

# Summer Legal Internship in Orinda

Students get hands-on experience about life in law

By Sophie Braccini



GJEL attorney Andy Gillin speaks with students during last year's summer internship program.

Photo Peter Fleming

High school students who have ever wondered what it would be like to be a lawyer, to work in the legal profession, or are just curious about the different branches of public and private law, mediation and civil cases, will have an opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of the profession during a summer internship program offered by Orinda law firm GJEL Accident Attorneys. Designed for students interested in learning more about a career in the legal industry, the five-day internship, beginning July 21, will allow 20 students to meet different types of law professionals and gain a better understanding of their day-to-day lives.

"I was interested in seeing what it is like to be a lawyer,"

says Miramonte High School sophomore Lucy Portnoff, who participated in the first internship program last year. "They taught us a lot, and I was surprised by the number of different fields of law, such as labor, real estate, social security, juvenile, or copyright law."

The week-long internship was the idea of attorney Andy Gillin, who has been partnering with the Miramonte High School mock trial program for years. "He noticed that there was a gap in the knowledge high school students have of the law profession," says GJEL attorney Ralph Jacobson. "He wanted to give them a more practical idea of what the day-to-day life of lawyers and other law professionals is like."

Portnoff remembers a packed week, with students meeting from 9:30 to 4 p.m. daily. It was lecture-based with practical exercises and a little bit of homework reading briefs or other documents. "It was an educational experience," says Portnoff. "We got to observe a mediation and the lawyers at work. We were also asked to work together as a jury on an existing case. Many different guest speakers came in and talked to us about their specialties."

Jacobson adds that beyond the partners at GJEL who mostly specialize in personal injury, the firm invited other lawyers with different specialties to speak to students. "We asked someone working in the Oakland Public Defender's Office to come and

explain what it is like to work for the state," says Jacobson. "We also invited people such as paralegals and administrative support personnel to talk about what they liked in their profession and its challenges." According to the attorney, while the week was slightly academic, the interns were shown what a civil procedure is, as well as a legal dispute, its different phases, and also how law firms are organized. "There was no blue print out there for this kind of internship," he adds. "We just did our best to make it well rounded."

"The whole week was very collaborative and we got to work together with the other students," says Portnoff, adding that she is still in touch with some of them.

When they chose the 20 participants from among the 70 applications they received, Jacobson says the lawyers tried to build a geographically diverse group, while assessing their level of interest in the profession.

"This year I am applying for an internship with the Alameda County District Attorney's Office," says Portnoff. "I continue to be interested in law, but have not decided yet on an undergraduate field of study." Portnoff was one of the youngest participants last year as a freshman; Jacobson says that most students were sophomores and juniors.

"I got to interact with the students on the first day and then later on, when we worked on the mediation, they observed," says the attorney. "At first they were shy and quiet, but by the fourth day, they were lively, inquisitive and curious. It was a lot of fun and a great pleasure to work with them." He concludes that some of the students might go into law, and that they will now make a more informed decision if they choose that career.

To apply for the 2014 internship, go to <http://www.gjel.com/news/gjel-summer-internship-program.html> and download an application.

## Love is in the Air at the Rheem Theatre

Live stage performance of 'Love Letters'

By Derek Zemrak

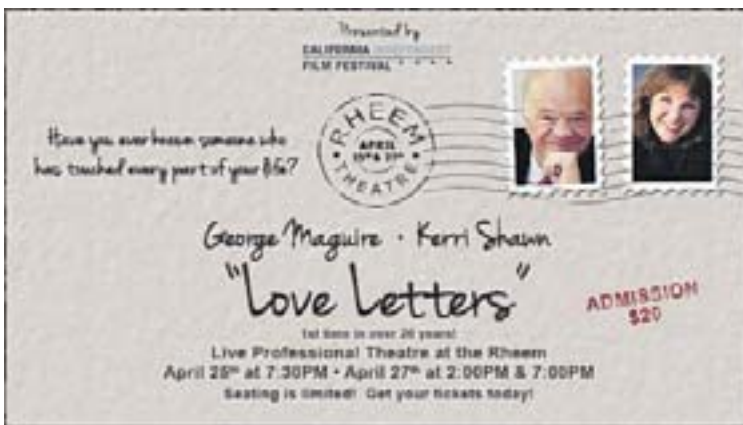


Photo provided

The California Independent Film Festival is proud to present the first stage performance at the Rheem Theatre in over 25 years – the Pulitzer Prize winner for drama, "Love Letters," written by A. R. Gurney. This is the per-

fect play to present in theatre four upstairs at the Rheem Theatre, where a newly constructed stage has been built to allow more live theater, comedy, improv, lectures and other events.

"Love Letters" is a two-char-

acter play that centers on Melissa Gardner and Andrew Makepeace Ladd III. Melissa and Andrew are both on stage as they read letters, notes and cards they have received from each other over 50 years of being pen pals. They share their hopes, dreams, sorrows, disappointments, accomplishments and losses. Many Hollywood actors have performed the play because it requires little preparation and the lines are never memorized, which is a requirement of the author. "Love Letters" has been performed by Tom Hanks, Rita Wilson, Carol Burnett, Brian Dennehy, Mel Gibson and Sissy Spacek, just to name a few.

This production will be performed by Bay Area theater fa-

avorites George Maguire and Kerri Shawn. Maguire has over 50 years of performing both on and off Broadway as well as having numerous film and television credits – "Fight Club," "Pursuit of Happiness" and "Nash Bridges." As a theater director at Center REP Theatre Company, Walnut Creek, his direction of "Our Town" and "Shirley Valentine" (with Shawn) received Shellie awards for best production and direction.

Since 1995 Shawn has served as director of education for Center REP Company at The Leshner Center of the Arts. She has been in a variety of productions over the past four decades including two one-woman shows; Shirley in

"Shirley Valentine" and Ann Landers in "The Lady With All of the Answers." Shawn has performed yearly for the past two decades at Eugene O'Neill's Tao House celebrating the life and work of Eugene O'Neill.

Come celebrate the return of live professional theater at the Rheem Theatre on opening night at 7:30 p.m. Friday, April 25. Two additional performances will be presented at 2:30 and 7 p.m. Sunday, April 27. "Love Letters" is a fundraiser for the elevator lift at the Rheem which is scheduled to be installed in June. Tickets are \$20 and can be purchased at the Rheem Theatre box-office or online at [www.lamorinda.com](http://www.lamorinda.com) theatres.com.

## Sharing Art and Vision

... continued from page B1

"Things came out pretty much the way we thought, but the whole thing is kind of a surprise," she said. "After we put it up, there was one rib missing. We still don't know where it is."

But they do know where Icky is "living" today, post Burning Man. Installed on March 4 in just six hours at the Nevada Discovery Museum in downtown Reno, Vagner is thrilled to have found a home for the creation. Despite the fact it won't be interactively mobile and after minor criticism – a few scientists said it had anatomical errors, to which the museum answered, "It's an art piece," –

Vagner said, "The great part is, once it was built, people were amazed."

The group's next project, "Embrace," will be a 72-foot tall sculpture of two figures embracing; their heads the same size of the Statue of Liberty's head and with interior, spiral staircases lit by a mini-Cooper sized chandelier, shaped like a human heart. To learn more about the project or to donate, visit <https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/1705373243/embrace-burning-man-2014>. For information about the Lamorinda Arts Alliance, visit [www.laa4art.org](http://www.laa4art.org).



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