

# LAMORINDA WEEKLY

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*"Imagine what our real neighborhoods would be like if each of us offered, as a matter of course, just one kind word to another person. There have been so many stories about the lack of courtesy, the impatience of today's world, road rage and even restaurant rage. Sometimes, all it takes is one kind word to nourish another person. Think of the ripple effect that can be created when we nourish someone. One kind empathetic word has a wonderful way of turning into many." – Fred Rogers*

Enjoying friends and warm treats at the Orinda Library's Caffé Teatro on a recent chilly day are, from left: Kirstin Ricker, Cash Ricker, Callum Glynn, Grant Ricker, Duncan Glynn, Kendall Glynn, and Emery Glynn.

Photo Ohlen Alexander

## Orinda Named the Second Friendliest Town in America by Forbes

*Lamorindans using social media to foster neighborhood involvement*

By Laurie Snyder

Orinda recently received a Mister Rogers-sized warm fuzzy from Forbes, the venerable publication which has been "Devoted to Doers and Doings" since its founding in 1917. When the business news outlet announced its rankings for "Friendliest Towns in America" on Dec. 19, Orinda was awarded the silver medal. Yes, you read that correctly. Orinda is the second friendliest city in the nation. "I wasn't surprised given our low crime rate and residents' high level of civic en-

gagement and generosity," said Mayor Amy Worth, who pointed to Orinda's annual Fourth of July Parade, festivals, and other civic activities as key reasons that the city is "a great place to live." Orinda City Manager Janet Keeter promptly fired off a press release while area coaches, realtors, non-profit groups, council members, and locals displayed their civic pride via email and Twitter. ... continued on page A10

### Quote of the Week:

*"She is family and that is what you do—you take care of family."*  
 Read *Happiness at One Hundred and Five*, page B5

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## Rosy Financial Picture for City of Lafayette

By Cathy Tyson

"The City remains in very good financial health, with a projected General Fund balance of \$13.8 million at the end of the fiscal year – June 30, 2013," states the fiscal year 2012-2013 Final Municipal Budget prepared by City Manager Steven Falk and Administrative Services Manager Tracy Robinson.

In an ironic turn of events, the value of being fiscally conservative and having a substantial savings account became quite apparent when torrential rain coupled with debris caused roughly \$600,000 worth of damage to Mt. View Drive. "The reason why it's a good thing to keep your expenses below your revenues is that it allows you to build up a rainy day reserve fund. And we all know what *that* can be used for!" quipped Falk.

He credits Lafayette's successful restaurants, retailers and revitalized downtown for recent increases in sales tax figures. By the end of the fiscal year, city management estimates a \$140,000 increase in sales tax revenue, up for the first time since 2007. "Taxes from restaurants now com-

prise 25 percent of our overall sales tax revenue, which is nearly double the amount of any other sector (gas stations come in second at 14 percent)," Falk said. "Tracy Robinson, the City's chief budgeteer, loves the fact that Lafayette Restaurant Row, featuring Chow, Postino, El Charro, Pizza Antica, Metro and so many others, has become a regional draw."

There has been similar positive news for the grocery sector with the addition of Whole Foods which has "led to better quality and selection – and higher sales. It has, as they say, lifted all boats, with Lafayette residents being the big winners. Check out the outdoor produce market at Diablo Foods and you'll see what I mean," said Falk.

Other positive signs for the city include new stores like Venture, a men's clothing store, and the expansion of independent merchants like Lamorinda Music and Mighty Fine Guitars, that has tripled its space, and the new, more visible location of Douglah Designs.

Drivers in town will be happy to hear that even though Measure G, the Fix Our Roads campaign, didn't pass, the city council made good on its promise to devote \$3 million toward road repair, spread out over a few years. A sinking fund for Pavement Management Projects was created and \$1.1 million of General Fund reserve funds were used in fiscal year 2012-13, leaving a balance of \$1.9 million to be spent over the next couple of years.

As anticipated, contracted sheriff services, the city's biggest expense, was a bit more costly than the last fiscal year, up 3.7 percent to \$3.4 million. For the average citizen however, it seems like out of pocket costs are what really matter. From soup to nuts the municipal fee schedule has you covered. For example, it's a relative bargain to get your bingo license renewed – only \$10. The future looks a bit more expensive for those looking for a Thinking about a remodel? That doesn't come cheap – fees can start at \$3,800.

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## What's on Your Mind?

Nick Marnell roams Lamorinda cafés to find out what readers think we should look at in 2013. Page B2



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## Gaels Gear Up for WCC Play

Expectations are high for the men's basketball season. Michael Sakoda reports. Page C1



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## Planting a New Leaf

Better living through gardening—Cynthia Brian looks forward to the new year! Page D1

