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Photo Ohlen Alexander

Christmas Cheer Soars When Snow Falls in Orinda

By Laurie Snyder

In an exclusive interview with Santa Claus, the Lamorinda Weekly has learned the jolly old elf will fly his sleigh totally on reindeer power this year – no movie-inspired turbine engine needed – thanks to a sudden December surge of Christmas Spirit.

The energy surplus has been traced to kids from 1 to 92 who have been unable to stop smiling since Dec. 14, when four truck-

loads of a mysterious white crystalline substance transformed the normally temperate Orinda Theatre Square into a winter wonderland.

"It's snow!" shouted one child with glee.

"My hands are cold," puzzled another.

"Oh. It's *real*," said a parent in a hushed tone.

Human sugar plums pirouetted in purple and pink snowsuits

while playful pals pelted one another as the scene unfolded in front of Barbacoa restaurant. The official version is that the snow was provided free of charge by Special Ice in Walnut Creek. But those in the know had a different take. Deborah Lopez's grandson, Chase, wisely assumed it came "from the mountains" while family friend, Blaine, theorized that someone brought it all the way from Oregon. ... continued on page A12

Quote of the Week:

"I believed so strongly in having a local government, in us being able to have a government in Orinda so that our constituents come locally and participate in creating our own destiny..."

Read A Year of Tumult and Triumph - page A6

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LAMORINDA WEEKLY

History of the Hen House

By Cathy Tyson



Sandwiched between the Round Up parking lot and the soon to be opened Cooperage restaurant sits the rustic historical Hen House building. The most recent proprietress

Photo courtesy Lafayette Historical Society of the Hen House, Elizabeth Kirkpatrick, has fond memories of the shop where she sold a wide variety of one-of-a-kind collectibles for a dozen years; ... continued on page A3

A Note About Our Newspaper Carrier

Blackhawk Enterprise (email – mailblackhawk@gmail.com) has been delivering the Lamorinda Weekly to all homes in Orinda, Lafayette and Moraga since January 2011. The team of eight drivers works hard to make sure you get your newspaper every other Wednesday. Blackhawk Enterprise and its team members would like to wish our readers a joyous holiday season and a very happy new year. You will also see a flyer from them in this week's issue.

Thank you,
Lamorinda Weekly



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Wonderful Life

A new holiday tradition debuts at Lafayette's Plaza Park - page B1.



Gaels' Great Start

The SMC Women's basketball team brings its A game - page C1.



Home Repairs

DIY or hire a pro? Tips for keeping your home in top shape - page D1.



We ♥ Lamorinda & Wish You A Wonderful Holiday Season!



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Lafayette Civic News

Public Meetings

City Council

Monday, Jan. 13, 7 p.m.
Lafayette Library & Learning Center,
Community Hall, 3491 Mt. Diablo Blvd.

Planning Commission

TBA
Lafayette Library & Learning Center,
Community Hall, 3491 Mt. Diablo Blvd.

Design Review

Monday, Jan. 27, 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, Jan. 15, 7:30 p.m.
AUHSD Board Room at 1212
Pleasant Hill Road, Lafayette
www.acalanes.k12.ca.us

Lafayette School District

Thursday, Jan. 16, 7 p.m.
Regular Board Meeting
Stanley Library
3477 School St., Lafayette
www.lafsd.k12.ca.us

Much Smaller Terraces Development Proposed

Plan includes deal with city for park facilities

By Cathy Tyson



Image provided

With great anticipation, a crowd at the Dec. 9 City Council meeting was eager to hear what city manager Steven Falk had to say about the ominously-titled agenda item "Option to Settle Potential Litigation Regarding the Proposed Terraces of Lafayette Development." There had been an avalanche of negative feedback about the proposed 315-unit multi-family project since it was introduced years ago. Litigation would have made it even less attractive.

Much to everyone's surprise, the proposal outlined a completely re-organized, massively smaller project that essentially divides the parcel into two sections, with the developer situating a maximum of 45 single family homes, representing an 85 percent reduction, clustered near the center of the property and the city purchasing land around the perimeter for a soccer and lacrosse field, much needed parking lot, a dog park, tot lot and

bike path.

"We think this is a great alternative," said attorney Allan Moore, who represents the landowner and developer. "We've been listening."

Longtime resident and parks, trails and recreation commissioner Carol Singer heartily thanked the City Council, noting she was "flabbergasted," and "completely amazed," describing all of the amenities the new proposal offers that are top priority

items for the parks and recreation commission. Another thank you came from Kendra Loveless who appreciated all the hard work and the developer being flexible, "this is so much better."

Not everyone was thrilled with the proposal. Resident Eliot Hudson pointed out how this represents a failure of the city, on land that should have been zoned LR-5, Low-Density Residential District, one house per five acres. Another person speculated whether the original controversial 315-unit version was simply a maneuver to make this iteration all the more attractive.

For roughly the last month the developer, O'Brien Land Company, and city leaders have had a series of meetings about the developer suing the city if the original project was denied. This new option-to-settle proposal seems like an elegant solution for the city, "given the risks to the city presented by that potential lawsuit, and particularly with California's Housing Accountability Act, which limits the ability of cities to deny an affordable housing proposal unless that proposal is inconsistent with both the General Plan land use designation and zoning ordinance that existed at the time the application was deemed complete," said Falk.

... continued on page A8

Don Tatzin Voted in as Mayor



Mayor Don Tatzin and wife Ellen.

Photo C. Tyson

At the last City Council meeting of the year Lafayette's outgoing mayor, Mike Anderson, announced the new mayor for 2014, Don Tatzin, after a unanimous vote by fellow council members. This marks Tatzin's record breaking sixth time as mayor, and his 29th year on the City Council. The mayorship is rotated annually among the five elected residents who comprise the City Council.

Tatzin praised Anderson as "the right person at the right time," especially for his role during the crisis of the washed out storm drain that was coincidentally located near Anderson's home. He also shared that An-

derson will be celebrating a "double retirement," retiring from his day job as Assistant General Manager of the Planning/Stewardship and Development Division of the East Bay Regional Park District, along with his retirement as mayor.

"It's been a very challenging year," said Anderson referring to the fire service coverage situation, and dealing with traffic congestion. "Lafayette is a place people want to come to because of its schools and restaurants; that's going to continue to be the case." Brandt Andersson was unanimously voted to be vice mayor for 2014. C. Tyson

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History of the Hen House

... continued from page A1



Photo courtesy Lafayette Historical Society

an old sign on the side of the building described the merchandise as "Haute Bohemian, Vintage Atelier, Bits with a Flair."

"The building moved a lot especially during the seasons," said Kirkpatrick, who described the floors bending "every which way - it was like you were walking on a ship. The clients at the Round Up had a habit of hitting the side of the building!"

Unfortunately time has not been kind to the structure originally built in 1920 on Tunnel Road, which is now Mt. Diablo Boulevard near Plaza Park, before being moved in 1939 to its current location at 20 Lafayette Circle, according to the Contra Costa County Assessor; there has been a fair amount of settling over the years, deferred maintenance, no insulation and critters that made for a challenging work environment.

Now leaning precariously to the left, the Hen House building has a colorful past. "They sold ice cream, hot dogs, soda pop, peanuts, candy, cigarettes, coffee and beer," recalled Edith Hunt Sterling in an oral history recorded in 1983 of Miller's Quality Ice Cream, the original shop. It was also known as Mother's Place, Ma's Kitchen or Ma Hunt's Kitchen.

Tunnel Road was eventually widened in the 1920s. "My aunt and uncle (Alice and Joe Hunt) had to give up their little road stand. They then bought a piece of property at the corner of Mt. Diablo Boulevard and Hough Avenue. ... It contained an inside counter, and tables for serving food," recalled Sterling.

Longtime resident Euphemia Speyer remembers that one of the

first five Lafayette telephones was in this building, and Mary Solon noted in an article, "If these walls could talk."

According to Solon, in the 1940s the *Lafayette Sun* occupied the building, then it housed a used furniture shop. During the '60s it was divided in two, with a wall down the middle, housing Happy Acre Realty Company and the Trading Post. In 1983 when Edith Sterling's oral history was recorded, the building was called Nifty Thrift Shop and run by Futures Explored for participants in their vocational programs. Nifty Thrift is still in business at a different location on Golden Gate Way.

Active 91-year-old and vice president of the Lafayette Historical Society Marechal Duncan visited and shopped at both Nifty Thrift and the Trading Post. "Don't remember what I purchased, but once I bought a gift for my wife, Doris," he said.

The building has been many things to many people in its almost 93-year history, from an ice cream shop, to a newspaper office and beyond, this hidden gem now needs a little love and lot of construction support. It's currently vacant after Kirkpatrick left earlier this year. Owner Mel Hunt said, "At the moment the building is in transition," so look for some changes in 2014, although no specific details were immediately available.

"The location is perfect for the right business," said Duncan, "whatever that may be."

Many thanks to the Lafayette Historical Society for their help with this story and for sharing their wonderful photos.

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Sun 9:30 - 8:00

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Moraga Civic News

Public Meetings

Town Council

Wednesday, Jan. 8, 7 p.m.
Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School,
1010 Camino Pablo

Planning Commission

Monday, Jan. 6, 7 p.m.
Moraga Library, 1500 St. Mary's Rd.

Design Review

Monday, Jan. 13, 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, Jan. 14, 7:30 p.m.
Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School Auditorium
1010 Camino Pablo, Moraga
www.moraga.k12.ca.us
See also AUHSD meeting page A2



Police Report

Stolen car found, 12/08/13 A report of an abandoned vehicle was matched with a report of the very same car being stolen from a Walnut Creek resident. The car had been parked on Miramonte Drive for more than a week. One witness stated an adult male exited the vehicle on Nov. 29. An early holiday gift for the car's owner.

Unwelcome mom, 12/07/13 Two roommates share a place on Ascot Drive. The mother of one of the roommates entered the apartment and refused to leave. The reporting person said that her roommate's mom is on the lease, but her presence was unwelcome at that time. Apparently the gal borrowed keys from the roommate's mom and the mom wanted the keys back. She had made a copy of the key, then returned the original to the mom.

Same apartment, later that night, 12/08/13 Moraga police responded to a loud party complaint after midnight about loud music, voices and college-age adults leaving the unit. The tenant was informed of the noise complaint and was issued a Town of Moraga Loud Party Ordinance notice. No further complaints

Party without the parents, 12/07/13 The parents of a 15-year-old girl picked up their daughter who was intoxicated at a Brandt Drive home and called to report that the homeowners were out of town and their 15-year-old son, who was home alone, hosted a small party that later got out of control. The teenage boy admitted that alcoholic beverages were being consumed, but wisely, he had cleaned up before the police arrived. Only four youths were at the home when cops rolled up; they did not appear to have been drinking, but they were picked up by their parents anyway. The teenage host was picked up by a family friend and supervised until his parents, the homeowners, arrived.

Out of gas, while slightly buzzed, 12/07/13 A 2009 Honda that was still warm to the touch was blocking the roadway at the intersection of Corliss Drive and Wakefield Drive at 2:40 a.m. Police located the registered owner who lived several blocks away. Turns out the car owner's 17-year-old daughter took the vehicle without permission and ran out of gas. While the officers were checking the scene the teenager showed up with a gallon of fuel. Nope, it wasn't fumes but the smell of alcohol the cops noticed. She submitted to a blood alcohol test that registered 0.015 percent, less than the threshold of 0.08 percent, but she is under age. The young lady, and her mom, agreed she would enter the Juvenile Diversion Program and was released to her mom at the scene.

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Passing the Gavel, Moraga Style

By Sophie Braccini



Ken Chew with Supervisor Candace Andersen Photo Sophie Braccini

The passing of the gavel on the Moraga Town Council should have been a piece of cake. In 2013 the all-male Town Council worked mostly in unison. The meeting Dec. 11 started with outgoing mayor Dave Trotter saying a few words about the

town's accomplishments in 2013 and his anticipation of what would ensue, namely the cooperative work with the school district, Saint Mary's College and Campolindo High School to share sports facilities, and the study of the hillside and ridgeline development

rules that may lead to amendments of the General Plan. But when it came time to nominate the next mayor, an awkward silence ensued.

Being mayor does not carry any particular voting privileges and the seat is rotated among elected officials, traditionally in the order of the number of votes received. Four years ago Councilmember Michael Metcalf tried unsuccessfully to convince his colleagues to forgo Ken Chew's rotation to the mayor's seat. And it was indeed Chew's turn again this time, according to the unwritten tradition. When Trotter asked for a nomination of the next mayor, all fell quiet. The mayor reminded his colleagues that he could not nominate someone himself. The heavy silence finally ended when Chew was nominated by Councilmember Phil Arth. On a 4 to 1 vote, with Metcalf opposed, Chew became the new mayor.

Councilmember Roger Wykle was uneventfully chosen to serve as vice mayor.

Chew spoke about his goals for the coming year. He invited residents to contribute their suggestions to the town's objectives. He highlighted four

areas under which the goals should fall: maintain excellence in stewardship; maximize existing resources for enhanced community use; celebrate Moraga's 40th anniversary; and enable the community as a whole to respond to opportunities as they arise.

"I'd like to have a new approach to setting goals for the town," Chew said. "I'd like to work as a team," which includes council members, staff and community. Then he proposed to hold the annual town goal setting session on the evening of Wednesday, Jan. 15 instead of the usual Saturday morning. "This is more respectful of staff and of the public," he noted. Both Metcalf and Trotter expressed concerns about the change. "It is my goal to enable town staff and the town manager to do their jobs," concluded Chew. "We ought to be able to leave them alone sometimes to do their jobs, with a set of goals and directions." The date of the goal setting session is yet to be confirmed.

To provide input regarding the town's objectives contact town manager Jill Keimach, jkeimach@moraga.ca.us or (925) 888-7020.

Upsurge of Commercial Theft in Moraga

By Sophie Braccini



Bill Snider checks a bill in the light. Photo Sophie Braccini

Bonita Vigil, who manages Safeway in Moraga, is no

slouch when people try to steal from her store. Although Moraga

is a quiet little town, she's recently had to deal with some unpleasant incidents. With the help of local police, the criminals were caught. At nearby Moraga Hardware and Lumber, Bill Snider also loses money to shoplifters and thieves; he is not afraid to confront them and has what is needed to prevent crime.

"One day or another you get caught," says Vigil. "It's not worth stealing a few hundred dollars."

"Recently people came at night and stole a whole cash register," Vigil recounts. "When the night crew came to ring a customer, they saw that it had been tampered with and emptied. The thieves were seen on tape and were caught soon after; after robbing another store in El Cerrito." Vigil would not disclose how much her store loses to

theft. Snider willingly shared a loss figure of \$30,000 for the year.

"Shoplifting is like drug addiction and alcoholism, it knows no boundaries," says Snider from experience catching people stealing in his store. "There are people who have lived here a long time, drive \$100,000 cars, who I've seen stealing." Snider confronts them and tells them to pay back what they've stolen over the years or never come back. And sometimes, he makes a citizen's arrest, detains the thief and calls the police. "I've owned this store for 13 years and I know who to watch," he said. "I've detained people twice this year." When that happens, Snider makes it very visible so word gets around that Moraga Hardware is not soft on crime.

... continued on page A11

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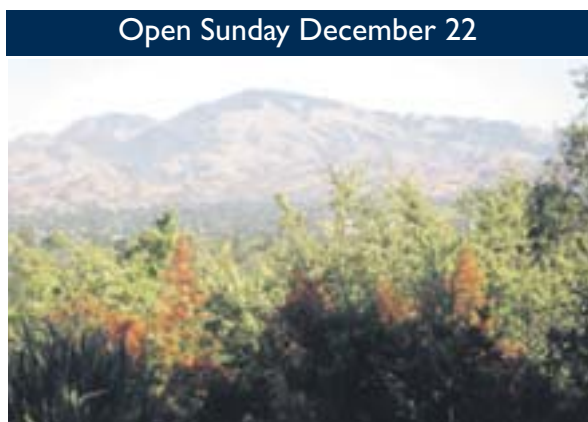
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Signs Under Scrutiny

By Sophie Braccini

About seven years ago the file regarding updates to the Town of Moraga's sign ordinance opened, and then closed. Planning director Shawna Brekke-Read recently found the staff strength required to revisit the issue. Meetings were conducted with the Chamber of Commerce to understand the needs of local retailers, other jurisdictions' regulations were studied and staff released a proposal to the Design Review Board on Dec. 9.

The proposed changes include allowing one portable sign per business (A-frame; maximum of 6 square feet per side); one illuminated window sign per business (but no blinking signs); banners to be displayed for one month (renewable after one month off); limiting the size and number of non-permanent free standing non-commercial signs (such as political signs) with a maximum of 60 days; wall signs of up to 100 square feet in commercial areas and externally illuminated outside wall signs without public review.

Ella Samonsky, associate planner, presented the new plan to the board. "The current language set minimal standards for all signs, and then we have special sections for

special use signs," explained Samonsky. "The process of approving signs relies heavily on design review. If the sign does not meet the standards, it has to go to the design review board for approval." She added that this current process allows for almost open-ended opportunities to request exceptions and modifications. The result is a possible lack of consistency, and a process that can be long and not always predictable as to its outcome.

"Sign regulation has to be content neutral (by law), so we are proposing to regulate based on zoning district, duration of the sign (temporary or permanent) and physical form of the sign," said Samonsky. Every sign application will then fall into a specific category with its specific set of standards. It will be easier for applicants to design compliant signs that won't necessitate long and costly public review. Open-ended modifications will not be allowed anymore, unless the situation presents a unique challenge.

The new code also requires new developments with multiple tenants to get a master sign program approved. For existing buildings with

three or more tenants, staff will require a plan when a major renovation or new monument sign is proposed.

Signs that would have a potential important visual impact will continue to be reviewed by the board, such as monument signs, cinema marquee and internally illuminated signs. Wall and shingle signs will be reviewed administratively. Window signs, temporary signs and signs conforming to a master sign program would not require a permit.

Members of the public who came to the meeting praised staff, for the most part, for clarifying and simplifying the process. Some asked for more flexibility. Harry Singh, of Mountain Mike's Pizza, asked to be allowed to have someone standing along Moraga Road with a sign from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. to signal the open buffet. Board members were not enthused by this request. Gayle Somers of Café Hacienda, who is working on another location near Chef Chao, asked to be able to signal her incoming business with a banner for as long as the remodel lasts. The board did not agree to allow a banner for longer than one month at a time.

... continued on page A8

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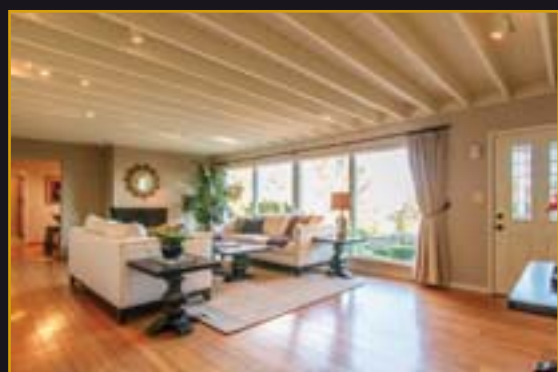
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Orinda Civic News

Public Meetings

City Council

TBA
Auditorium, Orinda Library,
26 Orinda Way

Planning Commission

Tuesday, Jan. 14, 7 p.m.
Auditorium, Orinda Library,
26 Orinda Way

Historical Landmark Committee

Tuesday, Jan. 28, 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, Jan. 13, 6 p.m.
OUSD Office, Vintage Building
25 Orinda Way, Suite 200
www.orindaschools.org
See also AUHSD meeting page A2

Correction, issue date Dec 4, 2013, "Orinda City Council Adopts Housing Element:"
The Orinda resident quoted in the article was Arthur Roth, not Arthur Ross.



Maureen Wilbur

Direct: (925)253-6311 Maureen@MaureenWilbur.com www.MaureenWilbur.com

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Happy Holidays to all and a Healthy and Prosperous 2014!

Maureen

A Year of Tumult and Triumph: Amy Worth Concludes Third Term as Mayor

By Laurie Snyder



Photo Ohlen Alexander

"WHEREAS, Orinda residents really do refer to Amy as the 'Mother of the 4th Bore' of the Caldecott Tunnel ... the City Council honors Amy Worth for her service as 2013 Mayor of Orinda, and thanks her for her timeless commitment and dedication to the citizens of Orinda."

Praised by her fellow Orinda City Council members as "a major powerhouse when it comes to Bay Area transportation issues," Amy Worth concluded her third term as mayor of the city of Orinda Dec. 3. Sue Severson and Steve Glazer were named mayor and vice mayor that

same night as Worth returned to her regular council seat.

In 2013, Orindans witnessed, quite literally, the light at the end of the tunnel when the Metropolitan Transportation Commission opened the Caldecott Tunnel's fourth bore and Bay Bridge eastern span. "For me as an Orinda City Council member, it's important that freeways work efficiently," explained Worth of her leadership as mayor and MTC's chair. "A lot of families are commuting for their jobs." Worth was also liaison to the Contra Costa Mayors' Conference, League of California Cities, As-

sociation of Bay Area Governments, Contra Costa County Transit Authority, Lamorinda School Bus Authority, Southwest Area Transportation Committee, and numerous other organizations.

Repair of the Tarabrook sinkhole and replacement of the Manzanita Bridge began. Ground broke on Eden's senior living facility, another Wilder playfield opened, and new homes sprouted from sites in Oak Springs, Orinda Grove and Wilder.

"I don't think we've had a year in many, many years that has been as challenging," observed Glazer, referring to months of four- and five-hour council meetings and calling Worth's leadership superb. "You were under the spotlight, I think, more than any mayor has been, in terms of the challenging issues that we've been facing as a city. And I just think that you've been amazing for your graciousness, and for your diplomacy, and for your kindness and inclusiveness."

"When you're a small city in the larger community like the 19 cities of Contra Costa County, or the San Francisco Bay Area Region," added Councilmember Victoria Smith, "you need to reach out and make connections and build those relationships with others so that you make sure that you get your fair share of the trans-

portation regional funds, of the Measure J and Measure C sales tax money. And Amy has been instrumental in doing that for us - in serving in a regional capacity, in serving outside of Orinda in order to represent Orinda's interests for all of us."

Said Worth, "Twenty-eight years ago when I walked door to door, working on incorporation, I believed so strongly in having a local government, in us being able to have a government in Orinda so that our constituents come locally and participate in creating our own destiny. And I think it's really worked so well in the 28 years, and this year we had an exceptional opportunity to have a lot more public meetings, a lot of participation, and it was really, really wonderful."

"I'm very pleased, after the end of this year, that Orinda residents can drive over a safe bridge, drive through a safe tunnel, and no more merging from four lanes to two. And, I'm also really pleased, for the first time in the history of Orinda, we have submitted a housing element to the state for certification. I think that's a great milestone for our community. And regionally, we've been able to plan for transportation investment and housing for our children and grandchildren as the region moves forward."

Orinda City Clerk Michele Olsen Reflects on Her Decade of Service to the Community

By Laurie Snyder

Time flies when you're a city official - especially when you advocate for engaging citizens in government like Michele Olsen. The Orinda city clerk since 2006, Olsen began working for the city 10 years ago. Her department, as defined by the Association of City Clerks of California, is one "within the municipal government upon which the city council, all City departments, and the general public rely for information regarding the operations and legislative history of the City."

Charged by state law with overseeing local elections, legislation, and Public Records, Political Re-

form, and Brown Act matters, Olsen also administers the Oath of Office to newly elected council members, and helps Orinda ensure "compliance with all federal, state and local statutes and regulations and that all actions are properly executed, recorded, and archived." Responsible for maintaining the Municipal Code and Conflict of Interest program, she is also the custodian of the city seal, and acts as the local filing officer for officials submitting Fair Political Practices Commission-required financial disclosures.

But Olsen, whose job requires her to be in tune with changing laws, government codes and tech-

nology, is also "old school" in one very interesting way. When she votes, she still does it at her designated polling place in Orinda so that she can feel connected to the process - and with her own kids right there watching and learning. "They're comfortable within government and the community," she says. "They know what it means to be an Orindan."

Of her many duties, it is Olsen's administration of the city's recruitment of citizens to serve on Orinda's commissions and the responsibilities she holds for "conducting elections in an impartial manner and acting as a link for the



Photo Ohlen Alexander

transparent exchange of information between residents and their local government" that give her the greatest professional satisfaction.

With an average of three vacancies each on planning, parks, finance and other citizen bodies for 2014, she hopes that more residents will apply than ever before. "City commissions are critical because important issues are evaluated there before they reach the city council. Council members want to know the issues have been evaluated before they weigh in."

To those with time constraints, she says, "At least stay informed. We have two independent papers - the Lamorinda Weekly and the Orinda News - that focus on us and on what's going on, and on providing outlets for people to speak."

For those who do have time to give back, she says, it can be very rewarding. "Volunteers run this community. Volunteers run the city. Your council members are volunteers; your commissioners are volunteers. That's what makes Orinda so special."

Applications for the volunteer bodies are due by Jan. 3, 2014. To learn more about how you can become involved, visit the city's website, or contact Olsen at: (925) 253-4221; molsen@city-of-orinda.org.

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Wishing all of my clients, friends and neighbors joyful holidays and best wishes for a healthy and prosperous new year! Frank Woodward



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Orinda Mayor's 2013 Awards for Excellence

By Laurie Snyder

Orinda Intermediate School (OIS) Green Team

Seniors Around Town

Lamorinda Idol Soloist



Photos Ohlen Alexander

Acknowledged with cheers and applause, the Orinda Intermediate School Green Team was given the Community Improvement Award for promoting recycling and conservation on the OIS campus and increasing awareness by their fellow students of environmental issues via field trips, composting and recycling activities, film screenings, Orinda Action Day, and Bike-to-School Day.



Seniors Around Town, the only program of its kind in Contra Costa County, was honored for keeping residents active and engaged by connecting older Orindans who no longer drive with younger community members who still do. Hundreds of appointments were kept and new friendships made thanks to free, volunteer, door-to-door transportation. "It has helped build community," said Worth. Kate Wiley and Eartha Newsong accepted the award for the program which began with a grant from the Metropolitan Transportation Commission.



Tosca Maltzman, a Miramonte High School junior and winner in the Lamorinda Idol high school soloist category, rocked the council chamber with her rendition of "The House of the Rising Sun."

Share your thoughts, insights and opinions with your community. **Send a letter to the editor:** letters@lamorindaweekly.com

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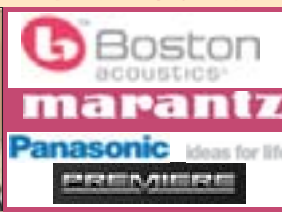
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Letters to the Editor

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:

The personal e-mails of Orinda City Council member Sue Severson to and from a developer, concerning a desirable parcel in Orinda Village, have been publicized. The other council members just unanimously elected her to be our next mayor.

These e-mails preceded a tumultuous drafting of Orinda's Housing Element. An extremely problematic draft in June, written without any public input, enticed several hundred outraged citizens to attend city council meetings. Many Orindans concerned with preserving the semi-rural character of the city and initiating transparency in City Hall commented publicly and wrote detailed letters. Twelve hundred citizens signed a petition opposing this early draft. A recurrent complaint was that Orinda conceded more than was legally required. Initially, City Council and staff ignored and then insulted these Orinda residents, referring to us as misinformed and paranoid. Eventually, some of our edits were incorporated into the lengthy document. However, the final draft adopted by City Council contains statements that could make Orinda susceptible to manipulation by developers. They are counting on the fact that Orindans are too busy with families and careers to pay attention to these arcane issues. If you cherish our semi-rural character or just want to have a say in our destiny, stay informed by attending council meetings or listening to the recorded audio afterward. Join a citizen group that focuses on Orinda affairs. Then, have your voice heard by writing e-mails to council members or speaking at council meetings.

Bruce London
Orinda

Join our Public Forum

If you have significant knowledge about an issue facing Lamorinda or one of its cities that requires more than the 350 words to which we must limit Letters to the Editor, don't despair! You can submit your letter to our Public Forum section. Just send your letter to **letters@lamorindaweekly.com** and let us know you'd like to be considered for the Public Forum.

Civic News Lafayette

Much Smaller Terraces Development Proposed

... continued from page A2

The signs of a pending denial were hard to miss. Recently the Design Review Commission sent their recommendation not to support the project to the Planning Commission; that, coupled with the 13 significant and unavoidable impacts noted in the Environmental Impact Report, made an official denial of the project, and thus the possible lawsuit, a near guarantee.

Looking for a better solution, the developer and the City Council came together to find something that would be acceptable to all parties, including community members. What they came up with delivers single family homes that are consistent with the neighborhood north of the freeway, preserves open space, continues to route traffic away from the Pleasant Hill Road bottleneck, and creates significant public benefit.

Many residents at the meeting were smitten with the Christmas list of public benefit items, especially the all-weather sports field, given the growing number of players in Lafayette and limited existing fields. Additional parking right at the corner of Deer Hill and Pleasant Hill Road is also sorely needed for pick up and

drop off of students and for users of the park facilities.

Deal points include the city purchasing Parcel B for \$1.8 million, "not coincidentally" said Falk, this is the amount the city has already set aside in its parkland acquisition fund. The developer, O'Brien, would use that money to build the above-ground all weather soccer/lacrosse field, dog park, tot-lot and parking lot. The park improvements become the property of the city. Still unanswered is who will pay for maintenance of the amenities.

The alternative plan Falk introduced will be discussed more thoroughly in public meetings on Jan. 13 and 22 at the Veterans Memorial Building. At that juncture, if the City Council wishes to pursue it further, the new proposal will go through the regular review process that includes the Circulation Commission, Design Review, Parks Trails and Recreation Commission and Planning Commission. Councilmember and immediate past mayor Mike Anderson was open to explore this option. "It's foolish not to give this alternative an opportunity." Falk's presentation, deal points, and maps are now posted on www.lovelafayette.org under Hot Topics.

Civic News Moraga

Signs Under Scrutiny

... continued from page A5

Kathe Nelson, the executive director of the chamber of commerce, emphasized the need for the new rules to be equitable and enforceable, with simple standards that are clear and concise. Presently the rules are very difficult to enforce, unless the signs are in the public right of way, be-

cause there is no code enforcement regulation like there is in other jurisdictions.

The revisions will be reviewed by the Planning Commission before being presented for the Town Council's approval early next year.

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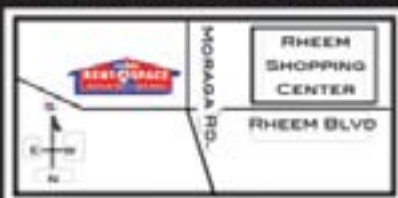


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Lamorinda Fire News Briefs

By Nick Marnell

Triage for the Med Squad

In September, the Contra Costa County Fire Protection District placed into temporary service a two-person squad car to respond to low-level medical emergencies, freeing up firefighters and engines to tackle more serious fire and emergency incidents. The unit was deployed at ConFire station 1 in Walnut Creek, midway between two closed district stations: Walnut Creek station 4 and Lafayette station 16. Fire chief Jeff Carman requested at the Dec. 3 Board of Supervisors meeting that the medical squad program be extended.

"The stats up until day 60 were inconsistent," said Carman, reporting on the data from the trial period. "I will make some operational adjustments to the squad allowing them to run even more medical calls than what they did the first 90 days, and by doing this consistently for the next 90 days we can gather even more conclusive data."

Supervisor Mary Piepho asked the chief to add a report on the public perception of a tricked-out pickup truck responding to medical calls. "They're used to seeing ambulances used in emergency

response and they're used to seeing a fire truck at an emergency response," she said. "How is the public reacting to this?"

The \$170,000 expense for an additional 90-day trial period was unanimously approved by the supervisors.

Fitch Report Update

Also at the Dec. 3 Board of Supervisors meeting, Fitch and Associates, LLC, a fire and medical service consulting firm, provided an interim report on the company's comprehensive study of the operations of the Contra Costa County Fire Protection District. The study was commissioned by the board in February, to investigate alternative delivery models of fire and emergency medical service. The district has struggled through years of property tax revenue shortfalls, and has plowed through its reserve funds and closed fire stations to remain in operation.

Consultant Guillermo Fuentes conducted the two-hour presentation, which was peppered with charts, graphs and slide after slide of data, covering funding, call distribution, response times, and risk/reward analysis. Its conclusion restated the meme that has

circulated throughout the district for years: ConFire needs to pursue alternative funding sources and reinvest in capital.

Fitch representative Jim Broman, a former fire chief, summed up the district's plight. "ConFire is under resourced," he said. "Even before the station closings you were very, very lean. And you've had to marginalize that even further."

While short on offering solutions for revenue generation, the Fitch study presented three operational options to the district: keep its current staffing model, deploy a combination of two- and three-person units, or introduce EMS-specific personnel into the system. Regardless which model is chosen, the study projects that ConFire will be sustainable only until 2017.

"It would be nice if we could run a fire department on statistics alone," said Carman. "But it's not that simple." Carman has formed a committee of labor and management to look at every aspect of the ConFire organization. "We'll go back to the drawing board and build our organization using 23 companies," he said. "The bottom line is, that we will have to oper-

ate with some stations closed all or part of the time, because we simply can't afford to operate all of the stations until our revenue improves."

"We're having to deal with what's being presented to us, not with what we'd like," said supervisor Karen Mitchoff. "The report paints a picture; it gives us options. But the Fitch Report does not solve our problems."

The company plans to fine tune the report and release the first draft to the public Jan. 10.



Moraga-Orinda Fire District Board of Directors Meetings

Next meetings:
Wednesday, Dec. 18
check website for updates
(Go to www.mofd.org as the meeting date approaches for location and more information)

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Lamorinda Retail Wards Off the Pessimists

By Sophie Braccini

While some analysts say retailers didn't get what they wanted from Black Friday and they will need to make it up in the next few weeks, several Lamorinda retailers are saying sales have been strong thanks to some creative thinking that has pulled the community into the smaller stores and away from big box retail.

Orchard Nursery, which has been in Lafayette since 1946, has seen ups and downs, and felt the sting of the recession over the past four years, but has seen a change in 2013. "We've sold in one weekend (Dec. 6 and 7) as many Christmas trees as we did since 2011," said Chris Martinez, an Orchard manager who's been working at the nursery for more than 30 years. "What we sell is discretionary, so when the economy is down, we suffer, and we've had a rough patch since 2008. But this year

people feel more confident. They are buying more, earlier; we even sold 11-foot Christmas trees last Saturday." Owner Tom Courtright added that sales of Christmas trees and ornaments started earlier this year, with 20 percent of last year's total sales sold during the month of November. "I'm happy!" he said.

While Orchard didn't do any special promotions for Black Friday – they rely on their reputation and their Christmas boutique that attracts generations of shoppers from all over the Bay Area – other retailers got creative. "We thought we'd do something crazy," said Venture Quality Goods' co-owner Tom Stenzel, who sent a Black Friday email blast to Venture customers offering a free sale item with the purchase of any regular item. It was a real door buster for the Mount Diablo Boulevard store. "We did twice as well as last year;

the store was bustling all day," said co-owner Rosylyn Stenzel.

"We provide an alternative to the usual craziness of holiday shopping," added Tom Stenzel, "and because we offer unique quality clothing that people can't find somewhere else in the East Bay, they come here."

The Stenzels noted that customers like shopping in a store where the atmosphere is relaxed and it's easy to find a parking space – a sentiment shared by customers at Across the Way in Moraga. Manager Susan Marconi has been selling top-of-the-line accessories for the home and garden for seven years in the Moraga Shopping Center, 'across the way' from Moraga Hardware and Lumber, and is very happy with the beginning of the season. This year the store ordered a conservative number of the LED ornaments, but by Dec. 7, it had already sold half of them, "and there is no way to re-order," Marconi said. She, too, believes that shoppers understand that buying locally benefits the community, and when they can find the quality they seek at a good price, they will frequent local businesses. "Le Creuset cookware is a good example (of my competitiveness), the sale price of big chain retail is my regular price," she said.

Sweet Dreams Candy and Toys in Orinda's Theatre Square is also looking for ways to keep shoppers away from the Walnut Creek chain stores and manager Connie King says that the holiday celebration for families, offered by the Square's owner, was the right idea. "So many people came for the Holiday Winter Wonderland and tree lighting ceremony with a lot of activities for the kids," she said, adding that it was a great way to keep people in town and out of Walnut Creek. GLL Real Estate Partners offered a series of events for the community (see related story on page A1) that translated for some into purchasing.

Creating an experience and a community feel is the recipe that seems to be working for these local retailers. J. Colleen Boutique owner Julie Rubio agreed. "People like coming here away from massive shopping to find something unique. They are getting the concept of sophisticated boutiques where they get a whole experience," she said. Customers came to her Lafayette Circle store Dec. 7 as part of Small Business Saturday for the sophisticated women's fashions – along with chocolate and champagne. Then a large crowd arrived for a first reading of the book "Trap The Elf" by local author Susan Oppelt, and afterward mothers and their children happily explored the many areas of the store. "Since the beginning of the month we've been doing very well," said Rubio. "Creating a whole artistic experience for our shoppers as well as showcasing unique designers is what we are about."

More good fun and bargains are yet to come in Lamorinda. For example, the big end-of-the-year sale is still on the horizon at Orchard. "We start by discounting 20 percent on Dec. 22, all the way to 50 percent on Dec. 27," said Martinez about the popular year-end event. "It is so funny; people come in advance, spot what they want – some even try to hide some items to be sure to be able to purchase them on the 27th!"

Lamorinda retail is not short on fun and cheer.

business briefs

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Tony Inzerillo usually makes wine from grapes, but when he saw the enormous amount of pears that could not be harvested at the top of the trees in the orchard next to Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School he thought he could do something with it. After



Tony Inzerillo (right) and John Piermattei present the 2013 Moraga pear wine. Photo Sophie Braccini

calling around, Inzerillo was told he couldn't use a ladder to pick the fruit, "so we used a man-lift and harvested tons of fruit (after all the lower fruit had been picked and taken to the food bank)," he explained. Inzerillo said it was a huge project involving Lamorinda Winegrowers Association members – some members provided bottles, one member created the perfect recipe – and it resulted in the 2013 Moraga Holiday Pear Wine that is fruity and fresh, and pleasant to the palate. "We thought our wine would go well with spicy Chinese food, so we took it to Alan at Asia Palace. He loved it and decided to offer it in his restaurant," said Inzerillo. "We produced it with no sulfur; the pears were never treated, so this is an organic product with an alcohol content of about 6 percent."

Meet New Owner of Loard's Ice Cream in Moraga

1480 Moraga Rd., suite H, Moraga

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A few months ago Claudina Ovenden was still a CVS manager in Orinda where she lives and is raising her three kids with her husband, David. Neighbor, Brook Stubblefield, owner of Loard's Ice Cream next door to CVS, used to come by and became friends with



Claudina Ovenden decorates a birthday cake in the Moraga Loard's prep area. Photo Sophie Braccini

Ovenden. "One night my husband and I had a conversation about opening a family business in downtown Orinda," remembers Ovenden, "but there was no availability." The very next day, when Stubblefield came to CVS, she mentioned that the manager of her Moraga store had left. When Ovenden asked about the job, Stubblefield told her she probably couldn't afford her as an employee, but said that she was ready to sell the store. After a few weeks of negotiation, the deal was closed and now the Ovendens – husband and wife – are co-owners of Loard's Ice Cream in Moraga. "My husband is a retired electrical engineer," says Ovenden. "He comes by to help." In her new store, Ovenden beams with pride, she has become a master cake decorator. "We get all our ice cream from the Loard's San Leandro manufacturer, then we make all the cakes and do special prep here in the store." Ovenden says she loves decorating cakes; she also created ice cream pies, and a new ice cream cake sundae. "During this season we also sell a lot of our 'snowballs,'" she notes. The snowballs are a ball of traditional vanilla ice cream rolled in coconut flakes, "but you can order different flavors," adds Ovenden.

Reusable Bags at Venture Display Lafayette Pride

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While on vacation in Los Angeles, Venture Quality Goods co-owner Rosylyn Stenzel found quality reusable bags that can be personalized. She contacted the manufacturer, Apolis, which is a company that empowers communities worldwide with a commitment to global advocacy through industry and understands of the importance of manufacturing locally. "The bags are made in Bangladesh by a community of women," Stenzel says. "The handles are leather, made in LA.



Lafayette shopping bag at Venture Quality Goods Photo provided

We asked to add the Lafayette logo that you can't get anywhere else." The bags are waterproof on the inside and have become very popular. "People get them to use as gift wrap, realtors get piles of them for their clients, they are used for swim bags or grocery shopping," says Stenzel.

News for the three Chambers of Commerce

Lafayette

Last Entrepreneur Club meeting of the year from 8:30 to 9:30 a.m. Thursday, Dec. 19. The chamber offices will be closed from Dec. 24 to Jan. 1.

Moraga

Chamber office grand opening from 8 a.m. to noon Monday, Jan. 6. Come say "hi" to Kathe Nelson in her new office in the LaSalla building of the Hacienda de las Flores, 2100 Donald Dr.

Save the date for the first chamber business meeting of the year at 7:30 a.m. Friday, Jan. 31 at the Hacienda de las Flores.

Orinda

Stay tuned for new events in 2014.

If you have a business brief to share, please contact **Sophie Braccini** at sophie@lamorindaweekly.com



Venture Quality Goods owners Tom and Rosylyn Stenzel



Across the Way Business Manager Susan Marconi



Andrew Wylie, Connie King, and Kent Rothfuss at Sweet Dreams

Summerhill Homes Moves Forward

By Sophie Braccini

Summerhill Homes has two development projects well under way in Moraga. The first is the Rancho Laguna II project. On Dec. 2 the Planning Commission confirmed the Conceptual and General Development Plan for the project's 27 proposed single-family residences, 10 of which would be built along Rheem Boulevard and 17 nestled among the hills of the almost 180 acres of vacant land. Then on Dec. 16, Summerhill asked the Planning Commission to look at another General Development plan, this one for a property on Camino Ricardo, which would build 26 single family residences on 14.24 acres.

The plan Summerhill presented for Camino Ricardo is a synthesis of 18 months of study, including five different study sessions with town boards and commissions and many hours of work with staff. The devel-

oper also proposed a development agreement.

All of this initial effort resulted in modifications to the project that increase the diversity of the homes' appearance, minimize the grading and create a more interesting roadway.

The Design Review Board has approved the concept as it was presented. Three architectural styles are proposed: "Early California," "Bay Area Traditional" and "Arts and Crafts," with many architectural details such as pitched rooflines and use of dormers, gables and eaves. All of the proposed homes would be two-story structures and would be designed to meet at least 70 points on the Build it Green checklist, which means that the project exceeds current Moraga code requirements for energy efficiency. Rooftop solar photovoltaic panels would be offered as an option to home buyers.

A development agreement is a contract between a local jurisdiction and person who has ownership or control of a property. The purpose of the agreement is to specify the standards and conditions that will govern development of the property; it provides mutual benefits to both parties. The developer offers elements that further the town's vision and provides benefits to the community, while for the developer the agreement is a guarantee that the rules and regulations in effect at the time of approval will not be subject to subsequent changes. In this case, the proposed development agreement includes a number of on-site and off-site public improvements including dedication and improvement of the public park/open space, construction of a pedestrian sidewalk along Camino Ricardo, construction of a public "outlook point," payment and vesting of certain fees. It also in-

cludes a lump-sum payment that the town can apply to the construction of pedestrian improvements along Moraga Road, with the precise improvements to be determined through the Livable Moraga Road project that is currently underway.

The Dec. 16 meeting took place after press deadline. The Planning Commission was expected to decide if it wanted staff to prepare the resolutions for approval of the Conceptual and General Development Plan and to continue the hearing to Jan. 6.

Upsurge of Commercial Theft in Moraga

... continued from page A4

A few weeks ago Vigil and her employees spotted the strange behavior of a woman who filled a cart with food, then left the store, followed by another woman who came by to retrieve the cart and take it briskly away. "We do not run after people who do that," says Vigil, "we call the police with the information about the car and the direction it's heading."

Moraga police sergeant Brian South took charge of the case and immediately contacted the Orinda police, since the silver Chevrolet Astro van had been seen moving toward Orinda. The three female accomplices were caught in front of Beverages and More and subsequently arrested for stealing \$1,000 worth of goods from Safeway and for possession of rock cocaine that was found in the car.

"We also made an arrest at Home Goods of a lady who stole objects there and in other Bay Area stores," said South, "and recently we arrested another female who tried to pass a fake \$50 bill at Safeway." Vigil says that the cashier looked at the bill

through the light and noticed that the bright yellow water mark that should be visible next to the picture was not there. Police were called and arrived in time to arrest the woman.

"Trying to pass counterfeit money is a very serious crime," says South, "and we have to get the Secret Service involved."

At Moraga Hardware, Snider has become an expert in detecting counterfeit money; he even bought the same type of infrared machine that is used by a local bank. "People use old \$5 bills that they wash, then they print the \$100 marking on it," says Snider. "So if someone uses a currency-check pen that detects fake money, it will show up as being fine. But if you hold it to the light, you won't see the watermark embedded into the paper showing a portrait of Ben Franklin that is identical to the one printed on the face of the bill, instead you'll see the figure '5.'"

Lafayette police chief Eric Christensen sent out an alert to business owners Dec. 10 relating a similar story - someone in Lafayette had just

passed a fake \$100 bill that was forged from a \$5 bill.

Snider says that when people want to pass counterfeit currency, they first go to stores with a real \$100 bill to check the local procedure. "When they see that we use the infrared machine, they never come back!" beams Snider.

Lafayette police chief Eric Christensen offers this list of the security features of U.S. currency.

The watermark: On the right side of the bill, the same president that is depicted upon the face of the bill should be on the watermark.

Mylar thread: Within the left side of the bill, there is a Mylar thread which should show the same denomination as that shown on the bill.

Color-shifting ink: On the number on the lower left hand corner, the value of the currency should change color as you move the bill from a green/brown to black.

Micro-printing: On larger denomination bills, there is micro-printing inside the numeric value in the lower left corner. The typing within the number should read USA and the value of the bill repeated over and over again; for example, USA20 USA20 USA20.

The feel and sound of the bill: Probably the best security feature is the texture of the bill; the currency should make a low, thudding sound when pulled upon.

Civic News Moraga



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From Front Page

Christmas Cheer Soars When Snow Falls in Orinda

... continued from page A1



The general consensus among most of the children, however, was that it was most definitely the good stuff—a bit of North Pole magic flown in by the big guy himself.

The snow was “crunchy,” observed elementary schooler Lauren Schultz. She’s hoping for a scooter and a bike—and a Stuffedies toy. “You can put anything in it, and it’s soft.” Lauren and her mom, Emily, recently made sugar cookies and a ginger-

bread house.

When asked by her daddy what Santa says, 2-year-old Celeste gave an enthusiastic, “Ho! Ho! Ho!” Celeste just moved to the St. Stephen’s neighborhood three months ago with her parents, George and Vanessa. “It looks like she’s really enjoying it,” he said of his daughter’s inability to tear her eyes away. She’s hoping for chocolate.

Broderick and Colton Bornstein,

Photos Ohlen Alexander snug and warm in Chip and Dale hats, had a blast bringing their own Frosty to life. “It was really fun, but we also had fun re-building,” said Broderick. “The head kept falling off and the eyes kept falling out.” Asked what Christmas meant to sister, Paige, she simply said, “Joy!”

New memories were made—and more names were added to the “Nice List.” Not a bad way to end 2013. Merry Christmas, Lamorinda!



If the snow didn't provide enough excitement to keep Santa's sleigh flying for another three centuries, there were also horse and carriage rides with Jerry Christmas high stepping up and down Moraga Way under the moonlight.

Season's Greetings!



The Lamorinda Weekly family shared good cheer at a recent holiday luncheon. Back row, from left: Amanda Kuehn (in blue), Ohlen Alexander, Andy Sheck, Cathy Dausman, Nick Marnell, San Kumar, Marissa Harnett, Sophie Braccini, Gint Federas; middle: Lee Borrowman, Cynthia Brian, Laurie Snyder, Cathy Tyson, Elizabeth LaScala, Lynn Ballou; front: Jennifer Wake, Wendy Scheck, Roslynn Aragones Stenzel. Photo Gint Federas

Whether you are home for the holidays, celebrating quietly or jovially with family and friends, or traveling far and wide ~ from all of us at Lamorinda Weekly to all of you, warm wishes for a festive holiday season, happiness and exciting opportunities in the new year!

It's a Wonderful, but Chilly, Life in Lafayette

By Cathy Tyson

Life in LAMORINDA



Mike and Jen Branagh's children, Bradley, 18 months, Brody, 5, and Sophia, 3, tell Santa what they want for Christmas. Photo Gint Federas

While the weather outside was indeed frightful, the holiday cheer was delightful. Presumably the reindeer were still in training at the North Pole, so "Old Betsy" – Lafayette's historic fire truck – filled in to transport Santa Claus to Plaza Park where he was greeted by little fans.

The bearded man in red, along with complimentary hot chocolate and cookies, made the first ever "It's a Wonderful Life in Lafayette" event a big hit to kick off the holidays, with a tree lighting, music and gratitude walls full of personal notes from kids responding to the question "What are you grateful for?" Sweet answers ran the gamut from food, my home, to my family and our three cats and beyond.

Local realtor Dana Green and Branagh Development, along with the Lafayette Chamber of Commerce sponsored the block party. "It was heartwarming to see the outpouring of community spirit as we joined together to kick off the holidays in true Lafayette fashion. As a


lifelong resident of Lafayette, this event proved once again why this is such a great community – I look forward to making this an annual event," said Green.

"Growing up my family had an annual tradition of going to San Francisco the day after Thanksgiving for the tree lighting ceremony," said Mike Branagh. "We have many great memories from these times. Lafayette was very special to my parents and Matt and I carry the same love for the city. We wanted the community to create the same memories we had so we thought, why not bring it into Lafayette? Partnering with Dana was an easy decision as she is a close friend of ours and shares the same love for Lafayette."

Two open-walled mini house-like structures were built specifically for the event by carpenters with Branagh Development. Branagh is currently working on updating Squirrels restaurant just across the way from the park, so the structures were constructed there.

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Oh, Christmas Tree

Lamorindans discuss the artificial trend and their own tree traditions

By Amanda Kuehn



Christmas tree in Shelbys Restaurant, Orinda Photo Amanda Kuehn

have a tree that you go out and cut down and bring home." Alexis Zwahlen, a student at Miramonte High School, agreed. "For sure real. It's just not Christmas without going with the family to pick out a tree."

If you do opt for a real tree, there are a few things to keep in mind. "Ask if chemicals were used in the growing of the trees, and where they are grown," said Dawson. "Better yet, consider buying a live potted Christmas tree, and use it for outside landscaping when the holidays are over."

Geoff Olmstead of Orchard Nursery in Lafayette estimates that they sell some 650-700 cut trees each season. The trees come from Oregon and are cut down and shipped the week of Thanksgiving. "Most people choose real trees because of the fragrance of them," said Olmstead. "I always do a cut tree. I was born and raised with one, so that's really how I go. They bring the Christmas spirit with them."

Orchard individually cuts each tree so that they stay fresher longer. Olmstead estimates that the average tree can last 6 to 8 weeks. "They need to be fresh cut within 30 minutes of putting them in water or the cells seal," he explained. You can also spray trees with cloud cover or wilt stop, which locks moisture into the needles, but it also takes away the fragrance.

"I can't see myself ever buying an artificial tree," noted Monica Fisher. "The scent is so romantic and so 'Christmasy.' My mom went out and got one once and my dad threw it away." For others the decision is not so important. "I get whatever my wife tells me to," said Dave Greenaway.

Santa Clause, who was visiting Theatre Square in Orinda, gave a similar answer. "We're going to have a real tree, though we haven't gotten it yet," he said. "That's really up to Mrs. Clause."

When asked if he had a preference, Clause paused. "I don't know if I do. There are some artificial trees that look terrible and some that are nice. People have different situations to respond to," he said knowingly.

Whatever choice you make and however you choose to celebrate, may your holiday season be merry!

For more information on environmentally friendly holiday tips, visit: http://www.sustainable-lafayette.org/?page_id=2110.

Now in the throes of December, many Lamorindans are hanging lights, hauling out holly and trimming trees. Though decking the halls was once an activity reserved for Christmas Eve, today the festivities hit early and our trees are often cut down and dolled up long before Dec. 24.

The 25-foot Burton Valley Christmas Tree at the corner where Burton Drive meets Lucas and Silverado in Lafayette is just one of the 35 million that will be decked out in the U.S. this season, according to a survey conducted by Nielsen Research on behalf of the American Christmas Tree Association.

With ties that go back as far as ancient Egypt, fir trees have long been a sign of life and rebirth in the middle of winter. Their association with Christmas began in Germany sometime during the 16th century and eventually spread to France and England, says the Christmas Tree Farm Network (<http://www.christmas-tree.com>). The first Christmas tree in America likely came during the American Revolution, but didn't really catch on until the early 20th century. Originally lit with candles and decorated with candy, paper flowers and communion wafers, modern trees are decked in lights,

ribbons, bows and ornaments.

When it comes to trimming trees, everyone has an opinion - colored or white lights, ribbons or ornaments, real or artificial. Artificial trees date back as early as the 19th century, but have only recently become popular in the United States. According to the Nielsen survey, 80 percent of the trees displayed at Christmas last year were artificial, 20 percent real.

In addition to being convenient, artificial trees can also be more environmentally friendly. "Artificial trees may be kept and reused for many years, which would eliminate the gas used for hauling real trees, not to mention the pesticides and fertilizers needed to grow [them]," said Michael Dawson of Sustainable Lafayette. "A good rule of thumb: if you can use your artificial tree 10 years or more, that's the better option."

"We get real, although I do feel bad," said local artist Susan Oppelt. "We talk about artificial trees and vacuuming up pine needles ... but I love the smell of it and passing on the tradition." Most local residents agree.

"There's nothing better than the real deal," said Margie Pfalzer. "That's the magic of Christmas, to

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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.

New Saint Mary's College President Already Firmly Involved

By Sophie Braccini



James Donahue

Photo Sophie Braccini

Saint Mary's College's 29th president, James Donahue, has been in charge of the college for just over five months and has already taken stock of the comparative advantages, the issues, and the dynamics of the 150-year-old higher education institution. An academic scholar and thinker at heart, Donahue will not be an ivory tower leader. Faculty, students and the community are witnessing the personal involvement of someone who wants to leave a legacy.

While he values the Christian Brothers' compelling tradition of humility and modesty, he believes Saint Mary's needs to move forward with more pride in its distinctiveness. "We have a great story to tell; we need more swagger!" he says.

Underscoring that Saint Mary's College was the only California school to be included on the "Colleges that Change Lives" list, Donahue says, "What we are doing here is remarkable, and we need to claim it, make a more prominent statement about what we are doing: training leaders."

In order to forward its mission, the president wants the college to invest in technology, update facilities, and provide more financial aid to deserving students. And while he believes the college is well run and financially sound, he says it needs to be more effective at fundraising to address the affordability issue. "We have potential for more aggressive fundraising and we deserve that," he says, "and it is my job to lead that charge."

Donahue is married, has two sons and a brand new grandchild. He was born and raised in Philadelphia, attended the College of the Holy Cross in Massachusetts, and went on to Princeton for his graduate work in the Theological School. He then moved west to the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley for his Ph.D. He initially devoted his life to being a theologian scholar in the area of ethics, went on to consult for businesses and institutions, and taught ethics in the Georgetown University School of Business.

"I've always been interested in the everyday reality of how values and beliefs translate into everyday actions," he said. "My decisions and choices are a matter of moral integrity. My moral compass is important to me. [I make sure that] my actions and my decisions are in line with my values."

His scholarly interests expanded to the choices organizations and institutions make. "That's what led me to administration eventually," he explained. He became dean of students

and vice president for student affairs at Georgetown before taking the helm at the Graduate Theological Union, an institution that does academic theological research.

A Roman Catholic, Donahue has always been involved in religious pluralism, and acknowledges that we are living in a world with a variety of ways and beliefs. Even if Saint Mary's is very much a Catholic institution, he says it is also a pluralistic one, and being Catholic at the college means bringing the insights of this tradition to bear on the evolving realities of higher education.

In preparing for the future, Donahue is working on the college's next strategic plan. He does not see the number of students increasing dramatically, but says some programs like the School of Business and the Executive MBA program are growing and represent an enormous opportunity. The School of Education is also growing. "The world of education is a changing landscape, and we are careful about evolving our curriculum appropriately," he says. Staff is also working on a master plan in partnership with the town.

Donahue's job at Georgetown University included a town/gown relationship with Washington D.C., and says the same principles for a good relationship apply here: trusting one another, having integrity on all sides, and being willing to find appropriate levels of compromise. He knows that there are multiple interests at play and is aware of the distrust that field lights, noise and parking issues have created with some neighbors. "I want to win that back by being a credible partner," he says, "but one interest cannot dictate the terms. Everyone needs to have a voice."

"I would like to think that most of the residents of Moraga see Saint Mary's as a resource," he adds. "I want to move away from the community seeing us as yet another developer. We want to be Lamorinda's college."

For Donahue, the mission of the college is to train thinkers and leaders.

"The set of skills the college is teaching – how to think, how to write, how to argue, and looking at the big questions of human existence – is taken by the students; they put them together and go off into the world to become leaders," says Donahue. "We are committed to enabling our students to discover who they are and what they can be, while providing them the tools to find a place in the working world. This is what the Lasallian tradition is about; students come first here."



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A Valuable Math Lesson for Parents

By Cathy Tyson



District math consultant Andy Schipper discusses Common Core math standards with parents at Stanley Middle School. Photo provided

Just a few months into the school year, many parents are perplexed by new math standards that are completely different from the way they learned basic computations back in the day. As part of an ongoing series of parent education evenings, the Lafayette School District sponsored an event for parents of second- and third-grade students to bring them up to speed on new math standards that are part of the Common Core model.

Despite a frigid evening, the Stanly Middle School library was full of parents from across the district who wanted to understand more about math instruction. District math consultant Andy Schipper delivered an entertaining and informative lesson on Common Core math standards and key math concepts that the assembled grown-ups could understand.

He demonstrated exactly what

their children will be doing in school and pointed out the many differences in how math is now being taught. Starting off with international comparisons that showed how U.S. students have stagnated throughout the era of No Child Left Behind, he shared a video of a "Number Talk" with third grade students who were able to discuss an astonishingly wide variety of ways to solve a problem, and engaged parents to collaborate on simple, yet surprisingly challenging math games.

One could almost see the light bulbs going off in parent's heads when prompted to collaboratively play games like Arithmagon and Seth's Game. The exercises helped cement just how different the new math is, and how it requires real thought and analysis, compared with the memorization of days gone by.

Schipper says the main problem with the old way of doing

things was that curriculum was "a mile wide and an inch deep." The new Common Core framework focuses on fewer standards but with an emphasis on coherence and thoroughness. "It's all about a greater depth of knowledge, thinking and reasoning skills," he said.

The role of teachers, illustrated in the video clip, highlighted their task as being more of a facilitator, moving from "sage on stage" to a "guide on the side," said Schipper.

Homework may present new challenges to parents because kids are doing calculations in a way that parents simply aren't used to; historically many parents were taught only one way to solve a problem, lining up digits in columns, carrying the one, and so on. Students will be coming home with strategies that parents may not be familiar with.

Schipper advised parents that homework will look different with more games and puzzles that bolster the ability to reason abstractly and quantitatively than sheets of endless computations.

What can parents do to help their students? Encourage doing math in their heads, advised Schipper, along with helping them master the basic addition and multiplication facts. Also key is encouraging kids to figure out solutions, prompting them with phrases like "What do you think?" and "How would you figure it out?" versus just giving them the answer to a question.

There will be an additional "Focus on Math" parent event, primarily for grades four and five, but all parents are welcome, from 6:30 to 8 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 14 at the Stanley Middle School library.

Together in Training

Lamorindans cooperate for EOC drills

By Cathy Dausman



Lamorinda emergency preparedness volunteers.

Photo Dennis Rein

While Lamorindans recently went about their daily business, more than 30 professional and volunteer first responders and civic employees wrestled with the after-effects of imaginary tornadoes and mock terrorist attacks.

The group, which included representatives from Lafayette, Moraga, Orinda, Moraga-Orinda Fire District, Saint Mary's College, Cal Fire, Contra Costa County Emergency Operations Center, The Red Cross, a local amateur radio group, the Lamorinda Community Emergency Response Team, East Bay Regional Park District, the Disaster Medical Assistance Team, and others, attended a three-day training exercise at Saint Mary's College where they learned how to run an Emergency Operations Center.

Communities open an EOC site when a natural or man-made disaster requires management and support beyond the scope of the incident itself. California opened EOCs during the Tuolumne County Rim Fire and the 2010

San Bruno gas pipeline explosion. This EOC seminar was the first of its kind within Lamorinda.

Lamorinda Emergency Preparedness Coordinator Dennis Rein organized the event, which was taught by personnel from the Emergency Services Training Institute of Texas A&M Engineering Extension Services and hosted by Saint Mary's College's Adán Tejada, chief and director of the department of public safety.

Rein has worked to develop EOCs for each Lamorinda city and the college, and said they have come a long way since he came to the job three years ago. Now Rein hopes to build a more cohesive unit. "This training session opened the door for one Lamorinda city being able to provide staff to another during a disaster," he said.

Participants used Federal Emergency Management Agency handbooks to solve financial, logistical and operational problems triggered by each training event. They learned to prioritize life and safety issues, stabilize the event,

conserve property and return the affected area to a post-event normal. They also learned how to request county, regional, state or federal assistance.

"This class will ask [you] more questions than [supply] answers," warned senior training specialist Bill Long on day one. Still, "Lamorinda is a much better place since this [training]," Rein said.

"There is a lot of power in co-operation," Moraga police chief Robert Priebe agreed, saying the training was "very valuable on many levels."

Priebe, along with Orinda police chief Scott Haggard, acted as joint EOC managers during the final, day-long exercise. "The best part was getting all three cities and Saint Mary's College all together," Priebe said. "I thought it was an outstanding opportunity to work with other city staff," echoed Haggard, whose advice to exercise participants was to "stay calm, slow down and document [the work being done]." ... continued on page B6

Repurposed Pup

By Cathy Dausman



Moraga Hardware and Lumber owner Bill Snider with his dog, Wells. Photo Cathy Dausman

The newest employee at Moraga Hardware is a bit on the short side, but bright, friendly and eager to learn. Her name is Wells; she is an 18-month-old purebred black Labrador retriever who made a "career change" from guide dog

to all-purpose pet. Moraga Hardware and Lumber owner Bill Snider took Wells in after the Orinda family who fostered her was notified the dog was up for adoption. Snider said a guide dog family can either keep a career change dog as a pet or place it with someone. They asked him. Wells was already familiar with Moraga Hardware since she used to make the rounds with her foster family. Snider recently lost his aging yellow Labrador, so Wells was a natural fit.

"Last summer I said 'good-bye' to her," Snider said, thinking he'd never see Wells again. "We got her the Sunday after Thanksgiving," he said. Wells is a salaried employee, so she works 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. most days ... a little less on Sunday. She's receiving full benefits (including an abundance of positive strokes from customers) but has no lunch break or pension plan. Her "office" is a comfy crate behind the counter. Snider said after she learns the layout, he'll train her to show customers where the stock is located. Duct tape ... and dog ... on aisle three!

Miramonte Teacher Named 2014 C-SPAN Senior Teacher Fellow

By Laurie Snyder



America learned from the Twitterverse Dec. 11 that Miramonte High School teacher, Meghan Selway, has been awarded a C-SPAN Senior Teaching Fellowship. Image C-SPAN Classroom

The Cable-Satellite Public Affairs Network (C-SPAN) Education Foundation has named Miramonte High School teacher, Meghan Selway, as a Senior Teacher Fellow for 2014. Only those state-certified professionals deemed "expert social studies teachers" at the middle or high school level, who are engaged in the creation of "innovative teaching materials," and who have completed regular C-SPAN Teacher Fellowships may advance to the role of Senior Fellow, according to the announcement.

Selway has been teaching government, law and society, and economics at Miramonte for six years, and was at Las Lomas prior to that. "Kids really enjoy government, and they enjoy economics. They're two classes that really make the students feel empowered," says Selway. She has also been a Curriculum Development and Teacher Training consultant to the University of California, Berkeley History Social Studies Project, and has volunteered as a tutor for the Refugee Transitions Program at Oakland International High School. She was first named a C-SPAN Teacher Fellow in 2007.

"It changed my life," recalls Selway. It got off to a start she still describes with awe. While

standing on the Mall in Washington, D.C. on day one of her fellowship, U.S. Secret Service personnel swarmed as a breathtaking sight unfolded. The helicopter of President George W. Bush was landing in surprisingly close proximity.

Selway's fellowship gave her the chance to learn about how C-SPAN operates and how the Library of Congress digitizes documents. And she helped to create lesson plans that have been used to enable students across the country to better understand America's presidents.

"Every summer they select three teachers nationwide, and they bring them back to D.C. for basically a month to work on classroom materials there," explains Selway's colleague, Cheryl Davis, who was named a C-SPAN fellow herself in 2004 and was profiled by this newspaper in September 2012. Senior fellowships, says Davis, are "all virtual" – conducted from the educator's home district in collaboration with another teacher from a school in a different part of the country. "The really great part about it – when I was working with it, I was with senior fellow Tracey Van Dusen. She's in Ann Arbor," says Davis. "She would do part of the work, and I would do part of the work, and we

would come up with a great lesson."

Davis was one of the early fellows to flesh out content for C-SPAN's "Deliberations" program (www.c-spanclassroomdeliberations.org/), which was recently endorsed by the National Council for the Social Studies for being "a free resource of high scholarly merit for educators nationwide" with a mission that mirrors the NCSS goal of teaching "the content, knowledge, intellectual skills, and civic values necessary for fulfilling the duties of citizenship in a participatory democracy."

In 2014, Selway will collaborate with a teacher from New York to update the Deliberations site further. She will also be busy judging applications for C-SPAN's StudentCam contest (www.studentcam.org/), a national documentary competition which encourages critical analyses by students in grades 6-12 of key issues impacting their neighborhoods and nation.

"There are all sorts of fellowships out there, but we often don't take advantage because we don't have time," says Selway, urging her fellow educators to consider applying for future opportunities. "It really is a wonderful teacher professional development experience," says Davis.


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New Troop 219 Eagle Scouts Honored

Submitted by Lisa Lindgren



Back row, from left: Elias Morley, Austin Wentzel, David MacDannald, and Ethan Lindgren. Front row: Anton Reifsteck, Layton Wiczynski, Vincent Gladden, and Justin Higgins.

Photo Jamie Westdal

Boy Scout Troop 219 honored eight new Eagle Scouts Dec. 14 at St. Perpetua Catholic Parish in Lafayette. For their Eagle Scout projects, Anton Reifsteck of Acalanes High School led a group of scouts at the Lafayette Reservoir to build a retaining wall in the upper parking lot, Austin Wentzel led a group of Scouts in building two picnic benches for the high school, Ethan Lindgren designed and constructed raised garden beds at The Gardens at Heather Farm, Walnut Creek, and Vincent Gladden completely refurbished the sign at Happy Valley Elementary School as well as the landscaping around the area of the sign. The four Scouts attend Acalanes High School. Layton Wiczynski of Campolindo High School led a group of scouts building Wood Duck boxes

that were put into the ground at the San Leandro Reservoir. Justin Higgins of Bentley High School installed 10 Wood Duck nesting boxes around the Lafayette Reservoir perimeter, including routine inspection for monitoring usage and hatch, and 10 additional Wood Duck nesting boxes at the San Leandro Reservoir—he earned the Hornaday Award for this project—and Elias Morley, also a Bentley student, led a group of Scouts removing an invasive species of plants from Leona Regional Open Space. David MacDannald of Holden High School and Fusion Academy designed and built a new retaining wall to replace a 72-foot-long wooden retaining wall in the parking lot of Lafayette United Methodist Church.

Saklan Kindergartners Learn the 'Art' of Giving at Special Event

Submitted by Erin Cooley



Saklan School kindergarten teacher Amy Burnett smiles with student Ryan Lo in front of art-work at a recent auction. Photo provided

Part of kindergarten teacher Amy Burnett's teaching philosophy at The Saklan School in Moraga centers around making art a major component in her lesson plan. She does this because she believes art is a great equalizer, and no matter what a child's skill may be academically, they can always express themselves through art.

Six years ago, when Burnett was evaluating her curriculum, she added a level of social consciousness to it. A parent at Saklan introduced Burnett to the Nicholas Colby Fund (nicholascolbyfund.org), which helps children with cancer by filling backpacks with books, toys, and games to keep them entertained during their hospital stays. She decided to have her kindergartners make original art pieces, and put on an auction Dec. 12 and 13 to benefit the fund. Burnett then takes the children on a field trip to a local toy store, and using proceeds from the art show, students pick out the toys and games to fill the backpacks for the sick children.

The first year that she did this, she was stunned by the grace and compassion the chil-

dren showed. These little 5- and 6-year-olds were in a toy store, during the holidays, and not one of them was looking for anything for themselves, said Saklan parent Erin Cooley. "They were pure in their thoughts like, 'What would make me smile if I were sick?' and 'What can I choose to make someone feel better?'" she said. "The parents that witnessed this the first year were smiling from ear to ear. And, each year since, it has been even more overwhelming."

There have been years where people make extra donations, beyond purchasing the art, just so the children can give more to the fund, and there have even been other children in the school who purchase art from the show with their own allowance money, Cooley said. "In a word, it's magical."

Burnett says that "children are never too young to make a difference."

"When we are mindful, we pay attention," Burnett told her students. "When we are mindful, it is quite simple to be grateful. How lucky are we all to be a part of this event; to be part of this simple lesson of compassion and joy?"

Volunteers with a Higher Calling

By Cathy Dausman



David Yoon and Bill Gurnett

Photo Cathy Dausman

While Bill Gurnett and David Yoon are volunteers who serve the state Office of Emergency Services under the Contra Costa County Sheriff's Office, some might say these men also answer to a higher power.

Gurnett and Yoon—Pastor Bill and Pastor David, respectively—are both ordained ministers. In addition to their "day jobs" they serve as law enforcement chaplains. Unlike a community chaplain, law enforcement chaplains are ordained, and their conversations are held in confidence.

According to its website, Contra Costa County currently has 25 law enforcement chaplains supporting police, fire and civic organizations throughout the area. In addition to his work as pastor for Landmark Missionary Baptist Church in Martinez, Gurnett volunteers 30 to 40 hours a month assisting the Lafayette Police Department. He has been there for six of his eight years as a volunteer chaplain, and is one of three lead chaplains organized under a senior chaplain. Yoon is associate pastor for Concord Korean Baptist Church in Martinez. He was sworn in as a chaplain for the Sheriff's office in October, 2012, and has been allied with the Orinda Police Department since January, 2013.

The two ride along with on-duty officers, so they see suicides, traffic fatalities, shootings and accidental death; they accompany police on death notification calls. They feel their presence lends a calming effect to the situation.

Law enforcement chaplains offer comfort to victims and their families, facilitate end of life planning, and, as Yoon said, generally "act as a sounding board" to those involved. Although there are exceptions, volunteer chaplains don't usually work inside county jails because the jails employ paid chaplains. "We bring reality together" and help victims "move forward in a healthy way," said Yoon.

Gurnett emphasized that although they are

chaplains, their job is not to convert, but to help "normal people in abnormal times."

"We are with the families until they get a support system," he said. Law enforcement chaplains help both victims and first responders alike. A chaplain is often called upon to conduct an event debriefing, called a critical incident management debriefing. This process helps those affected by a traumatic event cope with its aftermath. Gurnett and other law enforcement chaplains were involved in several briefing sessions after two window washers were shocked and burned in Orinda in 2010.

Among those in attendance were then Moraga-Orinda Fire District Chief Randy Bradley and then Orinda Police Chief Jeffrey Jennings. Moraga Police Department requested law enforcement chaplain assistance after a particularly difficult vehicle fatality several years ago.

"People don't realize what police and fire [responders] go through," Gurnett said. Yoon admires first responder professionalism and wants to do more for them. "I wish I could spend more time seeing what they do," he said.

Orinda Police Chief Scott Haggard calls the law enforcement volunteer chaplain program "a great organization, very professional, and always available to help."

Asked if their work is more difficult at holiday time, Gurnett and Yoon both said no, although Yoon said it's no surprise that bad things happen. Gurnett said it is their system of beliefs and their training which helps resolve events and puts things into perspective.

"We know how quickly life can end," Gurnett said simply.

To learn more about Contra Costa County's Law Enforcement Chaplain program, contact the county's Volunteer Services Coordinator at (925) 646-4461, or visit <http://www.co.contracosta.ca.us/index.aspx?NID=266>.

Together in Training

... continued from page B4



Duncan Siebert, Lamorinda CERT, confers with Cheryl Teixeira of the Moraga Police Department during an EOC drill at Saint Mary's College.

Photo Dennis Rein

Moraga-Orinda Fire District fire chief Stephen Healy thought the training was "a great example of local partnerships that benefit the community."

"Sharing resources will be key in a major event," he said.

"Basically, strangers from three cities that normally don't work together had to pool their talents and make the simulation work," added MOFD battalion chief Darrell Lee. Lee credits the idea of combining Lamorinda cities for emergency preparedness to former MOFD chief Randy Bradley.

Participant Steve Ehrhardt, Orinda facilities and parks supervisor, said he was "eager to learn, in a practical way, what the functions of an EOC are and what we as representatives

of the community can do better to prepare ourselves in the event of a full-scale emergency situation." Training manager Scott Brown saw "passion and the desire to learn" throughout the Lamorinda session. He noted the importance of "full involvement from top to the bottom in the jurisdictions involved."

"Citizens must trust their government is prepared for the next emergency," he explained. "Your emergency responders have vowed to run towards the problem, not away from it. They are training to be ready. They know what they are doing," he said.

Although it took nearly a year to organize this EOC training, Rein already hopes to do it again. He summarized the results in a single word: "Awesome!"

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For Love of a Car

Local real estate agent starts the "Lamorinda Tesla Club"

By Clare Varellas



Vlatka Bathgate with her Tesla at a gas station she won't need.

Orinda Coldwell Banker real estate agent Vlatka Bathgate was driving a Vietnamese client around to various listings the other day in her 2-month-old Model S Tesla when she asked her client if he would like to listen to a radio station from his own country.

"I was able to bring up all of the radio stations from Vietnam," said Bathgate. "Or sometimes I drive a client from Michigan, so I'm able to bring up all of the radio stations from that area. I'm from Croatia, and for every town in Croatia (and there are hundreds of them) I could get all the town's

radio stations." But Bathgate, a relatively new Tesla owner, claims that this is only one of many useful technologies her metallic blue luxury car affords her. In fact, she has grown to be so enamored with the car and its vast list of functions and features that a month ago she created the "Lamorinda Tesla Club," a coalition of Tesla owners living in Lafayette, Moraga, and Orinda whose goal in coming together is to better understand and appreciate the expensive but technologically and environmentally savvy type of automobile.

Photo provided "It's early days for the club but the idea is to socialize with other Tesla owners, swap car stories, and I kind of like the idea of a Tesla car convoy," said Bathgate. "Every Tesla owner I have met in the area has loved the idea of the club and wanted to join."

Bathgate purchased a Tesla in late October after a long search for the perfect luxury car.

"It was time for me to get a new car, and I did a lot of research, and nothing sounded good to me," said Bathgate. "I was spending a lot of money for just another car. So when I got to Tesla and I took a

drive, I thought it was something different, it was good for the environment, and it had a lot of technology. It's just a sleek and beautiful car."

The Tesla's 17-inch touch screen that contains nearly all of the car's controls appealed to Bathgate, who says she also uses to screen to show clients maps of listings to which they are headed. In addition, she likes that she can set controls from an app she has on her smart phone. Strangely, drivers do not need to turn on the car; it turns on automatically when a driver enters the vehicle.

"The car recognizes you and turns on by itself," said Bathgate. "When you are done driving, you just leave the car. You don't turn it off."

In response to some complaints from other Tesla owners that the car takes too long to charge electronically while gas-powered vehicles fill up with fuel in mere minutes, Bathgate says that this problem can easily be avoided by charging the car at times it is not being used.

"It doesn't take long to charge," said Bathgate. "It's just like with a phone. Usually I do it overnight, but I can figure out the timing when I want to have it charged."

Bathgate also disagrees with other owners' claims that it is impossible to take road trips in Teslas because of the distance between public electronic charging stations. Tesla spokesman Patrick Jones agrees with Bathgate, saying that an increasing number of large and powerful charging stations, called "Superchargers," are available for Tesla owners' use along roadways.

"We are aggressively expanding our network of Superchargers," said Jones. "Tesla Superchargers allow Model S owners to travel long distances for free between cities along well-traveled highways."

As of now, Bathgate says that her club is relatively small, but growing. She plans on scheduling some club events after the hubbub of the holiday season dies down. More than anything, she feels empowered by the fact that she and other Tesla owners are helping the planet by using their electric cars instead of gas-powered vehicles, even if the environmental impact is relatively minor.

"This is such a nice world that we live in, and if we do little by little, then we can help the environment," said Bathgate.

For more information about the Lamorinda Tesla Club, visit www.lamorindateslaclub.com.

Changing the World

Local activist and bestselling author work to dispel misconceptions about Afghanistan

By Lou Fancher



Bestselling author Khaled Hosseini recently spoke to a Lafayette audience about his books and Afghanistan.

Photo Elena Seibert

Mysteriously, majestically, a book can change the world.

The power of fine literature and reading were on full display at a Trust in Education fundraiser featuring an appearance by New York Times bestselling author Khaled Hosseini at the Acalanes High School Theatre on Dec. 13.

For TIE founder Budd MacKenzie, the Lafayette lawyer's life-changing pivot point leapt from the pages of "Charlie Wilson's War." The 2003 book by George Crile scooped up Mackenzie's mistaken belief in the purity of the United State's intentions in the Middle East and dashed them against the jagged rock wall of American action in



Budd MacKenzie Photo John Sherry

Afghanistan. He now spends 80 percent of his time working to improve the lives and futures of young people in Afghanistan.

For Hosseini – whose "The Kite Runner," "And The Mountains Echoed," and "A Thousand Splendid Suns" have sold close to 38 million copies and entrenched his name on bestseller lists – books have changed his career, family life, position as a human rights advocate and his influence on countless people in America and across the globe. Born in Afghanistan, living in Paris at the time of the Soviet Army's occupation of his homeland, Hosseini and his family were granted political asylum in the United States.

He grew up in San Jose, became a medical doctor, started a family – but all the while, he was writing. Fifteen months of Monday-through-Friday, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. staring out a window and sometimes scribbling, resulted in "The Kite Runner," which sells today in over 70 countries. "I'm kind of envious of that number," Hosseini said, about his debut book's start-to-finish timing. Asked by MacKenzie about his slower-to-produce subsequent books, he said, "You become more discriminating: tougher on yourself. It is, hopefully, part of the growth process."

MacKenzie's growing process – learning about Afghan culture and people – has had magnificent results. Raising \$60,000 in a one-night fundraiser at Diablo Valley Country Club 10 years ago, TIE lifted hundreds of Afghan children from the cramped room, mud floor of their previous classroom. Photos of the newly built, expansive school, students seated at desks, showed what money – and Afghans, who do all the construction of TIE-funded projects – can achieve.

MacKenzie's presentation revealed immense, breathtaking change: 12,891 fragile seedling fruit trees planted in 2006 are now sturdy; two bridges crossing small streams

save 18,000 people from unnecessary roundabouts to get to markets or schools; learning centers in villages wipe out hardline fathers' objections to their daughters' educations as unsafe by eliminating travel; playground equipment and soccer clubs attract students by making school fun; a local teen's ideas to send credit card-sized computers spurs corporate matching funds; blankets and knitted wool garments fill the pallets of supplies TIE sends after every well-attended "packing party"; Larkspur's Corte Madera School sponsors four street children and holds a Skype encounter with their distant beneficiaries; clients of Lafayette-based Futures Explored, an organization supporting adults with developmental disabilities, strip Peet's Coffee bags of their Mylar lining, which becomes life-saving, water-pasteurizing solar cookers used in Afghanistan's too-numerous refugee camps.

A book changed MacKenzie: Mackenzie, East Bay residents and the Afghan people are changing their future worlds.

MacKenzie invited Hosseini to explain what is "wrong" about how Americans perceive the Afghan people. "The news is such a limited way of learning about another place and another people," he said. "It's about a war, casualties, the latest suicide bombing. It relates little about people populating a country. People might be surprised that Afghan is not a country stuck in the 12th century. Even in the village with a mud hut, the guy on the donkey has a cell phone."

Hosseini said there is a tremendous hunger for education and the "lid is slowly being lifted" by access to technology and the education of females. Even so, he argued, the only true way to change course is to have a cultural change and as much as he'd like to "fill up a hypodermic needle with gender equality and inject it," foreign masters – Americans muscling in and forcing progress –

will never succeed. "The people of Lafayette can't change it. You can't change it," Hosseini said to MacKenzie. "It has to come from inside."

Hosseini hopes American troops will serve as safeguards to keep the country from "sliding back to militia wars," but admits, the future holds a "worst case scenario" of "a failed state, complete collapse and an all-out militia." The Taliban is clever, he suggested, and threatens the traditional centrality of family and self-definition as part of a peace-loving ensemble at the heart of Afghan life. "We have an expression here (in

America), 'down time.' It's alone time. In Afghanistan, their down time is when there are 50 people in the room."

Answering audience questions, Hosseini said his books are available in Afghan cities, but not in the outlying, rural villages. Passing Afghan culture to his children is challenging, but achievable, if he avoids lecturing. And tapping into young readers' desires to help Afghan refugees aligns him with MacKenzie, whose encounter with a book, like their reading of Hosseini's novels, ignited a passion for enlightened relations with the people of Afghanistan.

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By Eric Pawlakos

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Not a day goes by without some headline alerting us to the spying technologies that can be used today, including the ability to access an individual's email. You assume your text messages are only being read by the person you sent them to, but you can't know for sure. However, if you ever have the need, or desire, to send an encrypted text message from your smartphone, then you should take a look at TextSecure. It is a very straightforward app. You can send text messages to any recipient who is also using TextSecure, with the knowledge that your text will be encrypted and not readable by anyone but the recipient. To ensure full privacy, this app encrypts the text messages over the air so they can't be intercepted and read. They are also encrypted on your phone. The app is simple to use. Once your personal passphrase is inputted, you can turn the app either on or off. The option

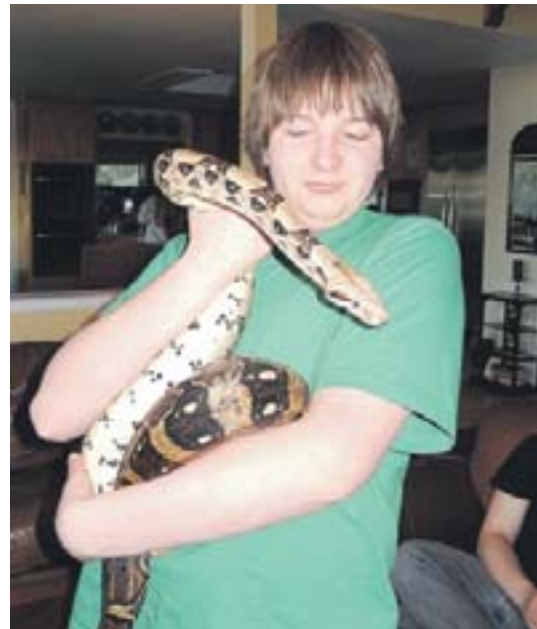
exists to copy all your existing text messages to TextSecure and have them encrypted. This is really handy if you ever lose your phone or leave it sitting around where someone else might sneak a peek. Even if you never want to send an encrypted text message, TextSecure's ability to encrypt the text messages saved in your phone makes it an app worth having.



Eric Pawlakos is a sophomore at UC Davis, majoring in statistics. He is a member of the UC Davis rugby team, and enjoys playing guitar in his spare time.

Orion Academy Students Get Cozy with Reptiles

Submitted by Michelle Barker



Orion Academy student Julian Joseph with a slithering 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.

TEEN SCENE

Celebrate Diversity!

By Konnie Guo

The Miramonte High School Diversity Club is working along with the leadership class to bring knowledge to students about the many holidays celebrated during the month of December in addition to Christmas, such as Hanukkah and Kwanzaa.

"It's important to be aware of other cultures and traditions, and not be narrow-minded," said Diversity Club officer Lina Mathkour, "especially since the United States is becoming more and more diverse each year."

Seventeen-year-old Rachel Breen celebrates Hanukkah and is proud of her Jewish heritage. "I'm glad to celebrate Hanukkah because it's a unique and fun holiday," she said. "It's a time to admire miracles and appreciate freedom." Hanukkah celebrates a victorious revolt that liberated the Jewish people in the second century BCE. Led by a man named Judas Maccabee, the Jews were able to successfully return to their Holy Temple in Jerusalem. As tradition states, the Menorah had to be lit to purify the temple, but there was only enough oil to last a day. Miraculously, the oil ended up sustaining the Menorah's flame for eight days and nights, which is honored today within Jewish households when lighting a new candle on the menorah each night. This year, Hanukkah coincided with Thanksgiving, a convergence that will not occur again for another 75,000 years.

Kwanzaa was established in 1966 to recognize African culture, and is a week-long celebration that focuses on seven core values: unity, self-determination, collective work and responsibility, cooperative economics, purpose, creativity, and faith. During the week, a kinara, or candleholder, with a total of seven candles is lit to represent these values. There are three red candles on the left, three green ones on the right, and one black candle in the center.

The Diversity Club is looking to spread more awareness to students by planning lunchtime activities during the month, and will be reminding everyone who is celebrating the holidays – be it Christmas, Hanukkah or Kwanzaa – to remember one thing: while the traditions may vary, the spirit of the holidays remains the same.

Konnie Guo is currently a junior at Miramonte High School in Orinda. She is an avid reader, and during her spare time, enjoys playing the piano and doing volunteer work.



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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Personal

Can anyone give me info for whereabouts of **Justin Ruhle's mother**? I have not seen her for 10 years since Anandi and Justin's wedding. I think she remarried. Please call Michelle Heart, 707-889-6486

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When a College Degree May Not Be Enough

By Elizabeth LaScala, PhD

It would seem that graduating from a good college with solid grades is no longer sufficient to be competitive in today's job market. This is the conclusion drawn by the Editor in Chief of Kiplinger Magazine, Knight Kiplinger, who recently told a story about his college-educated daughter, who was asked to take two skill tests at a job interview for a position she was seeking ("Kiplinger's Personal Finance" December 2013). Although these skills are typically associated with more technical aptitude (his daughter was seeking a graphic arts and web design position), Kiplinger did some digging around and found that skill testing is a growing trend among employers seeking to hire the most talented and skilled from among the growing numbers of college graduates entering the market.

While talk of skills may first bring to mind a vision of technical capacity like the ability to build a website or manage an information system, the research seems to indicate the trend is far broader. Just as graduate school programs have long used the GRE along with its Subject Tests in Science, Math and Literature to rank students' potential for graduate study,

employers are beginning to use those scores to assess job applicants. The implication is that job seekers can take the GRE and brandish top scores on their resume to entice employers with their mental aptitude.

The trend toward employer testing appears to be running parallel with the bent toward rising minimum education requirements for employment in the United States. A survey of over 2,700 employers published by Lorin-Hitt (Professor, Wharton School, UPenn) and Prasanna Tambe (Stern School, NYU) showed that 18 percent of private sector employers increased educational requirements over the last five years and nearly one-third state they require a college education for jobs previously filled by high school graduates. But the important question for a business's bottom line is whether a more educated work force results in greater revenues. According to researchers who analyzed 20 million resumes and connected them to the company performance of thousands of employers, the answer is 'yes' but not necessarily in all occupations. For example, in customer service and in sales positions, the profits are significantly larger when companies hire

college-educated individuals. The results of these studies show simple correlations, which do not prove causality. However, human resource managers who were surveyed seem to provide further information that supports the correlations. Of managers who hire more workers with college degrees for jobs traditionally held by high school educated workers, 64 percent cite higher work quality and 45 percent cite higher productivity. These are some of the factors that may account for the relationship found between a better educated workforce and increased company revenues.

Interestingly, this relationship did not hold when the researchers examined information technology workforces; it appears that persons with strong technical capacity (if skills are kept current by training) contribute to a company's success regardless of level of education. Thus, hiring for degrees alone does not seem to ensure a successful workforce in all companies and under all conditions. People of all ages and backgrounds can and do learn valuable skills through on the job experiences as well as through self-education in courses taken outside of a formal de-

gree program. Some employers also argue why pay more for a college grad when an applicant can demonstrate knowledge and reasoning skills needed to do the job well. What difference does where or if they went to school make? This trend is further fueled by a backlash against mounting student debt coupled with the high cost of a four-year college degree, which can cost families easily \$100,000 to upwards of \$250,000. Many young people are opting for a condensed, tailored education, such as vocational training or an associate degree path from a community college, while others who have taken the four-year route to a degree work for a few years and then choose to complete a certification or two in order to further qualify them for the job they want rather than paying for a pricey graduate diploma.

A traditional college education may be a great foundation, but the lesson here is to develop skillsets as you earn your degree so that your classroom knowledge is supplemented by practical applications. Internships and summer jobs are critical components for all college students. And for students in liberal arts as well as more technical fields,

it pays to remember that critical reading and writing are valuable skillsets too. This very point is made clear by Kiplinger, who notes that his magazine has long assigned freelance stories (for pay) to individuals applying for writing positions at the company in an effort to assess determination, writing ability and creativity.



Elizabeth LaScala Ph.D. guides families through the sometimes complex world of college admission. She helps students identify college majors and career paths, develops good fit college lists, and provides essay coaching and application support to help students tackle each step of the admission process with confidence and success. Elizabeth also helps families maximize opportunities for scholarships and financial aid awards. Visit www.doingcollege.com; Call (925) 891-4491 or email at elizabeth@doingcollege.com.

Students Drive School Safety Initiatives

Submitted by Theresa Schmidt and Diane Sharp



Sleepy Hollow Elementary School Principal Ken Gallegos and Miramonte High School freshman Stephen Schmidt smile near one of the new compass roses on campus. Photo provided

With campus shootings, and incidences of cyber bullying on the rise, student safety is top of mind for many Lamorindans. Four local high school students decided to take the initiative and make life a little safer for others.

After reading a story about school safety in the Acalanes High School newspaper, Blueprint, following the shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Conn., junior Megan Yee looked into the issue of student and campus safety at her school and at the Acalanes Union High School District. "During an interview with school safety expert Chris Dorn about ways to improve Acalanes' safety, we discussed that classroom doors should be able to lock from the inside as well as the outside," said Yee. "Acalanes' doors only lock from the outside; if an intruder were to come on campus, teachers would have to open their doors in order to lock them. This puts teachers and students at risk."

Dorn said some schools purchased small magnetic strips that teachers can leave on their door frames, and, in the case of an emergency, could easily pull off without opening their doors fully (the door will lock once the strip is removed). Yee discussed the door issue with the Acalanes associate principal, Peter Stewart, and forwarded him the link about the strips from Dorn. "Mr. Stewart, in turn, shared the information with one of our associate superintendents," said Yee, "and he ended

up ordering them for the entire school district."

Miramonte High School freshman Stephen Schmidt was also concerned about school safety and began to research school emergency protocols. He met with Sleepy Hollow Elementary School Principal Ken Gallegos to discuss safety ideas as part of his Eagle Scout project. Schmidt learned that in an emergency, responders would ask for a directional location to indicate a particular site on campus. "For example: 'The earthquake damage is in the playground bathrooms, located on the western part of the campus,'" he explained. But quickly communicating the directional location of a disaster can be difficult, so Schmidt suggested installing two-foot diameter, five-color compass roses at seven strategic locations on the campus and training students and staff how to use them so they could easily determine north, south, east and west from several locations on campus. He hopes to expand the Campus Compass Project to all Lamorinda schools and across the nation.

For Miramonte senior Nick Coufal, the issue of student safety took a different turn when his sister, Sarah, was severely cyber-bullied. "Someone stole her identity and opened an Ask.fm account impersonating her," he said. "There were hundreds of fraudulent and appalling posts." Ironically, Coufal won as student body president with his anti-bullying campaign.

Coufal persuaded the principal at Miramonte to show the film, "The

Bully Project" about five bullied teens, and to conduct a survey that would uncover how and where bullying was taking place. He also created posters and incorporated a "bully fact" in each of his daily broadcasts on the school PA system, and the vice principal asked him to help write the lesson plan for the day of the film. "Follow-up questions generated thoughtful discussions about creating a more inclusive environment, safe Internet practices, and abandoning intellectual superiority," he said. "To give bystanders tools to combat bullying, I developed a handout called '10 Ways to be an Upstander.'" Coufal is planning future assemblies where experts will give on-going training to bystanders and victims, and several other schools plan to show the film thanks to his efforts.

Another senior at Acalanes High School, Brian Lilienstein, also made a difference after a personal experience. When he was 13 years old, he helplessly watched as a man died on a street after jumping from his vehicle. "I sat stunned with no idea what to do," said Lilienstein. "That night has haunted me. It was the most terrifying and defining moment of my life. I never again wanted to feel so helpless." He decided he needed to know CPR, and began work to develop a training program for students (see the

related story at <http://www.lamorindaweekly.com/archive/issue0717/Brothers-Take-CPR-Training-to-Las-Lomas-High-School-Honoring-Wrestlers-Memory.html>). To date, Lilienstein and many others involved

in the program have helped train over 1,500 high school and middle school students in CPR.

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ART

The Moraga Art Gallery show entitled "Capturing Light: Lens and Glass," highlighting photography by resident artist Wenda Pyman, and cast sand glasswork and framework 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.

An exhibit titled "The Heart of Art" will be on view at the Lafayette Art Gallery through Dec. 28, and features warm and emotional works by both the current and new members. The paintings, prints, photography, ceramics and jewelry in "The Heart of Art" offer a wonderful selection of hand-made, one-of-a-kind holiday gifts and ornaments, and will run through the holiday season. For info, call (925) 284-2788 or visit www.lafayetteart-gallery.com.

Klein Gallery is pleased to invite the Lafayette community to

its new show "Prickly Point." This month's show includes work from nine Bay Area Artists who use a diverse array of mediums including painting, drawing, sculpture and photography. As the title suggests, the exhibition celebrates the unique character of each artist's work while encouraging viewers to take in the show as a whole. "Prickly Point" will be up through Jan. 12 at Klein Gallery, open Tuesday through Sunday.

SMC Art and Art History Department Alumni will showcase art in all media and sizes including video and small sculpture. Come see fantastic alumni art, catch up and network with fellow Art and Art History alums and faculty at the opening reception from 6 to 8 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 9, refreshments included. If you would like to volunteer and help with press, installation, opening reception or de-installation, please feel free to contact Lily Manderville, (510) 849-8935, galler@care-gtu.org or Professor Anna Novakov, anovakov@stmarys-ca.edu.

The Glover Group: "A Legacy of Light and Color" which features the current works of 21 local plein air painters who studied

Not to be missed

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. For info, visit www.thepamglovergroup.com.

Student Art from Afghanistan will be on display at the Lafayette Library and Learning Center, Community Hall through Jan. 13. 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

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>.

Holiday Music Concert from 2 to 3 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 21 outside the Orinda Library by teen volunteers of Be the Star You Are! literacy charity organized by Andrew Wang to raise money for Operation Disaster Relief. For info, visit http://starstyleradio.com/Events/Entries/2013/12/21_Holiday_Concert_to_Support_Disaster_Relief.html.

Contra Costa Children's Chorus celebrates 30 years of musical excellence in an Alumni Reunion Concert at 7:30 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 28 at Walnut Creek Presbyterian Church, 1801 Laccassie Ave. Artistic Director Martin Benvenuto and Founding Artistic Director Iris Lamanna will lead alumni and current choristers in song, featuring alumni soloists Camaron Ochs, soprano; Sylvia Baba, soprano; Matt Smart, piano; Keenan Boswell, piano; Aaron Grafton, cello. Tickets: \$20 by mail to CCCC, PO Box 2518, Walnut Creek, CA 94595, or at www.brownpapertickets.com.

Experience the joy of singing in a community of talented and dedicated women! WomenSing is holding auditions Tuesday, Jan. 7 – and by appointment for experienced singers. All voice parts are welcome, and scholarships are available for qualified singers. You may also visit www.womensing.org to review our recent repertoire and listen online. For info, email audition@womensing.org, call (925) 974-9169, or visit womensing.org.

THEATER

Town Hall Theatre has been the go-to place for theatrical holiday family fun in Contra Costa County for generations. This season Town Hall mixes it up with a three-person comic tornado, "Every Christmas Story Ever Told (And Then Some!)" which runs through Dec. 21. Just as the title suggests, three actors take on the entire Christmas canon from "A Christmas Carol" to "The Grinch Who Stole Christmas" to "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer" – Gustav the Green-Nosed Reingoat and beyond. For exact times and prices, contact the Town Hall Theatre Box Office at (925) 283-1557 or visit www.TownHallTheatre.com.

"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 Rd. 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.

KIDS, PARENTS & TEENS

Fratello Marionettes: North Pole Review. Join the fun with a 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!

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4:00 p.m. a family-friendly service
6:00 p.m. a contemporary candlelight communion service
10:00 p.m. a traditional candlelight communion service
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single services at 9:30 a.m.

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



St Stephen's EPISCOPAL CHURCH ORINDA

Sunday, December 22

The Fourth Sunday of Advent

Advent Lessons & Carols with Eucharist at 8:00am & 10:00am

Tuesday, December 24th at 4:00pm

Christmas Pageant and First Eucharist of Christmas
Start the festivities with Family Carol Singing at 3:30pm

Tuesday, December 24th at 8:00pm

Christmas Eve Candlelight Eucharist
The service is preceded by music for organ and trumpet at 7:40pm

Tuesday, December 24th at 11:00pm

Christmas Eve Candlelight Eucharist
Beginning with a concert of Christmas music for choir and instruments at 10:40pm

Wednesday, December 25th at 10:00am

Christmas Day Eucharist

Sunday, December 29 at 8:00am and 10:00am

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KIDS, PARENTS & TEENS ... continued

Children who like to sing can audition from 4 to 6 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 8 at Our Savior's Lutheran Church for Spring Semester. This internationally known chorus is recognized for excellence in vocal training and performance skills. There are choir levels for boys and girls ages 6-16, with local performances and touring opportunities for advanced choirs. The honors level choir is currently preparing to travel to Argentina during the summer of 2014. Call for an appointment or info at (925) 945-7101, ext. 1 or email frontdesk@childrenschorus.org.

OTHER

Become a Sutter Care at Home Hospice Volunteer. Provide hospice patients and families in your community with compassionate, caring support. Local training course available free of charge. For more info, call 1-800-853-7454 or email gaylesn@sutter-health.org.

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.

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.

Join the National Park Service for a free winter solstice-themed campfire program on Saturday, Dec. 21 at John Muir National Historic Site (NHS) in Martinez. The program begins at 3 p.m. with crafts and games in the park orchards and continues with a campfire from 5 to 7 p.m. No reservations are required. Meet at the front gate of the John Muir National Historic Site, 4202 Alhambra Ave. Come with warm layers, picnic blankets, lawn chairs, marshmallows and a desire to have a good time. Rangers will direct visitors from the gate to the fire ring until 5:30 p.m. If it rains heavily, the program will be canceled.

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 at 5A Rent A Space, 455 Moraga Rd., Suite F.

Let's Talk About It: Muslim Journeys, a community reading and discussion series. Discussions will be led by nationally-renowned scholar Hatem Bazian, Ph.D., (UC Berkeley) and will cover five unique books at the Pleasant Hill Senior Center, 233 Gregory Lane, Pleasant Hill. The first program will explore the book "When Asia Was the World" by Stewart Gordon and will be held from 6 to 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 14. For more information on the series, including links for registering and ordering the books, please visit guides.ccclib.org/journeys. For questions or comments, contact Jeff Gibson, project director at (925) 927-3240 or jgibson@ccclib.org.

SENIORS

Sons in Retirement Lamorinda Branch 171 meets the first Wednesday monthly at Holy Trinity Culture Center, 1700 School St., Moraga, with social hour at 11 a.m.; lunch at noon. The after lunch speaker on Wednesday, Jan. 8 will be Saint Mary's College Professor Ron Olowin, of the Department of Physics and Astronomy. Olowin is known for his creative and entertaining perspectives on the Universe. He will share his latest views of the cosmos. For details and membership information, call Larry at (925) 631-9528.

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Rosselyn Ramirez Photo Bilha Serling

Diablo Ballet will celebrate the Holidays at 7 p.m. Friday, Dec. 20 at Steinway Piano Gallery. This festive event will have attendees ringing in the holidays with an evening of dance led by Diablo Ballet ballerina, Rosselyn Ramirez, and beloved Nutcracker characters, with food, wine, and punch and cookies for children. With a tax-deductible contribution of \$200 or more to Diablo Ballet, patrons can bring up to four guests to the event! For more info, call Diablo Ballet at (925) 943-1775 or visit www.DiabloBallet.org.

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

Saving Mr. Banks

By Derek Zemrak



Walt Disney Studios Motion Pictures

I went into the press screening of "Saving Mr. Banks" thinking I was going to see a "feel good" Disney holiday movie. But in reality, I got more than a "spoonful of sugar." I saw a solid film with a superior script and superb acting based on the true story about P. L. Travers, the author of "Mary Poppins."

The film stars two-time Oscar winner Emma Thompson ("Sense and Sensibility," "Howards End") as the bitter Travers and two-time Oscar winner and Bay Area native Tom Hanks ("Forrest Gump," "Philadelphia") as Walt Disney. Disney's daughters loved the book, "Mary Poppins," and he promised them that one day he would make a "Mary Poppins" movie. Well, sometimes things are not that easy, even if you are Walt Disney. Travers was very protective of the creation of her characters in "Mary Poppins" and she had no desire to have them come to life on the big screen.

After 20 years chasing his promise to his daughters, Disney continued to pursue the rights from Travers. When the royalties were drying up, Travers finally agreed under one condition: that she maintain total control of pro-

duction. As Disney says, "A promise is a promise," and for his daughters he agreed to the terms. Disney did not have any idea what was in store for him and the production crew as they began making "Mary Poppins." Travers was not happy about anything from the script, the music, the animation, to the casting of Dick Van Dyke.

As the story is told with the use of childhood flashbacks, we learn why the fictitious characters were so important. The film explores how events in Travers' childhood stayed with her and how she became more embittered holding on to the memories. Some of the events are heart wrenching, which I was not expecting. Thompson as Travers is Oscar-worthy and the emotional end scene will receive a lot of attention. I think it will be a tight race at the 86th Annual Academy Awards between Emma Thompson and Cate Blanchett, for her role in "Blue Jasmine."

John Lee Hancock ("The Blind Side") directed "Saving Mr. Banks," which is a high-quality film, but not "supercalifragilisticexpialidocious." Be prepared for a drama - not a lighthearted comedy. "Saving Mr. Banks" is rated PG-13, due

to the intense emotional and troubling scenes from Travers' childhood with a TRT (total running time) of 2 hours and 5 minutes. Heads up: stay for the end credits for a special treat.

In the next issue I will be writing my picks for the 2014 Oscars. Speaking of the Oscars, mark your calendars for the annual Oscar party at the Rheem Theatre on March 2, 2014. Watch the academy awards on the biggest screen (except for IMAX) in the East Bay; enjoy live music, great food from Shellys of Orinda, auctions, raffles and door prizes. Plus enjoy the opening of the Classic Film Hall of Fame and Museum. Costumes and props from blockbuster films will be on display as well as wardrobes worn by Oscar nominees Meryl Streep, Bradley Cooper and Marisa Tomei, just to name a few! The place to be seen on Oscar night is the Rheem Theatre!

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.

Rotary International

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 20: Cynthia Kroll, chief economist for the Association of Bay Area Governments will speak about the economy and regional | December 27: No meeting Christmas week. Next meeting Friday, Jan 3, 2014. | Please join us! |
|--|---|----------------------------|

Mayor Days Be Merry!

By Susie Iventosch

It's that happy time of year, when we feature the favorite recipes of our outgoing mayors! This year, mayors Amy Worth, Mike Anderson and Dave Trotter

offered up some extra-delicious recipes, but none of them are terribly difficult ... a welcome feature during the hectic holiday season.

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.



Photos Susie Iventosch



Mrs. Trotter's Date Nut Bread

Mayor Trotter shared a date nut bread recipe handed down from his wife Debby's grandmother, Josephine Webster.

"It is a Webster family tradition at Thanksgiving and Christmas," the mayor said. "Debby has continued the tradition here at our home in Moraga. She refers to her date nut bread as 'required eating' during the holidays."

This bread is delicious and apparently already 'required eating' at our house, as my son gobbled up most of a loaf!

DATE NUT BREAD

(Makes 2 regular loaves, or 3 smaller loaves)

INGREDIENTS

- 1 pound dates, cut fine
- 2 teaspoons baking soda
- 2 cups boiling water
- Mix and let stand until cool.

- 2 heaping tablespoons shortening (I used butter)
- 1 1/2 cups sugar
- 2 eggs
- 3 cups flour
- 1 cup chopped walnuts
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- Stir in a mixer. Add cooled date mixture.

Pour into greased loaf pans and bake 45 minutes at 340 degrees. (Yes, 340 degrees, I double-checked on that, because it is an unusual baking temperature!)



Mayor Anderson's BBQ Salmon

Mayor Anderson shared his recipe for barbecued salmon, which is super-easy and absolutely fantastic!

"I have used this recipe to feed my vegetarian siblings at holiday meals in lieu of ham or turkey," Mayor Anderson mentioned. "Of course, it can be prepared anytime and be a real treat!" I served this salmon to my husband and son, who are huge fish lovers, and we all loved it, both for its simplicity and delicious flavor. I would consider making extra sauce to pour over rice or another side dish, as well as the cooked fish. This recipe will definitely be added to our fish dish rotation.

BARBECUED SALMON FILLETS

With Soy-Sherry Butter Sauce (Makes about 8 servings)

INGREDIENTS

- 6-8 pound whole salmon, cleaned, head and tail removed, and cut lengthwise into two boneless fillets
- 3/4 cup (1 and 1/2 sticks) butter (I used just slightly less than one stick)
- 2 cloves garlic, minced or pressed
- 1 1/2 tablespoons soy sauce
- 1 1/2 tablespoons dry mustard
- 1/3 cup dry sherry
- 3 tablespoons catsup

DIRECTIONS

Rinse fish and pat dry; then place each fillet, skin side down, on a piece of heavy-duty foil. Cut foil to follow outlines of fish, leaving a 1-2 inch border. Crimp edges of foil.

In a pan, combine butter, garlic, mustard, soy, sherry, and catsup. Stir over medium heat until butter is melted. Brush fish with part of the butter mixture; reserve the remaining butter mixture for serving over cooked fish.

Barbecue on the grill. Adjust dampers as necessary to maintain an even heat. Cook fish until fish flakes when prodded in the thickest part. (15-18 minutes)

Supporting fish with foil, transfer to a warm platter. To serve, cut through flesh of each fillet to skin; slide a wide metal spatula between skin and flesh and lift out each portion. Pass remaining butter mixture to accompany each serving. Makes about 8 servings.

Mayor Worth's Cheese Puffs

This recipe comes from Mayor Worth's family's dear friend, Ann Hawley, who was Assistant Dean of Students at Cal when the mayor and her husband were students there.

"They are a favorite for special family and holiday dinners and always a request for our daughters' birthday dinners," Worth noted.

We especially loved the spicy touch to these cheese puffs. In fact, we add just a few shakes of hot sauce, too!

CHEDDAR CHEESE PUFFS

INGREDIENTS

- 1/2 cup butter
- 2 cups sharp cheddar cheese, grated
- 1 cup flour
- A pinch of salt
- A dash of Worcestershire sauce
- A pinch of cayenne pepper

DIRECTIONS

Mix the butter, grated cheese, flour, Worcestershire sauce, salt and cayenne pepper together, using a fork or wooden spoon. Form dough into little balls about the size large marbles.

Now, you have a choice: You can place them on a baking sheet to freeze, then bag or store in a plastic container for baking later, or you can bake them right away, which is exactly what we did. And then we ate them right away, too. They are so yummy!

To bake, place the cheese dough balls on a baking sheet about two inches apart and bake for 15-20 minutes at 375 degrees. If you have any left, (not likely) store baked cheese puffs in an airtight container.

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- Trailing Remnants of Comet ISON
- Waiting for the Missing Piece Basketball teams prep for preseason without key football players
- New Plan for Rancho Laguna II
- Popular Financial Services Manager to Retire
- Tree Lighting Rings in the Season
- Miramonte Football Marches On! Mats in NCS final; Cougars beat Dons in quarterfinals, lose in semifinals
- Lynn's Top Five National Health Care: What to think about now

If you wish to view any of the stories above go to www.lamorindaweekly.com and click the link below the story.

LAMORINDA SPORTS

Miramonte Wins it All



No. 3 Miramonte defeated No.1 Casa Grande in the division II NCS football championships. The Mats upset the favorites 41-28 on Dec. 7.

Despite taking an early lead, the Mats were down 21-14 in the third. Refusing to quit, Miramonte went on a tear in the fourth quarter, scoring 27 points to regain the lead and seal the win.

Quarterback Drew Anderson led the charge, throwing for 438 yards and five touchdowns. Four of those touchdowns came in the fourth quarter.

Miramonte was not selected for the CIF State tournament.

C. Mitchell

Drew Anderson Photo Gint Federas

Bringing Their "A" Game

Gaels basketball off to a strong start

By Michael Sakoda



Danielle Mauldin Photo Tod Fierner

Building on last year's momentum, the Saint Mary's women's basketball team is off to the best start in school history. The Gaels finished last season with a record of 23-11 (11-5 WCC), advancing to the quarterfinals of the NIT Tournament – the furthest a Gaels' team has advanced – where they were edged 58-55 by Utah.

The 2012-2013 Gaels raised the bar going 10-0 in games following a loss, becoming the first team to avoid back-to-back losses in school history and getting a single season record 356 rebounds from Danielle Mauldin.

This year's team continues to improve on last year's success. The hot start has the Gaels with an 8-1 record, including a payback win against Washington and wins over Toledo (last year's MAC Champions), Butler, and Alabama.

The catalysts behind the Gaels' hot start – effort and desire.

"We ended last season with a loss on our home court, and the team hated that," said head coach Paul Thomas. "They put in work over the summer

and in the fall to start strong...they trained hard and they're getting results."

"We weren't satisfied with the results of the last few years, so that hunger to win is there," said returning guard Kate Gaze. "I think that's the difference...just the feel about this team."

With four returning starters – Jackie Nared, Danielle Mauldin, Kate Gaze and Carli Rosenthal – two of whom were named to the pre-season All-WCC team (Nared and Mauldin) this is a veteran team with big time experience.

"Danielle provides a way different facet to our game than anyone else does," said Thomas of his standout forward. "She rebounds the ball...has that midrange pull up, and if you try to close out hard she's going to go right by you."

So far this season, Mauldin and the Gaels offense have been on a tear, putting up 85.11 points per game while holding opponents to an average of 74.11 points per game.

"I'm never concerned about our

offense," said Thomas. "But our defense has to improve...we have to be able stop people...and I don't think we're about to do that quite yet."

The need for stops was evident in the team's lone loss of the season, a heartbreaking 92-94 loss to Sacramento State on Dec. 5.

"We let any and everyone drive by us, and our rotations and our close outs were non-existent," said Thomas of the disappointing game.

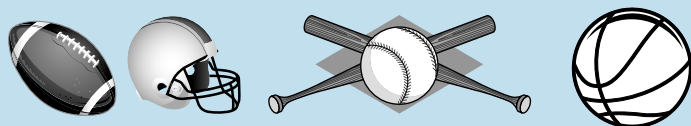
"The game at Sac State really opened our eyes," said Jackie Nared. "Any team can beat us if we're not on our A game every night."

But the Gaels bounced back after another strong week of practice, toppling UC Davis 88-71 on Dec. 15, the Gaels 14th straight win following a loss going back two seasons.

"They hate losing," explained Thomas. "When you have that kind of personality on your team it makes coming off of a loss a much easier situation."

St. Mary's travels to Los Angeles for a road test at USC on Dec. 19, and at CSU Northridge on Dec. 21.

Youth Sports Registration



Lamorinda Rugby Football Club

Registration is still 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. Find out more about our team and how to register online at www.lamorugby.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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Soccer Season Underway

Big Rivalry Match This Week

By Marissa Harnett

Just as surely as winter blows in, so does the high school soccer season. Training since mid-November, the season is just getting underway. Preceded by only one pre-season tournament, league play began on Dec. 11.

In boys' soccer, Campolindo is off to a hot start, winning the Winter Soccer Classic, Silver Division, on Dec. 7. After an erratic start last season, Campo hit a groove and surged to reach the NCS finals finishing the season 18-8-2 overall (7-4-1 in league).

Despite their strong finish last year, the team lacked confidence going into this season. "Although we got better last year as the season went along and completely exceeded expectations, the sting of finishing second in everything (Winter Soccer Classic, DFAL and NCS) definitely carried into the offseason and into this season," head coach Shane Carney explained. "It was hard for us to enjoy our unexpected success last year when we kept coming up just short."

The Dec. 7 win helped Campo solidify their confidence. Adding to their momentum, the Cougars also nabbed their first two league games against Las Lomas and Alhambra.

As last season's DFAL winner, Acalanes is arguably Campo's biggest rival. Finishing the 2012-2013 season with an overall record of 23-1-3 (11-0-2 in league), the Dons have consistently produced strong results and have earned the NCS title four times in five years.

However, a bumpy start to the 2013-2014 season finds the Dons fighting to regain traction. The Winter Classic produced disappointing results as the Dons went 1-2-1. A 2-1 loss to Alhambra followed in their league opener last Wednesday.

Still, head coach Paul Curtis is not worried. "The roster has 23 boys and they are working hard to come together as a single cohesive and productive unit," he explained. "This year, there are a significant number of new players on the varsity team and so that process will take some time," Curtis continued. He views the results as

an "opportunity for growth and improvement." Acalanes has seen major personnel turnover including graduating 25 players over two years. Also for the first time ever, three freshmen earned spots on the varsity roster. Curtis feels good about the season ahead – the Dons overcame Dublin in their second league game, perhaps signaling an upward trend – as well as in the coming years noting the deep young talent and particularly strong freshman team. "It bodes well for the future of the program," he said.

Miramonte, who has struggled with consistency and continuity over the last few years, performed well at the Winter Classic finishing with a 2-1-1 record and a third place trophy in the Bronze Division.

New head coach Billal Samy is excited to take the helm at Miramonte, a task that comes with many challenges. Second to battling injuries, helping players move from club soccer to high school is a significant hurdle. The short pre-season along with ability differentials make high school soccer a difficult transition.

Samy is up to the task though. "If the proper training environment is implemented, players of different backgrounds/abilities may have a better chance to put forth a strong, collective and competitive effort," he explained.

Samy is happy with the results so far, logging six goals for and only three against in the opening tournament. Although the Mats fell to Dougherty Valley in their season opener, Samy is confident. "We definitely have the personnel to compete at this level," he said.

As the fourth coach in as many years, Samy has simple aspirations. "My goal is to prepare the team to compete," he stated. "NCS is always a target, but developing players and planting the seeds for the next few years is the first goal."

Upcoming rivalry action at 6:15 p.m.:

- Friday, Dec. 20 Acalanes @ Campolindo
- Friday, Jan. 10 Acalanes @ Miramonte
- Wednesday, Jan. 15 Miramonte @ Campolindo



Dons earned their first DFAL win over Dublin last Friday.

Photo Gint Federas

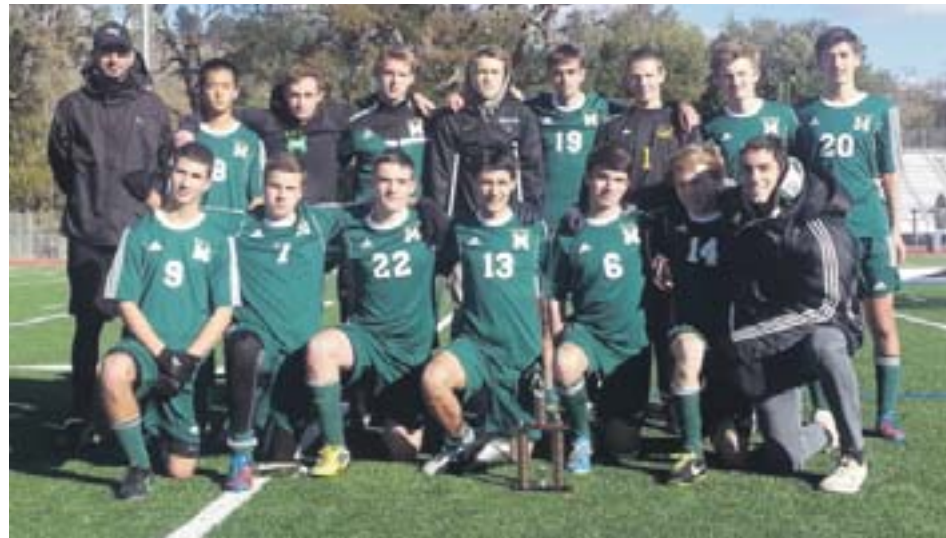


Campolindo is 2-0 after defeating Alhambra last Friday.

Photo Gint Federas

Mats Finish Third in Winter Classic

Submitted by Jeanne Woodlee



Back row, from left: Billal Samy, Joe Wang, Jake Woodlee, Ryan See, Sam Conklin, Reece Roberts, Garrett Johnson, Henry Hodder, Gabe Sloan; front row: Coleman Fine, Spencer Hardwick, Clay Haskell, Aaron Roybal, Clark Jordan, Ben Hodder, Jarrett Visher; not pictured: David Basili, Michael Basili, Asher Kalman, Connor McDonald, Ruwan Thilakarathne, Kyle Visher Photo provided

Miramonte boys' varsity soccer finished in third place at the Winter Classic Soccer Tournament. The team had several absent players and even had to forfeit the first game. However, once on the field, the Mats

were tough competition. Led by new coach Billal Samy, Miramonte tied against Mission San Jose 2-2, defeated Berean Christian 4-0 and defeated Irvington, 1-0, the rescheduled forfeit match.

Miramonte Girls' Basketball Strong as Ever

Campo, Acalanes look to unseat

By Conrad Bassett



Megan Reid



Nadine Maserweh

The 2012-2013 girls basketball season brought much attention to Lamorinda as the Miramonte Matadors went through a second straight undefeated Diablo-Foothill Athletic League season on their way to a spectacular 27-3 record. Miramonte again looks like the top favorite, but Acalanes and Campolindo are looking for the upset.

This year, Miramonte returns their entire team from last year, except graduated, four-year player, Carly Gill. Head coach Kelly Sopak notes that she will be hard to replace.

"Sometimes, we have to realize that people are not replaceable. Carly provided too much for one person to replace her. We simply will all have to step up to fill that void, including our coaching staff."

Sopak certainly has those tools—seniors Megan Reid, Bree Alford, Nadine Maserweh and Allison Miller return as does junior Kaitlin Fenn and sophomores Sabrina Ionescu, Keana Delos Santos, Jesse Wilson and Uriah Howard.

Sopak added, "Masarweh has improved tremendously since last season and will likely start this year."

Newcomers include freshman Elle Louie and senior Mariah Seals.

Those who saw the team play last year will note that Sopak freely substituted and there were always fresh players on the court.

"We will carry 11 on varsity and all 11 players will play," said Sopak. "I hate to compare teams but I have never felt more comfortable with my entire roster as I do this season. We may have a starting lineup for the sake of having one, but I look at it as if we have 11 starters. They are all unique and bring something different to the court but I could not tell you on any given night who is going to carry us."

And as always they will have a challenging schedule including traveling out of state twice—to the NIKE TOC in Phoenix and to Gillette, Wyo. to play in the Energy Classic.

Over in Lafayette, the Acalanes Dons have a new varsity coach, Chad Wellon, who will be looking to improve on last year's team that struggled to an overall 12-14 record.

He knows the players as he coached the

Dons' freshman team last year.

Wellon has a young team with only two seniors—Ariel Padua and Krista Federas.

Wellon said, "So far Julia Lyons, a sophomore point guard and team captain, has really taken on a leadership role and has been a consistent scorer for us."

Wellon added that his young team will also be helped by a freshman. "Another player to watch out for is Roni Marrone, freshman forward. She also has been a consistent scorer and contributor over the first part of our season."

So far, the Dons are off to a good start. They opened the season with three wins in their first four games, and they will be playing most of their pre-season games locally.

Campolindo is also starting the season with a new head coach. Art Thoms is moving up from the assistant position in the Cougar program. Campo went 25-6 a year ago with only two DFAL losses, both to Miramonte, and went as far as the Nor-Cal semi-finals. They lost three starters to graduation including Laura Hickey and Courtney Seyranian.

"Laura and Courtney were great players and leaders last season. We also graduated a third starter, Rachel Riddle. It will be hard to replace them," Thoms said.

Still the Cougars do bring back some depth. "Seniors Ashley Ewing and Meagan Adachi are returning starters from last year and Sierra Regan is a senior and has earned a starting position," Thoms explained. "Ashley, Meagan and Sierra were voted team captains and we will look to them for leadership."

"Freshman Brooke Panfili will step into a starting guard role," added Thoms.

The Cougars will also stay local playing several non-league games and playing in the West Coast Jamboree along with Acalanes.

All coaches agreed that the entire DFAL will be a solid league again this year. Dublin won 21 games last season and has won their first three games this year. Dougherty Valley has a solid history. Las Lomas and Alhambra should be improved as well.

Wellon summed it up, "Every game will be tough!"

DFAL regular season begins on Jan. 7



Julia Lyons



Krista Federas



Ashley Ewing



Meagan Adachi

Consecutive Turkey Titles

Submitted by Kellie Beaubelle



Back row, from left: Coach Azzani, Miles Beaubelle, Patrick Greenfield, Luke Miller, coach Braitberg, Ben Schmiedt, Jayson Fernbacher; front row: Harrison Braitberg, Adrese Azzani, Nicolas Dutto, Jonathan Wong. Photo provided

The Santa Maria seventh grade boys' American division team won the 2013 MVP Flight Turkey Shootout tournament for the third consecutive year. The majority of these boys have been playing together on the American team since third grade.

Cal Magic Earn Gold

Submitted by Greg Davis



From left, front row: Olivia Grillo, Teven Aghababian, Eliza Bates, Georgia Karas, Molly Midthun, Alyssa Runckel; back row: coach Tony Neto, Hanako Helton, Bridgette Schafer, Maggie Saravecic, Gabby Ortale, Devon Ortman, Nicole Van Stralen, Katherine Buckley; not pictured: Olivia Marquez. Photo provided

The California Magic U12 girls were crowned champions Dec. 9 in the prestigious Juventus Copa d' Oro tournament. Magic went undefeated over the two-day event, outscoring their opponents 9-1.

The championship game was intense from start to finish. Magic won in penalty kicks, providing great drama for the family and friends who came to watch.

At tournament's end, coach Tony Neto remarked: "This is our first year together as a team and I am very proud of the incredible skills the girls have developed. Our kids love playing soccer and it is wonderful to watch that passion on the field."

Mats' Alum is All-NAIA

Submitted by John Fuller



Photo provided

Sophie Fuller, a recent graduate of Miramonte and freshman defender for Westmont, competed in the NAIA soccer championship game in Orange, Alabama against Concordia of Oregon on Dec. 7. Fuller started every game for the Warriors.

Westmont advanced to the final match after defeating four teams from around the United States, including Westminter of Utah, Martin Methodist of Tennessee, Davenport of Michigan, and Northwood of Florida.

The Warriors came up short in the final, losing to Concordia by a score of 1-0. Fuller was selected to the NAIA All-Tournament Team and was additionally honored as the Defensive Most Valuable Player of the tournament.

National Champion

Submitted by Corinna Sassano



Photo provided

Lamorinda Soccer Club alum Claire Winter, a graduate of Acalanes High School and freshman at UCLA, is part of this year's national champion soccer team.

Lamorinda Soccer Club Champions

Submitted by Corinna Sassano



Photo provided

Lamorinda Soccer Club U13 boys' Navy team won the NorCal League. Ending the season with 25 goals (second best in the league), eight goals scored against (best in the league) and a +17 point goal differential (best in the league), the LMSC team possessed the ball and created opportunities all season.

As the season wound down, Lamorinda went into the last two games of the season in second place. This set up a face off for first place against Mustang Lazio, who were in first by 1 point.

At the end of the first half, LMSC was down 0-1. Although LMSC possessed the majority of the second half, they were almost 20 minutes into the second half before they were able to put the ball in the back of the net. Later, LMSC scored again to win the game.

LMSC clinched the division with a win over Richmond.

Slalom Success

Submitted by Leslie Ryder



Sierra Ryder at Alyeska Resort in a FIS race hosted by Alyeska Ski Club. Photo by Bod Eastaugh

Miramonte senior Sierra Ryder tied for first place in the Alaska Best Water December FIS slalom. Ryder and another competitor finished with a time of 1:55.71 seconds on Dec. 13. Ryder competes for Lake Tahoe Racing and is a FIS ski racer. She will compete next year in college.

Orinda Aquatics Swims in Winter Meets

Submitted by Tracy Fu



From left: Talbot Jacobs, Mary Ashby, Hannah Grubbs, Claire Therien, Allison Stevens, Gabe Ostler. Photos provided



From left: Michael Wheeler, Alec Baker, Alex Low, Kai Nashan and Justin Lammert

Orinda Aquatics finished fourth in the Winter Junior Olympics in Morgan Hill Dec. 6-8.

Just a week later, six high school swimmers, Talbot Jacobs, Allison Stevens, Mary Ashby, Gabe Ostler, Hannah Grubbs and Claire Therien, competed in the 2013 Speedo Winter Junior Nationals in Greensboro, N.C..

Lamorinda Weekly

is an independent publication, produced by and for the residents of Lafayette, Moraga and Orinda, CA

Contact us:

Letters to the editor (max 350 words): letters@lamorindaweekly.com
Sport events/stories/pictures: sportsdesk@lamorindaweekly.com
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General interest stories/Community Service: storydesk@lamorindaweekly.com
Publishers/Owners: Andy and Wendy Scheck; andy@lamorindaweekly.com, wendy@lamorindaweekly.com
Editor in Chief: Lee Borrowman; lee@lamorindaweekly.com
Life, Our Homes and Community Editor: Jennifer Wake; jennifer@lamorindaweekly.com
Advertising: 925-377-0977, Wendy Scheck; wendy@lamorindaweekly.com
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Staff Writers:

Sophie Braccini; sophie@lamorindaweekly.com
Cathy Tyson; cathy@lamorindaweekly.com
Laurie Snyder; laurie@lamorindaweekly.com
Cathy Dausman; cathy.d@lamorindaweekly.com
Sports Editor: Caitlin Mitchell; sportsdesk@lamorindaweekly.com
Nick Marnell; nick@lamorindaweekly.com
Teen Coach: Cynthia Brian; cynthia@lamorindaweekly.com
Food: Susie Iventosch; suziventosch@gmail.com
Contributing Writers: Conrad Bassett, Moya Stone, Michael Sakoda, Rebecca Eckland, Marissa Harnett, Lou Fancher, Clare Varelles, Chris Lavin, Amanda Kuehn, Barry Hunan (cartoonist)
Photos: Tod Fierner, Ohlen Alexander, Gint Fedaras
Layout/Graphics: Andy Scheck, Jaya Griggs. Printed in CA.
Lamorinda Weekly, P.O. Box 6133, Moraga, CA 94570-6133
Phone: 925-377-0977; Fax: 1-800-690-8136; email: info@lamorindaweekly.com
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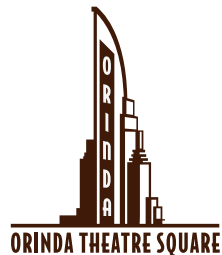
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Lamorinda OUR HOMES

Lamorinda Weekly Volume 07 Issue 21 Wednesday, December 18, 2013



The Home Designer: Wrap It Up

...read on page D8

Hire a Pro

But don't shy away from doing some home repairs yourself

By Chris Lavin



Mark Shaw works on a sticking interior door at his home in Orinda.

Photos Chris Lavin

Now that winter weather has struck, homeowners are looking around their houses for those repairs that just didn't get done over the summer, but need attention.

"Hire a pro," says Mark Shaw, who calls himself a realtor and a violinist in the same breath, "but there are some things you can handle yourself."

Shaw says that if a homeowner has done nothing to their home for 10 years, and made no repairs, then it's likely the owner is looking at \$5,000 in repairs – and that's the low end.

Shaw gives free home maintenance seminars at the Lafayette Library twice a year, one focusing on the exterior, the other on the inside. His most recent crowd was there for advice mainly for particular problems: A persistent shower leak that hasn't been fixed by three consecutive repairmen ("water damage is the worst, you can't let that go"), furnace problems ("make sure you're not heating your attic"), and a handful of widows who were looking for guidance now that their husbands aren't around to oversee repairs.

"It's interesting," Shaw said, "that when you've lived in a house for a long time, and especially if you live alone, things start to need attention, and you might think everything looks just fine. But it doesn't to someone coming in for the first time. I see it all the time."
...continued on page D4



Two perpendicular layers of stone wool insulation batts were easy to install in this Moraga home.

Photo Andy Scheck

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Lamorinda Home Sales recorded

| City | Last reported: | LOWEST AMOUNT: | HIGHEST AMOUNT: |
|-----------|----------------|----------------|-----------------|
| LAFAYETTE | 13 | \$531,500 | \$2,525,000 |
| MORAGA | 8 | \$310,000 | \$1,275,000 |
| ORINDA | 9 | \$400,000 | \$1,700,000 |

Home sales are compiled by CalREsource, 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

3567 Boyer Circle, \$915,000, 4 Bdrms, 2570 SqFt, 1938 YrBlt, 11-14-13;

Previous Sale: \$650,000, 09-27-11

3536 Brook Street, \$531,500, 2 Bdrms, 1121 SqFt, 1990 YrBlt, 11-13-13

3538 Brook Street, \$531,500, 2 Bdrms, 1113 SqFt, 1990 YrBlt, 11-13-13

3542 Brook Street, \$531,500, 2 Bdrms, 1121 SqFt, 1990 YrBlt, 11-13-13;

Previous Sale: \$156,000, 09-16-85

109 Camelia Lane, \$550,000, 11-18-13;

Previous Sale: \$1,500,000, 08-11-06

32 Crest Road, \$1,950,000, 3 Bdrms, 3718 SqFt, 1941 YrBlt, 11-8-13;

Previous Sale: \$2,225,000, 10-24-07

3158 Gloria Terrace, \$925,000, 3 Bdrms, 1908 SqFt, 1953 YrBlt, 11-12-13

3848 Happy Valley Road, \$2,525,000, 2 Bdrms, 1084 SqFt, 1903 YrBlt, 11-19-13

3222 Los Palos Circle, \$1,718,000, 3 Bdrms, 3142 SqFt, 1963 YrBlt, 11-20-13;

Previous Sale: \$1,420,000, 12-03-04

733 Los Palos Drive, \$2,185,000, 4 Bdrms, 4110 SqFt, 2003 YrBlt, 11-18-13;

Previous Sale: \$640,000, 08-07-02

3407 Shangri La Road, \$1,660,000, 4 Bdrms, 3972 SqFt, 2004 YrBlt, 11-8-13;

Previous Sale: \$1,925,000, 11-10-05

10 Silverhill Way, \$985,000, 5 Bdrms, 3684 SqFt, 1988 YrBlt, 11-21-13;

Previous Sale: \$878,000, 11-26-03

3178 Teigland Road, \$1,200,000, 4 Bdrms, 3284 SqFt, 1951 YrBlt, 11-14-13;

Previous Sale: \$1,200,000, 04-12-13

MORAGA

904 Augusta Drive, \$799,000, 3 Bdrms, 2710 SqFt, 1988 YrBlt, 11-8-13;

Previous Sale: \$779,000, 07-03-01

37 Lynwood Place, \$1,275,000, 5 Bdrms, 3430 SqFt, 1963 YrBlt, 11-13-13;

Previous Sale: \$150,000, 05-22-79

651 Moraga Road #24, \$310,000, 2 Bdrms, 1144 SqFt, 1962 YrBlt, 11-21-13;

Previous Sale: \$280,000, 04-18-02

3995 Paseo Grande, \$1,225,000, 5 Bdrms, 2623 SqFt, 1970 YrBlt, 11-19-13

1837 St. Andrews Drive, \$980,000, 3 Bdrms, 2828 SqFt, 1981 YrBlt, 11-19-13;

Previous Sale: \$1,010,000, 05-03-05

1903 St. Andrews Drive, \$1,150,000, 3 Bdrms, 3424 SqFt, 1983 YrBlt, 11-20-13;

Previous Sale: \$440,000, 09-01-88

479 Woodminster Drive, \$576,000, 3 Bdrms, 1572 SqFt, 1974 YrBlt, 11-13-13;

Previous Sale: \$510,000, 08-02-10

550 Woodminster Drive, \$517,000, 3 Bdrms, 1572 SqFt, 1974 YrBlt, 11-19-13

... continued on page D7

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Listings 2013

| | | |
|---------------------------|-------------|----------------------|
| 57 Parson Brown, Moraga | \$1,650,000 | Sold prior to market |
| 4 Whiting Court, Moraga | \$1,350,000 | Sold prior to market |
| 62 Moraga Via, Orinda | \$1,130,000 | Sold in 11 days |
| 15 Hetfield Place, Moraga | \$950,000 | Sold prior to market |

Buyers 2013

| | | |
|-----------------------------|-------------|-----------|
| 7 Haven Court, Moraga | \$1,695,000 | (pending) |
| 470 Fernwood, Moraga | \$1,110,000 | (sold) |
| 108 Warfield, Moraga | \$790,000 | (sold) |
| 1903 St. Andrews, Moraga | \$1,150,000 | (sold) |
| 1253 Larch, Moraga | \$1,100,000 | (sold) |
| 113 Cypress Point, Moraga | \$750,000 | (sold) |
| 171 Kingsdale, Walnut Creek | \$950,000 | (sold) |
| 704 Las Trampas, Lafayette | \$1,875,000 | (sold) |
| 801 Willow Pond, Danville | \$660,000 | (sold) |
| 755 Camino Ricardo, Moraga | \$1,117,000 | (sold) |

"We can't thank Lana enough for finding us a wonderful home in a really difficult market. We had been looking in the Lamorinda area for over 6mo with an agent from San Francisco. She helped us every step of the way as we negotiated and closed on the house. She definitely went above and beyond, acting as more than our agent. Each day we've been in our new house, we thank our lucky stars that we connected with Lana. We definitely wouldn't be here without her!"
Chris and Hilleary

"Lana did a great job sprucing up our house for sale and kept us posted every step along the way. Truly a pleasure to work with."
Brandon

"We have had the good fortune of partnering with Lana to sell our previous home. She is an ABSOLUTE professional, an amazing resource of local Lamorinda information and a tremendously hard-working agent. Lana is very creative and understands how to showcase a home's best features to make it attractive to a prospective buyer. This has been a tough market and we know that Lana always had our best interests in mind throughout the process. Lana is thoughtful and insightful but at the same time, she treated our buyers and their agent with respect. We highly recommend Lana as an excellent realtor for buying and selling in the Lamorinda area."
Shirley

"When we decided to check out the real estate market after returning to CA, we met Lana at an open house. She was pleasant and personable, but I'm the ultimate skeptic when it comes to people I think are only there to sell. We talked about the type of house we were interested in, took her card and left. A couple of weeks later the phone rang and it was Lana telling me she had a couple of places she thought would be interesting. Again I was skeptical, but we arranged to meet. She showed us two houses that were in the range of what we were looking for, including look, size, location and price. They didn't quite fit, but she suggested one more stop. We visited and ultimately bought it. Lana listened, followed up and found us something that met our needs. She made the entire process easy. And she is one of the nicest people I've had the pleasure to do business with. I'd want her to represent me should I ever sell or buy property in the future."
Douglas



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Hire a Pro

... continued from page D1



Kai Rochette washes off the furnace filter for his family's home in Canyon.

To illustrate his point, Shaw brought along a slide show with a lot of nasty pictures of things living in our carpets, horrible close-ups of parasites that ride in on our pets, and messy insulation that has fallen away from ducts.

While this list is by no means comprehensive, Shaw hit some high points:

- Have your furnace inspected and hire a chimney sweep to vacuum out your heating ducts. At the same time, replace your furnace filters every two to three months, or get a permanent filter that you can hose

down every few months.

- Get a carbon monoxide detector, pronto. "If you do not have one of these then go straight from here to the hardware store and buy one today." That warning was accompanied by a huge skull and crossbones, to the tune of an ominous Dvorak violin concerto. And use the fan over your propane oven range, even if it sounds like a jet engine. The carbon monoxide detectors aren't expensive, and one will do, installed down low in a hallway, for example.

... continued on page D6



These permanent furnace filters can be rinsed down with a hose – no need to buy new filters.



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Photo Courtesy of:
Michael Clemens - SeesTheDay.com

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Pictured Above:
Jake Berry, Acalanes High School



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... continued from page D4

- And clean range vents, filters and ducts while you're at it.
- Make sure your clothes dryer is venting properly. Clogged dryer vents are the leading cause of house fires, he said. (And yes, Shaw displays a truly terrifying image of a house engulfed in flames.)
- Check your smoke detectors, even the hard-wired ones.
- Clean your garage. "America has the only culture in the world where people will spend tens of thousands of dollars on a car, and then park it outside," he said.
- Consider buying a home warranty. Warranties cost about \$400 a year, he said, and will cover the repair of any major appliance on your property. And if it can't be repaired, the insurer will replace it. A woman asked if the insurer will come to the house to inspect, first, to see how old her appliances are. "Nope," was Shaw's answer.
- Buy a really powerful vacuum - "one that will try to suck the carpet right off the floor."
- If your attic isn't insulated, consider getting it done. "That's the biggest bang for your buck."

His audience came away exhausted, but relieved.

"This was so helpful," said Eve Guinan-Blaney, who feels slightly overwhelmed by keeping up her Lafayette house. "Especially for the elderly like me."

Shaw will happily send his exterior and interior home repair list to anyone who emails him. He can be reached at mark@markshawrealtor.com.



Lamorinda Home Sales recorded

...continued from Page D2

ORINDA

- 23 Alta Vista Drive, \$400,000, 2 Bdrms, 1012 SqFt, 1949 YrBlt, 11-18-13;
Previous Sale: \$27,000, 02-16-71
- 38 Brookwood Road, \$720,000, 4 Bdrms, 1517 SqFt, 1979 YrBlt, 11-13-13;
Previous Sale: \$380,000, 07-28-00
- 460 Camino Sobrante, \$1,250,000, 3 Bdrms, 2905 SqFt, 1956 YrBlt, 11-13-13
- 5 Chelton Court, \$1,069,000, 4 Bdrms, 1969 SqFt, 1960 YrBlt, 11-7-13;
Previous Sale: \$865,000, 06-19-12
- 44 Claremont Avenue, \$636,000, 3 Bdrms, 1378 SqFt, 1963 YrBlt, 11-8-13;
Previous Sale: \$67,500, 09-28-76
- 4 Corte Del Rey, \$875,000, 3 Bdrms, 1676 SqFt, 1957 YrBlt, 11-7-13
- 3617 Lost Valley Drive, \$855,000, 3 Bdrms, 1367 SqFt, 1958 YrBlt, 11-13-13
- Los Dedos Road, \$1,035,000, 2 Bdrms, 2278 SqFt, 1941 YrBlt, 11-20-13
- 109 Van Ripper Lane, \$1,700,000, 3 Bdrms, 2952 SqFt, 1951 YrBlt, 11-19-13;
Previous Sale: \$510,000, 06-08-89

Happy Holidays!



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Thank you to my clients, and Happy Holidays to all!

Troy Feddersen, CRS, ABR
Broker Associate

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www.Lamorinda.net



Nancy Stryker

Thanks to my clients for a successful collaboration in 2013.

*Merry Christmas, Happy Holidays and
Best Wishes for a Happy, Healthy New Year*

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Recent Solds



3805 Palo Alto Drive, Lafayette



171 Corliss Drive, Moraga



671 Ironbark Circle, Orinda



705 Ironbark Court, Orinda

The Home Designer Wrap It Up

By Brandon Neff



A chevron patterned rug adds happy energy to this 'tween' basement hangout.

Photos courtesy Brandon Neff Design

As we come to the end of yet another year, I thought it would be fun to reflect on the past 12 months and highlight some of the best of what's happened in the design world – so many trends, so many near misses, and a few noteworthy standouts that I think will endure.

Like many designers, I'm always fascinated by innovations in new materials, new silhouettes that seem to show up in every shelter magazine simultaneously and breakout products that shape how we live in our homes. As I'm not influenced much by the "latest" looks, I often look at my own portfolio of work to see if what I imagined for my clients happened to reflect any of the "hot list" ideas that seem to flood the design scene like fashion "must haves" clamoring for attention every season.

I always try to present fresh ideas for my clientele that are grounded in a classic foundation – good design should last a while. Spend a day with me and you'd see the limitless fabrics, furniture and decorative choices available to the trade burgeoning from my vendors from here to Los Angeles. My job is to help filter the ever expanding merchandise and steer clients toward achieving the look they want while building rooms that are both livable and unique.

True to the ever changing tastes of consumers, 2013 marked the official transition from Tangerine Tango to Spring Green as the color of the moment, and soon we'll be ushering in a new hue to grace everything from fabrics to accessories to cars and even toilet paper. Get ready!

... continued on next page

While there are always classics in interior design that will forever look chic and work seamlessly in any space – European and Asian antiques, American mid-century furniture, crisp white linen lampshades, Calacutta marble for kitchens and baths, sisal area rugs and a touch of black in every room – there have been a few new additions to the list of “go to” items I’m constantly gleaming inspiration from these days.

Drawing from history and the *au courant*, I keep a few ideas in my back pocket that always look great and work as solid foundations in any room. Here are a few of my favorite things:

Chevron patterns. For rugs, draperies, accent pillows and even wood flooring, chevrons evoke a classic, yet updated motif that works in any style of home. Try a grey and white chevron fabric for dining chairs – a new traditional look that goes with nearly everything you pair it with. Or hang a pair of cream and white chevron drapes to flank windows in a child’s bedroom for a chic jolt to wake up those tired baby blues and pinks.

Animal prints. Once a choice for only the bold hearted – think Tony Duquette and his theatrical interiors – prints in snow leopard, zebra, cheetah and tiger patterns are a new neutral. (I see you shaking your head at me – trust, people, trust.) The popularity of hide rugs layered over wall-to-wall carpeting adds both interest and whimsy to any room. (IKEA sells a fantastic faux hide.) Try a caramel leopard patterned wool runner to soften your stairs or as a hall runner as a way to create something special in a much used “connector” space. Classic black and white zebra linen looks fantastic as a neutral headboard trimmed with chrome nail heads – mix with plaid bed linens or an Ikat print for a totally boho combination. Or go over the top and use a python printed cotton for an eye-catching valance in an all white kitchen. Now, you’re talking crazy, Brandon!

Chinoiserie. The historic design craze during England’s Regency era of the 19th century, and used throughout the courts of Louis XV and Louis XVI of France, oriental motifs are back for good, and looking fresher than ever. As global styles mesh, and cultures are becoming increasingly more blended, the confluence of the Far East and Western interiors are finding a permanent partnership. From pagoda shapes and exotic fretwork on everything from etageres and lighting to lacquered finishes and japanning, Orientalism adds a well traveled and rich texture to your space.

... continued on page D10



Wrap It Up

... continued from page D8



A white lacquered Parson's table adds a modern touch to this traditional entry. Photo courtesy Brandon Neff Design

Try adding a pair of lidded ginger jars painted with a rural landscape to dress up your fireplace mantel, or choose from the myriad chinoiserie wall coverings to add drama to a powder bath – mix with a Chinese Chippendale style mirror and lacquered vanity for the ultimate in glamorous hand washing.

Colorful ceilings. What? No way, Brandon! Impossible! Yes, Virginia, you can paint your ceilings in something other than white. In fact, I haven't called out a white ceiling in a client's home for years. With all of the dynamic colors and finishes available today, why would anyone settle for white? It's just unnecessary. I advise the uninitiated to start with a pale grey, or soft mushroom hue – two colors that work beautifully with any wall accent. For a bedroom, add a touch of blue to the white tinting base for a dreamy (and complementary) shade reminiscent of a clear sky above – it's subtle, but very restful. And, for those

wishing to cast a flattering glow in a dining room, try painting your ceiling in a metallic – bronze and silver leaf are two of my favorites. Ralph Lauren makes wonderful Regent Metallic paints. The refracted light from your chandelier kissing the warm metal tint will throw a warm and magical light over you and your guests – like a room filled with candlelight – it'll take your dining to a whole new level.

Brass. I am continually being inspired by brass – in kitchen cabinet hardware, in fittings for showers and baths and in sconces and chandeliers. Its warm patina and depth of color add a luxe dimension. As a child of the '70s, I had thought of brass as a "second class" metal – it seemed to always pop up in hippie fern bars and was ubiquitous in all those pharmacy lamps used in pool halls and used to clad foot rests in bars. But today, I have a new appreciation for brass. For me, it evokes the glamour of Studio 54 decadence and Top

Of The Mark cocktails – burnished, shaken not stirred. Look for brass to make a comeback in everything from furniture to mirrors and from faucets to cutlery. La Cornue offers a range and hood in brass that reminds me of a French bistro – mix with limestone floors and marble counters for the height in gastronomic chic.

A Parsons Table. Named for New York's New School of Design and created by design luminary Jean-Michel Frank, this table should be a staple in your home. Versatile, simple, elegant, it was a standard issue in almost every Billy Baldwin Park Avenue project for good reason – it works with everything. One of my favorites is at West Elm – use it as a desk, or for a small dining area. Place it against the wall next to your bed as a nightstand or use it for a vanity. Their squared shape and clean lines are being enhanced with colorful finishes, mirror cladding and even wrapped in raffia. Mix it up with a Louis Ghost chair, or a Wegner teak armchair. You'll keep it around for years.

To all my design enthusiasts, here's wishing you the happiest of holidays and happy decorating!

I want to hear from you!

Write me and tell me what trends you're following. What looks are inspiring your design decisions? I'm putting together my column calendar for 2014, and I'd love to know what topics and stories interest you. Don't be shy, drop me an email and say hello!

Brandon Neff is a Bay Area based Interior Designer. He can be reached at BrandonNeffDesign.com or at brandonneffdesign@yahoo.com.



Ask Cynthia Brian-Pruning After Freeze

Reader's Request

Dear Cynthia:

After the recent few days of 20-degree temperatures, some of my plants look dead. Should I prune them back now so that they'll recover? My garden looks really ugly.

Carol in Moraga

Hello Carol:

Brrr... I commiserate with you. My geraniums and pink bower vine suffered in this recent freeze and are now brown. They are unsightly and appear to be rotting. My designer instinct is to cut them back to improve the curb appeal. However, allowing vanity to rule my desire for beauty may destroy the entire plant.

Contrary to popular thought, after a freeze do NOT prune or cut back the frost bitten plant matter. Allow the dead leaves and branches to remain in place as an extra layer of protection from the cold. Wait until danger of frost or freeze is past in late winter or early spring to remove the dead material. Trees may drop their leaves while lemon and other citrus may drop fruit. Don't panic. This is a sign that nature is at work keeping the plant alive.

A few things you can do to protect your garden:

- Cover frost sensitive plants with sheets, tarps, plastic, or, as I do, unused dog pillow covers. Christmas lights that are turned on are a good way to provide warmth. Remove plastic when temperatures are above 55 degrees to avoid sunburn.
- Give your plants a good drink mid morning before a freeze. The water will insulate the plant, protecting it from freezing. Don't water later in the day as temperatures get cool and any moisture remaining on foliage may freeze causing more injury.
- Turn your sprinkler systems off as you don't want them watering during a freeze. The resulting damage will be severe.
- Leave the blanket of fallen leaves in your garden. If you must rake, make sure to add this leaf mulch to areas in need of protection. Don't haul leaves away or put them in your green bin. Run a lawn mower over a pile of leaves. Use this instant free gold to mulch your landscape to keep the heat in the ground.
- Wait until March to fertilize as fertilizer stimulates new growth. Tender new foliage will be quickly damaged in the cold weather.
- Move containers to a warmer location, perhaps near the perimeter of the house or under the overhang of a balcony or roof.

Don't worry. Most everything will come back in the spring and the beauty of your garden will return. In the meantime, enjoy your down time.

Stay warm and Happy Gardening to you!

Cynthia Brian

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Cynthia Brian

The Goddess Gardener

Cynthia@GoddessGardener.com

www.GoddessGardener.com

I am available as a speaker, designer, and consultant.

Cynthia will answer one or more questions every other issue as space allows. Email your comments or questions to Cynthia@GoddessGardener.com



Freeze damaged pink bower vine on a lattice fence. It's tempting to prune back the dead leaves, but don't.

Photo Cynthia Brian

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ORINDA



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ORINDA



40 Dos Osos

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ORINDA



34 La Vuelta

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ORINDA



New Listing

20 Muth Drive

Beautifully updated contemporary ranch style, 4bd/2.5ba on spacious 3/4 ac lot. Hdwd flrs, slab counter kit. w/ breakfast area & formal dining rm together w/ big lawn & huge back patio w/spa are just a few of what this home has to offer.

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ORINDA



54 La Campana

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\$1,000,000

ORINDA



9 Las Piedras

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

\$1,349,000

ORINDA



1 Camino del Cielo

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ORINDA



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MORAGA



137 Via Joaquin

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MORAGA



New Listing

127 Cypress Point Way

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MORAGA



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9 Mountain View Place

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