


LAMORINDA WEEKLY

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10 a.m. - 4 p.m.

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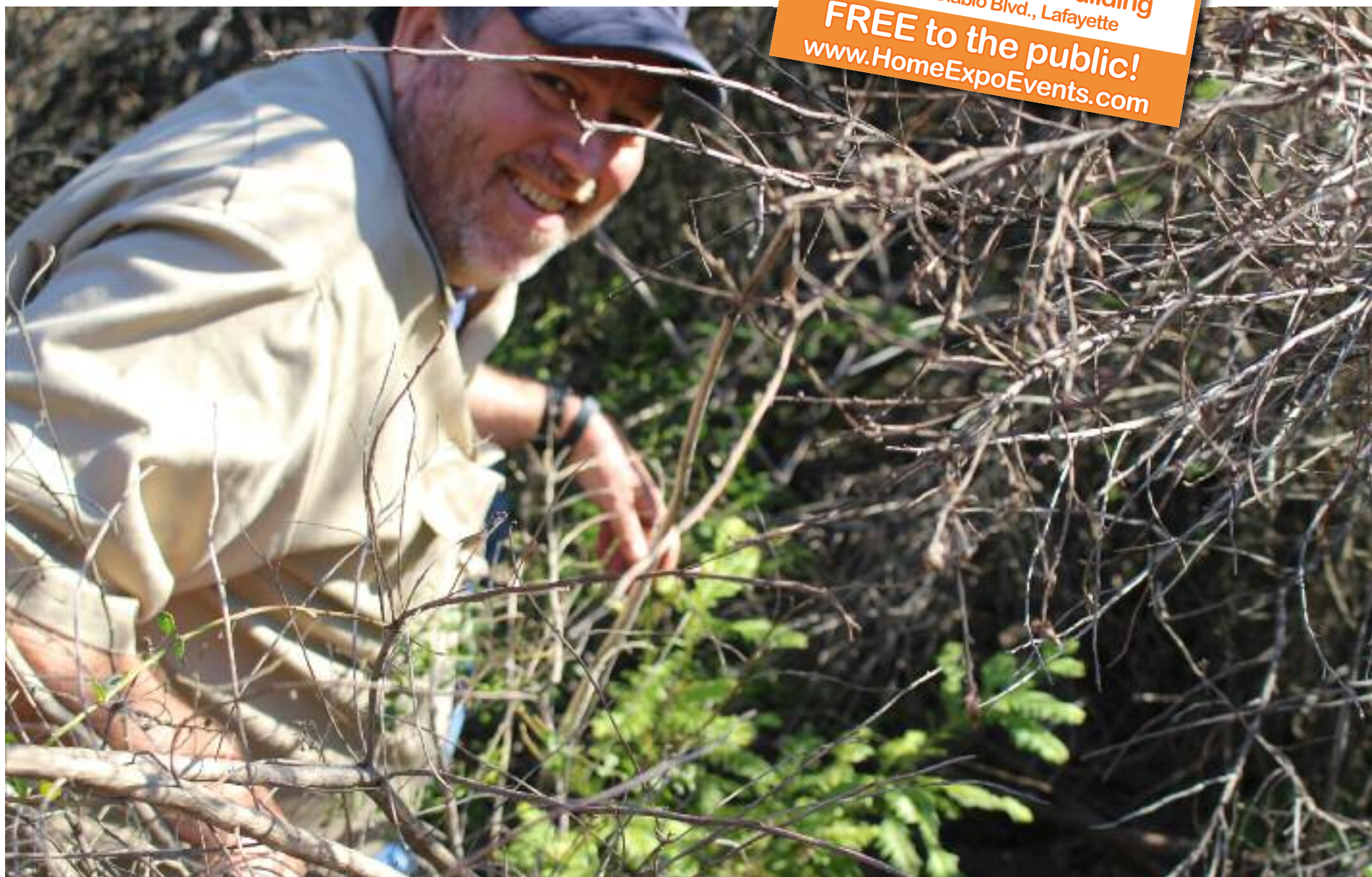


Photo Chris Lavin

The Man Who Plants Trees

Ranger Mark Silva is on a mission

By Chris Lavin

Once upon a time, a long, long time ago, there emerged a valley – several valleys actually – that came to line the watershed that flows down, then sucks in the rainwater and fog that seeps into the aquifers, collects into our dams, and provides us with what ultimately comes out of our taps. It's our watershed,

and the East Bay Municipal Utility District is in charge of it.

"People don't realize we drink this," said Mark Silva, deftly stepping out of his EBMUD truck and motioning toward the Upper San Pablo Reservoir at the Valle Vista Staging Area in Moraga. Silva is a large person with a big vision. He wears a

Fitbit training monitor on his wrist. His daughter gave it to him to make sure he stays in shape. "I get more than 10,000 steps every day," he said, indicating the monitor's goal. "I'm a big guy, but I'm in good shape." It's a tiny symbol indicating what Silva does practically every day, because the bigger picture is, he counts his steps in trees. ... continued on page A8

LAMORINDA WEEKLY

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CalBRE #01330630

Lamorindans Rally to Give Blood

Event focuses on increasing donations during winter

By Laurie Snyder



Orinda Councilmember Eve Phillips shares a confident smile before giving blood Jan. 7 as part of the American Red Cross Blood Drive at the Orinda Community Center. Photo Andy Scheck

Lamorindans joined Orinda City Councilmember Eve Phillips in celebrating National Blood Donor Month by rolling up their sleeves and giving back to the Bay Area and nation at an American Red Cross Blood Drive Jan. 7 at the Orinda Community Center. "National Blood Donor Month has been observed in January since 1970," explains Joseph Jopski, a representative from the organization's Northern California Blood Services Region. "The goal of events like this drive in Orinda is to increase blood and platelet donations during winter – one of the most difficult times of year to collect enough blood products to meet patient needs."

After filling out their health histories and completing mini-physicals, each Lamorinda donor gave slightly more than a pint of blood, which was then labeled and stored in iced coolers by the Red Cross. Bar coding enables the organization to track each donation from Orinda through the Red Cross system as the blood is typed, tested for bacteria and other diseases, separated into red cells, platelets and plasma, relabeled, and stored until the Red Cross ships the components to hospitals across the nation – something the American Red Cross does every hour of every day.

... continued on page A6

please...



RECYCLE THIS NEWSPAPER

...thanks

Life in Lamorinda B1-B10

Autism and anti-bullying advocate speaks at SMC – page B3.

GETTING A LIFE WITH ASPERGER'S

Lessons Learned on the Bumpy Road to Adulthood

Sports C1-C3

Don's win 5:3 over Mats in a back-and-forth affair – page C1.



Our Homes D1-D12

Cynthia Brian discusses why we garden – page D8.





Public Meetings

City Council
Monday, Jan. 26, 7 p.m.
Lafayette Library & Learning Center,
Community Hall, 3491 Mt. Diablo Blvd.

Planning Commission
Tuesday, Jan. 20, 7 p.m.
Lafayette Library & Learning Center,
Community Hall, 3491 Mt. Diablo Blvd.

Design Review
Monday, Jan. 26, 7 p.m.
Lafayette Library & Learning Center,
Arts & Science Discovery Center,
3491 Mt. Diablo Blvd.

School Board Meetings
Acalanes Union High School District
Wednesday, Jan. 14, 7:30 p.m.
AUHSD Board Room
1212 Pleasant Hill Road, Lafayette
www.acalanes.k12.ca.us

Lafayette School District
Wednesday, Jan. 14, 7 p.m.
Regular Board Meeting
Stanley Middle School 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

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More Legal Trouble for Former Lafayette Loan Businesses

By Cathy Tyson

The tangled legal fallout of a series of limited investment partnerships based in Lafayette continues to unfold. Most recently, the U. S. Department of Labor filed a complaint in December 2014 alleging that Bar-K Inc., Walter Ng and former Orinda pediatrician Bruce Horwitz engaged in activities that violated the Employee Retirement Income Security Act.

The complaint alleges that Ng, Horwitz and entity Bar-K Inc., "as fiduciaries to the plan, engaged in transactions and activities that violated the Employee Retirement

Income Security Act of 1974," said Deputy Regional Director of Public Affairs with the U.S. Department of Labor Jose Carnevali.

Specifically, plaintiff – The Department of Labor – claims that defendants "imprudently invested" the plan assets in two mortgage pools, Mortgage Fund '08 and RE Loans LLC, which collected the investors' funds and loaned the money to homebuyers and developers. In exchange, investors received interest from the loan proceeds. As many borrowers were unable to repay the loans, the pools became unable to repay investors. Both Mortgage Fund '08 and RE Loans LLC filed for bankruptcy protection in 2011.

A consent judgment issued by Judge Jeffrey White on Jan. 6 regarding this matter notes defendant Bruce Horwitz neither admits nor denies the allegation, but settled the matter for \$30,718. Similarly, the judge ruled that "as a direct and proximate result of the breaches of fiduciary duties" Walter Ng caused plan losses of \$1,310,252 and is judged in that amount.

What started as cash flow issues snowballed with the help of a collapsing real estate market, which ultimately led to the father and son, Walter and Kelly Ng, along with business associate Horwitz being accused of scheming 1,500 investors out of more than \$700 million.

Prior to the Department of Labor's case, the Securities and Exchange Commission filed suit; it announced earlier this year that the managers of Mortgage Fund, LLC have agreed to resolve fraud charges against them. The SEC alleged managers made false claims about fund performance, reassuring investors that everything was fine, while nearly half of the RE Loan portfolio was delinquent or in default, and even more loans were underwater in Mortgage Fund '08 with 74 percent delinquencies in 2008.

According to the SEC, "In the settlement, Kelly Ng, Horwitz, and The Mortgage Fund, LLC will pay a total of \$5,205,367 and Kelly Ng and Walter Ng will be barred from the securities industry." The SEC filed a complaint against the Ngs, Horwitz and the firm in federal court in Oakland, Calif. in 2013, alleging that they defrauded investors in their real estate fund called Mortgage Fund '08 LLC by secretly using its assets to rescue an older, rapidly collapsing fund called R.E. Loans, LLC. Having pled guilty to 20 counts of structuring cash transactions to avoid bank reporting requirements, Kelly Ng is currently serving an 18 month sentence at the medium security federal penitentiary in Lompoc, Calif.

In addition to the SEC's case, there is the Jones v. Armanino LLP class action filed on behalf of investors in RE Loans LLC and

Mortgage Fund '08. Armanino LLP, formerly known as Armanino McKenna, was an independent auditor, who plaintiffs allege did not properly conduct its audit, which resulted in financial statements that omitted and misstated important facts that misled investors. While Armanino denies it did anything wrong, the matter was resolved with the creation of a settlement fund of \$3,325,000 for the benefit of settlement class members.

The California Superior Court in Alameda County consolidated three separate class actions into one for pre-trial purposes; it was filed on Nov. 8, 2013. The complaint alleges aiding and abetting, breach of fiduciary duty, liability for securities fraud and common law fraud, negligent misrepresentation and more. The defendant moved for summary judgment recently, to get the case thrown out, "which the judge denied, so litigation is going forward," said attorney Mark Chavez of Chavez & Gertler LLP. He mentioned that depositions will start this spring.

What turned out to be their downfall started with a reasonable concept – Bar-K was created in the mid-1970s to loan money to local developers, and the business at that time was profitable. RE Loans debuted in 2002, but within a few short years everything began to fall apart. A request for comment from the Ngs' lawyer at Swanson and McNamara was not returned.

Lafayette Police Department Incident Summary Report
Dec. 28 to Jan. 3:

<p>Alarms 69</p> <p>911 calls 5</p> <p>Animal Cruelty Diablo Foods</p> <p>Burglary, Auto</p> <p>1000 block Manzana Pl</p> <p>3200 block Marlene Dr</p> <p>Fireworks</p> <p>3300 block Moraga Bl (2)</p> <p>Old Jonas Hill Rd</p> <p>Fire/EMS Response</p> <p>3300 block Mildred Ln</p> <p>Hit & Run</p> <p>900 block Dewing Av</p> <p>1800 block Ivanhoe Av</p> <p>3200 block Rohrer Dr</p> <p>Health & Safety Violation</p> <p>7-11</p> <p>1000 block Stuart St (2)</p> <p>Stuart St/Mt Diablo Bl</p>	<p>Petty Theft</p> <p>1100 block Camino Vallecito</p> <p>1800 block Reliez Valley Rd</p> <p>900 block East St</p> <p>1500 block Rancho View Rd</p> <p>Round Up Lounge</p> <p>50 block Lafayette Cr</p> <p>Reported to police dept.</p> <p>3300 block Johnson Rd</p> <p>30 block Diablo Cr</p> <p>Juvenile Disturbance</p> <p>1st St/Moraga Bl</p> <p>Missing Adult</p> <p>3200 block Ameno Dr</p> <p>Public Nuisance</p> <p>400 block St. Mary's Rd</p> <p>10 block Carolyn Ct</p> <p>1000 block Buchan Dr</p> <p>Reckless Driving</p> <p>3500 block Mt. Diablo Bl</p> <p>Taco Bell</p> <p>Mt. Diablo Bl/Lafayette Cr</p> <p>Susp. Circumstances 6</p> <p>Suspicious Vehicle 13</p> <p>Suspicious Subject 3</p> <p>Threats</p> <p>400 block Happy Valley Rd</p> <p>Traffic Stops 31</p> <p>Vandalism Acalanes High School</p>
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TOWN HALL MEETING 7 P.M.

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DETAILS TO FOLLOW

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Business Person of the Year – Leila Douglah

By Cathy Tyson



Leila Douglah in her Douglah Designs showroom in Lafayette.

Photo Cathy Tyson

After arriving from overseas fresh out of college with \$500 in her pocket, to successful business owner Leila Douglah is now living the American dream. It's no wonder she was recently voted the Lafayette Chamber of Commerce Marquis Business Person of the Year. She'll be honored on Jan. 30 at a special dinner at the Lafayette Park Hotel.

Although she was born in Minnesota, Douglah moved to Baghdad with her family when she was just 8 years old and stayed there for the next 16 years – through high school and college at the University of Technology in Baghdad. Her mother worked at the United Nations and her father was a professor at the university. After attending international school the first year of her stay, her parents decided that she and her two siblings should attend a regular local school to learn about the culture and master Arabic. She describes the first few years there as very challenging: "sink or swim."

Knowing there were virtually no opportunities for women in Baghdad due to political and economic constraints, this eager and studious young woman, upon receiving her degree in architecture, was hungry to get back to the States.

Armed with her degree, and a can-do attitude, she relocated at age 24 to Lafayette and quickly landed a job as an assistant kitchen designer at a large home improvement store. From there, she started her own interior designer business, working out of her condominium. Then in 1997 she opened a full service interior design and build business in the Clocktower building. Unfortunately she lost her lease when a new building management team took over, which in hindsight ultimately was a blessing as she moved directly across the street to a space with much more visibility on Mt. Diablo Boulevard. In 2014, she opened a second location at La Fiesta Square that serves as a retail showroom featuring plumbing fixtures, tile and lighting.

As locations expanded, so did the business's repertoire. Just a couple of years ago, Douglah obtained her contractor's license, so now the business offers clients luxury design-build remodeling, complete with an in-house construction staff. "Everyone is cross-trained," said Douglah, so the person who installs tile can also install cabinetry and countertops and more; most importantly, "we can control the quality." All of her two dozen employees enjoy medical, dental and vision benefits and paid holidays along with a consistent work schedule.

Douglah credits her upbringing for valuable lessons on learning to adapt, to look at the big picture and to not sweat the small stuff. After 24 years in the business, she knows there are constantly what she calls "little surprises" with any remodeling project.

Her philosophy is obviously working, as the business continues to blossom. "She's always looking for ways to improve," says office manager Diane Smith, adding every client is different, but the staff takes ownership and is accountable, and everyone works well together. "Leila knows that happy employees help grow your business," said assistant Nancy Glieden, explaining that's the key to any successful business. "She takes great care of us."

Grateful for life's opportunities, Douglah also has generously supported a number of organizations including Habitat for Humanity, Lafayette Partners in Education, Shelter Inc. and the Lindsay Wildlife Museum. She's a fantastic example of doing well by doing good.

The Marquis Business Person of the Year annual dinner is scheduled to start at 6 p.m. Friday, Jan. 30 at the Lafayette Park Hotel. The Chamber of Commerce sponsored event also features the introduction of the 2015 board of directors, incoming President Debbie Cooper from Mechanics Bank and the "State of the City" address by Mayor Brandt Andersson. Reservations can be made online or by calling the Chamber at (925) 284-7404.

Do you have a person in mind for the City of Lafayette to honor as 2015 Citizen of the Year?

Criteria are as follows:

- Must NOT be a current elected or paid member of any city council, school board or commission;
- Must be a current Lafayette resident;
- Must be someone who has given of their time, money or energy to help make Lafayette a healthy community, where people will want to live, work and shop;
- Must be someone who models excellence in everything they do;
- Must be someone who brings this community together and/or makes us proud to be a member of the community.

A celebration dinner will be held on **Friday, March 27** at the Lafayette Park Hotel & Spa to honor the winner! The deadline for submitting nominations is **Friday, Feb. 13**.

The 2015 Lafayette Citizen of the Year Award is co-sponsored by the Lafayette Chamber of Commerce and Lamorinda Weekly.

Please send your nomination to Lafayette Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Jay Lifson

Email: jay@lafayettechamber.org

Mail: Lafayette Chamber of Commerce
Attn: Lafayette Citizen of Year nomination
100 Lafayette Circle #103
Lafayette, CA 94549

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Reliez Valley
3234 Del Mar Drive, Lafayette

This wonderful updated ranch home is located on a great corner lot in a fantastic Reliez Valley area. This home enjoys a great flow with 3BD/2BA, 1687+/- sq. ft. and a remodeled kitchen. The flat backyard has ample play area space and is ideal for the garden lover.
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Moraga

Public Meetings

Town Council

Wednesday, Jan. 14, 7 p.m.
Wednesday, Jan. 28, 7 p.m.
Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School,
1010 Camino Pablo

Planning Commission

Tuesday, Jan. 20 canceled
Monday, Feb. 2, 7 p.m.
Moraga Library, 1500 St. Mary's Rd.

Design Review

Monday, Jan. 26, 7 p.m.
Moraga Library, 1500 St. Mary's Rd.

School Board Meeting Moraga School District

Tuesday, Feb. 10, 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

Big burglary, 12/24/14 A Corliss Drive resident was out of town for five days over Christmas and returned home on Dec. 28 to find two safes were stolen, along with a 2004 gray Honda Accord. The homeowner didn't know who would have done this. She estimates the monetary loss to be approximately \$12,000. Neighbors didn't see or hear a thing.

TV taken, 12/23/14 A family member went to check on her uncle's unoccupied Lynwood Place residence and discovered the pedestrian garage door had been forced open. The only thing missing was a television worth an estimated \$400, but the rest of the house had been rummaged through and miscellaneous food, alcohol, bedding and towels had also been taken.

Grand theft auto, 1/01/15 Not much of a happy new year for the guest of an Ascot Drive resident who had a cell phone, sunglasses and personal checks taken from the inside of his unlocked vehicle which had been parked in the driveway overnight. Total loss estimated at approximately \$1,300. The case is under investigation, but inactive pending further evidence.

Danger to self, 1/02/15 Cops were on routine patrol of the Rheem Shopping Center when they were contacted by a woman having emotional/mental health issues. Police determined she was a danger to herself and she was taken to the hospital.

Chair theft, 1/03/15 A citizen contacted cops in front of the police department, just down the road from where he just observed a theft by three white males in their late teens or early 20s stop in front of a Rheem Center dining establishment and quickly place two outdoor chairs into the back of the vehicle before speeding off. The observer wisely took photos of the suspect's vehicle. The incident is under investigation.

Resisting arrest, 1/05/15 Police checked on a man parked in front of a Corliss Drive residence and asked the fellow multiple times to step out of the vehicle, but he refused. The subject started acting as if he was hiding something under a blanket and would not listen to officer's com-

mands. As police opened the vehicle's door, the gentlemen started resisting; after a brief struggle the subject was subsequently arrested for resisting and obstructing a peace officer. He was also ticketed for being under the influence of a controlled substance and possession of paraphernalia.

The following incidents also occurred between Dec. 24 and Jan. 5:

Petty Theft – Silvia court
Violation of Court Order – Ascot Court

False Alarm – Camino Peral, Claudia Court, Fairfiled Place, Sanders Ranch Road, Corte Royal, School Street, Rimer Drive, Danefield Place, Kimberley Drive

Danger to Self – Moraga Road
Civil Dispute – Tharp Drive

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Hillside and Ridgeline Development

Is more public outreach needed?

By Sophie Braccini

The Planning Commission provided input regarding the end of the first phase of the Moraga Hill-sides and Ridgelines project at its Jan. 5 meeting. The Moraga Hill-sides and Ridgelines project was initiated in late 2013 based on a Moraga Town Council goal to study and potentially update the existing regulations for hillside and ridgeline development.

The first year of the project was spent discussing areas that should be studied to render the town's development regulations clear, understandable, and free of ambiguity. Over the years, different interpretations of the rules have surfaced, creating uncertainty and heated discussions as new developments were proposed. The Planning Commission was presented with a list of topics, preliminary landslide hazard and inventory maps were created to determine which areas of Moraga are possibly at high risk for building, and a draft 200-page public document called the Background Report, "Understanding Moraga's Hillside Regulations," was published June 2014 to provide a clear summary of the existing regulations regarding hillside and ridgeline development in the town.

After several public meetings, and work by a steering committee, it was decided the project should focus on ridgeline protection, development on steep slopes and the need for a slope permit, calculation of slopes, remediation of high-risk areas and viewshed protection. Whether the rules are left as is, simplified or amended will impact future large developments in Moraga, such as in Bollinger and Indian valleys, but could also impact the approval of smaller structures, such as adding a retaining wall to an existing sloped property.

During the meeting, members of the audience asked for further public discussion about these issues before the Council makes any decisions. Moraga resident Edy Schwartz called for a comprehensive education campaign, citing what the town did to educate people about roads and pass the 1 percent sales tax. Planning Commissioner Steve Woehleke responded, "How would you get the whole town to agree on this?"

The regulations that tend to limit development have been hotly debated in Moraga since incorporation in 1974. The Moraga Open Space

Ordinance (MOSO) was passed in 1986, limiting what could be done in certain areas, but a measure to strengthen MOSO failed in 2008. Woehleke expressed concern that the work done today was leaning more toward modifying the rules in a more stringent way than clarifying and simplifying them.

Property owner Dave Bruzzone expressed his frustration about what he perceives as the lack of responsiveness of staff to his written comments. He highlighted that part of his properties were labeled as being subject to MOSO when in fact it is not the case; he also indicated that the new landslide hazard map presented by staff was a detriment to the town. "(There are) landslides all over hillside communities, in Lafayette and Orinda too," he said, "and some of these landslides are on properties where people live right now."

When MOSO was approved it included a Development Capability Map listing higher risk areas; the landslide hazard map presented to the Steering Committee and Planning Commission, developed by Cotton Shires Consulting Engineers does not coincide perfectly with the

MOSO map. While the Steering Committee found the new visual by Cotton Shires useful, the commissioners did not unanimously share its enthusiasm.

Planning Commission Chair Christine Kuckuk said that for her the proper way to write policies was to draft rules that are so clean that there is no confusion and ambiguity, and she saw no need to develop new maps. On the other hand, Commissioner Frank Comprelli, who was on the steering committee found it useful.

Overall the commissioners agreed which are the key hillside and ridgeline development issues that should be addressed. "It's a conversation Moraga has needed to have for a long time," said Commissioner Stacia Levenfeld. "It's time to dive into the issues."

At its Jan. 28 meeting the Town Council will consider the Steering Committee and Planning Commission recommendations and provide direction to town staff and consultants on next steps for the project. A first draft of new regulations should be decided mid-2015 with final adoption envisioned by the end of the year.

Two Upcoming Meetings in Moraga

Moraga Livable Road, Jan. 14, and Canyon Bridge Jan. 20

By Sophie Braccini

The Moraga Town Council will discuss different options to improve pedestrian and bicycle circulation while maintaining a high level of service for cars along Moraga Road between Campolindo High School and the St. Mary's Road crossing at 7 p.m. tonight. The meeting will be held in the auditorium of Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School.

Discussion of the Livable Moraga Road project began a year and a half ago. At the end of a series of meetings, a majority of participants rallied around a reduction of Moraga Road to three lanes between Corliss Drive and Donald Drive, with pocket lanes for left turns, and maintaining four lanes from Donald Drive to the Rheem Boulevard crossing where the road already becomes two lanes, going north. As proposed, the corridor would include a continuous multi-use path from the Commons to Campolindo

High School, new pedestrian crossings, bike lanes and sidewalks, and intersection improvement at Rheem Boulevard, Corliss Drive, St. Mary's Road and around the high school frontage. More information about the Livable Moraga Road Project can be found at www.moraga.ca.us/livable-moragaroad.

The Public Works Department will hold a second community out-

reach meeting at 6 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 20 in the La Sala Room at the Hacienda de las Flores, 2100 Donald Drive. The antiquated bridge located on Canyon Road over the West San Leandro Creek was found structurally deficient, and is a hazard to pedestrians and bicyclists because it is so narrow. The town decided to construct a new bridge and is conducting extensive outreach due to the importance

of that bridge. At this meeting a revised conceptual plan addressing the concerns received at the first meeting in October will be presented. Construction is currently scheduled for 2016. Information on the project is available online (moraga.ca.us, enter canyon bridge in the search window), including a description of the project and responses to the questions that have been asked by residents.

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**TOWN COUNCIL
 GOAL SETTING WORKSHOP
 THURSDAY, 1/22, 6:00 PM
 HACIENDA- LA SALA BUILDING**



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 925-888-7045 • www.moraga.ca.us

Moraga Housing Element En Route for Certification

By Sophie Braccini

The Planning Commission unanimously approved the 2015-23 Housing Element that provides zoning for building at least 229 new housing units in Moraga. It complies with state requirements, as the document heavily relies on the Moraga Center Specific Plan (MCSP) that was approved four years ago.

The State Department of Housing and Community Development has already reviewed the first draft of this

document. Recommended edits from HCD were incorporated, and the final version was approved by the Commission Jan. 5.

Failing to certify a Housing Element can have a financial impact for a town, but recent citizen movements have challenged the state mandate, calling it unrealistic and undemocratic. In Moraga, the approval of the MCSP allowed the town to get its Housing Element certified in 2011,

and since the new mandate for additional housing is lower than the previous one, the town should not have any difficulty to be found compliant.

The Moraga Town Council will consider adoption of the Draft Housing Element on Jan. 28. Once adopted, the Town will submit the Housing Element to HCD for certification. HCD has 90 days to review the Adopted Housing Element for compliance with state law.

Poles Down



Photo Sophie Braccini

City Ventures took down the story poles that have been on the property located on Moraga Way

near the Moraga-Orinda Fire District station and administrative building since August, after the December

storms started taking them down for them. The poles were outlining a proposed development on this space that was recently approved by the Planning Commission and was appealed by a group of residents. The Moraga Town Council will review the development proposal in the coming months. In the meantime, Campolindo High School's musical group approached City Ventures to get some of the wood poles for the construction of the barricades in their coming production of "Les Misérables." Charity Wagner of City Ventures commented that other residents also called to collect some wood and were accommodated. *S. Braccini*



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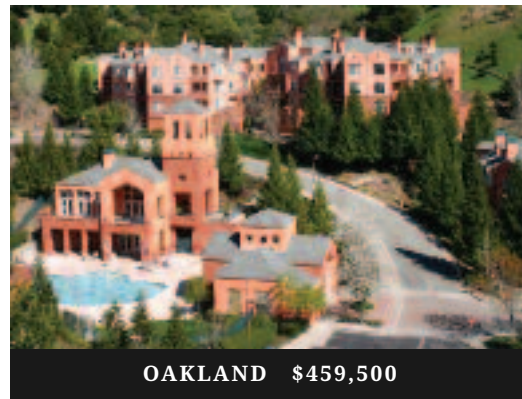
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Orinda

Public Meetings

City Council

Tuesday, Jan. 20, 7 p.m.
Auditorium, Orinda Library,
26 Orinda Way

Planning Commission

Tuesday, Jan. 27, 7 p.m.
Auditorium, Orinda Library,
26 Orinda Way

Citizens' Infrastructure Oversight Commission

Wednesday, Jan. 14, 6:30 p.m.
Sarge Littlehale Community Room,
22 Orinda Way

School Board Meeting

Orinda Union School District

Monday, Feb. 9, 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 Dec. 21 to Jan. 3:

Alarms	84
Barking Dog	400 block Miner Rd (2)
Burglary	10 block Eastwood Dr
Burglary, Auto	Wagner Ranch Elementary
Burglary, Commercial	20 block El Gavilan Rd
911 calls	10
Custody Violation	500 block Dalewood Dr
Disturbance	100 block Moraga Wy (domestic) 10 block Lost Valley Dr (civil) Oak Rd/Stein Wy (juvenile) 100 block Sleepy Hollow Ln (juvenile)
Drunk in Public	300 block Glorietta Bl
DUI	Moraga Wy/Brookside Rd
Fire/Ambulance Call	Monte Visa/Camino Pablo Miramonte High School 10 block Ranch Rd 30 block Tappan Ln 80 block El Gavilan Rd
Found Adult	20 block Crest View Ct
Hit & Run	Library Bank of America 20 block Knickerbocker 100 block Sleepy Hollow Ln
Loud Party	200 block Moraga Wy 100 block Stein Wy 40 block Lost Valley Dr 60 block Oak Dr
Theft, Petty	100 block Scenic Dr Bevmo 10 block Hacienda Cr 10 block Fallen Leaf Tr (2) 100 block Meadow Ln 10 block Woodcrest Dr
Theft, Grand	40 block Bear Ridge Rd
Public Nuisance	Safeway (2) Whitehall/Ardith Dr 20 block Carisbrook Dr
Reckless Driving	Moraga Wy/Hall Dr Camino Pablo/Camino Sobrante Moraga Via/Glorietta Bl Camino Sobrante/Miner Rd Camino Pablo/Los Amigos Camino Pablo/Monte Vista Camino Pablo/Hwy 24
Suspicious Subject	9
Suspicious Circum.	12
Suspicious Vehicle	28
Traffic Stops	72
Trespass	Hillcrest Dr/Overhill Rd
Vehicle Theft	30 block Ardilla Rd
Vandalism	60 block Barbara Rd 400 block El Toyonal



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Orinda Mayor Steve Glazer – Paying It Forward

By Laurie Snyder



The recent news regarding the Obama administration's efforts to improve relations with Cuba was heartening to Orinda Mayor Steve Glazer and family. "My wife's family came from Cuba so we share a special bond with the island. We still have relatives who live there and we have traveled to see them so we have a firsthand account of their struggles over the years. I'm hopeful that the human condition will improve for the people of Cuba with the renewal of political relations." From left – the Glazer family: Ariel, Steve, Melba, and Alex. Photo provided

"I want my year as mayor to be all about community collaboration and consensus building," says Orinda Mayor Steve Glazer. "We have our issues and challenges as a city but they are all achievable if we work constructively together in our common desire to protect and enhance this beautiful place. A day doesn't go by where I don't count my blessings and Orinda and its people are a cherished part of that gratitude."

Glazer is a big fan of Orindans – individually and collectively. The majority of those who live or work in the city are friendly and bighearted, he observes, "but their giving spirit is not always flamboyant or visible." Many donate money and volunteer hours to a wide range of philanthropic causes, but prefer to do so quietly because they believe in the maxim that to whom much is given, much is expected. "We have always found Orindans to be gracious and unpretentious. Our friends and neighbors are very generous with their time and resources to improve our community and to help others regionally and around the world. There is a great appreciation for the arts and embrace of cultural diversity. We feel very privileged to call it our

home."

Glazer and his family have lived in Orinda for nearly two decades. "I met my wife while working for a State Assemblyman in 1984. She was his press secretary (a job I had previously held) and I was running his re-election campaign. We dated for a few years and ended up marrying in June 1987. Our wedding was presided over by the Chief Justice of the California Supreme Court, with whom I had previously worked. Over the next few years, we moved between Los Angeles, Sacramento and the Bay Area due to her subsequent employment with the telephone company and arrived in Lamorinda in 1996 with two young children in tow. We chose Orinda because of its beauty, great schools and convenience to transit. I got involved in community matters pretty quickly, and was appointed to serve on the city's Parks and Recreation Commission in 1997. That same year I was asked to help the committee that was working to create the Moraga-Orinda Fire District (MOFD) to improve public safety and paramedic services."

Six years later, he would become more intimately acquainted with MOFD's personnel than he

could have ever imagined. "Little did I know it in 1997, but those new paramedics ended up being first on the scene with lifesaving care for me in 2003." That year, he was shot in the neck by a troubled youth firing a high-powered pellet rifle at passing motorists from the deck of an Orinda home. Glazer, who'd simply been out enjoying a drive with his family on Miner Road, was seriously wounded as a .17-caliber projectile pierced his body and lodged next to his spine – after narrowly missing his carotid artery. Police apprehended the shooter but, because pellet guns were classified as toys in the criminal code at that time, they were unable to charge the youth with negligently discharging a weapon. After his recovery from a two-hour surgical procedure to repair his wound, Glazer collaborated with then-California Sen. Tom Torlakson to legislate stiffer penalties for pellet gun attacks. Motivated by the paramedics' kindness and diligence, he also decided to "pay it forward" by playing a more active role in Orinda's governance.

On one recent day, Glazer spent an hour on the phone helping a fellow Orindan better understand how the city government works, and then shifted gears to make philanthropy-related telephone calls as a California State University Trustee before switching back into mayor mode. Driving out to Orinda's Lost Valley neighborhood, he surveyed and helped resolve a situation residents felt was blighting the area (see photos on p. A-7).

"Prior to a council meeting, a typical day is doing your homework on the issue at hand, asking questions of staff and talking with interested residents. When you serve as Mayor, you're responsible for providing feedback to staff in organizing activities and meetings, and have additional responsibilities to represent the city at community events and regional forums. You have to be mindful that in most cases you're not speaking for yourself, so you have to consider the opinions and expectations of your council colleagues. Half of the conflicts I see between residents or between residents and their city have to do with misunderstandings and not differences on substance. The question becomes, 'How we can engage and find common ground?'"

This is the second in a two-part series of interviews with Orinda Mayor Steve Glazer. To read part one, visit our online archives: www.lamorindaweekly.com.

Lamorindans Rally to Give Blood

... continued from page A1

Jopski estimates that, thanks to Lamorinda's team effort, 54 lives will be saved in 2015. All of the Orinda donations were successful, he says, and each may end up being used for up to three different patients in need

– a great return on the investment for all who participated. If you missed this month's blood drive, you'll still have another chance to help in March during National Red Cross Month. To learn more, visit [www.redcross.org/about-](http://www.redcross.org/about-us/red-cross-month)

[us/red-cross-month](http://www.redcross.org/about-us/red-cross-month). To organize your own Sleeves Up campaign with friends, family or coworkers, visit <http://sleevesup.redcross-blood.org/pages/howitworks>.

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The Rainbow of Public Service

By Laurie Snyder

“Be a rainbow in someone else’s cloud.” – Maya Angelou



Two unsightly Job Johnnies inhabit this Lost Valley substation.



The same area after Orinda Mayor Steve Glazer worked with PG&E over the holidays, finding a solution. Photos courtesy the City of Orinda

New York may be “the city that never sleeps,” but Orinda is “the city that never closes” – at least where city leaders are concerned – even when the sign on City Hall says “closed for the holidays.” Whether it’s a sinkhole forming beneath a street as happened on Tarabrook Drive following torrential rains in December 2013 or a private property raising the blood pressure of neighbors as it morphs from woody to eyesore, Orinda’s elected officials and city staff are frequently called in as “fixers” while their fellow Orindans are home enjoying family time.

Recently, in response to one neighborhood’s letter to the city regarding the shabby condition of PG&E’s supply yard and adjacent pasture near its Lost Valley substation, Mayor Steve Glazer stepped in over the holidays to improve the climate between the utility and Orindans who had grown increasingly frustrated as they watched a power pole replacement project staging area outside of the substation’s gate sprout more and more clutter while a single Job Johnny originally thought to be temporary became two. The following photos provide an example of one problem and its resolution.

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Fire Districts

Public Meetings

Moraga-Orinda Fire District Board of Directors

Wednesday, Jan. 21, 7 p.m.
Go to www.mofd.org as the meeting date approaches for location and more information

ConFire Board of Directors

Tuesday, Feb. 10, 1:30 p.m.
Board Chamber room 107,
Administration Building,
651 Pine St., Martinez
For meeting times and agendas,
visit <http://alturl.com/5p9pu>.

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One District, Indivisible

Wyro Retires from the MOFD Board

By Nick Marnell



Retired MOFD Director John Wyro
Photo provided

The refrain “But that’s the way we’ve always done it” has been the undoing of many a manager or company. As John Wyro relates, that phrase sparked the for-

mation of the Moraga-Orinda Fire District, from which he retired in December after nearly 17 years of service as district director.

A few months after Wyro’s appointment as a director of the old Orinda Fire District, the fire chief walked into his office. “He handed me a copy of a budget and said that we needed to approve it that night,” said Wyro. “I told him that I can’t do that, and he said that was the way it’s always been done. Needless to say, it didn’t happen.

“As we dug into it,” continued Wyro, “the more we realized that Orinda was subsidizing (the Contra Costa County Fire Protection District). We had old equipment, and most of all, no paramedics, and terrible response times. More often than not, (American Medical Response) had an ambulance in Walnut Creek responding to our emergencies. We started talking with Moraga and we decided we should become our own district. We put a group together and formed MOFD in 1997. Day one, we had paramedics staffing engines,” which Wyro credited to the efforts of interim chief Mel Deardorf.

“John always believed that since the new Moraga-Orinda Fire District was now serving a larger constituency, it was truly one dis-

trict serving all residents equally,” said Gordon Nathan, one of the original district directors.

MOFD made national headlines in 2009 when it was revealed that upon retirement fire chief Pete Nowicki spiked his pension to an amount significantly higher than his final salary. “It was my biggest mistake and disappointment,” said Wyro, speaking of the board’s approval of that retirement package. “My lack of feeling the need to go into the kind of depth necessary to investigate that situation, well ... it was a question I didn’t ask and should have.” The district has eliminated the spiking program in the fire chiefs’ contracts.

Wyro left no doubt as to his top accomplishment. “It was bringing paramedics to Orinda,” he said. “I know as a result of our efforts doing that, lives have been saved. There are people walking around today who wouldn’t be if we hadn’t done that.”

Many think of Wyro’s leadership in the fire station 46 joint venture between MOFD and ConFire. “I would like to have finished it, but I’ll be at the hearings,” he said. “I understand the process. I know the players in Lafayette, so I think I can help make it happen as a volunteer citizen. At a minimum, I’ll

be at every board meeting where that’s a topic, and I’ll be at the podium.”

He would not validate the complaints of a grass roots committee that claims north Orinda response times will be increased if station 43 is razed and replaced by station 46. “The district represents a larger constituency than just the folks around station 43. When all is said and done and they see the facts, their arguments are going to wither,” he said, again emphasizing the district as a single entity.

“It’s good to have board turnover,” said Wyro. “It was time for me to go, time to get a different look at things.” Though, he did say that he was prepared to file papers to run again, and that he would have served another term to finish up station 46 if no candidate surfaced whom he was happy with. “But, I am very comfortable with Brad (Barber) and I think he is going to be a very good director,” he said.

MOFD director Fred Weil served 11 years on the board with Wyro. “It was always a pleasure to work with John, in part because he would speak directly to issues with no hidden motives or agendas,” he said. “His focus has always been on the welfare of the whole district and its residents.”

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lows users to include specific details of an issue. “It allows users to take a picture, select an issue type, add comments and include a location of the complaint,” said Code Enforcement Officer Adam Foster. “Information is then instantaneously forwarded to the appropriate staff member.” For those without a smartphone, there is an online Code Enforcement Request form, or simply call the code enforcement officer at (925) 299-3207. C. Tyson



From Front Page

The Man Who Plants Trees

... continued from page A1

Beware the person who doubts this, following him into the bush. Silva has a mission. And that mission is to put back the redwood trees that were all sawed down and hauled out just about 100 years ago, in the early 1900s and before, planting them back into the bramble and thimble that has become an establishment of his hacked down, replanted watershed. The Monterey pines are gradually getting taken out. As EBMUD ranger and naturalist Matt Sporleder said, “Someone in the 1950s thought that was a good idea” to plant those Monterey pines. Think again, he says.

“Those trees are dying and they only have about a 50-year lifespan,” Sporleder said of the pines. “Mark Silva has a vision for that area.” To that end, Silva has taken it upon himself, for the past 20 years, to collect endemic seeds, germinate them in his back yard in Castro Valley, nurture the seedlings at the EBMUD yard in Orinda, then transplant the trees back into the watershed. He even goes out in the spring to the creeks and nets the pools of fallen redwood seeds that have blown down, dries them, then plants them scatter-style in his nursery to see what sprouts.

“I really don’t know what I’m doing,” he says modestly. But then again – it’s at least 400 trees later. For instance, on a recent hike through the watershed, a woman leading a Welsh

pony called out to Silva: “Are you checking on your trees?” Silva muffled a yep. “They’re doing good!” she yelled.

“I’ve watched him,” said pony owner Karen Bottiani of Lafayette, contacted later by phone. “He’s a really good guy. What he is doing is going to completely change that landscape. It’s going to put it back where it used to be. This place is going to look completely different in 50 years.” More like it used to look, she said. She has seen him in dry seasons carrying 5-gallon jugs of water to redwood seedlings that need that first jolt for the first couple of years. “If they get water in that first year, that’s what counts,” Bottiani said. “He’s making sure those trees get that.”

Silva’s goal is simple: Replace the non-native Monterey pine with the more fire resistant native coast redwood. He not only wants to protect obstruction of the public road by falling pines, but to protect the watershed from unnecessary runoff into the actual water by having sustainable trees that don’t fall down in a big wind storm. To that end, in 2003 Silva found what he calls the “glory hole,” something a public relations savvy reporter told him was a bad name for a hole. Silva did not know what she meant. Instead, he espoused on how he had found a hundred, no hundreds, of saplings in an area that he pillaged

for seedlings and, while leaving plenty, dispersed them throughout the watershed.

“Here’s one!” shouted Silva, diving into a pile of poison oak. “I didn’t know this one made it.” He subsequently began to tear down the broom overshadowing the pre-pubescent tree, shining light on its pale green branches. “Here you go!” Silva said, but he swears he doesn’t talk to the trees.

“I’m not kidding,” said Sporleder, who is taking out a Girl Scout troop later this month to plant 20 more redwood trees from Silva’s nursery. “He goes out when it’s raining hard and just stands there. He wants to know where the water is going. He wants to see where the erosion is happening. He looks and sees what needs to be done to keep the water clean and the soil in place.”

“Then he plants trees,” Sporleder said.

On a recent day at the Valle Vista lot, several acorn woodpeckers flew in to take their spots on remaining Monterey pine snags. What about them?

“Oh! We kept those snags there just for that reason,” Silva said. “The woodpeckers like them.” He calmly looked down at his wrist, and it wasn’t even 10 a.m. “Hey! I got 10,000 steps!” (On his Fitbit device.) “Now let’s go see some trees.”



"A goal without a plan is just a wish." – Antoine de Saint-Exupéry

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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:

Bruce London's Letter to the Editor published in the Lamorinda Weekly on December 31 takes issue with the sensible ideas in Michael Kaplan's Practical Housing Strategy letter, published on December 17. I would have to side in this matter with Mr. Kaplan, who has a long and distinguished record as an architect and city planner. I would share Mr. London's concerns that the Rite Aid property is not an appropriate site for the development of housing. This site is the heart of the Orinda Village commercial district and to the extent it is redeveloped some day in the future, its continued use should most likely be for commercial, not residential development. I would disagree, however, with Mr. London's definition of village character as excluding multifamily development in downtown. Housing has been well-established as an appropriate use of real estate in villages for centuries. It is a permitted use within the commercial districts under Orinda's current zoning code.

Over the past several years, Orinda has been attentive to the need for affordable housing in our community. A strong case can be made today, however, for addressing the additional need for market-based multi-family housing in Orinda. As an example, the Phairs block, if assembled, would be a logical location for such housing (rather than the Ride Aid property). Given the reality of current land values in downtown, such a development would require greater density than the 10 units to the acre the city's municipal code presently permits. The City Council is moving in the right direction to encourage densities of 20-25 units to the acre. This density, which would enable underground parking, can be readily accomplished with sensitive design, in keeping with most Orindans' present notions of village character. This sort of zoning flexibility is in fact encouraged by Section 17-8.1 of the Municipal Code, as Mr. Kaplan points out. Finally, I believe most Orindans would also agree with Mr. Kaplan, as opposed to Mr. London, in recognizing the financial benefits to the renewal of our tired downtown. The "vibrant community center" called for in our zoning code is one that continues to elude us. Renewal of our commercial districts is the way forward for Orinda. Resistance to change is backward-looking, and has led to the decline in our downtown we see year by year.

Tom Trowbridge
Orinda

Editor:

In defense of OUSD, I would like to play Devil's advocate in the Orinda School/mother/Storch debate. Public schools are government schools. Government makes the rules (with some local input), government draws the school boundaries, government tells you where your child must go to school and government decides how much of your tax money you get back to pay for your schools. Not all schools are given the same amount of money. The government, some time ago, decided that Orinda should be one of the low funded public school districts. To overcome that and because good schools are important to

Orinda parents, they engage in what amounts to endless "bake sale" schemes and volunteerism to support teachers and to fund programs. It is not an accident that Orinda and has good schools. A lot of hard work and dedication make it happen. Many people would like to take advantage of that. I worked at a business in Orinda for years and was privy to the schemes of various people to get their children into the Orinda and Acalanes schools such as using the addresses of friends and relatives to establish residency, renting apartments (sometimes temporary), honest petition etc. School officials have an obligation to the government and the community to enforce residency rules. By hiring an outside agency to check residency, it seems OUSD exercised due diligence and at the same time kept an "arms length" to prevent the appearance of favoritism. To complicate the situation, according to reports, the mother either lied when she claimed Bay Point as home or when she later claimed Orinda (mostly) as home. Whatever the justification, lying confused the situation as did her spending a lot of time in Bay Point. It appears OUSD relied on the results of a professional third party investigation. When challenged with more information, they reconsidered the decision. The response seemed to be reasonable.

Mae C. Lewis
Orinda

Editor:

The City Ventures (CV) plan is too big for the site and violates Moraga's "semi-rural nature." The November meeting was full of residents opposing it. CV often tries to get around the laws through deception, which the town seems to go along with. The most recent deception: After years of calling this a multi-family housing (MFH) plan, CV (which specializes in multi-family housing) has suddenly decided to call this "single-family housing (SFH)." This is because the setback requirement for multi-family housing is greater than for single-family housing. The development is too large for the site to fit the setback requirements. There are 4 large buildings with 4, 5, 6, 6 attached units (several with 3 stories). The Moraga Specific Plan names 6 or more dwellings per unit "multi-family housing." In the 11/21/2012 Lamorinda Weekly article, it is described as "multi-family units," and Philip Kerr from CV is quoted "this is not Son-sara, this is multi-family housing." Ellen Clark, the planning director, admitted the setback requirement for multi-family housing is larger than single-family housing ... but then mumbled something to the effect of "perhaps this looks like multi-family housing, but maybe it might be smaller than other MFH units, so maybe we can consider it single-family housing ..." This town has admitted to cutting corners to pass this. CV violates another setback rule. The land is zoned as office/residential. Residential setbacks are required to be larger than the office's setback. The CV setback for CCD is only 4.9 feet (!), about 10 feet closer to the road than the office! Since CV cannot abide by the proper setbacks, the project is too large for the lot, and in the wrong place. The town has granted CV use of 20 feet of Moraga Way's

ease to make room for a sidewalk. There will be no way to expand the road or add a common turn lane or left hand turn lane. A planning commissioner was appalled the city engineer (whom he thought should be fired) allowed this to occur and voted against the development for this reason. With all of the development the town wants to add (over 1000!) this is a terrible idea. Let's hope CV develops a plan with less density and height, more vegetation, that actually fits the site (honoring the setback requirements), and respects the semi-rural nature of Moraga and its present tax-paying residents.

Bob Valinotti
Moraga

Editor:

I want to express my great concern over the information I recently received regarding the Livable Moraga Road project. I live in Rheem Valley Manor and exit the neighborhood from Draeger Dr. to Moraga Road daily. There is no other way to say it other than this is a dangerous intersection. Turning right onto Moraga Road has its challenges regarding pedestrians and runners and bikes.

Turning left onto Moraga Road has the added danger of crossing two lanes of fast traffic. There are times when the only safe way to go south from Draeger Road is to go north – proceed to the stoplight at Donald Dr. – turn left – proceed to the Hacienda and turn around – go back to the stoplight and turn south on Moraga Road. The idea that adding pedestrians, runners, bikes, baby carriages and dogs to this already dangerous intersection defies logic and common sense.

It appears that the goal is to create a road which resembles streets in the neighborhoods – one transportation solution for all. If that is the goal, I can live with it if safety is taken into account. The difficulty with the proposed Corridor-Wide Concept is the addition of pedestrians, runners, bikes, baby carriages and dogs to a major town artery in which cars travel at forty plus miles per hour. This concept makes already dangerous intersections at Corliss Dr., Draeger Dr. and Devin Dr. worse. If this is to be a neighborhood roadway for everyone's use, where are the provisions for slowing down traffic? Will this stretch be a 25 mile per hour speed limit? Will there be traffic lights at these intersections? I have not read about these accommodations in the literature provided by the Town.

You may say I am raising a red flag here. I have lived in Moraga since 1975 and had the experience of receiving a police call regarding my son who was riding his bicycle and was hit by a car at the intersection of Draeger Dr. and Moraga Road.

The truth is, throwing pedestrians, runners, bikes, baby carriages and dogs into fast moving traffic is not safe. It seems that the goal of connecting shopping centers with neighborhoods, schools, parks and transit has overshadowed the goal of safe travel in Moraga. I urge the Town Council to send this plan back to committee to come up with a plan that will address the safety of all who travel this corridor.

DeEtta Kay Reynolds
Moraga



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Business

Rheem Valley Pet Shoppe Follows New Trends

By Sophie Braccini



Jennifer Lenfestey in the Rheem Valley Pet Shoppe

Photo Sophie Braccini

It's been just over a year since Jennifer Lenfestey, a former employee, took over the Rheem Valley Pet Shoppe. The store, tucked in the Rheem Valley Shopping Center, could have continued to survive doing business as usual, but Lenfestey has given it new life by focusing on suburban pet trends like supplying chicken and horse feed, delivering hay and organic dog food, stocking cat furniture, and even finding homes for rescue rabbits.

A Camino Pablo Elementary, Joaquin Moraga Intermediate and Campolindo High School grad, Lenfestey is not new to Moraga. She returned to Moraga in 1992 after serving in the Coast Guard, where she was a master helmsman, and surveyed icebergs as part of the Ice Patrol. "This unit dates back to the post-Titanic era," she explains. "It was very interesting to map icebergs and predict their routes." After leaving the Coast Guard, she decided to find a job.

"I did all kinds of odd jobs," she remembers with a smile. "At the time I had a pet corn snake and was looking for live mice to feed it. I looked all over until I opened the door of the Rheem Valley Pet Shoppe." She found out that the store had the supplies she needed and that they were also looking for help. "That was 18 years ago; I have not left since," she says.

Lenfestey says she loves the at-

mosphere of the store, the customers, and the pets. "For me it was a stress-free job," says the business owner who likes a quiet life, "and when Jorge (Quintero) decided to sell the store, I thought that the best way for me to keep my job was to buy the business."

The congenial woman has been thriving as a business owner; she does not count her hours, but never feels overworked. She likes all aspects of being an owner, especially being her own boss and making the decisions she finds appropriate for the shop.

"Over the years the demand from customers has changed," she says. "People do not buy rats anymore, for example, and we've seen a great diversification in what people are looking for." She has seen the demand for specific non-GMO or organic pet food increase, and a growing number of people with suburban farm animals such as chickens ask for feed and accessories.

"The store's new policy is that if people want something we do not have, we will get it for them," says Lenfestey. "And if they want something bulky or in large quantity, we will deliver."

Chloe Gilmore, who's been working at the store for a few years, loves the atmosphere of the place. "It is very nice to work here," she says. "We are continuing to offer the middle school internship at the Canyon School and students in sixth to eighth

grade come and spend time with us learning everything from cleaning cages to ordering products or holding the register."

Cleanliness is very high on Lenfestey's list. One of the first things she did when she bought the store was to freshen it up, deep clean it, repaint and reorganize. She also called back longtime former manager of the store, Carolyn Green, to help. Green, who is heavily involved with the East Bay Rabbit Rescue, agreed to come back. The rabbits in the store are rescue pets in need of a good home.

"We continue to have guinea pigs that are wonderful as a first pets," says Lenfestey. "We also have aquarium and pond fish, aquarium plants and equipment, cat furniture (towers and scratching post), specialty litter, and all kinds of pet-related accessories."

When Moraga passed the 1 percent sales tax, a local TV station visited Lenfestey, asking if the new tax would hurt her business. Fortunately, she says it didn't and 2014 was a good year. "People who haven't been here in a while should come in and check it out," she adds. "We'll do everything we can to make them and their pets happy."

*Rheem Valley Pet Shoppe
388 Park St., Moraga
(925) 376-8399*

Lamorinda Weekly business articles are intended to inform the community about local business activities, not to endorse a particular company, product or service.

business briefs

An App Helps Track Local Classes – TownCircle

TownCircle.us, ma.qianfan@gmail.com

Busy Moraga dad Melvin Ma was getting increasingly stressed when trying to keep track of the ever-changing recreation agenda of his 6- and 9-year-old boys. A professional app developer, Ma met with the Lafayette Parks and Recreation leadership and designed TownCircle. Through a quick scan of the Lafayette TownCircle barcode, the Lafayette Recreation's Winter Guide is available on the TownCircle app. Parents can then add their children's classes to their calendar with a simple click. "You'll never lose track of when a class starts or ends," says Ma who's happy to have simplified his life. To get started, Ma says simply download TownCircle mobile app from the App Store (Android version coming soon) and scan the Lafayette Recreation's TownCircle code. The entire Lafayette Recreation's Winter Guide will be stored on your smartphone. Pick the classes that you are interested in and add them to the smartphone's calendar. Ma plans to expand the availability of TownCircle to other municipalities.



New Living Lean Tennis Program

2 Orinda Theatre Square #140, Orinda

(925) 360-7051, www.livingleanprogram.com

Living Lean wants to be known as a company that helps clients become fit for life through personal training, nutrition programs and group classes. In addition to their currently offered spin classes, circuit training, TRX, abs and yoga classes, they are now offering tennis classes. In partnership with Lafayette Tennis Club, Living Lean will offer free beginner tennis clinics Mondays and Wednesdays from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. and private lessons with World Class Pros at a discount. Clients will have the option to play on tennis teams appropriate for their level as well. Living Lean owner Sheena Lakhota feels that tennis will offer her clients another type of workout to complement the workouts they already do. She believes that tennis offers a fun, different, challenging, circuit type workout that, in combination with the other classes, will effectively help her clients to get to the next fitness level. "I recently added tennis into my weekly workout routine and have noticed my fitness level has dramatically improved," says Lakhota.

Beaubelle Group

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In an industry that has seen real estate agents come and go with the rise and fall of the economy and the housing market, The Beaubelle Group, a real estate team at Coldwell Banker Residential Brokerage's Orinda office, is a bit of an anomaly. Founded by Glenn Beaubelle, a Lamorinda native with 38 years experience in the local housing market. Beaubelle and his associates have sold well over \$1 billion in local real estate and have consistently ranked in the top 1 percent internationally for Coldwell Banker. The entire Beaubelle Group team hails from Lamorinda, including: Beaubelle's wife, Kellie Beaubelle, a 20-year real estate veteran and designer; Finola Fellner, a former local teacher who is the group's top producer with deep ties to the community; Nancy Stryker, a consistent top agent who has lived in Lafayette for nearly 40 years; Lynn Molloy, who has a strong background in customer service from her former retail management experience; and Cory Cook, the team's very capable real estate transaction coordinator. "We all have kids that are going through the local schools or have gone through the schools," Beaubelle said. "We're all involved in our local towns in so many ways, and really care about this area and are proud to call it home."



The Beaubelle Team from left Lynn Molloy, Finola Fellner, Glenn Beaubelle, Kellie Beaubelle, Nancy Stryker Photo provided

Moraga Employee of the Month, Aaron Bates



Stephen Healy with Employee of the Month Aaron Bates, Kevin Reneau, Debbie Roessler and MOFD fire personnel. Photo provided

Aaron Bates, a dedicated public servant who works as a firefighter and paramedic for the Moraga-Orinda Fire District, was named the Moraga Employee of the Month for December. Bates has served the local fire district for the past four years, first as a reserve firefighter beginning in 2009 and eventually as a full-time employee in 2013. In addition to fire suppression duties, Bates also provides advanced life support as an EMT. "Aaron's skill as a paramedic is only matched by his compassion of others and the community he serves," said Fire Chief Stephen Healy. "Despite his skills and accomplishments, Aaron has remained humble and kind. He is calm and mature beyond his years." The Moraga Rotary and Chamber of Commerce will present Bates with his award and gifts at the Moraga Rotary luncheon on Tuesday, Jan. 20.

News from the Chambers of Commerce

Lafayette

Ribbon Cutting at Advanced Weight Loss and Wellness at 5 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 22 at 959 Mt. View Drive.

Coffee with the Mayor at 8 a.m. Friday, Jan. 23 in the chamber conference room.

Lamorinda Home Expo '15 begins at 10 a.m. Sunday, Jan. 25 in the Veterans Memorial Building, 3780 Mt. Diablo Blvd.

Ribbon Cutting at Bay Sotheby's International Realty at 5 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 29 at 3725 Mt. Diablo Blvd.

Moraga

Save the date for the dinner honoring the 2015 Businessperson of the Year Diane Wilson, executive director of Moraga Royale, Tuesday, Feb. 24.

Orinda

Ambassador Breakfast at 8 a.m. Tuesday, Jan. 20 at Shelbys for the ambassadors and those interested in becoming ambassadors. RSVP at TRomanceck@yahoo.com by Jan. 16.

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School Enrollments are Growing

By Cathy Tyson



The author of this article, pictured above with classmates in 1967, was a student at Los Perales School in Moraga. The school opened in 1965, but due to declining enrollments closed its doors in 1983; it re-opened in 1997 after a bond was passed to reopen it. Photo provided

Are there more school-aged children in Lamorinda than there used to be? The crush of kids on minimum days buying snacks is a tipoff – along with traffic heading to schools – that young families are certainly drawn to Lamorinda's green hills and great schools, and as existing homes gradually turn over, and new developments in various stages of completion open, it's expected that school enrollments will continue to rise, which is causing some concern among long-term residents.

Several factors impact school enrollment: Obviously, the amount of housing matters, but also birth trends, in-migration, out-migration, student transfers, charter schools, private schools and home schooled students all play a role in the equation. Boasting excellent reputations, and consistently high academic rankings, area schools are certainly an enticement.

For the last school year, 2013-14, Lafayette had the largest enrollment of students in kindergarten through eighth grade with a total of 3,469 kids. Orinda had 2,482 students for the same period and Moraga had 1,845 students. Each of Lamorinda's three towns is wrestling with what to make of the uptick in new students, anticipating a growing number of kids hungry for knowledge.

"The Lafayette Elementary School District should experience moderate enrollment growth over the next five to ten years," stated the district's 2014 demographic report. The study projected that the previous peak enrollment which occurred in the 1999-00 school year will be exceeded in 2016-17, reaching a total enrollment of 3,588 students, and it expects enrollment to continue growing, reaching an estimated total of 3,727 students by the fall of 2023.

Taking an overall look at school facilities, the report concluded that based on current school capacities, it may be necessary to adjust attendance boundaries and/or add classrooms to existing schools.

"It is, however, advised that the

District update its enrollment projections regularly to account for actual changes and to ensure the accuracy of near term projections at least every two years," the report cautioned.

Lafayette is poised for growth in the near future, but as of today, only the Marquis Townhomes project at the site of the former Hungry Hunter restaurant is complete. But the luxury project, The Woodbury, near the Veterans Hall, is under construction, the 69-unit multi-family KB Home project behind Panda Express is slated to break ground this year, and the controversial Terraces of Lafayette project, now called The Homes at Deer Hill, near Acalanes High School, is still going through the city's review process for its 44-single family homes.

In Orinda, Loreen Farrell, director of business services for the Orinda Union School District reported that "we received several primary-aged students who are residing in homes located within the new Pine Grove development, which was a bit unexpected." She also notes there were several inter-district agreements in the middle grades. "With the sudden increase in home sales and construction within our District, we are updating our demographic study in order to have the most up-to-date information to work with for planning purposes."

Being voted the second most friendly town in America by Forbes magazine surely doesn't hurt its popularity, but the dozen new luxury homes at Orinda Oaks, Pulte Homes' sold out Pine Grove, now called Orinda Grove development, or the many still undeveloped lots at the massive Wilder project have and will continue to add to the student population in town.

The same scenario, only a bit slower, is happening in Moraga. "After several years of declining enrollment, the Moraga School District enrollment increased, and has been generally flat the last three years. The District has experienced a trend the

past few years of enrollment increasing throughout the school year. I would not be surprised if today's current enrollment of 1,853 is 10-20 higher by the end of the school year," said Bruce Burns, superintendent of the Moraga School District.

Residents have seen story poles sprout up at a number of sites around town, indicating potential developments, but none have broken ground. Change can be challenging; each potential development has received robust public feedback.

While there may always be friction over municipal growth, that's the heritage of Lamorinda. As the area first developed, the rate of growth was astonishing. In 1960, when Eisenhower was president, Orinda had a booming population of 4,712 souls according to the census; fast forward 20 years and the 1980 census noted the population more than tripled to 16,825.

Lafayette was slightly bigger back in 1960 with 7,114 people; 20 years later it skyrocketed to 20,879.

Moraga wasn't even counted in the 1960 census but it went from roughly a wide spot in the road to 15,014 people in two decades. Surprisingly, for the next half century, from 1960 all the way to 2010, Moraga's population grew by a whopping 1,002 people, up to 16,016.

Looking to the future, California's population will continue to grow, and as land becomes more valuable, developers will likely continue to seek the green hills and great schools that brought existing residents here in the first place.



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In Memory

Kazie Afsari, 67, Lafayette



Kazie Afsari, 67, of Lafayette, California passed away January 11, 2015, with his two daughters by his side. His death was sudden and unexpected. Kazie was born on June 26, 1947. He practiced real estate, was a notary public, and wedding photographer in the Lamorinda area for over 30 years.

He walked the Lafayette Reservoir daily, had a passion for learning the Spanish language, enjoyed gardening in his backyard, traveling, reading history and philosophy textbooks, taking photographs and very much loved his two daughters.

He will be remembered dearly as an inspirational man with a great mind. He touched many lives with his strength, sense of humor, brilliance, intellect, and his innate understanding of people.

He is survived by his two daughters, Sarah and Layla Afsari, five brothers (Daryoush Afsari, Khosrow Afsari, Mansour Afsari, Bijan Afsari, and Mansoud Afsari), two sisters (Shayasteh Baikoghli and Khojasteh Shafaei), numerous nephews, nieces, and many more loved ones.

A memorial will be held between 2-5 p.m., Saturday, Jan. 18 at the Lafayette Library Community Hall. There will be time for anyone who wishes to speak to do so.

Kindergarten Registration for the 2015-16 School Year

Will your child start kindergarten in 2015? Registration dates in Lamorinda's school districts are just around the corner. To be eligible for kindergarten, a child must turn 5 years old by Sept. 1. To be eligible for the transitional kindergarten program, a child must have his or her fifth birthday between Sept. 2 and Dec. 2.

Lafayette
Registration for kindergarten/transitional kindergarten will take place at the district's four elementary schools on Tuesday, Jan. 20 and Wednesday, Jan. 21 at the following times:

Burton Valley Elementary 11 a.m. and 1-3 p.m. 561 Merriewood Drive (925) 927-3550	9-
Happy Valley Elementary 8:30 - 11:30 a.m. 3855 Happy Valley Road (925) 927-3560	9-
Lafayette Elementary a.m.-noon 950 Moraga Road (925) 927-3570	9
Springhill Elementary 11 a.m. 3301 Springhill Road (925) 927-3580	9-

Registration packets are available from the schools beginning Jan. 5. For more information visit the district's website, www.lafsd.k12.ca.us.

Moraga
Online registration for incoming kindergarten/transitional kindergarten students in Moraga opened Jan. 6 – go to <https://moragasd.aspaeries.net/air> to begin the registration process. Parents can complete their child's registration at the district's three elementary schools on Thursday, Feb. 5 and Friday, Feb. 6. Registration times are based on last names – those beginning with A-L should plan to register between 9 a.m. and noon; last names beginning with M-Z should register between noon and 2 p.m.

Camino Pablo Elementary
(925) 376-4435
1111 Camino Pablo

Los Perales Elementary
(925) 631-0105
22 Wakefield Drive

Donald L. Rheem Elementary
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Still Grateful for the Music

By Cathy Dausman



Tom Stack admires his Grateful Dead Platinum record commemorating the 1978 closing of San Francisco's Winterland Ballroom. Photo Cathy Dausman

Tom Stack refuses to be penned in, either literally or figuratively. "I'm into music," Stack said, but cautioned, "Don't pen me in as a Deadhead." This from a man who followed, then worked with the Grateful Dead for nearly two decades.

"Most realtors have another life," Stack explained when recounting his story, but few can match the Lafayette man's first career.

Entering Stack's home office today is like walking into a late 20th century music history collectibles museum. His 4-inch thick binders are filled with ticket stubs amassed from 432 shows in 27 states and four countries, during his late teen and young adult life. Eight drawers are filled with cassette tape music recordings; seven of those drawers are exclusively devoted to Grateful Dead music.

There are posters, CDs, vinyl records and DVDs chronicling the Grateful Dead, Santana and other Bill Graham concert headliners dating back to the late 1970s. Framed and signed music themed artwork lines the halls and decorates one bedroom in his home. Sports mem-

orabilia is also abundant – in addition to being an admitted "rock 'n' roller," this fifth generation San Francisco son is a basketball and baseball loving sports junkie and longtime San Francisco Giants fan. In fact, Stack credits "three Bills" – Bill Russell, Bill Graham and Bill Walton – for inspiring him.

It began in 1973 inside a St. Ignatius College Preparatory school classroom in San Francisco when Stack's English Literature teacher put "Truckin'" on a record player for the class to hear and challenged his students to analyze the song.

Stack thought lyricist Robert Hunter was "cool." Yet Stack made a career out of chasing his musical dreams without being able to "play a note or read music." After the "Truckin'" exposure, Stack discovered San Francisco's KSAN radio. He loved their album oriented rock format, finding "a reservoir of music" which he says "was the making of me."

He remembers being "on the floor" with eight or nine friends at Winterland Ballroom in San Francisco during an October 1974 Grateful Dead concert.

In college at Santa Clara Uni-

versity, Stack became a KSCU radio DJ, hosting a 4-hour weekly show. "We were cool," he smiled. "That's when I started meeting rock stars."

And then? He said he just stayed with the music.

After college, Stack took a Silicon Valley-based job and bought a house, still managing to travel up and down the state to take in live music concerts. But when Stack's girlfriend left and his longtime buddy Burt died in a motorcycle accident, Stack felt "the universe was telling me something." He considered writing a baseball stadium book, using research as an excuse to travel. Then on a lark, while attending a Grateful Dead concert in Ventura, he sold T-shirts he had designed in the parking lot for cash.

"I sold 72 shirts in 25 minutes," he said. "Deadheads knew to buy in the parking lot [before a concert]," where Stack said the atmosphere was like a bazaar. He began designing other shirts, riffing on resort motifs. He made a Virgin Island shirt proclaiming "Club Dead" and a Rastafarian knockoff shirt printed with "Club Dread." Gradually Stack developed an entire line of Grateful Dead souvenirs – shirts, hats, stickers and posters.

"In 18 years I went from listening to the radio to selling [Grateful Dead] shirts," Stack said, "all the while attending concerts in major arenas across the country." It became a business taking \$10,000 in orders and selling 5,000 shirts. "I knew in '77 it was fleeting," he said of his time as a Grateful Dead aficionado, living an "untethered" life, but Stack's motto was "Carpe diem," and he felt there was simply no other place for him to be.

In time, Stack rose from hawk-ing Grateful Dead T-shirts in the parking lot to become vice president of merchandising and licensing, managing worldwide distribution and web content at Grateful Dead Productions in Novato. Stack sadly recounts being in a DMV line with his father when he learned of Jerry Garcia's 1995 death. He felt constrained and unable to mourn, thinking it might distract his father from taking a driving test.

...continued on page B5



Stack selling his wares outside Oakland's Kaiser Convention Center in 1985. "If a dog had come by [and taken my shirts] I'd have been out hundreds of dollars," he said. Photo courtesy Tom Stack

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The International Film Showcase

An important part of Lamorinda's cultural landscape

By Sophie Braccini



Efi Lubner Photo Sophie Braccini

Over the past four years, Efi Lubner and Jo Alice Canterbury have brought excellent foreign films to the Orinda Theatre that could not be seen anywhere else in Contra Costa County, and sometimes even in the country, as part of the International Film Showcase. Using discernment, foresight and skilled negotiating with producers, the passionate duo has been able to bring a weeklong showing almost every month of films that sometimes ended up becoming Golden Globe or Oscar nominees. The fifth season will start with the showing of the Italian film "The Human Factor" beginning Jan. 30.

The passion for films, especially foreign films, radiates from Lubner. A native of Israel, the Lafayette resident was nurtured by films from all over the world. "I grew up on movies by Buñel, De Sica, Godart, Kurosawa, and Fellini," he remembers. He came to this country with the idea of becoming a film director and producer, and while he participated and led many projects, he couldn't make a big enough name for himself in the

industry. So, instead, Lubner made his living in the computer industry, founding EDC Computer Systems.

Movies continued to be part of his life, however, and he often attended foreign film festivals, like the Palm Springs International Film Festival recently held Jan. 2-12. "There I would see great movies and I would tell my friends that I would let them know when the films would come to a nearby theater, but most never did!" he says.

Finding an American distributor is hard, explains Lubner; not many are ready to bear the financial risk to take on a foreign film. Sometimes when he and Canterbury want to show a movie here, they have to go directly to the producer and try to negotiate.

"It does not always work," says Lubner. "Sometimes the producers do not have the money to pay to get a rating or for the music rights." To get the recent Showcase movie "Tangerines" – a 2015 Golden Globe nominee which is short-listed for an Oscar – Lubner met with Estonian producer Ivo Felt in Palm Springs last year and negotiated for months until he could get the movie through a Canadian distributor.

The film distribution industry is very structured and finding theaters that can stray from the regimented system is also hard. "We talked to Jim Sheehan when he was managing the Orinda Theatre," remembers Lubner. The Orinda venue was a natural choice since Lubner and Canterbury met while on the Lamorinda Film and Entertainment Foundation, a group that was formed to support the Orinda Theatre. A deal was made with Shee-

han to show a movie once a month for a week. When the management team changed, the deal was upheld, but changed to eight times a year instead of 10. Leonard Pirkle with the Orinda Theatre explains that there are conflicts with the scheduling of films. "We have tried to address this by only having the series occur in those months that seem to have more available slots – less studio releases," he says, adding that the theater plans to continue showing the films.

The duo only selects movies they both love, but Lubner says that he prefers films based on real stories that are not too avant-garde in the way they are filmed. "We are both volunteers; we work for the love of films and our reward is when people love what they've seen," he adds.

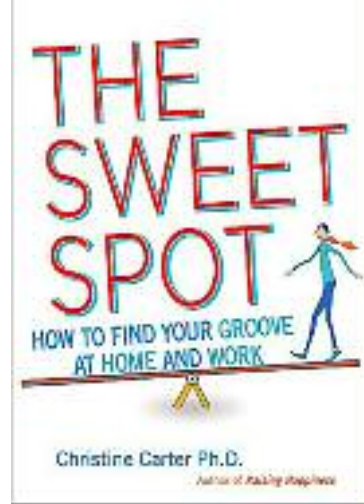
Lubner would not say which movies were his favorites: "They were all interesting, and give an opportunity to discover different cultures," he says. He adds that besides "Tangerines," some of the highlights last year were the German movie "Two Lives" and the Japanese film, "Like Father, Like Son."

Lubner and Canterbury are hoping they will be able to continue to bring these gems in Contra Costa County. The key is the location and the attendance. "We have an email list of 2,700 people; if folks want to receive the information about our movies, they can go to our website (internationalshowcase.org) and enter their address," says Lubner.

A review of the movie "The Human Factor" is slated to be published in the Jan. 28 issue of Lamorinda Weekly.

Finding Your Groove and The Sweet Spot

By Lou Fancher



What elephant are you riding on?

This might be the most important question you can ask yourself, according to a new book from sociologist and happiness expert Christine Carter.

"The Sweet Spot: How to Find Your Groove at Home and Work" (Ballantine Books) arrives in mid-January with perfect "New Year's resolution" timing from the UC Berkeley Greater Good Science Center expert and author of the best-selling "Raising Happiness" (2011). Carter spent her early childhood years in Orinda, attending Wagner Ranch Elementary School and Orinda Intermediate School in the 1970s. The Bay Area resident has two daughters and once described their visits to her parents still living in Orinda as "Disneyland to my kids" in an interview for a *Lamorinda Weekly* article about happiness.

So it's worth wondering how a woman with a Ph.D., a person plugged in to the latest research on happiness, productivity, organization, positive psychology and avoiding pitfalls like over-scheduling, could wind up riding the wild elephant of our 21st century, digital, do-it-all lifestyle. But Carter did.

Joining the herd of over-achievers, Carter cavorted along a dizzying chain that sounds all too familiar: perfect parenting, perfect professional performance, perfect partner to everyone but herself. She wound up perfectly exhausted.

But armed with science, practicality, a sense of humor and actually, frustration at finding herself enervated and disempowered at the intersection of professional success and personal sacrifice, Carter regrouped.

Fortunately for the rest of us, she put her lively personality and rock solid research into 320 pages of sharing her process and procedures for re-assembling a life.

"The Sweet Spot's" 10 chapters divide into five sections: Take Recess; Switch Autopilot On; Unshackle Yourself; Cultivate Relationships; and Tolerate Some Discomfort. Ideas that are useful, but aren't revolutionary, gain substantial authority when backed by real science—specific studies and references that are often expanded upon in highlighted boxes within each chapter. And Carter's autobiographical examples of losing her way and how she found the "groove" leading her back to power and mas-

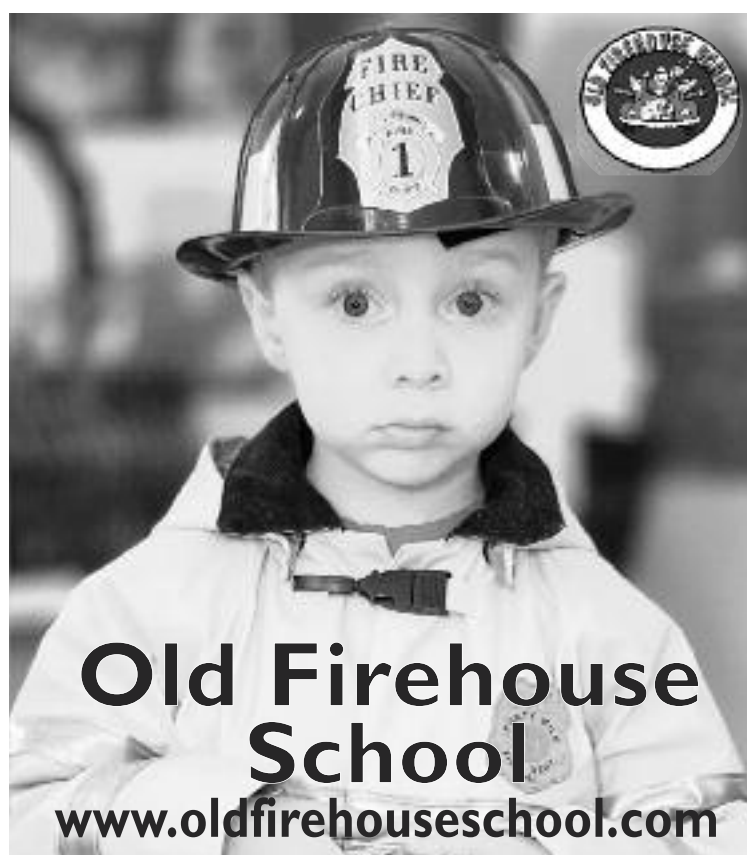
tery are delivered in a confessional, humble writing style that removes any impression of being "talked down to" or lectured by an expert.

Instead, we're encouraged to "crack the habit code" and given 21 tips to do so, including things like identifying mini-habits and bad habit triggers, designating intrinsic rewards and resisting self-sabotage, and even the counterintuitive "expect failure."

A suggestion to switch herds begins a terrific section in the book that leads a reader through purposeful actions to mindful living. Making conscious choices isn't easy, Carter repeatedly asserts. After all, there's risk and hard work in things like sublime sacrifice. Giving unto others is not simply an antiquated, automatic, "Golden Rule" idea, it takes effort—starting small. Social psychology has proven countless times the value of breaking desired behavioral changes into small, but still challenging steps – or outsmarting our smartphones – turn it off and talk to a stranger for a daily dose of "positivity resonance," among other tips.

Quoting Jonathan Haidt, author of "The Happiness Hypothesis," Carter suggests we avoid trying to control the elephant – Haidt uses an elephant as a metaphor for our most forceful, automatic habits, like seeking food and love – and instead, become skilled riders able to distract or coax the unwieldy beast of habits into more positive territory.

... continued on page B4



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SMC Jan Term Speaker Series Focuses on Lives Well-Lived

Best-selling author, and autism and anti-bullying advocate speaks at 1 p.m. today

By A. K. Carroll



Jesse Saperstein Photo provided

“There’s nothing wrong with being really different,” said Jesse Saperstein, motivational speaker and best-selling author of the book “Atypical: Life with Asperger’s in 20 1/3 Chapters.”

“Everyone has something to offer,” he said.

An advocate for autism and anti-bullying campaigns, Saperstein will be speaking at Saint Mary’s College as a part the school’s Jan Term speaker series, “Lives Well Lived.” The Lamorinda community is invited to take part in over half a dozen lectures on topics ranging from the place of minority voices to the hard work of forgiveness.

Saperstein will be speaking at 1 p.m. today in Hagerty Lounge. He will be stopping at Saint Mary’s halfway through his Bay Area tour for his latest book, “Getting a Life with Asperger’s.” He is being brought in with support from Jan Term and the Catholic Institute of Lasallian Social Action (CILSA). The idea of contacting Saperstein came from Michelle Barker, who serves as the administrative coordinator for CILSA and has a daughter with Asperger’s.

“In today’s world, people with disabilities are included in the marginalized groups within our society who are victims of injustice,” said Barker. She was reminded of this when she heard Saperstein speak last September, as his message falls directly in line with Saint Mary’s mission of so-

cial justice.

Being a public speaker first entered Saperstein’s mind during college, when he served as the residential advisor for the AIDS Awareness House at Hobart and Williams Smith Colleges. During that time Saperstein watched “Blood Brothers: The Joey DiPaolo Story,” a documentary based on the life of Joey DiPaolo, who contracted AIDS through a blood transfusion as a teenager, and went on to become a renowned AIDS activist. Saperstein got in touch with DiPaolo and decided that speaking and activism was just the sort of thing he wanted to do.

Following college, Saperstein set out to accomplish this goal. Sponsored by the DiPaolo AIDS Foundation, he planned to hike all 2,174 miles of the Appalachian Trail. It took him seven months, and in that time he raised \$19,000 for pediatric AIDS. He attributes his dogged persistence to having Asperger’s syndrome. “Most people eventually get to that point where they [give up],” Saperstein said. “I never seem to reach that point unless it’s an emergency.” Frigid temperatures and relentless blizzards were not enough to deter him. “I was able to understand that all I had to do was keep walking.”

Saperstein’s desire to write books came about after the trail. “I had a difficult time transitioning to reality,” he said. “I lost two careers, [which was] devastating.” Writing gave a voice to that pain. “That is how I tend to justify what has happened,” Saperstein said. “[By saying] this is what I have to write about.” Saperstein hopes that his books will help others and keep them from learning too many lessons the hard way.

As an autism and anti-bullying advocate, Saperstein speaks from his own experiences growing up and living in a world that doesn’t always embrace his differences. “I’ve been bullied a lot in my life, [even] throughout adulthood,” he said, noting that people still misinterpret his actions and motives, calling him a “stalker” when he relentlessly pursued finding the owner of a lost debit

card. “[There’s] a big myth that it gets better someday. For me, it did not get better for a very long time.”

One of Saperstein’s core beliefs is that all challenges can be overcome through tenacious work. “I’ve made

my weakness a strength,” he said of living with Asperger’s. “A lot of people can do that if they want it enough. Individuals with Asperger’s have ideas and talents that can help others. We’re not as uncommon or dissimilar

as we sometimes think we are.”

To learn more about Jesse Saperstein and his journey through a life well lived, visit www.jessesaperstein.com.



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Local Artwork Hangs in D.C. Office



Photo Joanne Tan

Newly elected U.S. Congressman Mark DeSaulnier smiles with Lafayette photographer and poet Joanne Tan as they hold the 24 by 36-inch photo on canvas, "Mt. Diablo Under a Glorious Sky," he purchased from Tan to hang in his Washington D.C. office. DeSaulnier was sworn into Congress on Jan. 6. Tan owns her portrait studio, Poem and Art Studio, Lafayette. To view more of Tan's work, visit <http://poemandart.com>. Submitted by Joanne Tan

Finding Your Groove and The Sweet Spot

... continued from page B2

Life-changing results, Carter writes, require undergoing the book's final processes: careful consideration of grudges, perfectionism, illegitimate fears, and tangled thoughts leading a person to believe he or she "has been a failure my whole life" and similar exaggerations. Essentially, studies show that getting hooked on negative

thoughts and interactions can become a way to avoid taking responsibility and course-correcting.

"Finding your groove" isn't easy, but once found, Carter's science-backed techniques operate from a position of power – the "sweet spot" athletes, artists, scientists and everyone desires.

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 may be sent to storydesk@lamorindaweekly.com with the subject header In Service to the Community.

Burton Valley's AIM Class Shoots High to Raise Money for Youth Homes Inc.

Submitted by Cathy Martinsen



Cathy Martinsen's AIM Class at Burton Valley Elementary School presents a check for \$1,411 to Youth Homes before winter break. Photo provided

The Book Bonanza is an annual fundraiser that has been a long-standing tradition at Burton Valley Elementary School. Every year, the AIM (Alternative Instructional Magnet) class collects, prices and, of course, sells books – at incredibly low prices. (Some books are as cheap as 10 cents.) All proceeds go to a charitable cause, and this year the stu-

dents chose to support Youth Homes, the organization that helps neglected and abused foster children and adolescents. The whole class banded together to complete each step in the process, and after three weeks of collections and pricing, the two-day sale was on. Classes from the Burton Valley community came to support the AIM class, buying books and drop-

ping in donations to the donation jar. After the frenzy, the students counted their change bags and were thrilled to realize they had surpassed their goal and actually raised \$1,411. The students presented a check to Laurel Pendleton of Youth Homes right before winter break and felt good knowing they had made a difference in many disadvantaged children's lives.

TEEN SCENE

The Importance of Pets

By Andrew Wang

Lamorinda teens work hard. Between volunteering, studying and athletics there is hardly any time left for quality time with family, let alone the family pet. Almost 70 percent of U.S. house-

holds have at least one domestic pet, according to the American Pet Products Association, and recent studies have linked pet ownership with reductions in loneliness and depression, as well as other health benefits, so we must not forget to always cherish our most loyal and incorrigibly joyful family members, our pets.

When I was 8, I got my first pet, a meek jade-blue parakeet we named Perchy. Perchy still greets me with a welcome chirp every day when I get home. Our happiest time of day together is when I practice the piano; Perchy's loud chirping counterpoint is the best musical accompaniment. His secret hobby is biting the pages of my homework, much to the chagrin of my teachers.

I asked other local teens about their relationships with their pets. Cary Huang of Campolindo says that, ever since he received two brown and black kittens from a family friend, they have been his endearing companions. He calls them "Good" and "Bad," and jokes that sometimes Good is the bad cat and Bad is the good cat. "Good sleeps on my chest every other night," he says, "but after 20 minutes of pure silence she instantly jumps to the floor and dashes away, which always wakes me up. Then early in the morning, around six, she'll meow because she wants the window blinds open so she can sit on the windowsill. I open the blinds while half-asleep, before realizing that the bright sunlight pours in. But, I do it for Good because Good really likes it."

Kourosh Arasteh says his family's dog, Elvis, is not just "incredibly loyal" but also "channels the Lhasa Apso spirit. ... This breed was used to guard temples in Tibet. He literally warms up my day," he says, "mostly my feet, because he likes to lie on them." An-



Perchy the parakeet Photo provided

other Campolindo student adds that his favorite part of having a dog is "having a companion that loves me unconditionally."

For all animal owners, pets are heartwarming friends and usually considered an integral part of the family unit. Whether you are a cat, dog, rabbit, mouse, chicken, or iguana owner, take a moment to appreciate the love and entertainment your furry, feathered, or scaly family member has granted you. Treat him or her with a nutritious snack, safe toy and your loving attention. Your bond with your pet is truly special and deserves to be celebrated. Who owns whom is a question that cannot be answered.



Andrew Wang, the Director of Concerts for Be the Star You Are! charity, is a senior at Campolindo High School. Besides writing and reporting, he enjoys programming, playing the piano and violin, and throwing a good Frisbee.

The opinions expressed in Teen Scene are those of the writer and not necessarily those of the Lamorinda Weekly.

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Lamorinda Bakers to Elevate Their Craft to a Higher Plane

By Laurie Snyder



Challah comes in many shapes and sizes, according to the author of *"The Book of Jewish Food,"* Claudia Roden. "Braided ones, which may have three, four, or six strands, are the most common, and because they look like arms intertwined, symbolize love. Three braids symbolize truth, peace, and justice." A round loaf, with no clear beginning or end, is often baked for the Jewish New Year – Rosh Hashanah – "to symbolize continuity." Photos provided

Anyone who has ever spent any length of time in a kitchen has likely invoked the name of a higher power at some point for help in heading off a culinary catastrophe. Yet a pinch of prayer has not, as a rule, been one of the ingredients found side by side with the salt and flour in the average cookbook – until now.

Cookbooks will be getting a major rewrite at 7 p.m. tomorrow evening in Lafayette as roughly 200 bakers learn that the spirituality of good food begins not with the blessing before the meal – but with a pre-preparation prayer over their ingredients as they participate in a Mega Challah Bake sponsored by The Jewish Women's Circle of Chabad of Contra Costa (www.JewishContraCosta.com).

Challah (pronounced *khah-luh* or *hah-luh*) is a rich, leavened white bread made with oodles of eggs and sweetened with sugar or honey. Traditionally baked in advance of Shabbat (the Sabbath) and holidays, it is said to represent the manna which fell from heaven during the 40 years of desert wandering by the Children of Israel after their escape from Egypt. According to various sources including Claudia Roden, author of the James Beard Award-winning *"The Book of Jewish Food,"* the bread's name was derived from a Biblical commandment that a small part of the dough – roughly the size of an olive – be broken off and given to the Lord each Sabbath by way of the community's priests.

"Baking Challah is a time-honored Mitzvah (commandment) dating back to our matriarchs. It is taught that when a woman bakes Challah and makes the appropriate blessings on the dough, she is bringing additional blessing into her home and into the food that she lovingly prepares for family and friends. It is a time for women to pray for their personal

needs, the needs of their families and their communities," said Chaya Berkowitz, co-director of Chabad of Contra Costa. "By bringing a large group of women together to bake Challah, in addition to learning a wonderful skill and inspiring unity in our community, our hope is that our joint prayers will be so much more poignant."

Lamorinda's Mega Challah Bake will be a hands-on workshop for women of all ages, and will be guided by Sara Briman. Honored with the American Academy of Hospitality Sciences' Five-Star Diamond Award for "keeping family values and traditions strong" and "for creating the finest authentic Challah bread worldwide," she is the chef at Acapulco's Hotel Encanto. "The yeast makes the dough rise. I ask that each day be one of growth for me and my family. We should rise above any difficulty in our lives," said Briman in a 2013 Miami Herald interview. "The egg is the symbol of life. I ask for a good life



Award-winning chef, Sara Briman, has been inspiring bakers from Boston to Chile with her Challah recipe. On Jan. 15, she will reveal one of her greatest baking secrets to Lamorinda women during the Mega Challah Bake in Lafayette.

with good health for me and for all around me."

After experiencing the beauty and camaraderie of Challah baking, adds Berkowitz, it is hoped that Lamorindans will go home and share this Shabbat tradition with others. "In the true spirit of unity, all participants will create two loaves of Challah, one to keep and one to give to a friend."

Open to all women, regardless of Jewish affiliation or background, advance registration is required because space is limited. The cost is \$20 per person. To register, visit: cc.ChallahBake.com, or contact Berkowitz at (925) 351-3875 or Chaya@JewishContraCosta.com.

What: Mega Challah Bake
When: Thursday, Jan. 15, 7 p.m.
Where: Veterans Memorial Hall, 3780 Mt. Diablo Blvd., Lafayette
Cost: \$20/person, pre-registration necessary:
 cc.ChallahBake.com

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Still Grateful for the Music

... continued from page B1



From left: NBA Hall of Famer Bill Walton, Jorma Kaukonen, lead guitarist of the Jefferson Airplane, Tom Stack, and Mickey Hart, drummer for the Grateful Dead
 Photo courtesy Tom Stack

"The band members ... all tried to find their way [after that]," he recalled sadly. To Stack, though, Garcia was "such a loveable figure," and the very "heart and soul" of the group.

In the late 1990s Stack married and moved to Lafayette. He and his wife, a singer, have a son whom Stack says "gets" music.

"Live music is so important," he said, and his real estate career offers some of the freedom of movement and creativity he discovered during his first career. Stack continues to feed his love of all things Grateful Dead,

even by booking Grateful Dead cover band performances in the past few years at the Lafayette Town Hall Theatre where he serves as vice president on the board of directors. He has produced approximately 20 shows there to date.

"I like to share it," he said of his love for live music. You can almost hear him humming the Hunter lyrics:

*"Sometimes the light's all shinin' on me,
 Other times I can barely see.
 Lately it occurs to me what a long, strange trip it's been."*

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“Art Appassionata” Opens at the Moraga Art Gallery

Submitted by George Ehrenhaft



“Lady in Green” and “Petaluma Sheep” by Orinda artist Lisa Gunn

Images provided

The exhibit “Art Appassionata” opens today and runs through March 24, featuring light-washed

landscapes and portraits by Lisa Gunn of Orinda and oil paintings of the California coastline by Carol Tarzier. A

free opening reception will be held from 5 to 7 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 17 in the gallery at Moraga’s Rheem Shop-

ping Center, 522 Center Street. Gunn, a classical pianist, fuses musical and artistic principles – texture, tone and color – in her oil paintings, and concentrates on capturing qualities of light. “If it is cloudy, the colors are muted,” she explains. “On bright, sunny days, contrasting light and dark colors take precedence.” She strives to create a bond between herself and the viewer. “I don’t show every detail, but paint as though it is a musical moment for me. I pick my subjects with great care – like a composer – and paint only what I find expressive or

wonderful. ... Over time,” she says, “I have discovered that music and art, although executed differently, rest upon the same platforms.”

Tarzier, renowned for both bronze sculptures and painting, teaches at the Academy of Art University and at Oakland’s Studio One Art Center. Her focus is figurative work in bronze and painting in oil, with ventures into abstract sculpture and pastel drawings on black Arches paper.

Fifteen member artists of the gallery also have paintings, photographs, ceramics, jewelry and finely-crafted woodware on display. The gallery’s hours are Wednesday through Sunday from noon to 5 p.m. For more information, go to www.moragaartgallery.com, call (925) 376-5407 or email moragaart-gallery@gmail.com.

Family Focus

A True Gift for Your Children

By Margie Ryerson, MFT

Happy New Year! Although the holidays are over, there are still gifts we can give to our children all year long. One is the gift of emotional protection – shielding them as much as possible emotionally, as well as physically, from the turbulence and violence that exist in our world today. Doing this requires a major effort since disturbing or potentially threatening events seem to surround us frequently.

Often children react to scary situations, real and imagined, with anxiety and fear. For example, the 7-year-old son of a couple I see refused to get out of his father’s car in the morning to go to school. “Jake” liked school and did well academically and socially. We discovered that he was afraid something would happen to one of his parents while they were at work and he was in school. He had heard his parents discussing a tornado where his cousins live in Oklahoma. Because Jake’s actions first became a school and family disciplinary issue, it took some intervention to find the source of his

troublesome behavior.

Another couple’s 8-year-old son refused to sleep in his own bed, and he slept on the floor next to his parents’ bed for months. He had overheard his parents arguing loudly many times, slamming doors and mentioning divorce. Not surprisingly, he became more fearful and insecure. His reaction finally prompted this couple to get help for their relationship.

Sadly, many children are exposed to news media coverage that they are not equipped to handle. When hostages were beheaded in Syria recently, a 10-year-old girl I work with began having heightened anxiety and nightmares. She had not only heard what had happened via television news, but she also saw the image of a kneeling hooded figure and a man with a large machete behind him.

It is important to limit children’s exposure to television, computer, phone, radio and print news, and to monitor their access to social media sites. You can show them positive and uplifting events, or even small

amounts of sad news so they can begin to learn to deal with reality. But they should be sheltered from potential references to violence until they are old enough to cope, which is at least over the age of 13 or 14. Each child is different of course, but the longer you can protect them, the better. It doesn’t make sense to encourage our kids to believe in Santa Claus throughout elementary school only to expose them to real world violence at the same time.

To be sure, children pick up information from their friends and classmates. Unfortunately, parents cannot provide complete protection. But in addition to working to limit their exposure, you can be the source of effective reassurance for your children. For example, you can point out every step you have taken to ensure their well-being. Even if you have your own doubts, you need to set those aside and help your children believe they are safe, and that you are convinced they will be safe.

Few things are as scary and

threatening to children as seeing their parents worried and fearful, because they will not feel that you are able to protect them. Serious and upsetting events in our community and the world at large are hard for adults to handle at times. But like using the oxygen mask on an airplane, you must first help yourself before you can assist your child. If you are experiencing too much worry and anxiety, it is important for you to get help for yourself. Then you will be able to block your own anxieties from affecting those close to you.

As parents it is also important not only to set boundaries for exposure to external sources, but to set your own limits for what your children receive from you. Too often parents talk to each other about sensitive issues or converse on their phones within earshot of their children. Some even discuss inappropriate subjects directly with their children. Worrisome topics such as someone’s serious illness or financial problems, or seemingly innocuous topics such as how fat you’re

feeling or how upset you are with their father (or mother) often contribute to children’s unease and fears. It is important to have clear boundaries so that our children understand that adult matters are off limits for them. Practicing discretion is another way to give our kids the valuable gift of increased emotional protection.



Margie Ryerson, MFT, is a marriage and family therapist in Orinda and Walnut Creek. Contact her at (925) 376-9323 or margierye@yahoo.com. She is the author of “Treat Your Partner Like a Dog: How to Breed a Better Relationship” and “Appetite for Life: Inspiring Stories of Recovery from Anorexia, Bulimia, and Compulsive Overeating.”

Roll Out the Eggplant for This Delicious Dish

By Susie Iventosch



Eggplant Rollatini with Balsamic Syrup

Photo Susie Iventosch

Eggplant is one of my all-time favorites, especially Eggplant Parmesan, but it can be a lot of work! This dish offers up a simpler recipe that can be served as an entree or an appetizer. The filling can be adjusted to use ricotta and mozzarella, or even

just cream cheese, but if you’re a fan of goat cheese it is especially delicious in this recipe. As a twist, you can insert a fresh basil leaf right on top of the filling before rolling for a tasty and aesthetically pleasing effect.

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. **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.



Eggplant Rollatini with Balsamic Syrup

(Makes approximately 8 rolls, serves 2 for dinner or 4 for appetizers)

INGREDIENTS

- 1 large eggplant, sliced into 8 thin slices (the long way), leave skins on
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 8 ounces of goat cheese (or goat cheese/cream cheese mixture)
- 1/4 cup sun-dried tomatoes, chopped
- 1/4 cup basil pesto
- 1/4 cup pine nuts, toasted
- 1-2 fresh tomatoes, coarsely chopped (or 1 cup cherry tomatoes)
- 1 cup balsamic vinegar, reduced over medium-high heat until thick and syrupy

DIRECTIONS

Cut off the very top and very bottom of the eggplant and slice lengthwise into 1/4-inch slices. Lay on a tray and salt on both sides. Allow to sit for 30 minutes to one hour. Meanwhile, mix goat cheese, sun-dried tomatoes and pesto in a small bowl.

When ready to assemble, take a paper towel and absorb any liquid that has sloughed off due to salt from both sides of the eggplant slices. Heat some of the olive oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Working in batches, place eggplant in pan, cooking until just pliable and beginning to turn golden brown. Flip to repeat on other side. Remove to cutting board.

Place about a tablespoon of the filling at the wide end of the eggplant and roll into a log, using a toothpick to secure if needed. I use the end pieces, too, and just roll them inside out, putting the skin on the inside.

Bake eggplant rollatini in 350-degree oven, until heated through and cheese filling is piping hot. Serve at once over or next to a bed of chopped tomatoes, and garnish with pine nuts. Drizzle balsamic syrup over all.

We served this with baguette slices (crostini) covered with mozzarella and broiled until bubbly and golden brown.

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MOVIE REVIEW

Top Five Movies of 2014

By Derek Zemrak



Felicity Jones stars as Jane Wilde and Eddie Redmayne stars as her suitor, Stephen Hawking, in Academy Award-winning director James Marsh's "The Theory of Everything," a Focus Features release. Photo Liam Daniel/Focus Features

The Oscar nominations will be announced on Jan. 15 and the awards will be presented at the Dolby Theatre in Hollywood on Feb 22. The show will be televised live on ABC. Here are my favorite films of 2014:

#5 "Selma" – Director Ava DuVernay will receive an Oscar nomination for "Selma," which chronicles Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s epic 1965 civil rights march from Selma to Montgomery, Ala. David Ovelowo, who portrays King, should be receiving an Oscar nod on Jan. 15.

#4 "Birdman" – Michael Keaton plays a struggling actor who was once a huge box office draw as a cinema superhero who mounts an ambitious Broadway production to kick life back into his career. "Birdman" is a complicated roller coaster ride of life and the performing arts industry. This is Keaton's role of a lifetime and a sure nomination for Best Actor.

#3 "The Theory of Everything" – Eddie Redmayne's portrayal of physicist Stephen Hawking will not only receive an Oscar nomination on Jan. 15, he should win the Oscar on Feb. 22. His performance was astonishing. The film deals with Hawking's relationship with his fellow collegian and future wife Jane Wilde. Felicity Jones gives a solid performance as Jane and should receive an Oscar nod. "The Theory of Everything" could be

the big winner on Feb. 22.

#2 "Imitation Game" – In 1939, Alan Turing (Benedict Cumberbatch), was a Cambridge mathematics alum hired by the British intelligence agency MI6 to crack Nazi codes. Turing's success makes him and his team national heroes, but he is imprisoned in 1952 when it is revealed he is gay. Cumberbatch is a strong second behind Redmayne for Best Actor.

#1 "St. Vincent" – This is a film that you probably will not hear being announced on the Oscar nomination list Jan. 15, which will be a disappointment. "St. Vincent" is the little independent film that receives my vote for best movie of the year because it is a surprise in so many ways. Based on the cast – Bill Murray, Melissa McCarthy and Naomi Watts – one would expect a comedy, but "St. Vincent" is so much more. It's a life lesson about human behavior, companionship, friendship and love. If you haven't seen "St. Vincent," do yourself a favor and see it. You will be pleasantly surprised.

I would like to wish everyone a healthy and prosperous 2015.

Do you love movies? Watch Real to Reel every Sunday at 2:30PM on KOFY TV20, as Derek Zemrak and Leonard Pirkle talk movies and everything entertainment in the Bay Area.

Lunafest: Short Films By, For and About Women

By A. K. Carroll

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Lovers and supporters of women's voices and the arts will gather in Saint Mary's Soda Center at 6 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 21 for the Moraga screening of "Lunafest," a traveling film festival filled with stories by women, for women and about women. The festival is being sponsored by Luna, the makers of the nutrition bar for women. Originally founded in 2000, Lunafest has featured 110 filmmakers and has raised over \$2 million.

Saint Mary's Women's Resource Center has hosted Lunafest since 2009. This year's festival, featuring eight exceptionally-made and thematically-diverse short films, will travel to over 150 cities and screen in front of over 25,000 people. Viewers

can expect to both laugh and cry, as well as have their interests piqued and their perspectives challenged regarding issues such as gender norms, broken relationships and feminine exploitation. Films will vary in style, length and content.

Members of the Lamorinda community are invited to attend. Tickets are \$5 for students and \$10 for general admission. They can be purchased through eventbrite at <http://www.lunafest.org/moraga0121>. All proceeds will go toward The Breast Cancer Fund, which works to prevent breast cancer by eliminating exposure to environmental factors.

For more information on Lunafest visit <http://www.lunafest.org>.

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January 16:

Gustavo Silva is Rotary exchange student living in Lamorinda and attending Acalanes High. Gustavo's topic is "My Life as a Brazilian Exchange Student"

January 23:

Join us for our first quarter Club Assembly to learn more about Lamorinda Sunrise, what we have been up to and our plans for 2015!

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Crab Feed & Dance

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OTHER ...continued

“Strategies to Maximize your Social Security Retirement Benefits” – a free educational workshop from 5:30 to 7 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 28 at the Lafayette War Memorial Center. Do you know which Social Security retirement benefit filing strategy is optimal for you? There are 567 filing choices for a married couple ... over 70 percent of people file for benefits before their full retirement age. Learn how to make the best decision regarding your Social Security retirement benefits. RSVP required: tfriedman@financialguide.com.

Oakland Museum of California presents “Bees: Tiny Insect, Big Impact” from Jan. 31 to Sept. 20, 1000 Oak Street, Oakland. A new family-friendly exhibition on the intricate world of one of the most important creatures to human agriculture and the natural environment. Cost: \$15 adults; \$10 students and seniors with valid ID; \$6 youth ages 9-17; free ages 8 and under. OMCA Members always get in free. For more info, specific days and hours, visit <http://museumca.org/bees> or call (510) 318-8400.

Crab Feed and Dance from 6 to 11 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 7 at the Holy Trinity Cultural Center, 1700 School Street, Moraga. Bring your appetites and dancing shoes. Dinner and Dance: \$50; Dance only: \$15. For non-crab lovers, chicken is available by special advance order. Dinner tickets must be purchased in advance. For tickets and reservations, call (925) 672-6799.

Free Tax Preparation for the 2015 tax season is available starting in February from AARP's Tax-Aide and United Way's Earn It, Keep It, Save It (EKS) programs. All tax preparers are trained and certified by the IRS. For info or to make an appointment for the Tax-Aide sites serving the Walnut Creek area, call (925) 943-5851, Walnut Creek Senior Club site; (925) 405-6278, Walnut Creek Grace Presbyterian Church site; (925) 979-5013, Walnut Creek St. Paul's Episcopal Church site. For general information and other site locations, call (925) 726-3199. For info on EKS sites call 2-1-1 or visit www.earnitkeepsaveit.org.

SENIORS

SIRs Las Trampas Branch 116 welcomes guests to socialize at 11 a.m. Monday, Jan. 19 at our monthly luncheon at the Walnut Creek Elks Lodge, 1475 Creekside Drive, and learn about membership activities including book discussions, bridge, computers, dine-outs, fishing, golf, hiking/walking, investments, poker, travel, wine tastings and more fun things. There are also special golf events and bridge tournaments during the year where wives, partners and guests are invited. For more information about these activities for retired men, visit www.Branch116.org; call (925) 322-1160 for lunch reservations. Cost: \$15.

Origami - Instruction by Julia Lam from 2 to 4 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 28 in the Elderberry Room, Lafayette Community Center. Learn the ancient art of origami – Japanese paper folding to create works of art. Although there are very intricate designs, beginning paper folders will start with a basic design. Lam will accommodate those who would also like to learn slightly more difficult, but still easily mastered designs. Please bring one crisp, new \$1 bill with which to make a special creation. Paper for all other projects will be provided. Free for Senior Services members; non-members: \$10.

Free computer and eReader help from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. on Wednesdays for seniors and other adults (18+). Are you new to computers? Do you need help setting up an email account? Would you like to learn how to write a letter on the computer? Would you like help downloading library ebooks and audiobooks onto your eReader or mobile device? Visit the Information Desk at the Orinda Library, 26 Orinda Way to set up your appointment, or contact Melanie McCallum for information at (925) 254-2184.

GARDEN

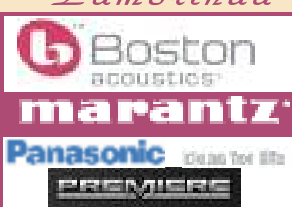
Moraga Garden Club will meet at 9:30 a.m. Thursday, Jan. 15 at the Holy Trinity Cultural Center, 1700 School St. Moraga. Social time at 9:30 a.m.; meeting at 10 a.m. The speakers will be Leslie Bennett and Stephanie Bittner, owners of StarApple and Fine Gardening, who will discuss "Edible and Ornamental Landscapes." Non-members welcome.

Montelindo Garden Club Meeting (third Friday, September thru May) will be at 9 a.m. Friday, Jan. 16 at St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, 66 St. Stephens Drive, Orinda featuring speaker Claire Splan, a San Francisco Bay Area Gardener, author of "California Fruit and Vegetable Gardening." For info, visit www.montelindogarden.com.

Worm Composting Bin Workshop from 10 a.m. to noon Saturday, Jan. 17 at Heather Farm Community Center in Walnut Creek. Learn about vermicomposting and build your worm bin. All supplies are covered, including worms. Cost: \$20 per household. Space is limited and registration is required by Jan. 9. Visit www.wastediversion.org to download registration form. Sponsored by the Central Contra Costa Solid Waste Authority. For info, call (925) 906-1801.

Winter Rose Pruning Workshop at 10 a.m. Saturday, Jan. 24 is a must for rose lovers. Rejuvenate your rose bushes and encourage beautiful new canes to produce the best blooms. Workshops are held in a covered outdoor area. Dress warmly and be prepared to learn a lot! Call (925) 254-3713 or email info@mcconnellnursery.com to reserve a seat.

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LAMORINDA SPORTS

Dons Roll Mats to Keep Top Spot in DFAL

By Karl Buscheck

With the postseason looming, the Acalanes girls' soccer team is rolling through the DFAL.

"We're feeling really good," said Acalanes head coach Evan Sassano, whose team owns a share of the lead in the DFAL standings with a 4-1-0 record in league (10-1-0 overall). "We're coming together as a team and playing the way we want to play."

It's been a remarkable run for a squad that went 0-4-8 in league a season ago. On Jan. 7, Acalanes clashed with Miramonte, topping its neighbor 5-3 in a back-and-forth affair.

"These are games that we get up," said Sassano. "We took it as a good challenge for us, and we saw that after we won that we feel we can compete with anyone."

On a cold night at Acalanes, the Mats, whose record stands at 2-2-1 in league (6-3-2 overall), didn't waste any time getting on the board. In the opening minutes of the game, Miramonte claimed a 1-0 edge courtesy of junior Cecilia Gee.

Acalanes then poured in three unanswered goals to take a 3-1 lead into the half. As the second half got underway, the Mats stormed back into the game. Ten minutes in, freshman Angeline Liu cut the deficit to one goal, as she scored on a deflected shot.

It only took Miramonte five minutes to find the equalizer. With the Mats' attack pushing forward, Gee made a quick turn 30 yards from the goal and sent a laser of a shot into the upper right corner of the net to tie the game at 3-3.

After the Dons watched their two-goal lead vanish, the team regained the momentum in the final third of the game. With 12 minutes to go, senior Caroline Clark provided the go-ahead strike on a penalty kick.

The goal was Clark's 12th of the season, making her the leading scorer in the DFAL. Senior Katharine Torchio then sealed the win for the Dons. With three minutes to go, Torchio was left unmarked on a fast break and crashed in her second goal of the contest.

Sassano was impressed with the way his team continued to battle after Miramonte's furious



Caroline Clark scored for the Dons.

Photos Gint Federas



Angeline Liu scored a goal for the Mats.

second-half charge.

"We knew that we needed to be resilient," he said. "We knew that we had to be strong mentally, that it's not going to be an easy game. So, we kept going and we showed

that we can finish a game out."

Up next for Acalanes is another rivalry matchup as the team visits Campolindo on Jan. 14. With a 2-1-1 record in league (5-3-1 overall), the Cougars sit in third place in the DFAL and are right in the mix for the top spot.

After winning back-to-back games, Campolindo is trending in the right direction as the end of the season approaches. On Jan. 9, the squad hosted Dougherty Valley, edging past the league opponent 1-0. On Jan. 6, the Cougars also beat Piedmont by the same score line in a non-conference matchup. Senior AJ Morgan provided the winning goal and now leads the team with seven strikes on the season.



Katharine Torchio's goal sealed the 5-3 win for the Dons.



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U6-U8 Boys & Girls	1/9/2015	FRIDAY	4-5:30PM	WILDER 2
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U9-U10 Boys & Girls	1/11/2015	SUNDAY	5-6:30PM	WILDER 2
	2/8/2015	SUNDAY	5-6:30PM	
U11- u12 Girls & Boys	1/10/2015	SATURDAY	9:15-10:45AM	WILDER 2
	2/8/2015	SUNDAY	6:30-8PM	
NEW & RETURNING PLAYERS:				
AGES	DATE	DAY	TIME	LOCATION
U13 Girls	2/16/2015	MONDAY	4-6PM	WILDER 2
U13 Girls	2/19/2015	THURSDAY	5:30-7PM	WILDER 2
U13 Boys	2/17/2015	TUESDAY	4-6PM	WILDER 1
U13 Boys	2/19/2015	THURSDAY	4-5:30PM	WILDER 1
U14 Girls	2/17/2015	TUESDAY	6-8PM	WILDER 2
U14 Girls	2/19/2015	THURSDAY	5:30-7PM	WILDER 2
U14 Boys	2/17/2015	TUESDAY	6-7:30PM	WILDER 2
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There will be a celebration of Bob Wilson on Jan. 28 from 7:30-8:30 p.m. in the Campolindo High School big gym. Bob Wilson, longtime Campolindo PE teacher, coach and athletic director, passed away on Dec.17. See related story at: www.lamorindaweekly.com/archive/issue0822/Longtime-Athletic-Director-Remembered.html

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Lamorinda Boys' Soccer Settles into Season

By Spencer Silva



Tom Higgins had a shot on goal during the match.

It was a brisk evening in Orinda when the Miramonte boys' soccer team (2-2-4) hosted the Acalanes Dons (3-6-2). The small crowd on hand on Jan. 7 was greeted not only by the cold air but also by back-and-forth gridlock on the pitch.

The end result was a 0-0 draw, but the game wasn't necessarily played between the penalty boxes. In fact, the Dons had eight shots on goal and the Mats had six. Both teams created scoring opportunities, but neither, ultimately, was able to put the ball in the net.

Acalanes spent much of the first half on offense, and, in the 31st minute, they created the game's first scoring opportunity when Danny Neyschloss escaped a lone defender and sent a searing kick that ricocheted off the near post.

In the 36th minute, just five minutes later, Tom Higgins barely stayed onside to get a one-on-one with Mats' keeper Garrett Johnson, but Higgins' strike went straight into Johnson's mitts.

As the game went along, the Mats offense picked up. After Acalanes nearly scored off a corner kick in the 74th minute, the Mats countered and

Aaron Roybal beat the last man on a through ball, missing a near-post goal by only inches.

Johnson registered an impressive eight saves on eight shots. His strong performance was the difference in the match for Miramonte. "I was focusing on being reserved, trying to organize my team," he said of the performance.

Miramonte's defense has been its calling card through its first seven matches. They've allowed just four goals; the struggles have come on offense. "We're trying to improve in the final third," explained coach Bilal Samy, "we need to put balls in the net."

On Jan. 9, they defeated Las Lomas 2-1 for their second win.

Acalanes coach Paul Curtis echoed Samy's sentiment, "We created three or four good opportunities, not spectacular ones, but good ones. We've been challenged to put together offense. It's tough to win when you don't put the ball in the net."

Curtis's team is in the midst of finding its identity. The roster is composed of mostly young, inexperienced players who haven't quite figured out how they fit into the

team's overall scheme.

"Our guys are still trying to identify their roles and figuring out what they need to be to help the team win," Curtis said, adding, "We need to mature together as a team."

On Jan. 9, Acalanes beat Alhambra in a 2-0 shutout. Ian Franklin and Luis Martinez scored for the Dons while Alex Longbeam recorded a shutout as goalkeeper.

The Campolindo Cougars (7-4-1) are also a team in transition. They lost 20 players from last year's varsity team and have dealt with a number of injuries and illnesses this winter. In spite of the adversity, the team is currently in second place in the DFAL behind Dublin High.

Coach Shane Carney explained the team's journey to find a rhythm.

"Finding consistency has been difficult," he explained. "The good thing that has come out of all of this is that we are getting used to the inconsistency and just know that each night it could be 11 totally different players who need to step up for the team to be successful."

The Cougars had a decisive 5-1 victory over Dougherty Valley, scoring four goals in the first half.



Garrett Johnson helped keep the Dons scoreless.



Danny Neyschloss almost scored, but his shot hit off of the goal post.

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Saint Mary's Off to Strong Start Despite Loss

By Michael Sakoda



Lauren Nicholson scored a game-high 23 points for the Gaels.

The Saint Mary's women's basketball team faltered over the weekend amidst one of their hottest starts in recent memory. The Gaels started this year 11-5 (4-1 WCC), and they're striving to grow together.

The Gaels, who went 23-10 (11-7 WCC) last season and reached the second round of the Women's NIT, had won four straight games before an 88-86 loss to Pacific on Jan. 10.

"Everyone is stepping up this

year," said junior guard Lauren Nicholson, who has been named WCC Player of the Week twice this season. "We've had a couple of tough losses, but we've definitely shown we have potential."

The game started out with back-and-forth scoring, but Pacific took a 42-36 halftime lead behind tough defense and great outside shooting.

In the second half, Saint Mary's trailed 38-48 with 16:06 to play, but

they fought back, getting to the basket and the free throw line to spark a 13-3 run to tie the game at 51 all.

With 8:53 left, freshman guard Carly Turner grabbed a rebound and ran the length of the court to score, giving SMC a 62-60 edge — the Gaels' first lead since their 4-2 lead at the start of the game.

But Pacific center Kendall Kenyon came on late, scoring 19 of her team-high 21 in the second half and overtime, including the game tying basket at the end of regulation.

Nicholson, who scored a game-high 23 points, had two looks to tie the game at the end of overtime, but the ball just wouldn't drop.

"We missed some shots today, missed some free throws," said Saint Mary's head coach Paul Thomas. "We ran a little set we've worked on all week, and did a good job of executing it, but we did a poor job defending. We didn't make them do something different, and that's how you lose."

The Tigers showed off their range, knocking down 12 three-pointers to the Gaels' one, while scoring 20 points off of the Gaels' 21 turnovers, which ultimately gave them the edge and an 88-86 win. It was the Gaels' seventh game decided by two points or less this season, and the first one they lost.

Shannon Mauldin scored 19 to go



Shannon Mauldin had 19 points and five assists.

Photos Tod Fierner

with five assists and three steals to pace the Gaels.

With 13 games left to go in the regular season, Saint Mary's looks to finish strong.

"I think we can definitely win the WCC, even with that loss (to Pacific), we showed that we can beat that team,

any team," said Nicholson. "It's a very up and down conference. Anyone can beat anyone, and we're very capable of being the champions at the end."

The Gaels will look to start their next winning streak tomorrow at San Diego.

Magic Take First

Submitted by Greg Davis



After the California Magic U11 boys' team went undefeated in Gold Division of NorCal Fall Soccer League, they won the NorCal State Cup in the Platinum Division 3 on Dec. 7. "I am so proud of these boys as they have

progressed with a culture that we nurture at Cal Magic. The boys played with a lot of heart all season and I am very proud of what they have accomplished," said coach Jasko Begovic.

Preseason Victory

Submitted by Martha White



The Campolindo junior varsity basketball team won the 2014 JV Mission San Jose Basketball Tournament on Dec. 23. Front row, from left: Jessica Sanchez, Jessalyn Simon-Parker, Emma VanDeWyngaerde; back row: Kate Miles, Danielle Rhoda, coach Matt Kirby, Grace Mcguire, Ellen White and Kalli King

Clean Sweep

Submitted by Michelle Clancy



St. Monica's fourth grade girls' team won the MVP Holiday Tournament on Dec. 28, going 3-0 for the tournament. Front row, from left: Annie Coane, Samantha Brouhard, Shayne Clancy; back row: coach Jinky Garcia, Allie Cummins, Ava Garcia, Kylie Williams, Camille Yabu, and coach Stephanie Williams

Mats Win Holiday Tourney

Submitted by Meg Foley



Front row, from left: Chase Callister, Henry Marken, Fraser Burch, Andrew Logan, Tyler Zwahlen, Bryce Radlow, Paul Bakshi, Liam Glenn, ball boy Nicolai Bell and ball boy Kenny Kostermans; back row: coach Terry Juergens, Benjamin Kao, Jimmy Foley, Spencer Lang, Asim Khan, coach James Bell, and Ryan Ford

Undeterred by the holiday break, the Miramonte freshman basketball team won a tournament on Dec. 29. They beat American Canyon, Antioch, and then host Napa High

School in the championship game. Andrew Logan received the MVP award for the championship game, and Tyler Zwahlen received an MVP award for the entire tournament.

St. P's Undefeated in Tourney

Submitted by Jon Zuber



The St. Perpetua fourth grade American team went 3-0 with a thrilling come-from-behind victory over St. Joan of Arc to make it to the finals

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Lamorinda OUR HOMES

Lamorinda Weekly Volume 08 Issue 23 Wednesday, January 14, 2015



Digging Deep with Cynthia Brian

...read on page D8

Stylish Solutions

The Intrinsic Nature of Deep Cleaning and Design

By Ann McDonald



This month, I have included photos from my own home so you can see where I walk the walk, not just talk the talk. This is one of my favorite angles to take photos of our kitchen. Why? Because it speaks truth about my dish cupboards. Seasonally I rotate collections but those can accumulate quickly. When I need an honest assessment of my mess, I snap this shot and take the truth pill. If it's bad, I dive in and reduce big time.

Photo Peter Medilek

Many design clients have dreams of spring remodels, home updates and fresh flowers in completely re-designed guest suites and home offices, but the first thing we must address is the deep clean.

Think of it as an accounting of your home interior.

We have a saying in our office: "Blessing comes when it has a space to reside." The same is true of new furniture and interior decorating and design. We must create space for it within our homes before it can come live with us.

Without space for new things to inhabit, they get piled onto old proverbial wine skins and before you know it your gorgeous home is brimming with old and new items that don't quite work together. Let's take this January to really address simple tips and execute simple diligence so we can refresh our homes and refresh our families at the same time. ... continued on page D4





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Lamorinda Home Sales recorded

City	Last reported:	LOWEST AMOUNT:	HIGHEST AMOUNT:
LAFAYETTE	6	\$820,000	\$4,000,000
MORAGA	5	\$260,000	\$2,050,000
ORINDA	7	\$750,000	\$1,380,000

Home sales are compiled by CalREsource, 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 CalREsource nor this publication are liable for errors or omissions.

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3494 Black Hawk Road, \$4,000,000, 5 Bdrms, 3644 SqFt, 1951 YrBl, 11-21-14

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Previous Sale: \$620,000, 07-27-10

1117 Rahara Drive, \$1,254,000, 3 Bdrms, 2153 SqFt, 1953 YrBl, 11-21-14

2094 Reliez Valley Road, \$1,500,000, 4 Bdrms, 3454 SqFt, 1960 YrBl, 11-25-14;

Previous Sale: \$1,350,000, 03-27-13

3449 Stage Coach Drive, \$1,910,000, 4 Bdrms, 3766 SqFt, 1989 YrBl, 11-21-14;

Previous Sale: \$1,310,000, 03-29-02

680 Wee Donegal, \$820,000, 3 Bdrms, 1836 SqFt, 1967 YrBl, 11-26-14;

Previous Sale: \$320,000, 06-23-94

MORAGA

2067 Ascot Drive #144, \$260,000, 1 Bdrms, 753 SqFt, 1971 YrBl, 11-25-14

1 Josefa Place, \$600,000, 2 Bdrms, 1211 SqFt, 1984 YrBl, 11-26-14;

Previous Sale: \$525,000, 07-07-05

1128 Larch Avenue, \$1,015,000, 3 Bdrms, 2053 SqFt, 1965 YrBl, 11-25-14;

Previous Sale: \$970,000, 11-04-05

146 Tharp Drive, \$1,075,000, 4 Bdrms, 2101 SqFt, 1963 YrBl, 11-21-14;

Previous Sale: \$456,000, 05-19-94

2 Willow Springs Court, \$2,050,000, 4 Bdrms, 3910 SqFt, 1989 YrBl, 11-26-14;

Previous Sale: \$2,050,000, 06-15-06

ORINDA

164 Ardith Drive, \$1,080,000, 4 Bdrms, 1806 SqFt, 1959 YrBl, 11-24-14

7 Candlestick Road, \$1,380,000, 4 Bdrms, 2261 SqFt, 1978 YrBl, 11-21-14

2 Carisbrook Drive, \$750,000, 3 Bdrms, 2389 SqFt, 1959 YrBl, 11-25-14

19 Culver Court, \$815,000, 3 Bdrms, 1525 SqFt, 1949 YrBl, 11-25-14

55 Hazel Tree Ridge, \$1,040,000, 11-21-14

150 La Espiral, \$780,000, 4 Bdrms, 2139 SqFt, 1942 YrBl, 11-26-14

10 St. Stephens Drive, \$880,000, 4 Bdrms, 1940 SqFt, 1955 YrBl, 11-21-14;

Previous Sale: \$299,000, 11-15-88

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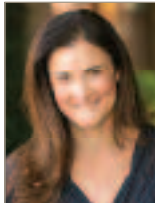
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Distinctive Properties



What to expect in 2015

By Andi Peterson Brown

The 2014 Lamorinda real estate market remained strong as the Bay Area economy continued to thrive, bringing us a steady stream of well-capitalized buyers. Sold inventory for the year remained almost identical to 2013: 276 homes sold in Orinda (264 in 2013), 301 in Lafayette (315 in 2013), and 150 in Moraga (140 in 2013), while the average sales price increased in all three cities. As compared to 2013, Orinda's average sales price increased 11% to \$1.375M, Lafayette's increased 8% to \$1.35M, and Moraga's increased 6% to \$1.205M. As the market emerges from its annual winter hibernation and we gear up for the 2015 spring selling season, we expect to see:

- **A competitive spring market.** Buyers should anticipate a competitive spring market, but industry experts expect more sellers to come to market in 2015, helping to ease our inventory shortage. Values are anticipated to continue their rise, but at a more moderate pace.
- **Relatively steady interest rates.** Interest rates remain historically low and are expected to remain so for some time. Industry economists are forecasting, though, that they could inch up to 5% before the year is over.

In addition, I'm happy to talk in more detail about the market if you have further questions.



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Stylish Solutions

The Intrinsic Nature of Deep Cleaning and Design

... continued from page D1



We have two French Ranges that are not self-cleaning. As such, a professional deep clean is critical from a maintenance standpoint. Take a good look at your appliances, inside and out, front and back as well as ceilings, light fixtures and floors. Hire professionals when you can. Photos Eric Nelder

How do we do that? Here are my top three successful January cleanout tips for you, the stylish suburbanite:

First: Deep Clean. Even if you have never hired a cleaning service, there are times it's prudent to call in the professionals. At least three times a year, we recommend a deep clean for each of our clients. That includes things like: skylights, stone floors, heating vents, interior ceilings, drapery and upholstery. There are so many services that specialize; find the ones with solid reviews that use eco-friendly products and invest. And look up. Don't neglect the oversized chandelier and ceilings. They need to be washed.

Many people hold off until the so-called spring months

(March and April) to do what they call a "spring clean," but we have found getting a solid crew in for a deep clean in January not only clears the glitter off the hardwood floor (hello, holiday leftovers), it sets our clients in a refreshing place even while the weather can be gloomy.

Personally, we have stone floors and the glitter (which I love in December) gets a tad tiresome in late January. After a solid vacuum by me, it's time to call in the stone polishers and sealers. Expensive? Perhaps, but definitely worth it. Besides, a bit of maintenance along the way saves the investment down the road.

Second: Reduce, reduce, reduce. Did I say reduce? I meant, reduce! We tackle our waistslines and even our winter gardens in January but often forget to look hard inside our homes. Personally, I succumb to January sales just like the rest and, as a decorator, I am often purchasing for inventory later in the season, but some of those things work their way into my personal space. Not good, Ann.

How do I recommend tackling this reduction? Simple: make a chart and get aggressive. Take inventory and target to reduce by 25 percent. That means when you are cleaning out a kitchen storage area, if you have 10 measuring cups, lose two or three – more if you can. Ten pans? Lose two or three.

The truth is, when we really face our truth behind the storage doors in the kitchen and on the book shelves in the family room, there is always room for reduction. Donate, garage sale, recycle.

Even the pros know: it's nearly impossible for someone to get a clear vision for a space in their mind's eye without clearing the clutter first. ... continued on page D6



Close-up shots reveal how clean items really are.

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Stylish Solutions

The Intrinsic Nature of Deep Cleaning and Design

... continued from page D4

It might be time to donate or toss that afghan with snags from your pet and one too many coffee stains (am I speaking to myself? perhaps), and purchase a new one that won't snag and will bleach in the wash.

It's funny, we do this with our wardrobes consistently, but we fail to remember it is just as critical with our homes, perhaps more so as our spaces nurture and create just by virtue of being space.

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Do your countertops need refinishing? I have brass straps on butcher block and call in marine-grade finishers to keep them in ship shape. Photo Peter Medilek

Third: Take Photos, Look Objectively, Document Progress for Encouragement. We tell our clients to take photos of each room in their home this time of year. Why? Because you'll see the space more clearly once you take a solid photo of a space, let it alone for a few days, clear your head, and by extension, your visual palate and come back to the photos a day or two later.

Set aside some time to address each photo and room. What are your goals for those spaces this year? Will 2015 be a year of guests? Then let's budget and plan for a refresh in that guest room. Will 2015 see an elderly parent or post-college child move home? Then let's budget and plan for that. What about the possible remodel or addition? Photos help tremendously. They simply don't lie.

When we sit down and work through what is really going on in a space, we can identify what needs to change.

Here's to a happy, healthy and tidy 2015 where our homes have space for blessings to reside. If you are interested in joining one of our upcoming design workshops, please email ann@couturechateau.com or call (925) 386-0720.

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Ann McDonald, IIDA, NAPO, is the Founder/CEO of Couture Chateau, a luxury interior design firm in Orinda. For a complete blog post including other design ideas, visit www.couturechateau.com/blog





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Digging Deep with Cynthia Brian

Why We Garden! Part 1

By Cynthia Brian

"In all things of nature there is something of the marvelous." –Aristotle

In the blustery cold of post holiday days, I found myself wandering my landscape bundled against the chill in a warm down jacket, faux fur hood, and two pairs of gloves. The winds were intense. Tree limbs littered the driveway as entire branches arched toward the ground. The gale reddened my eyes, and although nothing in the garden demanded my immediate attention, I was determined to work outside.

In the midst of the storm, I asked myself, "Why do I love gardening so much?" As I raked the rubble, and pulled the errant weeds, a river of answers flooded my brain. After asking friends, family, and strangers the same question, it became obvious that although we all have our individual reasons, gardening gets into our blood and contributes to our unique personalities, passions, and preferences.

Here are reasons we choose to be gardeners:

Part 1

Memories

Since I grew up on a 360-acre farm where we grew a great variety of organic fruits, vegetables, and herbs as well as a couple of acres of flowers, my fondest memories all have something to do with being in the dirt. I'll never forget the winter when my mom caught me picking her prized camellias. As she shouted and scolded, my devoted dog jumped between us growling at her. I learned the lesson that it was not okay to pluck flowers in any garden without permission, even if the bouquet I was picking was for my mother. She learned that our dog protected the kids first, even from our parents. Raising my own children, I wanted to give them opportunities



A fern gets a shower and shake in the sink.



Bare-root roses are now available in nurseries and garden centers.

that would trigger remembrances, whether it was harvesting the first beans, or burying a beloved pet. I still think about collecting blackberries for summer breakfasts at my grandparents' horse barn, learning to drive the jalopy in the orchard, and saving hollyhock seeds at Nonie's. A lifetime of fond memories grows in the garden.

Food

Growing your own food is the healthiest way to live. There is nothing better than eating a fresh, ripe tomato right off the vine. Oranges, grapes, apples, tangerines, cherries ... everything is sweeter and tastier when you grow it yourself. We amend our soil so we know our harvests provide nutrients and health benefits from ground to table. By learning what grows well in each season, a gardener has a yearlong produce department right outside the door.

... continued on page D10

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Why We Garden! Part 1

... continued from page D8

Exercise

Extended sitting has become the killer disease du jour. Gardeners get off the couch, unplug from the computer, and move outside in the fresh air. Digging, raking, hauling, lifting, planting, mowing, and hoeing burns calories. In fact, one hour of weeding burns approximately 300 calories for women and 400 for men, which is the same amount as moderate walking or cycling. Forty-five minutes of gardening equals 30 minutes of aerobics. Carrying buckets of stones, bricks, or water strengthens our muscles. We are cross training at every age.

Beauty

Gardeners are artists. Plants are the paint and our grounds are the canvas. Our unique creative styles offer solace to the senses. There is wonder and magic in the natural world and gardeners express themselves to surprise and delight. Many Lamorindans own second homes in the Sierras. The beauty of their snow-laden winter wonderland rivals the burst of May flora after the melt. The first signs of crocus and daffodils in January lift spirits while the perfume of roses and bright hues of summer perennials remind us that the outdoors are for entertaining.

Pride

How exciting it is to grow a spectacular peach or a beautiful dinner plate dahlia! We feel a sense of accomplishment, of a job well done, something tangible that we

manifested through our personalized manual labor. Being in the age of technology and big business, many of us don't use the motor skills in our work life that we use in the garden. We are proud of our calloused hands and muddy boots.

Connections

Not only do we feel a soulful connection with our Mother Earth, but we gain a better understanding of ourselves and of others. No matter what level we are in our gardening adventure, we connect and communicate with one another about our trials, triumphs, and hurdles. Many join garden clubs or become members of a community garden. Our social circles expand over the latest recipe we cooked with ingredients from our potagers.

Sharing

A garden is to share. It is such a joy to bring a basket of extra corn, Swiss chard, or plums to a neighbor or friend. Gardeners distribute rose canes after January pruning, bouquets of flowers as hostess gifts, and volunteer plants that have been pulled for transplanting. We share our knowledge of what works and what doesn't work, short cuts we have found, and specimens that flourish in our area. We collect and dry seeds to give to those who could benefit. Without all of the slips, pinches, cuttings, and rootings from my mother's garden, I wouldn't have my heritage showcase. If you've ever attended one of my garden presentations or seminars, you have benefited from the plethora of seeds, herbs, fruits, and other goodies I give away. Sharing is integral to a gardener's life.

There are so many reasons that we love to garden – rain, sleet, snow, or sunshine – that we'll continue this conversation in next month's Digging Deep. I'd love you to email me your main motives for being a gardener. Email me at Cynthia@GoddessGardener.com. I'll do my best to incorporate the many ways we make this world a more beautiful place by doing what we love. Make a New Year's resolution to find the marvelous in nature.

Happy Gardening and Happy Growing!



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With current winter drought conditions home owners need to make sure to water their trees too. Lack of water brings bugs and diseases. Proper pruning is also essential this time of year for your Pine trees. Bark Beetles can infest your tree when it is weak from lack of water or due to sap that comes from pruning in the spring and summer; these beetles are dormant during the fall and winter months. Beetles also can carry diseases from tree to tree, and the only way to stop them is to prevent them by having a healthy tree in the first place.

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Fresh picked carrots sprinkled with basil are ready to roast.



The final crop of persimmons sits on the chopping block with fresh greens and Meyer lemons.

Cynthia Brian's Mid-Month Reminders

- **ADD** better drainage to any potted plants you received as holiday gifts by removing the wrapping paper. Trim the spent blossoms, water deeply, and fertilize.
- **BRING** budding cymbidium orchids indoors to display.
- **PRUNE** all roses, crepe myrtles, and deciduous fruit trees by the end of the month.
- **BUY** bare-root rose bushes. Soak in water for a day before planting. Cut off any damaged or broken roots. Plant the bud union three inches above the ground.
- **TREAT** houseplants to a warm shower and shake. Indoor heat dries the roots, leaves, and fronds, especially those of ferns.
- **PICK** ripe and tangy naval oranges, Meyer lemons, tangelos and use the rest of your persimmons.
- **PERUSE** seed catalogues that are available now to determine what you want to plant in spring.



Cynthia Brian wears a hood for gardening in the cold.

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Cynthia Brian

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Best wishes to our families, friends and neighbors for a happy, healthy and safe 2015.



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