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Photo Andy Scheck

Tree Lighting Rings in the Season

By Sophie Braccini

There is nothing quite like seeing a large triangle of colorful lights glimmering on a hilltop to get you in the holiday spirit. Whether adorning window sills, rooftops, lampposts or tree branches, the pinpricks of purple, red, green and blue can capture the imagination of both young and old.

Last Sunday members of the Refuge Community

Church gathered to celebrate the magic of the season at their new Moraga Road location, joining in a sing-along of traditional Christmas carols, serving hot cocoa, cider and appetizers alongside a 25-foot-high blue spruce tree that sparkled merrily in the cool, clear night. The tree will serve as a beacon to all who travel between Moraga and Lafayette throughout December; the event was the first of many hol-

iday celebrations scheduled this month in Lamorinda (see the Holiday Events listing on pages B8-B9).

For Pastor Ron Johnson, who started the church four years ago, the tree lighting ceremony served as a celebration of a community embracing his project and getting together to honor the gift of Christmas.

... continued on page A12

Quote of the Week:

"I for one like to continue to look stylish while not ruining my clothes with spatters of gravy ... So, I own and sport an array of aprons." Read Looking Good in Lamorinda - page B4.

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*With gratitude for wonderful clients and another successful year.
Merry Christmas and a happy, healthy 2014 to you and yours!*

Lamorinda Weekly

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World AIDS Day Spreading awareness at Saint Mary's College and beyond

By Amanda Kuehn

The mission of the Women's Resource Center at Saint Mary's College is to be "a locus of women's empowerment, an inclusive space where every member of the SMC community, all genders, bodies, sexual orientations, racial, spiritual, and ethnic identities can seek education, support, dialogue and engagement around issues of gender equity, identity, and equality," according to documents carefully crafted by director Sharon Sobotta and coordinator Gillian Cutshaw. It may seem like a lot to bite off, but the WRC is up to the challenge.

An office within SMC's Student Life, the WRC is dedicated to addressing and educating the campus community about a wide variety of issues

... ranging from relationships to self-esteem, identity to dating violence. They also raise awareness on societal issues like racism, sexism, classism and oppression. Much of this education comes in the form of small and large-scale monthly and annual events, many of which are open to the public.

One such event is the World AIDS Day coffee house, which will be hosted in the WRC from 6 to 8 p.m. Wednesday, Dec. 4. The coffee house has become an annual event for the WRC and is open to any and all who wish to share their stories and increase their awareness, especially those who have been directly or indirectly affected by HIV or AIDS.

... continued on page A12

HIV BEGAN ONE PERSON AT A TIME

AND IT WILL END

ONE PERSON AT A TIME

WE ALL HAVE A ROLE TO PLAY!

WORLD AIDS DAY DECEMBER 1
JOIN THE MOVEMENT [f/greaterthan aids](https://www.facebook.com/greaterthan aids)

Life in Lamorinda B1-B12

Holiday Hilarity at THT

Liven up your holidays with good cheer from Town Hall Theatre - page B1.



Sports C1-C4

Mats to Play for NCS Title

Catch up on NCS football action as Miramonte prepares for the championship game - page C1.



Our Homes D1-D8

Amid the Acorns

A first look at the new Orinda Oaks - page D1.



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It's a Wonderful Life in Lafayette and we are grateful to be part of it!

Dana Green & Branagh Development are proudly joining the Chamber of Commerce in the 1st annual community tree lighting and holiday celebration.

Friday, December 6 from 4 to 7 p.m. in the Lafayette Plaza
(Tree lighting to take place at 5:30 p.m.)

Highlights will include Santa's arrival on Old Betsy (Lafayette's historical fire engine), children's activities, live entertainment, refreshments and a special wall of gratitude decorated by local third-graders!



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Lafayette Civic News

Public Meetings

City Council

Monday, Dec. 9, 7 p.m.
Lafayette Library & Learning Center,
Community Hall, 3491 Mt. Diablo Blvd.

Planning Commission

Monday, Dec. 16, 7 p.m.
Lafayette Library & Learning Center,
Community Hall, 3491 Mt. Diablo Blvd.

Design Review

Monday, Dec. 9, 7 p.m.
Lafayette Library & Learning Center,
Arts & Science Discovery Center,
3491 Mt. Diablo Blvd.

Check online for agendas, meeting notes and announcements

City of Lafayette:

www.ci.lafayette.ca.us
Phone: (925) 284-1968

Chamber of Commerce:

www.lafayettechamber.org

School Board Meetings

Acalanes Union High School District
Wednesday, Dec. 11, 7:30 p.m.
AUHSD Board Room at 1212
Pleasant Hill Road, Lafayette
www.acalanes.k12.ca.us

Lafayette School District

Wednesday, Dec. 11, 7 p.m.
Regular Board Meeting
Stanley Library
3477 School St., Lafayette
www.lafsd.k12.ca.us

Share your thoughts, insights and opinions with your community.

Send a letter to the editor:

letters@lamorinda weekly.com

Real Estate Double Header

Two meetings on the same night, different results

By Cathy Tyson

It was a busy Monday night. The City Council decided to purchase the old library building and the Design Review Commission made a final recommendation to not approve the Terraces of Lafayette project – all on Nov 25.

While the 6,720 square foot structure is in a great location, it needs serious updating. The price tag of \$1.97 million is strictly “as is.” Council members discussed, ironically in the new library building, and ultimately approved the city’s purchase of the vacant old library property from Contra Costa County. The city was required to make the purchase under the terms of a settlement agreement between the now defunct Redevelop-

ment Agency and the county. Problems with the title contributed to the long delay in the expected change of ownership.

There are some strings attached – proceeds from the sale will be applied to reimbursing the county for costs associated with the sale along with attorneys’ fees related to the quiet title action and maintenance costs.

The city of Lafayette is going to pay for the library outright, with no mortgage, from existing revenue in its General Fund reserve account that will have an expected balance at the end of fiscal year 2013-2014 of over \$7.5 million. If within the next 10 years the city decides to sell the property, the

proceeds must be used for library programs.

The Old Library Reuse task force will be analyzing options during the first half of 2014 for what to do with the property. If their recommendation is to use the old library for city offices, “The general fund can be reimbursed from the City Offices Development Fund, which currently has a cash balance of over \$2.6 million,” said administrative services manager Traci Robinson in a staff report.

As expected, across town at the Lafayette Community Center the Design Review Commission unanimously voted to send a recommendation to the Planning Commission to deny the originally

proposed 315-unit Terraces of Lafayette project. At the last design review meeting, the developer took to heart significant design concerns and introduced a new conceptual plan for a revamped 208-unit project, to better reviews by the commissioners. At that time project manager Dave Baker acknowledged the 315-unit project was a “non-starter.”

While there is a 14-day appeal window available, it’s unclear if project representatives will pursue it. The original application called for 14 two- and three-story buildings spread out on the 22-acre site near Acalanes High School. A handful of speakers came forward to encourage commissioners to deny the project.

Popular Financial Services Manager to Retire

By Cathy Tyson

For 23 years Gonzalo Silva has been keeping the books, paying all the bills and making sure the city’s finances are running smoothly. Now he’s finally ready, at age 71, to retire. While he acknowledges that it is “easy to come to work every day,” with very friendly supportive staffers, “enough is enough.”

The long hours he spends as Lafayette’s financial services manager will be wrapping up in March. He’s been working since his days as a teenager; his first job was a paper route for the now defunct San Francisco Progress newspaper. He’s currently responsible for all of the day-to-day financial processing, accounts payable and receivable, maintaining cash flow, preparing state regulatory reports, coordinating audits, budget preparation and more. City manager Steven Falk has nothing but compliments for Silva, who he describes as “simply one of the nicest fellows you’ll ever meet” and who “brought discipline, high standards, an uncompromising eye for quality, and a strong work ethic to the office every single day.” ... continued on next page

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DATE: December 3, 2013, 10am – 8pm
LOCATION: Lafayette Library, Community Hall Room

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Popular Financial Services Manager to Retire

... continued from page A2



After almost a quarter century, Gonzalo Silva is ready to retire. Photo C. Tyson

Calling the city's accounting operations "in shambles" when Gonzalo arrive in 1990, with just \$950,000 in reserves, Falk explains, "Today, due in large part to Gonzalo's work, the city boasts 23 consecutive balanced budgets, \$7 million in reserve, and a AAA bond rating from Standard and Poors. Only 25 of California's almost 500 cities have earned the coveted AAA rating. In an era when many cities are struggling - with some even bankrupt - Lafayette stands apart, and great credit for that goes to Gonzalo Silva."

"He personally inspects and approves every request for payment before it's processed to ensure that the taxpayer's money was being spent efficiently," says Tracy Robinson, administrative services director, who added that his skill at employee birthday "game lunches" is legendary.

Originally from Santiago, Chile, Silva came to the U.S. to attend high school, then went on to graduate from San Francisco State University, finally settling down in Moraga with his wife and young son in the early 1970s.

He's proud to report that in his entire tenure with the city of Lafayette, through countless audits, there have never been any issues; by design, the municipal accounting system is completely transparent. Anyone can investigate via the city website - expenses, revenue, salaries and benefits, spending on roads and capital improvement projects. "People who pay taxes have a right to know," explains Silva.

With a fiscal year General Fund expenditure budget of \$12.2 million, it's amazing to consider that each and every bill that keeps the city running, along with payroll for the entire 40-person staff is handled by Silva, one other accountant and one part time employee.

He instigated moving payroll in-house shortly after his arrival, saving a substantial amount in fees and keeping control of the entire process. Employees get paid every two weeks electronically with direct deposit. Bills from vendors get paid promptly as well.

Describing himself as a number cruncher and computer nerd, Silva easily made the transition from a paper-based system to computerization. He has a 401 K plan, like all city staff, no CalPERS here, and has been diligently contributing the maximum of 15 percent of his salary, along with an additional 5 percent into his retirement account.

It took him four years to make the final retirement decision, knowing he would miss his co-workers, because of little turnover, great morale and a friendly environment, "it's like working with family," he says. The feeling is mutual, Falk notes, "We will miss him tremendously."

Although he was recently in Europe, he's planning a trip to France in June, and many additional destinations in the future. He's also looking forward to spending time researching stock investments and playing the very addictive Words with Friends without interruption.

The search is on for the next financial services manager, the city is seeking an expert financial professional who can fill Gonzalo Silva's shoes. A degree is required along with management and accounting experience, and exceptional communication skills. For all the details, go to www.lovelafayette.org/jobs.

More Lafayette Civic News on Page A11

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The Lafayette City Council is soliciting volunteers to fill the following vacancies.

The Lafayette Community Center Foundation is dedicated to renovating and improving the Lafayette Community Center. The Foundation was formed in 1983 to oversee the capital improvements and renovations necessary to transform the old Burton School into an active recreation center. OPEN UNTIL FILLED.

The Circulation Commission reviews matters that affect the City's right-of-way and administers the Circulation Element of the General Plan. The Commission advises the City Council on matters pertaining to traffic safety, on-street parking, and pedestrian sidewalks and bikeways. Six of the seven members of the commission shall be residents of the city and shall represent specific neighborhoods as designated by the commission. The seventh member of the commission, who need not be a resident of the city, shall either own or operate a business in the downtown. OPEN UNTIL FILLED.

Downtown Street Improvement Master Plan Implementation Committee (DSIMPIC) is charged with the implementation of the Downtown Street Improvement Master Plan that was adopted in 1988. The Plan guides developers and staff in making improvements to street frontage in downtown Lafayette to create a cohesive, positive visual image and provide amenities to make the downtown a comfortable, safe and enjoyable place. OPEN UNTIL FILLED.

Environmental Task Force The City is committed to developing and implementing environmental policies and programs that will enable the City and its residents to meet their present needs without sacrificing the ability of future generations to meet their needs. OPEN UNTIL FILLED.

Lafayette Representative To The Contra Costa County Advisory Council On Aging (Acoa). The Contra Costa Advisory Council on Aging facilitates countywide planning, cooperation and coordination for individuals and groups interested in improving and developing services and opportunities for older resident in the County. The advisory council meets on the 3rd Wednesday of the month at 9:30am at 2425 Bisso Lane, Concord. OPEN UNTIL FILLED.

Parks & Recreation Commission reviews and supports effective management and operations of existing park facilities to maximize public enjoyment, continue to seek funding and develop the Community Park, Trail System and other City Parks. The Commission typically meets the 2nd Wednesday of the month at 7:00 pm at the Community Center, located at 500 St. Mary's Road. OPEN UNTIL FILLED.

Public Arts Committee establishes a public art program and its administration to oversee Lafayette's public art collection, contributing to the cultural enrichment of the community by adding public art that is of the highest quality, visually stimulating, and of enduring value, ensuring that public art is incorporated into project planning at the earliest planning stage, and establishes public art gift policies and procedures. This committee will be composed of individuals who, by experience, training, education, occupation or avocation, have demonstrated knowledge of and interest in the visual arts. OPEN UNTIL FILLED.

Youth Commission advises the City Council on issues pertaining to teenagers in Lafayette. The Commission coordinates activities and is involved in community functions that benefit both the youth and the community-at-large. The Commission meets the 2nd Monday of each month at 6:00 pm in the Sequoia Room at the Community Center located at 500 St. Mary's Road. (The Youth Commission does not meet in June, July or August.) OPEN UNTIL FILLED.

Individuals interested in these volunteer positions may obtain an application on-line at www.ci.lafayette.ca.us or call the main office at 284-1968 and an application will be mailed to you. If you have questions related to these volunteer positions please call Joanne Robbins, City Clerk at 299-3210.



Moraga Civic News

Public Meetings

Town Council

Wednesday, Dec. 11, 7 p.m.
Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School,
1010 Camino Pablo

Planning Commission

Monday, Dec. 16, 7 p.m.
Moraga Library, 1500 St. Mary's Rd.

Design Review

Monday, Dec. 9, 7 p.m.
Moraga Library, 1500 St. Mary's Rd.

Check online for agendas, meeting notes and announcements

Town of Moraga:

www.moraga.ca.us
Phone: (925) 888-7022

Chamber of Commerce:

www.moragachamber.org

Moraga Citizens' Network:

www.moragacitizensnetwork.org

School Board Meeting

Moraga School District

Tuesday, Dec. 10, 7:30 pm
Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School Auditorium
1010 Camino Pablo, Moraga
www.moraga.k12.ca.us
See also AUHSD meeting page A2



Police Report

Cows in the road, 11/20/13 Four good-looking cows were apparently tired of roaming the hills of Moraga and decided to visit the intersection of Crossbrook Drive and Greenfield Drive around 9:30 a.m. It's unclear if this was covered at the police academy, but officers encouraged the foursome out of the street and away from traffic. The ranch owner arrived and wrangled the cows.

Neighbors burglarized, 11/20/13 Two homes next to each other on Fernwood Drive were burgled. The thieves entered through an unlocked rear door at one home and via an unlocked garage door at the other place during daytime hours. Apparently the thieves like Apple products; they stole two older Apple MacBook Pro laptops from one house and an iPad and Apple laptop from the other.

Possession of marijuana, 11/21/13 An anonymous person reported a suspicious vehicle parked on Claudia Court. Police located the car and discovered that one of the occupants was in possession of less than an ounce of marijuana. The teenager was placed in the Town of Moraga Juvenile Diversion Program.

Attempt to stiff cab driver, 11/23/13 It was almost 3 a.m. when a group of Saint Mary's students refused to pay a cabbie for the ride he provided to their Ascot Drive apartment. Once he was compensated, the driver did not wish to pursue a citizen's arrest.

TP and vandalism, 11/22/13 Sometime during the night unknown suspect(s) vandalized a home on Augusta Drive: a tree was toilet papered and two cars parked on the driveway were egged and splattered with an unknown substance and written on with a permanent marker. One of cars had a cracked windshield as well. No longer a prank ...

Low key prank, 11/22/13 A Miramonte Drive resident called police to report not one but two suspicious circumstances; a neighbor's potted plant had been moved to her doorway, then a couple of hours later a branch from a tree in the common area was placed across her walkway. The person reporting the incidents claims to have no issues with anyone in the development. Cops agreed to keep a close eye on the neighborhood and patrol more during the evening hours.



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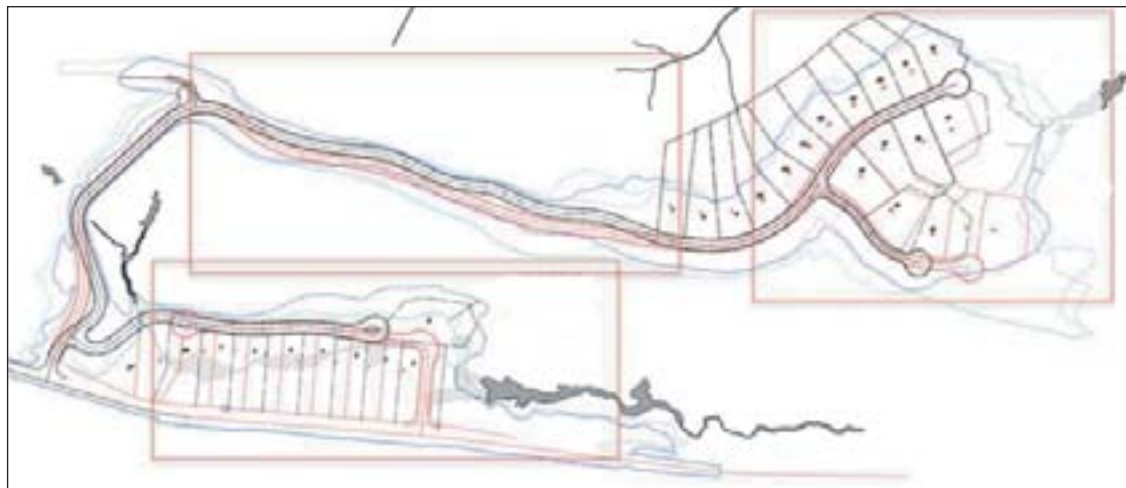
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New Plan for Rancho Laguna II

By Sophie Braccini



New plan for Rancho Laguna II: previous lots in red, new ones in black

Image provided

During his State of the Town address Nov. 21, Moraga mayor David Trotter talked about 'behind the scenes' discussions with Summerhill Homes that led to a new map of the Rancho Laguna II development project.

Summerhill presented its revised plan to the Planning Commission at a Dec. 2 study session.

Trotter was outvoted 2-1 in 2011 when the Town Council denied an appeal, filed by the local organization

Preserve Lamorinda Open Space, and approved the Conceptual Development Plan for Rancho Laguna II – a 27-home project off Rheem Boulevard that included the construction of two residences on a minor ridgeline

and a large amount of grading. The debate was around whether or not the General Plan allowed development on ridgelines; the phrasing "protect ridgelines" led to different interpretations. The General Plan's perceived ambiguities are driving the current effort to consider revisions of hillside and ridgeline development rules.

"We entered into contract (to purchase the development) the summer of 2012," said Summerhill Homes vice president Katia Kamangar. "Coming into this transaction, we also wanted to take a fresh look at the previously approved plan to see if there were enhancements that we could undertake that would further minimize the project's impacts." Summerhill reached out to Preserve Lamorinda Open Space, which has been critical of the project.

... continued on page A11

Ridgeline and Hillside Committee Appointments

By Sophie Braccini

Mayor David Trotter recently highlighted the importance of the General Plan amendment process to clarify the rules applied to development on ridgelines and hillsides. A committee was appointed that will prepare a plan for the Town Council's approval. It is supposed to include people with different opinions on the issue. The stakes are high, as the results of the effort could limit the ability of property owners to develop the last large areas of undeveloped land in Moraga.

This committee will meet in public session. It is comprised of two members of the Town Council, Dave Trotter and Mike Metcalf; two Planning Commissioners, Frank Comprelli and Stacia Levenfeld; and one Design Review Board member and a Parks and Recreation commissioner yet to be named. "This committee does not have a charter yet," said the mayor, meaning that the scope of the work has not been defined. Planning director Shawna Brekke-Read asked each body to select members who would represent different opinions in town.

Since he's been on the Town Council, Trotter has been on record supporting the protection of ridgelines from development and minimizing the grading of slopes. His interpretation of the General Plan is that all ridgelines should be free of development, as he argued during the appeal of the Rancho Laguna II development project approval. Metcalf said that he accepted the committee post to protect the interests of Moraga. "The town needs to respect property rights and due process," he said. "I am concerned about regulatory taking of private property that could lead to the town being taken to court." Metcalf believes that the code needs to be cleaned up, not rewritten. "We need to simplify a process that's clumsy. We will hire planners to get us a very usable product for all."

Comprelli sees himself as being open-minded; he has not been on the Planning Commission long enough to have a significant record one way or the other – he voted to support the development of a home on Donald Drive on a very steep slope. "There

is not a lot of property left. All of the easy ones have already been developed," he said. "The bulk that are left, including the two major properties, Bollinger Canyon and Indian Valley, have massive ridgelines and hillsides. Each project needs to be evaluated on its own merit." Levenfeld, who works in public policy and development, also says that her mind is not made up yet. "My interest is to explore and understand what is intended by the language of the General Plan, and all the possible angles, to decide the fair interpretation."

For years now people who want to see development in Moraga and people who want to protect as much

open space as possible have been fighting over every development project that comes down the pike. The line of fracture is not as simple as Democrats versus Republicans, or prop-

erty owners against open space advocates; many residents want to see housing and economic development, for the good of the community, without heavily impacting open space.

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SMC Parking Plan Remains Under Scrutiny

By Sophie Braccini

As Saint Mary's College pursues the construction of its new recreation facility, the Alioto Center, it needs to fulfill final requirements identified during the environmental review of the project in order to obtain an occupancy permit when construction is finished. During the initial study it was determined that the parking situation on campus is not optimal, with many lots being filled to, and sometimes over, capacity. The environmental study required that the college propose mitigation measures to improve the situation and make sure that St. Mary's Road is not used for overflow parking. The plan presented to the Moraga Planning Commission in November did not completely satisfy the commissioners; they wanted to see more quantified data to support the good intentions. The college will have to report back in a year and demonstrate progress.

According to the traffic study by Walker Parking Consultants, the lots that are most impacted at this time, with a rate of more than 100 percent occupancy, are those reserved for commuter students (non-residential parking). It appears that resident students use their cars instead of walking or biking to go to classes, because the campus is hilly and also because there is no walking path from some of the residence halls to the core of the cam-

pus where classes are held.

The college proposed to reduce the average occupancy of non-residential parking lots during the week from 100 percent to 95 percent by November 2016, with a long term goal of 90 percent. It also vouched to achieve and maintain an average of 1.3 occupants per vehicle during the afternoon peak period.

The means to reach the goals include increasing parking enforcement on campus, promoting free transit programs and reinstating a car-share program for students and employees.

"What about the people from outside who visit the campus to go to the museum or the library during working hours?" asked commissioner Tom Marnane. Tim Farley, SMC's director of community and government relations, replied that the study did not suggest that visitors to the campus have problems finding parking.

Commissioner Teresa Onoda did not find the idea of additional bicycle racks to be enough. "You have a golden opportunity to show leadership in the town of Moraga and promote more bicycle use," she said. "You could implement a bike-sharing program and require that freshmen don't bring a car, as many other universities do."

Farley responded that this question would be part of the 10-year master plan that the college has started to

work on and that will address the campus' development from 2018 to 2028.

"We still have a problem with students parking along St. Mary's Road because there is no space inside," said Marnane, "and your plan does not provide enough data in the short term. Some of your objectives are set to years from now, but we want to see the beginning of quantifiable improvements sooner."

Commissioner Christine Kuckuk shared those concerns. "The parking plan has objectives until five years from now which is supposed to be when your new master plan will take effect, but what if the plan is not ready in five years?" She added that the parking plan and its intentions are good, but that it is the job of the commission to make sure that it will really work, that certain benchmarks are met.

The commissioners agreed to ask the campus to reduce the occupancy rate of the non-residential parking areas to 95 percent while maintaining residential parking at 90 percent within a year. If the goals are met, the college will not need to come back to the commission on this issue and will just check yearly with staff. If they are not met, the college will have to propose additional mitigation measures.

Danville Pears for Moraga?



Photo provided by Seth Freeman

Moraga staff thought it would be a nice gesture to give each guest at the State of the Town event a cookie in the shape of a pear as a party favor. Some residents, however, were surprised to see that the cookies came from a Danville bakery – on an evening when everyone was urged to "shop Moraga first!"

"The choice was made for financial reasons," said parks and recreation director Jay Ingram. "One of our staff members is affiliated with that bakery and we got a discount we could not pass up."

Evidently minimal government and budgetary frugality, a trademark of Moraga, are not without their consequences.

S.Braccini

Total REFLEXOLOGY Studio

5 year anniversary

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Growing up in the same community he works in has earned Kurt Piper the reputation of the "Go To Guy" in Lamorinda for all of his clients' real estate needs. Kurt believes his deep real estate knowledge and involvement with the community are what earned him the solid reputation of the real estate agent that everyone in his community can go to for help and advice.

Looking back on his 20+ years in real estate, Kurt reflects on his education at UC Berkeley led him to work for Grubb and Ellis in commercial real estate and a developer in land acquisition, apartment development, and construction project management.

Reaching a crossroad in his young career at age 27, Kurt repositioned himself at Coldwell Banker in Orinda with the intention of flipping houses but found that

Kurt Piper & his family enjoying Tahoe

he was so busy selling homes, he only had time to service his clients. To date, Kurt has closed over 500 real estate transactions.

In the fall of 2012, he eventually found himself a perfect fit with Pacific Union because the firm opened up a new office in downtown Lafayette and Kurt had always admired the strong branding and Bay Area wide reputation that Pacific Union offered.

When Kurt signed on with Pacific Union, he brought a team of highly skilled individuals to work side-by-side with him. The members of KPG or Kurt Piper Group are Christine Gallegos, Leslie Piper (Kurt's sister), Scott Sans and Amy Price - all which have deep ties to Lamorinda. Kurt feels that KPG is "A company within a company" with Pacific Union as the umbrella firm. In just this past year, Kurt and his team have closed over 42 transactions, and he does not expect his business to slow down.

Coming from a philanthropic family and earning the prestigious rank of Eagle Scout, Kurt consistently gives back to the community, and has chaired a charity golf tournament that donated the profits to various local charities such as Las Trampas Inc., Xenophon and other worthy causes. Kurt

also has served on the Lafayette Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors. He is married to his high school girlfriend, Alice, and enjoys spending time with his two children, Nick and Chloe, listening to country music, BBQing, playing golf, traveling and going to Tahoe.

Kurt Piper & the Kurt Piper Group

You can contact Kurt at:
925.818.8000
Kurt@KurtPiperGroup.com
www.KurtPiperGroup.com



Orinda Civic News

Public Meetings

City Council

Tuesday, Dec. 17, 7 p.m.
Auditorium, Orinda Library,
26 Orinda Way

Planning Commission

Tuesday, Dec. 10, 7 p.m.
Auditorium, Orinda Library,
26 Orinda Way

Historical Landmark Committee

Tuesday, Dec. 10, 3 p.m.
Gallery Room, Orinda Library,
26 Orinda Way

Check online for agendas, meeting notes and announcements

City of Orinda:

www.cityoforinda.org
Phone (925) 253-4200

Chamber of Commerce:

www.orindachamber.org

The Orinda Association:

www.orindaassociation.org

School Board Meeting

Orinda Union School District

Monday, Dec. 9, 6 p.m.
OUSD Office, Vintage Building
25 Orinda Way, Suite 200
www.orindaschools.org

See also AUHSD meeting page A2

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Orinda City Council Adopts Housing Element

By Laurie Snyder

Kicking off the main item on the Orinda City Council's Nov. 19 agenda, planning director Emmanuel Ursu presented the Planning Commission's Oct. 29 recommendation that the City Council adopt Housing Element 2007-2014 (draft 5, revised), along with related zoning matters and an Initial Study and Mitigated Negative Declaration covering environmental issues related to the housing element – a segment of the General Plan which California cities are legally required to have and review. According to the staff report, the "Initial Study determined that the project will have a less than significant impact."

Additionally, Ursu conveyed a California Department of Housing and Community Development email

in which HCD personnel "responded to a question posed by Orinda Watch, regarding the default density and HCD's insistence on a density range." HCD's legal counsel and the head of the division which reviews housing elements "indicated that a density range is required to comply with the provisions of state law."

Ursu then addressed concerns from Santa Maria parishioners and the church's parochial administrator, Father Robert Herbst. Stressing again that "the property owner decides whether or not they will develop the property or continue to use it for the purposes for which they have historically used the property," Ursu said the proposed zoning change "would not result in anybody coming and taking that property to

develop it." In response, Herbst said "there are no plans to build anything on that space other than those small structures that are required to maintain the space as a viable multi-purpose sports field."

Observing apparent contradictions between the priest's words and what Diocesan leaders have told staff, Councilmember Steve Glazer asked for confirmation "that there's nothing that is in this rezoning that requires you to do anything different than what you're currently doing on the property." Herbst quietly said, "Right."

The anxiety that "somebody from the outside could come in and do something to that property against the church's wishes," was "coming from parishioners who see that this

is an opening of a door," said Herbst. "There are concerns that it's not the city, necessarily ... but other entities seeing this as a prime zoned area."

Mild tension then morphed into ugliness as comments by Arthur Ross moved from a depiction of council members' behavior as "ruthless and dishonorable" into a lengthy back-and-forth with Glazer. Ignoring mayor Amy Worth's signal that his three minutes were up, he attempted to proceed before interruption by Glazer asking whether he might ask Ross a question. Ross angrily refused, he said, because Glazer minimized perceived threats to Santa Maria. Ross then shocked attendees by asking, "Were I to put a gun at your chest would that be a threat?"

... continued on next page

Sharing in the Warmth of the Holidays

By Laurie Snyder



Photo(s) provided by the Orinda Parks and Recreation Department

Orindans were bitten by the holiday bug Nov. 2 when Orinda's beloved 37th Annual Holiday Bazaar opened its doors at the Orinda Community Center.

Sponsored each year by the Orinda Community Center Auxiliary (OCCA), the popular marketplace not only gives bargain hunters an early jump on their holiday shopping, but

helps generate funding to purchase equipment for Orinda's community center, its neighboring park, Concerts in the Park series, and Halloween Parade for Tots. And, it benefits Orinda's economy and cultural vitality by attracting visitors from around the East Bay who come to shop, and stay to dine and explore.

The day's events featured an arts and games corner for kids, sponsored by the Orinda Teen Advisory Council,

a Polynesian dance performance, magic tricks and balloon making with Scooter the clown, more than 40 vendors for parents' browsing pleasure, a Hawaiian serenade by the community center's enthusiastic ukulele class, music by Steve Harwood, a Zumba demonstration and, of course, a flag-raising by local Cub Scouts.

Funds raised by OCCA: \$5,000. Estimated worth in goodwill and spirits lifted: Priceless.



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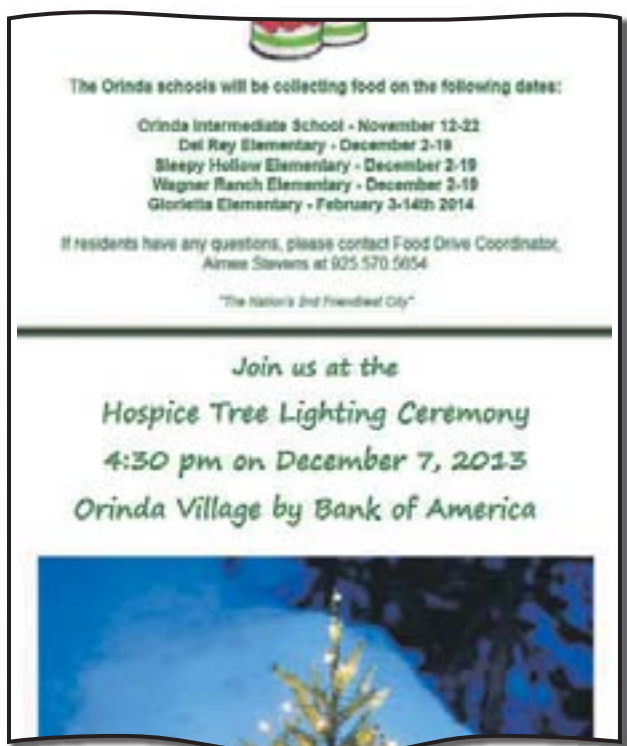
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A Neighborly Nudge to Peruse Orinda Publications

Orinda's leaders hope to improve neighbor-to-neighbor and two-way communications between locals and their government, and are asking for your help. Quite simply, for those not already doing so, they want Orindans to actively read and discuss city communications – whether emergency alerts about road closures and fallen trees, notifications about City Council meetings, or just regular updates provided via "Orinda Outlook," the city's weekly email newsletter.

To subscribe online, visit: www.city-of-orinda.org, and click on "subscribe to email notifications."

L. Snyder



Screenshot of a recent issue of "Orinda Outlook" available on the city's website.

Orinda Compassion in Action

Cans for a Cause Food Drive to benefit the Contra Costa Food Bank
By Laurie Snyder

The city of Orinda has been partnering with the Orinda Union School District, Republic Waste Services and the Contra Costa and Solano Food Bank to soothe grumbly tummies well beyond this holiday season. Already in full swing, the Cans for a Cause Food Drive is giving Orindans the opportunity to show the Bay Area just precisely why Orinda was named the Second Friendliest City in America. Residents and business owners are already doing a bang up job, but have only just begun.

Following on the heels of the collection at the Orinda Intermediate

School, which ended Nov. 22, event organizers will really wake things up when drives launch at Sleepy Hollow, Del Rey and Wagner Ranch elementary schools Dec. 2-19. Orindans will then continue to slay the hunger dragon when Glorietta Elementary hosts its drive Feb. 3-14.

These critically important events have been staggered to enable the Food Bank to help families long after the traditional holiday spike in food bank donations. Statistically, more than 35 percent of Food Bank clients nationwide are being forced to choose each month between food and paying

the mortgage or rent. It's just as tough here in the East Bay.

Thanks to Republic Waste Services, which is donating the collection bins and matching the amount of food collected, it's as simple as shop, stop and drop. Bring your non-perishable canned goods and packaged foods to one of the specially marked collection bins at the Orinda schools, City Hall, or the Orinda Community Center. For more information, call Aimee Stevens, the Food Drive Coordinator at: (925) 570-5654. To learn more about the Contra Costa Food Bank's work, visit: www.foodbankccs.org/.

Orinda City Council Adopts Housing Element

... continued from page A6

Asked where in the Housing Element it said high density housing would be brought to Orinda, Ross parried. "I don't have it in front of me, but I'm happy to sit down with you at any time, and with the attorneys that we're assembling, and with the law firm that we're thinking of bringing in for the recall."

Conversely, a resident who first lived in Orinda in 1954 and returned to care for a parent, said she just wanted the City Council to know that as someone "concerned about climate change and thinks that land use planning is an essential compo-

ment of reducing our greenhouse gas emissions, I would like to be proud of Orinda doing its part to create more affordable housing and to create less vehicle miles traveled. So, if the housing element is helping to move us in that direction, I think that's a good thing."

Council members each commented on the significant public input received. Glazer said the city was able to develop an advocacy-neutral document incorporating much of that feedback. "We've heard tonight that, although not everyone thinks that this housing el-

ement is necessarily what they would like to see," said Councilmember Victoria Smith, that some do "now think this is a sufficient document."

Worth thanked residents for their suggestions, "many of which we were able to incorporate and still have a plan that will enable Orinda to have a certified housing element that complies with state law, and also states the goals for our community."

The City Council unanimously approved both the Housing Element and the Initial Study and Mitigated Negative Declaration.

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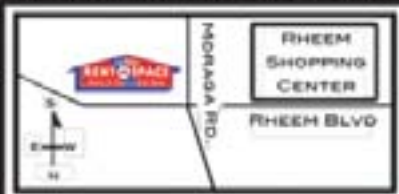
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Letters to the Editor



Share your thoughts with our community!

Opinions in Letters to the Editor are the express views of the writer and not necessarily those of the Lamorinda Weekly. All published letters will include the writer's name and city/town of residence -- we will only accept letters from those who live in, or own a business in, the communities comprising Lamorinda (please give us your phone number for verification purposes only). Letters should be 350 words or less; letters of up to 500 words will be accepted on a space-available basis. email: letters@lamorindaweekly.com; Regular mail: Lamorinda Weekly, P.O.Box 6133, Moraga, CA 94570

Editor:

MOFD directors Evans and Anderson have every right to be angry not just with MOFD's auditor, Cropper, but with former MOFD finance people also. While the auditor should have pointed out years ago MOFD's "inflated" reserve account on the balance sheet, those intimately involved should have also noted that the annual \$2 million debt service payment for the pension bond, due the day after the close of the fiscal year accounting, made the reserve picture overly optimistic. While this payment has increased every year, it is a known amount and has been made every year since 2007. This is not rocket science and apparently GASB rule changes would have red-flagged it if Cropper had done their job.

But more than this, the entire GASB dictated balance sheet is a myth and a nightmare. Even at this late date, when we know that MOFD has a \$45 million net pension liability, a \$25 million retiree medical liability, and a \$20 million pension bond (\$90 million of debt), the current balance sheet shows the fiction of \$10 million in net assets. The balance sheet as it currently exists is worthless.

In addition, the \$45 million of pension liabilities does not tell the full story. It is really \$165 million of liabilities (which, in turn, are over a half billion dollars discounted at a questionably high discount rate) "offset" by \$120 million in assets. But the risk that those assets will actually be there to pay off the liabilities is ours (the taxpayers). To hide this fact by showing only the net liability amount is another deception that should not be continued.

The full value of the liabilities and the assets should be prominently displayed on any balance sheet which is actually attempting to describe the financial health of the District. The auditor and those responsible for MOFD's finances have, to date, refused to do this. Attempts by the Orinda Emergency Services Task Force to explain this were met by some in the District with charges of "creative accounting"; nowhere near as creative as portraying a \$90 million deficit as a \$10 million asset.

A fuller discussion of MOFD's audited financials and balance sheet can be found on the Task Force web site www.OrindaTaskForce.org.

Steve Cohn Orinda

Editor:

I am responding to your article regarding the Mayor's State of the City meeting. Having read that, I seriously wondered whether I had been in the same room?

This is what I observed.

Dozens of residents passionately questioned what seems to be unbridled development in Lafayette and the position of the Mayor which implied that we have no choice, overdevelopment will march forward unabated.

While the mayor disputed that our designation as a Priority Development Area was creating these developments, he also presented information which contradicted this, that various agencies do indeed mandate development.

This is what is stated on the website for the Bay Area Plan website: "The plan concentrates new growth in areas nominated by local governments ... Overall, over two thirds of all regional growth by 2040 is allocated to Priority Development Areas."

So this seems to conflict with what the mayor stated.

It infers that once the city nominated itself in 2007 to be a PDA in trade for transportation funds that "The Plan" would then direct new development growth towards Lafayette.

A number of communities around the Bay Area, such as San Rafael are withdrawing as PDA's and resisting the demands of ABAG, or the Association of Bay Area Governments.

From the reaction of all residents at the meeting, Lafayette citizens want our officials to resist this overdevelopment and fight for the small town quality that is so important to us.

Where this should clearly start is to revise the Downtown Specific Plan to eliminate the very controversial elements such as building height, multi use development, certain sections of town designated for high density development and, since as the mayor brought up that what really directs development being the general plan, to revise that general plan to curb development.

With a booming market we're in a very different world than when these plans were written. Cranes sit on our horizon, high density developments are popping up along Mt. Diablo, with each, views and sight lines are disappearing. Numerous developments are in the works or coming down the pike, many Lafayette residents do not want this and want our leaders to affect conditions that will contain this and keep quality of life in Lafayette, and not turn us into a faceless BART whistle stop bedroom community for San Francisco.

Sincerely,

Ty Allison Lafayette

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Soaring Pension Debt Confirmed

By Nick Marnell

For the second consecutive district meeting, a guest speaker told the Moraga-Orinda Fire District board news that it did not want to hear.

The latest retirement charge foisted on MOFD by its pension plan manager stunned the district with a nearly \$2 million expense increase next fiscal year; the district will pay 80 cents for each dollar of non-over-time payroll into its retirement fund, up from 53 cents this year. To verify this inconvenient truth, the district hired Bartel Associates, LLC of San Mateo to do a review of the actuarial valuation of its pension plan. Company president John Bartel delivered his analysis to the MOFD board on Nov. 20, but his lengthy presentation was short on good news.

Bartel explained that the MOFD pension plan is heavily weighted toward retired members; 80 percent of the district's pension obligation is committed to retirees and 20 percent is earmarked for active employees. "That is one of the highest ratios we've ever seen when it comes to pension benefits," he said. Because the number of active district employees is going down, while the number of retirees – and the benefits due them – continues to rise, the percentage of payroll required to fund the retirement account necessarily rises.

The largest driver of the district's required contribution increase is the lowered discount rate applied to pension liabilities by the Contra Costa County Employees' Retirement Association, the district's pension plan manager; the rate dropped from 7.75 percent to 7.25 percent in 2013. As of Dec. 31, the district had accrued a pension liability of \$165 million, offset by only \$120 million in assets, resulting in an unfunded

liability of \$45 million.

One possibility for reducing the district's contribution rate is for the district to ask CCCERA to take into account the actual changes in the MOFD employment figures, which are lower than those projected by Segal Company, the county's actuary. But Bartel said that any change in the district employment numbers would not make much of a dent on the overall county totals, on which CCCERA bases its assumptions. CCCERA probably would not respond to the district's request anyway "because they do not consider you as their client," he told the board.

Bartel concluded by stating that the increased retirement plan contribution demanded for fiscal year 2014-15 seemed consistent with the district's demographics and the assumptions made by CCCERA.

The reality is that, if MOFD remains a participant in the CCCERA system, the district has no recourse and is stuck with the increased retirement charges. As a partial offset the district has eliminated a battalion chief's position and has implemented firefighter staffing cuts to save more than \$800,000 so far this fiscal year.

The board need not be concerned about more bad news arising at its next scheduled meeting; the district canceled the Dec. 4 public session.

Moraga-Orinda Fire District Board of Directors Meetings

Next meetings:
Wednesday, Dec. 4 canceled
check website for updates
 (Go to www.mofd.org as the meeting date approaches for location and more information)

Service Models Evolving

By Nick Marnell

The Lamorinda fire agencies have recently tweaked their service models as both fire districts take steps to deal with troubling economic realities.

As part of its march toward sustainability, the Moraga-Orinda Fire District began operating under a revised staffing model in early November. The new plan, announced by fire chief Stephen Healy, employs 17 on-duty firefighters daily, down from 19 as had been deployed since the district's inception in 1997. MOFD now runs one full-time ambulance, down from two, with three additional cross-staffed ambulances on call throughout the district. As a result, the district is expected to save more than \$500,000 this fiscal year.

"We understand the need to create savings as soon as possible, and that's why we moved in a timely manner," said Vince Wells, president of Local 1230, United Professional Firefighters of Contra Costa County, whose group met and conferred with MOFD and quickly approved the new staffing model, first presented to the public in October.

Two weeks into the new system, Healy confirmed that the three cross-staffed ambulances were running out of the three Orinda stations, with the full-time ambulance out of station 41 in Moraga. As for any early, unforeseen glitches? "None," Healy said.

Wells, despite having agreed with the implementation of the

new staffing model, maintains that having two fewer on-duty firefighters will result in service cuts in the district. "We are going to be keeping track," he said.

The Contra Costa County Fire Protection District, with serious sustainability concerns of its own, tested another type of cost-saving program in September.

A two-person squad, comprised of one engineer or firefighter/paramedic and one firefighter/emergency medical technician, was placed into service in the district to provide emergency medical response during the peak of the wildfire season. The idea was to have ConFire's larger engines and crews available for more critical structure and vegetation incidents. Since a reduced number of personnel were sent on the EMS calls, in a lighter, more maneuverable vehicle, cost savings would accrue to the district.

While potential dollar savings were not available, initial data from the first 90 days of the program showed that the use of the squad allowed a district ladder truck to be available 40 percent more often to respond to other calls, including fires. Based on this success, the district is requesting from the county Board of Supervisors that the program be extended an additional 90 days.

"I think it's a good concept," said ConFire chief Jeff Carman. "We are going to do everything we can to be as efficient as possible."

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Roam Artisan Burgers Opening Soon in Lafayette

By Rosylyn Aragoes Stenzel



Founders Lynn Gorfinkle and Josh Spiegelman pose in front of Roam Artisan Burgers at La Fiesta Square in Lafayette. Photo Tom Stenzel

With construction moving at a steady pace, Roam Artisan Burgers at La Fiesta Square in Lafayette plans to be open before Christmas. This isn't your typical burger joint, but instead Roam offers a menu that is focused on sustainably-raised meats and locally grown produce.

With two locations in San Francisco, founders Lynn Gorfinkle and Josh Spiegelman are excited to open Roam in Lafayette. When asked what inspired them to open a gourmet burger restaurant in the first place, Spiegelman said that Roam combines both his and Gorfinkle's passion for two things: great food and health/nutrition. Also, after traveling and eating at some of the best restaurants worldwide, they realized that the casual element of fine dining was lacking.

So with Gorfinkle's expertise as a chef and in operations management, and Spiegelman's expertise in business and finance, they opened Roam together. "We wanted to put the fine dining experience in everyone's hands and make it really accessible. So we don't have any snobbery around eating. It's just about coming in, whether you've just finished at the gym or are walking around in shorts and a T-shirt and want to get a burger or date night. With Roam you can dress it up or dress it down. It's however you want to approach it, but we're always going to be here serving the same, really good quality food at

a reasonable price point," says Spiegelman.

"We're really into the source of our ingredients. We work exceptionally hard to guarantee the quality of what we're getting. It's everything from all the meats that are pasture-raised – where the name Roam comes from – to taking a perspective of looking at agriculture and ranching and going back to the way that things have always been traditionally done, which is healthiest for the planet, and the best thing is it's the healthiest and most nutrient-rich for us who are eating it."

Gorfinkle and Spiegelman have thoughtfully planned out the menu starting with your choice of meat; 100 percent grass-fed beef, free-range turkey, all natural Bison as well as an organic veggie burger. Not sure what to have on your burger? There are eight different delicious styles to choose from ranging in variety from the Sunny Side – topped with an organic, free-range egg, white Cheddar, caramelized onions, greens, tomato and sweet chili sauce to the French and Fries – topped with Truffle parmesan fries, Gruyere, avocado, caramelized onions, watercress and Dijon mustard, or of course there's always the create your own option.

For sides, they offer skin-on Russet Fries, Sweet Potato Fries and the Zucchini Onion Haystack. For those who want to try it all, there's the Fry-Fecta which supplies a generous size of all three.

Roam's fries are fried in rice bran oil, which is very light, says Spiegelman, and lower in saturated fat, resulting in a lighter fry that's a little better for you. On a side note, Roam recycles their used oil by participating in a waste oil program in San Francisco where the oil goes to fuel Muni buses.

Roam caters to all kinds of diets; including everything from vegetarian to gluten-free and Paleo. Don't feel like having a burger? Check out their Market Salad with ingredients that change according to the season. There's also a seasonal veggie dish and don't forget the organic veggie burger made in-house.

Gorfinkle and Spiegelman not only care deeply about the quality and source of their meats and produce, but also about being eco-conscious in the operations and building of their restaurants. Per Gorfinkle, Roam composts up to about 80 percent of food waste, and participates in a compost program where the soil is used in school gardens in San Francisco and farms throughout California. Also at Roam Lafayette, they're making use of reclaimed, salvaged wood and low-toxic paint in constructing the new restaurant.

But back to the menu, one can't have a burger and fries without the traditional milkshake, and even better, these shakes are stepped up a notch. Made with organic ice cream from Strauss Family Creamery, there's everything from mint chip, salted caramel, and coconut to a seasonal pumpkin spice shake with the option of having a bruleed marshmallow on top.

Also featured are artisan sodas made without corn syrup, featuring unique flavors such as Meyer Lemon, ginger lime, prickly pear, caramelized pineapple and blood orange. Beer and wine are available on tap and in keeping with the sustainability focus with no waste of bottles, but tapping straight from the barrel.

The Lafayette location like the others in the city, will offer casual seating including a community table that seats 18. Outside patio seating will also be available. It is the largest of their three locations.

Roam Artisan Burgers Lafayette will be open seven days a week, 11:30 a.m. to 10 p.m. For more information visit roamburgers.com.

business briefs



From left: Henry Guzman and Jose Barajas. Photos Sophie Braccini

New Mexcal Restaurant in Orinda 65 Moraga Way, Orinda (925) 253-7777

The owners of Mexcal in Danville recently opened a new location in Orinda. The Italian/Mexican fusion restaurant, as described by manager Henry Guzman, serves dishes of Italian origin, like Fettuccine with Mexican sauce and condiments like green tomatillo sauce and jalapenos. "The owner of the store, Jose Barajas, thinks this is an excellent idea for Orinda," said Guzman, who added that the restaurant serves Mexican food with Italian spices. The new Mexcal is located next to Peet's Coffee near Theatre Square.

4G Verizon Under New Management 3631 Mt. Diablo Blvd., Lafayette (925) 270-5368

Eli Rey is the new manager of the 4G Verizon store in Lafayette near Trader Joe's and Diablo Foods. "I've hired a new team and we are very excited to start here in Lafayette in time for the holidays," said Rey. The ribbon cutting for the business is at 5 p.m. Tuesday, Dec. 10.



New Verizon manager Eli Rey

Shelby Sexton Becomes Caroline's Salon 33 Lafayette Cir, Lafayette (925) 284-1474

www.carolinessalon.net

Shelby Sexton continues to have a chair at her old salon, but it now has a new name: Caroline's Salon. Caroline Wiseman, who started at Shelby Sexton after moving from Los Angeles about a year ago, is the new owner. Wiseman has an extensive background in celebrity hair and makeup (see related article <https://www.lamorindaweekly.com/archive/issue0517/pdf/From-Hollywood-Glitter-to-Downtown-Lafayette-Emmy-nominated-hairstylist-comes-to-Lamorinda.pdf>) and quickly made a name for herself in Lafayette. The full service hair and nail salon located in La Fiesta Square next to Cake has started offering new services. "I'm excited to introduce Blow-dry, Brows and Bubbles on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays," says Wiseman. "Adrianna Farina is our amazing blow-dry girl. She's also a great all-around hair stylist." Starting Dec. 1, the following people will also be working out of Caroline's Salon: Nancy Daul, master colorist from Walnut Creek, Melissa Malugani, blow-dry specialist from Walnut Creek and Kaytie Mandell, airbrush tan expert.

Bailey Orthodontics Holiday Reception 15 Altarinda Road, Suite 104A, Orinda (925) 254-4568

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News from the three Chambers of Commerce Lafayette

Chamber Holiday Mixer from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, Dec. 11 at Citibank, 3528 Mt. Diablo Blvd., Lafayette.

Moraga

The chamber will soon have a physical address open Mondays starting in January from 8 a.m. to noon (excluding holidays) at the Hacienda de las Flores in the La Sala room, 1600 Donald Dr. The building belongs to the town of Moraga and the chamber is using the office free of charge.

Chamber Christmas party from 6 to 9 p.m. Tuesday, Dec. 10 at Moraga Royale.

Orinda

Chamber Holiday Mixer from 5:30 to 7 p.m. Wednesday, Dec. 11 at Mechanics Bank (across from Nations). Everyone is invited and encouraged to attend. Please bring a toy for Toys For Tots.

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Information Age Emergency Monitoring

By Cathy Dausman

Orinda and Lafayette police blotters continue to be unavailable while the Contra Costa County Sheriff's Department re-structures its distribution. But that doesn't mean Lamorindans need to go without hearing about the latest emergency responses. In fact, the public can access real-time events through a variety of websites and apps, including Nixle, Pulse Point and a county-wide Community Warning System.

Moraga and Lafayette currently use Nixle (www.nixle.com) to communicate with the public. Founded in 2007, the Nixle website says its company offers "both free and paid notification services for local police departments, county emergency management offices, municipal governments and their agencies." Child abductions, a BART station fire, gas and water main leaks, weather warnings and event notifications which

may affect traffic patterns all go out over Nixle. Subscribers learned about Lafayette's recent downed power lines; they also were notified about Lafayette school lockdowns immediately following a local bank robbery in real time. Moraga posted Nixle warnings after a stolen car and subsequent hit and run investigation became an area wide manhunt. Nixle also broadcasts Amber Alerts. Users can even assist the agencies involved by responding with "reply to" on the site.

Pulse Point (pulsepoint.org) is a smartphone app designed by a San Ramon Valley fire fighter, said Dennis Rein, Lamorinda's emergency preparedness coordinator. The program was originally developed to enlist help from those with CPR training in nearby medical emergencies. When such an emergency shows on the Pulse Point screen, it pinpoints the

user location, the location of the medical emergency and where the nearest life-saving automated external defibrillator can be found. Traffic collisions, medical emergencies, fire alarms, technical rescues and other emergency response events are detailed, right down to the emergency engines responding. There is also an option to monitor dispatch communications as they are made on your smart phone - making the app a modern day police scanner. A variety of agencies subscribe to Pulse Point nationwide. Local agencies making use of the Pulse Point technology include Moraga-Orinda Fire District, Alameda, Contra Costa, and San Ramon Fire departments.

According to its website, the Community Warning System (www.cococws.us/getCurrentAlerts.action) "alerts people in Contra Costa County to imminent threats to their

life and safety." Depending on the emergency and affected area, notification may be sent via sirens, phone alerts, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration alerts or Emergency Alert System notifications broadcast over commercial radio stations. CWS also employs a variety of

social media platforms, including text and email alerts, Facebook and Twitter accounts.

Nixle, Pulse Point and Community Warning System are quick and easy opt-in subscriptions. Instant gratification for those of us living in the Information Age.

Civic News Lafayette

Breaking Bread with a Bread Maker



Photo Andy Schreck

Addressing assembled city leaders and business people at the annual Chamber of Commerce sponsored Thanksgiving breakfast, keynote speaker Tom Franier, co-owner of Semifreddi's, passionately explained why he's so grateful. The successful business he started with two partners had humble beginnings in a tiny bakery in Kensington, near Berkeley, with one sourdough

recipe, a grand total of four products and a vision to bake the best bread every day. Diablo Foods was their bakery's first customer in Contra Costa County almost 30 years ago. Moraga resident Franier shared his philosophy - to simply take care of his employees, who will consistently craft a fine product that customers love. With the highest wages in the industry, health insurance, a 401K

plan and a generous profit sharing arrangement, he credits motivated employees with the success of the business. Clearly the proof is in the sourdough; the business now grosses more than \$15 million annually. On average, Semifreddi's delivers close to 200,000 loaves of bread per week and roughly 40,000 pastries and cookies throughout the Bay Area. C. Tyson

Civic News Moraga

New Plan for Rancho Laguna II

... continued from page A4

Summerhill's proposed new plan includes several changes, none of which is significant enough to lead to a challenge of the approved Conceptual Development Plan, notably the re-siting of two lots that were going to be set on a ridgeline, and that required significant grading, which have been relocated to the lower housing cluster along Rheem Blvd. The new plan also reduces grading by moving inside streets, it preserves a mature buckeye tree along Rheem Boulevard, suppresses some mitigation wetlands that were, according to Preserve Lamorinda Open Space, proposed in a poor location, and adds

a detention basin for the drainage of the upper development cluster.

In a letter to the town's planning director, Suzanne Jones of Preserve Lamorinda Open Space stated: "SummerHill Homes has been a very willing and cooperative partner in working with (Preserve Lamorinda Open Space) and we greatly appreciate their efforts. The changes they have made represent an honest attempt to work with the community and address project impacts within the constraints imposed by the (Conceptual Development Plan) and the requirement of the new detention basin. We ask that the changes outlined in

this letter be met with the Town's approval." Jones added that although Preserve Lamorinda Open Space supports the changes proposed by Summerhill, the group still thinks that the plan includes too many homes.

"The alternative plan has less environmental impact and the area graded is smaller," said Shawna Brekke-Read, planning director, "so we recommended the Planning Commission proceed with the alternative plan." Once the commission completes its review, the next step will be the presentation of the General Development Plan by Summerhill Homes during a series of public meetings in 2014.

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From Front Page

Tree Lighting Rings in the Season

... continued from page A1



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.

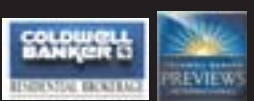
The WRC's World AIDS Day coffee house is held in what Sobatto describes as "an open, laid back atmosphere," where individuals come together to share stories and experiences through spoken word, storytelling, music and art. This year a woman from WORLD (Women Organized to Respond to Life-threaten-

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.

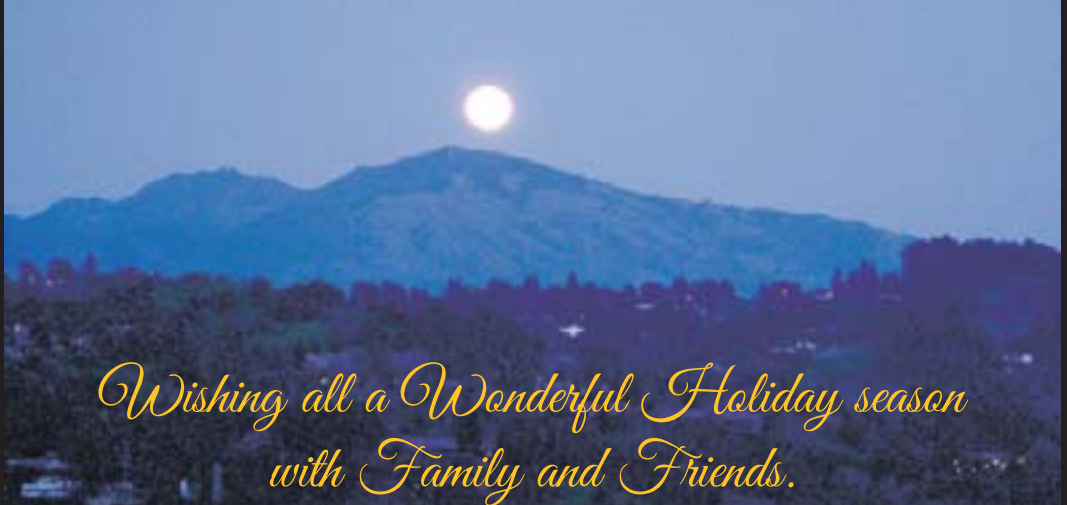
The WRC is located in Mitty Hall Ground Floor and is open Monday-Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (as well as during special events). For more information about World AIDS Day or other events, contact the WRC at (925) 631-4192 or visit www.stmarys-ca.edu/wrc.



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THT Production Offers Heaping Helping of Holiday Hilarity

By Sophie Braccini



From left, Liam Callister, Dennis Markam, and Justin Dupuis. Photo Stu Selland

Michael Storm says it is the funniest play he's ever directed. "Every Christmas Story Ever Told (And Then Some!)" is indeed a fast-paced comedy and a wonderful choice by Lafayette's Town Hall Theatre to put everyone a jovial mood for the holidays. It is supported by an excellent cast of three favorite THT actors who make full use of their comic genius.

"We start off with the opening of 'A Christmas Carol.' But then the character on stage delivering the first lines is joined by two of his fellow actors who are not interested anymore in doing that play and they convince him to diverge and try to create a piece of theater that's all encompassing, representing all Christmas stories existing from all different countries around the world," says Storm. Then starts a hilarious dance through the stories and traditions of the holiday season, from "The Grinch Who Stole Christmas," to the Rankin Bass television favorites of the 1960s, including the tale of Gustav the green-nosed rein-goat (Rudolph is still under copyright), to the Macy's Christmas Parade, and then some.

The second half of the play is an incredibly rapid splicing of "A Christmas Carol" and "It's a Wonderful Life." Dennis Markam's character changes on the spot from Scrooge to Jimmy Stewart in order to interact with another character, a great piece of comedy.

"Early in the '70s, three guys came up with a play called 'The Complete Works of William Shakespeare Abridged,' covering all of Shakespeare's plays. They were called the Reduced Shakespeare Company," recalls Storm. "This play could have been [performed] by the Reduced Shakespeare Company; it is as funny as

those guys were, in a contemporary setting."

While the script is important in any comedy, timing is everything. The three-man cast – Justin DuPuis, Liam Callister and Markam – look like they are genuinely enjoying themselves, and there is probably a dose of improvisation in the physical delivery of the play, which makes it seem fresh and spontaneous. The comedic timing is perfect as the three men juggle the tens of different costumes, entrances and exits that are needed throughout the play.

It is not DuPuis' first appearance at THT, but it is the first time he shows the various facets of his comedic talent, including slapstick humor. He is funny as a distraught elf, a female newscaster, a fairy, and even as Death itself. Callister is a younger actor full of boyish, sometimes touching, energy. You can tell he thoroughly enjoys playing Gustav the green-nosed rein-goat. Markam – the serious one to begin with – quickly cracks up, but still attempts to be the anchor of the show as his two partners go full tilt. The balance of the three is excellent.

The show is Storm's directorial debut at THT. An actor and director, for the last four years he's been the artistic director at Theater First in Berkeley. He previously directed "Every Christmas Story" in 2008 in San Jose and he brings an immediate maturity to the show.

The play is an excellent holiday experience for the whole family, although the existence of Santa is 'seriously' discussed and might be difficult for young believers. For information or to purchase tickets, contact the Town Hall Theatre Box Office at (925) 283-1557 or visit www.TownHallTheatre.com.

"Every Christmas Story Ever Told (And Then Some!)" runs Dec. 7-21, with previews on Dec. 5-6. Showtimes are at 8 p.m. Thursdays and Fridays; at 3 p.m. (except Dec. 7) and 8 p.m. Saturdays; and at 2 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 15. Town Hall's Theatre Club will have a free wine and talk-back session with the director and cast immediately following the performance on Friday, Dec. 13.

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New Crowdfunding Trend Expands in Lamorinda

By Sophie Braccini



Dana Ostomel and Diana Obrand fine tune the MEF crowdfunding campaign.

Photo Sophie Braccini

It is not surprising that the financing industry slated to raise more than \$5 billion this year is well represented in Lamorinda. Crowdfunding, a mechanism used to fund a project or venture by raising small amounts of money from a large number of people typically via the Internet, was first started in 1997 to fund a British rock band's reunion tour. It is now empowering local businesses and non-profit ventures as well.

For the first time in its history the Moraga Education Foundation is using crowdfunding to reach out to the extended community. "The idea is to ask for support from distant relatives or friends who want to make a 'gift of education' for a student this holiday season," explains MEF communications chair Diana Obrand. "It is a convenient way for friends and relatives who are far away, or for Campolindo alums, to contribute to the programs we fund."

In addition to funding the arts, MEF supports additional classes and after school tutoring at Campolindo High School, K-8 teachers, Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School electives, reading tutors, science aides and more. The foundation is using the crowdfunding platform, Deposit a Gift, created by 1995 Campolindo graduate Dana Ostomel, to raise \$10,000 – only a fraction of the \$2.2 million the foundation is seeking to raise this school year.

Deposit a Gift has handled all kinds of fundraising projects, from the Katrina relief effort to helping parents of premature babies, and Ostomel often gets comments from people regarding the marketing efforts they have to make to be successful. "One of the preemies' grandmothers told me she felt this is like a job; she has to think about when to post on Face-

book, when to send emails, and at what frequency," says Ostomel, whose company has been working in the fundraising field for four years. She recommends contacting people two to three times the first week via email and posting updates on social media.

"A gift is a possibility, but it is not mandatory. What is important to any fundraising project is to have a compelling story that is well told, and to think about the marketing campaign before the launch," Ostomel says. "People have to feel that they are part of the story, part of the journey." She also recommends circulating the site to the inner circle of supporters before the launch so the campaign does not start with a zero balance. "Giving begets giving," she adds.

A local campaign that finished with a bang and far surpassed its target was Acalanes High School junior Will Goldie's Eagle Scout project that sent computers to Afghanistan in partnership with Trust in Education and Raspberry Pi, the computer manufacturer.

The young man's success can be attributed to the multiple partnerships he set in place, with each group echoing his marketing efforts. "For my Eagle Scout project I wanted to work with the Raspberry Pi computers," says Goldie. "They have a neat concept for a computer – a simple small box that you connect to the keyboard, the screen, the memory, the drives and everything else you need. I also wanted to work with Trust in Education and saw a perfect opportunity to raise money, develop the software, buy all the components, assemble the computers and send them to the Afghan school Bud (McKenzie) is supporting."

The group, which had an initial goal of \$2,500, raised \$10,000 through an Indiegogo.com platform. The Raspberry Pi Foundation doubled the gift. Goldie has started shipping the computers and is using the additional money to build more units and improve the network access within the Afghan school.

Crowdfunding is also being used locally to launch business ventures. Orinda mom Stephanie Tomasco recently began using the crowdfunding platform Kickstarter to gain backers for her new business, Be Real Food, which produces kid-friendly, healthy, gluten-free bars. Because gluten sensitivity runs in her family, and because she wanted to control the amount of sugar her daughter was getting every day, Tomasco decided to create a bar that most kids would love, but that would incorporate only quality ingredients she wanted for her daughter. After she enrolled neighborhood kids to taste different formulas and decided what was appealing to young palates, she began to look for additional funds to ramp up her production. She lined up a co-packer to handle the production, a broker to put the bar in stores, and is using crowdfunding to gain backers for the product. "The idea is that people invest a certain amount of money with us and we will send bars to our backers in January as a thank you," explained Tomasco. So far, she has raised over half of her \$20,000 goal; her campaign will run until Dec. 21 and can be found at <http://kck.st/HRbmkK>.

The MEF crowdfunding campaign will run until the end of the year, it can be accessed at <http://mefgiftofeducation.mydagsite.com>. Goldie has set up a site to update his supporters at <http://educationpi.squarespace.com>.

Orinda Author Discusses Sequel at Orinda Books

By Lou Fancher



Tamara Ireland Stone Photo provided

Orinda author Tamara Ireland Stone catapulted onto the young adult fiction scene in 2012 with "Time Between Us," her debut novel about young romance set against a time-travel landscape. Scheduled to appear at Orinda Books Dec. 7, Stone will discuss and sign copies of the recently-released sequel companion book, "Time After Time" (Disney-Hyperion, Oct. 2013).

Stone's first book introduced readers to Anna, an Evanston, Ill., 16-year-old who chases her travel dreams by running track, hoping a college scholarship will be her magic carpet out of town. It's 1995 and Anna feels stuck, until one day when she meets Bennett, a boy she's fated to know but never supposed to meet. Sound edgy? Well, it almost is, be-

cause Bennett actually lives in San Francisco – in 2012. He time travels into Anna's life from the land of cell phones and Coldplay, long after pay phones and annual Michael Jackson hits have become mere memories.

As their chemistry swirls into a heady, young-love elixir, Bennett realizes time warps' impending complications and attempts to stay away. Unable to resist, he returns multiple times: looking for his sister, Brooke, who he lost in 1994, whisking Anna off to tiny islands in Thailand or to Paris, and getting "knocked back" to 2012 whenever he comes close to encountering his (1995) baby-self.

In one complicated "do over" – Bennett can bounce back hours or days within the 1995 frame – they avert a devastating car accident that threatens to end the life of Anna's best friend, Emma. Their traveling causes residual severe nausea and desperate thirst, but more, playing with fate leads both characters to wrestle with each other and the ethical consequences of time travel.

Stone handles the push of infatuation with skill, capturing the gush of a young teen's thoughts and words without derogatory, adult shadings. Anna's voice, as narrator, is convincing, especially in the mix of feelings she has for Emma, when her long-time friend becomes involved with Anna's almost-love-interest, Justin. The plot tangles slightly, and Stone

drops a major plot line (the sister) entirely, but her first book's crisp action and sweet romantic angle have translated into its being printed in over 20 countries and optioned for film by CBS Films.

"Time After Time" switches the narrative to Bennett's viewpoint, allowing readers to climb inside his thoughts as he and Anna fight to find consistency between their surreal calendars. Bennett engages in more "do overs" and Bay Area readers will recognize local stories. (A father and two children on bicycles, struck by a speeding driver parallels the tragic deaths of Soliaman Nuri and his daughters in Concord in 2012.) Bennett's headaches escalate into prolonged nose bleeds and near blackouts. ... continued on next page



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Lafayette Sixth-Grader Lands Role on SF Stage

By Michael Sakoda



Blake Johnson Photos provided

For many young local actors, landing a role on a San Francisco stage can take years, if at all. For Blake Johnson, a sixth-grader at St. Perpetua School in Lafayette, it took one lengthy audition. Blake will be performing in the A.C.T. (American Conservatory Theater) production of "A Christmas Carol" beginning Dec. 6.

"I am playing two parts," Blake said. "Boy Dick, in a past scene, and Candle Child in a present scene."

For anyone new to the show, or just a little rusty on their Dickens, Dick Wilkins was the childhood friend of Ebenezer Scrooge, who ends up marrying Scrooge's childhood sweetheart.

Blake's somewhat serendipitous journey to the stage began when his parents settled down in Lafayette almost 20 years ago. "We liked the small community, the beauty of it," said his mother, Lesley Johnson.

Just three and a half years ago, Barrett Lindsay-Steiner, the director of Standing Ovations, a renowned East Bay musical theater program for kids, paid a visit to St. Perpetua.

Johnson encouraged her son to sign up for the school play. Blake remembers his reluctance. "I didn't really want to do it," he said matter-of-factly. "But then it grew on me."

Blake did the shows at St. Perpetua for one season, and has stuck with Lindsay-Steiner ever since, performing in musicals and plays on a regular basis, and more than that, finding a calling.

"I want to do this as a career," Blake said.

But performing is in his blood.

Before Johnson met her husband and Blake's father, James, she herself had something of the drama bug.

"Growing up, I did all sorts of shows with my friends," she said. "And I was a ballet dancer for several years."

Blake's sister, Claire, an eighth-grader at St. Perpetua is also involved, studying acting and singing in addition to her school work.

So far, Blake's favorite productions have been "Alice in Beatles-Land" and "The Emperor's Gnu Clothes."

"In 'Alice in Beatles-Land' I played the Grave of Hearts ... that was a really fun role," he said.

So how did this Lafayette sixth-grader find himself in a professional show?

"My mom booked me an audition for 'A Christmas Carol,' and it just went from there," Blake said. "(The audition process) was really nerve wracking, but once I saw how they were doing it, I got more comfortable. I sang a song and did a monologue and I left hoping for a part."

Blake doesn't study voice yet, but Johnson says it's on the horizon. "Voice and dancing, that's what he wants to do next," she said.

"The music teacher at A.C.T. who plays for 'A Christmas Carol' says I have a natural voice," said Blake.

Outside the theater, Blake is a typical Lamorinda kid, who loves playing video games, soccer and golf. "He's been playing golf with First Tee over at Boundary Oak," Johnson said.

With the show set to open this week, the rehearsal schedule has been hectic – six days a week, 4 to 7 p.m. on school days, 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. weekends – but it has helped build Blake's and his family's excitement.

"They send us an email the night before rehearsal telling us what we're going to be working on," Blake said.

"We kind of live by that email," added Johnson.

On the plus side, the cast just moved into the theater on Geary Street where they started to work with lights and mics, and wardrobes and hair, said Johnson. "That was all new for (Blake)."

"A Christmas Carol" opens to the public Dec. 6 with 29 performances that run through Dec. 28. For information, visit www.act-sf.org.

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Blake Johnson (center) in the May 2012 Standing Ovations production of "Emperor's Gnu Clothes."

Orinda Author Discusses Sequel at Orinda Books

... continued from page B2

He and Anna rip at their relationship when they begin to disagree about the wisdom of manipulating events.

Regretfully, Stone's writing is far more layered and believable with Anna as the protagonist than with Bennett at the helm. In this second book, we learn more about Bennett's family and his morality, but fail to move beyond a repetitious, shallow treatment that ultimately bogs down the book's momentum. Despite Bennett's increasing anger – at his father and Anna for pushing him to "fix the world," and at himself, for giving into it – the tension isn't enough to sustain a transformational arc. Stone's solid writing chops keeps it from becoming droll, and it's a double-edged criticism to say that "Time After Time" fails to propel page-turning in the same way as its predecessor.

Fans – and there are many, "liking" Stone on Facebook and lining up the stars on Goodreads' review site – clearly relish this paired book set. Readers who encounter the time-travel novels by reading out of sequence can follow the plot without having read the debut book. But if you do read "Time After Time" first, don't be afraid to time travel backwards yourself: "Time Between Us" is available for purchase and offers Stone's best writing to date.

Tamara Ireland Stone will discuss and sign copies of "Time After Time" at 3 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 7 at Orinda Books, 276 Village Square in Orinda. For information, visit orindabooks.com.

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Looking Good in Lamorinda

Holiday Stylin'

By Moya Stone



A vintage ensemble from Collector's Choice Antiques
 Photos Moya Stone

It was a grand time for all who attended the fall fashion show and tea hosted last month by Collector's Choice Antiques in Lafayette. The show was styled by staff member J.B. Kaye and featured select pieces from the shop's vintage clothing collection including cocktail dresses, day dresses and suits. Spanning the decades from the early 1900s through the 1980s, many of the ensembles would be just the thing for the upcoming holiday season. Need a dress for the evening office party? A '60s lace gown would be lovely. Got a date for New Year's Eve? An '80s sequin dress will show you off in unique chic.

Speaking of celebrations, mark your calendars for Collector's Choice Antiques' annual holiday open house at 5 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 14 at 3574 Mt. Diablo Blvd. Refreshments will be served and I'm told there's a special surprise in the form of tap-dancing Christmas trees. Sounds like a stylin' blast to me.

Stylin' on the Television

Way to go Orinda! Our own town was recently featured on "Bay Area Drop In," a local cable television show that highlights the history, lifestyle, real estate and design of various Bay Area locations. For the Orinda episode the show's style expert, Michelle Moquin, dressed the cast in autumnal colors with an emphasis on green. "From moss and emerald to shades of teal, green is the hot color trending for fall," says Moquin. Now in its fourth season, "Bay Area Drop In" can be viewed Saturdays at 6:30 p.m. on KTSF channel 26 or cable channel 8. All past episodes are available on the show's website: <http://bayareadropin.com>.

Stylin' Stocking Stuffers

Yes that's right, the holidays are fast approaching and Eliza Jamkochian from Glamorous Boutique in Lafayette has been busily stocking fashionable gifts for under \$50. Top on the list is the infinity silk scarf, which continues to be a best seller from tweens to great grandmas. Statement necklaces, earrings, and bracelets are also popular choices for the fashionable on your list. Eliza says brooches are a particularly hot item this season. "Also a statement piece," she explains, "a brooch can go on coats, Pashminas, hats, tanks, even belts." She suggests popping a simple cocktail dress by placing a sparkly brooch on the shoulder or someplace unexpected like the hip. Can't go wrong with a Pashmina shawl and Glamorous Boutique has some luscious autumn shades. My personal favorite gift idea is the shoe clip. A popular accessory in the 1930s and '40s, the shoe clip is back to help dress up all our shoe choices from flats to pumps. Glamorous Boutique stocks several motifs - leather bows, silk flowers, and beads.

Stylin' Shopping

I am so impressed that Moraga is home to a fashion design studio. Right in our own neighborhood Mycra Pac designs stylish outerwear for women and manufactures locally in Oakland. Lo-

cated in the Rheem Valley Shopping Center, the staff at Mycra Pac is currently gearing up for their semi-annual sale set for Wednesday, Dec. 4, from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. and Thursday through Monday, Dec. 5-9, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. On offer will be fall 2013 raincoats, winter coats and accessories, all 60 percent off wholesale prices and ... the sales tax is on them. What a holiday gift to the community and just in time for the cold and rainy season.

Stylin' Fieldtrip

With the holidays comes the opportunity to spend time in the kitchen baking and preparing special family meals. Now I for one like to continue to look stylish while not ruining my clothes with splatters of gravy or cake batter. So, I own and sport an array of aprons. One was handmade by a friend and quite a few my mother passed along to me announcing she was no longer going to be the "family cook." I wear them all and have become quite fond of aprons in general.

The Clayton Historical Society currently has an exhibit called Shakers and Bakers which features aprons from the collections of Clayton Historical Society members and other local residents. (Perhaps one of the Lamorinda Historical Societies might do something similar.) The aprons are nicely displayed on mannequins and hung around the Society's museum, which is located in the old house belonging to the town's founder, Joel Clayton.

Examples of all the various apron styles from the Pinafore in the 1900s to the Cobbler of the 1960s are shown as well as men's working aprons, apron patterns, and lots of photos. Many are handmade with sweet detailing proving that a lady likes to be stylin' even in the kitchen.

Shakers and Bakers runs now through Dec. 29 at the Clayton Historical Society, 6101 Main St. in Clayton. Open Wednesdays and Sundays from 2 to 4 p.m. Admission is free. This could be a fun and informative outing for the kids during winter break.

Here's wishing one and all a happy holiday season and don't forget to go forth in style.



Apron Chic Photo Richard Aiello



Silk floral shoe clips



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Moya Stone is a local fashion writer and blogger at www.overdressedforlife.com.

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I Feel Your Pain

Teen athletes and injuries on the rise

By Cathy Dausman



Swimmer Natalie Morlock receives advice on therapy exercise from physical therapist Tom Clennell at the Children's Hospital Sports Medicine Center for Young Athletes in Walnut Creek. Photo Cathy Dausman

Natalie Morlock and Dominique Gillis share something more than attendance at the same high school. The Acalanes High School students are part of an increasing number of young athletes who suffer from sports related injuries. Both Morlock, a swimmer, and Gillis, a competitive cheerleader, are still undergoing physical therapy after recent injuries and subsequent corrective surgeries.

It seems teen athletes may be setting themselves up for more of the same as their once seasonal sports evolve into year-round competition. To borrow a phrase from "Casablanca," athletes whose young bodies are being asked to "play it again" ... and again ... and again, end up over-stressing their "skeletal immature" (think growth plates) bodies. So says David Arakawa, management coordinator and physical therapist at the new Children's Hospital Sport Medicine Center for Young Athletes in Walnut Creek.

"The number one complaint we treat for is pain," he said. Arakawa has noticed a definite increase in those seeking treatment over the last five years, in part because young athletes want to specialize in a single sport at increasingly earlier ages.

Morlock has been swimming year round for the last seven years. The Orinda Aquatics member would like to compete in college, but six months ago she injured soft tissue in her knee. Three months ago she had it surgically repaired; she was prescribed four months of post-operative physical therapy in once a week, 45-minute sessions. She estimates seven of her fellow Orinda Aquatics members, (totaling 80) have also had recent surgeries.

Morlock said her rehab work with physical therapist Tom Clennell has been eye opening, not only in strengthening and conditioning her injured knee, but "to see all the other things I can fix."

Clennell enjoys working with

young athletes on the rebound, because they come with an "awareness" of what he wants them to do. As Morlock finished up, Clennell's next patient arrived. Dominique Gillis is a competitive cheerleader known as a "flyer" – the cheerleader atop a pyramid of bodies. She often gets catapulted into the air.

After one stunt, Gillis landed full force on her ankle and broke her talus bone. She was in a non-weight bearing cast, and later a walking boot, and finally surgery. It was three months before she could walk. "Even resting my leg hurt," Gillis noted. But she wants to return full force. "I want to cheer in college," she said.

Her mother Mary Piscitelli feels athletic activities are especially intense in Lamorinda, and while sports are a healthy outlet, she said their endorphins drive them to push their bodies no matter what the consequences.

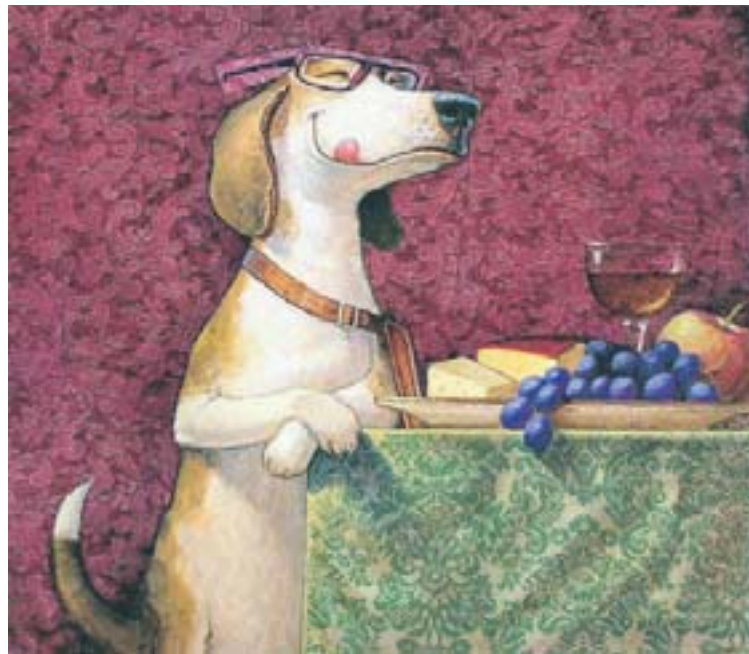
Some students have worn out joints by the time they enter college, and many suffer from knee and hip injuries in their 40s, Piscitelli said. As long as there are year-round practices and driven young athletes striving for the next level of competition, physical therapists like Arakawa and Clennell will have their work cut out for them.

"You have to be 100 percent cleared for PE to get back to sports," said Gillis, which includes being able to run the track.

For the best long-term athletic development, Arakawa recommends that students not specialize in a single sport at least until high school. Participating in a variety of sports – call it cross training – is "the best relief for over stressed bodies," he said. "With each sport [played] you gain a certain skill set."

Local Award-Winning Illustrators to Speak at LLLC

By Jennifer Wake



"The King's Taster," by Kenneth Oppel (HarperCollins) Illustration Steve Johnson and Lou Fancher

Being married can be hard work. But try collaborating as illustrators on more than 45 children's books, commercial illustrations, character development projects and advertisements over a 28 year period – all while winning awards and working on other creative endeavors.

That's exactly what Moraga residents Steve Johnson and Lou Fancher have done; they are Society of Illustrators Gold Medal recipients and their 2000 release, "I Walk at Night," by Lois Duncan was recognized as one of The New York Times Best Illustrated Books. The artists will be speaking about their work at 6:30 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 12 during a "Sweet Thursdays" event at the Lafayette Library and Learning Center.

Fancher, who is also a dancer and

writes for several publications including Diablo Magazine, Wired, the Contra Costa Times and Lamorinda Weekly, says collaborating can be challenging when the art isn't going the way you want it to go.

The reward? "Meeting people who say, 'I read this book, showed this art to my child, spouse, significant other, students, stranger on a bus and they loved it.'"

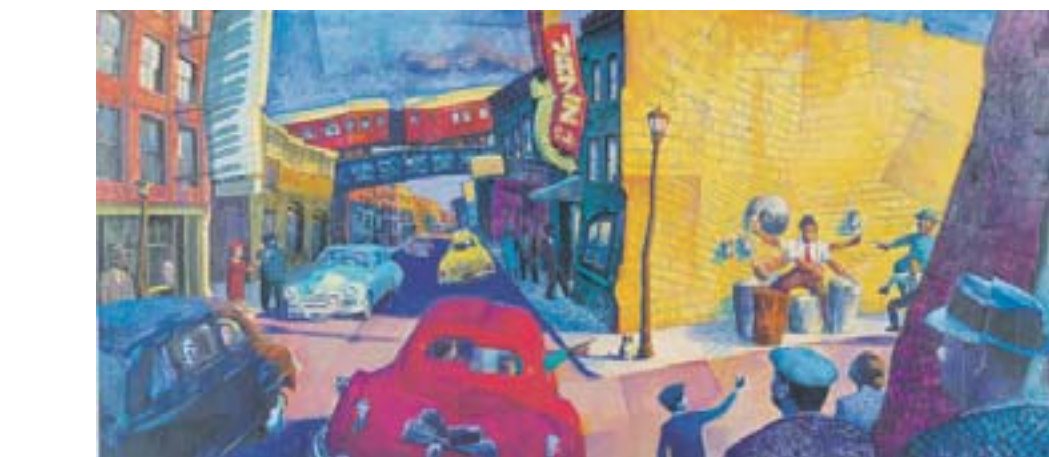
The two artists work together using a variety of mediums including oil, acrylic, wood, paper, pencil, crayons, string – even fabric and candy wrappers. "Pretty much anything that's not tied down or buried underground," Fancher says. "Our first projects were commercial illustrations for corporations and editorial magazines. The lines separating who

does what were more distinct than they are today. Now, it's often hard to recall which person drew the dog with glasses or who thought painting on upholstery fabric would be fun."

Among the long list of books the two have illustrated include "The Salamander Room" by Anne Mazer, The New York Times best-selling "My Many Colored Days" by Dr. Seuss, and "Amazing Peace" by Maya Angelou. The duo also provided pre-production set and character designs for Pixar's animated films "Toy Story" and "A Bug's Life." Fancher says they really enjoyed being a part of the first days of Pixar, "when they were still a gang of (mostly) guys who hung out in Point Richmond and had the best Halloween costumes ever."

While Fancher says it is difficult to make a lot of money as an illustrator in today's market, she suggests budding artists listen to their heart. "If it is beating for art, go to college. Get a degree so you can teach when the market is down," she says. "Study the masters, live a life beyond art, marry your (grand) vision and your (realistic) abilities to develop a style."

Artists Lou Fancher and Steve Johnson will discuss their work and life as illustrators from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 12 as part of "Sweet Thursdays" at the Lafayette Library and Learning Center. The free event is designed for all ages. Many of the artists' books will be available for purchase and signing after the event. To view a gallery of their work, visit johnsonandfancher.com.



"The Bebop Express," by H.L. Panahi (HarperCollins/Laura Geringer) Illustration Steve Johnson and Lou Fancher



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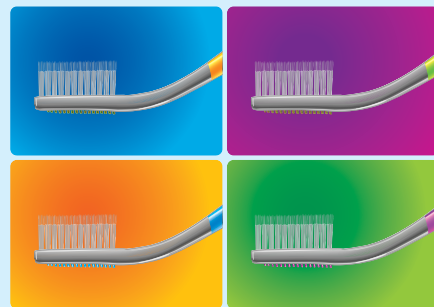


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Acalanes High School teacher Susan Lane with freshman poster contest winner Cara Wolfe. Photo Denise Schreiner

Creative freshman Cara Wolfe at Acalanes High School had a banner day: winning first place in the student poster contest sponsored by Contra Costa County Schools Insurance and getting a \$100 check, not to mention an "A" on the poster itself. Cara's poster will be reproduced and distributed to all of the school districts in Contra Costa County.

While definitely pleased to receive a check, Cara wasn't immediately sure what to do with it and thought she'd put it in the bank. She wanted to incorporate bright colors and clear direction in the piece - mission accomplished. Second place went to fellow Acalanes student Julia Lauer, who is a sophomore.

Health and Safety Services manager Denise Schreiner said Acalanes Digital Design teacher Susan Lane has been invaluable in encouraging her students to take part in the contest, integrating it as part of her lesson plans. "It's a lot of work," said Lane, describing the effort the students have to put in to master the challenging professional software used to make the posters.

The contest is part of a larger effort to build awareness of slip, trip and fall prevention to decrease the incidences of the number one injury for teachers, administrators and school staff. The Contra Costa County Schools Insurance Group is a self-insured, self-administered Joint Powers Authority that provides health and safety services, workers' compensation and cost containment programs to member school districts within the county. *C. Tyson*

Trailing Remnants of Comet ISON

By Cathy Dausman



SMC physics and astronomy professor Ronald Olowin, Ph.D. Photo Cathy Dausman

It's not a star, but it is a media darling and according to Saint Mary's College professor and astronomer Ron Olowin, Ph.D. "everybody's following it."

"It" is Comet ISON, from the outer solar system's Oort Cloud, which came so close in its orbit around the sun Nov. 28 that scientists thought it had disintegrated completely. Hopes were raised when video captured by the ESA/NASA Solar and Heliospheric Observatory showed a dim streak of white material streaming away from the sun, suggesting that a small nucleus was intact.

But according to a Dec. 2 NASA report, "Whether that spot of light was merely a cloud of dust that once was a comet, or if it still had a nucleus ... is still unclear. It seems likely that as of Dec. 1 there was no nucleus left. By monitoring its changes in brightness over time, scientists can estimate whether there's a nucleus or not, but our best chance at knowing for sure will be if the Hubble Space Telescope makes observations later in December."

Although the remnants of ISON may not be visible, Olowin will discuss the significance of the comet event and how it relates to astronomy through the ages from 4:30 to 7:30 p.m. Monday, Dec. 9 at the Lafayette Library and Learning Center outdoor amphitheater. Children can also make a fun comet craft at this free event.

Because comets are largely icy snowballs with gas and debris filled tails extending for millions of miles, Olowin says "comets come and go," referencing Comet Halley's winter 1986 appearance and Hale-Bopp in 1997. Comets simply bring more artifacts from the outer solar system down to Earth, Olowin explained from his college office, a galaxy-themed tie bedecking his shirt. A dozen more astronomy and science-themed ties were draped close by - the professor selects his tie to match his lecture material. "You and I are star stuff," he said.

If ISON behaves, he said, earthlings can learn more about the quality of water and organic materials contained within. But even without the spectacle of a comet, he noted that looking skyward creates a "harvest of wonder" for us all.

For event details, visit www.lafayettelib.org/calendar/programs/family.html. For more information about Comet ISON, visit www.nasa.gov/ison.

TEEN SCENE

Music for a Good Cause

By Andrew Wang



Andrew Wang and friends perform "Music for a Good Cause." Photos Cynthia Brian

Have you ever gone to the farmers' market, train station or public square when a musician was playing, and felt a whole new emotional world flow out from his guitar or fiddle, the soaring melodies permeating through the air and brightening the mood with a whiff of freshness and vigor? I have always been entranced and uplifted by the music of street performers, and at the same time inspired to share my own music with others.

On Veteran's Day the Campolindo Band and Orchestra performed classic American tunes for retired veterans at the Veterans Home of West Los Angeles. Two busloads of 80 high school music students hauled timpani, chimes, and other instruments to Los Angeles in order to commemorate the veterans for their service. A small crowd of veterans assembled to attend the performance, some with physical disabilities and nervous ticks, but almost all forced themselves to overcome physical hardship to stand up and salute proudly when their division's march was played. "It was an honor playing for the veterans," reflects cellist Brian Davis. "The experience made me think about the power of music to uplift and inspire."

"Music communicates directly with the soul," conductor Johnny Johnson says. "Performing music for our community and others is an important public service."

A similar event happened on Halloween as a part of the "Letters for Literacy" event for local literacy charity "Be the Star You Are!" A chamber group of friends and I performed some spooky and whimsical tunes at the Rheem Valley Shopping Center. The trick-or-treaters happily rejoiced in the combined atmosphere of bright harmonies and free candy. "It feels like we're trick-or-treating in Disneyland," exclaimed junior Yaman Jandali, who was trick-or-treating at local businesses with friends. Little kids dressed in vampire and princess costumes flocked around to enjoy the music and show their support by stuffing a

dollar or two in the donation box. Even parents, who weren't trick-or-treating, showed great interest in the music and the charity, clapping along with the melodies and taking flyers. Performers and audience members tapped and danced to the rhythm of the music and had great fun.

Local groups are taking advantage of their musical abilities to promote good causes. Stay tuned. On Dec. 21, local teen musicians will perform at the Orinda Library to raise funds for Typhoon Haiyan disaster relief. Music is the universal language of connection and collaboration.



Young trick-or-treaters make a donation for Letters for Literacy as they listen to the orchestra play spooky music.

Andrew Wang, a volunteer with "Be the Star You Are!" charity, is a student at Campolindo High School. Besides writing and reporting, he enjoys programming on his computer, playing the piano and violin, and tossing Frisbees.

Teen Scene is YOUR voice. If you have something to say or have writing skills and want to be part of our Teen Scene team, email our Teen Coach, Cynthia Brian, Cynthia@CynthiaBrian.com.

The opinions expressed in Teen Scene are those of the writer and not necessarily those of the Lamorinda Weekly.

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First Hydration Station at Miramonte

Submitted by Samuel Shain



Miramonte High School senior Nick Coufal (left) and junior Samuel Shain stand in front of the first hydration station installed on campus Nov. 15 – the first ever within the Acalanes Union High School District, according to Shain. “It was installed for a variety of reasons: easier water bottle fill up, limit the amount of plastic water bottle waste (in just one week we’ve conserved over 300 plastic water bottles from being discarded), hydrate students on campus, and to provide a healthier beverage choice,” he said. Coufal and Shain were involved in the process of proposing and implementing the hydration station on campus. “We are also very grateful for the endless support of our school’s administration,” Shain added.

Photo provided

Lynn’s Top Five National Health Care: What to think about now

By Lynn Ballou, EA, CFP®

As I write this column, much about the Affordable Care Act (ACA, also known as “Obamacare”) is still unknown, not the least of which is whether or not it will be repealed! However, as one media personality so poignantly noted, it’s like putting toothpaste back – once it’s out of the tube, there’s just not that much you can do except clean up the mess and move on!

Because there is so much information and misinformation flying around about this topic, I reached out to Colleen Callahan, an industry leader on this topic, with a local practice in Pleasant Hill (Colleen Callahan Insurance Services). She shared the following important considerations: “One piece that has often been overlooked in the media is that in 2014 a person really has two choices – buy coverage in the market place Covered California (through an agent) or through an agent directly with an insurance company that offers individual plans. There will be a few more options available outside the exchange and the network of doctors might be larger. Plans in the exchanges are offering narrow or skimpy networks.” As Callahan noted in our recent Webinar (you can access a replay at www.ballouplum.com) there is no additional cost to work with an agent, only the added benefit of their vast expertise.

Let’s look at five different scenarios and possible courses of action, one of which might apply to you.

1) College (or Other Post High School) Student: If either of your parents have medical insurance through work or on their own, under the ACA you are allowed to be covered by their plan until you are 26 years old, although the cost of that insurance may not be paid for by your parent’s employer. If available, you should strongly consider staying on your parent’s policy. If you are in school, you may have access to student medical insurance through your college. If school insurance is available find out what it covers and how it would coordinate with any other coverage you might have. If you have no access to either, then it’s likely that you can be covered under the ACA, which in California would mean the Covered California plan. You may be eligible for premium credits and/or a subsidy. And if your income is very low, then you will probably be qualified for Medi-

Cal. If you don’t want to be a Medicaid recipient, consult with an agent immediately about your options.

2) Young Adult: If you are on your own and not in school, and also not working for an employer who provides insurance coverage for you, then Uncle Sam wants YOU! You are the hope and the future of the Affordable Care Act because if you are young, healthy, and participate in our new national health care plan, your premiums for coverage as a participant in the plan will probably be relatively inexpensive. This helps offset the costs needed for those who might be older and therefore utilizing more expensive care. Check out the Covered California website for a description of the plans available for purchase. And keep in mind that it’s very possible you will also qualify for premium credits and/or a subsidy.

3) Self-Employed: Those of you working and self-employed and not married to someone with employer provided coverage that you can tap into need to seriously review the choices now available to you through Covered California. However, it is quite difficult to navigate the site on your own, and also difficult to determine which options best suit you. Colleen Callahan noted, “I would always recommend seeking the guidance of a licensed insurance agent, different than navigators; a professional agent can give advice. They have annual education requirements, are regulated and carry insurance.”

4) Working with Employer Coverage: Nothing for you to do for yourself, because you have coverage. However, if you are paying to cover your spouse or adult children who could be independent of you (but aren’t 26 years old yet), you should review choices provided to you by Covered California. It’s possible that the plan your employer provides is a cost effective option for you to continue to use in covering spouses and qualified adult children. However, this is a great example of a case where enlisting the help of a qualified agent gives you the opportunity to review all possible coverages and costs.

5) You Have a Plan, You Like Your Plan, You Want to Keep Your Plan: Many of you in this situation have received notices from your insurance companies that your coverage is being terminated. Because of the mess this is creating, President

Obama has asked insurance companies to keep plans currently in place available to participants for the next year while the government works through the details of the ACA. Why is this important? Because most of you receiving these notices, who then go to the Covered California website, are finding that although insurance is available it’s much more expensive than what you had in place and isn’t giving you the same coverage you enjoyed having. One major reason this problem exists is that there is more coverage required to be included in plans than ever before, and insurance companies have increased premiums to pay for it.

One last thought for those of you age 65 and above; I didn’t forget about you! For now, you are out of the fray and should continue to be covered by Medicare. One of my previous columns has covered what you need to pay attention to, not the least of which is the Dec. 7 deadline for Medicare Part D open enrollment if you have any changes in mind.

I hope this column has been helpful to you. In addition to reaching out to your own trusted advisors, here are some resources for you to use: www.coveredca.com – the official website for Covered California www.nahu.org has a ‘find an agent’ tool – this is available for people in every state www.callahaninsurance.com to reach Colleen Callahan and her team



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Holiday Events Make the Season Sparkle

Lafayette

Don't miss "It's a Wonderful Life in Lafayette," presented by the Lafayette Chamber of Commerce and sponsored by local Lafayette realtor Dana Green and Branagh Development, who together are also hosting the environmentally-friendly downtown Lafayette twinkle lights for the 2013 holiday season. The party runs from 4 to 6 p.m. **Friday, Dec. 6**, with Santa scheduled to parade on Lafayette's treasured "Old Betsy" fire engine, starting from the Lafayette Historical Society (Lafayette Library and Learning Center) at 4 p.m., traveling down Golden Gate Way and arriving at Lafayette Plaza Park at 4:30 p.m. Look for twinkle lights,



live musical entertainment – including local student musicians and singers (pre-school on up), performers from the Peter Pan Foundation, Town Hall Theatre performers – ornament making and

a holiday sing-a-long. Official tree lighting is slated for 5:30 p.m., complimentary hot chocolate and treats sponsored by Whole Foods. Food trucks will have dinner items to purchase.

Saturday, Dec. 7 and running through Dec. 21. A three-person comic tornado takes on holiday classics from "A Christmas Story" to "The Grinch Who Stole Christmas." Check the THT website for ticket prices and times, www.townhalltheatre.com or call the box office at (925) 283-1557, 3535 School Street, Lafayette. (See story page B1)

"Christmastime" holiday music. Get in the spirit with a festive mix of fantastic Christmas tunes performed by not one, but two of the choirs – singing and ringing, from Our Saviors Lutheran Church, in the Sanctuary at 4 p.m. **Sunday, Dec. 8** at 1035 Carol Lane, Lafayette. Free. Carols from England, France, Spain and Puerto Rico along with some rockin' Christmas Spirituals will be featured.

Lafayette's Hospice of the East Bay Tree of Lights is now shared with Moraga. Look for the ceremony at the tree near the entrance of the Moraga Country Club (1600 St. Andrews Dr.) at 5:30 p.m. **Sunday, Dec. 8** with a reception to follow. This year's tree is dedicated to Mary Ellen Dochterman.

Christmas Concert featuring the Lafayette-Orinda Presbyterian Church Choirs from 4 to 6 p.m. **Saturday, Dec. 14** in the Sanctuary, 49 Knox Drive, Lafayette. Direct any questions about the free event to the church at (925) 283-8722.

In Lumine. From flares and fireflies to more introspective illuminations, WomenSing's wonderfully fresh holiday concert, "In Lumine" (In Light), will be the choral event to anticipate this holiday season. Full, robust and romantic elements abound in Imant Raminsh's "Missa Brevis in C Minor." The light of the Mother will shine in Ivo Antognini's "Ave Maris Stella" in its string-like lines, and cluster chords that create a glow of sound. In the song cycle "Lux Lucis," Seattle composer Karen Thomas provides two lustrous settings of 12th century texts by composer and mystic Hildegard von Bingen with numerous references to light, sun, flame and radiance. The light of fire in Dale Trumbore's "Flare" will rush to catch you! Join WomenSing, and Guest Conductor Jeremiah Selvey this holiday season. Program begins at 8 p.m. **Wednesday, Dec. 18** at the Lafayette-Orinda Presbyterian Church, 49 Knox Drive, Lafayette. Tickets available at <http://www.brownpapertickets.com/event/506271>.

Traditional Folk Songs of the Winter Holidays at the Lafayette Library and Learning Center. Kids and adults can enjoy a free holiday concert with legendary folksinger, storyteller and autoharp virtuoso Adam Miller from 6 to 9 p.m. **Thursday, Dec. 19** in the Library's Community Hall. Sing-along songs will include something for everyone: Hanukkah, winter solstice, Christmas carols and more.

The Bethlehem Experience. The Lafayette United Methodist Church presents an interactive performance that takes you back through time. Tour Guides will lead groups of 10 people through the marketplace of

Bethlehem on the night of the Messiah's birth with the smell of exotic spices, the festive sound of Jewish music, the sight of robed and sandaled merchants in their stalls, the taste of freshly baked unleavened bread, live animals in the stable and the soft feel of flaxen "swaddling clothes." The social event that emphasizes the spiritual meaning of Christmas takes place between 5:30 and 8 p.m. **Dec. 20-22** at the Lafayette United Methodist Church, 955 Moraga Road, Lafayette. Hour-long tours begin every 15 minutes. Refreshments and entertainment provided while you wait. Freewill donation: \$5 per person or \$20 per family. For questions call (925) 284-4765.

"To All a Good Night." Improvisation play based on audience members' worst "home for the holidays" stories at 8 p.m. **Saturday, Dec. 21** at the Lafayette Community Center, 500 St. Mary's Road. Tickets: \$10 at the door or via www.synergytheater.com, which also has more information about the production.

Kenn Adams' Adventure Theater – an interactive comedy show for heroes of any age – will begin at 11 a.m. **Sunday, Dec. 22.** Audience members make all of the sound effects, become the scenery, suggest the twists and turns of the plot and jump up on the stage to play the main characters. Tickets: \$5, available at the door or via www.synergytheater.com.
C. Tyson

Moraga

Saint Mary's Glee Club and Chamber Singers will perform a program of sacred music, spirited popular songs and seasonal classics at 1:15 p.m. **Wednesday, Dec. 4** in the Saint Mary's College Chapel. Suggested donation: \$10 general; \$8 seniors and non-SMC students; \$5 students, faculty, and staff. For more information, contact Sharon Cahill at (925) 631-4670.

Annual Holiday Tree Lighting Ceremony. Santa and the Moraga Youth Involvement Committee helpers will distribute cookies and hot cocoa with the Moraga Community Chorus entertaining the crowd at 6:30 p.m. and the tree lighting at 7 p.m. **Friday, Dec. 6** at the Moraga Commons Park. Residents can support the tree lighting by contributing to the Buy-a-Bulb fundraiser. The suggested donation is \$25 can be made online at moraga.ca.us; click on Quick Links, Register for Classes, Donations.

Hospice of the East Bay 27th Annual Tree of Lights Ceremony at 5:30 p.m. **Sunday, Dec. 8** at the Moraga Country Club, 1600 St. Andrews Dr. (also at 4:30 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 7 in Orinda). The tree lightings offer community members a way to honor the lives of their friends and loved ones. Funds raised allow Hospice of the East Bay to provide essential programs and services such as the Vigil Program which ensures no one has to die alone. For light dedications, donations, sponsorships and event questions, call (925) 887-5678 or visit www.hospiceeastbay.org.

... continued on next page

Christmas on the Hill Concert

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Saturday, December 7th
5:30-8pm

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The Contra Costa Children's Chorus performs "My Spirit Rejoices" a variety of holiday music at Lafayette-Orinda Presbyterian Church from 7 to 9 p.m. **Friday, Dec. 6** in the Sanctuary, 49 Knox Drive, Lafayette. Tickets: \$5 for students, \$10 for seniors and \$15 general admission.

Santa's Bag Boutique for one weekend only, **Friday through Sunday, Dec. 6-8.** Come early for the best selection of holiday, gift items, and cool stuff; all sales benefit the Lafayette Community Center Foundation. Edibles, unique handmade décor, jewelry, celebrity gift baskets and so much more at this annual event at the Lafayette Community Center, 500 St. Mary's Rd., Lafayette. Hours: 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. on Friday and 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday and Sunday.

The Merola Opera Program Holiday Concert is coming to the Lafayette Library at 2 p.m. **Saturday, Dec. 7** for a performance by two of its renowned opera artists in the library's Community Hall. The hour-long recital will star Kristen Clayton and Bojan Knezevic, who have performed with the San Francisco Opera and around the world. Tickets: \$10, with all proceeds going to the Lafayette Library Learning Center Foundation. It will feature a repertoire of selections from popular operas as well as holiday favorites. To purchase tickets, call the Library at (925) 283-6513 ext. 103 or email reserve@LLLCF.org. Tickets may be available at the door.

Looking for a unique gift this Christmas season? Come to the Lafayette Art Gallery for the special Holiday Boutique **Saturday and Sunday, Dec. 7 and 8**, featuring one-of-a-kind gifts and craft items that are sure to make the recipient smile! The members of the Lafayette Art Gallery will be represented, as well as selected guest artists and artisans from the local community. The Holiday Boutique will feature wonderful holiday gift items including ceramics and glassware, holiday cards, scented beeswax and decorator candles, hand-made soaps, holiday ornaments, jewelry and fashion accessories, great stocking stuffers like coasters and fun magnets, designer accent pillows, handcrafted journals, and of course paintings and prints.

"Every Christmas Story Ever Told." Fun for the whole family at Town Hall Theatre beginning

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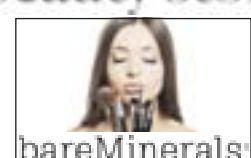
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The best cure for a chilly winter night is to gather with friends and family for a sing-along, a cup of cocoa, or a quick hello to Santa before the big day. There are plenty of opportunities to ring in the holidays throughout Lamorinda during the month of December. The following is a sampling of some of the events that will add sparkle and cheer to this special season. **Happy Holidays from Lamorinda Weekly!**

Moraga ... continued

Free photo with Santa from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. **Saturday, Dec. 7** at 5A Rent A Space, 455 Moraga Rd., Suite F. Free framed picture, cookies, and games for the kids. There will also be a free gift wrapping room from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. every day but Sunday through Dec. 24 with wrapping paper, ribbon, and scissors.

Live Nativity. See the Christmas story come to life at the ninth annual viewing of the Live Nativity from 5:30 to 8 p.m. **Saturday, Dec. 7** at Moraga Valley Presbyterian Church, 10 Moraga Valley Lane. The courtyard will be transformed into a Bethlehem manger when members of the congregation take on the roles of Mary and Joseph, the three Wise Men, shepherds, Roman soldiers, and a host of heavenly angels. And the oxen, sheep, goats, and other animals truly transform the space into a spectacle not to be missed. While the courtyard will be a reverent scene, there will be additional activities, music and snacks in the Fellowship Hall. The Sanctuary will be open for prayer and contemplation. There is no cost to attend.

Breakfast with Santa. There are a few spaces left for the 10:30 a.m. slot on **Saturday, Dec. 14** (8:30 a.m. is sold out), organized by the Moraga Parks and Recreation Department at the Hacienda de las Flores. Register at Moraga.ca.us, quick links "Register for classes."

You're invited to take a photo with Santa, so bring your camera from noon to 3 p.m. **Saturday, Dec. 14** in the Rheem Valley Shopping Center between Tuesday Morning and Nation's Giant Hamburgers. Photos, holiday clowns and balloon art are free with Rheem Valley Shopping Center receipts totaling \$25 or more. For info, visit rheemvalley.net.

Teen and Tween LED Holiday Ornaments. Learn how to light up your craft projects with LED lights from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. **Saturday, Dec. 14** at the Moraga Library. Library staff will take participants step-by-step through the process of making and then adding LEDs to gorgeous ornaments. There is limited seating for this special program. Register at cclib.org or call the Moraga Library at (925) 376-6852.



Fratello Marionettes: North Pole Review. Join the fun with our puppet extravaganza, The North Pole Review, which showcases the high kicking antics of the Russian Trepak Dancers, the graceful ice skater Crystal Chandelier, and features dazzling acrobatic penguins at 4 p.m. **Tuesday, Dec. 17** at the Moraga Library, 1500 St. Mary's Road, Moraga. Generously sponsored by the Friends of the Moraga Library, this is a perfect way to celebrate the holiday season!

Candlelight Christmas Service from 7 to 8:30 p.m. **Friday, Dec. 20** will include worship, scripture reading, biblical message and a dessert banquet at Refuge Com-

munity Church, 155 Moraga Road. For more information, visit www.refugecommunity.org. *S. Braccini*

Orinda

Annual Holiday Dinner, Orinda Historical Society. Be there or be square for what is sure to be one of the community's most enjoyable and memorable evenings this holiday season **Wednesday, Dec. 4**. Laugh and learn while dining on scrumptious salmon, chicken or vegetarian delights. Presentations: History of Holden School (Joel Weber and Caroline Cogan); What's New at the Old Yellow House (James Wright). Social hour begins at 6 p.m.; dinner begins at 7 p.m. at Orinda Community Church. Cost: \$40. For more information, call the Orinda Historical Society at (925) 254-1353.

A community sing of Handel's Messiah will be held at 7:30 p.m. **Friday, Dec. 6** at St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, 66 St. Stephens Dr., Orinda. The Messiah Sing will be directed by Minister of Music Robert Train Adams, with Festival Choir, professional soloists and chamber orchestra with harpsichord and organ to benefit the Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano Counties. Childcare is available by reservation. A free-will offering will be taken. For more information contact Brenda Free, office@ststephensorinda.org or (925) 254-3770, ext. 10.

Family fun holiday events at Orinda Theatre Square from 4 to 7 p.m. **Saturday, Dec. 7** and from 3 to 7:30 p.m. **Saturday, Dec. 14**. Make your own ornaments, enjoy a holiday cappella performance by Miramonte High School students and a tree lighting ceremony (Dec. 7), or build a real snowman in the afternoon and a take a horse and carriage ride before dinner (Dec. 14). Schedule details available at www.orindatheatresquare.com.

The 12th Annual Tarabrook Holiday Boutique will feature one-of-a-kind handmade gifts and food from over 30 local artisans from noon to 8 p.m. **Friday, Dec. 6**, and from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. **Saturday and Sunday, Dec. 7-8** at 1 Tarabrook Drive, Orinda. Lots of parking. A percentage of the proceeds benefit the National Breast Cancer Foundation.

Orinda Tree of Lights Holiday Celebration. Get yourself in the spirit before fessing up to the big guy about whether or not you've been naughty or nice in 2013. Program begins at 4:30 pm **Saturday, Dec. 7** at the Bank of America parking lot. To sponsor a light in memory of a loved one, visit the Hospice of the East Bay's website: https://hospice.ejoinme.org/MyEvents/2013TreeofLights/OrindaTree/tabid/482630/Default.aspx.

Jingle Festival. Everyone is invited for an afternoon of family fun from noon to 3 p.m. **Sunday, Dec. 8** at St. Mark's, 451 Moraga Way, Orinda. Come decorate gingerbread houses, sing holiday karaoke, and make ornaments and other crafts. There will be a holiday bazaar for your shopping pleasure featuring handmade scarves, crafts, jams, jewelry, baked goods, and books. After the festival stay from 3 to 4 p.m. for the Jingle Festival Holiday Concert. For more info, contact (925) 254-5965. *L. Snyder*

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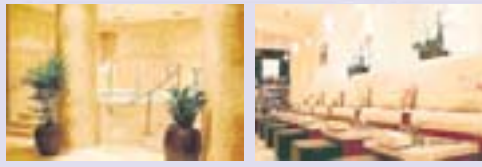
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Lamorinda's Religious Services



St. Giles Episcopal Church
An Inclusive & Affirming Community
 Sunday School & Eucharist at 9am
 St. Mary's College Chapel
 1928 St. Mary's Rd., Moraga
 925-376-5770 - www.stgiles-moraga.org

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St. Anselm's Episcopal Church

A Loving Community

Sunday Services: 8 and 10 AM

In-church Youth Zone, 10 AM Nursery Childcare
 682 Michael Lane, Lafayette, 284-7420, www.stanselms.ws

Lafayette United Methodist Church

955 Moraga Rd., Lafayette,
 284-4765, office@thelumc.org

Worship	Sunday	10 am
Children/Youth Sunday School	Sunday	10 am
Youth Fellowship	Sunday	6 pm



- ▶ Something for everyone, birth through senior adults
- ▶ Seedlings Preschool
- ▶ lamorinda familycenter
- ▶ Sunday Worship

LAFAYETTE-ORINDA PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
 See more at LOPC.org

ORINDA CHRISTIAN SCIENCE CHURCH

24 Orinda Way (next to the Library) - 254-4212

Sunday Service and Sunday School 10 - 11 am
 Informal Wednesday Meeting 7:30 - 8:30 pm
 Reading Room/Bookstore M - F 11 - 4; Sat 10 - 1
 www.christianscienceorinda.org



St Stephen's Episcopal Church

66 St. Stephen's Drive, Orinda
 254-3770. www.ststephensorinda.org
 Sunday 8am, 10am &
 5:30p.m. Casual Eucharist



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Holy Shepherd Lutheran Church

433 Moraga Way, Orinda, 254-3422
 www.holyshepherd.org



8:15 a.m. Traditions Worship Service
 9:40 a.m. Education for all ages
 10:45 a.m. Contemporary Worship Service
 Coffee Fellowship at 9:15 and 11:45 a.m.
 Childcare available for ages 5 and younger

◆ Not to be missed ◆ Not to be missed ◆

ART

The Glover Group: "A Legacy of Light and Color" which features the current works 21 local plein air painters who studied under the late acclaimed landscape painter, Pam Glover, and who continue to paint together today and participate in both individual and group showings throughout the Bay Area runs through Jan. 1 at the Orinda Library Gallery. The public is invited to a reception from 2 to 4 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 8. For info, visit www.thepamglovergroup.com.

Saint Mary's College Museum of Art's Schedule of Exhibitions through Dec. 15: "Judy Dater: Edo Redux," one of the country's most influential living photographers (in the new Studio Gallery). "The Artist Revealed: Artist Portraits and Self-Portraits" (in the Hearst Gallery). Fifty portraits and self-portraits are on loan from the Syracuse University Art Collection. "Malcolm Lubliner: The Automotive Landscape" (in the new Armistead Gallery). "Nature's Placid Splendor" (in the Keith Gallery). Landscape paintings with three private collection paintings never before on public view. Open 11 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Wednesday through Sunday. For info, call (925)-631-4379 or visit stmarys-ca.edu/museum. Admission: free to K-12 graders; \$5 adults. Free parking.

Browse the glass on display and view the glassblowing demonstrations at the 2013 Holiday Open House of Smyers Glass from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Dec 5-8 at 675 East H Street in Benicia. The glassmakers showroom will be decorated for the holiday season and light refreshments will be offered.

The Moraga Art Gallery show entitled "Capturing Light: Lens and Glass" highlighting photography by resident artist Wenda Pyman, and cast sand glasswork and flamework by guest artist Janice Peacock will run through Jan. 4. The show also includes works by the gallery's 14 resident artists and several guest artists at 522 Center Street, Rheem Shopping Center, Moraga. Free. The gallery is open Wednesday through Sunday from noon to 5 p.m. For more information, email moragaartgallery@gmail.com or call (925) 376-5407.

Student Art from Afghanistan will be on display at the Lafayette Library and Learning Center, Library Gallery (Community Hall) through Jan. 13, 2014. Afghanistan is a country with deep roots in art and culture. Though many beautiful treasures have been destroyed by war and political strife, Afghan children continue to create art and imagine a world of peace. This exhibit, brought to you by Trust in Education (TIE) and the Lafayette Public Art Committee, highlights drawings created by students taking classes funded by TIE.

MUSIC

As a holiday treat, Diablo Theatre Company offers up the delightful "A Grand Night for Singing," a romantic, entertaining revue of music by Rodgers and Hammerstein, the duo who created songs that are standards of musical theater and American popular culture. The show will run Nov. 29 through Dec. 7 at Walnut Creek's Leshner Center for the Arts, 1601 Civic Dr., Walnut Creek. For tickets, call (925) 943-SHOW (7469) or visit www.lesherartscenter.org or www.diablotheatre.org.

Welcome Winter with warm Brazilian Jazz – a free musical event to celebrate winter with Brazilian songs, and a few seasonal tunes featuring Mary D'Orazi with Tim Campbell on piano and Greg German on drums/percussion at 7 p.m. Wednesday, Dec. 4 at the Orinda Library. For more info, visit ccclib.org, call (925) 254-2184, ext 15, or email bgirshma@ccclib.org.

"Horizons," the fall dance concert slated for 8 p.m. Thursday through Saturday, Dec. 5-7 in LeFevre Theatre

is presented by Saint Mary's College Dance Company. Featuring the work of eight Saint Mary's seniors, and exploring many facets of the human experience, including love, magic, faith, innocence, sacrifice, and competition, this concert will appeal to and entertain a wide variety of audience members. Tickets are \$5 general admission and free to Saint Mary's students with ID. For info and reservations call (925) 631-4670. Online tickets are also available at brownpapertickets.com.

Voices of Musica Sacra sings a variety of Christmas favorites, featuring Britten's "A Ceremony of Carols" with harp accompaniment, plus other holiday music by Ives, Byrd, Burt, Thomas, and more, plus a carol sing-along at 8 p.m. Friday, Dec. 6 at St. Paul's Episcopal Church, 1924 Trinity Ave., Walnut Creek, and at 3 p.m. on Dec 8, at St. Stephen Catholic Church, 1101 Keaveny Ct., Walnut Creek. For info, visit www.vmschorus.org, email info@vmschorus.org, or call (925) 228-1181.

Music makes the holidays sparkle, and this year Diablo Valley College Department of Music invites you to bring friends, family, children and grandchildren to two concerts of holiday and seasonal favorites at 8 p.m. Friday, Dec. 6 and Saturday, Dec. 7 in the Performing Arts Center, DVC Campus. For tickets, contact the DVC Ticket Office at (925) 969-2358 or DVC.MUSIC.NET. Tickets: \$12 advanced; \$15 at the door.

Diablo Women's Chorale presents its December concert "Home—for the Holidays," an intimate concert of home, hearth ... and chimney at 3 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 7 at Mt. Diablo Unitarian Universalist Church, 55 Eckley Lane, Walnut Creek. The house band and special guests will delight and amuse your whole family. DWC is directed by Mary Sorenson and accompanied by pianist Steven Evans. Tickets: \$15 general; \$10 students at the door or online at www.diablowomenschorale.org.

THEATER

Snow falls onstage and the Christmas tree magically grows to great heights in the beloved annual California Academy of Performing Arts presentation of "The Nutcracker" at 7 p.m. Friday, Dec. 6; at 2 and 7 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 7; and at 2 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 8 at the Del Valle Theatre, 1963 Tice Valley Blvd., Walnut Creek. Tickets: \$22, can be purchased at <http://www.lesherartscenter.org/ticket-office-information/> and more information can be found at www.capadance.net. Contact: lynnkdavis@comcast.net.

LECTURE & LITERATURE

Saint Mary's College Creative Writing Reading Series presents Matthew Zaprunder, the author of three collections of poetry, most recently "Come On All You Ghosts" (Copper Canyon 2010), a New York Times Notable Book of the Year. The presentation begins at 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, Dec. 4 in the Soda Center, Claeys Lounge.

Stanley Middle School Holiday Gift and Book Fair Sunday through Tuesday, Dec. 8-10 at Barnes & Noble in Walnut Creek. Shop for the holidays while supporting Stanley Middle School. Free concerts will be performed by the Stanley Chorus from 7 to 8 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 8 and by the Stanley Jazz Band from 7 to 8 p.m. Monday Dec. 9. Up to 20 percent of purchases will go directly to Stanley.

"A Night of Many Colors" features award-winning artists Lou Fancher and Steve Johnson, who have collaborated on over 45 picture books as well as pre-production set and character designs on movies including "Toy Story" and "A Bug's Life," at 6:30 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 12 at the Lafayette Library and Learning Center. This husband and wife team uses an unusual approach wherein both artists conceive, design and paint together. For info, visit flllc.org. (See story page B5)

KIDS, PARENTS & TEENS

Family Science Night Inventors Festival. Kids ages 4-12 can step into the shoes of an engineer as they investigate, experiment, and problem solve solutions to real world problems at this free event from 6 to 8 p.m. Wednesday, Dec. 4 at the Lafayette Library and Learning Center Community Hall, sponsored by the Lawrence Hall of Science.

Come enjoy a special reading of "Trap the Elf" by author Susan Oppedt at 4:30 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 7 at the J. Colleen Holiday Event, 261 Lafayette Circle, Lafayette. Twenty percent of the book sales on the day of the event will go to the lilysarahgracefund.org (supporting the arts in underfunded elementary schools across America).

North Shattuck Association presents snow – in Berkeley?. Take a snow day in the Gourmet Ghetto from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 8 at the parking lot near Lincoln, 1673 Shattuck, Berkeley! Bring boots and mittens to play in the snow. Visit with the Snow Queen, ride a pony, make crafts or shop. Free. For more info, visit <http://www.anotherbullwinkeshow.com/holiday-berkeley/holiday-gourmet-ghetto.html>, call (510) 548-5335 or email Lisa@AnotherBullwinkleShow.com.

OTHER

Pearl Harbor Commemoration and Eye of Diablo Beacon Lighting. The Pearl Harbor Survivors Association, and now the Sons and Daughters of Pearl Harbor Survivors have commemorated the attack on Pearl Harbor by relighting the beacon at the summit of Mount Diablo. Extinguished just after the attack in 1941, the Eye of Diablo has been relit at sunset, Saturday, Dec. 7, every year since 1964 at the request of Fleet Admiral Chester Nimitz, Commander in Chief of Pacific Forces during World War II. The program will begin at 3:45 p.m. For more information, call Save Mount Diablo at (925) 947-3535, or visit www.savemountdiablo.org.

... continued on next page

Please submit events to:
calendar@lamorindaweekly.com

Rotary



Explore Rotary clubs in Lamorinda The heart of Rotary is our clubs—dedicated people who share a passion for both community service and friendship. Learn about Lamorinda's Rotary clubs.

Lamorinda Sunrise Rotary Club

We meet Friday mornings at 7:00 am at Celia's Mexican Restaurant, 3666 Mt. Diablo Blvd, Lafayette . (Diagonally across from Trader Joes)

December 6:
 Mary Jane Margraff. Local Lafayette resident will talk about women in aviation and suborbital space flight.

December 13:
 Gabby Zacco. Gabby is a retired DEA agent and is involved with the Moraga School District as a drug prevention & education coordinator

Please join us!



please...



...thanks

Not to be missed

OTHER ... continued

SENIORS

The LLLCF Distinguished Speaker Series welcomes noted travel expert and TV personality Rick Steves at 7 p.m. Friday, Dec. 6 at the Orinda Theatre. Steves, host of the PBS series Rick Steves' Europe and best-selling author of over 50 European travel books, will share tips on becoming a "temporary local" and connecting with your destination more intimately and authentically. Post-presentation book signing; books available for purchase at the event. For info, visit www.lllcf.org.

Covered California is the new healthcare exchange marketplace created because of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, commonly known as Obamacare. Join representatives from Covered California's Community Outreach Network to find answers for you and your families. Enrollment counselors will be on site to sign you up! The event is free and will be held at the Lafayette Library and Learning Center from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Dec. 7 and Dec. 14, in the Homework Center. No pre-registration necessary.

Swing by Bailey Orthodontics for a combined open house, grand reopening, and holiday celebration. Hors d'oeuvres, drinks, and raffle prizes from 5 to 8 p.m. on Dec 12 at 15 Altarinda Road, Suite 104A, Orinda. www.baileysmile.com.

Lamorinda Nature Walk and Bird-Watching - Experience nature at its finest along our local trails. Delight in the beauty that unfolds around each bend, all the while learning to identify a variety of birds. Trail maps will be distributed. Bring a water bottle; binoculars will be helpful if you have them. Join us every Wednesday or whenever you are able from 9 to 11 a.m. Meet at Lafayette Senior Services (Alder Room at the Community Center) at 9 a.m. For more info, or to place your name on the route email/phone list call Lafayette Senior Services at (925) 284-5050.

Creative Writing Workshop - Examine the possibilities of self-expression through writing from 10:30 a.m. to noon on Thursdays bi-monthly in the Cedar Room, Lafayette Community Center. This friendly group, with an ever-changing membership but lots of returning participants, will welcome you and any of your writing efforts. Find encouragement and feedback and bring out the writer in you. If you can speak, you can write, and we will show you how! Beginners to established writers welcome. Cost per session: \$1 Senior Services members; \$3 non-members.

HOLIDAY EVENTS

See the list of wonderful holiday events planned in Lamorinda throughout December on page B8-B9.



'Tis the Season of Giving

The Moraga Police Officers Association along with S.A.F.E. (Stuffed Animals For Emergencies) is collecting new or gently used stuffed animals to help children through traumatic experiences. The stuffed animals are given to local police and fire departments to distribute to children they encounter who are affected by traumatic events. S.A.F.E also facilitates the distribution of donated stuffed animals for a variety of charitable purposes to help children. This year's annual holiday collection drive continues through Jan. 2, 2014. New or gently used stuffed animals can be dropped off in the collection area located in the lobby of the Moraga Police Department, 329 Rheem Blvd. Thank you for your support!

The Moraga-Orinda Fire District is once again collecting new, unwrapped toys for the U.S. Marine Corp Reserve Toys for Tots Program. Look for the Toys for Tots bins located in front of each MOFD fire station. Toy donations will be accepted through Dec. 25. If you have any questions, please call the MOFD administrative office at (925) 258-4599.

Need Donations?

During the holiday season, Lamorinda Weekly will accept and publish opportunities for local giving. Please send 100 words or less describing the cause, type of donation needed, and where to bring/send it. The organization collecting the donations, or receiving the donations, should be within our extended community. Submissions must be sent to storydesk@lamorindaweekly.com by Dec. 12 for inclusion in our Dec. 18 issue. Include "Season of Giving" in the subject line.

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MOVIE REVIEW

"Frozen"

By Derek Zemrak



that Elsa created in the ballroom, Anna receives a head injury and is unconscious. The only way to save her is for the king and queen to take her to the chief troll who saves Anna's life, but erases her memory of the event and her knowledge of Elsa's powers.

After the untimely death of the king and queen, Elsa becomes queen at the age of 18. During the coronation she tries to conceal her powers, but when Anna announces her engagement, Elsa goes into a rage, freezes the entire kingdom and runs away to create her own ice palace. It is Anna who must save the kingdom and her sister as she sets out on her journey. Along the way, Anna encounters new friends to assist her: Kristoff (Jonathan Groff) the local ice salesman, his horse and a snowman named Olaf, voiced by Broadway star Josh Gad ("The Book of Mormon"). Olaf is the much-needed comedic relief in the film. He lights up the screen in all his scenes. So with the help of these "Wizard of Oz" type characters, Anna must break the spell.

"Frozen" is rated PG, due to the death of the king and queen and the evil, gigantic snow monster that might frighten the little ones. The total running time (TRT) is 1 hour and 48 minutes. The movie goes along at a quick pace.

Derek Zemrak is a film critic, film producer and founder of the California Independent Film Festival. You can follow Derek on Twitter @zemrak for the latest Hollywood news. Derek can be heard every Friday on KAHN 950AM on the Poppoff Show.

It is the time for holiday blockbusters and the family animated film "Frozen," which comes from Disney Animation not Pixar. The quality is not up to Pixar standards but overall the film is very well produced. I believe it is Disney's best film in recent years.

The filmmakers deliver a few surprises in the film: a strong female presence – the main leads are both girls and Jennifer Lee is a co-director. Lee wrote last year's Oscar nominated animated film, "Wreck-It Ralph." She brings a female perspective to the film especially in the form of "Wreck-It Ralph" humor. Chris

Buck ("Surf's Up," "Tarzan") is the other director.

"Frozen" focuses on the two princess sisters: Anna, played by Kristen Bell ("Forgetting Sarah Marshall") and Elsa, the older sister played by Broadway actress and Tony winner Idina Menzel ("Rent," "Wicked"). The movie opens showing the closeness of the two as they play in the kingdom enjoying each other and establishing their sisterly bond. One day while playing a near tragedy strikes Anna. Apparently Elsa has magical powers that produce snow and ice from her fingertips. As the sisters are playing on the ice playground

MEROLA OPERA PROGRAM
THE MEROLA OPERA PROGRAM & LAFAYETTE LIBRARY PRESENT
Opera & Ornaments
A Merola Opera Program Holiday Concert
Saturday, December 7, 2013 • 2 pm
Lafayette Public Library • Community Hall
3491 Mt Diablo Blvd
\$10
Start your holidays with a concert featuring opera, Broadway and holiday favorites by Kristin Clayton & Bojan Knezevic!
For tickets, contact the Library at (925)283-6513 x103 or reserve@lllcf.org. Tickets may be available at the door.
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Comedy returns to the Rheem Saturday December 14th! Come join the laughs!

Bunjo's Comedy All Star Show
A Stand Up Comedy Showcase With Some of the Best Comedians in the Bay Area

Hosted By: Phil Johnson, Tim Krider, Sandra Rizzer, Dan Miras, John McKeever, Richard Severin, Emily East, Pete Wilcox, Tessa Anderson

Saturday December 14 @ 8PM (doors open at 7PM)
Tickets - \$12
www.lamorindatheatres.com or 925-388-0751
The New Rheem Theatre - 350 Park St., Moraga

Delicious Holiday Decorating

By Susie Iventosch



Shortbread snowflake edible ornaments

Photo Susie Iventosch

At the request to feature edible holiday ornaments, I was a little hesitant. Even though they can be charming and cute, they are usually not all that palatable. And, I must say, my first experiment for this holiday column was a complete disaster! It was a cinnamon spice cookie of sorts, made strictly from applesauce, cinnamon, allspice and nutmeg. While it smelled divine, it did not taste good at all, and when I hung the snowflakes from a ribbon in the window, the hole ripped apart and the snowflakes fell to the floor!

The second attempt was exceedingly better. I decided upon a real shortbread cookie, made with cinnamon and decorated with Royal Frosting and sparkling

sugars. They turned out to be so beautiful and the only tough decision was whether to hang them as decorations or eat them right away!

We did a little bit of both.

I think you will have fun making these cookies. You can be as artistic as you want with the frosting decorations and you can even use food coloring to make different colors, if you like. I just stayed with the white, since these are snowflakes. But, if you decide to make Christmas trees, Santas, or snowmen, you can definitely use different colors in the frosting! Have fun and don't snitch too much of the dough along the way. It is delicious even before it is baked!

Susie Iventosch is the author of *Tax Bites* and *Tasty Morsels*, which can be found at Across the Way in Moraga, www.amazon.com, and www.taxbites.net. Susie can be reached at suziventosch@gmail.com.

This recipe can be found on our website:

www.lamorindaweekly.com. If you would like to share your favorite recipe with Susie please contact her by email or call our office at (925) 377-0977.



Cinnamon Shortbread Snowflake Cookie Ornaments

(Makes approximately 2-3 dozen cookies, depending upon the size of your cookie cutters)

Cookies

INGREDIENTS

1 cup (2 sticks) unsalted butter at room temperature
3/4 cup powdered sugar
1 teaspoon cinnamon
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
2 1/4 cups all-purpose flour

Decoration Materials

1 recipe Royal Frosting (below)
1 jar of white shimmery decorative sugar
Silver and white shimmer dust, or edible glitter
Ribbons (1/2 to 5/8 inch wide and roughly 20 to 24 inches long) for hanging cookies for decorations

DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 300 degrees. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.

In a large mixing bowl, beat butter with powdered sugar until creamy. Add cinnamon and vanilla and mix well. Finally, blend in flour. Form dough into a ball and wrap with plastic wrap. Refrigerate for about 20 minutes, or until fairly firm.

Roll dough out onto a floured cloth or board, to a thickness of approximately 1/4 inch. Cut out with snowflake-shaped cookie cutters and place onto baking sheet, about 1 inch apart.

Make a hole about 1/2 inch from the top of each cookie, before baking, using a regular plastic straw.

Bake for 20-25 minutes, or until slightly browned on edges. If the holes have closed up slightly, just use the same straw and carefully reform hole while cookie is still hot and soft.

Cool completely. Thread ribbons through holes of each cookie and tie a knot in the top. Decorate with Royal Icing (recipe below) and immediately sprinkle each cookie with edible glitter and sugars, before icing hardens. Allow to sit for half an hour or until icing is firm, before hanging decorations.

Royal Icing

I had never made this frosting before for decorating cookies, but I will definitely use it again! Not only is it delicious, but easy to make using meringue powder in place of egg whites, and dreamy for decorating the cookies. It is so easy to use in the decorating bag, and it hardens up well, so that the decorations don't run off the cookies! Although I did not try it, I believe you could easily add a little vanilla extract in place of some of the water.

INGREDIENTS

1 3/4 cups powdered sugar
4 1/2 teaspoons meringue powder (available under the Wilton brand at Michael's or Deb El at most markets)
4 tablespoons warm water
Edible shimmer dust (silver and white)
Sparkly white decorating sugar

DIRECTIONS

Place all ingredients in a large mixing bowl. Beat on medium-high speed of an electric mixer until well-blended and stiff peaks form and frosting looks creamy. Tint with food coloring, if desired. (If you don't use the frosting right away, cover completely either with plastic wrap or a damp towel over the top of the bowl, so it does not dry out. I just spooned it immediately into the decorating bag, and then put the whole thing in a Ziploc, until ready to decorate cookies.)

Spoon into a decorating bag, fitted with a #2 decorating tip. (You will need a plastic coupler, also, to affix the tip properly onto the bag. These items are available through Kohl's online or Michael's craft stores.)

While you are making your snowflake ornaments, you may wish to sip a mug of Hot Apple Cranberry Spiced Cider.

Hot Apple-Cranberry Spiced Cider

INGREDIENTS

4 cups cranberry juice
6 cups apple cider
Peel of one orange
1 two-inch piece of fresh ginger root, peeled and sliced (optional)
1/2 teaspoon whole clove
3 cinnamon sticks
GARNISH
cinnamon stick
orange slices
fresh cranberries

DIRECTIONS

Combine all ingredients in a crock pot and heat for 4-6 hours. Serve hot in mugs and garnish with orange slices, fresh cranberries and cinnamon stick.

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LAMORINDA SPORTS

Miramonte Football Marches On!

Mats in NCS final; Cougars beat Dons in quarterfinals, lose in semifinals

By Michael Sakoda



Ray Clark and Drew Anderson

Photos Gint Federas

At the No. 3 seed, **Miramonte** (11-2) surprised Clayton Valley Charter in the semi-finals of the NCS playoffs last week. The Mats upset the defending champion 44-38 to advance to the NCS Division II title game. The Mats will take on No. 1 Casa Grande at 7 p.m. this Saturday, Dec. 7 at Rancho Cotate High School in Rohnert Park.

Clayton Valley had just one game plan—run the ball—and for much of the game, they did it successfully. The Eagles attempted just two passes—one from their quarterback, one from their running back.

The Mats' defense struggled to stop Miles Harrison, the junior standout who rushed 33 times for 237 yards, three touchdowns and three two-point conversions. But late in the third quarter, with Miramonte leading 29-22, the Eagles went for it on a fourth-and-six from the Miramonte 26 yard-line, and Harrison was brought down after only two yards by a battalion of Mats defenders.

Miramonte then went 76 yards downfield and quarterback Drew Anderson (27/38 339 yards, 3 TD, 1 rushing TD), capped the drive with a 10-yard touchdown pass to his younger brother, Ryan (his second of the night).

In the fourth quarter, Clayton Valley, on fourth-and-14 from the Mats 22, found the end zone on a flea flicker from Harrison to quarterback Gabe Taylor, their only completed pass on the night. After the 2-point conversion,

Miramonte still led 36-30. The Mats would score again, getting a rushing touchdown from Ray Clark, after driving 67 yards downfield, but Clayton Valley's Xavier Crawford returned the subsequent kick 92 yards for a touchdown, cutting the lead back to six, 44-38.

With 3:27 left in the game, the Mats faced a fourth-and-seven from the Eagle's 48, and head coach Jack Schram left his offense on the field. "I've got extreme confidence in our offense," he said after the game. "I knew they could get it done."

He was right. Drew Anderson completed a short pass to Dominic Paoletti, who hurdled a defender and raced to the Eagle's 33-yard line, getting the first down and sealing the game.

"They were the defending champions," Schram said. "We knew we had to go through them to have a shot at the Division II Championship, and we stepped up, and we did it."

The week before, Miramonte ousted No. 6 Northgate to get to the semi-finals. The game on Nov. 23 was an offensive clinic, with the teams combining for 1,078 yards of total offense.

Drew Anderson led his team throwing for 358 yards and six touchdowns. Ryan Anderson caught four passes for 112 yards and three touchdowns.

Crosstown rival **Campolindo** (11-0) had a tough time against No. 3 El Cerrito (10-2) in the NCS Division III semi-finals; the Cougars lost 49-34.

The real story of this game was El Cerrito's defense. Campolindo came into the contest averaging 35 points per game, and while they put up 34, they scored their final two touchdowns late in the fourth quarter when the game was already out of reach.

The Cougars had just eight first downs and quarterback Andrew Zolintakis (15/21 290 yards, 3 TD), who went virtually untouched against Acalanes, was sacked five times and hurried several more.

"(Nick) Fadelli had a good game the first time we played (El Cerrito)," head coach Kevin Macy said earlier in the week. "But we're going to have to count on him to do more this time."

Unfortunately, Campo's run was non-existent Friday night. Campo's backs combined for a mere 25 yards on 28 carries while El Cerrito ran the ball 37 times for 311 yards. Despite two rushing touchdowns from Isaac Christian and a receiving touchdown apiece from Tyler Petite, Preston Kilwein, and Justin Dunn, Campo just didn't have enough to move on to the NCS Championship.

"We beat them earlier in the year," Macy said. "I think they were just licking their chops...ready to get a piece of us."

The week before, Campolindo defeated No. 7 **Acalanes** (8-3) in the quarterfinals 38-14. The Cougars got two rushing touchdowns from Fadelli in the first quarter. But Acalanes fought back, scoring on a 9-yard rushing touchdown from Peter Mitchell to open the second quarter.

Campo's offense was explosive—Fadelli ran for 152 yards and two touchdowns; Zolintakis went 14/21 for 238 yards and two touchdowns; Christian found the end zone twice, once on a reception and once on a carry—but it was their defense that won them the game.

The Dons entered the half trailing 21-7.

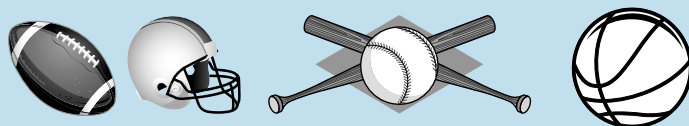
In the fourth, Acalanes capped a 70-yard drive with a 57-yard touchdown pass from Harrington to Brett Merrill, but Campo added a touchdown and a 43-yard field goal from sophomore Matt Blair, earning a 38-14 victory.

"We took a big step forward...eight wins...a playoff win," said Acalanes head coach Mike Ivankovich. "You lose and it's disappointing, but we can't lose sight of what we accomplished this year...what we hope to build on next year."



Tyler Petite is stopped by El Cerrito. Petite had a touchdown in the loss.

Youth Sports Registration



Lamorinda Rugby Football Club

Registration is now open for the 2014 rugby season! Season runs January through March for youth, and through April for HS. All ages welcome. Girls welcome through age 11. No prior rugby experience necessary. Practices are located at the Wilder Fields in Orinda. Youth parent informational meeting is scheduled for Nov. 20 at 7pm in the Miramonte HS Cafeteria. The High School level team is hosting a recruiting event at 6:00 PM on December 4th at Round Table Pizza in Lafayette for anyone in high school interested in learning more about us. Find out more about our team and how to register online at www.lamorindarugby.com. Contact head youth coach Doug Pearson for more info: dpearson@lee-associates.com. For High School, contact Recruiting Director Tim Mascheroni at tim@mascheroniconstruction.com.



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Campo Volleyball Season Ends in NorCal Tournament

By Brad Kvederis



Natalie Meniktas

Photos Gint Federas

A season that began with high hopes and a lot of question marks came to a bitter-sweet end for Campolindo on Nov. 26, as the Cougars bowed out of the CIF girls' volleyball state championships with a 3-1 opening-round loss at Christian Brothers Sacramento. Campolindo finished the season 25-10, and 12-0 in the DFAL.

After narrowly winning the first set, Campo reached game point in the second – but the host Falcons fought back, scoring four straight points to win in overtime and tied the match at 1-1. Christian Brothers then won the third set handily and cruised the rest of the way to win 23-25, 26-24, 25-11, 25-21.

The missed opportunity to go up 2-0 was deflating for Campo, according to head coach John Vuong, who cited it as the turning point of the match.

"I think the big back-breaker was in the second set, when we were up 24-22 and couldn't

close out. It took a lot out of our younger players... [they weren't] able to recover," Vuong said. "Christian Brothers has great outside hitters, but they were playing better defense than us that night."

Tuesday's season finale came on the heels of a heartbreaking five-set defeat at the hands of Bishop O'Dowd High in the North Coast Section championship match the previous weekend. The Cougars overcame a 2-0 deficit in that contest – and thought they had won when an O'Dowd player's spike attempt went out long on match point. But while the players were celebrating, the officials reversed the call after a lengthy delay and ordered the teams back on to the court; O'Dowd won the next two points to clinch the title. (For more about that game, see our online article posted Nov. 24, www.lamorindaweekly.com/archive/issue0719/Cougars-Lose-Heartbreaker-in-NCS-finals.html.)

Despite the back-to-back tough losses to end the year, Vuong said his team still considers the season a success. While they couldn't duplicate last season's run all the way to the state championship game, they swept their conference schedule and came a fingertip away from repeating as section champions – no mean feat for a team that was supposed to be having a down year.

"With eight seniors graduated last year, many thought we were rebuilding. But going 12-0 in league and (being) a section finalist were great accomplishments," Vuong said. "Our players responded to their fullest and competed every night, and challenged each other in practices. That is all we could ask for."

Campolindo looks to be well-positioned for next season, with libero Natalie Meniktas the team's lone graduating senior. Team MVP Kelley Wirth will return for her senior season, and key front-line players Kirsten Sibley and Emma Johnson will be juniors.

"We will expect a bigger season next year," Vuong said. "A lot of things could happen with one year of club volleyball. And the players will be more mature. Our goal is to play in December, and it doesn't change no matter who we have."



Kelley Wirth



Emma Johnson and Kirsten Sibley celebrate after scoring a point

Waiting for the Missing Piece

Basketball teams prep for preseason without key football players

By Conrad Bassett



Acalanes looks to rebuild after a tough year.

Photos Gint Federas

The Lamorinda stronghold on the Diablo Foothill Athletic League boys' basketball title was wrestled away last year by Dublin High School. The three local teams would like nothing better than to bring the banner back to Lamorinda this year.

Last year's DFAL runner-up, Campolindo finished at 9-3 in league and 22-9 overall. The Cougars had an outstanding post-season run that took them to the NorCal Division III championship game, where they were edged out 55-52 by Sacred Heart Cathedral (San Francisco).

Head coach Matt Watson returns for his sixth year and looks forward to a strong season. "Getting so close to playing for a state title has pushed these kids to work even harder and to make another title run," said Watson.

However, the Cougars will be off to a slow start because several key contributors to the basketball team are also on the football team, whose playoff run kept them on the field and away from the court.

The basketball team was down four players to football. Two of last year's starters, seniors Andrew Zolintakis and Justin Dunn, are football starters, and senior Isaac Christian and sophomore Sterling Strother are also on the team.

In the meantime, the team was preparing as best as it could. Starting guard Matt O'Reilly returns for his junior season along with seniors Walter Brennan, Luke Hoyle, Ryan Smith, Andrew Cassidy and junior Chris Hansen. Each player will be asked to fill the roles left by graduated seniors Tyler Garrison, Jack Evans, John Schmitz and Matt McCue.

"We have some size, speed and shooters and we should be very competitive on a nightly basis," said Watson.

The Cougars have a highly competitive pre-league schedule, including games against perennial powerhouses Burlingame and St. Mary's Stockton and a rematch against Sacred Heart Cathedral.

Over in Orinda, Drew McDonald is back for his second season as head coach at Miramonte. Last year, the Matadors went 17-11 overall and 8-4 in the DFAL.

McDonald's first order of business is replacing six graduated seniors, including three-time all-DFAL player Kiran Shastri, who is currently averaging 12 points per game as a freshman at Chaminade University in Hawaii.

"We're looking for senior Ray Clark, jun-

iors Moneer Mujaddidi and Jake Linares, who contributed off the bench last year, to step up and play bigger roles," McDonald said. "We're expecting sophomore Will Hicks to help us this year after playing JVs last year."

The Mats also return all-DFAL guard senior Joey Goodreault and junior guard Jackson Wegener.

McDonald faces the same challenges as Watson, as he also starts the season without his dual-sport athletes. There are as many as 11 varsity and junior varsity players still playing football, including senior Drew Anderson.

As always, the Mats will tackle an aggressive pre-season schedule including the prestigious Mission Prep Christmas Classic in San Luis Obispo, a tournament that traditionally has some of the top teams.

This season, Acalanes basketball will start a new era under first-year head coach Bill Powers, who comes to the Dons after several successful years at Monte Vista in Danville and as an assistant at the junior college level.

Powers takes over a team that struggled at times. The Dons finished 8-18 overall and went 3-9 in the DFAL.

The Dons will build around a core of seniors. "The group of seniors is amongst the most special groups I have seen," said Powers. "They inspire me."

Seniors who will be important for the Dons' success are Zack Kisner and Matt Thomas, whose three-point shooting will stretch opposing defenses. Senior Ross Teichman will help as well. "[He] has a strong inside-outside game," said Powers.

Inside, the Dons return senior Buster Souza who was a force a year ago in scoring, rebounding, and shot blocking.

The Dons will also face a transition as football players switch gears. Seniors Brett Merrill and Kyle Kinnear just finished football and "are banged up" but should be ready to contribute quickly.

The point guard position will be manned by two new varsity players, junior Joey Hewitt and sophomore Andrew McKendell.

Powers will also be challenging his team early with away games at Sir Francis Drake and St. Mary's Stockton.

All three teams will be on the road for pre-season. DFAL regular season action begins on Jan. 7.



Miramonte is still down players from the football team.



Campolindo is ready to build on last year's success.



Photo provided

Mats' Alum Catches Fire in College Game

Submitted by Joanne Lin

Former Miramonte basketball star Kiran Shastri scored a game-high 21 points to lead the Chaminade Swords to an 86-63 win over Saint Martin's. Shastri came off the bench and went 6-for-10 on three's to pace the Swords in the final night of the PacWest/GNAC Challenge. Miramonte alums Derek Lin, Nathan Evans, Julian Deloso and Griffin Schram, among others, went to the game to cheer on their former classmate.

LMYA Soccer Champions

Submitted by Jim Malmquist



Photo provided

Team Barcelona defeated the Quakes in the LMYA 7th-8th grade boys' finals on Nov. 16 by a score of 4-2.

Barcelona's Grant Malmquist scored just minutes into the game assisted by a cross from Daniel Dinnerman. Several minutes later, Roberto Natho banged in a shot from outside the goal box to put Barcelona up 2-0. Sebastian Varela then scored from the left wing. In the closing seconds of the first half, the Quakes' Ian Archer dribbled the ball around several defend-

ers and scored a left-footed goal just before the whistle blew.

The Quakes took that momentum into the second half and played with a lot of heart, scoring another goal on a corner kick from Andrew Torres to Simon Oh. Barcelona's defense stepped up and stopped the Quakes' attack - Robbie Goldman and Karl-Erik Mills led the defensive charge for Barcelona, along with keeper Zachary Varela. Zach Goldman sealed the victory with a goal late in the final period.



Photo provided

Second Place at Big Sur

Submitted by Sheryl Cardiff

Ryan Cardiff took second place in the Big Sur Half Marathon in the men's 16-19 age group. Cardiff, a sophomore at Acalanes, is an avid tennis player. With a time of 1:23:07, Cardiff finished just 20 minutes behind the elite Olympic-class runners who took the top spots in the overall category.

Gaels Reach National Finals

Submitted by Tony Samaniego



Photo provided

The Saint Mary's rugby team made it to the finals of the Collegiate D1A National Championships of Sevens Rugby tournament on Nov. 24. The Gaels took on Arkansas State University, but came up short, losing 32-12.

The Sevens campaign started in August. After several tournaments, the Gaels qualified for the championship tournament after going 6-0 in the Battle of the Bay. The team's record in five tournaments was 27-3.



U11 girls' Navy team



U11 girls' Red team



U15 girls' Navy team



U10 boys' Navy team



U12 boys' Navy team

Lamorinda Soccer Club Score Report

Submitted by Corinna Sassano

The U10 girls' team placed second in the gold bracket of the State Cup Final on Nov. 17 in Manteca.

The U11 girls' Navy team defeated the Pleasanton Rage, 1-0, in the State Cup. The team demonstrated a suffocating defense that denied the Rage all but a couple of opportunities. The girls had just enough offense to break through the Rage's stacked defense.

The U11 girls' Red team beat the U11 White team at the Impact Malia's tournament in Brentwood on Nov. 23-24.

The undefeated U15 girls' Navy team are Champions of NorCal NPL Premier 2 Division. The girls locked in first place with two convincing wins in their final two games against Merced FC (4-2) and San Ramon Azurri (2-0) in the Nor-Cal NPL Fall Showcase.

The U10 boys' Navy team won the State Cup Final on Nov. 17.

The U12 boys' Navy team finished the season No. 1 in the Gold division of the NorCal Premier league.

The U12 boys' Navy team was also one of many teams to participate in the club-wide shoe donation program

Lamorinda Rugby Alums at Collegiate Level

Submitted by Steve Peterson



Recent graduates now at Cal: Miles Honens ('12), Karl Thornton ('12), Jamie Howells ('13)

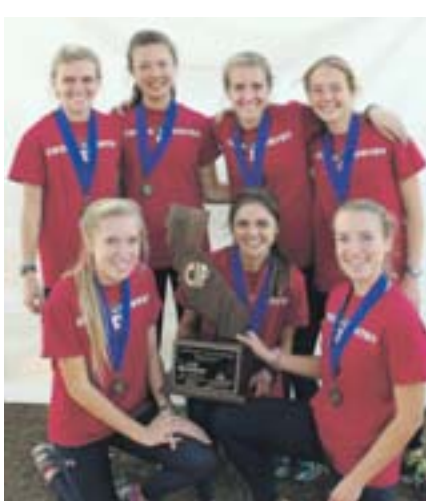
Photo Tom Howells

Several Lamorinda Rugby alums participated in the recent Battle of the Bay Collegiate 7's Rugby Tournament. Many current players were on hand to watch their club-mates on the pitch and enjoy some great, fast-paced action.

Three members of Lamorinda's state championship winning team from two years ago represented Cal: Miles Honens ('12), Karl Thornton ('12), and last year's Backs' captain, Jamie Howells ('13), who got his first minutes and first points for the Bears. Other Lamo alum sightings included Chase Herring ('10) and Declan McNiece ('12) of St. Mary's, Tom Howells ('11) and Connor Rosenbaum ('12) of UCLA, and Will Kopas ('08) coaching UC Davis.

Campo Cross Country Shines at State Meet

Submitted by Chuck Woolridge



Photos provided

At the 2013 California cross country state championships, senior Aidan Goltra churned out his second state title.

Goltra's 15:02 performance was just shy of the division record, and qualifies him for the Nike National Championships to be held in Portland on Dec. 7.

The boys' team finished fourth place overall. Wrapping up their senior season in style, both Ben Weinberg and Will Moran improved over their 2012 state meet times by 34 seconds.

The Cougar girls, who headed to Fresno as the No. 2 team in the division, came out on top with a team title.

After a heartbreaking 2011 performance that saw the team title slip away in the final mile, and an injury-plagued 2012, the three-time state championship veterans juniors Brighie Leach, Mary Orders, Rachel Johnson and senior Haley Shipway refused to lose.

All four athletes set new career bests for both course and distance. Leach separated from the fray early, running in the second spot. Her time of 17:51 is now third on the school record list.

Orders and Johnson held on to top 20 positions. Orders' performance was over a minute faster than her previous state meet while Johnson knocked 27 seconds off her 2012 mark.

The decisive factor for the 2013 squad was its insurmountable depth, provided by freshman Sarah Cella and Shipway, who crossed under the finish banner in 32nd and 34th place, respectively.



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Lamorinda OUR HOMES

Lamorinda Weekly Volume 07 Issue 20 Wednesday, December 4, 2013



Digging Deep with Cynthia Brian ...read on page D6

Orinda Oaks Grows Amid the Acorns

By Cathy Dausman

A new Orinda development is taking place above Moraga Way, where the traffic noise quiets and Orinda hills fall away to frame Mount Diablo in the east. It is Orinda Oaks, a cul-de-sac of residential homes on a new street – Miller Court – constructed by Signature Development Group.

Ironically, the development's grand opening took place on a day where the fog obscured the views, said Beaubelle Group realtor Kellie Beaubelle. When *Lamorinda Weekly* visited the site, however, there wasn't a cloud in the sky, and construction crews busily roamed the hillside in trucks and tractors.

The development is just a ridgeline east of the Wilder development and can be accessed most directly from the south end of Stein Way. Orinda



Master bedroom

Photos provided

Oaks homes are listed “at a price point near Wilder,” Beaubelle said. Three have been sold; one is currently occupied. Available home sizes range from 3,700 to 3,968 square feet; the last phase will offer homes over 4,000 square feet. Scott Zengel of Signature Development Group said lot sizes range from 1 to 8 acres. And because the entire development is just 12 homes “you won't have construction for years and years,” Beaubelle added.

The two-story home development (the lone single story home is already sold) contains a mix of modern, Spanish and traditional styles; each has a large, open floor plan. Master bedrooms are located on the main living level and houses have at least three full baths and two or three bay oversized garages.



View of Mt. Diablo

...continued on page D4

Lamorinda Home Sales recorded

City	Last reported:	LOWEST AMOUNT:	HIGHEST AMOUNT:
LAFAYETTE	10	\$725,000	\$2,100,000
MORAGA	10	\$347,000	\$1,598,000
ORINDA	8	\$712,000	\$1,290,000

Home sales are compiled by Cal REsource, an Oakland real estate information company. Sale prices are computed from the county transfer tax information shown on the deeds that record at close of escrow and are published five to eight weeks after such recording. This information is obtained from public county records and is provided to us by California REsource. Neither Cal REsource nor this publication are liable for errors or omissions.

LAFAYETTE

- 3291 Beechwood Drive, \$735,000, 2 Bdrms, 1589 SqFt, 1941 YrBlt, 11-5-13
 3539 Boyer Circle, \$875,000, 4 Bdrms, 2464 SqFt, 1950 YrBlt, 10-29-13
 32 Brookdale Court, \$1,058,000, 4 Bdrms, 2278 SqFt, 1960 YrBlt, 10-30-13
 974 Janet Lane, \$1,040,000, 3 Bdrms, 1473 SqFt, 1951 YrBlt, 10-30-13;
 Previous Sale: \$845,000, 12-07-06
 129 Jordan Place, \$1,645,000, 4 Bdrms, 3288 SqFt, 2006 YrBlt, 11-1-13;
 Previous Sale: \$1,910,000, 02-14-07
 1946 Marion Court, \$1,625,000, 3 Bdrms, 3477 SqFt, 1984 YrBlt, 11-1-13;
 Previous Sale: \$1,850,000, 09-27-05
 3370 Mildred Lane, \$725,000, 3 Bdrms, 1154 SqFt, 1954 YrBlt, 11-1-13
 3545 Oconner Drive, \$976,500, 2 Bdrms, 1154 SqFt, 1939 YrBlt, 11-4-13
 1141 Upper Happy Valley Road, \$2,100,000, 5 Bdrms, 4558 SqFt, 1967 YrBlt,
 10-31-13; Previous Sale: \$1,550,000, 10-24-12
 3300 Walnut Lane, \$795,000, 3 Bdrms, 1163 SqFt, 1950 YrBlt, 10-29-13;
 Previous Sale: \$600,000, 10-20-09

MORAGA

- 1478 Camino Peral #A, \$347,000, 2 Bdrms, 1272 SqFt, 1970 YrBlt, 10-31-13
 755 Camino Ricardo, \$1,117,000, 4 Bdrms, 2082 SqFt, 1966 YrBlt, 11-4-13;
 Previous Sale: \$765,000, 08-08-01
 3868 Campolindo Drive, \$1,225,000, 4 Bdrms, 2539 SqFt, 1971 YrBlt, 10-29-13;
 Previous Sale: \$12,500, 06-08-71
 171 Corliss Drive, \$1,598,000, 5 Bdrms, 3176 SqFt, 1965 YrBlt, 11-5-13;
 Previous Sale: \$900,000, 04-10-02
 89 David Drive, \$1,375,000, 4 Bdrms, 2544 SqFt, 1971 YrBlt, 10-31-13;
 Previous Sale: \$1,040,000, 05-11-07
 92 Devin Drive, \$1,099,000, 4 Bdrms, 2122 SqFt, 1960 YrBlt, 10-25-13
 69 Miramonte Drive, \$565,000, 2 Bdrms, 1762 SqFt, 1964 YrBlt, 11-1-13
 1731 St. Andrews Drive, \$660,000, 2 Bdrms, 1464 SqFt, 1974 YrBlt, 10-29-13;
 Previous Sale: \$315,000, 01-23-96
 21 Tamarisk, \$729,000, 3 Bdrms, 1819 SqFt, 1985 YrBlt, 10-23-13;
 Previous Sale: \$759,000, 07-29-04
 161 Westchester Street, \$838,500, 3 Bdrms, 2148 SqFt, 1979 YrBlt, 10-23-13;
 Previous Sale: \$869,000, 08-21-07

ORINDA

- 372 Dalewood Drive, \$1,230,000, 3 Bdrms, 3553 SqFt, 1979 YrBlt, 11-6-13;
 Previous Sale: \$1,139,500, 11-13-02
 63 Davis Road, \$1,082,000, 2 Bdrms, 2085 SqFt, 1948 YrBlt, 10-25-13
 16 Estabueno Drive, \$1,125,000, 3 Bdrms, 2134 SqFt, 1953 YrBlt, 10-29-13
 316 Glorietta Boulevard, \$1,290,000, 3 Bdrms, 2732 SqFt, 1952 YrBlt, 10-28-13
 120 Goodfellow Drive, \$912,000, 3 Bdrms, 1953 SqFt, 1966 YrBlt, 10-25-13;
 Previous Sale: \$384,000, 04-06-98
 7 Los Conejos, \$1,150,000, 3 Bdrms, 1973 SqFt, 1958 YrBlt, 11-1-13;
 Previous Sale: \$303,000, 06-25-97
 392 Moraga Way, \$712,000, 4 Bdrms, 1695 SqFt, 1958 YrBlt, 10-25-13
 11 Wanfleete Court, \$995,000, 4 Bdrms, 1580 SqFt, 1958 YrBlt, 10-25-13;
 Previous Sale: \$925,500, 09-13-05



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Brokers must accompany their client(s) and register them on their first visit to the Sales Center in order to be eligible for a broker commission. © 2013 Orinda Oaks Signature Development Group



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Orinda Oaks Grows Amid the Acorns

...continued from page D1



Photos provided

Visitors enter the model home through a generous hard surface patio surrounded by half walls, with high ceilings and wide-plank wooden flooring in its interior. The kitchen featured high-end stainless steel appliances; its center island and counter surfaces were quartz. The patio off the kitchen in the model home felt especially airy as the lot sloped away from the house on that side.

Upgrades to the model, noted in print room by room, included custom pendant lighting in the kitchen, a large suspended light in the family room, crown molding and cabinet color changes. The model home has already been sold, but it won't be occupied until the development is complete. If you have walked the model and still can't envision material options or upgrades, a design center in Livermore has the building materials on hand.

Beaubelle stressed the local involvement that went into developing Orinda Oaks. According to its website, Signature Development Group is a 20-year-old privately owned, locally managed Oakland-based firm. The Beaubelle Group of Coldwell Banker is an Orinda business, something SDG felt

made "a perfect match." After the tour, Beaubelle was asked if she was tempted to move in to one of the Orinda Oaks homes. "Oh no," she laughed. "I built my dream home 12 years ago!"

Orinda Oaks is exclusively represented by the Beaubelle Group of Coldwell Banker. For details, visit www.orindaoaks.com or call (925) 253-6337.



Game Room

Digging Deep with Cynthia Brian

Winter Wonders

By Cynthia Brian

“The best Christmas trees come very close to exceeding nature.” – Andy Rooney

A couple of days after Halloween, my niece who is a paramedic posted photos of her Christmas decorations on Facebook. Every inch of her home and garden were already festooned in holiday finery. Her tree was hung with sparkling ornaments, the mantel dressed with swags and candles, the bushes and flowerbeds glittering with lights and accents. She definitely inherited the celebratory spirit from our farm family. Every year since I was born, my parents made sure that at least two acres of our ranch were illuminated like a runway to enable Santa Claus to find his way to our remote locale. Not one inch of the gardens surrounding the house was left without adornment and twinkle lights. This was an outward display of pure inner love and I can't even imagine what this oasis looked like from the night sky. Even now, with seven great grandchildren to amuse, my gardener mother maintains this enchanted tradition. Magic happens to those who believe.

Every day those who tend gardens work hand in hand with Mother Nature. As the Grand Dame, she is always in charge. Gardeners are her faithful stewards, nurturing the land that feed our bodies while clothing our spirits with beauty, fragrance, and spiritual wellness. As the earth settles down for its winter nap, we also slow our pace in our outdoor spaces to begin preparations for the holiday celebrations and a new year.

...continued on page D6



Chestnuts on a horse chestnut tree are not edible! They are poisonous.

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2013 Lamorinda Closed Sales

STATUS	ADDRESS	CITY	PRICE
Sold	919 Dewing Ave.	Lafayette	\$588,000
Sold	2420 Cherry Hills Dr.	Lafayette	\$650,000
Sold	1841 Del Rio Dr.	Lafayette	\$721,000
Sold	1028 Carol Ln.	Lafayette	\$725,000
Sold	1062 Sierra Vista Way	Lafayette	\$728,000
Sold	3784 Mosswood Dr.	Lafayette	\$749,000
Sold	1042 Sunnybrook Dr.	Lafayette	\$750,000
Sold	432 Donegal Way	Lafayette	\$765,000
Sold	4133 Hidden Valley Rd.	Lafayette	\$809,000

STATUS	ADDRESS	CITY	PRICE
Sold	3530 Deer Hill Rd.	Lafayette	\$840,000
Sold	3432 Saint Marys Rd.	Lafayette	\$846,500
Sold	3444 Solana Ct.	Lafayette	\$900,000
Sold	1712 Chapparal Ln.	Lafayette	\$1,125,000
Sold	567 Silverado Dr.	Lafayette	\$1,185,000
Sold	3178 Teigland Rd.	Lafayette	\$1,200,000
Sold	3138 Diablo View Rd.	Lafayette	\$1,300,000
Sold	1111 Sierra Vista Way	Lafayette	\$1,410,000
Sold	3674 Happy Valley Rd.	Lafayette	\$3,190,000
Sold	2 Benedita Pl	Moraga	\$521,000

STATUS	ADDRESS	CITY	PRICE
Sold	343 Calle La Mesa	Moraga	\$933,000
Sold	1100 Country Club	Moraga	\$1,130,000
Sold	31 Via Hermosa	Orinda	\$690,000
Sold	49 Dolores Way	Orinda	\$809,000
Sold	149 Ardith Dr.	Orinda	\$928,000
Sold	149 Ardith Dr.	Orinda	\$968,000
Sold	18 Meadow Park Ct.	Orinda	\$980,000
Sold	25 Los Amigos	Orinda	\$1,050,000
Sold	81 Van Ripper Ln.	Orinda	\$1,150,000



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Digging Deep with Cynthia Brian

...continued from page D5

In order to sleep peacefully and dream of our gardens, we have to think about safety first. According to the Consumer Product Safety Commission over 10,000 people visit emergency rooms during the holidays due to decorating injuries from falls, burns, cuts, and shocks. More than 200 fires are started each year because of dried out trees.

Every tree is the perfect tree at Christmas, especially if you have children who choose. To put the magic in your winter wonderland while keeping your family secure and protected, here are a few suggestions.

- Find the freshest tree to light up your yuletide. Whether you cut it yourself, or buy it from your favorite lot, look for a tree with green needles that are difficult to pull from the branch. The tree's bottom needs to be sticky with resin and needles should not fall off when the tree is shaken.
- Keep all trees, branches, and flammable decorations away from fireplaces, radiators, and high traffic areas.
- Hang stockings on chimneys only when there is no fire burning.
- Buy new lights that have been tested by the Underwriters Laboratory (UL). Make sure that lights for your garden are labeled as outdoor capable. All lights need good wiring, devoid of any broken or cracked sockets, frayed wires, or loose connections. Only use extension cords that are designed for the outdoors and beware of the number of light sets that may be attached.
- Never add electric lights to metallic ornamentations as you could be exposing yourself to electrocution.
- When climbing ladders, use the buddy system.

Besides the conifers that beckon Santa's visit, fruit bearing trees provide wondrous gifts of nature during December. Persimmons, quince, chestnuts, and pomegranates offer exotic flavors for holiday gastronomy. The delicious and juicy Hachiya persimmon is the perfect fruit to flavor many holiday dishes, including Christmas puddings and fruitcakes. These beautiful pointed persimmons resemble bright orange ornaments hanging on the bare branches. If they are firm when picked, allow them to sit on a plate on the counter until soft. They can then be enjoyed raw or cooked, but only when they are mushy. On the other hand, the Fuyu persimmon is flat, hard, and delicious eaten like an apple or sliced into salads. Once it gets soft, it can also be used in dishes that suggest Hachiya. When planting persimmons, keep in mind that it may take up to 10 years for a bountiful yield.



Like glittering ornaments, Hachiya persimmons hang on a winter tree.

Another tree that is offering holiday bounty is the quince. This hard fruit resembling an ugly apple was a sign of love and commitment in ancient Rome. In Greek mythology, quince was the gift from Aphrodite, the goddess of love. It has been speculated that the forbidden fruit that tempted Eve in the Garden of Eden was actually the quince, although quince is inedible raw. When cooked, the aroma smells like rose petals, and the color of the flesh turns amber. The taste is a combination of pear and apple. Mixed with cinnamon, cloves, and nutmeg, quince is heavenly. The fruit is popular in Middle Eastern meat stews as well as British tarts and preserves.

"Chestnuts roasting on an open fire, Jack Frost nipping at your nose" are the popular lyrics from the Christmas song that conjures up images and happy memories of by-gone holiday seasons. On the branch, the chestnut is encompassed inside a prickly shell that looks like a small yellow tennis ball with spikes. When the shell opens, out falls a shiny brown nut. For those who grow chestnuts, now is the time to gather the fallen fruit. Slit the skin with a serrated knife (use caution as the shell is tough), blanch, roast, wrap in a cloth for five minutes before eating. **BEWARE:** the nuts from horse chestnuts and buckeyes are poisonous. They look like chestnuts but are not edible to humans or animals.

Pomegranates have symbolized hope, prosperity, fertility, and eternal life for over 4,000 years. Today they are

heralded as a 'superfood,' low in calories, high in antioxidants, vitamin C, potassium, and fiber. When planted in a sunny location, the small 6- to 12-foot tree is easy to grow with green glossy foliage and pretty orange flowers in summer and fall. When the fruit is red it is ripe and ready to be eaten raw. Cut the crown to remove the yellow pith while scoring the skin in quarters. Immerse the scored fruit in a large bowl of cold water. Holding the fruit under the water, break it into sections. The seeds will fall to the bottom of the bowl. Drain, dry, and enjoy.

Be prepared for sticker shock when you purchase any of these Christmas treats. Persimmons and pomegranates cost \$2-4 each in the produce aisle. Perhaps it's time to write a letter to Ole' St. Nick to put in a request for these special trees or other garden gadgets. What do you want or need for your garden? A gazing ball, purple rhododendron, pair of shears, birdbath, a money tree? He's making a list and checking it twice. December is the month for dreams to come true. Tie your Christmas to the outdoors. Let there be light!

Peace on earth. Good will to all. Be a child again on Christmas morning. May your stockings be filled with the seeds of winter wonders, hope, and love.



A live cypress tree in a container is a great replacement for cutting a tree.

Cynthia Brian's Gardening Guide for December

"Christmas is not in tinsel, lights, and outward show. The secret lies in an inner glow." – Wilfred Peterson, "The Art of Living"

What would the holidays be without the high voltage displays of thousands of twinkling lights illuminating our landscapes? We drive around neighborhoods oohing and aahing at the inflatable snowmen waving to us, Santa's sleigh on the rooftops tethered to his blinking reindeer, and flickering candy canes hanging from tree branches. The festival of lights is upon us as we hark the heralded angels and remember the reason for the season. Light a fire in your heart and shine brightly with love. Tidy your garden, then, enjoy the merriment.

- **CONSIDER** purchasing a living Christmas tree instead of a cut one. Garden centers have a selection of cypress, pine, fir, and even rosemary clipped to resemble a Christmas tree. Place your tree in a beautiful copper container, or wrap with festive fabric. Live trees will survive year after year and prices are reasonable.
- **FERTILIZE** shrubs and trees after all the leaves have fallen to provide food to last for the season.
- **RAKE** the over abundance of leaves in your gardens to add to the compost pile.
- **SURROUND** yourself with colorful orchids or amaryllis to chase away the winter blues.
- **PLANT** pansies, violas, and cyclamen to brighten your beds.
- **ADD** texture and drama to your indoor décor with spiky long lasting bromeliads.
- **INCORPORATE** plenty of organic matter into new beds that you are preparing for spring. Double dig to ensure the best results.
- **CLEAN** garden equipment, patio furniture, and remove leaves from water features. Sharpen shears and oil your tools to protect them from rusting.
- **SERVICE** mowers and tillers to avoid the spring rush.
- **PRUNE** dormant fruit trees including peach, apricot, prune, plum, apple, and pear. Save the wood for barbecues next summer.
- **CUT** any dead or damaged branches from all trees and shrubs.
- **CHECK** any stakes or ties on smaller trees to make sure they are sturdy enough to withstand strong winter winds.
- **WINTERIZE** your wonderland by pruning and shaping wisteria, honeysuckle, berry bushes, and perennials.
- **SORT** containers. Move any frost tender pots to a sheltered area.
- **CLEAR** vegetable beds that have finished cropping.
- **SOW** cover crops such as alfalfa, lima beans, and peas to increase the nitrogen in your soil.
- **PICK** persimmons, pomegranates, quince, and lemons to use in displays and holiday cooking.
- **CREATE** wreaths and garlands from branches of grapevines, redwoods, pines, and other conifers.
- **GATHER** pinecones, berries, twigs, and grasses to add to your arrangements.
- **ATTRACT** birds to your backyard throughout the cold months by keeping feeders filled and baths ready.
- **DECORATE** a sapling with dollar bills to give as the perfect house-warming gift!
- **DEADHEAD** roses for a final flush of blooms for the New Year.
- **ADD** sparkle and pizzazz to your porch by spraying your left over pumpkins and gourds gold, silver, or bronze. They'll look like jewels.
- **DRINK** a glass of tart cherry juice before bedtime to boost your melatonin and help you sleep better. Making a hot valerian tea works wonders too, but don't combine with alcohol or other sedative drugs.
- **PUREE** mint leaves with garlic and olive oil for a winter fresh pesto to put over pasta, bread, and fish.
- **LIGHT** up your decorations with battery powered twinkle lights, or other outdoor lights set to timers. Trees trimmed with lights inspire delight.
- **PICK** carrots for Rudolph and the reindeer, and don't forget to leave yummy persimmon cookies for Jolly St. Nick on Christmas Eve.



On a dreary day, there is nothing better than filling your rooms with orchids.

Get up, get out, and get growing while you celebrate the holly jolly. Give the greatest gift of all – the light of love. Believe in the magic and get glowing!

Happy Gardening to You!

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Cynthia Brian
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WINTER TIPS

Cleaning and thinning your trees may reduce the potential storm hazards without compromising the shade. In some situations the risk of failure cannot be reduced without removal of branches. Remember that healthy structurally sound trees are generally wind fast even when mature.

Storm damage is usually, but not always, related to structural problems that could have been addressed with proper structural training when the tree was young. Co dominant (two trunks with a narrow angle of attachment) trunks account for many trees failures. The hazard of wind damage is higher on the regrowth of trees that have been "topped".

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ORINDA



55 Oak Road

Build your dream home on this gorgeous oak studded lot with views of the hills. Terrific neighborhood of impressive homes close to town. Utilities/sewer at street.

\$219,000

ORINDA



40 Dos Osos

Incredible Orinda, San Pablo Dam, Mt. Diablo views + abundance of nature surrounds this supersized parcel bordering EBMUD land. Once in a lifetime opportunity raw land sale.

\$545,000

ORINDA



54 La Campana

Brilliant 1938 south facing lathe & plaster construction in heart of Country Club. 4bd/3ba with approximately 2608 sf. One of largest pools in Orinda, Trader Vics built BBQ poolside, gardens. A bit of TLC needed.

\$1,000,000

ORINDA



9 Las Piedras

Picturesque private 6bd/ 3ba home in park like setting w/ panoramic views, level lawn & recreational pool. 3745 sf classic custom w/ vaulted ceilings, walls of windows, hardwood floors, den, workout room, FR & well-appointed kitchen.

\$1,349,000

ORINDA



11 Fairway Drive

Rare find. Mid-century modern 4bd/ 3ba + 2 half bath home on 4th fairway. Private, large rooms, high ceilings, office, boudoir, great guest setup, updated kitchen. Grand, comfortable, very special property.

\$1,599,000

ORINDA



17 Tappan Lane

Vistas across Orinda come alive from all rooms of this spacious 4,155 sf with 6 bd/4 ba & 2 half ba. High ceilings & light & bright. Perfect for fun in the sun with yards, decks, pool, & vineyard on 1.15 acres.

\$2,389,000

ORINDA



11 Scenic Drive

Elegant updated 4bd/3.5ba, 4695 sf single-story estate property on .64 ac. Custom millwork, hand carved biblical stone fplcs, lrg bdrms, ofc, Chef's eat-in kit/fam.rm; guest house, pool, lrg patio, gorgeous landscaping.

\$3,350,000

ORINDA



92 Sandhill Road

Absolutely One-of-a-Kind Bay Area Home with captivating, sweeping views from every rm. Perched on foremost knoll of the coveted Sandhill enclave. Ideal for active family as well as large scale entertaining.

\$5,200,000

MORAGA



New Listing

137 Via Joaquin

Updated Moraga Townhome with Oversized loft, chef's kitchen, open floor plan, lots of windows, private setting. Inviting patio backs to open space. 75 Walk Score.

\$645,000

MORAGA



1743 Spyglass Lane

Moraga Country Club Forest Hills model, updates throughout include new kitchen appliances, granite counters, updated bath, hardwood floors, new carpet, paint & lighting.

\$950,000

MORAGA



Pending

30 San Pablo Court

Remodeled 4 bedroom & 2 bath home with high end finishes located on a huge flat yard. Desirable "The Bluffs" neighborhood with top rated Moraga & Campolindo schools.

\$1,275,000

LAFAYETTE



9 Mountain View Place

Fabulous updated 4bd/2.5ba, 3481 sf custom contemporary on .78 ac in tranquil setting. Spacious LR & DR, new hardwd flrs throughout, new eat-in kitchen/DR open to FR, voltaic solar panels, new redwood deck & more.

\$1,299,000



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