

Community Service

Sisterhood in Contra Costa County

Submitted by Kim Jinnett



Senior Girl Scouts from Moraga Troop #30072 with Brownie and Daisy Scouts from Washington, Nystrom, Cesar Chavez, Wilson, Highland and Vista elementary schools. Photo provided

Moraga Girl Scouts from Troop 30072 are leading Brownie and Daisy Girl Scouts from West Contra Costa County in six meetings from now until June. As part of a Sisterhood Journey, the senior Girl Scouts from Campolindo High School are helping their younger sister scouts learn about the hard work and fun the Girl Scouts has to offer. Using space at Girls Inc. in Richmond, the new scouts are

learning about science, friendship, songs, crafts and the importance of sisterhood. Nicole Jones, from the Girl Scouts Council Outreach program, hopes that parents of the younger girls will be inspired to continue to operate the troop after the senior Girl Scouts have helped to launch the excitement and adventure of what's possible.

Orion Academy's Community Service Club has Risen to New Heights

Submitted by Ann Wullschlegler



Orion Academy's Community Service Club

Photo provided

Last spring Orion Academy Senior Jake Block wanted to push himself in a new direction. During Jake's personal growth project he decided to create an Orion club that would not only engage students socially but also help the school to contribute time and energy to important causes around the globe. Since the beginning of the school year, the Community Service Club has executed several successful drives and recently launched a fundraiser at the school's poetry night.

During the holiday season, students at Orion were not just thinking of themselves and the presents they might receive. In late November, the Community Service Club organized, promoted and successfully ran the 2nd Annual Orion Toy Drive to benefit the Variety Children's Charity of Northern California. Orion students were asked to donate an unwrapped toy to

be given to a child in need during the holiday season, and they rose to the challenge. Over 30 students, representing all grades and home-rooms, donated over 50 gifts, bringing joy to many young lives around the Bay Area.

After two successful toy drives, the Community Service Club focused on a different type of fundraising technique as well as a global issue. Last fall Typhoon Haiyan struck the Philippines leaving 2,000 people dead and millions displaced. The club members decided to organize a fundraiser to raise money that could be sent to the relief effort in the Philippines. On Poetry Night, Feb. 11, members of the Community Service Club took over the snack bar at the event. They sold basic snack items and homemade baked goods for a generous price, netting over \$450. All proceeds went to the Red Cross relief efforts in the Philippines.

Girl Scout Gold Award Project Combines Love of Children and Music

Submitted by Emma Patton



Emma Patton

Photo provided

When Miramonte High School senior Emma Patton asked a circle of enthusiastic 5-year-olds to sing their favorite songs at a Concord Head Start preschool, the last thing she expected was to hear a rap song by Finatticz, she says. "Marcel, the shy one, had barely looked up from his puzzle when his classmates bombarded me with hugs as I walked in, so naturally, I was surprised when he eagerly volunteered to perform. Marcel marched into the center of the circle and shamelessly broke into song, well... rap," she says. "'Don't drop that thun thun aye, don't drop thun thun aye,' he rapped confidently. I immediately recognized

the song and had to stifle a laugh while the other kids listened intently, as if this was an everyday occurrence."

Patton created a music program at the Concord preschool as part of her Girl Scout Gold Award project. She designed her Gold Award to be a combination of her two passions: children and music, and says because of this, she truly enjoyed every second she spent at the preschool.

"Essentially, I created a summer music program, which focused on developing basic musical skills for these 4- and 5-year-olds, while providing the same encouragement and enthusiasm for music that I had received as a child," she says. "Upon completion of my project, I realized there is a significant need for Head Start volunteers, and even an hour a week could have a huge impact on these kids' lives."

The Head Start program is open to a variety of volunteer-led activities. "If you're a dancer, teach the children ballet; if you're an artist, lead the children in arts and craft activities – the options are endless," Patton says. "If you enjoy the boundless energy and enthusiasm that preschoolers have, consider taking some time to share your passion with these kids, as I did." For more information, contact the Contra Costa Community Service Bureau at (925) 313-1551.

We are pleased to make space available whenever possible for some of Lamorinda's dedicated community service organizations to submit news and information about their activities. Submissions can be sent to storydesk@lamorindaweekly.com with the subject header In Service to the Community.

Former JM Teacher Annually Travels to India as a Spanish Translator

Submitted by Gabriela Mozee



Gabriela Mozee

Photo provided

When her contract expired with Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School as a part-time Spanish teacher three years ago, another world opened up to Gabriela Mozee. Traveling and translating for her beloved meditation practice, The Natural Path, known as 'Sahaj Marg' in Sanskrit, Mozee now translates for those who come from Latin America – including Central America and Spain – to India in order to delve deeply into the practice for a period of one month. During this month, participants from around the world are given in-depth experience, activities, lectures, field trips, and more, in the basics that The Natural Path practice requires daily: meditation, cleaning and prayer.

The participants, known in this program as 'scholars,' are selected by regional coordinators, who then ask an abhyasi to apply for the annual international scholarship program.

Gabriela has been practicing The Natural Path meditation since 2002 and has been to India seven times in the last five years, returning last January and February.

"I was fortunate to attend the International Scholars Awards Workshop Program [ISAW] 2014 as a Spanish translator and coordinator, thanks to Alberto Lafranchi and Dolly Nicolai – two longtime French abhyasis (those who practice The Natural Path meditation) who now live in Chennai, India, our headquarters," says Mozee. "They have been organizing this annual

program, together with our Spiritual Guide, Rev. Parthasarathi Rajagopalachari, for the past 12 years."

A translator helps with many of the coordinators' duties, attends daily 'staff' meetings, and is available not only to translate daily talks, meetings and activities during the formal program, but is usually available beyond regular hours to go on errands with those abhyasis under his/her care to help with communication in banks, stores, pharmacies, shopping, immigration offices if needed, Internet cafés and more. "It's usually a 14-plus hour day!" says Mozee.

Approximately 55 people from Venezuela, Peru, Colombia, Brazil, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Madagascar, Morocco, South Africa, Ethiopia, Belgium, Vietnam, China, Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Lithuania, Estonia, Turkey, Iran, Romania, Ukraine, and the Philippines participated in the recent intensive four-week program, including translators/coordinators from Great Britain, Ecuador and France.

Mozee now teaches free meditation locally under The Natural Path. "I will be happy to explain and teach you the daily practice and welcome you into our Sahaj Marg global family," she says.

If you are interested, visit www.sahajmarg.org or email Mozee at gmoozee@gmail.com.

New Eagle Scouts Honored

Submitted by Steve Tennant



New Troop 57 Eagle Scouts, from left: Tom Kunkel, Matt Coupin, Alex Mangus, Jimmy McFeely and Alex Jordan

Photo provided

Orinda's Boy Scout Troop 57, chartered by St. Mark's United Methodist Church in Orinda, proudly announced that Matthew Coupin, Alexander Jordan, Thomas Kunkel, Alexander Mangus and Jimmy McFeely achieved Scouting's highest rank of Eagle Scout.

Their achievement was celebrated at an Eagle Court of Honor held March 23 at Holy Shepherd Lutheran Church in Orinda. Each was presented with a proclamation from Orinda mayor Sue Severson, as well as congratulatory letters from elected officials including Rep. George Miller, Sen. Barbara Boxer, Sen. Diane Feinstein, Vice President Joe Biden and President and Mrs. Barack Obama. Sen. Feinstein also sent U.S. flags that were flown over the U.S. Capital in honor of each Scout.

To become an Eagle, the candidate must earn a minimum of 21 merit badges, including 12 Eagle-required badges, demonstrate leadership and scout spirit, and successfully complete an Eagle service project.

Matt Coupin, currently a freshman at MIT, constructed an outdoor art studio for The Orinda Preschool (TOPS). The project effectively converted the vacant deck into a functional, creative workspace. Alex Jordan, a freshman at Santa Barbara City College, de-

signed and constructed a vegetable garden including a picket fence border and arbor entrance for the Northern Light School in Oakland, a private school serving underprivileged children. Tom Kunkel, a freshman at DVC, built a 900 square foot patio in the environmental garden at Miramonte High School, and built a cement block border and decorative trim around two trees. Alex Mangus, a freshman at Pratt Institute in New York, painted and installed a 7 by 11 foot mural with help from students of Vincent Academy, a recently opened charter elementary school in West Oakland. Jimmy McFeely, a freshman at UC Santa Barbara, interviewed and videotaped seven veterans about their experiences in World War II and Korea. Jimmy sent the interviews and service information to be archived at the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C.

These five young men join less than 4 percent of all Scouts who achieve the Eagle rank. In Troop 57's more than 50 year history, 132 have become Eagle Scouts. The Troop has 55 Scouts, and meets Tuesday nights at Orinda Intermediate School. For boys in fifth grade through high school interested in learning more about Scouting, visit www.orindatroup57.com or contact the Troop Committee Chair, Steve Tennant, at (925) 788-1092.