

## Ten Lamorinda Odyssey of the Mind Teams Advance to State Competition

Submitted by Michelle Regan and Beverley Sopak



Orinda Rotary Odyssey of the Mind team, from left: Bradley Wu, Nicholas Kim, Sarah Inouye, Stephanie Wu, Sullivan Jordan, Caroline Kim, Leah Sopak, and coach Michael Kim. Photos provided



Burton Valley Elementary Odyssey of the Mind Division 1 (fourth and fifth grade) team, from left: Kaitlin Srinivasan, Charlie Schofield, Nathaniel McManus, Peter Husch, Matthew Brock-Utne, William McGlothlen, and Cole Regan.



Springhill Elementary Odyssey of the Mind Primary Division team. Top row, from left: Ella del Rosario, Chase Caicedo, Joey Martin, Chase Regan and Danny Martin; bottom row: Ellie Hutson and Kyla Goertzen. Not shown: coaches Joy Martin and Shawn Goertzen.

The winner's circle was filled with Lamorinda Odyssey of the Mind teams, each comprised of up to seven student members who competed for top honors at the San Francisco Bay Region competition March 1. Teams competed in age-defined divisions ranging from kindergarten through college with the top two teams from each division going on to the April 5 state competition. The program promotes creative thinking where student groups develop and implement all problem solutions without outside assistance from adults. Each year there are five different long-term project competitions to choose from ranging from technical to artistic or performance based.

Burton Valley Elementary school placed first in their division for the "Driver's Test" competition. The student team designed and built a vehicle that achieved specific project requirements. The team also developed an eight minute performance incorporating their vehicle and team members to demonstrate the vehicle's capabilities and the team's creativity. The competition included a 'spontaneous' challenge where team members completed timed out-of-the-box thinking challenges.

The BVE team's long-term project theme is 'A Carrot's Driver's Test' where a not-so-prepared carrot embarks on his driver's test and is unexpectedly thrown into a situation where he must rescue stranded baby carrots and later rescue the bunny-abducted absent minded professor who thoughtlessly introduced bunnies into the world run by carrots. No worries here! Our student driver carrot successfully passed his driver's test and managed to save the baby carrots as well as the professor! The Orinda Rotary Odyssey of

the Mind team advanced to the state tournament by taking second place at the regionals for "The Stackable Structure" problem. This will be the team's third year competing at State. Last year this team won State and advanced to the World tournament.

Springhill Elementary School's Odyssey of the Mind team also competed in "The World's First Arts Festival" primary competition (Grades K-2) and came home with medals. As part of the long-term problem competition the team created an eight minute performance with costumes and a story line that fit the "World's First Arts Festival" problem theme. Characters included cavemen and cavewomen as well as a security guard— after all, everyone knows that all art museums have a security guard! The group also created their own 'Cave Man' song and prehistoric caveman painting backdrops.

**Other top winners included:**  
Moraga Rotary Club A (Div II) "It's How We Rule" – first place  
Orinda Intermediate School Red (Div II) "Seeing is Believing" – first place  
Lafayette Rotary Club (Div III) "Seeing is Believing" – first place  
Moraga Rotary Club B (Div III) "The Not-So-Haunted House" – first place  
Happy Valley Elementary School, Lafayette (Div I) "Seeing is Believing" – second place  
Orinda Intermediate School Green (Div II) "Seeing is Believing" – second place  
Moraga Rotary Club A (Div III) "Seeing is Believing" – second place

The state competition will take place on April 5 at Heritage High School in Brentwood. To learn more about Odyssey of the Mind student programs and events, go to [www.odysseyofthemind.com](http://www.odysseyofthemind.com).

## Helping Struggling Readers of Any Age

*The 'Reading Revolution' method comes to Lamorinda*

By Sophie Braccini



Cyndy Lemyre shows first sound movements to Growing Tree Preschool students Clara Shei Bowman (left) and Sloane McDowell. Photo Sophie Braccini

Jack is learning to blend the sound "ai" with consonants today. The happy Moraga second grader began his eighth session recently with his Active Reading Clinic tutor, Sharon Winning, and seems to be having fun.

He starts at one end of the large room where the private lesson is held, and at Winning's signal – "Go!" – he runs to the other side where she stands holding large cards with a beginning consonant, the group of vowels, and a final consonant. Jack blends the sounds of the three cards that make up real words or "monster" words. This kinesthetic and game-oriented approach is the heart of the multi-sensory method, developed by Judy Kranzler in the '80s, and taught ever since in Active Reading Clinics (ARC) across the country. A new center is opening in Moraga, and a second one should follow in Orinda. The method can help children of all ages who are struggling in school with the traditional reading approach.

Kranzler struggled to learn to read when she was a child. A visibly bright little girl, she still had a lot of difficulties and started to hate school, feeling inadequate. As she grew up, she researched ways to learn that would make it easier for kids who do not thrive with the visual or auditory methods that are taught in school. She studied and researched all over the world and gradually developed the "Reading Revolution" method, a kinesthetic approach that uses movement, sound, and visual tools to teach reading. The method is taught one on one, twice a week, allowing it to be tailored to each specific child.

Back in the ARC room, Jack's

tutor moves him from one activity to the next, never at a desk, but sitting on a mat reviewing the movements he learned for each vowel sound, or standing throwing bean bags in buckets labeled with "ai" or "ay" as his tutor calls out words. "Jack is not ADD or ADHD but he can become fidgety after a while; that is why I include a lot of different physical settings in our session," says Winning. She has other tools for dyslexic students, based on movements that help children memorize their own way.

"It is estimated that about 20 percent of the children in school are struggling, but do not fit into a defined category of learning disability," says Moraga resident Maura Richards. "When my son Tommy was in second grade, he was not doing very well." Tommy was tested by the school but did not qualify for anything, so his mother started researching other ways to teach her son. She found the ARC in Walnut Creek and decided to invest in bi-weekly trips in order to help him.

Tommy, now in fourth grade, loves to read. "Last night when my mom came to tuck me in I asked her if I could keep reading," he says. "I kept reading my book, 'Spirit Animals,' for another 30 minutes." He remembers the method as something fun. "It was like play," he says. His mother says his progress has been across the board, emphasizing Tommy's improved self-esteem from becoming a more competent student.

"I developed this curriculum over the past 30 years and it continues to be a work in progress," says Kranzler of her multi-media curriculum. "It incorporates the best of what research

demonstrates is effective in 'phonics' and 'whole language' systems. It incorporates the experience we gained with over 200,000 students in hundreds of schools across the U.S. The 'reading revolution' comes through a series of proprietary steps that, in aggregate, bring together the latest brain research and theories of how the human brain triggers its learning mechanisms."

Richards was so impressed with ARC that she decided to work with Kranzler and her managing director Cyndy Lemyre to open an Active Reading Clinic in Lamorinda. Richards introduced the method to Linda Richardi and Terri Giovanetti, the co-directors of Growing Tree Preschool, who agreed to open a new ARC at Growing Tree.

Lamorinda students of all ages will be tutored in the afternoon one-on-one at the preschool starting March 17. Additionally, the pre-K Growing Tree students, whose parents are interested, will get pre-K readers' readiness training in small groups. "We are not pushing them to read early," notes Lemyre. "We are giving them kinesthetic tools to memorize sounds that will help them to learn to read, whatever their style." The Pre-K program is different from the regular ARC sessions and is for Growing Tree students only.

Lessons start March 17 in the Moraga ARC at the Growing Tree, 695 Canyon Rd., in Moraga. For more information, visit [www.activereadingclinic.org](http://www.activereadingclinic.org) or call Cyndy Lemyre at (925) 944-5559 or Moraga Managing Director Maura Richards at (415) 637-7757.

## A Wide Array of Wonderful Films

*East Bay International Jewish Film Festival comes to Orinda March 21-23*

By Sophie Braccini



"The Wonders" Photo provided

The 19th annual East Bay International Jewish Film Festival is coming to Orinda's Theatre Square March 21-23 with 10 feature films and documentaries that present a rich tapestry of the best of Israeli films today – some funny, some serious, others poignant or violent. Festival director Riva Gambert is certainly right to say, "There is a film for everyone's taste and sensibility."

The first set of films that will be shown March 21 are on the lighter side, with "Bert Stern: Original Madman," an American documentary that takes a look at this legendary photographer who turned on America to vodka via his inventive ads for Smirnoff, and helped modernize celebrity photography; "David Steinberg Has Quality Balls," an engaging

documentary about this wonderful Canadian comedian; and "The Wonders," a film set in Jerusalem with a dangerous and glamorous leading lady and a goofy leading guy, inspired by a true story. Avi Neshet's film noir, which has touches of romance and comedy, is a well executed mix of genres.

On March 22, the film offerings take a more serious turn: In "Bethlehem," one of Israel's highest 2013 award winners that received top honors at the prestigious Venice Film Festival and won "Best Film" at the Ophir Awards (Israel's Oscar), an Israeli secret service officer and his 16-year-old Palestinian informant Sanfur form the central duo of the film. Set in the time of the Second Intifada around 2001, the movie's screenplay was co-authored by Israeli and Palestinian writers. Directed by Yuval Adler, the plot is worthy of Greek tragedy, with a young man forced to choose between loyalty and family. Caution is advised; this is a war movie with violence and brutality. It captures the complex reality of Palestinian-Israeli relations.

Also showing that day is "S#x Acts," an award-winning coming-of-age drama about a 16-year-old girl in an upscale Israeli city.

The final day of the festival, March 23, includes a heavy-hitting lineup of films that tackle tough issues

such as autism, aging with conviction, betrayal, murder and revenge. "The A Word" tells the journey of a family as they discover their son has autism; "Life in Stills" is about a 96-year-old grandmother who tries to fight eviction from her Tel Aviv photography shop, which houses thousands of photos portraying the history of the country.

"Fill the Void," which won seven Ophir Awards, is directed by Rama Burshtein – the first Orthodox Jewish woman to direct a film meant for viewing outside of her own community. In the film, 18 year-old Shira Medelman, the youngest daughter of an Orthodox Hassidic family in Tel Aviv, postpones her forthcoming marriage after her 28-year-old sister dies in childbirth. When the widower thinks about leaving the country with his newborn son, Shira's mother pressures her to wed her brother-in-law. Shira must decide whether to follow her mother's wish or fulfill her own dreams. Hadas Yaron received the Venice Film Festival "Best Actress" award for her portrayal of Shira.

"Out in the Dark" is a compelling thriller that portrays the intense romance between Nimr, a Palestinian graduate student, and Roy, an Israeli lawyer; and "Big Bad Wolves" is a mesmerizing, psychological drama that received 11 Ophir nominations.

... continued on next page