

See's

LAMORINDA WEEKLY

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In Moraga
Rheem Center
Next to Starbucks
10 AM - 5 PM
Kiwanis Holiday Fundraiser



Back Row: Associate Planner Michael Cass, Financial Services Manager Jennifer Wakeman, Administrative Assistant Dana Anderson, Administrative Services Director Tracy Robinson, City Manager Steve Falk, Code Enforcement Officer Adam Foster. Front Row: Planning Technician Megan Canales, Accounting Assistant Cindy Lincoln, City Clerk Joanne Robbins, Assistant Planner Sarah Allen, Planning Director Nirroop Srivatsa. Photo Ohlen Alexander

Local Government Goes Wild with Holiday Sweaters

Plenty of opportunities for holiday cheer in Lamorinda - pages A12 and B8

By Cathy Tyson

It was definitely not business as usual at the Lafayette city offices when municipal staffers and management got their holiday fashion groove on. It may have been the day before Thanksgiving, but these generous souls embraced the spirit of the season and unleashed their creative sides by donning festive, ingenious seasonal sweaters – just because we asked. Known for going all out on Halloween, planning staffers and administration, even the city manager and code enforcement officer, busted out an array of fantastic sweaters.

No more business casual for Tracy Robinson, administrative services director, who ordered a very cute cat Santa sweater from Amazon.com because she didn't have anything at home that fit the bill. Even the boss, holiday fashionista Steven Falk, was a good sport with his rockin' hand

crafted sweater.

While it's clear the dedicated folks who keep Lafayette running love to express themselves, deep down, under the polyester and cotton, everyone is grateful for their co-workers and the supportive environment at the office throughout the year. City Manager Falk summed it up, "Given the planet's many daunting and intractable problems, it feels like a privilege to work every day with dozens of fun, smart, and committed people who are trying to improve at least one little corner of the world."

For offices looking to recreate the magic and mystique, there really is an official National Ugly Christmas Sweater Day on Dec. 12.

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Merry Christmas & Happy New Year from 5A!

- Saturday, Dec. 13th, Santa will be at 5A 11am - 3pm for Free Photos, frame, cookies, cocoa, arts & crafts.
- Santa's Secret Wrapping Room Dec. 1st - 24th at 5A: paper, tape, ribbon - everything you need to wrap your gifts.

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Safe, Affordable, Accepting – The Definition of 'Home'

By Laurie Snyder



"There's a growing need for more housing because the incidence of autism, for example, is escalating. Most of the severely affected autistics will never be independent," said Orinda resident Glen Petersen as he spoke before the Orinda City Council in July. His son, Aaron, was just two years old when diagnosed with autism. Photo Ohlen Alexander

"The reason I'm here is I'm very passionate about the problem of housing," said Orindan Glen Petersen as he began his allotted public forum minutes at a July Orinda City Council meeting. The council was in the midst of one of many discussions it has held regarding updates Orinda is making to the Housing Element of its General Plan. Petersen's presentation has so resonated with attendees that *Lamorinda Weekly* is revisiting the reason for his decision to speak in preparation for the City Council's Dec. 9 meeting when it will again discuss the Housing Element.

"There are a lot of parents with disabled kids who know their kids will never be independent. Eighty percent of those will live at home with their parents until they pass," said Petersen, a physician and 24-year Orinda resident with a 26-year-old autistic son. He and his fellow members of Sunflower Hill (www.sunflowerhill.org) have been working to improve the quality of life not just for their own kids, but because there is

a growing need for supportive housing with the escalation of autism diagnoses nationwide. "Most of the severely affected autistics will never be independent."

The children involved with Sunflower Hill range in age from 14 to 28. And one thing they all have in common, said Petersen, "is that they will fit the needs of the RHNA [Regional Housing Needs Allocation] requirements for individuals needing very low-income housing."

"Our kids grow up, turn 18, and then we find ourselves asking, 'Is there life after high school? Where will our children go?'" said Susan Houghton, Sunflower's executive director. Her own son receives just \$800 per month in Social Security, which will be cut if he earns any income. Young adults like her son "either have to live with their parents or the state pays for them to live in a group home, which can end up costing the government up to \$40,000 for one person to share one bedroom with another resident."

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