

"I Do Not Like Going to Walnut Creek!"

Lamorindans Share Their Concerns and Interests for 2013

By Nick Marnell



John, a 46-year Moraga resident, looks forward to our continued coverage of Lamorinda issues throughout 2013. Photo Andy Scheck

"It's all about sports here," said Jennifer, as her eyes burned through my blue baseball shirt. "How about a listing of current events for school-aged children, but non-sports related?"

Jennifer, a public service employee from Orinda and a parent of two, was the first to respond to my questions as I navigated the cafés of Lamorinda, asking residents about their concerns for 2013, and what topics they would like to see covered in Lamorinda Weekly.

The schools are no doubt one of our area's greatest assets. Meredith,

mother of two young daughters, is downright worried for the future of Moraga schools. Her frustration was palpable. "Where do people think the funding for education is going to come from?" she asked. "Why didn't Moraga pass the parcel tax (last spring)?"

Paul warned of a potential problem in education that may escalate throughout 2013. The Moraga teacher is concerned about the No Child Left Behind mandate, and the resulting regulations that may tie the hands of our schools. "Do we really need the government to interject itself to deter-

mine what is right for our district?" he cautioned.

As I organized my notes, Mark, a Moraga dad who was eating a salad at a nearby table, dropped his fork and walked over. "I have something I'd like you to write about," he said. "Why isn't there a single public park in Lafayette? And school lunches. They are totally void of nutritional value."

Lauren, a Lafayette mom, loves to read about local Lamorinda businesses. "I love to shop locally," she proudly stated. "I especially like to eat at new restaurants." She concluded with a comment that should have our community erect a statue in her honor. "And I do not like going to Walnut Creek."

There are always two sides to every story, however. Annette, an Orinda Downs mom, wishes that we'd provide more information like "reviews on restaurants, plays, and on big events in San Francisco and Walnut Creek."

Linda pushed her sunglasses on top of her head and wasted no time in responding. "Speeding on Corliss! Constantly! People drive at freeway speeds on my street." She'd like to see a campaign for reduced speeds on Moraga roads. How about this, Linda? Moraga residents would likely be thrilled to have the ticketing police cars reassigned from their streets to Corliss. For, say, the next 10

years.

A cancelled appointment by her physical therapy client gave Ann a chance to discuss her concerns for the elderly. "Let the public know what services are available," she said. She'd like to see more stories on services like free transportation, depression counseling, and specifically, Caring Hands, the volunteer program of John Muir Health. Former Moraga resident Jane wants to see coverage of senior safety issues. "Especially the scams so prevalent on the seniors," she said.

Kim and her husband moved to Lafayette a year ago from Ithaca, New York. They both work, have no children, and seem a bit overwhelmed by all of the family activities in the area. "How about features on activities for folks that have no kids," she said.

As to overlooked sections of our community, how about this perspective, offered by Hope, who sat alone at a table in one café. She recently sold her company, the kids were gone, and she wondered what she was going to do in the next phase of her life. "Why don't you do a feature on downsizing?" she suggested.

Nilou, who works for the EPA in San Francisco, hates the perception that Lamorinda is a "Republican enclave, full of venture capitalists. That's not what we're all about here." Yet Shari of Lafayette says, "There needs to be a conservative viewpoint out there. I'm tired of the left."

Nilou, Shari and Lafayette retiree, John, all agree that they like to read stories about the interesting people in the area. "What did Joe Blow do?"

Where did he travel?"

Another Lafayette mom, Merilee, would "like to find out what my neighbors' kids are doing" via the newspaper. On a more conspiratorial note, Liz, from Moraga, has interest in a gossip column. "Like a Dear Nick?" she kidded. Mercy!

Adam, a Saint Mary's student, wants to see the college covered in more depth than for only its sports achievements. And it's nice to see our readership extend into the high schools. Bailey, a Campolindo student, is active in many sports, and wants everyone to know that "there are even (soon to be) diving classes at our school." Andrew Morris, Acalanes Aquatics Director, confirmed that he hopes to begin those classes this spring.

A lack of development in our community was cause for concern. "Since the movie theater closed, there are very few activities for teenagers in Lafayette," said Amy, who works for a San Francisco software company. Richelle, a Moraga scientist, bemoaned the vacancy rate in the Rheem Valley Shopping Center.

Long-time Moraga resident, John, simply said he enjoys reading about all the current events.

And, finally, there was Jennifer—a Moraga mom, who thought, and thought, and thought. But, try as she might, she could come to only this conclusion: "I can't think of anything wrong with your paper. You cover it all!"

On that gracious note, here's hoping that by the end of 2013 all of you feel exactly the same way.

Happy New Year everyone!

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When Elder Parents Resist Your Suggestions

By Linda Fodrini-Johnson, MA, LMFT, CMC

Have you experienced the following? You know that Mom or Dad is having problems, although he/she denies it, and won't let you help. You suspect he or she is not getting groceries, not eating well, and not going to medical appointments. When you make suggestions about getting help, your mom or dad refuses and makes excuses. When you come for a visit, he/she "doesn't want to bother you," or says "maybe later" or "I'll think about it." You leave worried and frustrated.

Sometimes learning a different approach can make all the difference in achieving the results you would like for your parents. Success happens most often when families respect the elder's right to make decisions and when all suggestions made are in line with the values of the elder. It is so easy for adult children to want something better for their parent or choose services or housing that appeals to their own likes without taking into account the parent's value system or needs.

Here are some helpful tips:

- 1) Sometimes cost is the roadblock. You could pay the bill for the parent as a gift. All the siblings could chip in to pay for a driver or an emergency response system. It could be as low as \$30 a month, or even a no cost government entitlement.
- 2) Negotiate: Avoid put-down language and sarcasm. Say, "I love you, even though we disagree on this."
- 3) Ask, "What is stopping you?" Often there is an unrealistic fear. Give factual answers without trying to "sell an idea."
- 4) Explain that you are worried, so Mom or Dad can feel that this is being done for your peace of mind, not because help is needed. Use "I" messages in your communication, not "You should."
- 5) Tell him/her: "Your family wants to spoil you."
- 6) If home care is needed, start small and increase the hours of help as tolerated:

• Reassure your parent about protecting his/her privacy, fear of strangers, and fear of losing control.

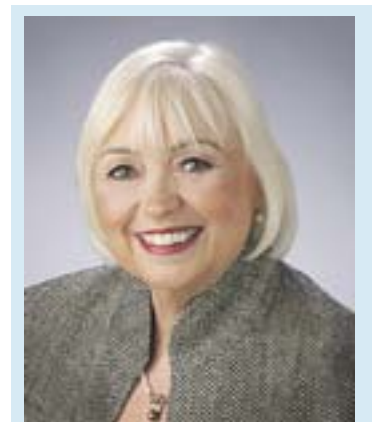
• Let your parent choose the day of the week and the time of day for help to come.

• Hire a professional geriatric care manager to assist with the transition and supervise the quality of help.

• If the resistance appears to be from a cognitive deficit, dementia or mental health problem, talk it over with your parent's doctor. It could indicate that you will need legal assistance to take over the decision making process for your parent. If you are seeing neglect and feel your parent's health or well-being is at risk, you might need to call Adult Protective Services.

Loving a parent, respecting his or her dignity, finding the right combination of services to support quality of life and doing so without guidance and support, can be a journey of frustration.

For further information about professional geriatric care managers or to find a care manager in your local area, contact The National Association of Professional Geriatric Care Managers (NAPGCM) at: www.Care-Manager.org or visit www.Eldercare-Answers.com.



Linda Fodrini-Johnson is a licensed marriage, family and child counselor, a certified care manager, and is the executive director of Eldercare Services. She is an advisor on the new Lamorinda Village Task Force that will assist seniors to stay in their own neighborhoods and homes.

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