

## ADULT DAY PROGRAM

for those with Alzheimer's or other related dementias

- STIMULATING ACTIVITIES
- LIVE MUSICAL ENTERTAINMENT
- GAMES
- CRAFTS
- EXERCISE
- FRIENDSHIP

**New  
Expanded  
Facilities!**

# LARC

LAMORINDA ADULT RESPITE CENTER

**925-254-3465**

433 Moraga Way Orinda www.holyshepherd.org

**CANYONDESIGNBUILD**

RESIDENTIAL DESIGN  
& REMODELING

- KITCHENS
- BATHS
- ADDITIONS
- EXTERIORS

www.CanyonDesignBuild.com | 3630 Park Blvd. Oakland CA 94610 | 510.482.0300




## STOP CLEANING Get Gutter Guards!

- Fits all sizes of gutters
- 10 year No-Clog Warranty
- High quality aircraft alloy
- We will clean and repair your gutters before installation of your new guards

Licensed & Insured #939838

**Fall Special - 20% OFF**

The Gutter Guard Company  
**925-247-7044**

www.bayareagutterguards.com

## Rheem Valley Convalescent Hospital & Rehabilitation



Award  
Winning  
Care &  
Rehab

Rheem Valley Convalescent Hospital & Rehabilitation has earned the CMS 5-Star Rating, the AHCA National Quality Bronze Award and has been ranked as one of the Best Nursing Homes by U.S. News & World Report. Let us provide you with Award Winning Care. We specialize in Post Acute Rehab – in addition to traditional therapy techniques, we utilize state-of-the-art therapy modalities including virtual rehabilitation.

**Rheem Valley Convalescent  
Hospital & Rehabilitation**



348 Rheem Blvd, Moraga CA 94556, **925.376.5995**

## Making Friends While Playing Mah Jongg

By Cathy Tyson



From left, new friends Sharon Galliani, Jewel Strom, Astrid Gehrke and Martina Alexandre. Photo Cathy Tyson

Players took turns chiming in. “Two crak,” “three bam,” “five crak,” eventually coming around to perky and competitive 95-year-old Jewel Strom: “Six dot. What do you think of that?”

Dots, dragons, east, west – for the uninitiated it’s hard to decipher the lingo but these dedicated players knew the difference between a pong and a kong. The game, which originated in China many years ago, takes skill, strategy and calculation but it provides an afternoon of socialization, new friendships and fun.

Moraga resident Strom learned to play Mah Jongg years ago with her mother and sister when she was a little girl growing up in San Francisco. She explains that it’s kind of like a rummy game with tiles. She used to host a three-some at her

place, but when one of the ladies had to drop out, they were in a bit of a pickle. Her daughter was concerned and contacted Lafayette Senior Services – they offered drop-in American Mah Jongg to experienced players on Tuesdays at the Lafayette Community Center from 1 to 3:30 p.m. with no reservations needed for the casual group.

Gentle, good humored camaraderie was in the air on a recent Tuesday, as the women played and casually chatted about families, upcoming holidays, shared bite sized chocolates and more. “I can’t tell you how wonderful they’ve been to me,” said Strom of her fellow players, one of whom is her regular car pool driver.

While the game sounds rather complicated, longtime player and teacher Alice Stern says after a com-

plete explanation, and a little practice, a light bulb goes off and all of a sudden players “get it.”

Usually four people gather around a card table and use the 144 tiles that are divided into three different suits – bamboo (bam), characters (crak), and circles (dot) – along with honor and bonus tiles: winds, dragons, flowers and seasons. The game became popular in the states in the 1920s and by the 1930s the rules had morphed, becoming substantially different, some say easier, than the original Chinese version.

The sound of the tiles clicking on the table brings back fond memories for many of days gone by when mothers, aunts and sisters played together, recalls Maureen Neumann, director of senior services.

Win or lose, this low key pleasant afternoon is good exercise for the mind and an easy way to socialize. Those wanting to learn the game should keep an eye out for the next Lafayette Parks and Recreation directory; Stern will be offering American Mah Jongg classes in January and May of 2014. For players ready to rumble, they are always welcome at the on-going drop-in games on Tuesdays in the Cedar Room of the Community Center, 500 St. Mary’s Road, Lafayette. Cost is \$1 for members, \$3 for non members. For more information, call Senior Services at (925) 284-5050.

## New MVPC Senior Pastor Has Saint Mary’s Ties

By Michael Sakoda



Rob Perkins Photo provided

Moraga Valley Presbyterian Church held the installation service Sept. 15 for Reverend Dr. Rob Perkins, the church’s first new senior pastor in 31 years. But this bucolic town is not new to Perkins.

His wife, Mitali – a star in her own right and the author of multiple young-adult books – has been a lecturer at Saint Mary’s College for two years. “She came from a Hindu family, became a Christian in college, and she writes about crossing cultures, and she speaks at schools and libraries ... is quite in demand ... definitely my better half,” said Perkins. And his sons, Tim and Jim, attend Saint Mary’s College.

Perkins met his wife during his senior year at Stanford. “I was teaching a bible study in the dorm where she was the RA,” he said. “We were friends for about a year, and we dated for about a year, then we were engaged for about a year, and then we were married.”

Perkins attended Stanford University as an undergraduate with a plan to enter the medical field, but always with a greater purpose in mind. “By the time I finished high school, my goals were more about being a missionary than a pastor,” he said. “I saw myself overseas working as a missionary doctor. I was pre-med, but by the time I finished school, I thought, ‘I don’t want to be in school for another seven years,’” and luckily, for the congregation at MVPC, he didn’t.

Born and raised in Southern California, from the beginning the church was part of Perkins’ life.

“I had a very devout mother. From my earliest memory she was praying with me and talking about the bible,” said Perkins. “I grew up nurtured in that faith, and I thought, when I was in middle school that I would be a pastor someday.”

Outside of the scripture, however, Perkins was drawn at a young age to a more fundamental understanding of God. “I had a really great church leader growing up... and I saw real authentic faith in him, not just religion, but an actual relationship with God, and I wanted that,” he said.

Though new, Perkins is already ecstatic about the work his congregation is doing in the community. “This church is unique,” he said. “It has about a thousand members, but it has a much bigger impact than you would think. Both high schools use our church for things, ... we have a nursery school with about 150 members, ... a lot of people who don’t come to

church on Sundays consider this place their church.”

Beyond Lamorinda, the efforts MVPC makes around the world remind Perkins of his missionary passion. “Serving others and being involved in missions beyond our doors is a big priority here. We have missionaries in Richmond and Oakland, missionaries in Serbia and the Dominican Republic, and every year we have over 200 high school students go to Mexico with our church and build homes there,” he said.

Perkins’ hope for the established and potential parishioners at MVPC lies in an almost holistic understanding of God. “Pascal the philosopher said that every person has a God-shaped vacuum inside them, and they try to fill it with money, with sex, with power, with advancement, with family, but ultimately, those things will let us down; there’s a lot of emptiness in their lives if they don’t know God,” he said. “I believe we can offer the one thing that can meet that need ... not that I want to force it on anybody ... but I feel we can offer people a way to find who they’re supposed to be.”

On Fridays, Perkins’ off day, he likes to spend time with his wife, hiking and enjoying the outdoors. “We lived in the Boston area for about 12 and a half years, and we love being in California again ... getting to be outside without bitter cold winters,” said Perkins.

He loves to play golf and he’s a sports fan, calling himself “a recovering Red Sox fan trying to get back into sports in the Bay Area.”

## Lafayette Church Members Have Fun with Hats

Submitted by Ted Fuller



Lafayette Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) members had some fun with the theme “Home Is Where You Hang Your Hat” Sept. 8 when they met for breakfast and coffee, and had a chance to bring a hat from home, or make their own hats from paper, ribbon and other supplies. From left: Elsie Buchwald, Cal Underwood (standing), Don Stump, and Adah Sumner, who elected to bring her own hat, a bonnet given to her 25 years ago by her sister. “It can also be used as an apron,” notes Sumner. Charter member Elsie Buchwald joined the church in 1959.

Photo Ted Fuller