Spend time in the home without other buyers milling about, and **don't** let it pass you by.



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# The Real Estate Year in Review

By Conrad Bassett

**2011** was another interesting year for residential real estate in Lamorinda, just as it continued to be throughout the country. However, where most other areas saw a more limited amount of sales, Lamorinda's volume was up significantly in Moraga, and down only slightly in Lafayette and Orinda.

Homes stayed on the market for a little less time than a year ago and prices remained relatively stable as supply remained reasonably low throughout the year.

Also, the Lamorinda communities continued seeing more short sales and REOs (bank owned properties) although these properties continue to negatively influence other nearby communities on a much larger scale.

Per Contra Costa Association of Realtors statistics reported for closings January 1 through December 31, 2011, 245 single-family homes closed in Lafayette versus 250 in 2010 and 198 in 2009. There were two sales where the sales prices were not reported to the MLS. For the 243 reported closings, sales prices ranged from \$399,000 to \$2,900,000 and the average time on market was 49 days, down from 53 in 2010. The average sale price was \$1,040,014 versus \$1,097,749 in 2010 and \$1,045,217 in 2009. The average sales price was 96.8% of the final list price in 2011.

In Moraga there were 124 single-family closings up significantly from the 102 in 2010 and the 59 in 2009. Prices ranged from \$530,000 to \$2,450,000. The average sale price was \$894,768, down from \$927,948 in 2010 and 2009's \$961,872. The number of days on market in 2010 was 40, an improvement from the 44 days in 2010, and the average home sold for 97% of its last list price.

In Orinda the number of single-family closings was 164. In 2010 the figure was 179 while 162 closed in 2009. There was one property where the sale price was not reported to the MLS. The reported sales ranged in price from \$250,000 to \$3,450,000 with an average price of \$1,021,751. In 2010 the average was \$1,060,798. In 2009, it was \$1,029,915. The average market time was 50 days, down a few days from a year ago when it was 62 days. The average sales price was 96.1% of the final list price.

On an average price per square foot basis, Lafayette homes sold for \$402.15 per square foot, Moraga homes for \$381.61, and in Orinda it was \$423.17. In 2010, Lafayette homes sold for \$432 per square foot, Moraga homes for \$385 per square foot and in Orinda it was \$408. In 2009, Lafayette homes sold at \$434 per square foot, Moraga homes sold for \$408 and Orinda was at \$426.

In the condominium/town home category, Lafayette had six closings, down from nine closings in 2010, and six closings in 2009. They ranged in 2011 from \$325,000 to \$555,100;

Moraga had 67 (up from 65 a year ago) ranging from \$97,200 to \$738,000. This includes attached homes in Moraga Country Club. Orinda had 12, which was much higher than the three each in 2009 and 2010. They sold from \$200,000 to \$972,500. The lowest four were in the complexes on Brookwood Road and the higher ones in Orindawoods.

It should be noted that there are a few direct sales that do not go through the MLS and they are not reported here. These include some foreclosures that were sold at the courthouse as well as some sales between private individuals.

As of December 31, there were 48 homes under contract per the MLS in the three communities combined, with asking prices of \$339,000 to \$3,499,000. 13 "Potential Short Sales" are currently pending. In each case, the anticipated closing date is several months into the future as the sellers await approval of their particular lender or lenders.

A comparison of year-end inventory in the three communities combined versus a year ago shows a marked decrease to 78 available properties from the 133 that were available on January 1 of 2011. There were, as of January 1, 2012, 12 short sale homes available and also 3 listed bank REOs. Typically the biggest inventory is in the spring and early summer. There were only 34 homes on the market in Lafayette at year end versus 55 a year ago. The current asking prices range from \$331,000 to \$5,800,000. In Moraga, buyers had a year-end selection of only 11 homes and condos versus 39 a year ago. List prices ranged between \$165,000 and \$3,500,000. In Orinda there were 24, down from 40 on the market a year ago. Asking prices as of December 31 ranged from \$475,000 to \$6,750,000.

As has been the recent story, the most active price range is the more "affordable" price range. However, after a year of an increasing number of homes sold above \$2,000,000, there were only 17 that sold above this amount in 2011. In 2010 this number was 42. This compares with 23 that closed in Lamorinda in 2009, 30 in 2008 and 50 in 2007 at \$2,000,000 or above.

Interest rates continue to remain at near historic lows and are attractive to those with down payments of at least 20%. Corporations continue to expand and contract and also to relocate families... families who find the Lamorinda area attractive because of outstanding public schools, BART, and the close distance to San Francisco. That and the very minimal amount of new construction help keep supply and demand within a better balance than a lot of other neighboring communities.

Prices are not as high as they were at the peak a few years ago, but in 2011, there were several situations in the three communities where the seller received multiple offers and homes sold for above the list price. This, when coupled with a very low supply, points to both a strengthening of the market and a willingness by sellers to be realistic in their pricing.

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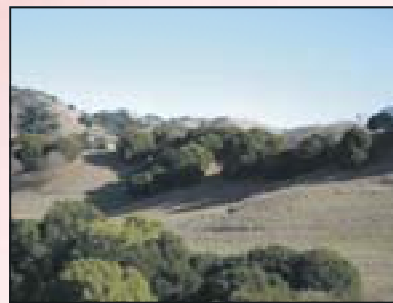
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# Every Home Needs a Heart

... continued from page D1

Originally built as a minimalist home with a detached garage, the main mid century ranch style structure sprouted from a hill above the Orinda Country Club more than half a century ago, and was most likely created as a getaway cottage, according to present owners Susan and Howard Warner.

When she first viewed it roughly 14 years ago, says Warner, the property had “almost a magical feel.” She is still clearly mesmerized. “I loved the house from the very beginning.”

Woven into the house’s historical tapestry are tales of fitness legend Jack LaLanne’s



*Facing toward the dining room’s glass doors, guests feel part of the greater natural world. When facing away, the dining experience is cozy.*



*Designers maximized important historic characteristics of the home, including this original brick fireplace.*

time here. The LaLanne family is credited with at least one of the residence’s numerous remodels – the enclosure of the walkway between the main house and detached garage which created a new living room area.

Since that time, the house has “undergone a number of discordant remodels and additions,” according to Jarvis Architects, a recipient of previous Orinda awards for architecture and the firm chosen by the Warners in 2009 to modernize their residence while still retaining its old Orinda charm.

Robin Pennell, the lead architect on the Warner’s project, has been a partner with Jarvis since 1991. “He was very keyed in to what we wanted,” says Warner. “He really kept the integrity of the house.”

That house, says Pennell, “had probably six distinct additions, each done a little more poorly than the last. There was nothing that held the house together.” Warner points to the different styles of flooring employed in each room as major contributors to the home’s “hodgepodge” feeling prior to its re-design.

Both echo the other’s sentiment— “The house had no heart.”

Saying that “none of the rooms were in the right place” and describing the residence as having “a lot of rambling spaces,” Pennell said his job was to simplify the house and pull it together by removing much of the offending work that had been done over the years.

Both Pennell and Warner note that there were features with fascinating and important character that were worth preserving – flush doors with distinctive grooves that evoked an almost art deco feel, beamed ceilings, and a living room that was unusually large for this period of ranch home design. That room, says Warner, was and still is “the true essence of the original home.”

A sense of history resonates from the living room’s original old brick fireplace, which has been transformed into a focal point for visitors by flanking white bookshelves and comfortable, inviting furniture.

Warner and Pennell decided to replicate the grooving on the majority of the home’s doors, as well as other pewter and wood touches to create a more consistent feel from room to room.

... continued on next page



*The living room’s original dark wood beamed ceilings and more subdued lighting contrast nicely with the home’s sunlit kitchen and dining room.*



Two additional fireplaces were re-bricked to match the one in the living room, and wood floors are now visible throughout the home – except in the bathroom where marble was installed. A new powder room was also created to ensure the comfort of visitors.

“I really wanted this design to stand the test of time,” says Warner.



Wrap-around windows (center) provide bright natural lighting for the interior staircase off the family room.



The kitchen door opens onto the expansive deck. The doors at left lead to the dining room.

The living room ended up serving as an anchor for the remodel so that the contractor, Kirk Wall, could dramatically transform the kitchen, dining, and family room areas per Pennell’s vision. Wall, says Pennell, “helped make design decisions along the way. He has a nice eye. This would not be what it is if any one of the three [collaborators] was not participating.”

The whole back of the house now has a view of Mount Diablo – a simply stunning sight that is felt as much as seen upon entering the front door, thanks to the redesign.

“The flow is wonderful,” says Warner. “It feels very spacious – much more than the original design.”

Strategically placed French doors between the family and living rooms also contribute to that sense of openness, as does the high ceiling in the kitchen, Warner’s favorite room in the house. Warmed by a fireplace on chilly, okay-to-burn days, it truly is the heart of the home – a comfortable place where visitors are inspired to put their feet up, relax, and zone out to the serenity of the natural views. It is the perfect setting for Warner who enjoys having family and guests near her while cooking.

Gnarled oak trees visible from the dining room give one a sense of timelessness. At least one of these sturdy friends is believed to be 150-years-old.

It’s also easy to have fun. The kitchen and dining room areas open onto an expansive deck. During the summertime, Warner rolls out indoor-outdoor carpeting to create a single large entertainment-living space accommodating up to five tables for guests. An outdoor barbecue supports work done inside in the kitchen.

Pennell added large wide steps to the deck to encourage the Warners’ guests to come down and enjoy the backyard, newly re-landscaped with native plants to help conserve

Orinda’s precious water. He also strengthened indoor efficiencies, improving the heating and water systems and insulation.

“Look at every path closely and deliberately,” wrote Carlos Castaneda. “Does this path have a heart? If it does, then the path is good.”

**ARCHITECT:**

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Jarvis Architects  
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Oakland, CA 94618  
Telephone: (510) 654-6755  
info@jarvisarchitects.com



Strategically placed French doors between the family and living rooms contribute to the home’s sense of spaciousness. The hardwood floors add warmth.

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