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The Orinda Library

Submitted by Rose Tuttle

I love Orinda. I have lived in Orinda since I was born. My family and I know a lot of people here and since Orinda is so small people care about each other. When we go out to dinner, we always run into people we know. Even though Orinda is a close-knit town, not everyone agrees on every issue. The Orinda Library has been a big part of my life. When I was little, the librarian had story time where she'd read books to children. There's a cozy kids' corner with huge stuffed animals and many pillows scattered on the floor. We used to go at least once a week. But it's not just a library. It's a community center where people gather.

On the left side of the library, there's a small art gallery where most of the year, pieces from local artists are displayed. One month each year, they put up children's artwork that they made in art class in the Orinda schools. When I was in fifth grade, one of my drawings was chosen for the exhibit. I loved being able to show off my work and felt honored that my effort was recognized. There are also small productions of Broadway plays that are put on by kids in the library's small theater.

There was a controversy about building the new library. There were multiple views in town. One side felt that the old library was too small and needed more space for books and for people to use computers. Another side felt money could be better used elsewhere and that we already had a library. Some felt that the libraries wouldn't be used much longer because of the Internet.

Another controversy was how to fund the daily operations of the new library. Many libraries have been underfunded because cities couldn't afford them. Why have a big beautiful library if we were going to have to shut it down?

This is where the library parcel tax came in. There was an argument over paying a parcel tax, which would collect \$12 per year from each homeowner in Orinda to keep the library open seven days a week. Some people felt that \$12 a year was too much to pay to keep the library open every day. Others felt that it was unfair to burden Orinda homeowners who might not use the library with the fee. And some felt that since the library attracted people from outside the community, we shouldn't have to pay for their use.

But I think that \$12 a year is not too much to pay to keep the library open all week -- \$12 a year is only one dollar a month. It's less than it costs to go out to lunch! We get so much value out of the library. It's an important building in our community. When people have nothing to do, they can get into trouble. Our large library with "over 30,000 children's materials and an overall collection of over 70,000 books, recorded books, music and DVDs along with 29 public computers, Wi-Fi, comfy chairs, pillows, reading nooks and a tutoring room," according to the Library's website, is a gathering place to read and learn. It's comfortable and welcoming.

Thankfully, Orinda voted to pass the library parcel tax. After months of debate, the Orinda City Council decided to go through with the building of the new library and it was opened in October of 2001 when I was almost three.

I hope people years from now will still be visiting our library.

Rose Tuttle is a 13-year-old student at Julia Morgan School for Girls.

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