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From Front Page

Tree Lighting Rings in the Season

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From left: Pastor Ron Johnson with children Madelyn, Micah, Emma, and wife Kimberly. Photo Henry Jai

A new cross stands where 3,000 square feet of juniper once grew and an old cross used to wobble. The event was a great opportunity for Johnson to showcase the relatively new church and all the improvements the Refuge community has made to the property.

Johnson started Refuge renting a space at the Veterans Memorial Building in Lafayette almost four years ago (see article at <http://www.lamorindaweekly.com/archive/issue0324/Planting-a-New-Church-in-Lafayette.html>). As the community grew, he looked for a new location and found that the church at 155 Moraga Road was un-

occupied. Johnson leased the property and began interior and exterior renovations with the help of the parishioners and friends of the church.

This past October Refuge parishioners dug 200 holes and planted new plants in front of the church on Moraga Road. "We feel blessed that everything moved forward so nicely for us and we are very grateful for all the support we got," said the pastor. Victor Ghavamzadeh of East Bay Tree Services removed the juniper for one third of the cost, Kevin Montgomery of Cresco Express donated the double boom lift that was used to install

the lights on the tree, Jim Minder donated the drip irrigation system, and Jim Lance purchased the plants from the Moraga Garden Center. Many others spent hours inside and outside the church to make it beautiful.

"This December first was a first for us," added Johnson. "Christmas, and the holiday season, is a great opportunity to connect with people."

On Dec. 20, Refuge Community Church will hold a candlelight service from 7 to 8:30 p.m. that will include worship, scripture reading, biblical message and a dessert banquet. For more information, visit www.refugecommunity.org.

World AIDS Day

Spreading awareness at Saint Mary's College and beyond

... continued from page A1

World AIDS Day, which is globally observed on Dec. 1, was initiated by health ministers from around the world in 1988. The hope is that cases of AIDS might be reduced by increasing awareness and promoting education and prevention, as well as improving treatment. AIDS advocates also seek to combat prejudice and call upon governments to keep commitments to fighting the disease.

There are currently 33.3 million people living with HIV, according to UNAIDS estimates. Two and a half million of those people are children. It

is estimated that some 1.8 million people knowingly die from AIDS annually, not to mention the cases that go undiagnosed. The majority of people infected with HIV and AIDS live in lower-and middle-income countries.

The WRC's World AIDS Day coffee house is held in what Sobatto describes as "an open, laid back atmosphere," where individuals come together to share stories and experiences through spoken word, storytelling, music and art. This year a woman from WORLD (Women Organized to Respond to Life-threaten-

ing Disease) in Oakland will share her first-hand experience of living with AIDS. At the end of the evening, participants will proceed to SMC's chapel lawn and tie red ribbons around trees as a sign of remembrance.

The WRC is located in Mitty Hall Ground Floor and is open Monday-Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (as well as during special events). For more information about World AIDS Day or other events, contact the WRC at (925) 631-4192 or visit www.stmarys-ca.edu/wrc.



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