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## Community Service

### Local Residents Participate in Annual Congo Swim

Fundraiser benefits sexual abuse victims of the Congo, raises awareness

Submitted by Bobbie Dodson



Survivor Coco Ramazani gives Keris Dahlkamp a congratulatory hug at the completion of his 22-mile swim. Photo provided

Canyon resident Keris Dahlkamp cites as his reason for establishing the Congo Swim, which raised funds for Friends of The Congo and Global Fund for Women, "If it were my wife, mother or daughter being violated, I would hope that those who could do something would do something." He went on to say, "We must launch out into the deep. Please join me."

And join they did – to do something about this humanitarian crisis. Swimmers from all over the world participated in the Congo Swim, from swimming laps in a community pool to joining Dahlkamp in Lake Tahoe. The ministerial staff of Lafayette-Orinda Presbyterian Church, Peter Whitelock, Judy Durff and Gerald Chinen added to the effort. Dahlkamp's personal commitment was to swim the length of Lake Tahoe, 22 miles, which he accomplished in 14 hours.

A pilot boat and two kayaks accompanied Dahlkamp from the time he entered the water shortly after midnight. Because of a shoulder injury, he swam the first eight miles only kicking to maintain his shoulder strength for the last

part of the event. The strategy worked, though nearly was compromised when a curious couple paddled their kayak toward the swimmer; were overwhelmed by the power of the waves; were unable to stop; and bumped into Dahlkamp's head. Fortunately, he was unhurt and a few yards later he waded ashore at Kings Beach, arms held high in triumph, where he was engulfed by well-wishers.

Carolyn Bauer, who was aboard the pilot boat, explained how they kept in close contact with Dahlkamp, monitoring his condition and what he should eat. "We gave him hot water for core warmth, roasted potatoes for calories, salt capsules, regular water, and extra nutritious Clif Shot Blok bars for endurance. She continues, "I jumped in the water and swam for a while. It gave me total respect for the 'real' swimmers who paced him for two hours at a time. They began at 6 a.m. and the first in the water was the niece of Orindans Melissa and Gareth Creasey, Lonie Harris, who came from London to join the team.

A touching moment came when, sitting in the pilot boat, Coco Ramazani, a survivor of sexual abuse in Congo, wrote on a rock words about what she had endured then threw the rock into the water as a way of releasing her pain.

Rena, Dahlkamp's wife, was in one of the support team kayaks. Their two children Rio, 7, and Magdalena, 5, watched their dad take off near midnight, rode on the pilot boat for a while, and were at the shore at King's Beach to greet him.

Dahlkamp's mother, Maria Rosales, who swam a short distance with her son in the chilly waters of Tahoe, said, "It gives me goose bumps to think of the memories my grandchildren will have of the Congo Swim. Certainly they will be proud of what their father accomplished for the very needy in the Congo.

"Hundreds of thousands of women and children in eastern Congo have endured sexual violence. It is a tragedy of epic proportions," Rosales explained.

For more information, visit [www.congoswim.org](http://www.congoswim.org). "Tell This to My Mother" by Joseph E. Mwantuali, is based on Coco Ramazani's true story and available through Amazon Books.

### A Decade of Giving Children a Chance to Become Healthy, Aging Adults

Submitted by Susan JunFish and Moon Pak, Parents for a Safer Environment



From left: Shirley Shelangoski of Pleasant Hill, Ashley Jang of Campolindo High School, and Elyse Kedzie, Head Royce High graduate from San Ramon, at the Parents for a Safer Environment educational booth at the John Muir Earth Day Festival. Photo provided

It's not the first thing on our minds when we go to work, school or eat out, but have you ever wondered what kinds of chemicals we may be exposed to during our daily activities? Most of us don't because they are usually applied in our absence but research is showing that pesticide exposure is linked to many health problems.

Decades of studies have shown that pesticide exposure is linked to chronic asthma, several types of cancers, birth defects, learning disorders and dementia, according to the California Department of Public Health. More recent human tissue culture

and animal studies are also linking very low levels of commonly used pesticides to hormone disruption, which can lead to obesity and other metabolic disorders, diabetes, and cardiovascular problems.

The good news is that there are safer alternatives to pesticides which are more effective and can cost less.

On Oct. 1, Parents for a Safer Environment (PfSE) will be offering a workshop to the larger community to celebrate its 10-year anniversary of protecting people, wildlife and the environment locally, regionally, and state-wide, and to discuss least toxic alternatives for controlling six of the

most common pest problems: burrowing and structural rodents, small animals, weeds, insects, rats and termites. The workshop, held from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the Hacienda de las Flores, is co-sponsored by the Town of Moraga, which has the only organically maintained public parks system in Contra Costa County and was given the American Public Works Association's Sustainability Award in 2013.

Under the guidance of PfSE, the Moraga School District and the Town of Moraga passed protective, pest control "IPM" policies in 2005 and 2006.

Eight continuing education units (CEUs) are available for pesticide applicators, a change from the pesticide industry sponsored events. At check-in, carpoolers will receive free pest control products of their choice at the door. A complimentary breakfast will be provided from Whole Foods, and registrants will also enjoy an organic lunch and fruit tasting all day courtesy of Ken's Organic Produce, a favorite vendor at the Moraga Farmer's Market. The workshop's registration deadline is Sept. 26 (online at [www.pfse.net](http://www.pfse.net)). Cost for the full-day event is \$50.

If you would like to get involved, PfSE welcomes volunteers to participate in exciting projects. Visit [www.pfse.net](http://www.pfse.net) or contact [Lysle@pfse.net](mailto:Lysle@pfse.net) for more information.

### Grandparent's Day at Moraga Royale

Submitted by Jessica McCormick



Moraga Royale invited friends and family to join them for their 7th annual Grandparent's Day celebration Sept. 7 – a fun-filled day of barbecue, snow cones, pony rides, a petting zoo, and carnival games that helped to raise funds to benefit the Alzheimer's Association and Moraga Royale's donation for the Walk to End Alzheimer's in Walnut Creek next month. Pictured is resident Don Wade "clowning around" with staff member Jessica McCormick.

Photo provided