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Orion Academy Students Get Cozy with Reptiles

Submitted by Michelle Barker

Orion Academy student Julian Joseph with a slithery friend. Photo provided

Orion Academy students Fiona Fahey, Julian Joseph, Abby Stypula, Evan Wilmouth, P.J. Gibbs, Cole Beaty, Leighlin Geis and Henry Nanstad - and many creatures - came to the Walnut Creek home of Julia Barker and her family Dec. 8 for the Orion Reptile Party, which was one of the offerings from the auction at the Moraga school's Fall Fiesta that occurs annually in September. Orion Academy strives to educate secondary students with NLD, Asperger's Syndrome and other neurocognitive disorders in a program that equally emphasizes academics, social competency and pragmatic language development. Besides the students, the other guests included a giant African millipede, two tiger salamanders, a bearded dragon, a Mexican rosy boa, a red-tailed boa, an Argentine red tegu lizard, and a 12-foot albino Burmese python. The students all got to touch or hold these live creatures. Plus Jungle James, of Jungle James Animal Adventures, provided a wonderful educational program about each of the creatures, with many of the knowledgeable students chiming in with facts that they knew about the various animals. Besides the animals, the cupcake and ice cream sundae bars were also a big hit.

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