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Photos Gint Fedaras



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# Water Polo Champions

Lamorinda was well represented in the water polo North Coast Section playoffs this season. All three girls teams and all three boys teams qualified to compete. In the playoffs, the local teams dominated competition. Both girls and boys championship titles went to Lamorinda.

**Boys:** As time expired late Saturday afternoon, the Miramonte boys' water polo team, along with their fully-clothed coaches, jumped into the pool to commemorate their 10-8 victory ...

**Girls:** The Campolindo girls' water polo team has become one of Northern California's most dominant sports programs. On Nov. 15, they capped their brilliant season ...  
 ...read stories on page C1

Advertising

**LAMORINDA WEEKLY**

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## Shopping Small is Big in Lamorinda

Small Business Saturday is Nov. 29

By Sophie Braccini

The holiday gift lists seem to grow longer as the days get shorter. Black Friday is nearly upon us, for those inclined to participate in that bustling post-Thanksgiving tradition. Local retailers are hoping Lamorinda residents will consider visiting the independent businesses just down the street that make our downtowns unique and bring much needed sales tax revenue to our cities.

Four years ago, American Express launched Small Business Saturday. According to the company's website, "Customers and small businesses alike have been able to kick start their holiday shopping season on a day celebrating the uniqueness, charm and economic impact that small busi-

nesses bring to communities nationwide."

Add that to the call to "Shop Local," which has echoed throughout Lamorinda for the past few years, and you have a perfect storm. This year, retailers in Orinda, Moraga, and Lafayette – with a somewhat different paradigm – will seize the opportunity to strut their stuff on Small

Business Saturday, Nov. 29.

"This is the first year we are seriously digging in," said Sylvia Jorgensen, president of the Orinda Chamber of Commerce. Orinda is taking the event very seriously – the City Council just issued a proclamation recognizing Nov. 29 as Small Business Saturday; and look for a special event banner to appear on the BART bridge.

The Moraga Chamber of Commerce is also supporting local retailers. "Our town's merchants have a lot to offer, and they all want to celebrate their uniqueness on Small Business Saturday," said executive director Kathe Nelson.

... continued on page A10

**Life in Lamorinda B1-B10**

Mindful techniques help Los Perales students - page B7.



**Sports C1-C3**

Cougars and Dons advance in playoffs - page C2.



**Our Homes D1-D12**

Getting your home house-guest ready - page D6.







# Lafayette Civic News

### Public Meetings

#### City Council

Monday, Nov. 24, 7 p.m.  
Lafayette Library & Learning Center,  
Community Hall, 3491 Mt. Diablo Blvd.

#### Planning Commission

Monday, Dec. 1, 7 p.m.  
Lafayette Library & Learning Center,  
Community Hall, 3491 Mt. Diablo Blvd.

#### Design Review

Monday, Nov. 24, 7 p.m.  
Lafayette Library & Learning Center,  
Arts & Science Discovery Center,  
3491 Mt. Diablo Blvd.

#### School Board Meetings

**Acalanes Union High School District**  
Wednesday, Nov. 19, 7:30 p.m.  
AUHSD Board Room  
1212 Pleasant Hill Road, Lafayette  
www.acalanes.k12.ca.us

#### Lafayette School District

Wednesday, Dec. 10, 7 p.m.  
Regular Board Meeting  
Stanley Library  
3477 School St., Lafayette  
www.lafsd.k12.ca.us

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



### Lafayette Police Department Incident Summary Report, Oct. 26-Nov. 8

<b>Alarms</b>	58
<b>911 Calls</b>	15
<b>Battery</b>	
3500 block Mt Diablo Bl	
Hamlin Rd/Sweet Dr	
<b>Burglary, Residential</b>	
1000 block Pine Ln	
3300 block Rossi St	
<b>Burglary, Auto</b>	
10 block Westwind Rd	
20 block Reliez Valley Ct	
900 block Buchan Dr (2)	
3500 block Mt Diablo Bl	
<b>Civil Problem</b>	
1000 block 2nd St	
<b>Collision/Fire &amp; Ambulance Disturbance</b>	3
Mt Diablo Bl/Lafayette Cir	
Reliez Valley Rd/Silver Dell Rd	
1200 block Pleasant Hill Rd	
<b>DUI</b>	
Mt Diablo Bl/Brown Av	
<b>Hit &amp; Run</b>	
El Charro	
Mt Diablo Bl/Pleasant Hill Rd	
1000 block Brown Av	
800 block Mt View Dr (2)	
<b>Health &amp; Safety Violation</b>	
3400 block Golden Gate Wy	
Acalanes High School	
<b>Petty Theft</b>	
Golden Gate Wy/Mt Diablo Bl	
20 block Southhampton Pl	
500 block St Mary's Rd	
900 block East St	
900 block Condit Ct	
3500 block Mt Diablo Bl (2)	
3300 block Mt Diablo Bl	
3300 block S Lucille Ln	
3200 block Marlene Dr	
4000 block Mario Wy	
3500 block Wildwood Ln	
Safeway	
<b>Grand Theft</b>	
40 block Prado Wy	

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## Proposed Saranap Village Project Concerns Lafayette Residents

By Cathy Tyson

Does Lafayette have much say about a project outside of its borders? That was the question before the City Council on Nov. 10 regarding the 4.6 acre proposed project on Boulevard Way in Saranap, an unincorporated area just east of Lafayette.

Mayor Don Tatzin called Lafayette “an interested party, but we have no role in the decision making process.” Because the proposed development by Lafayette-based Hall Equities Group is dealing with Contra Costa County for a general plan amendment, rezoning, major subdivision and final development plans, the City of Lafayette can only highlight its many concerns to county planners. So far, the county has ignored correspondence.

“Potentially significant impacts on the City are anticipated,” noted a staff report on the project. Months ago city staffers reviewed the Notice of Preparation from the County Office of Conservation and Development. Michael Cass, associate planner, said that in staff’s opinion, the county has neglected to study a majority of issues, referring to items brought up in the draft Environmental



Saranap as it appears today.

Source: MBH Architects Saranap Village EIR



This conceptual rendering shows what Saranap might look like in the future.

Impact Report, finding “numerous deficiencies” and “inaccurate conclusions” in the report.

According to the developer, the project is designed to create a lively village atmosphere embodying high-quality architecture that increases the walkability of the neighborhood, by redeveloping underused sites to create a neighborhood focal point that would include shopping areas, a restaurant, a grocery store, coffee shop, micro bank, bar/nightclub and fitness club along with condominiums for purchase and apartments for rent.

It’s an ambitious plan, explained Mark Hall, CEO of Hall Equities Group at the recent city council meeting. “We feel like we need a bold project,” adding, “it’s an opportunity to change the character of the neighborhood for the better.”

Specifically, Saranap Village is a mixed-use development, comprised of up to 235 housing units, 30,000 square feet of retail and restaurant use, and over 14,000 square feet for a bou-

tique, gym, and amenities for the project’s residents – spread among four buildings around the intersection of Boulevard Way and Saranap Avenue, near the interchange of Highways 24 and 680. The developer also proposes to narrow Boulevard Way from four lanes to two and to provide substantial improvements in the sidewalks and streetscape.

Members of the public, as always, had comments to share about the project. A surprising number at the council meeting were positive in nature. David Dacus, president of the Saranap Community Association, sent out over 2,000 mailers; he estimated that two-thirds of the comments received were in support of the development.

Others were clearly against the project. One Saranap resident referred to the developer’s comment about changing the character of the neighborhood, stating she liked the existing character as it currently is and called the proposed project “ridiculous and

appalling.” Several Lafayette residents expressed concern about the estimated 5,000 additional vehicle trips per day, the construction time of roughly one year that would drive Saranap residents through Lafayette streets, and the building heights.

With a unanimous vote by the City Council, a letter was sent out by the mayor to the county’s Conservation and Development Department stating that the draft EIR fails to adequately study a number of impacts on Lafayette spelled out over six pages – a laundry list of deficiencies falling into categories that include aesthetics, population and housing, with over 20 items under the transportation and traffic heading.


The public comment period for the draft EIR ended Nov. 17. There is a public hearing on the merits of the project slated for early 2015 with the Contra Costa County Planning Commission. A copy of the draft EIR can be viewed online at www.cc-county.us/5195/Saranap-Village.

At This Time Of

# Thanksgiving


my thoughts turn to you with warm appreciation...

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## Coming Soon: Parking Workshop and Thanksgiving Breakfast Event

Want breakfast? Don't dally – reservations are due Nov. 19

Coming to Lafayette this week are a Parking Workshop, where the city hopes to gather residents' thoughts on parking strategies, and the annual Community Thanksgiving Breakfast, organized by the Chamber of Commerce – an opportunity to reflect on the community and give thanks. Residents are welcome to double dip.

In the second of three **Parking Workshops**, city leaders want to know what you think of parking meters, permits for employees and a parking garage, along with ways to solve the current parking crunch. The workshop asks for residents' feedback and will spend some time looking for input on the east end's parking problems, roughly from First Street to Pleasant Hill Road. The workshop, sponsored by the City of Lafayette Parking Ordinance Committee, is from 6 to 8 p.m. on Thursday, Nov. 20 in the Community Room at the Lafayette Library and Learning Cen-

ter, 3491 Mt. Diablo Blvd. Free, no reservation required, and complimentary snacks.

Who wouldn't want to enjoy eggs and coffee with a side of humor and inspiration? Author, aviatrix, mother, mission support representative for Virgin Galactic, and charming Lafayette resident M.J. Marggraff will be the keynote speaker for the upcoming **Community Thanksgiving Breakfast**. For the past 36 years, the early morning event has kicked off the holiday season in a significant and meaningful way. Reservations are required and must be made by Wednesday, Nov. 19; go to the Lafayette Chamber website at [www.lafayettechamber.org](http://www.lafayettechamber.org) to reserve an individual spot for \$20 or a table for eight for just \$150. Breakfast is from 7 to 8:30 a.m. on Friday, Nov. 21 at Our Saviors Lutheran Church, 1035 Carol Lane in Lafayette. - C. Tyson

## Transportation Planner Moving On

By Cathy Tyson

Having been on the job for 15 years and one week, beloved transportation planner Leah Greenblat attended her very last Circulation Commission meeting recently – judging by the outpouring of support and thanks for her dedicated service, she leaves big shoes to fill.

"She's irreplaceable," said City Manager Steven Falk. "Leah has been worth her weight in gold, and I mean that almost literally. She's a remarkably good analyst and writer, and by my calculation she wrote and won more than \$10 million in grants for Lafayette during her tenure here." He added, "She's brilliant; she's funny and

fun; she's committed to and works hard for green transportation options; and she has the patience of a saint."

That patience comes in handy when dealing with a wide array of responsibilities and residents. For those not familiar with the duties of a transportation planner, there's never a dull moment; from sharrows to neighborhood traffic calming and multi-purpose pathways, along with providing professional analysis and recommendations on complex transportation issues, long and short range planning, and reviewing development applications focusing on circulation in and out of a project. ... continued on page A8

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**Sat., Nov 22nd**

Shown: Santa with Bambi 355.00                      Gunther Ulbricht

**Gunther Ulbricht from Germany will be at David M. Brian to sign any of his world famous Nutcrackers that you purchase during this event.**

**Join us November 22nd or make your selection now and we will be sure to have your purchase signed.**

**Walnut Creek**  
11:00 – 1:00

**Danville**  
2:00 – 4:00

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*Happy Valley*

1117 Rahara Drive, Lafayette

**JUST SOLD**

Sitting on top of a gated entrance in sought after Happy Valley sits this delightful and warm 4BR/2 1/2 BA single family home. With a grand fireplace, exposed wood beam ceilings and remodeled chef's kitchen, this tranquil home is a beautiful retreat. The serene outdoor space with scenic views includes an orchard filled with fruit trees, a lovely pool and gazebo.

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CalBRE#: 01367466

ALAIN PINEL





## Moraga Civic News

### Public Meetings

#### Town Council

Wednesday, Nov. 26 canceled  
Wednesday, Dec. 10, 7 p.m.  
Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School,  
1010 Camino Pablo

#### Planning Commission

Monday, Dec. 1, 6 p.m.  
Hacienda De las Flores, La Sala,  
2100 Donald Dr.

#### Design Review

Monday, Nov. 24 canceled  
Monday, Dec. 8, 7 p.m.  
Moraga Library, 1500 St. Mary's Rd.

#### School Board Meeting

**Moraga School District**  
Tuesday, Dec. 9, 7:30 p.m.  
Joaquin Moraga Intermediate  
School Auditorium  
1010 Camino Pablo, Moraga  
www.moraga.k12.ca.us  
See also AUHSD meeting page A2

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



### Moraga Police Department

**Annoying phone calls, 11/4/14** A South Sandringham resident reported to the police that she received 24 phone calls from a blocked number between 5:10 and 5:45 a.m. During the first call, a male on the other end stated "B%&#, wakey wakey;" the balance of phone calls were hang ups. No suspects at this time.

**D.U.I., 11/08/14** A blue BMW was pulled over near the intersection of Moraga Road and Moraga Way for failing to stop for the red traffic signal at the intersection. The 77-year-old female driver showed objective signs of impairment, her blood alcohol test was just above the legal limit at 0.09. The woman was released to a family friend on her signed Promise to Appear.

**Petty Theft, 11/09/14** Two large duffel bags containing women's clothing were taken from the unlocked trunk of an unlocked silver Toyota Corolla sometime during the night while the car was parked on Chalda Way. Total estimated loss is approximately \$500. No suspects or leads at this time.

**Recovered stolen car, 11/09/14** A 1993 Chevy Silverado was parked in one of the carpools at 2030 Ascot Drive. The landlord said his tenant left her assigned parking stall around 8 a.m. and the stolen Chevy was in her spot when she returned home at 4:30 p.m. Turns out, the car had been stolen from the Orinda BART parking lot. The car's ignition appeared to be punched. It was towed. Why would a car thief take an older pickup truck on a five mile joy ride to Moraga?

**Battery against an officer, 11/10/14** Police responded to a party on Country Club Drive on a report of a person who was intoxicated and unconscious. Upon arrival, cops were met with multiple juveniles who appeared to be intoxicated and not responding to officers' commands. The fire department arrived and took the very intoxicated subject to the hospital for medical treatment. A young man was arrested for battery of a peace officer and resisting arrest. He was later released to a parent.

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Happy Thanksgiving



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## State of the Anniversary

By Sophie Braccini



Mayor Ken Chew prepares a toast to celebrate Moraga's 40th birthday.  
Photo Cathy Dausman

The theme of the 40th anniversary State of the Town address was as poignant as ever: the more things change, the more they stay the same. For the 150 or so Moragans attending the Nov. 12 presentation by Mayor Ken Chew it was a theme that

struck home as 40 years of the life of Moraga was reviewed.

The evening started out strong with a no-host bar and wonderful appetizers. Guests mingled and interacted with each other in an intimate and casual atmosphere. Many town volunteers and staff members were in attendance, along with current, past and future town council members.

Expectations and spirits were high when the meeting was called to order by the mayor, and everyone took their seats; the remainder of the evening was a composed affair. Contrasting the new with the old, Moraga's 40 years of cityhood was presented in all its glory.

Guests were treated to a presentation of pictures, documents and people that exemplified how Moraga became the semirural, limited government jurisdiction that it is. Among

some of the most interesting contrasts were roads, buildings and landmarks.

The Moraga Shopping Center has remained remarkably the same; "The Barn" went from being a lonely train station, to a popular bar, to a LEED certified office building; and Saint Mary's College, which pre-dates the town, has grown from a few buildings in the middle of nowhere to a world-class campus.

Chew presented metrics that were equally compelling. It was interesting to see the pattern of development in Moraga. Approximately 72 percent of the homes in town were constructed in the 60s and 70s, and only eight homes have been added since 2010. As a result the number of town personnel has remained quite stable since the 80s, and the town continues to be operated with a modest annual surplus of about \$200,000 a year.

Notwithstanding the years of history, Chew turned the crowd's attention to how the town's leadership is laying the groundwork for the future. The mayor placed a heavy emphasis on road work and the recent improvements achieved through Measure K. He highlighted the fact that the sales tax increase is bringing in \$7.7 million so the town can start putting a dent in the \$25 million worth of delayed infrastructure maintenance. Chew, whose term on the town council is ending this year, added a word of caution to future councils and the audience that the storm drain system is antiquated and those repairs are unfunded at this time.

Chew then proposed a toast to Moraga and the crowd broke into a joyous round of "Happy Birthday" before indulging in cake.

## Town Accepts the Climate Action Plan

By Sophie Braccini

The Moraga Town Council accepted a climate action plan on Oct. 22 that was developed, over a year and a half, by a task force comprised of 18 volunteers working with a consultant. Moraga has many years of history developing climate action plans, a set of strategies intended to guide efforts for reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

In March 2006, the California En-

vironmental Protection Agency released its Climate Action Team Report to Gov. Schwarzenegger and the state legislature. At the state level, the goal adopted is a greenhouse gas reduction of 20 percent below 2005 levels by 2020. Many cities have embraced the concept and are designing their own climate action plans to contribute to the general goal.

ICLEI USA, Local Governments

for Sustainability, won a grant in 2008 to define Moraga's carbon footprint (as well as those of Lafayette and Orinda); a first action plan was drafted following the inventory and was accepted by the Town Council – but not adopted. Unlike adopting a plan, accepting a plan does not carry a request for further action.

For this year's iteration, the Town Council again decided that accepting

the plan was sufficient.

Because the plan was not adopted, it cannot be certified by the Bay Area Air Quality Management District, which has oversight of local climate action plans, negating one of the reasons to create such a plan – streamlining the CEQA process, on required analysis of greenhouse gas impacts, for developers.

... continued on page A10

### Memorial Service for Roger Poynts

A service for Roger Poynts, who died in a car accident Oct. 26, will be begin at 4:30 p.m. on Saturday, Nov. 22 at the Orinda Masonic Lodge, 9 Altarinda Way in Orinda. –S. Braccini

### Clarification, issue date Nov. 5, 2014, "MPD's New Lieutenant - and Next Police Chief?"

It has come to our attention that this article inadvertently left readers wondering if Moraga Police Chief Robert Priebe would retire within a year. Priebe indicated that he loves his job and the community, and plans to continue his service for another few years. "I have great hopes for Jon (King) as a member of MPD and hope he replaces me when I retire, whenever that might be," Priebe added.



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# BREAKFAST WITH SANTA 10 AM, SATURDAY, DEC. 13

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## Moraga's New Planning Director: Ellen Clark

By Sophie Braccini



Ellen Clark explains the Livable Moraga Road concept to a resident during the Pear Festival Photo Andy Scheck


When Shawna Brekke-Read left her job as Moraga's planning director for a nice new gig in South Lake Tahoe, senior planner Ellen Clark was appointed interim director. It did not take long for Town Manager Jill Keimach to decide that promoting from within was the right strategy, and Clark is now the town's planning director. She directs a department that is tackling many projects and issues, and she is already familiar with the topics and the people. Clark brings to the department the calm and endurance of a marathon runner.

Clark began her career in 2000 with a consulting firm in Berkeley; she decided to move to the town of Mammoth Lakes with her husband, an architect, when she had her first child. She was the small town's acting planning director when she applied for the senior planner position in Moraga a year and a half ago. "The family wanted to go back to the Bay Area, and I picked Moraga because it was a similar size community, where you get to work on very different types of projects, which I find more interesting," she says.

Clark has found that in Moraga, even when the projects are small, the issues are complicated; so her analytical mind is challenged. "I was thinking about it as we are looking for a new planner," she explains. "Moraga is this little town of just 16,000 people, suburban, mostly residential, but with enough issues to keep it very stimulating." ... continued on page A10

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**SUZANNE D'ARCY'S**

# Open Studio



Florals, Still Life, Landscape, Figurative

**Dec. 6th and 7th  
 10am to 4pm**

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 www.Suzannedarcy.com

# Better Homes and Gardens REAL ESTATE MASON-McDUFFIE Real Estate...Simplified!

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**1166 Camino Vallecito, Lafayette**

**NEW LISTING**



Superb Upper Happy Valley location on a private half-acre lot with valley views. This 3BR/2BA home features a new kitchen with top-grade appliances & Caesartone counters, spacious bedrooms and a large living room. The backyard features a lawn and second patio for enjoying your outdoor morning coffee. www.1166CaminoVallecito.com.  
**Offered at \$1,395,000 by Jim Colhoun 925.200.2795**

CalBRE 01029160

**389 Belmont Street, Oakland**

**NEW LISTING**



This newly remodeled unit is located just 1 block from bustling Grand Avenue and beautiful Lake Merritt! Boasts gorgeous hardwood floors, new kitchen and baths, open floor plan for easy entertaining and living with a wood burning fireplace and private balcony. Enjoy dining, shopping, easy commuting and the life that only being on Lake Merritt provides!  
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CalBRE#01909766

**2928 Sakland Indian Drive, Rossmore**

**PENDING SALE**



Level-in Buckeye model located in Eagle Ridge with breathtaking views. Perfect combination of comfort & luxury, ideal for entertaining. Architecturally appealing w/ high ceilings and endless closet space. 3rd BR w/custom cherry wood cabinetry used as den. Large master bedroom suite has spa-like bath.  
**Offered at \$1,075,000 by Larry Jacobs 925.788.1362 and Kress Hauri 925.899.5739**

CalBRE#01495118/#01465617

**1591 Catherine Way, Concord**

**PENDING**



Great opportunity to purchase an upgraded 3BR/2BA home. The kitchen is first-class with double ovens and beautiful cabinets. Prepaid leased solar panels with very low annual electric bill. Big backyard with boat or RV parking on the side & spacious garage workshop!  
**Offered at \$535,000 by Jim Colhoun 925.200.2795.**

CalBRE 01029160

**4014 Hiller Lane, Martinez**

**PENDING**



A stunning property with beautiful, professionally designed landscaping and patio. This bright 3-bedroom home features tall ceilings, a loft and views of Mt Diablo and seasonal fireworks. The updated kitchen includes granite counters and is designed for easy entertaining.  
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# Orinda

## Civic News

### Public Meetings

#### City Council

Tuesday, Dec. 2, 7 p.m.  
Auditorium, Orinda Library,  
26 Orinda Way

#### Planning Commission

Monday, Dec. 1, 7 p.m.  
Auditorium, Orinda Library,  
26 Orinda Way

#### Citizens' Infrastructure Oversight Commission

Wednesday, Dec. 10, 6:30 p.m.  
Sarge Littlehale Community Room,  
22 Orinda Way

#### School Board Meeting

##### Orinda Union School District

Monday, Dec. 8, 6 p.m.  
OUSD Office, 8 Altarinda Road,  
www.orindaschools.org  
See also AUHSD meeting page A2

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



### Orinda Police Department Incident Summary Report, Oct. 26-Nov. 8

Alarms 16  
911 calls 5

#### Burglary, Residential

40 block Oakwood Rd  
Rabble Rd/Wilder Rd

#### Burglary, Auto

Nation's  
Wagner Ranch Elementary

#### Burglary, Commercial

70 block Moraga Wy

#### Disturbing the Peace

50 block Van Ripper Ln

#### Hit & Run

Miner Rd/Brookbank Rd

#### Loud Party

60 block Loma Vista Dr  
20 block Lavina Ct  
100 block Glorietta Bl

#### Loitering

20 block Van Ripper Ln

#### Petty Theft

400 block Moraga Wy  
50 block Moraga Wy  
20 block Brookwood Rd (2)  
40 block Heather Ln  
10 block Orchard Rd  
10 block Vianne Ct  
CVS

10 block Camino Sobrante

10 block Arbolado Ct

#### Public Nuisance

100 block Ardith Ct  
60 block Davis Rd  
20 block Southwood Dr  
30 block Southwood Dr  
Overhill Rd/Catherine Ct  
100 block Scenic Dr

#### Promiscuous shooting

Orinda Intermediate School

#### Reckless Driving

Camino Pablo/Brookwood Rd  
Miramonte High School  
Ivy Dr/Coral Dr  
Moraga Wy/Brookwood Rd

#### Suspicious:

Person 10  
Circumstances 8  
Vehicle 14

#### Threats

Orinda BART

#### Traffic Stops

81

#### Traffic Pursuit

Hwy 24/Pleasant Hill

#### Vehicle Theft

60 block Bates Bl

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## City Leaders Consider Historic Landmark Designation for Orinda's Frank Lloyd Wright House

By Laurie Snyder



Named as "the greatest architect of all time" by the American Institute of Architects in 1991, Frank Lloyd Wright defined space as "the breath of art," and strategically placed windows to seamlessly transition from his built world into nature.

Photos Ohlen Alexander

*"Respect the masterpiece. It is true reverence to man. There is no quality so great, none so much needed now." – Frank Lloyd Wright*

Gerald Shmavonian, the new owner of Orinda's Frank Lloyd Wright-Buehler House and Gardens, has cleared two milestones en route to securing an official city Historic Landmark Designation for the distinctive complex. On Oct. 1, Orinda's Historic Landmark Committee (HLC) determined that six of the structures on the 3-acre property at 6 Great Oak Circle should qualify for the designation: the main residence, guest house, play house, tea house, and workshop, as well as the formal Shin garden conceived by Henry Matsutani, who achieved prominence in the 1960s for restoring the Japanese Tea Garden at Golden Gate Park and designing the Moon Viewing Garden for the San Francisco Botanical Gardens.

On Nov. 12, the Orinda Planning Commission concurred with that ruling. According to city planning director Emmanuel Ursu, the commission "recommended to the City Council that the FLW house, gardens and appurtenant structures described in the staff report be designated a city historic landmark."

Heralded as "the work of a master" from the Modern Movement when added to the National

Register of Historic Places in 2006, the Wright-Buehler Gardens also became a California State Historic Resource that same year. The main residence and workshop were designed by Wright himself while the play and guest houses were designed and built later by Walter Olds, Wright's apprentice who supervised the original construction of the main house and workshop from 1948 to 1949, and then oversaw the home's restoration from 1995 to 1997 following a devastating fire which damaged the bedroom wing and its adjoining hallway. Olds, who had come to know the icon's heart and mind well while studying with him at Taliesin, Wright's incomparable Wisconsin estate and architectural laboratory, was later lauded by architectural critics for his exacting attention to Wright's vision and techniques.

One of only two Usonian homes created by Wright in the San Francisco Bay Area and of just 12 in California, the main residence in Orinda has a basement – a rare feature for Wright homes. According to Carol Roland, author of the application securing the home's placement on the National Register, Wright's Usonians "are the culmination of his continual experimentation with the form and content of residential architecture." Each "was a response to his search for a house that would function best for the unique American family," and each "was carefully designed to its site to take ad-

vantage of the topography, maximize privacy, and ground the house in its natural environment."

Further setting the Orinda masterwork apart – even from Wright's other Usonian homes – is the Wright-Buehler workshop. Maynard Buehler, an engineer-inventor renowned for his rifle scope mounts, "required a specialized workspace in which he could experiment with ideas and forge tools to meet his needs," explains Roland. The Wright-designed shop was "fitted with cabinets and drawers custom designed to Buehler's specifications." Placed at the L-Plan's east end with high concrete block walls, a clerestory the length of the building's western front, a fireplace and bathroom, it was a one-of-a-kind workspace offering Buehler a snug place where he could "spend hours without having to go back and forth to the house" to "think through many of the concepts that resulted in the several patents that he held."

The only structure on the property not approved for landmark designation was the greenhouse. This decision was made because the structure's design origins remain unclear despite the intensive research undertaken during the prior national and state historic designation review processes. ... continued on page A11



The moment visitors enter the gardens at the Frank Lloyd Wright-Buehler House, many feel as if they have passed through a wrinkle in space and time.

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## Orinda City Government Operates Smoothly First Day Following Elections

By Laurie Snyder

Despite claims by a handful of East Bay media outlets and issue-specific bloggers that Orinda's unsettled election results were causing upheaval or sweeping uncertainty within just a few hours of Election Day 2014, life moved on with the sunrise in America's Second Friendliest City. Orinda City Council members were, in fact, productively attending to business just one day after the 2014 mid-terms.

Mayor Sue Severson began her day Nov. 5 with the Mayor's Liaison Meeting, a monthly assembly of representatives from garden clubs to schools reporting on their respective efforts to better Orinda. And later that same evening, the full council came together for its regular bi-weekly meeting – albeit a bit sleep deprived because most stayed awake monitoring the snail-paced returns.

Council's agenda included review and approval of the BART-Orinda

Downtown Access Ramp and Lighting Project, review and approval of the list of road segments to be repaired with Measure J funds for fiscal year 2015, authorization of staff to proceed with design and preparation of contract plans, specifications and an engineer's estimate for the projected road repairs, and hearing public comments regarding the draft of the Environmental Impact Report being prepared as part of the state-mandated update of the Housing Element of Orinda's General Plan.

The BART project will improve pedestrian access to BART by replacing the current ramp-stair approach between Bryant Way and the elevated sidewalk on Camino Pablo's eastern side with an ADA-compliant ramp with handrails. Lighting will also be added near that ramp and under Highway 24's eastbound overpass. With \$250,000 of the total cost provided by BART and \$122,014 pulled from

Contra Costa Transportation Authority's 28C funds, Orinda will likely only need to kick in \$75,000. Bidding expected to open in May 2015 with construction anticipated this summer.

The road paving item was a continuation of public meetings held since voters approved Measure J in June. Since then, council, staff and CIOC members have been assessing StreetSaver data and public input while developing the criteria for determining which roads will be repaired first and in what order. The current projected list and criteria are available on the city's website. Many of the segments slated to receive this first round of attention will be among Orinda's worst; however, some have been chosen because the city will be timing repairs with projects executed in Orinda by outside agencies such as the East Bay Municipal Utility District.

... continued on page A11

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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:

### MOFD's Audited Financials Lacking

On October 15th MOFD presented to its Board of Directors the audited financials for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2014. This 90 page document has reams of numbers, pages of text, and even some pictures. But the one item missing was the answer to the big question: "is MOFD going bankrupt?" The answer to this is usually found in the balance sheet but this year's balance sheet remains the same piece of fiction as it has been since the District went deeply "under water" in 2008.

The District wants us to believe that their assets exceed their liabilities by \$10 million. In reality, nothing could be further from the truth. While the District does have \$10 million in capital assets, which it needs to provide us service, and \$4 million in cash, its liabilities overwhelm these meager savings. (1) It has \$17 million in unfunded retiree medical benefits. (2) It has \$166 million in pension liabilities with only \$126 million in pension assets as an offset. (3) It still owes \$22 million on a bond it borrowed in 2005 when its pen-

sion was previously underwater. In total, it has \$206 million of employee benefit liabilities offset by \$126 million in pension assets. But to add insult to injury, where the District has historically published the condition of its pension (assets and liabilities), albeit buried in a footnote to the audited financials, this year it has failed to do even that. In the last issue of the Weekly, MOFD Director Steve Anderson was quoted "Those charges affect our liability. Even though they are not required to be in our financials until next year, they should be publicized." So why aren't they? The Orinda Emergency Services Task Force has prepared what it believes is a comprehensive and informative financial position report (balance sheet) which shows MOFD's true financial condition and compares it to the prior four years (see www.OrindaTaskForce.org). The Task Force believes that MOFD should adopt such a report to accurately inform the community and itself of the realities of its finances.

Steve Cohn  
Orinda

## Public Forum

If you have significant knowledge about an issue facing Lamorinda, or one of its communities, 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. We will not accept Public Forum submissions regarding a current ballot measure or candidate for public office. Opinions expressed in Public Forum are the express views of the writer and not necessarily those of the Lamorinda Weekly.

## Civic News Lafayette

### Transportation Planner Moving On

... continued from page A3



Leah Greenblat at her last Circulation Commission meeting on Nov. 3.

Photo C. Tyson

At the Circulation Commission, which deals with traffic safety issues, parking, pedestrian sidewalks and bike ways, residents and commissioners couldn't help but spell out what her work has meant to them. Chair Dino Riggio thanked her for all of her "patience, tact and generosity," presenting her with a lovely lemon tree from the group as a gesture of appreciation. Other commissioners, along with Council Member Traci Reilly, chimed in with positive accolades.

Commissioner Lynn Hiden said Greenblat understands the community unusually well and has the rare talent to look at issues and "sift out a solution," adding, "She handles complex, interwoven subjects with aplomb, works patiently, and has carried an enormous load for the City of Lafayette. There is very little in Lafayette that is transportation related that hasn't seen the fine hand of Leah Greenblat."

Cindy Sevilla, vice chair of the Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee, recognized Greenblat for helping Lafayette to become a more

sustainable community. Resident and property owner Joan Bruzzone offered a sweet card and lovely orchid along with her sincere thanks.

"After 15 years with Lafayette, I get great pleasure at looking around town and seeing what I consider to be positive, transformative improvements to its transportation network," said Greenblat. "I'm proud of the changes we made to Pleasant Hill Road south of the freeway; the downtown caliber sidewalks on Mt. Diablo Boulevard; the walkways on Springhill Road and Stanley Boulevard; the directional bikeway signage throughout the city, and my list goes on and on."

After wrapping things up in Lafayette, she'll be working for the Western Contra Costa Transportation Advisory Committee, one of four Regional Transportation Planning Committees in the county that defines and implements policies, programs and projects to improve local and regional transportation and air quality -- keeping people, bicycles and cars moving on an even larger scale.



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## Civic News Fire Districts

### County Supervisor Refuses Her Pay Increase

By Nick Marnell

Contra Costa County Supervisor Candace Andersen not only voted against a 33 percent pay increase for the county supervisors at the Nov. 4 board meeting, she eschewed taking all but a 4 percent raise for herself. "It's not the appropriate thing to do," she said, as county union members in the audience applauded her nearly every word. "For us to take that large of an increase, while the raises for 9,000 county employees average around 4 percent, seems arrogant, and it is not the way to lead."

The motion to increase the supervisors' salaries passed on a 4-1 vote. The pay hike is the supervisors' first since a cost of living increase in 2007. To keep her increase in line with the raise given to county employees, Andersen confirmed that she will request an adjusted annual salary of \$101,379. The adjusted \$129,227 salary of the other four supervisors, which is pegged at 70 percent of the salary of superior court judges, still ranks below the pay scale of Alameda County and Santa Clara County supervisors. The supervisors also receive a \$600 monthly car allowance, expenses, eligibility for deferred compensation, plus health and retirement benefits.

"I'm not trying to get rich," said Andersen, whose district includes Lamorinda. "I'm doing this job as a public service. And when you serve, you make sacrifices."

But when Andersen exhorted her fellow supervisors to take a leadership role and forfeit a portion of their salaries as she did, Supervisor John Gioia fired back, blasting Andersen for her failure to back previous county revenue generating proposals.

"Leadership involves many things," Gioia later explained. "When we needed to raise revenue to help the fire district, she was not supportive of a parcel tax. She also voted against considering a county sales tax increase." Andersen did not support the failed 2012 Measure Q, a \$75 parcel tax to help fund the Contra Costa County Fire Protection District. This year she voted against authorizing an opinion poll to determine the likelihood of passage of a countywide sales tax increase. "I would have preferred not to get as involved as I did at the meeting," said Gioia. "But when she challenged us on our leadership, I had to point those things out."

The supervisors' raises will take effect Jan. 5.

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**Moraga-Orinda Fire District Board of Directors Meetings**

**Next meeting:**  
Wednesday, Nov. 19  
check website for updates  
(Go to www.mofd.org as the meeting date approaches for location and more information)

**ConFire Board of Directors' Meeting**

**Next meeting:**  
Tuesday, Dec. 9  
check website for updates  
Board Chamber room 107, Administration Building, 651 Pine St. Martinez  
(Agenda at http://alturl.com/5p9pu)

**Clarification, issue date Nov. 5, 2014, "Drones in Lamorinda:"** Our story about drones referenced the necessity of Federal Communications Commission licensing and regulation within FCC Title 47, Part 97. Drone operation may also involve the unlicensed parts of the radio frequency spectrum. Operation of the latter would fall under regulations in Part 15. See <http://www.arrl.org/part-15-radio-frequency-devices> for a more complete explanation.

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## Town Accepts the Climate Action Plan

... continued from page A4

Staff presented to the Town Council the 40 measures that were proposed by the task force to reduce Moraga's carbon dioxide emissions 4 percent by 2020 (read the related article in our archive at [www.lamorindaweekly.com/archive/issue0816/Moraga-Planning-Commission-Says-Climate-Action-Plan-Needs-More-Work.html](http://www.lamorindaweekly.com/archive/issue0816/Moraga-Planning-Commission-Says-Climate-Action-Plan-Needs-More-Work.html)).

Councilmember Mike Metcalf said the measures that addressed transportation and construction were by far the most effective to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. "The most bang for the buck comes from carpool and rideshare programs," he said, "and we are already working on that with CCTA

(Contra Costa Transportation Authority)." He proposed to not spend any more money on the plan to get it to a point where it could be submitted for certification by the Bay Area Air Quality Management District, which has oversight of local climate action plans, but rather to use it simply as a guideline—his motion met with unanimous approval.

After the meeting, Mayor Ken Chew said the council could have done more to implement the climate action plan. "The CAP was started quite a few years ago since I got on the council in 2006," he said. "Unfortunately, I thought last year the CAP task force was set up for failure. Some of the members on the task

force were not too thrilled about the town having a CAP in the first place."

"Adopting the plan would provide more 'teeth,'" confirmed Ellen Clark, planning director, "but the council's decision doesn't foreclose taking action on the strategies or even necessarily delay their implementation, depending when and how they're integrated into our future work program."

A few days after the meeting, Moraga resident and former council member Lynda Deschambault alerted town staff to a grant opportunity—the California Youth Energy Services Rising Sun program, which hires young adults, ages 15 to 22, and trains them to serve communi-

ties across the Bay Area with no-cost Green House Calls. At each Green House Call, interns check the home for efficiency, install energy and water-saving equipment, and provide personalized recommenda-

tions for further savings. "(Moraga) is pursuing a grant in partnership with Lafayette to fund a CYES team in Moraga and Lafayette," confirmed Ella Samonsky, associate planner.

## Deschambault Honored by Sustainable Contra Costa

Sustainable Contra Costa honored nonprofits, businesses, community groups, educators and individuals on Oct. 15 for their efforts toward sustainability at the sixth annual Contra Costa Leadership in Sustainability and Green Building Awards Gala in Concord. Moraga's Lynda Deschambault won the Leadership in Sustainability award in the Individual category, and the nonprofit she founded and directs, Contra Costa County Climate Leaders (4CL), was voted the "Seed of Change" winner for this year. Lafayette-based Ecohouse was one of two Green Building Award winners.

## Moraga's New Planning Director: Ellen Clark

... continued from page A5

Clark especially appreciates that residents are interested, involved and actively participate in the public process. She says that it is sometimes hard to engage people, but there have been good turnouts at outreach sessions for the Livable Moraga Road project and the review of development rules for ridgelines and slopes. Clark seeks community consensus on issues before plans are brought to the Town Council for final approval.

There was some reluctance to put

topics on the council's agenda, in the weeks leading up to the recent election, which might become overly politicized. Now the process to study possible amendments to the town's code regarding development on ridgelines and slopes will move forward; the council will work on zoning changes in the area of the Moraga Center Specific Plan; and a new project proposed by Jerry Loving for multi-family housing next to the Rheem Theatre will start its rounds of

study sessions—while several in-progress developments, including Rancho Laguna II, off Rheem Boulevard; Via Moraga, across from the Rheem Shopping Center; the City Ventures project on Moraga Way; and Summerhill Homes' Camino Ricardo project, proceed along the sinuous development pathway.

To these relatively short term projects Clark adds some long term objectives. "The plan to improve the Rheem Shopping Center has gone on the

back-burner," she says. "The General Plan envisioned a Specific Plan for that area; the question is should we invest in a plan for that center or can we work on focused General Plan amendments and zoning changes?" She knows that the crafting of the Moraga Center Specific Plan cost \$1 million and took seven years. She also sees tremendous opportunity for improvements to the existing municipal code, which she views as a very old fashion and cumbersome document. She acknowl-

edges that some work has already been done, including a review of the sign ordinance, but she would like to have time to do a complete clean-up.

When she is not in the town offices or spending time with her family, Clark runs. She already has four marathons under her belt. She says that sometimes, in the middle of a run, she may wonder why she is doing something so hard; but at the end of the race she derives great happiness from a sense of achievement.



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## Livable Moraga Road Project Starts to Gel

Moraga's Planning Commission, Design Review Board, and Parks and Recreation Commission met in October to discuss the recommendation of the Livable Moraga Road advisory committee regarding reconfigurations of Moraga Road designed to make the arterial more friendly and safe to all types of users.

Over the course of several public workshops, the two areas found to be most in need of improvement are the Campolindo High School area, where drop-off and pick-up creates havoc on weekdays during the school year, and the section of Moraga Road between Corliss Drive and Donald Drive where several adjacent streets merge, more or less efficiently, onto the arterial.

Town staff proposed a new configuration for drop-off at the high school, but has not yet been able to get a commitment from the school district to work with the town on the project. It is essential to have the district's support since some modifications are likely to be necessary on the campus itself. Moraga's planning director noted that grants such as Safe Routes to Schools are available to fund such projects.

Of the different configurations to improve the Donald Drive to Corliss Drive section of Moraga Road, an alternative that envisions two northbound lanes, one traffic lane southbound, one center turning lane, and parking on alternate sides, as well as sidewalks, bike lanes and a multi-use path, garnered a majority of support.

## Shopping Small is Big in Lamorinda

... continued from page A1

"This is about awareness," said Moraga Hardware and Lumber owner Bill Snider, a Moraga resident. "The whole idea is to remind people that there is more than Amazon and Walmart, and let's not forget the small businesses that support the local scout troops and education foundations."

Both chambers of commerce plan to post information about participating businesses on their websites—[www.orindachamber.org](http://www.orindachamber.org) and [www.moragachamber.org](http://www.moragachamber.org) (click on the Shop Moraga First tab).

Jay Lifson, executive director of

the Lafayette Chamber of Commerce, sees Small Business Saturday as the prelude to the city's largest retail event of the year, which takes place the following week—"It's a Wonderful Life in Lafayette," a festive family event from 4 to 7 p.m. on Friday, Dec. 6 at Lafayette Plaza. The fun-filled evening includes visits with Santa, the official holiday tree lighting ceremony, one-of-a-kind photo ops, live musical entertainment, crafts, treats and a holiday sing-a-long. "This event is designed as a time for gathering, giving and gratitude," said Lifson.

## As seen in Moraga ...

### Wardrobe Panache



From left: Erwin Santos, Ricky Hinojsa, Raymund Respicio, Igor Kipnis.  
Photo Cathy Dausman

How to reconcile "casual Friday" dress code with proper bank attire? This foursome, all employees at the Moraga branch of Wells Fargo Bank, has done so simply by swapping out their ties for bow ties. "Bow tie Friday" began about a year ago, said branch manager Erwin Santos (left). And yes—the ties you see are real bow ties, not the clip-on variety. "I didn't know how to tie [a bow tie], until I watched a YouTube video," Santos said. He must be a fast learner, because now he helps others tie their bow ties. —C. Dausman

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# Lamorinda Election Results

One message came through loud and clear in the Lamorinda elections this year – with only a handful of votes making the difference between sitting on the dais and sitting in the audience, every vote matters. In the council races, voters in Moraga favored candidates who prefer a cautious approach to development; while Orindans

bucked the status quo, casting more votes for a political newcomer than for any other candidate.

The Contra Costa County Elections Division updated its Nov. 4 General Election results on Nov. 12. Although the total numbers changed since the preliminary results were posted on election night, the outcomes did not:

Moraga Town Council (two seats):	Number of votes	Percent of total vote
<b>Dave Trotter</b>	3,532	37.94
<b>Teresa Onoda</b>	3,241	34.82
Ken Chew	2,453	26.35
<b>Orinda City Council (three seats):</b>		
<b>Eve Phillips</b>	3,704	21.36
<b>Amy Worth</b>	3,468	20.00
<b>Dean Orr</b>	2,973	17.15
Bob Thompson	2,886	16.64
Linda Delehunt	2,418	13.95
Carlos Baltodano	1,838	10.60
<b>Orinda Union School District (three seats):</b>		
<b>Julie Rossiter</b>	4,058	26.73
<b>Jason Kaune</b>	3,902	25.70
<b>Carol A. Brown</b>	3,583	23.60
Hillary Weiner	3,574	23.54
<b>Acalanes Union High School District (three seats):</b>		
<b>Susie Epstein</b>	19,151	28.53
<b>Nancy Kendzierski</b>	17,428	25.96
<b>Robert Hockett</b>	15,520	23.12
Kristen Correll	14,615	21.77
<b>Moraga-Orinda Fire District Board, Division 1 (one seat)</b>		
<b>Kathleen Conroy Famulener</b>	1,076	52.62
Nathan Bell	968	47.33

(Source: Contra Costa County Elections Division) - L. Borrowman

## Civic News orinda

### City Leaders Consider Historic Landmark Designation for Orinda's Frank Lloyd Wright House

... continued from page A6

In reaching their respective decisions, HLC members and planning commissioners determined that the Wright-Buehler complex met the following criteria: the home and gardens represent “a distinctive example of an architectural period, style or movement or its identification as the work of an architect or

master builder,” has “elements of architectural design, detail, materials or craftsmanship which represent a significant architectural innovation,” and “is a distinct work of art.”

The Orinda City Council is expected to review the Wright-Buehler House landmark

application sometime in the new year.

For an exclusive look at this architectural masterpiece, view Ohlen Alexander's photographs in our Sept. 24 article, “Frank Lloyd Wright House in Orinda a Structural Symphony” at [www.lamorindaweekly.com](http://www.lamorindaweekly.com).

### Orinda City Government Operates Smoothly First Day Following Elections

... continued from page A7

Staff hopes this will not only stretch city dollars, but will minimize the likelihood that newly repaved roads will need to be torn up and repaved again. Staff estimates the city will spend \$5,054,479 (Measure J), \$978,971 (Measure L half cent sales tax hike), and \$1,208,631 (Annual Paving Program) for a possible total of \$7,242,081. Observed Vice Mayor Steve Glazer, “Robust action is happening in the north and the south, and the east and the west – and all points in between.”

Staff also cautioned, however, that construction cost estimates shown on the 2015 Measure J list are “not based on design level field reconnaissance and therefore should be considered as a planning tool only.” The list will

be fine-tuned after the final designs are in, and presented in a follow-up report to the council. “Streets may be added or eliminated at that time to stay within the projected funding for FY 2015.” Factors which may affect the budget include design, inspection, monument preservation, and striping costs.

The highlight of the EIR public hearing was a presentation from the consultant helping Orinda through its housing element update. “Prior to the enactment of the California Environmental Quality Act,” said Patrick Angel, “there really wasn't an avenue for the public or resource agencies to express concerns about environmental effects of projects under consideration.” CEQA, he said, is “intended to

disclose if you take this action, what are the physical effects to the environment that will happen.” It also requires cities to explore ways to mitigate or find alternatives which could minimize or avoid the environmental effect. What the EIR under CEQA doesn't do is to advocate for or against development projects. “It also doesn't get into social or economic issues,” such as loss of property values or school crowding. “It's truly about physical effects on the environment.”

The EIR's public comment period ends at 5 p.m. on Dec. 1. Afterward, each comment will be included with its detailed response by the city in its final EIR draft. To learn more, visit the city's website.

## Civic News Lamorinda

### Transit Survey Needs Your Input

Lafayette, Moraga and Orinda are working with County Connection, the local public transit service, to investigate potential options to better serve the Lamorinda area. Organizers are reaching out to residents of the area for their input. The simple online survey is customized for each city, only takes a few minutes to complete and could benefit the community in the future with enhanced transportation options:

- [www.moragatransitsurvey.com](http://www.moragatransitsurvey.com)
- [www.orindatransitsurvey.com](http://www.orindatransitsurvey.com)
- [www.lafayettetransitsurvey.com](http://www.lafayettetransitsurvey.com)

Any questions, contact Paul Supawanich at [PSupawanich@nelsonnygaard.com](mailto:PSupawanich@nelsonnygaard.com) or (415) 281-6922. - C. Tyson

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**Civic News Lamorinda**

**Problems with your Government?**

Here's what you can do

By Nick Marnell

Many who witnessed the mudslinging and the negative advertising before the election have little interest in running for elective office. But winning an election is not the only method by which citizens can participate in local government. In fact, membership on appointed civic commissions and committees sometimes allows for even more influence on the creation of public policy.

That is why Contra Costa County and the Lamorinda municipalities rigorously vet those who apply for these appointed posts. Roughly speaking, a commission has powers delegated to it and is assigned a specific task to perform, while a committee is typically a deliberative body that investigates and advises on a specific issue.

For filling Lamorinda positions, the work begins in the office of the city or town clerk, who announces the vacancies, collects the applications and agendas the candidate interviews. Moraga and Orinda council members hold the interviews during full council sessions, while city clerk Joanne Robbins confirmed that the Lafayette interviews are conducted by the city council liaisons and the commission chair. "By having the commission chair participate, we have input from a person who has the best understanding of what additional skills are required on the commission," said Lafayette mayor Don Tatzin. He stressed that the commission meetings are public meetings and anyone can attend. In all cases, the city or town council appoints the positions at a public meeting.

In Contra Costa County, the clerk of the board posts vacancies, collects the applications and forwards them to the appropriate county staff person and the district supervisor. Depending on the position, interviews are con-

ducted by the supervisor or by the county Internal Operations Committee. Erling Horn talked about his experience securing the District 2 alternate seat on the Contra Costa County Fire Protection District advisory fire commission.

"Make your resume as short as possible," said Horn. "And be prepared to be flexible." Horn applied for a seat on the county planning commission, but during the vetting process, Supervisor Candace Andersen suggested that Horn, who helped write fire standards for the National Fire Protection Agency, might be a fit for the advisory fire commission. He then interviewed with Andersen for an hour.

Andersen, whose district includes Lamorinda, explained what she covers in her candidate interviews. "I want to know how often they've been to community meetings," she said. "I evaluate their expertise, their education, their volunteer experience. I explain the frustrations of working on public boards. And of course, we do a thorough check of their background and their character references." Ten days after his interview, Horn learned that Andersen recommended him for the fire position to the Board of Supervisors, which officially appointed him at a public meeting.

One aspect of public service that terrifies many potential applicants is the financial disclosure requirement. Most appointees must fill out the California Fair Political Practice Commission Form 700 Statement of Economic Interests, a full disclosure of personal assets and income. The form includes a cover letter and six financial schedules, with the degree of disclosure set by the municipality's conflict of interest code. Lafayette posts the completed forms on its web-

site, town clerk Marty McInturf confirmed that Moraga posts them on the FPPC website, while Orinda retains its forms in-house, available for public inspection, per city clerk Michele Olsen. The county also posts required Form 700s on the FPPC website.

In addition, many local and county appointees must complete courses in both California ethics and the Brown Act, which guarantees the public's right to attend and participate in public meetings.

Committee-specific experience is not a prerequisite for serving. Jim Cunha, a member of the Lafayette Emergency Services Task Force, had no background in fire or emergency medical service, but he brought along his experience as a trustee and executive committee member of the Lafayette Library and Learning Center Foundation. His curiosity over the complexities of the fire service drove him to investigate its problems.

"If you don't understand something, then it's not right," said Cunha. "Keep digging, keep asking questions until you do understand it. More times than not, it needs fixing."

"I encourage people to apply," said Horn. "There's a real need for citizen involvement." He certainly knows of what he speaks, as Horn is active on three Lafayette public committees. "Yeah, I'm probably at the upper end," he said, noting that most citizens manage participation in only one.

And though at times it may not appear to be so, citizens under the age of 30 are strongly urged to apply for all government appointed positions. "Because many of the meetings are held in the evenings, it should be relatively convenient for working individuals to make time in their schedules," said Orinda city manager Janet Keeter.

**Civic News School Board**

**Significant Deficit Spending Slated for High Schools**

By Cathy Tyson

"The Local Control Funding Formula was not kind to the Acalanes Union High School District," said Chris Learned, associate superintendent of business services for the AUHSD.

The district, which oversees Acalanes, Campolindo, Miramonte and Las Lomas high schools, finished the 2013-14 school year with a deficit of \$1.7 million; for the current school year, 2014-15, it is projected to be \$5.4 million in the red, tapering to \$3.8 million for 2016-17, if nothing changes.

At a recent school board meeting that went late into the night, Learned gave an in-depth presentation on revenue, expenses and projections into the future; his conclusion: "Doing nothing is not an option."

What caused this? Mainly the Local Control Funding Formula, LCFF, along with the loss of one-time funds to implement the Common Core and a significant increase in CalSTRS and CalPERS seven-year phase-in of employer contributions. CalSTRS is the California State Teachers Retirement System and CalPERS is the California Public Employees Retirement System which

manages pension and health benefits for non-teaching school employees.

LCFF replaced the convoluted 40-year-old school funding methodology from the state; changing the way it distributes \$41 billion dollars per year for public education. While that sounds significant, California is 49th in school funding levels compared to other states. The new system gives more local control and endeavors to equalize base funding amounts, providing additional money on top of base amounts in several categories. Once LCFF is fully implemented it will only bring schools back to 2007 funding levels, due to years of deep and significant cuts.

The LCFF funding formula provides a base amount of dollars for all students, recognizing the difference in the cost to educate kindergarten students versus high school students. Then there are add-on funds for class size reduction, and more add-ons for certain students who need more resources, English language learners, students from low income families and foster kids. Beyond that, the state also recognizes that in addition to these supplemental dollars, students who live in districts that have a higher

concentration, over 55 percent, of disadvantaged youth get further additional funding.

While clarifying funding, establishing equity and providing more resources to students who need them makes sense, the problem is that in Lamorinda the base funding level is low and the district doesn't qualify for much additional funding. Based on enrollment in the 2013-14 school year there are 5,307 students in the high school district; only 5.1 percent are socio-economically disadvantaged and 2.2 percent have limited English proficiency.

Superintendent John Nickerson explained in the 2014-15 Final Adoption Budget, "the base-funding level of the LCFF remains absolutely inadequate and the formula will place extreme fiscal pressures on the District going forward."

The board voted to create a finance committee that will meet monthly, starting before the winter break and including teachers, parents, students and administrators, to look at all possible options to find a solution. "We can fix this problem, but we need to be aggressive," stated Learned.



# Keeping it Clean on Mulholland Ridge Trail

By Cathy Dausman



Ted and Carol Gamble hold the tools of their trade for cleaning the Mulholland Ridge Trail. Photo Cathy Dausman

It's not unusual that Ted and Carol Gamble take an active interest in the Mulholland Ridge Trail; after all, the couple still lives in the house they built on the Moraga side in 1970. "It's a wonderful canopy [of trees] and a scenic hike," Ted Gamble said of the area. And it's a place where people love to walk their dogs. But for the past 40 years, the Gambles have given more than lip service to their surroundings – they clean the roadway from Laird

Drive to the top of the ridge on a regular basis on their own and without pay.

Once a month in winter, and once a week in warmer weather, Gamble takes his gas weed eater or commercial power blower along the route to clean up. His wife follows with a trash bag, filling it with remnants of fast food meals, bottles, cans, and other less savory items.

"I do it somewhat selfishly,"

Gamble said. He explained that clearing the route of pine needles is a "safety issue" for drivers, bikers and pedestrians; and he likes the exercise he gets while looking at nature.

People are "entitled to a nice scenic walkway," he explained.

According to Gamble, developer Donald Rheem built the roadway and had it maintained so that he could drive from his Orinda side home into Rheem Center for daily coffee and donuts at Scotty's.

"He drove a big old Buick," Gamble recalled. After Rheem died, his estate sold the Mulholland Ridge land to a developer, who in turn sold the property to at least two other developers. "They really didn't do anything to it [the roadway and property]," Gamble said, because the elevation was tough to build on. "If trees fell [across the road] nobody cared," Gamble said. "Eventually, the upper [roadway] portion became impassible."

The last developer to own the property deeded 500 acres along the ridgeline in perpetuity to the Town of Moraga and the town acquired the road. It took several hundred thousand dollars to repair and repave the road and trim back the brush. Now, Moraga only sweeps the site about twice a year, Gamble said, because of the cost.

"No one really knows that he does this and no one ever thanks him except my husband," said Moraga Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Kathe Nelson, although Gamble himself said he was thanked by a former town manager and that drivers on the route sometimes give him a thumbs-up.

"In a town so dependent on volunteerism, there are still unsung heroes," Nelson said.

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# Lafayette Youth Arts Society Contest Kicks Off

By Diane Claytor



2013-14 Lafayette Youth Arts Society Creativity prize winner in photography Clare Needs chose this photo for the colors and how it emphasized the rule of thirds. Photo Clare Needs

With her long flowing hair and fashionably tight and torn jeans, 15-year-old Uma Unni looks like a typical teenager. But this Acalanes High School sophomore is not spending hours hanging out at the mall or endlessly playing video games. She is much too busy!

In middle school, Unni developed a love of fiction writing but discovered there was no way, other than through schoolwork, to find out if her writing was actually good. Through research, she found an essay competition run by England's Royal Commonwealth Society. Born in the UK and holding dual citizenship, Unni qualified to enter. She won a prize, which, she said, was a "huge confidence booster. I learned that I did have the ability to write." She figured there must be other kids like her, kids who love to write but didn't know how to capitalize on their talent. This gave her an idea.

The summer before entering high school, Unni and a friend founded the Lafayette Youth Arts Society (LYAS), "an organization run by kids, for kids ... to provide a place for the kids of Lafayette to showcase their artistic talents." It was going to be a fun summer project. "We didn't talk to or get permission from anyone at the beginning. We set up the website, decided what we wanted the organization to be and then started making contacts."

They developed a mission statement: "... to create a contest that isn't so much about competition, but about inspiring a love of writing and photography in kids." They wrote letters, sent emails, made phone calls. The "summer project," which, Unni said, "we naively imagined would be a simple contest" open to Lafayette middle schoolers, soon spilled into the fall and Unni's friend had to limit her involvement. Unni was entering high school and "my parents were afraid the contest work would interfere with my school and music. They finally agreed to let me continue as long as I kept my grades steady."

Unni wrote more letters, made more phone calls. Famed author Daniel Handler, better known as Lemony Snicket, signed on as a writing judge. Unni contacted the three Lafayette middle schools and received tremendous support. She contacted the City of Lafayette and got mention on their website as well as a week of advertising on the community billboard; contacting the Chamber of Commerce resulted in a social media blitz to spread the word. Numerous local businesses provided gift cards to use as prizes and a large banner was printed at no cost. Unni met with teachers, city and business leaders, local clubs. "I think that's what really brought us success," she exclaimed, "the community was behind us every step of the way."

And they were successful. In its first year, the LYAS writing and photography contests attracted almost 150 entries. According to Unni, the judges all commented on the high quality of the entries, with several stating "it was almost impossible to choose just one winner."

LYAS' second annual writing and photography contest began Nov. 15 when the topics/ themes were announced on the website, lyas.org. It closes on Jan. 30, 2015; winners will be announced in March. Robert Haas, former U.S. Poet Laureate and both a Pulitzer Prize and National Book Award winner, has already agreed to serve as a judge. The other judges are Alison Burke, a retired Miramonte English and Spanish teacher and Rod Twain, a former middle school English, history and government teacher; he is currently substituting at Orinda Intermediate School. Photographers Morris Johnson and Gary Crabbe will be judging the photo entries. Thanks to community donations and sponsors, there are cash prizes ranging from \$250 for first prize to \$100 for third prize winners. Unni expects more competitors this year because of increased publicity.

Additionally, this year's photography contest is going international. Unni's godmother teaches at a middle school in Denmark and several teachers there are turning the photography contest into a class project. "We're planning on giving the same photo themes to the American and Danish kids," Unni said, "and we're excited to see the world through the lenses of kids of the same age but on different continents."

Obviously, as she promised her parents, Unni kept her grades up. She and LYAS' vice president, Zoe Portnoff, a sophomore at Campolindo, are working together on this year's contest. Both Unni and Portnoff are occasional contributors to *Lamorinda Weekly*.

Looking ahead, Unni, who also loves technology, plans to continue writing, and hopes to find a university where she can pursue a dual major in English and computer science. As for LYAS, they now have liaisons at the Lafayette middle schools who will be in high school when Unni and Portnoff go off to college. "It's our hope," she said, "that they'll carry on the contest, recruit more liaisons and keep this going for years."

# Talented Lamorinda Students Perform with UC Berkeley Chorus

Submitted by Xiomara Di Maio



Photo Sunita Ho

Marika Kuzma, director of choirs at UC Berkeley, recently invited Xiomara Di Maio, director of the Lamorinda School of Musical Arts, Stanley Middle School Chorus vocal coach/accompanist and San Francisco Boys Chorus preparatory director, to assemble a children's choir for the performances of Carl Orff's *Carmina Burana* that took place on Oct. 24 and 25 at Hertz Hall in Berkeley. The hope was to include children from the Lamorinda area.

After Di Maio sent a message to all the music teachers in the area letting them know about the invitation, Bob Athayde at Stanley Middle

School, Susan Comber at Lafayette Elementary School, and Christina Engelbrecht, music program coordinator for children and youth at the Lafayette-Orinda Presbyterian Church responded. The teachers passed the word to their students, and 13 families committed to a series of rehearsals and performances in September and October that led to a successful and life changing experience.

The students, ranging in age from 7 to 13, included Sophie Kessler, Stephanie Liu, Veronica Mesaros, Katie Bettencourt, Helena Holmberg, Michael Brennan, Paige Towerly, Rachel Zang, Arden Searer, Ela

Giftgi, Nia Ho, Jenna Englehart and Lindsey Lewis. The students attend Orinda Intermediate School, Lafayette Elementary and Stanley Middle School.

"The kids' singing and presence were superb," said Di Maio. "The guest artists, the UC Berkeley chorus, audience members, and UC Berkeley Chorus Director Marika Kuzma were very impressed with their performances, and we were invited back. It takes passion, discipline and focus to do something like this. I was very pleased with the results, and the kids are looking forward to the next opportunity!"

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# Cultural Differences Add to Lamorinda's Tapestry

## Locals share how they keep their Asian ancestry alive

By Sophie Braccini



Yuriko Magagna, Yukyeong Kim, and Yue Li Photo Sophie Braccini

Lamorinda Asian-American residents have a diverse tapestry of origins, histories, and cultures that skillfully mesh with the rest of the population and contribute to its development. Yukyeong Kim, Yuriko Magagna, and Yue Li are three young local mothers who have developed a friendship since meeting

in Lamorinda. Li came from Beijing, China as a graduate student and is raising her family here. Magagna was raised in Mexico by a Japanese family and attended Sophia University in Japan where she met her husband, who is an American. Kim is Korean and came here two and a half years ago, after her husband started

a four-year assignment in the Bay Area.

"This is my first time living in a foreign country," says Kim. Her husband's South Korean company recommended Lamorinda for its learning environment. "I met many Korean people here; we have not formed a

formal group, but at the end of the year we have a big party with 50 or 60 people. Life here is wonderful," she says, adding that at the beginning it was hard because of the cultural differences. Family dynamics are quite different here, she explains; dads are more involved in the family life, sup-

porting the kids' sports activities, for example, while men in South Korea are mostly focused on work.

"At first it was difficult, but eventually I became more comfortable, I find the difference very interesting and I enjoy it," says Kim.

... continued on page B4

# Hail to the D'Backs Chief

By Nick Marnell



Campolindo High School's Chip Hale is all smiles as he is announced as the manager of the Arizona Diamondbacks.

Photo Jennifer Stewart, Arizona Diamondbacks

New Arizona Diamondbacks manager Chip Hale had every reason to be intimidated when he tried out for the Campolindo High School baseball team in 1980.

"We had a great team," said his coach, Lafayette resident Don Miller. "I don't think he realized what he was getting into. Chip was a stocky, left handed hitting third baseman. He wasn't a great athlete. He was a good player with the mental toughness and an intense desire to compete."

"No one worked harder, though," continued Miller. "After practice, he'd ask, 'Coach, can I drag the field for you?' He was that kind of a kid."

"I was actually more of a football guy," said Hale, who also quarterbacked the Cougars' football team. "We had just moved from San Jose to Moraga so I started on Miller's junior varsity squad." Hale had to play his way onto a team loaded with future professional players, including Paul Faries, who later played for the San Diego Padres and the San Francisco Giants.

During his freshman year Hale made his Campolindo varsity debut against Livermore High School. Again, he had every reason to be intimidated. Hale's first at bat was against Cowboys' star pitcher Randy Johnson, the future major league Hall of Fame lefthander.

"The four years at Campo were fantastic," said Hale. "And we played together all summer in American Legion ball. I remember camping with the team in Oregon, before we came in runner up in the 1982 American Legion World Series." Hale said he felt the team aspect of baseball has been compromised today. "We knew how to win, as a team," he said. "Now, the emphasis is more on individuals, playing on travel teams."

Hale confirmed that playing for Miller was stressful. "He was more of a football style coach. There was lots of yelling and screaming, but we needed it. He put us through the wringer, and it helped us in the future."

Early on, Hale exhibited signs that he was a natural for management. "We're playing in the 1980 North

Coast Championship, in Albert's Park," said Miller. "We're scouting Redwood and Petaluma highs. Chip says, 'Hey coach, can I go with you guys to scout?' This was a freshman! You look back at that, and you can see why he was born to be a big league manager."

"I talk to Donny as much as any coach I've ever had, maybe once a week," said Hale. "In some respects, I'll try to run this team his way. Of course, now you need a different way to teach. Discipline will be different. But I plan to teach the team winning baseball, and I will expect that the game be played the right way."

After he starred at the University of Arizona, the Minnesota Twins chose Hale in the 1987 amateur draft. He played seven seasons with the Twins and the Los Angeles Dodgers before he began his professional managerial career in 2000. For the past three seasons Hale was the Oakland A's bench coach, and after the 2014 season, he spoke with the Twins about their managerial vacancy.

"I was about to interview with Minnesota, and I got a call from Arizona," said Hale. "It was Derrick Hall, team president." He met with Hall, chief baseball officer Tony La Russa, general manager Dave Stewart and three others from the Diamondbacks' front office. "It was an intimidating group," said Hale. "We talked about how I would do things. They called back the next day, and said, 'Don't commit to the Twins.' Sunday night, I had dinner with the front office, and the deal was announced the next day."

On Oct. 13, the Arizona Diamondbacks formally introduced Hale as their manager. Once again, Hale will face an immediate intimidating challenge, as the Diamondbacks open the 2015 season against the world champion San Francisco Giants.

"I am excited and proud to say I'm a Campolindo grad and that I am now a major league manager," said Hale. "If my dad hadn't bought that house on Corliss in Moraga, and if it weren't for my experiences at Campolindo, I wouldn't be here today."

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## Eukel Teacher Trust to Honor Contra Costa Teachers, Nov. 20

Two Lamorinda teachers among three honored  
 Submitted by Alan Plutzik



Michael Meneghetti



Paul Verbanszky

Photos provided

Three teachers who educate and inspire with creative and effective teaching methods will be honored at the 23rd annual Warren W. Eukel Teacher Trust Awards Dinner. Stanley Middle School science teacher Michael Meneghetti, Campolindo High School social studies teacher Paul Verbanszky and St. Francis of Assisi School first grade teacher Karen Kreider Short are the trio of outstanding instructors honored this year. Each will receive a check for \$10,000 that they can spend however they wish.

Michael Meneghetti has been a teacher for more than 30 years. He says children are natural born scientists who thrive when given hands-on activities to study science. He's well known for his Albanian Mystery Box, Magnetic Levitation Train and experiments such as putting Alka Seltzer and tap water in clear sandwich bags to watch the bags expand and the water turn colder.

Paul Verbanszky has been a teacher for 13 years, the past 10 at Campolindo High. He uses "real

world" projects such as the Presidential Campaign Simulation to bring civics home to his students. He also helps coordinate the district's GATE program and has coached Campolindo's Academic Decathlon team, which has captured the national championship in the mid-school division the past two years.

Karen Kreider Short has been in the education field for a quarter century, 14 years as a teacher. In her classroom, she uses puppets, songs and a secret wave to help her first graders learn their lessons. Kreider Short has a colorful, visual classroom with student art projects and academic work hanging from wires above the students' desks. Her positive, cheerful approach instills confidence in her students.

The Eukel Teacher Trust's 2014 Awards Dinner will be held at 6 p.m. Thursday, Nov. 20 at the Diablo Country Club. Renowned food and wine expert Narsai David will collaborate with premier Contra Costa County restaurants — Esin Restaurant & Bar, Faz, Prima Ristorante, Va de

Vi Bistro & Wine Bar, Yankee Pier, Diablo Country Club, and the Contra Costa College Culinary Arts Program, each of which will contribute a course to the dinner. Terry Koehne will serve as master of ceremonies. The awards dinner is open to the public.

The Warren W. Eukel Teacher Trust, a community-based nonprofit, annually honors outstanding K-12 classroom teachers in Contra Costa County. The award winners are selected each year from teachers nominated by teaching colleagues, principals, parents and students. The Eukel Teacher Trust is funded by contributions from area businesses and community members. Since its inception in 1992, the Eukel Teacher Trust has made cash awards totaling over \$540,000 to 64 Contra Costa County teachers.

Tickets for the dinner are \$175 per person (of which \$87.50 is a tax-deductible contribution) or \$1,750 for a table of 10. For further information or to purchase tickets, call (925) 945-0200 or visit [www.eukelteachertrust.org](http://www.eukelteachertrust.org).

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## Cultural Differences Add to Lamorinda's Tapestry

... continued from page B3

She says that her husband is eager to go back to South Korea at the end of 2015. "The family ties are very strong in Korea," she says.

Kim feels that she has been changed forever by the expatriation; it opened her mind, not only about Western ways, but also about other Asian countries and people. Kim was a journalist in South Korea, and she's been sharing her thoughts with her friends in a blog. She thinks her kids are also enjoying the environment, but thinks when they go back, they might have a shock as to the amount of work that will be asked of them. They already have additional schooling with Kim teaching them Korean after school.

Additional schooling is very popular among Yue Li's family as well. "It is a common problem for parents like us who came from China, that our children are more American than Chinese," says Yue Li, "so every Saturday I take them to Chinese school in Pleasanton for two hours." Her elementary school age children have also practiced Chinese 40 minutes daily for the past three years. "Sometimes I wonder if I am being a Tiger Mom," says Yue Li with a smile, "but Chinese language and piano are the two things I don't want them to quit."

Campolindo High School sophomore Austen Li, from a different Li family in Lamorinda, went to Chinese

school for a while, but says he didn't do the homework. "And now I regret not maintaining the bilingualism," he says. His sister Anya, a freshman, adds that they understand when their parents speak Mandarin to them, but that they respond in English. "At home the cultures are clumped together," she says.

As with other cultures, food is a link they share with friends, especially during the holidays. "We do get together with Chinese friends for Chinese New Year, share food and catch up," says their father, Zhan Li, dean of the School of Economics and Business Administration at Saint Mary's College. "We also used to play cards or sing Karaoke."

Both Austen and Anya say their friends, who come from a variety of backgrounds, are important, but that the link with their family comes first.

Their father says, "This is a great place for any minority group to really get involved in the American culture." He notes how technology is changing the communication landscape. Li belongs to the online app, WeChat, where a Lamorinda group formed. He noticed that since he joined that chat he pays more attention to Chinese news; it made him more connected to his roots and up to date with what's happening. "Deep down, we are still Asian and

we do not want to lose our roots," says Li. "My wife and I are the cultural bridge generation."

Sharron Sue is a third generation American whose grandparents came from the Canton Province of southern China and her husband is of Japanese ancestry. She does not speak Chinese or Japanese but her family maintains traditions and celebrations, such as Japanese-inspired events advertised in the Nichi Bei Weekly ([nichibeijournal.com](http://nichibeijournal.com)). Sue formed the Lamorinda Asian-American Club in 1996 with other friends of Asian descent. "We started the club to be a place for Asian-Americans to discuss common issues, cultural differences, civic involvement, and build a community," she says. At the time most members had kids in local schools and discussed classes, then college applications became the hot topic. The group also started an annual golf tournament to raise funds for different causes. "We bought books for the school libraries to promote diversity," she says. "We wanted kids going to the school libraries to see pictures of kids that looked like them or were in similar situations, doing normal things in everyday life."

The Lamorinda Asian-American Club also organizes culturally relevant activities such as a recent Kimchi workshop. For more information on the club, contact Sue at [nssue@aol.com](mailto:nssue@aol.com).



# A Love Affair with Words

By Diane Claytor



Lafayette resident and author Roberta Palumbo

**R**oberta Palumbo loves words. She loves the written word and the spoken word. She loves reading the words and writing them. "I simply love the sound and rhythm of language," she said.

For 32 years, the Lafayette resident was a professor of literature at Holy Names University, the same Oakland university from which she graduated. She also developed and then directed the school's four year, across-the-curriculum writing program. Fifteen years ago, Palumbo retired. It appears that her life then became even busier.

While at Holy Names, Palumbo's specialty was E.M. Forester, the English novelist best known for "A Room with a View" and "A Passage to India." A frequent lecturer on Forester and his works, she continued as a

guest speaker after she retired. "I now had time to do other stuff," she said, and decided to include Forester's friend, Virginia Woolf, the English writer and "one of the foremost modernists of the 20th century," to her lectures. From there, Palumbo just kept adding to her repertoire.

An avid reader of biographies, Palumbo felt Woolf's husband, Leonard, often "got a bad rap." So she decided to write something to "help Leonard gain his self-esteem." Having seen A.R. Gurney's play, "Love Letters," Palumbo was inspired. She wrote a one act play based on real letters written by both Virginia and Leonard Woolf. "I don't know what got into me," Palumbo said. "I had no background in drama." But that didn't stop this woman who definitely likes a challenge. The play was performed at the annual International Virginia Woolf Society Conference and the 2008 Fringe Festival of Marin, a medium for new works. She wrote a second play about Virginia Woolf and again it was performed at the International Virginia Woolf Society Conference.

"The plays were well received. I figured I must be doing something right," Palumbo stated. "And I was certainly having a lot of fun." So she continued, moving on to Robert and Elizabeth Barrett Browning, two of the most prominent English poets of

the Victorian era. Using letters written by the Brownings, Palumbo wrote another one act play, "Not Death, But Love," depicting the Brownings' 20-month secret courtship in the 1840s. And this time, she directed the production that was submitted to the 2013 Fringe Festival of Marin. To Palumbo's surprise, she won best director; Molly McCarthy, portraying Elizabeth Barrett-Browning, won best actress; and the play beat out 11 others to garner the best play award.

Now the question was what should Palumbo do next. "People who saw the play about the Brownings were always asking me what happens next," she noted. "So I decided to continue the story on through their marriage."

Research on an upcoming trip to Italy led Palumbo to discover that Casa Guidi, the house the Brownings had lived in for 14 years in Florence, was now not only a museum honoring the poets but a lodging facility. "The rooms had been restored, furnishings were reproduced. Spending more than I probably should have, I immediately booked the room," Palumbo said. When she mentioned that she had authored a play about the Brownings, the reservation agent asked that she bring a copy for their library. "That meant I had to get something printed and it had to look professional." This presented the per-



The Brownings' drawing room at Casa Guidi with a facsimile of Elizabeth's low green deck chair where she often sat and composed her poetry.

Photos provided

fect opportunity to complete the story and turn it into a novella, "Robert and Elizabeth: Two Voices, One Love," described by Palumbo as a "memoir of a marriage, written by two soul mates."

"To tell this legendary love story," Palumbo explained, "I read over 500 letters and 30 biographies, choosing and condensing events and creating a narrative depicting the conflicts, difficulties and joys of Robert and Elizabeth's relationship. It's an intimate look at their life and love. By integrating my words with theirs, the language is less formal and easier to understand," she said.

With the help of Lafayette's Big Hat Press, the book was published and a copy now sits in the library of Casa Guidi. It's also available to purchase online and at Diablo Rapid Press.

Palumbo's next project is turning Robert and Elizabeth's life together into an audio drama. She said she "loves playing with the text, creating drama, thinking about inserting music and sound effects."

This retired teacher has not slowed down; she's still teaching, she said, "about literary history and more importantly, about human nature."

## Lynn's Top Five

# What's so special about a Special Needs Trust?

By Lynn Ballou, CFP®

**A**ccording to the 2010 U.S. Census, nearly one in five Americans has a disability. While some are able to work and support themselves, many others depend on public benefits for their health care and very basic needs. A well-meaning family member or friend who wants to provide financial assistance, housing or food to a person who receives public benefits risks compromising or completely undermining the benefits eligibility of the very person they are trying to help. This is where a special needs trust comes in. The special needs trust is an estate planning tool that allows a family or friend to provide assistance to a person with a disability without interfering with that person's eligibility for public benefits – if that trust is properly drafted.

As you might imagine, this is a highly technical area of estate planning law. We are fortunate that local attorney, Polly Levin, an estate planning attorney whose focus is this specialty, practices in Walnut Creek. She kindly agreed to lend a hand to this column to shine a light on the issues surrounding this topic that you need to think about. Here are five of the most important elements to consider when establishing a Special Needs Trust (SNT).

**1) Is a Special Needs Trust necessary?** Polly's advice is that "if the family is planning for a child who is still young and it is unclear what her or his capabilities will be at adulthood, I recommend setting up a SNT." She adds, if not needed, it is revocable during the parents' lifetimes.

**2) Choice of Trustee.** Family member? Professional Fiduciary? Polly cautions that this is one of the most critical considerations, advising that, "Parents need to consider that the trustee will be charged with doing everything that the parent does for the child, which is generally a lot. I know of many families where the mother (usually) has stepped back from her career in order to be available to care and advocate for the child who has a disability. People generally assume that a family member will be willing to take over this huge role. Sometimes, the job of trustee can be split between two family members: one who will handle the financial issues and the other who handles the care issues. But more often than not, there are no family members who are available to take on this task. In that case, there are people who manage special needs trusts as a profession. They are called 'private professional fiduciaries,' they are licensed by the State, and the Private Professional Fiduciary (PPF) Association of California, which has a web-

site."\* Polly strongly suggests to her clients that they interview a number of qualified professionals who have experience specifically in this field to see if they can find someone who they think would be a good fit. She also cautions, "The other issue is whether that person will still be around once the parents are gone. There are a few PPFs who have a large enough organization and a succession plan, but it is crucial to build a system into the trust for removing and replacing a PPF trustee."

**3) Where will the child with a disability live after the parents are gone?** Many issues have to be considered including if the child can afford to stay in the parent's home and what this means to all the other siblings regarding an equitable estate split. And a huge issue, Polly mentions, is: "Can the disabled child get the support needed if he or she continues to live in the home? Alternatively, can the parents set the child up in an independent living situation with appropriate support?" In essence, what's affordable, what's realistic – issues that should not be glossed over without in-depth consideration.

**4) Costs. What's involved?** Interestingly, it's typically not the price of setting up the specialized estate plan that's daunting, but the on-going costs to administer it during the life of the disabled child. Polly notes: "A small trust cannot indefinitely support having a PPF as trustee, which is often an issue because not every family has a large family support system to oversee and help with the day to day care of the child who is disabled." She notes that PPFs either charge a percentage of the assets under management (usually around 1 percent), or on an hourly basis. However, even with a small estate, some protection of benefits is better than none, so a SNT is still helpful for however long it lasts because it preserves eligibility for government benefits. A family with limited resources might develop a plan that involves a coordinated effort of family and friends who are willing to serve in some limited roles for little or no compensation alongside professionals who can do the more technical work and will need to be paid.

**5) How to modify your estate plan to include a SNT for a child.** Most of you grappling with this issue may already have a well-crafted estate plan in place, but for a variety of reasons have come to a cross-roads in your family planning where you see that the need to protect a child has become an increasingly prominent part of your thinking. Most estate planning attorneys are very open to letting you know

that SNT planning is not an area of expertise for them, and they instead collaborate with those for whom this is a specialty. Some will continue to manage your estate plan and have someone with Polly's expertise expand on this newer part of the plan. Others will simply advise you to work solely with an estate planning attorney with a SNT specialty and will advise that they transfer to them your entire planning process.

There are no easy answers for those of you facing these tough choices of balancing available and crucial government benefits and the needs of a family member with a disability alongside potential future family asset availability. Surrounding yourself with an expert team of financial and estate planning advisors who can collaborate with you and your family will go a long way toward giving you some peace of mind. Staying current and communicating with your team will be an important part of this process, too, because this field continues to evolve as government funding and estate planning changes come into play. The following resources were referenced above and I hope you find them helpful.

**2010 United States Census:**  
<http://www.census.gov/newroom/releases/archives/miscellaneous/cb12-134.html>

**Private Professional Fiduciary Association of California:**  
<http://www.pfac-pro.org/whatis.php>



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## Community Service

### Local Middle School Winners of Lions International Peace Contest Announced

Submitted by Bob Murtagh



From left: Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School art teacher Moose Wesler, Kate Dendinger, Nadia Alcantara and Erin Thomas



From left: Claire Jenkins, Stanley Middle School art teacher Robert Anke, Mia Travis, and Sabrina Lin



From left: Orinda Intermediate School art teacher Susan Weiss, Michelle Tang, Abigail Miller, Shaune Lundstrom, and Lion Bob Murtagh

More than 375,000 students, ages 11-13, will compete in the 27th annual Lions International Peace Contest which emphasizes the importance of world peace to young people everywhere.

The Lamorinda Lions Club hosted the local portion of the contest at all three middle schools in the Lamorinda area. A total of 280 students submitted posters and the local winners were awarded their prizes on Nov. 5. The winners were selected for originality, artistic merit and portrayal of the contest theme, "Peace, Love, and Understanding."

#### The winners are:

**Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School:** Kate Dendinger, Nadia Alcantara, and Erin Thomas

**Stanley Middle School:** Mia Travis, Claire Jenkins, and Sabrina Lin

**Orinda Intermediate School:** Shaune Lundstrom, Abigail Miller, and Michelle Tang

The winners will face stiff competition through the district, multiple district and international rounds of competition. One grand prize winner and 23 merit award winners will be selected. Many of the posters will be on display through January at the Lafayette, Moraga, and Orinda libraries.

The Lamorinda Lions Club is one of 46,000 worldwide. In addition to efforts toward conquering blindness, the club has made a strong commitment to community service and helping youth throughout the area. For more information about Lions activity, contact Bob Murtagh at (925) 283 1841.

## Donation Requests from the Community

*'Tis the Season of Giving*

### Lafayette Rotary Club Coat Drive

Every year the Lafayette Rotary Club is collecting gently used coats to donate to Shelter Inc. of Contra Costa. At a recent Rotary meeting Executive Director Timothy O'Keefe pointed out how important the Rotary coat drive is every year at the start of the cold season to serve many homeless community members with warm clothing. This year the club is inviting the community to bring gently used coats (adult or kids sizes) to the following locations in Lafayette: Blodgett's Abbey Carpet & Flooring, 3291 Mt Diablo Ct., Lafayette, and the Lafayette Chamber of Commerce, 100 Lafayette Circle, Ste. 103, Lafayette.

### Need Donations?

During the holiday season, Lamorinda Weekly will accept and publish opportunities for local giving. Please send 100 words or less describing the cause, type of donation needed, and where to bring/send it. The organization collecting the donations, or receiving the donations, should be within our extended community. Submissions must be sent to [storydesk@lamorindaweekly.com](mailto:storydesk@lamorindaweekly.com) by Dec. 12 for inclusion in our Dec. 18 issue. Include "Season of Giving" in the subject line.

## Community Service

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](mailto:storydesk@lamorindaweekly.com) with the subject header In Service to the Community.

### Orinda Academy Food Drive at Orindawoods a Huge Success

Submitted by Miriam Shaffer



Orinda Academy ninth graders, from left, Malaya Phelps, Virginia Clark, Yusra Khan, and Humah Sultani, display the food they gathered for Orinda Academy's food drive for the Contra Costa Food Bank. Photo provided

Ninth grade students at Orinda Academy collected over 40 bags of food during an October food drive at Orindawoods, a com-

munity of 258 residences neighboring the school. The food collected was donated to the Contra Costa Food Bank.

Students Malaya Phelps, Virginia Clark, Yusra Khan, and Humah Sultani participated in the food drive. All are members of Orinda Academy's community service club. Teachers Chris Booth and Elizabeth Martinez directed the project. To obtain donations, empty bags were placed at the doorsteps of Orindawoods residences with information about the drive.

"We are extremely appreciative and thank Orindawoods homeowners for their generosity. Our community benefits and grows stronger as a result of their actions," says Elizabeth Jurado, Spanish teacher and co-leader of the community action group at Orinda Academy.

### Girl Scouts Help Cambodian Family Get a Well

Submitted by Erica Kain



Girl Scout Troop 30859 members at a recent outdoor event Photo provided

Thirteen girls in Girl Scout Troop 30859 from Sleepy Hollow Elementary School in Orinda, as well as the Jewish Day School in Lafayette spent a year on a "Water Journey" through Girl Scouts, learning how to conserve and respect water. Ksenija Soster Olmer, the vice president of Cambodian Child's Dream Organization Inc., visited with the fourth-grade girls and explained what it is like for girls in developing countries to have to bring water to

their families, and how much a well can help a family in Cambodia. The girls raised \$250 through their cookie sales, which covered the cost to construct a well for one Cambodian family.

"They learned a great deal about how lucky we are to have sinks that provide us with potable water, and how so many girls in the world must work to collect water for their families while caring for siblings at the same time," said Erica Kain. "As part of

this work, they went on a 'water hunt' where they had to seek out safe water sources and carry quantities of water back for their families - along the way they encountered dried-up wells and unsafe water sources before finding fresh water; then they had to carry dolls while carrying buckets in their arms or on their heads, without spilling the water, back to their family."

In addition, the girls gave a presentation about water usage at Sleepy Hollow. "The girls wrote the scripts and created the props all on their own, and they also created posters to put up around school to reinforce the messages in their water conservation skits," said Kain. The messages included: taking shorter showers, identifying and fixing leaks they find, not washing your car in the driveway, not watering your lawn during the hottest part of the day, and turning off the tap when brushing your teeth.

"The girls were very well-informed when they sold the cookies at their booths, proudly explaining their mission," added Kain. "They had previously used their cookie money to help fund a library in Ethiopia, and they are always very excited to tell others about them."

### Boy Scouts Visit Atria Lafayette on Veteran's Day

Submitted by Rochelle Holbrook



Photo provided

Boy Scouts from Troop 200 visited residents of Atria Lafayette on Nov. 11, performing

a flag folding ceremony while a bugler played "Taps" to commemorate Veteran's Day.



# Elementary Students Focus on Being Mindful

By Sophie Braccini



Students in Millie Tang's fourth grade class at Los Perales Elementary School practice deep breathing. Photo Andy Scheck

When Lucy Dendinger decided to become the chairperson of the Los Perales Elementary School PTA Red Ribbon Committee in Moraga, she had no idea where that would lead. Now after four years, the Lamorinda school has pioneered a practice of mindfulness with students that could change how they deal with stress in the future.

"When I took over the Red Ribbon program for the Los Perales PTA, I asked myself what we were trying to teach the children," remembers Dendinger. "A friend of mine, Lynn Esquer, a psychologist, told me about a book, '10 Mindful Minutes: Giving Our Children – and Ourselves – the Social and Emotional Skills to Reduce Stress and Anxiety for Healthier, Happier Lives,' by Goldie Hawn. Inspired by that book, I thought that we could give the children tools to make the right choices themselves, rather than telling them what these choices were. Such a practice would empower them for the future, especially in our community where they are so stressed."

What the children are taught during Mindful Choices week is to breathe deeply and practice awareness of their senses in order to live in the moment and make good choices "Before you make that quick decision on the playground and perhaps a conflict, or before a test, you pause, you breathe and you notice," says Dendinger. The LP mom says the deep breathing has a physiological effect on the brain.

"Today was a good day to talk about it," said Dendinger's 10-year-old daughter Anna. "We had two tests, one of them a math chapter test. I deep breathed before the test, and I think that I did very well." The LP fourth grader simply sits in her chair

palms up on her knees; she bows her head or closes her eyes and breathes deeply for a little while. She says that she uses it when she has difficulty falling asleep, and even more impressively, she says that if she gets hurt, she will breathe deeply for a few seconds to stop crying.

"As a teacher who has been using the deep breathing myself, I use it with my students when they come in from an event that they need to refocus back to a calming environment – like [after the] Halloween parade, we had to regroup and switch back to work mode," said Los Perales fourth grade teacher Millie Tang. "I use it when we need to pause and switch to another big task, before a big assessment I take them through the process, at this point, the classroom is quiet, calm and they're ready to move forward." Tang also uses the process when the kids are overly anxious in general – having a heated discussion or are unhappy about an issue.

The Hawn Foundation conducted years of research about how to help children cope with stress and anxiety in the wake of 9/11. "The foundation has done extensive research over the last 10 years on teaching children skills to manage stress and help them be optimistic and happy," says Dendinger. A publication by the foundation reports that children who participate in deep breathing practice have better reading scores, less absenteeism, a 25 percent reduction in aggression on playgrounds, better attention and more concentration, quicker reactivity in answering questions and responding to teachers, better interpersonal relationships, an improved ability to manage stress, and a 63 percent rise in optimism.

Dendinger asked a group of

mothers to read the book, as well as her friends Esquer and Maura Wolf from the Saint Mary's Leadership Center, and involved them in a collaborative process to design the curriculum. "We started four years ago with a five-day curriculum," explains Dendinger.

The first day talks about the brain. "They learn about the 'Guard Dog' (amygdala) and the 'Wise Old Owl' (prefrontal cortex); and how deep breathing can help calm the 'dog' so that the 'owl' can think and remember clearly," explains Dendinger. The second day is about mindful eating and tasting. The children are asked to take a little piece of food, like a raisin, look at it, smell it, very slowly chew it and notice all the flavors that emerge as they do. "It's mindful eating instead of mouthful eating," says Dendinger. The third day is about practicing deep breathing and noticing how it helps calm the brain and make better choices. On the fourth day the children practice mindful listening, pay attention to what is going on in their environment, and discuss how the awareness of what is going on can help make good choices. "On Friday the children get a 'mindful stone' – polished colorful stones with a note recommending to put the stone in a place where they will be reminded to pause, breathe deeply and notice," says Dendinger.

Dendinger says that the parents and the school have been very supportive. She has formalized the curriculum and she says she is ready to pass it on to other schools if they want to use it and improve upon it.

"If we could get this practice into all three elementary schools can you imagine the calming effect we will have, town-wise?" said Tang.

# Lamorinda's Specialties of the House Soup's On!

By Amanda Kuehn Carroll

November is upon us and at long last the evenings have cooled to a proper fall temperature. It's chili weather. Chowder weather. Bisque and broth and bouillon weather. If the nip in the air has you hungering for something that simmers, Lamorinda has you covered.

Tucked inside a complex of office buildings, on a hill that meanders just off of Mt. Diablo Boulevard behind the Veteran's Memorial Center, **Fiona's Pantry** is a hidden gem that is worth an afternoon treasure hunt. Current construction



Chicken and Veggie with Cheese Tortellini from Fiona's Pantry

detours make the trip a bit tricky, but if you can get yourself into 3732 and find your way to suite 170, you'll reach a haven of a café that offers fresh soups daily. When asked what sort of soups Fiona's serves, owner Ferdinand Eres paused. "I'm drawing a blank," he remarked with a chuckle. He called on a co-worker and a customer and together the three compiled an impressively diverse list of savory substances. From a traditional chicken noodle to Italian sausage and kale, a zuppa toscana to artichoke and asparagus, all of Fiona's soups are made from scratch. There's also egg drop soup, chicken pot pie soup, tamarind, pesto and tomato bisque with cheese tortellini. One of the most popular has been the Thai coconut chicken. A sample of the chicken and veggie proved to be simple but satisfying, with large chunks of chicken swimming in a savory spicy broth. To finish things off, all first time customers are given one of Fiona's famous cookies free of charge, making a trip to the pantry well worth the hunting. Fiona's is located at 3732 Mt Diablo Blvd., Lafayette, (925) 283-1444.

As an appetizer or an entrée, Shelby's house-made soups are always created from scratch. With large bay windows and a corner spot on Orinda's Theatre Square, **Shelby's** offers a classy take on French-California bistro cuisine. Their chicken and vegetable soup offers the feel-good taste



Chicken and Vegetable Soup at Shelby's Photos A.K. Carroll

of childhood, soft chunks of cabbage and slips of potato swirling with the carrots and onions of a French pot-au-feu. Seasoned with the slightest hint of kefir lime, it is a surprisingly well-rounded bowlful. Shelby's also offers a vegetarian chili, mildly seasoned and packed full of hearty beans. Shelby's is located at 2 Theatre Square in Orinda, (925) 254-9687.

If you're up for some ethnic flair when it comes to soup-type soothing, the pho at Little Hearty Noodle might just hit the spot. Though the ambiance of the restaurant lacks the color and space you'd expect for a dine-in experience, with 17 varieties of "noodles and broth" you're sure to find something to suit your palate's preferences. Carry out is a snap, and comes highly recommended for a cozy night home. **Little Hearty Noodle** is located at 578 Center Street in Moraga, (925) 376-7600.

# Local Teens Celebrate Three Years on Radio

Submitted by Cynthia Brian



From left: Express Yourself radio hosts Caiseen Kelley and Henna Hundal Photo Cynthia Brian

The internationally broadcast radio program, Express Yourself, will celebrate its third year on Nov. 21. Launched in 2011 on the Voice America Kids Network as an outreach service of the Moraga non-profit, Be the Star You Are (www.BTSYA.org) with five local youth, the program has become the top-rated program in the world on the network and now boasts 30 reporters and hosts from around the country.

"Working on Express Yourself has honed my skills as a journalist to effectively report on a vast variety of topics," said local teen host Henna Hundal. "I can now not only discuss fun topics like favorite books or the

latest teen trends, but I'm also able to talk about the tough issues like bullying and domestic violence. Through the show, I've learned how to carefully probe these tough topics by having my curiosity and inquisitiveness tempered with empathy and care."

Miramonte High School student Caiseen Kelley, a host, guest coordinator, and the Techy Talk reporter for the program, said this has been "the opportunity of a lifetime. This is a unique chance to get unedited opinions from, for, and by youth expressed around the world. Express Yourself lives up to its motto of *Where teens talk and the world listens.*"

Steven Zhou, a Miramonte graduate now studying at Pepperdine University is thrilled to know that the efforts he began in high school as the show's first host and administrator are still going strong. Produced by Starstyle Productions, the program broadcasts at noon every Tuesday on the Voice America Kids Network to 132 countries. Photos, descriptions, links, and archives of the shows are available at www.ExpressYourself-TeenRadio.com.

For local youth interested in getting involved, send an email to the producer, [btsyateenradio@gmail.com](mailto:btsyateenradio@gmail.com).

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## Lamorinda's Religious Services



### Lafayette United Methodist Church

955 Moraga Rd., Lafayette,  
284-4765, office@thelumc.org

Worship	Sunday	10 am
Children & Teen Faith Formation	Sunday	10 am
Teen Fellowship	Sunday	6 pm
Study Groups, Service Opportunities	Various	
Free Community Luncheon	4th Sunday of Month	11:30 am

► **SUNDAY Worship**, 9:00 & 11:00 AM,  
with programs for 3-mos.-12th grade.

► **SEEDLINGS Preschool**, M-F.

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### ORINDA CHRISTIAN SCIENCE CHURCH

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www.christianscienceorinda.org



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10:15am Pre-Service Fellowship (Free Coffee & Bagels)  
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Wednesdays: 10:00am Community Bible Study

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www.willowspringchurch.net

### Holy Shepherd Lutheran Church

433 Moraga Way, Orinda, 254-3422  
www.holy shepherd.org



8:30 a.m. Traditions Worship Service  
9:50 a.m. Education for all ages  
10:45 a.m. Contemporary Worship Service  
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Sunday School 10:00 a.m

### St. Anselm's Episcopal Church

A Loving Community

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In-church Youth Zone, 10 AM Nursery Childcare  
682 Michael Lane, Lafayette, 284-7420, www.stanselms.ws

## ◆ Not to be missed ◆ Not to be missed ◆

### ART

The Moraga Art Gallery's new show entitled "Waters of the Koi" highlights the bright, colorful abstract paintings of Heather Metcalf, and the exquisitely turned-wood platters, bowls and vases of Jacques Blumer. The show will run through Jan. 11, 2015. The gallery is open Wednesday through Sunday from noon to 5 p.m. For more info, visit www.moragaart-gallery.com or call (925) 376-5407.

The Bancroft Library Gallery presents "California: Captured on Canvas" – an exhibit of 43 remarkable paintings from the library's collection highlighting the state's history and culture that have drawn people to California from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. through March 6, 2015, UC Berkeley Campus, Doe Library Annex.

"Quilts in Jest" – A time-honored craft wittily transformed into social commentary by fiber artist Phyllis Kluger at the Walnut Creek Public Library Community Art Gallery, 1644 N. Broadway, Walnut Creek. The show runs from Nov. 19 through Jan. 15 with an opening reception from 6 to 8 p.m. Wednesday, Nov. 19. For info, visit bedfordgallery.org/exhibitions/cag.shtml or call (925) 977-3340.

Four exhibitions at Saint Mary's College Museum of Art: "Pueblo to Pueblo: The Legacy of Southwest Indian Pottery" will feature a remarkable variety of pottery from mid-19th to the mid-20th century; "The Native American Collection of Roger Epperson;" "Grace Hudson: Painter of the Pomo People;" and "William Keith and the Native American." Museum hours are Wednesday through Sunday, 11 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Admission: Adults \$5; members and K-12 graders free (parking free). For info, call (925) 631-4379 or visit stmarys-ca.edu/museum.

### MUSIC

Treat yourself to a lively concert of up-tempo numbers, dance tunes, and instrumental and vocal jazz soloists of the SMC Jazz band under the direction of maestro John Maltester at 8 p.m. Thursday, Nov. 20, and 4 p.m. Friday, Nov. 21 at the Soda Activity Center, 1928 Saint Mary's Road, Moraga. Tickets are sold at the door: \$5 general; \$2 SMC community and seniors.

Voci Women's Vocal Ensemble, directed by Dr. Anne Hege, presents "Voices in Peace XIII: Birth and Beginnings," an exploration of the power and fragility of beginnings. Selections from Gustav Holst's Choral Hymns from the Rig Veda, as well as works by Ysaye Barnwell, Claude Debussy, Pekka Kostiainn, Jude Navari, Arvo Pärt, Karin Rehnqvist, Hector Villalobos and others portray the magical energy found in dawn, birth, and transitions at 2 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 22 at St. Perpetua Catholic Church, 3445 Hamlin Road, Lafayette. Tickets: \$25 suggested donation at the door; \$20 advance; \$15 students; free for children 6-12 years old. For info, visit www.vocisings.com or call (510) 531-8714.

Saint Mary's student singers perform opera, classical and Broadway songs under the direction of Donna Olson that are sometimes tender, sometimes comic but always affecting, at 4 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 22, and Sunday, Nov. 23 at the Soda Activity Center: Claeys Lounge, 1928 Saint Mary's Road, Moraga. Free.

Amici Lyric Opera performance by renowned Bay Area dramatic soprano Elena Yakoubovsky, in partnership with pianist Simona Snitkovsky at 3 p.m. Sunday, Nov. 23 at the Lafayette Library Community Hall. The program features beloved Russian songs. To view a live performance by Miss Yakoubovsky, visit You Tube or www.elenayakoubovsky.com. Tickets: \$25 General, children under 12 free. Box Office: (800) 838-3006 or online www.brownpapertickets.com/event/917232.

A community sing of Handel's Messiah will be held at 7:30 p.m. Friday, Dec. 5 at Orinda's St. Stephen's Episcopal Church. The Sing will be directed by Minister of Music Robert Train Adams, with Festival Choir, soloists and chamber orchestra. This

event is free, with an offering taken for the Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano Counties. Childcare is available by reservation. For more information contact the church at office@ststephenorinda.org or (925) 254-3770, ext. 10.

The Diablo Women's Chorale presents "Holiday Sweet" – a luscious confection of seasonal and vintage pop music – at 7:30 p.m. Friday, Dec. 12 and 2 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 13 at Mt. Diablo Universalist Unitarian Church, 55 Eckley Lane, Walnut Creek. The holiday performance is directed by Mary Sorenson and accompanied by Stephen Evans. Advance tickets: \$10 students; \$16 general admission; \$20 premium seating at www.diablowomenschorale.org or call (800) 838-3006. Tickets at the door: \$20 general admission; \$10 students.

### HOLIDAY EVENTS

The 36rd Annual Community Thanksgiving Breakfast will be held from 7 to 8:30 a.m. Friday, Nov. 21 at Our Saviors Lutheran Church, 1035 Carol Lane in Lafayette. M.J. Marggraff (Author, Speaker, Virgin galactic Spaceflight) is this year's featured guest speaker. Reservations can be made by calling the Lafayette Chamber of Commerce at (925) 284-7404 or online at www.lafayettechamber.org. Cost: \$20 per person.

It's a Wonderful Life! Come celebrate the holidays with tree lighting, food, drinks, music and entertainment, children's activities, and Santa from 4 to 7 p.m. Friday, Dec. 5 at Lafayette's Plaza Park.

Hospice Orinda Tree of Lights at 4:30 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 6, at in Orinda Village parking lot by Bank of America. This ceremony is part of Orinda's community holiday celebration.

Winter Wonderland at Orinda Theatre Square. Real Snow Wonderland - Build Your Own Snowman starting at noon until the snow melts Saturday, Dec. 6, with a kids ornament workshop from 4 to 6 p.m. Then on Saturday, Dec. 13, from 5 to 7 p.m. enjoy visits from Santa around the Square, horse and carriage rides, holiday performances by Lamorinda Theatre Academy, free hot chocolate and gourmet coffee drinks, and a merry and bright close to the evening with a tree lighting at 7 p.m.

### KIDS, FAMILY & TEENS

The Central Contra Costa Solid Waste Authority (CCCSWA) has created a new scholarship for high school students who are implementing waste reduction and recycling programs on their high school campuses. Up to three scholarships (\$4,000 each) will be awarded to high school seniors entering college next fall. Please contact Ruth Abbe or Nancy Deming for more information about the program: Ruth.Abbe@abbeassociates.com (925) 974-2575/ nancyldeming@gmail.com (510) 290-4875.

### LECTURE & LITERATURE

SMC Creative Writing Reading Series presents Aviya Kushner at 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, Nov. 19 in the Soda Center, Claeys Lounge. Kushner's first book, "The Grammar of God," about the experience of reading the Bible in English after a lifetime of reading it in Hebrew. Kushner teaches in the MFA program in nonfiction at Columbia College Chicago and is a contributing editor at A Public Space.

Lamorinda Sunrise Rotary Speaker. Daniel Borenstein, a columnist and editorial writer for the Contra Costa Times and Oakland Tribune, and proven watchdog for consumers providing in depth reporting on politicians, education and especially pension reform will discuss "Pension Underfunding – An Update" at 7 a.m. Friday, Nov. 21 at the Lafayette Park Hotel. Borenstein has spent countless hours deciphering the complex pension rules and regulations and how different agencies/people are abusing them and causing enormous underfunded pension liabilities. He will

offer a current analysis of the pension underfunding situation. For info, visit www.lamorindasunrise.org.

### THEATER

The California Academy of Performing Arts presentation of "The Nutcracker" at the Campolindo Performing Arts Center Dec. 17-21. This family favorite is a feast for the eyes, filled with surprises and delights for all ages. The story is narrated as it unfolds, guiding young viewers through the beautiful ballet and making it much more enjoyable for little ones (and grown-ups) who might not be familiar with the timeless story of Clara and her magical Christmas Eve dream. This production is huge, with more than 100 local performers. Tickets for the general public (\$22) can be purchased at Eventbrite.com. For more info, visit www.capadance.net.

### OTHER

Social Media Strategies Workshop Series – Building a Strong Local Network in a Social Media World will highlight local opportunities for forging new connections and how social media can build upon those face to face interactions at 8 a.m. Wednesday, Nov. 19 at the Lafayette Library.

Saint Mary's Dance Company presents "Solidarity" at 8 p.m. Nov. 20, 21 and 22, featuring choreography by graduating seniors examining our sense of solidarity – all of us together in our shared struggles, triumphs and community – sometimes tenuous, sometimes palpable at LeFevre Theatre, Theatre, 1928 Saint Mary's Road, Moraga. Tickets will be sold at the door: \$5 general; seniors, and non-SMC students.

Orinda Community Event - Over 45 unique vendors from holiday decorations, hats and scarves, pottery, custom-made quilts, jewelry and much, much more! Free Santa visits, Scooter the clown, and children's activities from 9:30 a.m. to 4:40 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 22 Orinda Community Center, 28 Orinda Way. Questions? Call the Orinda Community Center at (925) 254-2445.

Kittens, Kittens, Kittens! Come see our beautiful babies at weekly adoption events on Saturday, Nov. 22 from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. and Sunday from 1 to 4 p.m. at Pet Food Express in Lafayette, 3610 Mt. Diablo Blvd. See torties, tabbies, tux's, orange guys, grey ones, Siamese, calicos, and black beauties. Love comes in all sizes; big cats are available for adoption, too. Kittens are also shown at Pet Food Express in Pleasant Hill and Petco in Walnut Creek. For info, visit www.communityconcernforcats.org.

Voices Against Brain Cancer, a national nonprofit organization committed to finding a cure for brain cancer, is set to host its inaugural "Join the Voices! San Francisco Run/Walk" at 8 a.m. Sunday, Nov. 23 at Golden Gate Park. Voices Against Brain Cancer hopes to create greater national awareness and ultimately find a cure. For more info, go to www.jointhevoices-sanfrancisco.org. Registration begins at 8 a.m. with a 9 a.m. start time.

The Berkeley Architectural Heritage Association will hold its 40th Anniversary Celebration marking 40 years of preservation advocacy, education, and activism from 2 to 4 p.m. Sunday, Nov. 23 at the First Church of Christ, Scientist, 2619 Dwight Way, Berkeley. A reception will follow in the Fireside Room. Reserve your seat by email at baha@berkeleyheritage.com, or call (510) 841-2242. Free.

Join Valley Stitches and Fiber Artists Guild members for a luncheon where members provide the salads and the board provides desserts. There's always food to share with guests. And you have the bonus of members showing off their talents along with a surprise to all. Doors open for a little shopping at 9:30 a.m., and the meeting starts at 10 a.m. Monday, Dec. 1 at Faith Lutheran Church at 50 Woodworth Lane, Pleasant Hill. For info, call Sheila at (925) 945-1338.

please...



...thanks



**MOVIE REVIEW**

# 'Interstellar'

By Leonard Pirkle



The space and time travel epic "Interstellar," this year's "Gravity," is well worth seeing in a large theater with an audience – the true cinematic experience. Potentially not the best movie of the year on some lists, this film is definitely the most ambitious and visually impactful to come out in a long time. It is important to see "Interstellar" on the large screen; if you choose to wait until it comes out for home viewing you will likely not appreciate it

to the level that it deserves. I loved it and would highly recommend this film. The acting led by Matthew McConaughey, Jessica Chastain and Anne Hathaway is superb and the visual landscape is striking and appears to go on forever – much like the vastness of space.

A story that was originally tied to Steven Spielberg, it has been worked and reworked over the last few years by Christopher Nolan (also the director) and his brother Jonathan Nolan. Both are known for the Dark Knight Trilogy as well as "The Prestige and Memento" – all top shelf films. The common complaint is that the film seems like two stories jammed together. I believe that is part of its complexity – a layered film that hits on multiple levels. A space journey that has not left behind the human aspect in its eagerness to leave Earth, it brings home the harsh and desperate realities of those left behind.

The initial reviews of this film are mixed; I recommend you see it and make your own decisions. I can honestly state that I have thought about this film over the last week since first screening and it has only piqued my interest to see it again. It has raised questions and I am eager to experience some of the more nuanced aspects with a second viewing. This film has been aligned with "2001 A Space Odyssey" – a film that was also initially received with mixed reviews. Now the film appears on most top film lists and is No. 22 on the American Film Institute's (AFI) top 100 Greatest American Movies. Time will tell if "Interstellar" makes this list – I would not be surprised, with sufficient seasoning, to see this film become a classic.

Image provided

## Not to be missed

### OTHER ... continued

**Moraga Movers Holiday Luncheon at Saint Mary's College Soda Center** from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Monday, Dec. 8 will feature the College's international award winning singers in a program of contemporary and holiday music. The entrée will be London broil with all the trimmings and apple pie for dessert. Reservations are required and can be made at (925) 376-6622 or on the Movers website. Cost: \$20 per person.

### SENIORS

**Apple Basics - facilitated by Sharon Beck, owner of Mac-Senior** from 10:30 to noon on the first and third Thursday's in the Elderberry room of the Lafayette Community Center. This series will start at the very beginning: the technology needed for wireless communication, your Apple ID, iTunes, iCloud and the basics of iPad and iPhone usage. Topics for future sessions will be determined by participants' input and needs. There will be time for Q&A at the end of each class. Please note: this series deals with Apple devices only. Cost per class: free to Senior Services members; \$5 non-members.

**Downsizing and Moving - an interactive and engaging presentation** offering tips and techniques on how to go about the moving process as well as the actual physical move of your belongings – presented by Gentle Transitions and Seniors on the Move, in

conjunction with Merrill Gardens Lafayette from 1:30 to 3 p.m. on Dec. 2 at Merrill Gardens Lafayette, Corner of Mt. Diablo Blvd. and Second Street, Lafayette. Free.

**Living with Alzheimer's: Early Stage Alzheimer's** - Educational program for individuals with Early Stage Alzheimer's disease or related dementia, and their Care Partners. Many topics covered, including coping with the diagnosis and changes, planning for the future, learning about research and treatment options and caring for important relationships. Wednesdays, Dec. 3, 10, and 17 in Lafayette. Time given at completion of registration. Pre-registration is required. Please contact Lan Trinh at (800) 272-3900 or ltrinh@alz.org to register.

### GARDEN

**Moraga Garden Club will meet Thursday, Nov. 20** at Holy Trinity Cultural Center, 1700 School St., Moraga. Social time at 9:30 a.m., meeting starts at 10 a.m. featuring speaker Susan Morrison, who will discuss "Design Solutions for Small Spaces." Guests are welcome.

**Montelindo Garden Club meeting will feature speaker** Matthew Levesque, author, designers, speaker and advocate for material reuse, who will discuss "Reuse in the Garden" at 9 a.m. Friday, Nov. 21 at St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, 66 St. Stephens Drive, Orinda. Visitors welcome. For info, visit www.matthewlevesque.com.

## Lamorinda Weekly

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## Service Clubs Announcements

Rotary



Explore Lamorinda Rotary clubs 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.

A global volunteer organization working to improve the lives of women and girls through programs leading to social and economic empowerment.



Please join us at our new location **THE LAFAYETTE PARK HOTEL** on Friday mornings at 7am. For more info, please email us at lamorindasunrise@gmail.com

### November 21:

Columnist, editorial writer and consumer watchdog, Daniel Borenstein will provide us with an update on the issues surrounding Pension Under Funding.

### December 5:

Veteran, fellow Rotarian and Sentinels of Freedom Scholarship Program graduate Ryan Sykes will speak about the Sentinels of Freedom program.

We will not meet on Nov. 28<sup>th</sup> in observance of the Thanksgiving holiday!!

### SOROPTIMIST OF 24/680



"Improving the lives of women and girls through programs leading to social and economic empowerment"

Please join us for our next meeting:

**WHEN:** Wednesday 12/3/14  
Social 5:30-6:00 p.m.  
Meeting 6:00 – 8:00 p.m.

**WHERE:** The Buttercup Grill  
660 Ygnacio Valley Road, Walnut Creek.

**December Speaker:** Randy Wight, Topic: "Yes, AND....techniques for improving communication."

**For more information, contact:**  
Regina Englehart @925-876-9076  
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# A Flavorful Crostata for the Season!

By Susie Iventosch



Pear-Cranberry Pistachio Crostata

My husband and I spend one four-day weekend each year going away with some of our very dearest friends and it is always a serious food-athon! Each couple takes a turn at making dinner, and we have had some very memorable meals over the years.

The meals begin with appetizers and end with dessert and there is plenty of wine to go around. This year, we had two pies for dessert, and both were scrumptious! One of them, a strawberry-rhubarb, was specially made to order for our getaway by Susie Gilleran of Might Fine Pies.

An Orinda resident since 1998, she was introduced to the art and business of pie making when the agency she worked for shut down. You know the saying, when one door closes, another one opens! She always had an interest in food, and, in fact, was a food writer for the Chicago Sun Times before moving to California. And, as a creative director for the advertising firm, she always had a flair for the creative side of things.

But, the main problem Gilleran had was that she didn't really know how to bake when she left the agency, even though she really

wanted to tackle the frontier of baking. So she enrolled in the baking program at City College of San Francisco and earned her certificate from Chef Betsy (Elizabeth Riehle) who, Gilleran says, was an amazing and inspirational instructor.

"She really got us to work together and we'd bake for the café and the restaurant at the school, The Educated Palate," Gilleran said. "To get us into the mode of the early world of bakers, we'd start at 6 a.m. and go until noon, Monday through Friday."

She learned baker's math, like how to scale recipes, and she found the science of baking fascinating, too.

When she finished the program, her entire mission was to be able to make her daughter's wedding cake. Not only did she make the cake, but all sorts of other goodies for the event, too, like cookies and individual tarts. With a newfound confidence, she began taking pies to friends' houses when invited for dinner.

"My friends told me I should start selling them, and so I began the business just a year ago around Thanksgiving," she said. "Since then, I've probably baked more than 100 pies!"

Gilleran doesn't have a sweet tooth herself, but she just loves making pies.

"They are so labor-intensive that I think people have just stopped making them, but pies remind you of your mom and they always seem to make occasions special," she pointed out. "For me, the next best thing to pie making, is pie sharing."

The combinations of fruits and nuts in Might Fine Pies are uniquely delicious. This pear-cranberry crostata with pistachio paste is not only unusual, but the colors are very pretty together, especially this time of year.

"I like to get the most out of a season, by using the flavors as well as the colors of the season," Gilleran noted.

I think you will love the flavors of her Pear-Cranberry Pistachio Crostata. We made it for dinner guests last night, and they left requesting the recipe! It also inspired me to try an apple crostata with a maple-toasted pecan paste. Will keep you posted on the outcome!

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## Pear-Cranberry Pistachio Crostata

Makes one 9-inch crostata, serves 8-10, great for dessert and especially great warmed up for breakfast the day after!

### Crostata Dough

#### INGREDIENTS

1 stick (1/2 cup) unsalted butter, chilled  
1 ¼ cup all-purpose flour  
1 tablespoon sugar  
1 teaspoon salt  
1 egg yolk  
2-3 tablespoons cold milk or iced water

#### DIRECTIONS

Cut butter into ½-inch pieces; wrap and chill thoroughly. Combine flour, sugar and salt in bowl of food processor fitted with a steel blade and pulse just to combine. Add the butter and pulse 6-8 times until the butter is about the size of small peas. Add the egg yolk and water and pulse a few times more, just until the dough begins to form a ball. Turn out dough onto a floured surface and gently knead to finish combining. Press dough into a round, flattened disk, wrap in plastic and chill at least 1 hour or up to 4 days in the refrigerator.

*Note: It's also possible to make the dough by hand or in a bowl of a mixer with a paddle attachment. If going the mixer route, mix dry ingredients on low, just to combine. Drop butter into bowl and mix on low until butter is incorporated, about the size of small peas. Add egg yolk and milk or water together; continue mixing just until dough holds together.*

### Filling

#### INGREDIENTS

1 ¼ pounds (about 4, depending on size) Bosc pears, peeled, halved, cored  
¼ cup, plus ¼ cup, plus 1 tablespoon sugar (for different parts of crostata)  
4 tablespoons butter (for pears), plus 4 tablespoons butter (for paste)  
¼ cup unsalted pistachios for paste, plus 20 pistachios, roughly chopped for topping  
1 egg, plus 1 egg yolk  
½ teaspoon vanilla  
2 teaspoon all-purpose flour  
Pinch of salt  
1 cup dried cranberries

#### DIRECTIONS

### Roasting pears

Preheat oven to 350 F. Prepare pears, making sure when coring to also remove the fibrous portion that usually runs up the middle of the fruit. Place each pear half in roasting pan, cored side down, then sprinkle with ¼ cup sugar and dot with 4 tablespoons butter. Roast until pears begin to caramelize, turning golden brown (about 30 minutes, depending on oven), then flip, drizzling the caramel that is formed on the pan bottom over the pears. Continue roasting until pears are fork tender, another 5-10 minutes. Cool in pan. Reserve.



Photo Susie Gilleran

*Note: This step may be done up to 4 days before preparing crostata. Wrap pears and keep chilled in the refrigerator. Bring to room temperature when ready to assemble.*

*Author's Note: I used green D'Anjou pears and though they also hold up to cooking, this step took only about 20 minutes total in my oven, so just be aware not to overcook pears, which may depend upon what kind you use!*

### Pistachio Paste

Preheat oven to 350 F. Spread pistachios on parchment paper-lined baking sheet and roast for 8 minutes. When cool, chop pistachios in food processor or blender until fine. In mixer using paddle attachment, cream remaining ¼ cup sugar with remaining 4 tablespoons butter until light, about 2 minutes. Add ground pistachios and mix until combined. On low, beat in egg and vanilla, beating 1 minute more, scraping bowl after each addition. Add flour and salt until combined. Reserve.

*Note: This step may be done up to 4 days before preparing crostata. Wrap and keep refrigerated. Bring to room temperature when ready to assemble.*

*Author's Note: Though I've found them before, I couldn't find unsalted pistachios this week, so I used "lightly salted" already roasted pistachios, and the paste turned out delicious! I also omitted the egg in this part, because I wanted to eat this yummy paste right out of the bowl!*

### Assembling

Slice each pear half into a fan, starting at the thicker end, making 4-5 slices, each one stopping just short of the stem end.

Preheat oven to 400 F. Roll out dough into a 12- to 14-inch round. Transfer onto a lightly buttered or parchment-lined baking sheet. Spread pistachio paste over dough, leaving about a 1-inch border around edge of dough. Place pears over the paste, then top with cranberries. Fold over dough, leaving a 4- to 5-inch window in the middle. Brush entire dough surface with remaining egg yolk wash, sprinkle with remaining 1 tablespoon sugar and remaining roughly chopped pistachios. Bake for 15 minutes, rotate pan in oven, and turn down heat to 350 F. Bake another 40-45 minutes.

*Author's Note: Again, in my oven, the entire baking time was probably only about 30-35 minutes. It's really just a matter of getting the crust nice and golden brown.*



Photo Susie Gilleran

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](mailto: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.



**You can find most of the recipes published in the Lamorinda Weekly on our website. Click Food tab.**

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# LAMORINDA SPORTS

## Mats Avenge Loss, Defeat Cougars in NCS Finals

By Spencer Silva



Coach James Lathrop pulled by Tommy Baier  
Photo Gint Federas

As time expired late Saturday afternoon, the Miramonte boys' water polo team, along with their fully-clothed coaches, jumped into the pool to commemorate their 10-8 victory over the No. 1 Campolindo Cougars.

It was a rematch of last year's final, where the Cougars scratched out an 11-10 victory over their cross-town rivals. This time around, the Mats led for most of the game, but it was their defense that ended up making the difference.

"Our defense and seniors really came up big," Miramonte coach James Lathrop said after the match. "Evan (Pauletich) was awesome. ... Jack Conner came off the bench and really provided a spark. It was the best team defense we played all year."

The Mats reached the final by comfortable defeats of California High and De La Salle in the early rounds, before beating Sir Francis Drake (San Anselmo) 10-7 in the semifinals.

In the championship, Campolindo was expected to employ their full press and counter-attack strategy. The Mats held the high-octane Campo attack to zero goals in the first quarter, although they broke through for five in the second.

Cal-bound senior Jordan Hoover scored four of the Mats' first five goals, carrying the team as he often has in

2014. It was apparent to the standing-room-only crowd from the beginning – including many of the Acalanes faithful - that this would be a tough match.

Senior Garrett Felix, one of Campo's best defenders, was tasked with guarding the powerful Hoover, but by halftime Felix was a foul away from leaving the game. He eventually fouled out, leading to a number of defensive mismatches.

The score was 6-5 at the half, but in the third quarter, Miramonte began to pull away as the Campo defense struggled. The Mats outscored the Cougars 3-1 in the quarter, swinging the score to 9-6 in their favor.

The game ended with a final score of 10-8.

The road to the NCS final match was paved in controversy for the Cougars. They won their first two NCS matches by a combined margin of 25 goals against Heritage and Monte Vista. On Nov. 12, they faced an upset-hungry Acalanes Dons team who looked poised for the win (see sidebar) and it wasn't until Nov. 14 that Campolindo's win was confirmed.

Before the championship match, Campolindo head coach Miles Price declined to specifically comment on the situation, but he said that he talked to Acalanes head coach Clarke Tamariki about the incident and there was "no bad blood" between the teams.

Acalanes (12-11) earned the No. 5 seed in the tournament and beat Washington and San Ramon Valley to reach the semifinals.

Lathrop reflected on how the semifinal controversy affected his team. "I think we benefited from the weird situation between Campo and Acalanes," he explained, "not because of the drama, but because we were able to concentrate on ourselves and our game-plan during practice because we didn't know who we were going to play."

Despite the tough loss in the championships, Price reflected on how far the Campolindo program has come. "Just a few years ago we weren't making it past quarter-finals. Now we've made it to the championship game two years in a row. We have a great pipeline and our program will continue to be strong."

The NCS crown is a nice bookend on what amounted to be an extremely successful season for the Mats.

The thrilling NCS Championship game had a shadow cast over it, unfortunately, by the events of the semifinal match between Acalanes and Campolindo.

On Nov. 12, with seconds left in the second overtime, Acalanes led Campo 11-10. They possessed the ball and were in a spread formation intent on running the clock out. However, with less than 10 seconds left, there was an errant pass thrown by an Acalanes player that led to a scrum for possession. Campolindo came away with the ball but time expired.

Acalanes began to celebrate in the pool, but after a conversation between Campo coach Miles Price and the referee crew, it was determined that Price had called a timeout before time was up. The referees decided to add five seconds to the clock and gave Campolindo the ball. Campo scored a game-tying goal in those final five seconds and went on to win the match 12-11 in the sudden-death third-overtime.

Misha Buchel, the Acalanes girls' water polo coach, who attended the game commented, "When time expired and they put five seconds on the clock, no one could believe it. I imagine (Campolindo) felt like they found a \$20 bill in their pockets. It was a remarkable night."

After the match, the referees were approached with video evidence and other accounts by parents, students and fans. Video footage showed possession was taken by Campo with less than two or three seconds remaining. Seemingly aware that they had added extra time to the clock, the referees deliberated and declared Acalanes the winner, 11-10.

On Thursday, the North Coast Section determined the game results under review. It was decided that Acalanes could not protest the result after continuing to play the final overtime. In an official statement released by the NCS, it declared that the protest had to be declared at the time of the incident – which would have been at the end of the second overtime. Also, according to the National Federation of High School (NFHS) rules, "judgment of the officials" is not something that can be protested.

In a phone interview, associate commissioner Karen Smith said, "The (referees) felt they'd made a mistake by reporting Acalanes as the winner. It's an unfortunate situation and I hope the focus gets back on what a great game it was rather than the controversy."

Neither coach from Acalanes nor Campolindo would comment on the situation.

## Three-Peat!

### Campo girls win NCS water polo title

By Spencer Silva

The Campolindo girls' water polo team has become one of Northern California's most dominant sports programs. On Nov. 15, they capped their brilliant season (25-3, 5-0) with a hard-fought 7-4 win over archrival Miramonte (18-8, 4-1), capturing their third consecutive Division II NCS title. They've now reached the finals in six consecutive seasons.

The Mats, who lost 12-6 and 12-7 to the Cougars during the season, drew up some special plans for the Cougars' high-powered offense. They committed to eliminating standout senior Hannah Buck, who didn't score until the fourth quarter. They also aimed to take advantage of exclusion penalties, something Campo is known to be liberal with since they have one of the best goalkeepers around, senior Madison Tagg, who is committed to play at Cal next fall.

Miramonte led the game 1-0 at the end of the first quarter, but in the second it was all Campolindo. Campo scored three unanswered goals, punctuated by a beautiful shot by senior Rachel Lewin, who led all scorers with three goals.

Campolindo led 4-2 heading into

the third quarter, and Miramonte went a man-up on a number of occasions, but it was unable to capitalize because of excellent defense from Tagg. With 1:53 left in the third quarter, Hailey Eberle scored Miramonte's last goal of the afternoon bringing the score to 6-4.

Heading into the fourth quarter, Campo's head coach Kim Everist ordered her girls out of the pool to offer some inspiration. When asked about the motivational speech, Everist laughed, "Motivation. That's a nice way of putting it. I felt like we were playing tight and tentative. I told them 'look to your right and look to your left and let's play like we have all season.'"

The speech worked and Campolindo scored once more to notch a 7-4 win.

Campolindo was thrilled with the win and its season. "This is the most successful senior class ever," Everist said in her post-game interview.

It's a bold statement, but a well-founded one. Just a few weeks ago, the Cougars defeated another local rival, the San Ramon Valley Wolves 7-5 to win the NorCal Championships, a tournament held at Sacred Heart every fall. With the victory, they

ended SRV's 52-game winning streak.

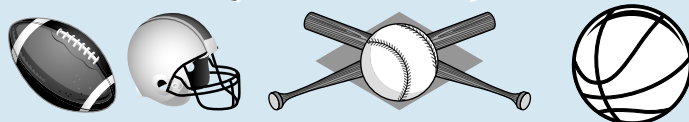
Winning the NorCal championship for the second time in three years was huge for the squad, but Everist was leery of the win.

"It's dangerous coming off a big NorCal win against SRV," she explained. "NCS is the important one. You can't win NorCal then not win NCS."

While the Lady Cougars came out on top, the Mats had plenty to be proud of. "We played our best game of the season," said first-year head coach Megan Calderazzo. The Mats had a great season and a strong play-off run, outscoring their opponents 38-1 (Concord High, Justin Sienna) in their first two NCS-tournament matches before playing Acalanes in the semifinals. They beat the Dons 10-7 after taking a 5-1 lead at the half.

Acalanes coach Misha Buchel is excited for the future of his team after a strong season (16-11, 2-3) "We're bringing the band back to together next year. This season was the appetizer," he added, "and if everyone commits to playing club and swimming in the spring, we're going to be primed for a big year next season."

## Youth Sports Registration



### Lamorinda Rugby Football Club



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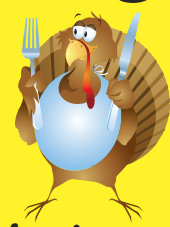


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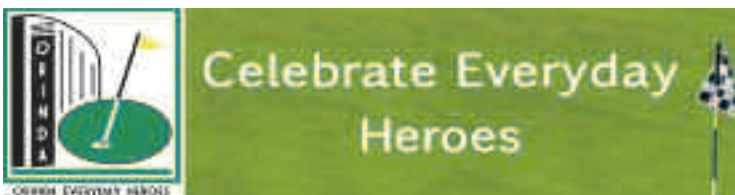
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## Lamorinda Football Dominates Opponents

*Acalanes, Campolindo advance in NCS playoffs*

By Michael Sakoda



Casey Harrington Photo Gint Federas

After wrapping up the DFAL regular season the first week of November, all three Lamorinda football teams headed into the NCS playoffs last week. Campolindo (11-0, 6-0 DFAL) took the No. 1 seed in Division III. Acalanes (8-3, 4-2 DFAL) earned a No. 5 seed. Miramonte (3-8, 2-4 DFAL) is Division II and earned a No. 12 seed.

On Nov. 7, Miramonte played at Dublin and the DFAL season wrapped up with a Lamorinda showdown between Acalanes and Campolindo.

Miramonte took care of business against Dublin, winning 34-21. "We knew going in that's what we had to do to qualify [for the NCS playoffs]," said Mats' head coach Jack Schram about the win.

In the rivalry game, the Dons ran the ball through the first half. Nathan Edwards moved the chains for the Dons' offense. Quarterback Casey Harrington took advantage of the field position, running in a 1-yard touchdown in the first quarter and finding Matt Burns for a 9-yard touchdown in the second. At halftime, Acalanes was down 19-13, but it was set to receive the ensuing kick.

"We played a great first half," said Acalanes head coach Mike Ivankovich. "The issue was we stalled on offense and didn't stay with them in the second half."

The Cougars ran away with the game, outscoring the Dons 29-0 in the final two quarters. Senior running back Nick Fadelli, who notched three touchdowns on six carries in the first half, turned it on in the second, finishing with 225 yards on 15 carries to go with five touchdowns. Quarterback Jack Stephens picked apart the Acalanes secondary, completing 12 of

19 passes for 215 yards and a 25-yard touchdown to Max Flower.

"I think forcing the three and out to start the second half, then scoring right away just changed everything," said Campolindo head coach Kevin Macy. "We made [10-0] our goal, and the kids felt that this was their championship."

On Nov. 14, Campolindo played Ygnacio Valley in the first round of the NCS, while the Dons hosted Bishop O'Dowd.

Campolindo dismantled the Warriors, 52-14, scoring the opening 21 points. The Cougars took a 38-7 halftime lead. Stephens completed 6 of 7 passes for 115 yards and three touchdowns. Sophomore Noah Loeliger (two touchdowns), led a committee of three Cougar backs who found the end zone.

With the win, Campolindo will now face No. 8 Cardinal Newman on Nov. 21.

"They're really not an eight seed," said Macy. "When you look at all the other second round games, no doubt we have the hardest."

Acalanes similarly cruised through the first round, hammering Bishop O'Dowd 49-20 last Friday, in a game where Harrington could do no wrong, completing 11 of 15 passes for 300 yards and four touchdowns and rushing four times for 36 yards and a touchdown.

After Harrington threw a 76-yard bomb to Tyler Henderson on their second play from scrimmage, Burns picked off an O'Dowd pass on the first play of the Dragons' next drive. Six plays later, Edwards scored on a 1-yard run, giving Acalanes a 14-0 lead.

"We executed our plan," said Ivankovich simply.

With less than a minute to play in the first half, Burns grabbed his second interception, setting up Acalanes with a first and 10 from their own 31. Harrington found Chad Johnson for 55 yards on their first play, then connected with Jack Thoren for a 16-yard touchdown.

Johnson caught for 156 yards and a touchdown to lead an outstanding receiving core. Edwards rushed for 113 yards and a touchdown. The Dons travel to No. 4 Analy, this Friday for a game that promises to be exciting.

On Nov. 14, Miramonte traveled to Casa Grande in a rematch of the NCS Division II finale last year. Heading into the first round, Schram was optimistic but wary. "We beat them last year in the championship, but this isn't last year. They struggled early, but they're a heck of a lot better than their record, but I think we're a heck of a lot better than ours."

Unfortunately, the Mats offense faltered against a stout Gauchos defense, and they fell, 48-6, ending their post-season run as abruptly as it began. They'll look to bounce back next year, with standouts Ryan Anderson, Sutter Lindberg, and Clayton Stehr set to return.

## NCS Rivalry Series Continues with Volleyball

*Campo, Acalanes face off in semifinals*

By Scott Wu



Molly Dalziel



Kirsten Sibley

Photos Gint Federas

The girls' volleyball NCS playoffs are underway and the intensity is growing with every spike. All three Lamorinda high schools made this year's Division III playoffs. Campolindo (26-7 overall) earned the No. 1 seed, Acalanes (21-8) took the No. 4 seed, and Miramonte (21-10) earned the No. 6 seed. After the first two rounds, Campolindo will host Acalanes in the semifinals tonight, Nov. 19 at 7 p.m.

Head coach John Vuong is proud of the team's No. 1 seed because he knows that his team has worked hard to earn the ranking. "Being the top seed should not be new to the girls. We worked very hard during the season so that we could earn this opportunity," said Vuong.

The Campolindo Cougars have not yet lost a set in the NCS playoffs, which is reflective of their dominant season. They beat No. 16 El Cerrito and then No. 8 Albany with ease. Albany challenged the Cougars in the second set, recording a 22-25 loss, but the Cougars won the first and third sets by double-digits.

In the semifinals, Campolindo will play host to Acalanes, a team they swept twice during the regular season. However, looking ahead to the Nov. 19 match, Vuong can point out two things that his team needs to do in order to ensure a win.

"We must limit our unforced errors and be better in our execution of the free ball opportunities," said Vuong.

The Acalanes Dons, who beat both No.

13 San Rafael and No. 5 Petaluma, will look to upset the Cougars. The Dons will have to play an away game for the first time in the playoffs, but head coach Todd Travis doesn't see it as an added challenge.

"Playing in front of our friends and families at a familiar site is very advantageous, but we won't be doing anything different from our normal routine," said Travis.

After finishing 9-3 in the DFAL, Acalanes took second place behind Campolindo. Although they did not take a set during their regular season match-ups, Travis is hopeful that their experience this season will help them in the postseason.

"We purposely scheduled a really tough preseason, so we have been through many games with playoff intensity by the time NCS rolls around," said Travis.

Earning the No. 6 seed, Miramonte traveled to face No. 11 Del Norte of Crescent City. Despite the long journey, the Mats pulled off a win in straight sets. With the win, Miramonte advanced to face No. 3 Sonoma Valley on Nov. 15.

"Traveling 8 hours to our first round game was difficult, but it did not change our mentality going into Saturday's game," said head coach Lisa Bachtold. "We wanted to go out there and play with no regrets, whatever the outcome may have been."

Miramonte lost in a four-set match. Their best effort came in the second set, when they defeated Sonoma 25-21.

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# Cal Magic Play Magician

Submitted by Greg Davis



Photo provided

The California Magic U10 girls soccer team dressed as magicians for the Boo Fest Halloween Tournament and made their opponents disappear. The girls won all four of their games by playing with great passing, ball control and strong shooting. This was the girls' third tournament win of the year.

# JV Water Polo Perfect

Submitted by Mary Gabrielson



From left, back row: coach Hanley, Ben Miller, Aidan Jacuzzi, Alex Crum, Michael Williams, Christian Meckfessel, coach Schroeder; middle row: Quinn Lyon, Sam Foss, Garret Murphy, Tommy Hawkins, Cameron Sanders, Nick Thompson, Michael Wheeler, Cole Lauritzen; front row: William Faoro, Aidan Crouch, Josh Wolfram, Spencer Spiering, Evan Gabrielson, Jack Spiering, Matt Peterson; not pictured: Robbie Graves (assistant coach), Max Younger, Sabin Moiceanu

The Camplindo boys JV water polo team wrapped up a successful season with a win over Alhambra, securing an undefeated DFAL record and its third DFAL championship in a row. On Oct. 25-26, the boys also beat Valley Christian, De La Salle, Clovis, and Bellarmine on their way to winning the NorCal Frosh-Soph Championship tournament.

# Mats Sign Letters of Intent

Submitted by Maya Cody



From left: Daniel Conner, Marie-Claire Schillinger, Arielle Caronna, Emily Byrne, Kristen Hong, Grayson Judge and Alexandria Chilimidos (left)



Miramonte High School seniors signed their National Letter of Intent/Likely Letter on Nov. 12. Daniel Connor signed with UC Berkeley for baseball. Marie-Claire Schillinger is headed for Rice University for swimming. Arielle

Caronna intends to go to San Jose State to play golf. Emily Byrne signed with Loyola Marymount for water polo. Kristen Hong and Grayson Judge plan to attend Harvard for water polo. Alexandria Chilimidos signed with University of San Diego for rowing.

# First Place Finish

Submitted by Maggie Kurimai



St. Perpetua's third grade national team took first place at the MVP Flight Fall Classic.

From left, back row: Coach Ed, Coach Morgan, Parker Etnyre, Jake Elerts, Nate Lyons, Alexander Kurimai, Cameron Bodel, Coach Dennis; front row: Toby Brock-Utne, Owen Fitzmaurice, Liam Krackeler, Aidan Haslam Photo Maggi Kurimai

# Swimmers Honored

Submitted by Jon Wheeler



From left: Coach Kevin Lai, Will Nagle, Jordan Owyong, Max Cruz Costello, Coach Don Heidary Photo provided

Max Crux Costello was recognized as the Outstanding 11-year-old Male Swimmer for the Short Course Season while Will Nagle was named the Outstanding 11-year-old Male Swimmer for the Long Course Season.

Hannah Grubbs and Jordan Owyong were both chosen as finalists for the esteemed Impact Swimmer of The Year Award. This award is given to a swimmer that has made an impact, not only in the sport of swimming, but also in either their school or community, or both. Ultimately, the award was presented to Grubbs in recognition of her swimming successes, her leadership and character, and her continued involvement with the Harbor House Ministries, a charity benefitting Oakland inner city children.

Pacific Swimming hosts an annual banquet to celebrate the accomplishments of its swimmers and coaches throughout the year. On Oct. 11, four Orinda Aquatics swimmers were honored at the banquet.

# Stanley Volleyball Wins Championship

Submitted by Karen Elliott



From left, bottom row: Rachel Dadiomov, Mikaela Valerio, Renee Sandford, Jenna Stedman, Meg Balfrey, Olivia Elliott, Natasha Malinovsky; front row: Parker Jung, Emma Fox, coach Claire Porep, Daphne Ganter and Helen Kleinsmith; not pictured: Erin Hemmenway Photo provided

The Stanley Middle School girls' 7B volleyball team claimed the championship trophy on Oct. 25. Head coach Claire Porep, a junior at Acalanes, led the team to the title.

The championship game against Longfellow

Middle School from Berkeley was a nail biter. During regular season play, Longfellow had been one of two teams to beat Stanley. During the round robin play, Stanley handily beat Longfellow. Stanley beat Longfellow again in the championship.

# Two Wins for the Title

Submitted by Alan Go



From left, back row: Paige Holder, Claire Needs, Elsa Clever, Coco Cornish, Diana Haman, and Maja Moran; front row: Bianca Chao, Nell Kessenich, Rachel Go, and Nadashiko Osaki; not pictured: Emily Klein

The Stanley 8A girls' volleyball team capped their season with a win at the championship tournament on Oct. 30. The Wildcats defeated Joaquin Moraga twice in the double-elimination tournament to claim the championship. In the final match, the Wildcats lost the first set 16-25 but rallied to take the next two sets, 25-17 and 15-12. Elsa Clever and Paige Holder won All-Tournament honors and Rachel Go was named the All-Tournament MVP.

# East Bay Eclipse Competition

Submitted by Michelle Maeder



From left, back row: Cameron Fara, Montreux Maeder, Emmet Morgridge, Riley Breul, Connor Gregg, Thomas Brook, Max Stryker, Marco Nykodym, Nick Carr, and coach Kevin Clark; front row: Michael Brewer, Parker Bahl, Nick Hashim, Matt Montaquila, Alton Creson, Phil Ku and Kaleo Nelson.

The 2014 Octoberfest Tournament Champions, otherwise known as The East Bay Eclipse U14 boys' soccer team, prevailed with

a final 4-1 win over the Mustang Revolution on Oct. 26 in Walnut Creek.

# Cal Magic Scare Competition

Submitted by Greg Davis



Photo provided

The California Magic U11 boys' soccer team placed second in Diablo Futbol Club's Kick or Treat Tournament in the gold division with a record of 3-1 on Oct. 25-26. Off

the field there was no contest from other clubs in the boys costume competition - the team dressed as vampires and victims.

# Diablo Water Polo Team Wins Cup

Submitted by Elizabeth Munson



Top row, from left: Head coach Maureen O'Toole-Purcell, Brooke Westphal (Lafayette), Rachel Rosen, Annelise Miller, Makenna Ferguson (Orinda), Christina Crum (Moraga), Alexandra Brown, Morgan Lewis, Alexis Rowell (Lafayette), Sydney Milham, assistant coach Kelly Mendoza; bottom row: Jewel Roemer, Madeline Smith (Lafayette), Nina Munson (Moraga), Maisy White, Sydney Hammill, Kathryn Lyons (Orinda) Photo Courtesy Vladimir Cherry

The Diablo Water Polo Club 14U girls' team won the 2014 TYR Champions Cup on Nov. 9. In a battle amongst the two top teams, Diablo defeated Rose Bowl 10-8 to claim the gold medal.



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# Lamorinda OUR HOMES

Lamorinda Weekly Volume 08 Issue 19 Wednesday, November 19, 2014



*Digging Deep with Cynthia Brian  
...read on page D9*

## Hit the Deck

*Regular maintenance can prolong the lives of outdoor spaces*

By Chris Lavin



**R**ichard Houghton is a tall man with a big smile and an unusual passion.

“I could talk decks all day,” Houghton said with surprising enthusiasm for the subject. “And all night. You’ll have to shut me up.”

Houghton has sanded, repaired or otherwise built from scratch more than 3,000 decks in the area, probably 2,000 of them in Lamorinda.

“Now is the time, before we get too much rain,” he said. “You’ve got to get the debris out from between the grooves or you’re going to hold the moisture in there, and it’s going to rot a lot sooner than it otherwise would.”

And that takes time, and regularity. Decks can be such a pain sometimes that not everyone is a fan.

“I hate decks,” said Gloria Lenhart of Lafayette. “I did have decks and hated them, but I don’t have one now. Here’s the problem with decks: They are maintenance nightmares which require regular sanding, sealing and repairing. I once lived in a house with three decks and every year we sanded down and re-sealed one of them. A never-ending task. In this house I have a concrete patio. All you have to do is sweep it off occasionally, and really you don’t even have to do that!”

Houghton understands this sentiment and sees it in his customers. So he came up with a solution: On one of his jobs he found a woman using a nifty tool that she had ordered from Sunset magazine – a deck flosser. So Houghton tracked down the tool and bought a couple of them. Over the years, they didn’t hold up so well, but the inventor didn’t want anything to do with them. So he just told Houghton: “You can have it. You make ‘em.”

So with his usual enthusiasm Houghton got to work. He set up a workshop in his garage (with a retinal scanner to get in and security cameras galore), improved on the design, applied for a patent, and now he’s in distribution mode. (He turned out to be fibbing about the retinal scanner and cameras.)

... continued on page D4

*Jack Champlin of Lafayette repaired his deck so that his family would have a dining area while the kitchen was being renovated. Photo Chris Lavin*





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## Lamorinda Home Sales recorded

City	Last reported:	LOWEST AMOUNT:	HIGHEST AMOUNT:
LAFAYETTE	10	\$835,000	\$3,080,000
MORAGA	5	\$335,000	\$1,299,000
ORINDA	5	\$1,082,000	\$1,400,000

Home sales are compiled by Cal REsource, 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

3318 Beechwood Drive, \$1,200,000, 4 Bdrms, 1499 SqFt, 1946 YrBlt, 10-17-14;

Previous Sale: \$983,000, 05-01-07

3966 Cowan Road, \$1,795,000, 4 Bdrms, 2754 SqFt, 1960 YrBlt, 10-10-14;

Previous Sale: \$245,000, 07-12-85

3984 El Nido Ranch Road, \$1,705,000, 4 Bdrms, 3843 SqFt, 1991 YrBlt, 10-15-14;

Previous Sale: \$989,000, 04-14-00

715 Glenside Circle, \$1,400,000, 3 Bdrms, 2016 SqFt, 1951 YrBlt, 10-17-14;

Previous Sale: \$795,000, 11-08-01

474 Helen Avenue, \$835,500, 3 Bdrms, 1651 SqFt, 1951 YrBlt, 10-17-14;

Previous Sale: \$38,500, 06-23-71

3794 Highland Road, \$1,091,000, 3 Bdrms, 2125 SqFt, 1983 YrBlt, 10-13-14;

Previous Sale: \$803,000, 09-10-04

1834 Ivanhoe Avenue, \$1,512,500, 5 Bdrms, 3638 SqFt, 1957 YrBlt, 10-10-14

3 Lark Creek Lane, \$3,080,000, 4 Bdrms, 4550 SqFt, 2000 YrBlt, 10-17-14;

Previous Sale: \$1,950,000, 04-09-02

3416 Moraga Boulevard, \$835,000, 2 Bdrms, 929 SqFt, 1941 YrBlt, 10-17-14;

Previous Sale: \$700,000, 03-01-06

3023 Rohrer Drive, \$1,225,000, 3 Bdrms, 1808 SqFt, 1961 YrBlt, 10-10-14;

Previous Sale: \$862,000, 12-11-02

### MORAGA

624 Augusta Drive, \$1,299,000, 4 Bdrms, 2680 SqFt, 1976 YrBlt, 10-17-14;

Previous Sale: \$1,225,000, 11-02-06

8 Baltusrol Street, \$780,000, 3 Bdrms, 1749 SqFt, 1979 YrBlt, 10-10-14;

Previous Sale: \$690,000, 03-14-08

1040 Del Rio Way, \$1,005,000, 4 Bdrms, 2189 SqFt, 1969 YrBlt, 10-14-14

2145 Donald Drive #14, \$335,000, 2 Bdrms, 1162 SqFt, 1964 YrBlt, 10-15-14;

Previous Sale: \$460,000, 06-22-05

8 La Salle Drive, \$739,000, 3 Bdrms, 1573 SqFt, 1961 YrBlt, 10-17-14

### ORINDA

641 Cross Ridge Court, \$1,350,000, 3 Bdrms, 2113 SqFt, 1979 YrBlt, 10-15-14;

Previous Sale: \$760,000, 03-29-02

649 Cross Ridge Court, \$1,175,000, 4 Bdrms, 2866 SqFt, 1979 YrBlt, 10-13-14

16 Rich Acres Road, \$1,082,000, 3 Bdrms, 2404 SqFt, 1976 YrBlt, 10-15-14;

Previous Sale: \$450,000, 07-20-89

28 Via Moraga, \$1,400,000, 4 Bdrms, 2655 SqFt, 1965 YrBlt, 10-16-14;

Previous Sale: \$470,000, 04-01-94

627 Watchwood Road, \$1,245,000, 3 Bdrms, 2541 SqFt, 1987 YrBlt, 10-14-14;

Previous Sale: \$965,000, 02-28-03





  
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All square footage measurements are estimates and may vary from actual numbers. Brokers must accompany their client(s) and register them on their first visit to the Sales Center in order to be eligible for a broker commission. © 2013 Orinda Oaks Signature Development Group





# Hit the Deck

... continued from page D1



Richard Houghton demonstrates his nifty Groove Cleaner that he builds himself in his garage.

"I love this thing," Houghton said, picking it up and turning it in his hand like a fine gem. "It works great."

Bill Snider at Moraga Hardware and Lumber is the first one to carry prototypes, although they haven't decided how much to price them for. "That's my wife's job," Houghton said. "She owns the company."



For more than 40 years Houghton has helped people fix, build and maintain their decks. It's really not that tough, he said. His checklist:

- Make sure the debris is out between the grooves.
- Sand them down when they get rough. Water can collect in the cracks, freeze, or start to do its rotting thing.
- Pound the nails flush with the surface first.
- Sweep or blow the decks if wet material has fallen.
- Seal, seal, seal with a good sealant.
- Inspect above and below for rot and weak spots.
- And sometimes, he admits, you just have to replace them.

Houghton said homeowners can typically expect to spend between \$25 and \$35 per square foot for full all-out replacement or deck additions. Unfortunately, he said, California this year passed a 1 percent surcharge on cut lumber, and even if the owner decided to go with composite materials for the decking itself, the under-story still has to be constructed with wood, adding to the final cost.

Houghton didn't use to like the composite materials, called Trex. The first generations of the material were simply made of shredded plastic bottles, made into pellets, and melted together. "But they found that water could get into the spaces between the pellets and when it froze, the stuff fell apart," he said.

Not good. Now the company is on its sixth generation. "It does last longer than redwood," he said, "but most people really love the warm look of redwood."

Houghton runs Fine Line Renovations at [decksbyfineline.com](http://decksbyfineline.com).



Houghton inspects the under-story of a deck for dry rot.

Photos Chris Lavin



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## Stylish Solutions

# Creating a 'Welcome Home' Feel for Holiday Guests

By Ann McDonald



Guest bedroom in a cabin. Hudson Bay slippers that match the room make guests feel like no detail is overlooked. Photo Peter Medilek

The turkey is ordered, the farmers' market run is on the calendar and you are getting your home ready to host family and friends for the Thanksgiving holiday. We chatted last month about setting the table and creating an inviting atmosphere but what about the rooms where your guests will stay? In my home, we have several rooms that are multi-purpose but we don't have a dedicated guest room. Each time we have overnight guests, there is some kind of transition that has to take place in addition to the deeper cleaning required with a house full of boys and pets.

I confess, in years past I would panic. Did I clean under the desk? Are dirty socks in the closet? What about the dust ruffles on the day beds? When were they last cleaned? Is there dog hair that I no longer see? Maybe you have a series of questions that run through your mind each time guests come to stay.

Here's how this fussy decorator finally conquered those last minute details:

**1. Make lists for specific guests.** One of my biggest issues is the "what if" question. We have several relatives who bring with them different requirements. I would often run through my mental checklist and then worry – what am I forgetting that pertains directly to them? It finally hit me. Make a list (in some cases a file) that pertains to that guest only. Edit what worked and what didn't after they leave.

We have a pet friendly home and as an animal lover, I welcome the pets that come with their people. As such, it's important to me that pets have a nice time as well. Extra pet beds? Check. Extra bowls? Check. Appropriate leashes and treats? Check.

For generational differences, it's important to think outside the box. For elderly guests I always make sure to have items they may need but may not necessarily want to have to ask about. Be gracious and simply present 'personals' in a pretty storage box or basket in their room. Don't forget extra reading glasses, extra reading lights, pens and paper on the desk next to the bed, a comfortable chair in the bedroom and Advil or Tylenol for a stiffened knee. Always cap off a guest room, especially a temporarily converted space in your home with a pretty flower in a vase.

These little things indicate you care enough to know what they might need. Protect their privacy and give honor as best you can, especially when there is no official guest room. I keep copies of these check lists handy both in my design studio and in the laundry room in case I bring in a home helper to set up the space. One list for her, one list for me equals no missed items!

**2. Shop for and style vignettes by color.** Because we have multi-function rooms, the bedding my teenage sons use is not necessarily the same bedding I want my mother- and father-in-law to enjoy while they stay. I create separate vignettes for different guests or by room and use color to separate them.

This helps me keep track of which items go together and there is no back and forth over last-minute design issues. We

did this for a single person guest suite in a cabin. With bold Hudson Bay blankets as the anchor, every detail was whimsical and fun, down to the matching slippers. Because guests aren't long term, it's OK to have some fun with the bedding.

... continued on next page



Using decorative pillows can take an ordinary kid's bedroom and bump it up for guests. Featured is a Couture Chateau pillow, lined and interlined made from an antique textile. Photo Couture Chateau llc



When outfitting a cabin or second home, order slippers, embroidered robes and towels – black makeup towels are great. For a lovely guest experience at home, even and especially if you are using a sofa bed or child's room converted for the night, consider investing in a few designer robes with a simple monogram or "guest." Photo Couture Chateau llc





Use hooks inside double duty rooms for easy care items like robes, towels and even welcome notes for guests. Photo Couture Chateau llc

**3. Use designated baskets for specific vignettes and include every item for easy set up.** For those with smaller homes or no guest bedroom, this is one of my top tips. We create a designated basket and essentially create our own version of “room in a basket” with: sheets, bed coverlet, mattress cover, nice towels, embroidered robe, slippers, beautiful pillows both for sleeping and decoration, soaps, shampoos, sewing kit and other sundries.

This way, when ‘Guest A’ is on her way, we know to pull the Blue Toile Basket and set up the spare studio space and guest bath accordingly. I will sometimes include a photo of how the space was set up last time just for easy reference.

I store the completed baskets in the laundry room or storage area under the house and confess I do shop year-round to take advantage of luxury sales so these sets are the best quality I can afford.

Finally, I cannot stress the importance of immediately washing, folding and re-storing in the proper basket, the vignette you created. The next time you need it, there is no running around and your fresh towels don’t end up on the pool deck or washing a car.

As more of us are working from home or finding our spaces have to do double duty, these stylish solutions keep us on trend and feeling like we’ve made an honorable effort when hosting out-of-town guests. It’s not about having a royal-sized guest room, though those can be fun and fabulous, it’s about creating a home where your guests are honored and feel welcomed, no matter the size.

Details like a dog treat for a cherished pet, a beautiful pillow that is just theirs or a makeup towel and extra set of reading glasses goes a long way.

May your holiday home be filled with laughter and good cheer. Happy Thanksgiving!

Do you need help with your remodel or design project? Give us a call at (925) 386-0720 or email us at [ann@couturechateau.com](mailto:ann@couturechateau.com).



Ann McDonald, IIDA, NAPO, is the Founder/CEO of Couture Chateau, a luxury interior design firm in Orinda. For a complete blog post including photos of different guest hosting ideas, visit [www.couturechateau.com/blog](http://www.couturechateau.com/blog).



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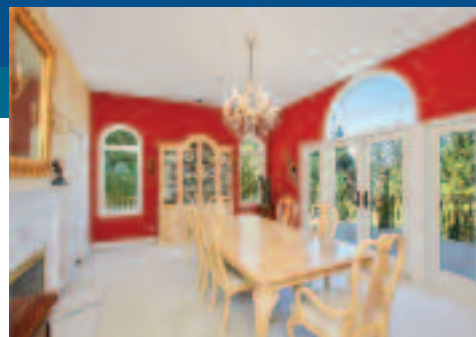
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## Digging Deep with Cynthia Brian

# Garden Gratitude

By Cynthia Brian

*“Gratitude is the fairest blossom which springs from the soul.” – Henry Ward Beecher*



*What would Thanksgiving be without turkeys ... eating our grubs?*

*Photo Cynthia Brian*

As Thanksgiving approaches we find ourselves giving thanks for our family, friends, health, and jobs. But how often do we stop to give gratitude for Mother Nature? As I strolled through my garden during my morning meditation walk, I was overcome with appreciation for the natural world that surrounded me. My garden enhances and nourishes all of my senses. The fiery ruby leaves on my liquid amber or the saffron pumpkin cloaked potted pistache in their autumnal wardrobe add a carnival of color to the landscape. The fragrance from my Angel Face roses is a sweet scent that I dream of bottling. The quail calling to one another, the gurgling of the fountain, and the whistling of the wind through the palms are sounds that calm my spirit and engage my inspiration. On my rounds, I always stop to sample the edibles, tasting the new florets on my cabbage, a sprig of mint to freshen my breath, or plucking a few cumquats to add to my afternoon tea. Touching everything, I arrive back in my kitchen with bouquets of blossoms or moss covered branches to decorate my desk and most of all, to stimulate my creativity. Over the years, I've developed a sixth sense surrounding my outside world. I feel more connected to life, to nature, and to myself while I'm in the garden. And I am grateful for the kinship.

Our gardens are growing universities, teaching us daily the values for enhanced living. From my garden teacher I have learned patience, responsibility, gentleness, kindness, and forgiveness. There are no mistakes in nature and failure is just fertilizer. When it began to rain the last day of October, I quickly ran to fertilize my brown, dry lawn. Today it is emerald green, instructing me about the importance of resiliency.

... continued on page D11



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## Cynthia Brian's Mid-Month Reminders

- **FERTILIZE** your lawn and yard at the first drops of rain. We've had a warm fall, so it's not too late to give a jolt of nutrition to help the landscape withstand the winter months.
- **PICK** fuyu persimmons now to eat and enjoy fresh, in salads, or other appetizers. As soon as your Hachiya persimmons are bright orange, they can also be harvested, however, they cannot be eaten until soft.
- **PLANT** chrysanthemums to brighten your walkways, containers, and patio.
- **ADD** a tropical flair to your Thanksgiving décor with an arrangement of the beautiful orange Birds of Paradise.
- **CONGRATULATE** the wild turkeys crossing through your landscape. They are lucky they are still eating grubs and not part of the Thanksgiving feast!
- **PLANT** easy to grow, low maintenance Dutch iris, snowdrops, grape hyacinth, daffodils and other spring bulbs for a surprise splash of color come March or April.
- **DIVIDE** overgrown perennials.
- **RAKE** leaves, adding them to the mulching pile. Let your kids frolic in them first, making memories that last a lifetime.
- **WEED** weekly as the rains come to avoid an overabundance of unwanted plants in spring.
- **SOW** wild flower seeds for a natural, woody look.
- **GIVE** thanks for your garden, our hills, valleys, and Mother Nature.



*Fuyu persimmons are ripe for the plucking. Eat them like apples or add to salads.*



*Gazing balls illuminate a fall chrysanthemum garden.*



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## Digging Deep with Cynthia Brian Garden Gratitude

... continued from page D9

We all bounce back from challenges and tomorrow is another day.

This year when we celebrate Thanksgiving, my table will be laden with the goodness from my garden including my mashed home grown potatoes infused with thyme, sage, and rosemary, a wine roasted turkey stuffed with orchard apples, onions, and grapes, plus a fresh picked salad of baby lettuces, arugula, kale, fennel, and sliced Fuji persimmons. Grace will be one of gratitude for the bounty and beauty that Mother Nature provides every day of the year, no matter what the season.

As I leave work in San Francisco, each time I witness the spectacular sunset in my rear view mirror going east on the Bay Bridge, I breathe a sigh of relief as the grazing cows on the hillside come into view. The forests of trees, the smell of the wild grasses, the capaciousness of our open spaces, and the sounds of birds replace the honking horns, crowded streets, and urine soaked sidewalk odors of the city. I give thanks that I have the opportunity to spend my days in a tranquil environment where I breathe clean air and enjoy the lushness of the valleys within a short drive of cultural amenities. Even the eerie howls of the coyotes singing at the moon, the herds of hungry deer dining along my driveway, and the wild turkeys roosting in my pines roots me in gratitude for my rustic simplicity.

I am home. And home is where my heart is.

May you enjoy a cornucopia of blessings and joy this November with your loved ones. Thank you for being such dedicated, involved readers. I appreciate you.

Happy Gardening. Happy Growing. Happy Thanksgiving.

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**92 Sandhill Road**  
 Estate setting of unmatched appeal. Large spaces plus modern design allure for appealing family living or grand scale entertaining. Fabulous views of valley & Briones reservoir/sunsets.

**\$4,475,000**



### MORAGA

**157 Miramonte Drive**  
 Fantastic bright townhome overlooking MCC Golf Course, including 2 carports each w/storage. New oak hrdwd flrs, wall to wall carpets & freshly painted. Fenced patio. Walk to Miramonte High.

*New Listing*

**\$629,900**



### MORAGA

**82 Miramonte Drive**  
 Fantastic Miramonte Gardens Opportunity. Rare 1798sf, 4bd/3ba, updated twnhm w/new carpet, updated kitchen, dual pane windows, expansive bkyd/patio. Conv. locale w/2 carports & storage.

*New Listing*

**\$630,000**



### LAFAYETTE

**3921 Happy Valley Road**  
 Stunning 4600+sf custom 4bd/3.5ba gated estate on 1ac in heart of H.V. Pool, pano views. Hrdwd flrs, kit. w/island, granite, & SS appls open to fam rm, game rm. Close to top rated schools, commute.

**\$2,795,000**



### LAFAYETTE

**23 Sessions Road**  
 Gated English Manor 12.18 acre 5bd/6ba Estate. Grand foyer, living, family rooms + "Club" room, deluxe kitchen, dramatic solarium + executive office. Gorgeous grounds w/lap pool/lawns, views.

**\$3,895,000**



### LAFAYETTE

**1141 Vallecito Court**  
 Treasured Happy Valley 6bd/5.5ba estate custom built in 2006 with the finest craftsmanship & materials. Spectacular yard w/pool, spa, fireplace & level lawn. Guest house. Privacy & views.

**\$3,900,000**



### PLEASANT HILL

**20 Whitfield Court**  
 Great 2.58 acre parcel at top of knoll with views of Mount Diablo & ideal privacy. Truly special setting sites for development zoned R-10 & R-15. Wonderful opportunity for investment.

**\$1,950,000**

93 Moraga Way, Suite 103 • Orinda, CA 94563 • Phone: (925) 254-0505

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