



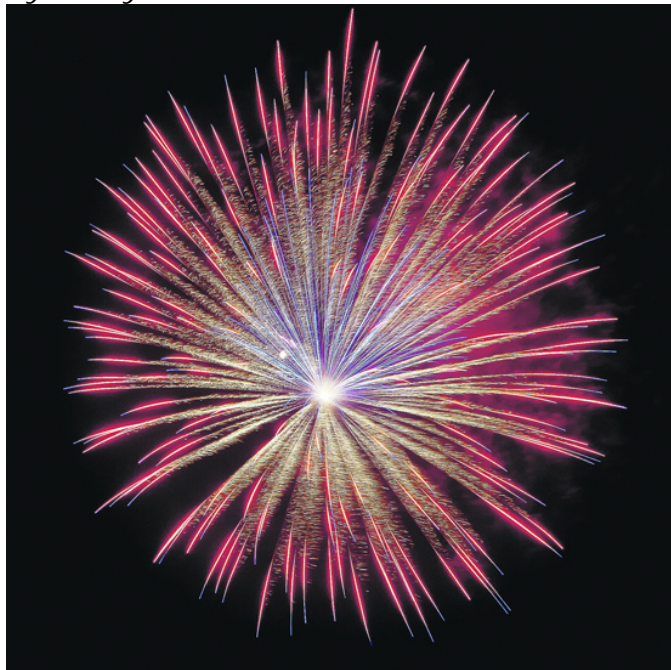
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Fireworks Could Fizzle Lacking Funds

By Cathy Dausman



Last year's 4th of July fireworks Photo Kevin Goto

Just as it takes a village to raise a child, it takes a community - plus \$24,000 - to stage a fireworks show. And if three very local "villages" don't step up with financial donations for Moraga's Fourth of July display, then the future of those shows is quite literally up in the air.

"People don't understand the town [of Moraga] doesn't pay for [the fireworks]," said Moraga Chamber of Commerce representative Kathe Nelson.

Nelson spent a recent afternoon placing half gallon Ball jars atop Moraga business counters, where she hopes they will attract customers' attention as well as their spare change. A total of 48 jars will be distributed throughout Lamorinda, including Orinda and Lafayette.

The collection jar kickoff began at June meetings of Kiwanis of Moraga Valley and Lamorinda Sunrise Rotary, and so far netted the cause more than \$175, bringing the current total to over \$1,600. Moraga Parks and Recreation Director Jay Ingram said the fireworks shows started in 1991, and up until last year the cost has been covered by donations. Some 6,000 people enjoy the nighttime event which is launched near Moraga Country Club grounds and viewed from Moraga Commons and surrounding hills.

Former Moraga mayor Karen Mendoca climbed the Commons hills seeking donations; current mayor Dave Trotter passed the hat among fellow golfers at Moraga

Country Club. Last year, however, Ingram said Moraga fell \$1,200 short of expenses. "That scares me a little for this year," he said. The town's general fund picked up the slack then, but a fireworks display isn't budgeted for, he added.

"Everybody should have fireworks for the Fourth of July," said 5A Rent-a-Space co-manager Gloria Noggle. Taking the Lamorinda population of over 58,000 into account, the cost would be only "50 cents a head," added Noggle's husband and co-manager Brad.

So, who's had a spark of inspiration for the cause so far? Orinda Association pledged to donate half their Fourth of July pancake breakfast proceeds to the fireworks fund. Pennini's owner Patrick Vahey will match any donations that come through his Moraga restaurant. And Moraga Hardware and Across the Way owner Bill Snider said, only half-jokingly, "I'm not even giving people change."

Jar labels include a QR code, taking smart phone users directly to the Town of Moraga website where contributions can be made online. Checks can also be mailed to: Town of Moraga, Attn: Buy-A-Rocket, 2100 Donald Drive, Moraga CA, 94556.



Pennini manager Matthew Poirier sweetens the pot. Photo Cathy Dausman

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