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Letters to the Editor

Editor:

Criminal Investigation in Moraga Needed

As a high school teacher with a son in his school, I am deeply dismayed to read of the evidence that came to light about Principal Walter's abject failure to protect students at Joaquin Moraga from a sexual predator teacher. (See Contra Costa Time's, "Moraga School District Secret: Principal Failed to Report Student Abuse Letter.") Educators learn right away that as "mandated reporters," we are required by law to report suspected or alleged abuse to Child Protective Services. Walter's criminal and ethical failures are manifold: He received a letter from a student detailing sexual abuse by her teacher, Dan Witters, and then waited an entire summer vacation before talking with Witters about the allegations. (Were Witter's Moraga students safe that summer?) When he finally did meet with Witters, Walter's actually gave him a copy of the letter with the accusing student's name on it. Most shocking, Walters failed to report the allegations, as required by law, to Child Protective Services. It gets worse: he later received a document from a different teacher in his school (who is now in jail for raping a different JM student; see articles on Julie Correa) documenting Witter's behaviors, including licking a female student's ear and patting another's rear end, and Walters not only failed to report these new allegations to the authorities, he doesn't even remember if he brought them up to Witters. Walter's failed to protect the children our town trusted him to protect: It appears that if he had intervened as he was supposed to, half-a-dozen other girls would not have been abused by Witters. With this new evidence of his failure to prevent the future victimizations, our town can brace itself for many expensive law suits. And who can blame the victims? We should have protected them. Walters is a nice man, and this is tragic, but if there's anything we've learned in the last decade it's that we can't sweep adult-to-child abuse under the rug. Walter's must be investigated for criminal negligence in his failure to meet his legal obligation to report sexual abuse by a teacher he supervised.

Sam Shapiro
Moraga

Editor:

The recent decision to terminate the off-leash hours at Rancho Laguna Park has led some of us dog walkers to look for alternative places to exercise our dogs. We are now spending more time up on Donald Dr., exploring Gateway Valley, Briones, the Lafayette Reservoir, and the backside of Sibley. These are beautiful areas and great places to enjoy a rigorous hike, especially if you're with a friend. The new concern is that these places are isolated, we see coyotes and there are occasional mountain lion sightings. For women in particular, human predators cause a sense of insecurity.

I feel safer in the park. There are more people around, usually people I have come to know. Fewer wild animals venture close to the homes. And despite all my efforts to arrange for friends to walk with me, it is not always possible. It is important for our community to provide a safe environment for the large displaced population of dog owners who have enjoyed the off-leash hours at Rancho Laguna. I would like to see the cities of Orinda, Moraga and Lafayette pool their resources to provide dog owners a safe place to walk that provides for off-leash hours.

Diana Stephens
Orinda

Editor:

A couple of months ago, while I was at church on a Sunday morning, my home was broken into by some burglars. I called the police, and "Orinda's Finest" responded in a few minutes. The two officers were very efficient and knowledgeable. Some jewelry was taken from a drawer in my bedroom and a laptop computer was taken from my home office. The worst problem was that my newly-installed kitchen door was destroyed, the way they broke into my house. The officers pointed out that I had left my garage door open a good sign to the "crooks" that I was not at home.

In a couple of days, the officers found out who the culprits were, and an arrest was made. Most of my jewelry was returned to me.

I can't thank the officers enough for how efficiently and thoroughly they ran this investigation. We Orinda residents can surely be grateful for how we are taken care of by our police services.

Johnette Perry
Orinda

Editor:

An Open Letter to President Barak Obama

Dear President Obama,

Twelve years ago, by vote of our congregation, the Orinda Community Church took action supporting the movement for equality for the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered community when we adopted our Open and Affirming Statement, welcoming "all to full participation in the life of our church." We therefore applaud your personal statement of faith in support of equal marriage rights for homosexual couples.

Too often religion is invoked to condemn homosexuality. We believe that the Gospel of Jesus is a gospel of inclusion and that we are called by our Christian faith to support the human dignity of all people. The right to marry is an acknowledgment of the equal rights of gays and lesbians to engage fully in the life of our nation. We look forward to the day when all people will be so welcomed and we thank you for taking an important step in that direction.

Very truly yours,

Mary Winbigler (on behalf of the Church Council)

Orinda

Reach the reporter at: info@lamorindaweekly.com

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