

## 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.

### Girl Scout Helps Feral Kittens Through Gold Award Project

Submitted by Linda Bailey



Erin Wurgley Photos provided

The Girl Scouts of Northern California is pleased to have bestowed the highest honor possible for a Girl Scout, the Gold Award, to Acalanes High School graduate and current Diablo Valley College student Erin Wurgley of Lafayette, Troop 31042.

For the prestigious Gold Award, comparable to the Boy Scout Eagle Award, girls spend months or even years completing requirements that develop leadership and culminate in an extensive service project that makes a difference in their community or even across the world. In

2013, Girl Scouts of Northern California proudly conferred this honor to 152 outstanding young women.

To earn her Gold Award, Wurgley completed a project that developed the Lamorinda Feral Kitten Rescue Network. The project, which she began in August 2013, focused on community education, fostering, socializing, adoption, collection and distribution of donations and supplies for 4- to 8-week-old feral kittens. Kittens socialized between the ages of 4-8 weeks old have a high rate of adoptability as normal house cats. Since finishing the project, Wurgley continues to collaborate part-time with the Contra Costa County Feral Cat Foundation and SNIP (Spay Neuter Impact Program) for feral cats.

"It is an honor to bestow the Gold Award to exceptional girls like Erin whose commitment and initiative better themselves and the world around them," said Marina Park, CEO of Girl Scouts of Northern California.

"The intensive work behind the Gold Award epitomizes how Girl Scouting helps to set a girl on her path, and then she can take it anywhere from there."



### Orinda Juniorettes Join In The Spirit of Giving

Submitted by Konnie Guo and Elizabeth Bennette



From left, top: Sondra Abruzzo, Leila Minowada, and Colleen McCullough; bottom: Sarah Rockwood, Konnie Guo, Madeleine Becker, and Lara Sanli Photo Colleen McCullough

It's hard to imagine a group of teenage girls sitting down to make quilts on a Saturday morning, but the Orinda Juniorettes have done just that. They have also donated a goat through Heifer International, supported girls' education through the Malala Fund, and knitted hats for premature babies.

The Orinda Juniorettes of California are a local group of high school girls who engage in various community service activities, some conventional and some quite unique. Started in 2010, the Juniorettes – a division of the Orinda Junior Women's Club and the General Federation of Women's Clubs – have monthly projects focusing on a specific charity. For September, they completed a total of 16 quilts which they plan to donate to children in need, specifically those who are homeless, suffer from HIV or AIDS, or were born drug addicted. With quilt kits provided by Children's Quilts/East Bay Heritage Quilters, the girls laid out patterns, ironed, and sewed together various quilts. More experienced sewers taught other members how to use the sewing machines. Juniorette member and vice president Konnie Guo says, "It's so great how we were able to have fun, learn how to sew quilts, and give back to the community with this project."

The group's November project was Operation Christmas Child, which the Juniorettes have

contributed to for the past three years. As a program dedicated to providing children in underprivileged areas with school supplies, toys, and clothing, Operation Christmas Child has gained the support of hundreds of thousands since its establishment in 1993.

Determined a few weeks in advance, each member purchased a few items, and met with the other members over a recent weekend. Some purchased crayons or markers, and others bought stuffed animals or hair clips. At the meeting, the Juniorettes distributed and packaged the gifts in shoe boxes, and wrapped up the boxes with holiday wrapping paper, ribbons and stickers. After a day of packaging gifts, a club member reflected, "Not only is it so much fun to embrace the holiday spirit with my friends, but Operation Christmas Child is such a worthy cause. Taking part in it allows us to make a difference and give back during the holiday season."

Next month, the Juniorettes plan on visiting and assisting at Saint Anthony's soup kitchen in San Francisco, having a bake sale, and preparing for a school-wide textbook drive in the spring. Juniorettes are always looking for new members, so if there are any high school girls living in the Lamorinda area who are interested, please email the Juniorettes at [ojc.club@gmail.com](mailto:ojc.club@gmail.com).

### Girl Scout Gold Award Project Brings Gift of Reading to India

Submitted by Patty Gonser



Acalanes High School senior Jenny Gonser reads with one of the girls, Krupa, at an orphanage in India. Photo provided

This past August, Acalanes High School senior Jenny Gonser volunteered over 150 hours to create a library for an orphanage in India for her Girl Scout Gold Award. She collected over 1,000 donated books and with the help of family, friends and high school church group members from Lafayette-Orinda Presbyterian Church, recorded 100 of the books to create a listening library for the 108 children currently living at the orphanage in Visakhapatnam, India.

The orphanage was started about nine years ago by Rosie and Anand Thandu, two software engineers who were born in India but were then living in Walnut Creek. "Rosie and Anand are amazing people who have dedicated their lives to helping to provide a loving home and food,

clothing and education to some of the very poor children in India," said Gonser's mother, Patty. "Prior to coming to the orphanage, many of the children had been abused, were malnourished and had never had a formal education."

Gonser used her babysitting money to buy 20 CD players and had batteries donated. With the LOPC high school youth group, Gonser brought all the books, CD players and batteries to India where she spent two weeks setting up the new library and training the teachers and students. The children and the teachers were thrilled and the listening library was a huge hit. The orphanage was recently damaged by the eye of Cyclone Hudhud. To learn more about the orphanage, and how to help, visit <http://childrenoffaithmissions.org/>.

## Donation Requests from the Community



*'Tis the Season of Giving*

#### Roughing It Camp Joins Spirit of Giving

Join Roughing It in the spirit of giving this holiday season. We are collecting donations of coats, non-perishable food, and unwrapped toys until Dec. 18 for these wonderful causes: Coats for One Warm Coat, the Contra Costa Food Bank, and Toys for Tots. Drop off your items between 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the Roughing It Camp Office, 1010 Oak Hill Road in Lafayette.

#### Support the Spirit Van Through Donations, Volunteering

The Lamorinda Spirit Van is a transportation program that offers affordable rides to local shopping centers and medical appointments for Lamorinda's most vulnerable older adults. Its clients are overwhelmingly widows in the later years of their lives who have not only outlived their husbands, but also their ability to drive. In most cases it offers some sort of independence, and avoids the need for these folks to rely on the generosity of friends and family or to move into institutions. Almost all the drivers are volunteers who donate the equivalent of about \$75,000 per year of their time to support the program. The program needs your help. A small donation from Lamorinda families could provide additional funds for the support of these vulnerable folks and improve individual lives "one trip at a time." Your tax-deductible check may be made payable to the City of Lafayette and mailed to: Lamorinda Spirit Van, c/o Lafayette Community Center, 500 St. Mary's Road, Lafayette, CA 94549. For anyone interested in becoming a volunteer driver, please call (925) 283-3534.

#### Orinda's 'Cans for a Cause' Food Drive

*Benefits Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano*

Show how much you care, Orinda, by helping to collect 10,000 pounds of food this holiday season. Drop off your donations at specially marked collection bins at: Orinda City Hall, Orinda Community Center, the Orinda Union School District's administration building, or any of Orinda's elementary schools through Dec. 19. (Contact sites for specific collection dates and times.) Items needed: peanut butter, hearty soups, dried or canned beans, canned tuna and chicken, canned tomato products, 100 percent fruit juice (48 ounces or less plastic bottles), canned vegetables and fruits, enriched rice or pasta, iron rich and whole grain cereals, powdered milk. For more information, call: (925) 570-5654.

#### 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.

#### Toy Drive for Needy or Homeless Children

Every year since Leslie DeWolf's daughter started Brownies/Girl Scouts, they have taken a barrel from the Bay Area Rescue Mission and asked a business to host it. "We have seen amazing generosity and felt the true joy of the season," she says. If you feel blessed and would like to bring happiness to a needy or homeless child this season, bring an unwrapped gift for a boy or girl of any age to Smile Tu, Inc., 2933 Ygnacio Valley Road in Walnut Creek.

**Submit stories and story ideas to [storydesk@lamorindaweekly.com](mailto:storydesk@lamorindaweekly.com)**