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Sleepy Hollow Legends' swimmer Mollie Appl finished the 9-10 girls' 50-yard butterfly in 34.76 seconds.

Photo Gint Federas

Bottoms Up Meet Makes Big Splash

Awards abound and underdogs shine at 40th annual OMPA invitational (See story on page C1)

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LAMORINDA WEEKLY

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Orinda House Fire Response Questioned

By Nick Marnell



View of the Charles Hill Road fire from the captain's seat of a responding MOFD engine. Photo courtesy MOFD

A firefighter was injured and four family members were displaced in a two-alarm fire that broke out in a single-family home in Orinda June 21. The fire at 16 Charles Hill Road, which was reported shortly after 10 a.m., was contained within an hour; the injured firefighter was treated at the scene and returned to work, according to Dennis Rein, Moraga-Orinda Fire District public information officer for the incident. "It was a very aggressive fire attack by our guys, and they saved a large portion of the house," Fire Chief Stephen Healy told the MOFD board July 1. Battalion chief Sean Perkins estimated damage of \$200,000.

Some north Orinda residents questioned the fire response, as, based on data provided by Rein, engine 145 arrived at the scene seven and a half minutes from the time the fire was first called in, with engine 143 arriving nearly 30 seconds later. According to an Orinda resident, a driver saw smoke but no fire engine, so he drove up Charles Hill to fire station 43 in hopes of alerting the firefighters. But the station was empty.

MOFD station 43, at 20 Via Las Cruces, less than one-half mile from the incident, was empty because the station 43 captain was meeting that morning with the captain at station 45 in Orinda Village.

... continued on page A8

Civic News A1-A12

Vision for Hacienda de las Flores Unveiled – page A4.

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Otter found in Orinda creek – page B1.



Sports C1-C3

The tremendous success of the Lamorinda prep sports programs – page C1.



Our Homes D1-D12

Get rid of what's bugging you in the garden – page D10.





Lafayette

Public Meetings

City Council

Monday, July 27, 7 p.m.
Lafayette Library & Learning Center,
Community Hall, 3491 Mt. Diablo Blvd.

Planning Commission

Monday, July 20, 7 p.m.
Lafayette Library & Learning Center,
Community Hall, 3491 Mt. Diablo Blvd.

Design Review

Monday, July 27, 7 p.m.
Lafayette Library & Learning Center,
Arts & Science Discovery Center,
3491 Mt. Diablo Blvd.

Check online for agendas, meeting notes and announcements

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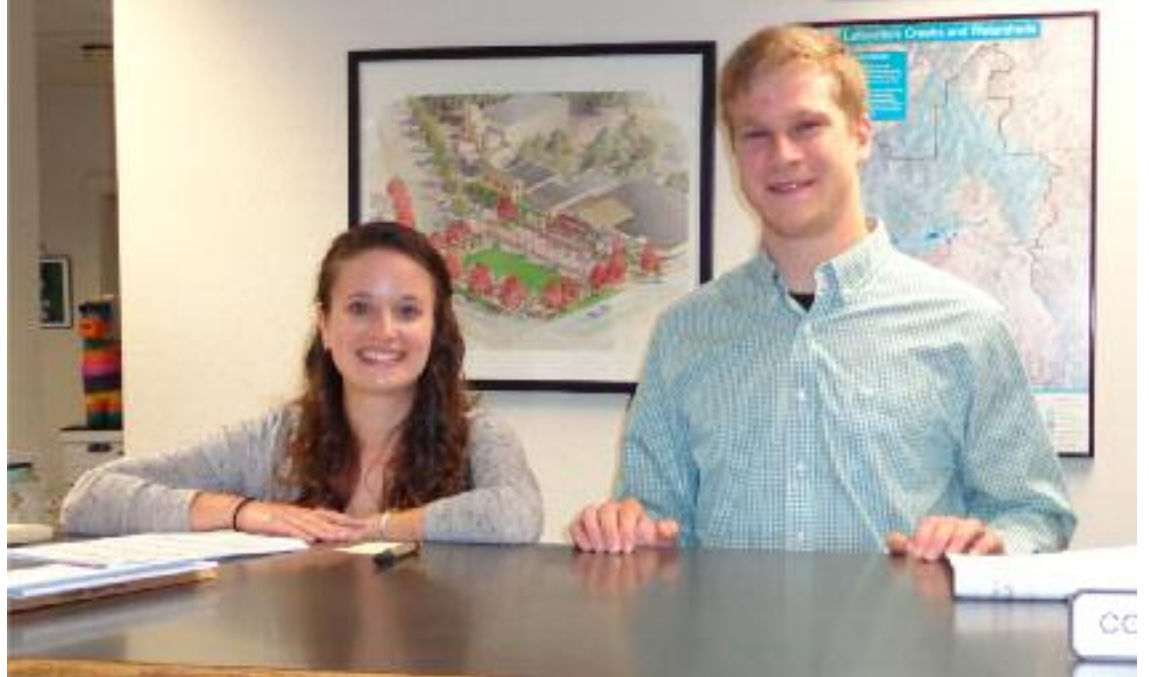
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New Kids in Town at the Planning and Building Department

By Cathy Tyson

They may look young, but brand new city planning technicians Chris Joram and Julia Koppman Norton, both recent college graduates, are smart and eager to work for the city of Lafayette.

Nothing says welcome aboard like donuts and cake on your first day, says Joram, who has been at the job for just over a month. He felt very welcomed and is impressed with the collegial atmosphere in the city offices. A graduate



Lafayette city planning technicians Julia Koppman Norton and Chris Joram

Photo C. Tyson

Lafayette Police Department Incident Summary Report June 21 to July 4

Abandoned Vehicle	Pleasant Hill/Old Tunnel Rds
Alarms	93
Animal Cruelty	
	3400 block Springhill Rd (2)
	Trader Joe's
	Safeway
911 calls (incl. hang-ups)	18
Burglary, Auto	
	Mt Diablo Bl/Golden Gate Wy
	900 block Leland Dr
	Bentley Upper School
	30 block Lafayette Cr
Burglary, Misc.	
	1000 block Brown Av
Civil Problem	
	1200 block Monticello Rd
	1100 block Raha Ra Dr
	3300 block Victoria Av
Disturbance of the Peace	
	3000 block Rohrer Dr
Police/Fire/EMS Response	
	Hwy 24/Oak Hill Rd
	Pleasant Hill Rd/Taylor Bl
Fireworks	
	Reliez Valley/Withers
	Silver Springs/S Silver Springs Rds
	Beechwood/Hawthorne Drs
	800 block Acalanes Rd
	Toffelmire Dr/Moraga Rd
	Burton Valley Elementary
	Rohrer/Silverado Drs
Fraud	
	3200 block Lucas Cr
	1200 block Panorama Dr
	Safeway
	3200 block Deer Hill Rd
	Bank of the West
Harassment	
	3300 block Lucille Ln
Hit & Run	
	Lafayette Cr/Mt Diablo Bl
	3400 block Mt Diablo Bl
	School/1st Sts
	1000 block Serrano Ct (2)
	3200 Camino Colorados
Health & Safety Violation	
	Springhill/Pleasant Hill Rds
	3700 block Mt Diablo Bl
ID Theft	
	reported to police
	3400 block Echo Springs Rd (2)
	3600 Brook St
	1400 Meadowlark Ct (1)
	1200 block Warner Ct (2)
	3700 block Mosswood Dr
Loitering	
	3500 Block Mt Diablo Bl
Loud Music	
	3600 block Walnut St (2)
	600 block Glenside Dr
Loud Noise	
	3600 block Mt Diablo Bl (2)
	Springhill Elementary
	Franklin Ln/Happy Valley Rd
	600 block St Mary's Rd (2)
	Glenside Dr/St Mary's Rd
	600 block Murray Ln
Loud Party	
	3900 block Cowan Rd
	1000 block 2nd St
	St Mary's Rd/Glenside Dr
Neighbor Dispute	
	900 block Janet Ln
	1100 block Oleander
Panhandling	
	3500 block Mt Diablo Bl

Petty Theft	
	1200 block El Curtola (2)
	3500 block Herman Dr
	Lafayette Community Center
	3400 block Mt Diablo Bl (2)
	3500 block Via Los Colorados
	60 block Lafayette Cr
	1000 block Dyer Dr
	600 block Burton Dr
	Springbrook Pool
	3500 block Silver Springs Rd (2)
Grand Theft	
	10 block Hidden Valley Rd
	3200 block Mt Diablo Bl
Public Nuisance	
	Lafayette Cr/Fiesta Ln
	900 block Moraga Rd
	Post Office
	3600 block Happy Valley Ln (2)
	Oak Hill/N Thompson Rds
	Mosswood Dr/Village Center
Phone Harass	
	1100 block Glen Rd
Promiscuous Shooting	
	10 block Valley High
	1000 block Sierra Vista Wy
	1500 block Pleasant Hill Rd
Reckless Driving	
	St Mary's Rd/Woodview Dr
	Acalanes High School
	Mt Diablo Bl/Happy Valley Rd
	Moraga Rd/Sky Hy Dr
	Deer Hill/Pleasant Hill Rds
	Hwy 24/Oak Hill Rd
	Mt Diablo Bl/Moraga Rd
	Reliez Valley Rd/Green Valley Ct
	3500 block Mt Diablo Bl
	Stanley Bl/Vacation Dr
Susp. Circumstances	6
Suspicious Vehicle	18
Suspicious Subject	14
Threats	
	1000 block N Thompson Rd
	3200 block Vals Ln
	3100 block Indian Wy
	500 block Silverado Dr
	3100 block Indian Wy
	3100 block Lucas Dr
Traffic Stops	175
Trespass	
	10 block Rancho Diablo Rd
	Safeway
	900 block Leland Dr
	Springbrook Pool
	1100 Oleander
Unwanted Guest	
	Safeway (2)
	10 block Northridge Ln
	Lafayette Park Hotel
Vandalism	
	3700 block Mosswood Dr
	3400 block Moraga Bl
	900 block Moraga Rd
	3600 Happy Valley Rd
	3400 block Mt Diablo Bl (2)
	3600 block Mt Diablo Bl
	3500 block Golden Gate Wy
	900 block Mt View Dr
Vehicle Theft	
	3500 block Mt Diablo Bl
	3400 block Black Hawk Rd
	3300 Deer Hill Rd
	3400 Shangri La Rd
	70 block Bacon Ct
Warrant Service	
	100 block S Sandringham, Moraga

of Campolindo High School and Sonoma State University, with a degree in environmental planning, Joram currently lives in Moraga. "I already have a great feel for the community," said the newbie who played basketball for Campolindo and is familiar with local neighborhoods.

Gluten-free cupcakes greeted Julia Koppman Norton. She's from Oakland and recently graduated with a degree in urban studies from UC Berkeley. "I'm really excited to be here," she said on day three of her employment. The bright and cheerful young lady has been involved in the world of dance – jazz,

ballet and choreography in her younger years.

"They are both fantastic," says senior planner Michael Cass, who has been showing them the ropes: he appreciates the "youthful energy" they bring. The two will be working the counter two days per week, helping residents who come to the city seeking discretionary development applications. Planners on duty work at the city offices' front counter from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. Certain projects are exempt from the permitting process, for example fences not over six feet high, retaining walls that are not over three feet high, installing a swing set, or oddly, ac-

ording to the California Building Code, oil derricks.

The new employees will also be working on zoning applications dealing with smaller additions and tree removal permits. As they become more experienced, they will be working with other planners on tasks spelled out in the work plan, like the Housing Element.

Joram and Koppman Norton are replacing veteran planners Lindy Chan and Anthony Arrivas. Chan had been with the city since 2001, working on hundreds of building applications. Arrivas started as a planning intern, then moved on to a planning technician position.



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- Sardines Insalata:** calamata olives, green beans, potato, feta cheese, balsamic olive oil9
- Niman Flat Iron Steak:** potato gratin, green beans, chimichurri sauce18
- Fresh Seafood Cioppino:** in a rich tomato-basil sauce, parmesan, garlic toast19
- Roasted Scallops:** spinach, salciccia sugo19
- Roasted Wild Salmon:** white wine, capers, braised greens, and potato gratin17
- Veal Scallopini:** mushrooms, garlic, marsala wine17

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Operation Swingtime Salutes the Troops

By Cathy Tyson



Photos provided

Is there an invisible time machine somewhere between the Lafayette Reservoir parking lot and the Rotary stage? In a special free concert honoring veterans' service, local Rotary clubs are hosting a twilight outdoor concert from 5 to 8 p.m. this Saturday, July 18 called Operation Swingtime, featuring the Big Band of Rossmoor and special guests Mic Gillette, formerly of Tower of Power, along with the Swinging Blue Stars, a quartet of ladies who sound just like the Andrews Sisters.

This concert, now in its second year, sets out to recognize veterans, reserves, active troops and soldiers' families, thanking them for their service – and, of course, the public is invited to enjoy the show as well. Calling the playlist for the evening "eclectic," bandleader Mo Levich highlighted a festive mix of jazz, big band music, Broadway show tunes and Gershwin.

Look for military vehicles on display

in the parking area, thanks to the Department of Defense and a large Mobile Vet Center vehicle that connects veterans with services they and their families may need, like health care, financial advice, education, housing and benefits.

There's a large lawn area opposite the stage on the east end of the reservoir near the kid's playground. Bring your own lawn chairs and a picnic dinner to nosh while stepping back in time. Golf carts will be available to help mobility-impaired folks on the short uphill journey to the stage area. Residents can thank the Rotary Club of Lafayette, the Lamorinda Sunrise Rotary Club, the Rotary Club of Moraga, the Orinda Rotary Club and the Rotary Club of Rossmoor for putting on the event. The Big Band of Rossmoor is presented by Generations in Jazz. A lovely evening, delightful music, perhaps some wine and snacks ... as Ira Gershwin put it so aptly, "Who could ask for anything more?"

Homes at Deer Hill Review Continues

By Cathy Tyson

The review process for The Homes at Deer Hill marches slowly on. At a recent Lafayette City Council meeting, traffic analysis, circulation, as well as air quality and school impacts were discussed. Dates were set for future components of the proposed 44-home project near Acalanes High School to be reviewed: one more in July and two in early August.

At the July 6 meeting, applicant O'Brien Land Company had experts responding to specific questions that were brought up by the city council, along with the city engineer and a representative from the Lafayette School District, and, of course, public testimony was given.

Steve Noack and Steve Bush of PlaceWorks addressed air quality impacts from the construction process itself and proximity to Highway 24, along with construction dust mitigation measures, and Rich Haygood of TJKM, a transportation consultant, explained traffic impacts.

Residents' exposure level is measured conservatively high, said Noack, measured over a 70-year period, where someone is outside every day. Mitigation measures to reduce impacts to a less than significant level include: standard best management

practices on airborne particulates and dust during construction; using state-of-the-art heavy equipment on the construction of the project; and finally having on-site residents replace the maximum efficiency filters on HVAC every three months – the manufacturers' suggested schedule. Calculations included the impact of construction activity and the site being subject to existing pollutants from Highway 24 and Pleasant Hill Road. During the construction phase, the applicant will be actively monitoring the air.

Concerns also centered around the proposed roundabout at the entrance, whether it's feasible or not, and which option – a roundabout or traffic light at the intersection – would deliver the best level of service and safety at that location. The slope of the hill, along with the speed of vehicles, factors into the ultimate selection.

Questions also lingered around the drop-off area. "There's always uncertainty about how people are going to behave despite our best intentions," said Council Member Don Tatzin. Council Member Mike Anderson pressed to get feasibility information about a roundabout sooner rather than later. Distribution of guest parking within the project also came up.

... continued on page A8

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Moraga

Public Meetings

Town Council

Wednesday, July 22 canceled
Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School,
1010 Camino Pablo

Planning Commission

Monday, July 20, 7 p.m.
Moraga Library, 1500 St. Mary's Rd.

Design Review

Monday, July 27, 7 p.m.
Tuesday, June 8 canceled
Moraga Library, 1500 St. Mary's Rd.

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

Unauthorized industrial fireworks 7/04/15 Police responded to a call about industrial fireworks on Augusta Drive at Greenbrier. Moraga-Orinda Fire District responded, dousing the large box holding 16 unexploded skyrockets with water, rendering them inert. Knucklehead firework owner, who apparently missed multiple fire danger warnings, has not come forward.

Possession of fireworks 7/04/15 Although there was a report of a pipe bomb, officers checked the area and only found remote devices to set off explosives. They also found several juveniles on the golf course who were in possession of fireworks, which were later disposed by the fire department. One of the three youngsters had consumed an alcoholic beverage. The three amigos agreed to enter the Juvenile Diversion Program, and were picked up by responsible adults.

Car left in road 6/30/15 An abandoned white Chevy Suburban was creating a traffic hazard on Moraga Road near Campolindo Drive. Cops had the very large vehicle towed and entered the car into their computer system. They also left a notice that the car was now stored at the registered owner's residence. No word if the beast was out of gas or had mechanical trouble.

Pool house squatters 7/03/15 Someone reported that two people were found living in the pool house on Woodminster Drive, and caused unspecified damage to the property. Cops came, the couple fled, but police later caught up with them and they admitted to being in the pool house, but denied causing any damage. Presumably if they had a better housing option, they would have taken it.

Car disappearance, exact date unknown. A Mercedes was reported missing by the owners of a home on Donald Drive that had been inherited. They simply wished to document the incident. Some time later, the car was involved in an accident in Concord and towed from the scene by police. Chief Priebe reports that the car has not been reported stolen.

Other crimes that occurred in Moraga between June 30 and July 7:

False Alarms – Moraga Way, Gaywood Place, Paseo Grande, Moraga Road, Calle la Montana, Fernwood Drive

Battery – Moraga Road

Identity Theft – Draeger Drive

Deceased Person – Saint Andrews Drive

Petty Theft – Camino Peral, Center Street

Danger to Self – St. Mary's Road

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Hacienda Proposal Excites Town Council

By Nick Marnell



Concept A: Community conference center and inn at Hacienda de las Flores. The Moraga Town Council opted for function over form July 8 as it directed its design consultant to further enhance a conceptual plan for the development of the Hacienda de las Flores.

After hosting two community workshops and processing the feedback and information, Gould Evans, the architectural design firm chosen by the town to develop conceptual plans for the upgrade of the nine-acre property, presented two completely different visions for the

Hacienda at the council meeting. Concept A featured a community conference center and inn, which called for the conversion of the main building into an inn, plus the addition of an expanded conference center, a swimming pool and up to 30 lodging units. Concept B pictured the Hacienda as a community arts and sculpture park, featuring plenty of open space and requiring the remodel of the main building into a community center and restaurant, plus the construction of a

tent courtyard area to host year-round social functions.

The arts park received little support from the public or the council, as it provided limited ability for the town to generate revenue. "The town can't afford concept B," said Councilmember Phil Arth. "It's not commercially viable."

"Concept A is exactly what we need," said Vice Mayor Mike Metcalf, noting that Moraga is in dire need of accommodation and could certainly use another restaurant.

Councilmember Dave Trotter urged the firm to think even bigger along those lines, suggesting that the casitas be converted into two-story lodging units rather than the one-story model presented.

Bob Baum of Gould Evans projected that the price tag for the community conference center could reach \$22 million, double the expected costs for the arts park. He said that though he has received initial interest in the project from developers, the key to a successful public-private partnership will be how a request for proposal is structured, including the terms and incentives given to operators and investors, with the number of hotel rooms being a critical factor.

The firm will proceed with the next step in the design process, refining the community conference center concept and including a more focused cost estimate. The updated conceptual plan should be presented to the town this fall.

Parks and Recreation Director Jay Ingram captured the upbeat mood of the evening. "Dream big," he said, envisioning the reconstructed Hacienda as a top tourist destination. "If we want something bad enough, we'll figure out a way to make it happen."

Moraga Management

Balanced budget, happy staff, retirement liability (almost) in check

By Sophie Braccini

New agreements for all employee groups, including compensation and benefits, became effective July 1. When the new two-year memoranda of understanding was approved by the Town Council, town manager Jill Keimach highlighted the fact that the negotiations went smoothly, due to employees' understanding of the town's situation and reasonable demands. According to these employees, the smooth process was the result of the mutual trust that Keimach fosters with her team, keeping them in the loop and making sure they get the rewards they deserve, when fiscally possible. This year, with increases in property and sales tax revenue, the town was able to raise employees' salaries while projecting a modest surplus. A required new accounting method also shows the town's upcoming California Public Employees' Retirement System liability will have to be taken into account.

"Thank you from me, the community, and the council for continuing to understand our limited financial resources and being part of the solution during the economic downturn," said Keimach to the town staff. "Now that we are back on track financially, I am pleased the council is able to show its appreciation to all staff in the form of two years of salary increases." As of July 1 all employees received a 3 percent cost of living increase plus a 1 percent salary increase in exchange for a 1 percent employee payment of the Town's share of its pension, continuation of the new medical benefits or similar benefits at the Kaiser gold level through the next two years, and a 0.25 percent salary increase (for police officers).

The 2015-16 budget, as approved by the council and including these salary elements, projects a \$100,000 surplus at the end of the fiscal year and is based on a 3 percent increase in property tax revenues, \$1.7 million from Measure K sales.

According to the town's employees, salary negotiations went well. Lt. John King who was the mid-manage-

ment representative, and who only recently joined the Moraga staff, has

worked in other public agencies and has participated in similar negotia-

tions in different capacities.

... continued on page A8

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Planning Commission Takes the High Road Regarding MOSO Implementation Amendment

By Sophie Braccini

The Planning Commission was asked on June 15 to consider a targeted modification of Moraga Open Space Ordinance implementation zoning to allow for-profit recreation businesses to operate on parcels that had previously not been allowed. According to the commissioners, the amendment seemed to have been tailored to support one specific project, so they recommended that a review be conducted of the types of recreational activities permitted on MOSO land, arguing that zoning should not be specific to a business model.

While the proposed amendment to MOSO zoning rules would be applicable throughout town, residents who attended the meeting were concerned with one project only: the Adventure Day Camp proposal to take over the former Moraga Tennis and Swim Club on Larch Avenue. The proposal would turn the parcel into a day camp site and preschool. Although that specific project was not a focus of the meeting, neighbors continued to raise traffic or parking concerns centered on that proposal. Some also indicated that changing MOSO, a voter-approved ordinance, was not in the purview of the commission.

The amendment was crafted by the Town Council when it appeared

that Adventure Day Camp, a for-profit business, would not be authorized to conduct business per the municipal code implementing MOSO, which says that only non-profit recreational activities are permitted on these types of parcels.

Arguments against such an amendment are that it could lead to additional development on MOSO land, that MOSO is a voter-approved ordinance that cannot be changed by the planning commission.

Planning commissioner Steve Woehleke stated that he was not comfortable recommending any modification to MOSO; commissioners Lindsay Carr and Suzanne D'Arcy concurred. Commissioner Christine Kuckuk noted that the proposed amendment would not affect the voter-approved ordinance, only its implementation rules. Planning director Ellen Clark indicated that this nonprofit mention was probably a relic from pre-MOSO open space zoning.

Kevin Welch, owner of Adventure Day Camp, said that he and his wife also owned a nonprofit business and could very well be conducting the same business with a nonprofit status, which reinforced what commissioner Kuckuk suggested: that zoning by

type of business was not the right thing to do. Instead, she said, the commission should be conducting a review of the types of recreational activities that should be allowed on MOSO land. Under the current MOSO, a dirt bike trail or a casino could be considered compliant use. Commission chair Tom Marnane

agreed with this approach, adding that Moraga should be encouraging new businesses to come in, as long as their activities fit the character of the town.

Neighbors were reassured that if this project was to proceed, all its impacts would be studied in due time. For now, the planning commission decided not to recommend the adop-

tion of a targeted modification of the implementation rules of MOSO allowing for-profit business, but instead agreed to study the possibility of removing any mention of the type of business completely from the regulation, and defining what types of recreational activities are desirable on Moraga MOSO land.

July is 'Parks Make Life Better Month'

Submitted by Jay Ingram



Town staff and council members were all smiles at the June 24 Moraga Town Council meeting after the council proclaimed July as "Parks Make Life Better Month."

Photo Clinton Calkins

/ Alain Pinel Realtors /

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Orinda

Public Meetings

City Council

Tuesday, July 21, 7 p.m.
Auditorium, Orinda Library,
26 Orinda Way

Planning Commission

Tuesday, July 28, 7 p.m.
Auditorium, Orinda Library,
26 Orinda Way

Historical Landmark Committee

Tuesday, July 28, 3 p.m.
Gallery Room, Orinda Library,
26 Orinda Way

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 June 21 to July 4

- Alarms** 74
- Animal Cruelty**
Library
20 block Orinda Wy
- 911 calls (includes hang-ups)** 11
- Barking Dog**
50 block Mira Loma
- Battery**
Miramonte High School
Knickerbocker/Spring Rd
- Burglary, Auto**
100 block Meadow View Rd
Wilder/Hwy 24
- Burglary, Residential**
80 block Sleepy Hollow Ln
300 block Miner Rd
10 block Risa Ct
80 block Estates Dr
10 block Harran Cr
- Burglary, Commercial**
20 block El Gavilan Rd
- Civil Problem**
300 block Glorietta Bl
30 block Oakwood Rd
- Custody Violation**
50 block Muth Dr
- Dependent Child**
Safeway
- Disturbance**
600 block Ironbark Cr
70 block Brentwood Rd
10 block Via Farallon
Miramonte High School
- Drunk in Public**
Tara Rd/Tarawood Dr
Safeway, Lafayette
- Defrauding Innkeeper**
100 block Stein Wy
- Harassment**
100 block Moraga Wy Rite Aid
- Theft, ID**
10 block Lavinia Ct
10 block Sager Ct
- Theft, Petty**
10 block Theatre Square
50 block Tarry Ln
10 block Ichabod Ln
Wagner Ranch Elementary
800 block Ironbark Pl
- Theft, Grand**
10 block Ivy Dr
- Fireworks**
10 block Ramona Dr
La Bolista Wy/Loma Vista Dr
El Toyonal/Camino Pablo
Tara/Overhill Rds
- Hit & Run**
10 block Ichabod Ln
Safeway
- Loud Music**
60 block Moraga Way
60 block Orchard Rd
10 block Charles Hill
- Loud Party**
70 block Scenic Dr
70 block Orchard Rd
- Loitering**
Charles Hill Place
- Missing Adult**
10 block Altarinda Rd
400 block Moraga Wy
- Neighbor Dispute**
10 block Dos Posos
- Police/Fire EMS**
10 block Charles Hill Rd
10 block Chelton Ct
20 block Charles Hill Rd
10 block Donald Dr
- Panhandling**
Starbucks
- Public Nuisance**
10 block Tarabrook Dr
Moraga Wy/Overhill Rd
- Promiscuous Shooting**
10 block Tumbling Brook Rd
70 block El Toyonal



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Council Gives Green Light to Seek Bids for Downtown Parking Study

By Victor Ryerson

The City Council has authorized Orinda city staff to seek competitive proposals from professional traffic planning and engineering firms to prepare a comprehensive parking study for the Crossroads/Theater District and the Village in the downtown area. The council's action follows numerous meetings in which downtown parking concerns were raised by residents and by the Orinda Chamber of Commerce. "The goal here is that we want to solve for local parking," emphasized Mayor Dean Orr, rather than "for people coming from elsewhere."

In recent months, residents and business owners have approached the council on a number of occasions about a variety of parking issues that prompted the council to act. These include the problem of overflow parking in local neighborhoods, limited parking for employees who work downtown, and shortage of merchant and customer parking, as well as overflow parking by BART riders. The council directed staff to prepare a formal draft Request for

Proposal (RFP) at its March 3 meeting, and approved the staff's draft with added language on July 7.

The consultant selected for the project will perform a complete analysis of the current downtown parking supply and demand situation in the downtown area, as well as neighboring residential areas. "The key thing is to know who is using the parking," observed Council Member Victoria Smith.

The RFP specifically requires the consultant to perform a parking audit in the field in addition to analytical tasks, prompting Jennifer Englewood to chide the council that the necessary information could be developed from available resources and meetings with residents. "I recommend discussions with a facilitator" before engaging a consultant, she urged, adding, "I bet you each a soda pop" that the results would be better.

Specific topics to be addressed in the report will include how to improve the efficiency of customer and employee parking, opportunities for public-private partnerships

for using available parking spaces most efficiently, and improvement of the existing parking enforcement program. Among solutions to be considered are the issuance of parking passes or permits for downtown neighbors and employees. Council member Eve Phillips also asked staff to add consideration of instituting shuttles on the Moraga Road corridor to utilize parking facilities that are outside the downtown area.

Phillips has been actively working on the BART overflow issue. Although BART commuter parking will be considered in the study, she observed that BART's attitude toward its parking overflow has been less than sympathetic until recently. "BART does not think much about the land outside BART," she said, and overflow BART parking has been regarded as "our problem." However, she and former mayor Steve Glazer recently met with BART in an effort to generate joint solutions to the problem.

The study must also consider methods of financing improvements

in the parking supply – perhaps including parking meters. Orr anticipates that such recommendations will undoubtedly generate "robust discussion" down the road.

City Manager Janet Keeter stated that the rough estimate of the projected cost of the report is \$45,000 to \$65,000. Although she said price will be an incredibly important factor in the selection process, the contract will not necessarily go to the low bidder. She emphasized that the city wants a report recommending concrete solutions. "Deliverables would be action-oriented plans," she said.

Although the staff is authorized to issue the RFP, selection of the consultant will come before the council with the staff's recommendation. Following the selection, the winning bidder will be required to conduct several kinds of public meetings to obtain input for the report under the requirements of the RFP. These will include a kickoff meeting; one or two stakeholder meetings with downtown business owners, residents and staff; and up to three public input meetings.

Council to Interview Candidates for Glazer Vacancy at Public Meeting

By Victor Ryerson

Orinda residents can put in their two cents' worth on the selection of the next Orinda City Council member at a special meeting at 6 p.m. Wednesday, July 15 in the Orinda Library Auditorium. The current council members will interview the candidates for the position vacated by then-mayor Steve Glazer, who submitted his resignation on May 28 when he was sworn in as state senator following his victory in a runoff election. The council opted to appoint a candidate to fill the vacancy rather than call a special election, which would have cost the city roughly \$38,000 to \$63,000.

Eight candidates have submitted applications and required financial responsibility forms by the July 6 deadline. Each will make a five-minute statement to the current council, followed by a question-and-answer session by the council members. Members of the public will be allowed to attend and observe, and after all eight candidates have been vetted by the council,

public comments will be taken. Under the council's regular practice, each member of the public will generally be allotted three minutes to speak. The council will then deliberate and select the new council member, who will tentatively be sworn in on July 21. The winning candidate will fill the midterm vacancy until it expires at the end of December 2016.

The candidates who submitted applications for the vacancy are:

- Owen Murphy, a retired businessman who has served twice on the city's Finance Advisory Committee;
- Bob Thompson, an investment manager who has also served on the Finance and Advisory Committee;
- Juan Nelson Kelly, an actuary, who serves as Orinda's liaison to the Contra Costa County Library Commission;
- Darlene Gee, a civil engineer, who currently chairs Orinda's Citizens' Infrastructure Oversight Commission;
- Carlos Baltodano, a building

safety consultant, who has served on the Orinda Planning Commission and other city organizations;

- Linda Delehunt, an educational consultant;
- Rachel Zenner, director of government relations for Safeway Inc., who has served on Orinda's Parks and Recreation Commission; and
- Cara Hoxie, a former corporate attorney and current stay-at-home mom who has been active as a community volunteer with the Educational Foundation of Orinda, among

other organizations.

Applicants were asked a variety of questions, including "Why are you interested in serving on the Orinda City Council?" And "What do you hope to accomplish while holding this position?" Responses to questions, as well as detailed background information about each applicant, are available online at <https://cityoforinda.app.box.com/s/hcvw4r4sabyb0rzfbu044ksbxmi72am/1/3982570879/33045359533/1>.

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Moraga Via/Glorietta Bl
Ardith/Ivy Drs
Moraga Wy/Glorietta Bl (2)
- Shoplift**
Safeway
- Susp. Circumstances** 17
- Suspicious Vehicle** 29
- Suspicious Subject** 10
- Traffic Stops** 131
- Trespass**
10 block Ichabod Ln
Manzanita/Vista Drs
- Uncontrollable Juvenile**
El Toyonal/Camino Pablo
- Unwanted Guest**
CVS
20 block Ridge Ln
- Vandalism**
50 block Ivy Dr
- Vehicle Theft**
100 block Manzanita Dr
- Verbal Dispute**
20 block Overhill Rd
- Warrant Service**
400 block Dalewood Dr (2)

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Lamorinda Market Update

1/1/15 to 6/30/15

This year is proving once again to be all about the sellers. Homeowners that have prepared their home with the help of an expert and priced it within the market range often are receiving multiple offers.

	Lafayette	Moraga	Orinda
# Homes Sold	180	96	136
Average Sales Price	\$1,562,228	\$1,073,626	\$1,489,295
Average Price per Sq.Ft.	\$582	\$487	\$559
Average Days on Market	26	19	23
Increase In Average Price (From Same Period Last Year)	17%	6%	12%

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Chilly Weather Doesn't Dampen Enthusiasm for Movies in the Park

By Daniel Smith



Front row seats were quickly snapped up at Orinda's Movies in the Park July 9. From left: Grace Bell, Avery Ghali, Cami Lovell, Ellie Rodriguez and Natalie Aiken. Photo Ohlen Alexander

Heavy fog, a chill wind, and the threat of July showers couldn't deter the 30 moviegoers who showed up last Thursday to Orinda Community Park to watch "The Boxtrolls." The film was part of Orinda's ongoing Movies in the Park series, which according to Michelle Lacy, director of Orinda's Parks and Recreation Department, usually attracts

around 100 people in normal circumstances. But nothing about this summer's weather has been "normal." Several people said their friends stayed in on account of the weather.

The sunshine made a brief cameo around 8 p.m. while children were off playing on the jungle gym, leaving their parents to stake out front row seats, for

which there ended up being no competition. "The Boxtrolls" started at sundown, around 8:30 p.m., and any remaining light was blotted out by the descending fog. Midway through the film a heavy sprinkling began, but the hearty audience held steadfast. Raincoats went on and umbrellas went up.

Despite the damp and cold it

was still "definitely worth it," according to Grace Bell who was there to celebrate her 9th birthday with friends. The kids seemed to love the film's title characters: adorably ugly little critters, more into mischief and tinkering than doing harm, and only capable of speaking through squeaks and chitters. Sure, they're derivative of the Minions, but some, like 9-year-old Natalie Aiken who came to watch "The Boxtrolls" a second time, feels that the boxtrolls reign supreme. "They're funnier and, I don't wanna give away the end, but they save people," said Natalie, who was quickly reprimanded by her friends for leaking spoilers. The adult audience was more entertained by the film's portrayal of social status, humorously lampooned through the villainous character of Archibald Snatcher and his lust for that greatest of status symbols, cheese, which purportedly "brings men of respect and power together in brotherhood."


Movies in the Park was started by Lacy and the Parks and Rec Department in 2014. It is the direct descendent of Danville's Moon-

light Movies, which was also started by Lacy during her tenure as Danville's recreation manager. Unlike Danville, however, the public can vote on the summer line-up for the Orinda Movies in the Park using the online survey website SurveyMonkey. In this democratic spirit 12-year-old Kate Gross proclaimed she'd "like to see old Disney movies... like 'The Little Mermaid,'" while her parents, Beth and Justin Gross, suggested "Casablanca" or the "Star Wars" trilogy. This raises important questions for Lamorinda film fans, like: Can films with more mature MPAA ratings be shown in the park? and When did 1989's "The Little Mermaid" become old?


The Movies in the Park series continues every other Thursday with "Big Hero 6" July 23, "Maleficent" Aug. 6, and the grand finale on Aug. 20: The "Frozen" sing-a-long. Last year's sing-a-long attracted over 300 parents, children, and would-be Lamorinda Idols. That number could be even larger this year, granted, of course, there are no August showers.

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Fire Districts

Public Meetings

Moraga-Orinda Fire District

Board of Directors

Wednesday, July 22, 7 p.m.
Moraga Library Community Room
1500 St. Mary's Road, Moraga
For meeting times and agendas,
visit www.mofd.org

ConFire Board of Directors

Tuesday, July 21, 1:30 p.m.
Board Chamber room 107,
Administration Building,
651 Pine St., Martinez
For meeting times and agendas,
visit <http://alturl.com/5p9pu>.

Orinda House Fire Response Questioned

... continued from page A1

According to Healy, that type of meeting occurs routinely. In fact, the chief encourages face-to-face meetings among his crews, subject to a district directive that took effect July 1. "I want them to get out and learn their streets," he said.

From 10 a.m. until sunset, the crews can go anywhere for any reason, but only within their primary first-due response areas. The crews may leave their areas for what Healy termed an operational necessity.

"They must remain in the vicinity of their own station's primary coverage area to minimize any delays," said battalion chief Jerry Lee. "For example, the fire engine from the Rheem station in Moraga will not be allowed to venture out of the Rheem area during those hours."

District training sessions and meetings between crews, such as the one that took place the morning of June 21, must now be scheduled before 10 a.m.

The Contra Costa County Fire

Protection District crews do not normally conduct in-person meetings outside their first-due areas, according to Lon Goetsch, assistant chief of operations. The district personnel often meet via teleconference, and some of the district training is conducted using web-based software. "But we do encourage them to drive through their

first-due areas," he said.

Goetsch said that crews often run training exercises away from their stations. Two or three crews may run a structure fire drill at Saint Mary's College, or the Lafayette station 17 captain often will conduct drills in the rough terrain of the Hunsaker Canyon area. "In the summer, we train in the morn-

ing so we can keep them close to their stations in the afternoon," said Goetsch.

Healy told the MOFD board that, although the response time to the Charles Hill fire was at the upper limit of the district performance standard, it fell within what he cited as a national response time standard of nine and a half minutes for a suburban area.

Public Forum

JOIN IT

What Lies Below

Are high-pressure pipelines running through your community?

By Britt K. Strotzman

Most people don't know what lies beneath the streets they live and travel on each day. Communities statewide contain multiple systems of wires and pipes for delivering water, sewage, storm drainage, gas and electricity — all of which can pose life-threatening dangers when least expected.

On Sept. 9, 2010, a natural gas pipeline owned and operated by the Pacific Gas & Electric Co. exploded and caught fire in a suburban neighborhood in San Bruno, Calif., killing eight people and injuring 66 others. The victims had no idea a 30-inch high-pressure natural gas pipeline ran right through the middle of their neighborhood. In the wake of this disaster, every contract for the sale of residential property must now contain a specified notice pertaining to gas and hazardous liquid transmission pipelines. Yet, that notice merely alerts buyers to the general location of gas and hazardous liquid transmission pipelines located through the National Pipeline Mapping System — it does not always provide the most accurate or pertinent information about the age, quality and maintenance of those lines.

Inaccurate recordkeeping led to a 2014 gas pipeline explosion in the City of Carmel-by-the-Sea, Calif., where faulty PG&E records misled construction crews replacing a gas-distribution line in a residential community. The pressurized "live" line was accidentally punctured, causing gas to escape into a nearby house that later exploded and leveled the house, sending building debris just over the heads of crew and residents walking nearby. Shrapnel was hurled into neighboring houses and windows were blown. It was a miracle nobody was killed.

While construction-related tampering of pipelines can cause leaks and explosions, age, corrosion, weld failure and pipeline mismanagement often present the greatest threat to public safety. The following examples illustrate a significant increase in recent years in the number of local incidents and disasters nationwide caused by underground infrastructure failures that were not primarily driven by third-party damage:

1. Bellingham, Wash. — Liquid gas line break killed three people (1999);
2. Carlsbad, N.M. — Natural gas explosion killed 12 people at a campsite (2000);
3. Bergenfield, N.J. — Natural gas explosion in apartment building killed three people (2005);
4. Plum Borough, Pa. — Natural gas explosion in a home killed one person and seriously injured a 4 year-old girl (2008);
5. Rancho Cordova, Calif. — Natural gas explosion in a home killed one person (2008);
6. Middletown, Conn. — Gas plant explosion killed six people (2010);
7. San Bruno, Calif. — Natural gas pipeline explosion killed eight people and injured 66 others. Thirty-eight homes were destroyed, 17 homes were rendered uninhabitable and 53 other homes were damaged (2010);
8. Allentown, Pa. — Natural gas explosion in suburban neighborhood killed five people (2011);

9. Sissonville, W.Va. — Gas line explosion destroyed part of an interstate highway and damaged nine homes (2012);
10. City of Carmel-by-the-Sea, Calif. — A PG&E distribution line gas leak caused an explosion that leveled a home (2015);
11. Fresno, Calif. — A PG&E gas pipeline burst and exploded, killing a man and injuring at least 11 others (2015)

Given the number of incidents that continue to occur, residents in communities statewide are now questioning what pipelines and other underground utilities lurk beneath their homes, jobs and children's schools and whether those pipelines are now safe — or being made safe.

With all the PG&E pipeline work going on in the Lamorinda community, it is more important than ever to understand what lines run beneath your neighborhood. The following questions are a good place to start:

1. Call your local elected official and ask that they obtain current pipeline information from pipeline operators, including relevant maps and records regarding the physical location and characteristics of pipelines and other lines operating within the jurisdiction. Specifically request details including:

- The products carried by local pipelines;
- The operating pressure and capacity of those lines;
- The materials the pipeline is made of;
- The method of welding used;
- The precise location of the pipeline and shutoff valves; and
- The location of the nearest utility yard with personnel qualified to shut off the gas 24/7 in an emergency — and their contact information.

2. Ask your local PG&E operator for a copy of PG&E's safety plan as it relates to pipelines that run in your neighborhood. In the event of an emergency it's important to make sure that plans are in place to protect your community's safety.

Unfortunately, residents should not rely solely on natural gas and other utility pipeline operators to maintain and operate safe systems. It is important for communities to work with elected officials to obtain the necessary and meaningful information about the pipelines running through local communities — and help ensure that what happened in San Bruno and other local communities does not happen again.

Britt Strotzman is an attorney for Meyers Nave where she serves as a Principal and Chair of the firm's Crisis Management: Public Policy, Ethics and Investigations Practice. In her capacity, she serves as Special Counsel to the City of San Bruno, the City of San Carlos, and the City of Carmel-by-the-Sea handling complex, intertwined civil and criminal investigative, legal and regulatory matters stemming against PG&E from the deadly 2010 PG&E pipeline explosion in San Bruno, explosion in Carmel-by-the-Sea, and pipeline safety issues before the state's regulatory agency in San Carlos. Ms. Strotzman is a resident of Moraga and can be reached at bstrotzman@meyersnave.com.

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Lafayette

Homes at Deer Hill Review Continues

... continued from page A3

The July 27 meeting is slated to cover parks facilities, site design and architecture, and the applicant's reclaimed irrigation water strategy. A special meeting is scheduled from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday, Aug. 8 to review the development agreement, and review findings necessary to approve

or deny the project, and conditions of approval if appropriate. A final public hearing is slated for the city council's regular Aug. 10 meeting.

City council members agreed that if residents were out of town for the Fourth of July holiday and missed the July 6 meeting, they are still welcome

to comment on topics that were discussed at the July 27 meeting.

To see all the questions and answers prepared for this meeting, or to listen to the over-three-hour audio version, simply go to www.love-lafayette.org and click on the July 6 city council meeting.

Moraga

Moraga Management

"(When entering a negotiation) the leadership factor is huge," he said, "and what we have here is a town manager who is in tune with her hard-working people and she can balance the council's priority for fiscal responsibility."

Other representatives included Kelly Clancy and Julia Elbo, and Sgt. Brian South who negotiated for the Moraga Police Officers Association. Keimach said at the council meeting that the police officer's union representative was asked to leave the bargaining table. "We didn't need him,"

confirmed South. "Everything went very smoothly."

Clancy, who has been part of the negotiations in Moraga two times, says that Keimach is easy to work with, and she is fair and reasonable. "This creates a certain level of trust," she confirmed. King added that Keimach always listens and is interested in hearing different sides of an issue.

The Bay Area is now close to full employment and King said Keimach understands that to keep quality people you have to compensate them

... continued from page A4

well. The salaries in Moraga are not the highest in the Bay Area, and Moraga's chief of police has repeatedly explained that one of the reasons that the town has difficulty retaining police officers is the compensation package with a pension that is 2 percent at age 50, compared to other agencies that offer 3 percent at age 50.

But there are other ways to keep people happy, and Clancy acknowledged that rearranging the schedule to have every other Friday off is a good thing.

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TASTING SCHEDULE

7.17.15 ♦ 4-7PM

BERINGER
Gillian Ballance,
MASTER SOMMELIER

7.24.15 ♦ 4-7PM

GARNET WINES
Alison Crowe,
WINEMAKER

7.31.15 ♦ 4-7PM

CHIMNEY ROCK WINES
Elizabeth Vianna,
WINEMAKER

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Business

Delicious, Healthy and Fun*Graze, the New Moraga Restaurant*

By Sophie Braccini



From left: Sue Doster and Kamille Nixon enjoyed their first lunch at Graze on a hot summer day. Photo Andy Scheck

Moraga's latest addition to the dining scene, Graze, had its soft opening in mid-June and is now in full swing, with a full menu of tasty salads, soups, entrees and sandwiches, available for lunch and dinner Wednesdays through Saturdays. Owners Ted and Ingrid Fulmer are bringing a simple concept they first developed in Hawaii where they ran a restaurant for eight years. They also bring their passion for fresh ingredients, mixed with herbs and spices to create tasty, satisfying, yet healthy

meals. Located in the Rheim Shopping Center, next to China Moon (where Shish Kabab Show and, for the old timers, Fudge Alley used to operate), they provide indoor and outdoor seating on the large patio.

The Fulmers met at Gordon Biersch in Palo Alto, where they both worked. Ted Fulmer has always worked in restaurants, cooking or serving since age 16. He later sought an accounting degree and became a CPA. The couple opened their first two restaurants in Chico:

the Black Crow Grill and Rawbar, a sushi fusion restaurant. They decided to sell those restaurants and start again with a new restaurant in Hawaii, this time with two young boys in tow.

"That restaurant was Pau, which means 'all finished, all done, all good,'" says Fulmer. When one of their employees offered to buy that business, after eight years, they returned to the Bay Area and rented a kitchen space at Miglet's bakery in downtown Danville. They began preparing dine-in and to-go orders of salads and dressings. "We started getting a following for our salads. We have been looking for a place of our own for a while. Then we found the opportunity in Moraga," he says.

"My concept is simple: quick, fresh and delicious," says Fulmer. "The way I eat at home, I take a grain, mix in vegetables, I add a homemade sauce, and a protein on top. That's how I built my specials at Pau, and I found that everybody wanted to eat like that, too." Fulmer's sauces, salads and grains are filled with all kinds of different herbs and spices that make the difference. "In the couscous (large Israeli couscous) there is mint and parsley. In the Asian noodle, there is scallion, Thai basil, cilantro and a ginger sauce – all that fresh flavor that hits you. I could serve my tomato soup plain, but with a little fresh thyme, a little parmesan, and a little drop of extra virgin olive oil, it becomes 'Whoa! That tomato soup was so good!' That's the extra 10 percent that makes the differ-

ence."

Among the many full bowls on the menu, the Aloha Noodle salad has a Hawaiian influence with its buckwheat noodles. Fulmer says that is his boys' favorite. The Superfood with quinoa and brown rice can be topped with either chicken breast or salmon, grilled or sashimi style, or for those who do not eat animal protein, the salads can be ordered without it. The sandwiches are either fish or chicken with greens, tomatoes and sauce on La Brea bread. There is also a choice of braised short ribs. "The meals are served in a bowl and have to be satisfying for me or one of my boys (now 11 and 16, and very active). This is a place for everyone, including families," he adds. There is

even a pepperoni cheese bread that, while not as healthy that the rest of the menu, young kids love. Fulmer says that his menu is seasonal, but that the favorites will stay there year-round, like the Superfood or the Aloha Noodle, and he confirms that everything but the bread is made on site from scratch daily.

Graze
376 Park Street, Moraga
(925) 388-0351
Hours: 11 a.m. to 8 p.m.
Wednesdays, Thursdays,
Fridays and Saturdays

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**Lafayette Resident Named to California State PTA Board**

www.capta.org

Shayne Silva of Lafayette has been named to the California State PTA board of directors as director of legislation, with a two-year term beginning July 1. In her role, Silva will coordinate the association's state capitol advocacy programs, priorities and initiatives. She has been a proud member of PTA for 25 years and has received PTA Honorary, Continuing Service and Golden Oak Service Awards. She has served as an advocate for the California State PTA for seven years. Prior to that time, she served six years as an education commissioner after serving as the 32nd District PTA president.



Lafayette resident Shayne Silva Photo provided

Patelco Dedicates Lafayette Branch to Local Resident

3498 Mt. Diablo Blvd., Lafayette

(925) 299-7220

Patelco Credit Union recently dedicated its Lafayette branch to honor longtime Lafayette resident Gene Bell, who has dedicated more than 30 years to Patelco's members and the overall community.



Gene Bell stands next to his plaque at the Lafayette branch of Patelco Credit Union. Photo provided

"Gene is a true embodiment of Patelco's community oriented focus. This dedication is just one way of honoring his service to our credit union members and the communities we serve," said Erin Mendez, president and CEO of Patelco Credit Union. A plaque is posted outside the branch office with Bell's name, honoring his years of service. Bell has lived in Lafayette for more than 30 years.

Nash Alawdi Named Moraga Employee of the Month for June

Nash Alawdi, an assistant manager at 7-Eleven convenience store, has been named the Moraga Employee of the Month for June. Alawdi has been serving 7-Eleven customers and helping supervise the store's staff for the past eight years. He once found \$150 in cash



From left: Kevin Reneau, Nash Alawdi and 7-Eleven owner Sam Saleh Photo provided

in the store, reviewed the video for identification of the owner and helped return the money to that owner. "Nash always goes the extra mile to be helpful whenever possible," said store owner Sam Saleh. "When a customer came in missing her purse, he took her in his own car to help her find it. He is just a great employee." The Moraga Rotary and Chamber of Commerce will present Alawdi with a gift card to Safeway as well as a gift card to Peninni's in Moraga at an upcoming Moraga Rotary lunch in July.

News from the Three Chambers of Commerce

Save the date for the Mega Mixer, including all three Lamorinda chambers of commerce, from 5 to 7 p.m. Thursday, Aug. 6 at Pleasant Hill Community Center, 320 Civic Drive. Free for chamber members and guests. For info, call the Pleasant Hill Chamber of Commerce at (925) 687-0700.

Lafayette

The Entrepreneur's Club will meet at 8:30 a.m. Thursday, July 16 in the Chamber Conference Room.

Enjoy Coffee with the Mayor at 8 a.m. Friday, July 24 in the Chamber Conference Room.

There is a Green Committee meeting scheduled at noon Tuesday, July 28 in the Chamber Conference Room. For information, visit lafayettechamber.org.

Moraga

There are no chamber events scheduled during the month of July.

Orinda

There are no chamber events scheduled during the month of July.

If you have a business brief to share, please contact **Sophie Braccini** at sophie@lamorindaweekly.com

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Letters to the Editor

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. Visit www.lamorindaweekly.com for submission guidelines.
email: letters@lamorindaweekly.com; Regular mail: Lamorinda Weekly, P.O.Box 6133, Moraga, CA 94570



Dear Editor:

Recently read that the John Muir Land Trust is in the process of purchasing the Carr Ranch property in Moraga. What great news!

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the Carr family for preserving the beautiful ranch property for the residents of Moraga and the surrounding communities. What a wonderful gift to the community. We applaud them for their farsightedness in thinking of the future of this community in having the JMLT manage the property for future generations to enjoy.

With so much development either planned, or actual construction beginning in Moraga, we all owe a debt of gratitude to the Carr family for thinking of the Moraga Valley's future in preserving this beautiful open space.

Gordon & Gail Nathan
Moraga

Editor:

Well, I did it! I added my grain of sand—my petition signature—to support "The Friends of Semi-Rural Moraga" anxiously building a sand moat to protect their sand castles . . . while the tide continues rising. But what could I do? Dick Olsen asks so politely and my wife threatens so graphically!

As I understand it, Councilmember Phil Arth, who wants a roundabout to help him enter and exit St. Mary's Road at Bollinger Canyon, is not at all concerned about increased traffic created by adding new residents next to the firehouse on Moraga Way. Why not? It may be because he plans to recommend a roundabout in front of the fire house. That will not only "solve" the traffic problem but, as roundabout consultant Ron Boyle said, it should help our fire-fighters find their "sense of place."

Of course as long as America adds 25-30 million residents every decade, the only certain "sense of place" Lamorinda residents can count on is a sense of an increasingly crowded place. Stop residences for 100 people here and they'll build residences for 200 people there, or for 300 people there and there. Oh, yes, and those 100 or 200 or 300 people will want roads and schools and hospitals and, take a deep breath . . . water! So, Moraga Town Council, while you're seeking a grant for roundabouts, why not seek a grant for water? Perhaps tonic water would be good!

If you want to know what you might do to help reverse the perpetual population growth tide, visit www.GrowthBiasBusted.org and www.ThePopulationFix.com. It's probably too late to keep Moraga semi-rural, but perhaps we can save some space for our "seventh generation" descendants.

Edward C. Hartman
Moraga

FireSphere

Bringing satellite imagery down to earth

By Cathy Dausman



Founder and FireSphere developer Scott Farley promotes his crowdsourced app during a May open house at the Orinda fire station on Orinda Way. Photo Cathy Dausman

Scott Farley came to the East Bay seeking water; as a student at UC Berkeley he joined the swim team. But it was another element – fire – that caught his attention six years ago, and helps explain the mobile app and website he has developed to aid Lamorindans in recording and understanding the fire risk they face daily living on the wild land urban interface.

In 2009 Farley, who is originally from Southern California, watched in fascination for weeks as fire crews battled the Station Fire, the largest and deadliest of California wildfires that year. An interest

in cartography and geography and the need to develop an undergrad thesis prompted Farley to improve the standards of the National Fire Danger Rating System.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture explains NFDRS as "a system that allows fire managers to estimate today's or tomorrow's fire danger for a given area," taking into consideration "fuels, weather, topography and risks."

The color-coded fire danger scale runs from "low" to "extreme." NFDRS maps are built from satellite imagery in 30-by-30 meter boxes (approximately one half mile across);

Farley's app increases the resolution to one square meter by applying 750,000 points within that box.

Like NFDRS, FireSphere (www.firesphere.org) grades fire danger based on available fuel sources (grass, trees, type, etc.) and paints a computer-generated color picture of relative wild land fire danger. But satellite imagery may confuse non-burnable concrete with burnable grassland topography. FireSphere makes the distinction, because each user photographs the area and compares it with cached pictures of fire fuels before it is submitted. The information is then geolocated, compiled, and becomes part of the interactive FireSphere website, which produces daily updates on current and predicted local wildfire conditions.

As a free, crowdsourced mobile app, FireSphere relies on users to submit data. The test market is within the confines of the Moraga-Orinda Fire District, but Farley hopes to expand his project to include the city of Lafayette. The more users FireSphere has, the clearer the local fire danger "picture" becomes.

Farley has begun speaking to local organizations to raise public awareness about FireSphere. He spoke to the Mt. Diablo Silverado Boy Scout Council in May and was scheduled to attend the Lamorinda CERT training session in Orinda July 13.



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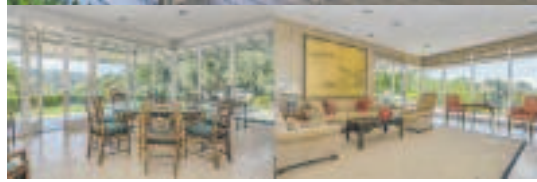
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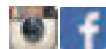
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Auto Burglaries, Car Chase in Lafayette

By Cathy Dausman

Call it theft or call it burglary; Lafayette has recently seen an increase in the number of auto burglaries within its community. Since June 7, the city has recorded no less than 16 instances of items stolen from vehicles. A recent email from Lafayette Police Chief Eric Christensen likens auto burglars to the bears plaguing visitors in national parks. "If you feed them, they are likely to come back a second, third, or fourth time. By leaving items of value for burglars to steal, you increase the risk of others being victimized as well," he warns. Auto burglary is a largely preventable crime, the report says, but a recent episode shows that sometimes that is just the tip of the criminal iceberg.

Lafayette officers were dispatched last week to investigate the report of a suspicious vehicle at a Lafayette park. Responding officers located an older black convertible and spoke with its subjects. A records check showed one occupant had an outstanding warrant. That subject, a female, was placed under arrest, when the male suspect began fighting with police and then disappeared into nearby woods.

Additional officers from Lafayette, Orinda and Moraga were called in.

Officers discovered the vehicle in question was likely stolen. The male subject was identified but despite the use of a canine team and air support, authorities did not locate the man; he was believed to have fled the area.

The suspects were previously linked to a \$50,000 property theft from a vacant home in May. The property has since been identified and returned to its rightful owner. Later that same day, a Lafayette resident reported their car stolen. Believing the suspect intended to return to where the vehicle was stolen, investigators set up surveillance. When the suspect did return, he used the car to ram a patrol vehicle and escape.

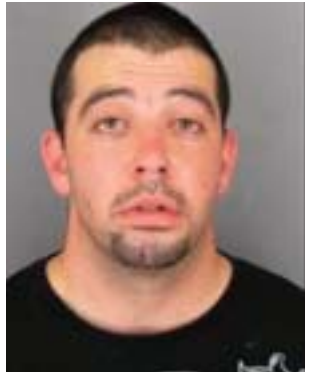
A resident spotted the suspect at their home. When officers arrived, the suspect fled on foot. Helicopter and canine units were used in a second unsuccessful search. The stolen vehicle was later recovered. Police ask residents

who may have video of the suspect to contact the investigative team, and to call if they spot suspicious individuals or vehicles near a business or neighborhood.

Sunday afternoon, Lafayette police released more details, naming the suspect as 28-year-old Alexander William Anderson, who sometimes calls himself Efron Curiel. Anderson is wanted in connection with a series of property crimes and an assault with a deadly weapon on a peace officer in Lafayette. A \$175,000 warrant has been issued for his arrest. Anderson is described as a white male, 5 feet 10 inches tall, 160 pounds, with black hair and hazel eyes. His previous residences include Antioch, Bay Point, Bethel Island, Concord and Pittsburg; if spotted do not approach, but instead, call police.

To receive Lafayette police alerts, email Chief Christensen at echri@so.cccounty.us with your name, street address and an email address. Residents are also urged to subscribe to Nixle Alerting System (www.nixle.com), and note the following phone numbers: Emergency 911; Dispatch (non-emergency) (925) 284-5010; and the Police Department Office (925) 283-3680.

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Suspect Alexander William Anderson Photo provided

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Otters Starting a Return to Lamorinda Creeks?

First otter in an Orinda creek spotted

By Chris Lavin



Otter spotted in San Pablo Creek near the Sturgeses' Orinda home
Photo Karen Sturges

A recent chain of events set the Orinda creeks and environmental movement atwitter this month when a couple who has lived on Moraga Way for more than 20 years spotted an otter in San Pablo Creek, right behind their house.

Thomas Sturges was in his workshop, doing his usual gardening and workshop-like tasks, sharpening stuff and putting things away, when he saw a large wake in the creek behind the building.

"I saw a big ripple, and thought, 'That's quite a fish!' So I stepped out to look, and saw it was an otter," Sturges said. There it was, swimming through the creek, probably looking for crayfish, near a culvert on San Pablo Creek that runs right behind their house by McDonnell Nursery. He told his wife, Karen, about it.

"We see him, or her, about once a week now," said Karen Sturges. She got her phone ready and started snapping pictures when he (or she) was around. "The otter doesn't stand still," she said with frustration, a problem for photographic purposes. When asked to provide some more high-quality photos of the otter, she did. Her son Derek calls her the techie in the house.

The Sturgeses visited the Friends of Orinda Creeks' booth during Orinda's Fourth of July celebration, and told volunteers there about their find. The otter was

about the size of a big house cat, they said, and Karen Sturges had pictures on her phone to prove it. Word quickly spread.

"I am highly excited by the otter," said Michael McGowan of Friends of Orinda Creeks, adding that he thinks it brings good news about the improving health of local creeks.

Megan Isadore, the executive director of the River Otter Ecology Project, which collects information about river otters in Central California, thinks McGowan is right.

"Otters are clearly repopulating in the Bay Area, but they are mostly going south," Isadore said, into the environs of the South Bay. Yet the appearance of an otter on San Pablo Creek is indicative of a bigger issue: the return of more normal health to the Lamorinda watershed after decades of abuse. Otters used to be all over the area, but they were extirpated almost completely by the middle of the 1900s, Isadore said. Part of that was water quality; part of it was a large use of pesticides.

River otters have long been spotted in the San Pablo and Lafayette reservoirs, even Briones, while none in Upper San Leandro Reservoir. One was spotted in 2013 in Las Trampas Creek in Lafayette. But the sighting on San Pablo Creek is a first – and a mystery. Isadore said it probably came from one of the reservoirs,

but those are miles away.

"Otters can travel a long way over land," she said. If it came from San Pablo Reservoir, it would have had to negotiate miles of culverts and pipes unless it decided to negotiate traffic on Highway 24. And Lafayette Reservoir is a bit closer, but that journey would have required even more overland trekking.

Isadore's project has initiated an investigative experiment partly to answer precisely this question: If she can find enough scat, test results will help develop a DNA pattern for families and populations in the Bay Area that can lead to individuals such as the Orinda creek otter.

"It's expensive, and it takes time," said Isadore, who is concentrating now on the Marin County river otter populations.

... continued on page B2

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Through September 13

Bright and Beautiful: Early San Francisco Bay Area Watercolors

Featuring the Collection of Roger and Kathy Carter



Lorenzo P. Latimer, *Redwoods, Creek*, 20" x 13 1/2," 1902, watercolor on paper. Collection of Roger and Kathy Carter

This exhibition will showcase the art of watercolor painting as it was practiced in Northern California in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. On view will be works by Juan Wandesforde, William Keith, Percy Gray, L.P. Latimer, Chris Jorgensen, Francis McComas, Sydney Yard, and Gunnar Widforss.

Public reception and lecture by Curator Alfred C. Harrison Jr, Sunday, July 26, 2pm, Soda Activity Center.

Through September 6

River Passage: New Work by Danae Mattes



Danae Mattes, *Passage II*

Bay Area artist Danae Mattes creates abstract, mixed media wall and floor objects using clay, paper and pigment, activated by water, which symbolically flows through all aspects of her life and art.

Through September 6

Stephen Joseph: Inside Vasco Caves



Stephen Joseph *Black Meadow Pool*, circa 1995-2005, archival pigment print. Courtesy of the Artist.

Vasco Caves, located in the East Bay Regional Park District, is an uncommonly distinctive place in an uncommonly distinctive region where the physical (geological), biological, cultural and spiritual landscapes converge, each one inseparable from, and influenced by, the other. On view will be photographs of rock outcrops and caves that are rarely seen by the public.

Through September 6

The Darker Side of William Keith: Late Paintings



Collection of the Saint Mary's College Museum of Art



Thomas and Karen Sturges stand at the spot in their back yard in Orinda where they started spotting an otter on San Pablo Creek this month. It's the first known return of an otter to an Orinda creek since they were wiped out in the last century.
Photo Chris Lavin

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Lafayette Resident Attempts Breaking Open-Water Swimming World Record

By Clare Varellas



Jamie Patrick attempting world-record swim.

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YOUR SMILE IS EVERYTHING

During the 18 hours straight he spent at water level in the Caribbean in late June, 44-year-old Jamie Patrick encountered three sharks, a box jellyfish, and 10 hours of overnight swimming in unlit ocean water.

But none of these were what ultimately forced an end to the Lafayette resident's swim at the 36-mile point. Dehydrated due to unexpectedly high water temperatures, Patrick was pulled from the water almost halfway to his mileage goal: the marathon open-water world record of 77 miles.

"I was severely dehydrated and started to be a little erratic and had slurred speech, and that's ultimately why my crew decided that it was time to pull me from the swim," said Patrick. "Physically I had a lot more in me, but to be safe that's why I had those people there to make the decision."

The decision, made by the nine-member crew of friends who accompanied Patrick, was not an easy one, according to crew chief and lifetime friend Matt Richardson, especially considering the nine months of rigorous training and planning that had preceded the attempt, which took place on June 23 and 24 off the coast of the Bahamas island of Eleuthera. Patrick, Richardson said, surely has the physical ability to one day complete such a distance.

"For this type of thing you need the right anatomy and physiology and training and experience and mental training," said Richardson, who is also a doctor in physical therapy at Saint Francis Memorial Hospital in San Francisco. "I think Jamie was prepared for this. It's just that it was too hot."

"Prepared" seems to properly describe someone who has completed 15 Ironman triathlons, participated in the invitation-only Ultraman World Championships twice, and seen the finish line of a triple-Ironman race. Patrick, general manager of San Francisco office supplies company Patrick & Co., started swimming recreationally at Miramonte Swim Club under then-coach and Olympian Matt Biondi during grade school, and hasn't stopped since.

"I just love every aspect of being in the water," Patrick says. "In long open-water swims, you're looking at the deep-dark blue for hours and hours, and really testing yourself mentally and physically. For some reason, it's almost like active meditation for me."

That's why Patrick, after a stu-

dent-athlete career decorated with All-American titles at Miramonte High School and success at both California State University Long Beach and University of Hawaii, endeavored to break the 77-mile record for longest open-water marathon swim, set only a few months prior to the attempt. Marathon swimming, according to Patrick, is a slightly more strict form of open-water swimming in which the athlete receives no "unnatural" assistance from the crew: no touching the boat, and nutrition and water are tossed from the boat in containers.

But despite his ultimate miss at obtaining the world record title, the 2011 World Open Water Man of the Year achieved some successes, at least personally. Only two hours after the swim's 4 p.m. launch off Eleuthera, Patrick found himself swimming directly over three large sharks for seven or eight minutes.

"One of my biggest fears is sharks," said Patrick. "They were about five- to seven-foot, and they proceeded to hang out for a little while, and there were a couple points during that period of time where I almost grabbed onto the boat just out of pure fear. But if I would have done that the swim would have been over right then and there."

As if swimming with the sharks wasn't enough, Patrick was also stung by the poisonous box jellyfish, a sting that can be fatal, and was forced to swim through the injury's pain until a new medical product recently re-

leased from the University of Hawaii allowed him some comfort.

Patrick had been training for the swim for about nine months, logging 10,000 yards a day on weekdays and regularly completing 12-hour swims on weekends. But the planning alone, he said, was half the effort.

"The planning process is almost as consuming as the actual training side of it: support boats, travel for crew, electronic shark shields, nutrition, safety gear, medical supplies," said Patrick. "It's quite a task, and you've got to dot all the i's and cross all the t's because once you get there, it's very difficult to try to find something you need."

Patrick and his father selected Eleuthera as a location for the swim due to its shallow water, favorable wind conditions, and, important for long-distant swims, its high temperatures. Unfortunately, an unexpectedly high water temperature of 86 degrees was what ultimately left Patrick severely dehydrated, and forced him to stop. Richardson, crewmembers, Patrick's parents, and a physician all agreed upon the decision to reign in the swimmer for the sake of his health and safety.

And yet, one failure is certainly not enough to stop Patrick from trying again in the future. For now, though, he's back above the surface.

"There was some unfinished business left in the Caribbean, and when will that be, I'm not sure," said Patrick. "I need to get back to real life for a while."



Jamie Patrick



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Otters Starting a Return to Lamorinda Creeks?

... continued from page B1

River otters are smaller in size than sea otters, they have more pups, they are larger by body size and they eat differently. River otters will take a crayfish or fish or frog out of the water and have a picnic on the shore; sea otters just turn over and eat off their bellies. (Think of who you would rather have over for supper.) River otters

are more agile on land.

But this reporter had a nagging worry: Won't the Orinda creek otter get lonely?

"Otters have a very fluid social life," Isadore said with a laugh. "They are extremely adaptable. They can be social. Females and males will usually stay apart. But this is most likely a male dispersing

from his family group."

In case he (or she) finds a partner, Karen Sturges will be standing by, iPhone in hand.

For more information about Bay Area otters, or to report a sighting or scat, visit www.riverotterecology.org. For information about Orinda creeks, visit www.orindacreeks.org.

Literary Luncheon at Orinda Books Allows Close Encounter with Author Ann Packer

By Lou Fancher

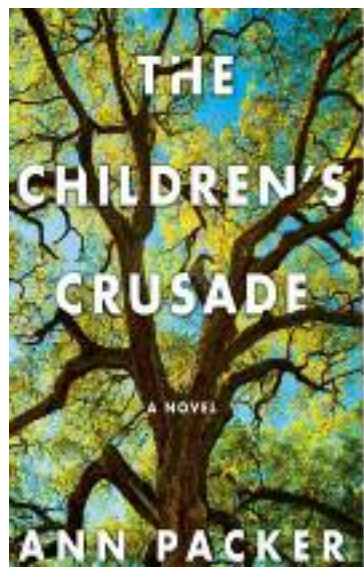


Image provided

In some ways, we all lead fictional lives. Imagine attending a reunion or similar gathering without hearing, "That's not what happened, I remember this . . .," or "Gee, I don't remember that at all." Especially within families, memories blur and emphasis unravels differently in the parallel tracks of siblings, parents, and other family relatives.

Five decades in the Blair family, captured with chilling accuracy in the ever-precise lens of author Ann Packer's new novel, "The Children's Crusade," were the subtext for a literary luncheon at Orinda Books on June 25.

Packer's 448-page tale of Bill and Penny Blair and their four children sways between first- and third-person accounts of the family's past and present predicaments. Bill is a physician who dotes on his children, even James, the youngest, who rebels and eventually soars like a satellite away from the family homestead. His wife, Penny, is an artist and an increasingly reluctant mother as her brood multiplies. The "R" threesome, named Robert, Rebecca and Ryan, like a consonant-locked trio, cloister themselves close to their unhappy childhood home as adults. Set in 1954 in what would become Silicon Valley, the family history unfolds multi-directionally through the turbulent '60s, '70s and up to the 21st century as they tell their differing stories.

And just as the Blair's follow their individual warp and wane, read-

ers of the novel have starkly contrasting reactions to books like Packer's.

The fun of jawing over books is half the reason the salon-style luncheons are finding their way on to Orinda Book's calendar of events at increasing rates. June had "Cheese and Wine" with Laura Dave, author of "Eight Hundred Grapes;" a "Chef Charlie" cooking demonstration by Charles Vollmar of Epicurean Exchange, including a three-course light lunch with wine and a cookbook, "Mi Comida Latina" by Marcella Kreibel; and Packer's appearance.

"I'm a big reader and I saw a note about a book signing," Agnes Kirkhart said. "I have her books. I read the reviews and thought, 'Why not read a book I'm interested in and then get to know the author?'" A Concord resident making time during her lunch hour to travel to Orinda, Kirkhart said discovering the book's background increased her understanding of "Children's Crusade." "I know the characters more intimately because now, I know how they were 'born.'"

Diane Arney of Orinda said she and members of a tennis group she belongs to decided they were becoming "just too superficial" and formed a book club at the store 20 years ago. "It just grew and grew, until we had to divide it in two. There's lots of energy here."

And lots of different opinions, with readers pelting Packer with their frank reactions to the novel between

trips to a buffet table laden with pasta salad and light deserts.

Packer fielded the input deftly, describing a process about which she said, "I don't plan as I write at all. I make it up as I go along, letting my imagination roam."

Packer said her mind, while working on the novel, was filled with thoughts as varied as sense memories of going barefoot in her childhood, an analytical approach to crafting characters that leaves her cool, almost cold in relationship to them. "My relationship with the characters is whether or not they're reading right, not whether they're behaving right. It's different than a reader's relationship," she said, and a centralizing belief underlined throughout the book that "children deserve caring," and "people should be careful of children and pay attention to their needs."

Which connects conveniently to the other "half reason" the luncheons are popular: Orinda Books owner Maria Rhoden.

Operating in multiple roles—a harbormaster steering guests to small, circular tables; a commander posing piercing, insightful questions for authors that reveal her well-read background; a scullery maid scurrying to supply forks, water, biscotti for guests—Rhoden puts on a spirited performance of her own. Her energy is cheerful, generous and contagious—and seems to prompt lively language from others.

"I'm a huge reader. I devour books," said Orinda resident Cathy Cutler. "There's a wonderful staff here, always has been. They have a chance to expose their knowledge. It's a vibrant hub." Rhoden said opportunities to have best-selling authors like Packer come to the store are partially due to the good reputation established by longtime owner and founder Janet Boretta.

And Packer, told by a reader at the luncheon that she differed from the author and thought one of the characters was at fault for the fictional family's woes, said words that might serve as a template for resolving family reunion differences: "We differ. Good. It's your story now."



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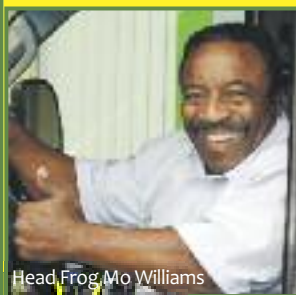
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Upcoming Orinda Books events

Luncheon with Cassandra Dunn, author of "The Art of Adapting" Tuesday, July 21 at noon

The Random Readers Book Club discussion of "The Boys in the Boat" by Daniel James Brown Wednesday, July 22 at 2 p.m.

Cooking demonstration and lunch with Chef Charlie Tuesday, July 28 at 11:30 a.m.

For more detailed information, visit orindabooks.com.

As Seen In Lamorinda: Dawn Breaks at Lafayette Reservoir



Photo Stu Selland

An American flag is greeted by the dawn July 2 at the Lafayette Reservoir parking area.

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Lynn's Top Five

Paying for College – Let's Think Outside the Box!

By Lynn Ballou, CFP®

Living in Lamorinda feels like living in a college town with Saint Mary's in Moraga, Cal just over the hill and so many other great educational opportunities nearby. And we are a community committed to sending our youth to college or to other post-high-school learning institutions. So, how do we pay for it? Let's review five ideas that might be misunderstood or overlooked.

1) Cast a wide net. Not everyone can nor should go to the best-known and/or most expensive schools. It makes great sense to look at the under-discovered, often overlooked opportunities. These schools are eager to expand their student community to include a diverse population, and many have unique attributes that could fit your student to a tee. By applying to a diverse array of colleges, your student increases the possibility of finding the most affordable fit. After a year at the wrong, "big name" school, my son's friend told him about Cal Lutheran University in Thousand Oaks. We had never even heard of the school. It turned out to be the best fit for him and they were able to tailor a financial aid package, athletic and scholastic plan that fit him (and us) well.

2) Go to school abroad. Many college students enjoy studying abroad for a year, but what about for longer? Just as our schools are looking for a globally diverse student base, so are foreign campuses. Sometimes the costs can be comparable to a UC education. Yes, it's going to be a bit pricey to do that college scouting trip, but it could be a fun part of a family vacation. Plan ahead for those great travel deals. And don't be shy about looking into your family tree to find out if you have a link to any international countries, religions or cultures with respect to universities abroad that could provide your student an admissions advantage or financial aid benefit.

3) Pay as you go. I don't think this gets enough credit. Think about it: Your child is no longer living at home and you are not incurring those expenses. Sometimes that alone will save you thousands of dollars. And if you really plan ahead you can be prepared to pay as they go for at least part of the costs. For example, if instead of funding your retirement plan at a moderate pace while your children are home, you could maximize and wherever possible accelerate that funding. Then, while your student is in college, you can put away less for retirement and divert those funds to the "pay as they go" approach. This can also be very helpful when filling out financial aid forms – fewer assets in your child's name and a lot more in retirement plans that are often off limits or count far less in college financial aid formulas.

4) It's work, but apply for every possible dollar in local scholarships. We often overlook

the benefit of having our children participate in the gathering of assets for college funding. One way they can be involved is by aggressively researching and applying for every local grant and scholarship they could possibly qualify for. Yes, time-consuming essays and interviews are involved for seemingly small amounts. But this is great for your kids because guess what they'll be doing for the next four years anyway? I also think that winning any of these is a fantastic boon for them on their resumes. It looks pretty impressive to be in your teens and say on a job application that you are the recipient of a local award. To those who employ youth, these things definitely grab their attention, even when hiring a summer babysitter.

5) Get help. There are many to turn to for help, but you will especially want to find a qualified college planning counselor who understands and likes your student. It's also very important to work closely with your certified financial planner as options become clear to determine which possibilities are affordable and pass on those that are not. The right college planning consultant can save you a lot of time and money by assisting you with the daunting job of finding and narrowing down your student's best options, as well as assisting you in preparing financial aid packages. And you should absolutely start working with your financial planner early on to develop a long-term strategy for successfully helping your children with college costs while tailoring a long-term plan that will fit your total financial goals and objectives in a realistic and affordable way.

And last but not least, try to enjoy this remarkable journey! When done well, the joy, not to mention pride, of being able to assist your children in attending the college or other post-high-school educational institutes that best suits their needs is worth it.



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An Unlikely Candidate for a SMC Summer Research Project: Mistletoe

By A.K. Carroll



Courtney Starr checks the size of this mistletoe in Lamorinda.

Photo Andy Scheck

When biology major Courtney Starr began making plans for summer research, she didn't expect she'd spend June through August surrounded by an iconic symbol of Christmas, but that's exactly what is happening for this Saint Mary's junior. In collaboration with Anthony Talo, Ph.D., a professor of biology at Saint Mary's College, Starr is plucking, grinding and analyzing mistletoe from all around the Lamorinda area.

"There's actually a lot of mistletoe in Lamorinda," said Starr, noting that the term covers a wide swath of plant life (up to some 1,300 species). Starr and Talo are focusing on the three to four that grow closest to home, primarily on one called *Phoradendron macrophyllum*. "We're looking at the distribution of different genetic subspecies," said Starr, "and how they vary by location."

Inspiration for the project came from Talo's day-to-day life. "One of my goals is to develop undergraduate research," he said. As he drove back and forth to work, clusters of mistletoe bulging from leafless deciduous trees repeatedly caught Talo's attention. "I thought 'there's got to be an [undergraduate] project there.'" Though there are clusters of mistletoe throughout California, Talo noted that the ones in Lamorinda are particularly sizable. Enough so to warrant some exploration.

"One question I was interested in was how related mistletoe are within a tree and between trees as well. In theory, all of it should be related but what you have are little islands [of mistletoe] per tree and potentially what we would see is speciation between trees, eventually becoming so different they would not interbreed."

As an obligate stem hemiparasite, mistletoe seeds are typically carried through bird droppings that transfer the mistletoe from one clump of trees to another. Once a seed makes its way to a host tree, it sticks in a haustorium (basically a dual-acting anchor-straw) from which it draws nutrients and water. It then spends its entire life attached to the host. As opposed to a holoparasite, which is incapable of

contributing to its own survival, mistletoe takes in energy and produces food through photosynthesis. It has been found on a variety of trees, with different species of mistletoe preferring different hosts.

Starr and Talo have found that the pockets of mistletoe that grow on host trees near Mt. Diablo are a different species from those that grow on the trees at Saint Mary's. They are trying to figure out just how different those two species are, basically asking whether or not the populations share a common ancestor. "They could have started as one type and then adapted to their environments, forming different preferences and traits," said Starr, excited by the idea of seeing evolution in process.

Starr and Talo are focusing on the population(s) closest to Saint Mary's campus, but are also taking samples from other clusters in the area. The project has taken them to Briones Regional Park, the Moraga Commons, the Oursan Trail, and the Lafayette Reservoir. "[The mistletoe] is readily available for research," Starr noted. She gathers samples every one to two days. So far she and Talo have collected 50, roughly half of their goal for the summer-long project.

When they aren't out collecting samples, they're in the lab analyzing them. Starr extracts the DNA from the mistletoe, grinding her samples and

using chemicals and a centrifuge to pull strands of DNA from the rest of the plant cell. She then performs a Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) to replicate the DNA, amplifying the specific region of DNA she's trying to compare. Starr does this with all of her samples, comparing the DNA coding from one population to the next and evaluating whether or not it differs by location.

Starr and Talo's summer mistletoe collections and analysis, which focus on the mistletoe in Moraga, will continue until the last week in August. In October, Starr will give a poster presentation at Saint Mary's. She and Talo may also publish a paper, depending on their findings. Talo hopes to broaden the research going forward, looking at samples from populations throughout Contra Costa and Alameda counties. Starr may be a part of that additional research, though mistletoe isn't what got her interested in biology.

"I'm actually interested in animal biology," Starr said. "But doing the research on [something like] this gives you a background; starting small and working toward something more complex."

"I can't think of a better way to do science," Talo said of the faculty-student project. "It's a very one-on-one relationship. We have good students who really want to do good research."



As Seen In Lamorinda: Hamming it Up



Photo Cathy Dausman

Ham radio operators Patti Young, left, and Sandi Gritzer put out their call across the country as Al Archangel offers tech support. The trio, all licensed amateur radio operators and members of Lamorinda Area Radio Interest Group, set up shop at Moraga Commons during American Radio Relay League's nationwide Field Day event held the last weekend in July. C. Dausman

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Lafayette Mom Launches Customizable Dress Line for Little Girls

By Clare Varellas



Dresses designed by girls, ages 3-6, as part of the new Isabel Azam girls' fashion line. Photos provided

For several years now, 4-year-old Persia Naasz has eagerly followed the annual production of her very own, personalized "birthday party dress" by her mother, designer and previous fashion teacher Jaleh Naasz.

"She was really into the process," said Jaleh Naasz. "She would go fabric shopping with me, I would let her pick her own fabric, and then she'd wake up in the morning and go check on me and be like, 'Are you done with my dress yet?'"

So when Naasz's friends on social media expressed their interest in having similar custom-made clothing for their own daughters, Naasz, who holds a master's degree in fashion from the Academy of Art in San Francisco, considered stitching together a business plan for a girls' fashion line.

After a year of planning and a month of work at the sewing machine, Naasz is completing the final touches on the line's first collection: a group of 20 girls' dresses completely designed by the daughters of her friends, all aged between 3 and 6. The custom-made collection is to be shown at the line's first fashion show at Hacienda de las Flores in Moraga on July 22.

"The girls have been picking flowers to put on there, and my daughter has a complete opinion about which flowers go exactly where, and if you move them around, she'll notice," said Naasz.

Personal customization, according to Naasz, is one of the highlights of her new line, which she calls Isabel Azam after the middle names of Persia and her younger daughter, Raven, 1. So, she says, is sustainability and awareness of how clothing is made.

"You have no idea who made your clothes," said Naasz. "You have no idea what their living situation is like, and they'll continue to take those jobs because we continue to buy [clothing] from the stores."

Learning how clothes are made begins when girls between the ages of 3 and 12 receive a dress kit in the mail in which they are given a brief page of information about clothing production, along with an envelope in which to send back their fabric of choice, measurements, and dress style choices. Upon receiving the fabric, Naasz plans to update a daily blog with the progress of all dresses currently in production, so girls can monitor the stages of sewing. Eventually, the dresses are to be shipped back in big red boxes with personalized tags.

Naasz hopes that the process will instill in girls an understanding of how much effort and time goes into making clothing, especially in an era in which children around their age labor in factories across the world to produce the clothing easily available in stores. In addition, she hopes to decrease body image issues by making girls clothes that work best for their figures.

"I really need to get the message across that you're not just buying a dress; you're buying an experience," said Naasz. "And when you're done with it, your child should have learned a little bit about fashion and where clothes come from, the mom would have had a little bit of a bonding experience with the child, and they both [will have] had to practice patience."

Laura Kelly, one of Naasz's friends and the daughter of fashion show participant Mae Kelly, 3, said she learned lessons of her own when Mae demonstrated a desire to make her own design decisions about her dress. But ultimately, she said, it was an empowering experience for her daughter, who was able to choose exactly how she wanted to present herself.

"I went into it kind of with some ideas of how I thought the dress would end up being like, and the dress has ended up not being at all like that," said Kelly. "It was an experience for me having to think this is about her, not about me. I was really pleased because when we saw the dress yesterday, it was beautiful."

The first fashion show of Isabel Azam will be held at 5:30 p.m. Wednesday, July 22 at Hacienda de las Flores. It is open to the public, but RSVPs via the Facebook event page (https://www.facebook.com/pages/Isabel-Azam/140688416433) or email (jaleh.naasz@gmail.com) are requested, as the event will be limited to 200 guests.



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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.

Moraga Women's Society Tours Beneficial Garden at JM

Submitted by Susan Sperry



Elaine Gottman and Dawn Lezak

Photo provided

Moraga Women's Society donates funds every year to each school in the Moraga School District as part of its donation policy. For the last few years the funds donated to Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School were dedicated to the school's Earth Stewardship class, taught by Dawn Lezak. The class was first started by Elaine Gottman, now retired, to teach students hands-on outdoor activities connecting the sixth-grade curriculum presented in her class. Activities include spending time working in their vegetable and herb garden, digging, planting, composting, conducting experiments, learning about sustainable systems, climate zones, erosion, insects, solar energy, and much more.

Moraga Women's Society members were given a tour of the garden on April 20 where Lezak and students explained their mission. The members were then served refreshments of cucumber sandwiches and tea.

Third-Graders Visit the Moraga Historical Society History Center

Submitted by Susan Sperry



From left, back row: Colleen Lund, Kathy Zuber, Sam Sperry, Susan Sperry, Elsie Mastick; seated: Margaret DePriester; not pictured: Rosemary Coburn

Photo provided

Begun as a sixth-grade project approximately 30 years ago by Susan Sperry, then teaching at Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School, the annual History of Moraga unit took shape. In those days Maggie Skinner, dressed in period costume, and Brother Dennis Goodman of Saint Mary's College brought their slide show to the JM auditorium to tell all sixth-graders about prehistoric animal footprints on the Bluffs, the Saklan Indians hunting and gathering techniques, the importance of the railroad, James Irvine and the pear trees, and early ranching days.

As time passed, the unit was moved to the third grade, Skinner moved and Brother Dennis passed away. Resurrected by Elsie Mastick and the third-grade teachers of Moraga, this annual event moved to the History Center after its completion in 2000. Manned by Society volunteers, the third-graders arrive at the Center every April

ready to learn local history lessons.

Kathy Zuber illustrates the prehistoric life that once existed in Moraga; Rosemary Coburn and Margaret DePriester describe how the Saklan Indians survived in our valley. Elsie Mastick picks up the story as Anza brings Jose Joaquin Moraga with him from Sonora, Mexico to oversee the building of the San Francisco Presidio. In his train overalls and hat, Sam Sperry elaborates on the importance of the early railroads. At the last station Susan Sperry relates how Joaquin Moraga ranched his 13,000 acres, raising cattle. Taken over by squatters and troubled by debt, Moraga lost his land. Colleen Lund relates the activities of a typical day on a squatter or sharecropper farm.

The students and their parents leave the History Center with a new appreciation of our tiny town with a history filled with interesting facts from prehistoric times to the present.

Share Your Celebrations and Remembrances

If you would like to share an announcement about a special event or achievement, such as a wedding, engagement, scholarship or graduation of a local resident, or about a special person from Lamorinda who has passed, send a photo along with your text (up to 250 words) to storydesk@lamorindaweekly.com, and include "Celebrations and Remembrances" in the subject line.

Submit stories and story ideas to storydesk@lamorindaweekly.com

Celebrations

Benny Toudic Joins Marine Corps

Submitted by Joanne Tan



Benny Toudic at his June Campolindo High School graduation, with his mother Joanne Tan and Sergeant Ken Rick, wearing a purple heart, who recruited him.

Photo provided

Venturing Crew 243. He was recognized by the United Nations Foundation for his work as the team leader raising funds to reduce the number of people who contract and die from malaria in Africa. In the process of achieving Eagle Rank, Toudic applied deeply held values of trustworthiness, hard work, and perseverance, which will be the cornerstone for all his future endeavors.

For 13 years Toudic won numerous awards in Contra Costa County music competitions and at the United States Open Music Competition in various piano performance and composition categories. Toudic also played trumpet for eight years, performing with the Acalanes Brass Ensemble, Acalanes Jazz En-

semble and the City of Walnut Creek Jazz Band. He is also a talented artist. Benjamin "Benny" Toudic, a recent graduate from Campolindo High School, an Eagle Scout, a second-degree black belt in Tae Kwon Do, and an award-winning pianist and classical music composer, will start his 13-week boot camp for the Marines on July 26. Toudic first wanted to become an Eagle Scout in fourth grade while he was a Cub Scout. Benny went through National Youth Leadership Training, and was the Activity Chair for

Toudic has been attending regular trainings twice a week since deciding to join the Marines a year ago, and he is grateful to all those who have contributed to his growth in the Lamorinda community over the past 18 years. He is looking forward to the new challenges in the next chapters of his journey.

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Moraga Native Earns Master's in Special Ed

Submitted by Ron Tarica



Dominica Joanne Tarica was awarded a Master of Arts degree in Special Education from San Francisco State University on May 22 at AT&T Park. She is a 2004 graduate of Miramonte High School. Dominica received a Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology from Richmond, the American International University in London in 2008. She continues her work as an Inclusion Specialist in the Oakland Unified School District. Her parents are Ron Tarica and Sandi Andersen-Tarica of Templeton, Calif. The family formerly lived in Moraga for 20 years.

Photo provided

Orinda Native Motar Board Fellowship Recipient

Submitted by Jenni Birch Szolwinski

Every year, the Motar Board National Foundation awards fellowships to assist members in financing their graduate studies, and it recently awarded \$30,000 to eight exceptional Motar Board members to support their graduate education during the 2015-16 academic year. One award recipient, Orinda native Daniel Citron, was inspired by philanthropic work with the homeless population and a study abroad experience in Costa Rica to pursue a career in dentistry. Citron says that these experiences "shaped my views on international health and inspired me to make a commitment to providing accessible dental and oral health care to the most marginalized members of society." A 2009 graduate of Miramonte High School, Citron is a 2014 summa cum laude graduate of San Diego State University, where he earned his baccalaureate degree in international security and conflict resolution, and served as a member of the award-winning Jane K. Smith Cap & Gown chapter of Motar Board. A passionate musician and avid fitness enthusiast, Citron will attend the UCLA School of Dentistry in the fall as a Motar Board Fellowship recipient. To learn more about Motar Board, visit www.mortarboard.org.



Orinda native and Motar Board award recipient Daniel Citron

Photo provided

Lafayette Pilot's Life in the Sky

By Jade Shojaee



Steve Neighbor smiles from in his office in the sky.

Photo provided

Steve Neighbor has been defying gravity since he first took flight at age 9 during a Fleet Week tour on board the USS Hornet with his father. "I had the opportunity to sit in the pilot's seat of a UH-1 Huey helicopter.

I wanted to flip every switch and turn every dial. Needless to say, they wouldn't let me," he reminisces of the adventure that inevitably changed his life.

By night Neighbor fronts as an

upstanding resident of Lafayette, but by day he paints the sky red as an aerobatic/tail-wheel instructor pilot at Livermore-based Attitude Aviation. If you think that sounds adventurous then get this: he also flies test flights

for Department of Defense contractors. "One national DoD contractor chooses to use one of our airplanes (a Marchetti SF-260) as a platform to test their equipment in a real world, air combat environment," Neighbor says. "My job is to do my best to scramble their equipment by maneuvering the aircraft aerobatically. Each time I break one of their gadgets, they go back to the drawing board to figure out why it broke and how to improve it. They've gotten very good at it, but I've gotten good at it, too."

Becoming a pilot is no easy feat says Neighbor, who has poured countless hours of training and studying into what now seems effortless for him. The process is "comparable to earning a master's or a doctoral degree," he says, "in that you have to be able to understand and teach on the correlative level, with the added difficulty of being required to perform certain maneuvers."

Neighbor gives new meaning to the concept of a 9 to 5 by flying figure eights through an empty sky. "I am fortunate to have the opportunity to teach my clients how to fly upside down and literally end over end," he

says. "I instruct in a wide array of aircraft (12 in total), so there's a lot of variety. Every day is a little bit different, and there's always something to learn."

Neighbor generously offered to take this reporter on a mini-adventure up in his turf and even let me steer the plane. Since I was new to the sky (and quite the scaredy-cat) he went easy on me, but the views are absolutely spectacular and there was nothing more humbling than experiencing reality as a speck in that massive expanse of blue.

Long-term, Neighbor would like to network his way into a corporate airline and be an instructor pilot on the side. For kids aspiring to break into the industry, Neighbor offers this advice: "Work hard, save your money, and stay out of trouble. A great way to break into the industry when you're young is to work at a flight school by helping with dispatch or working as 'Line Service.' Flight schools like hiring young adults to help move, wash, and service airplanes for their pilots."

For information about Attitude Aviation, visit attitudeaviation.com.

Troop 212 Takes Bike Trek to Germany

Submitted by Richard Terry



Photo provided

Thirty members of Moraga Boy Scout Troop 212 (16 Scouts, 14 dads) recently returned from a 14-day bicycle trek to Germany, their sixth trip in the past 20 years. Arriving in Munich, they cycled to Donauworth, then Dinkelsbuhl, Schwabish Hall, and finally to Rothenberg. Taking a train to Salzburg, they then went to Berchtesgaden with a trip to the local Salt Mine and Hitler's Eagle

Nest, before biking over the Alps to Traunstein. The last day, cycling back to Munich, was a long 65 miles. The total trip was over 275 miles with a total elevation gain of over 15,000 feet. Bike treks are part of the troop's high adventure program and occur every three years. Other destinations include the Oregon Coast ride and the Canadian Rockies ride from Calgary to Jasper.

Orinda Academy Announces 2015 Graduates

Submitted by Miriam Schaffer



Orinda Academy 2015 graduates (listed in alphabetical order): Raina Arberry, Torin Bakos, William Burkhalter, Miranda Gill, Matthew Hildreth, Ben Jaffin, Jae Sub Lee, Michael Livanos, Alex McSpadden, Colin Mooney, Sairena Ramirez, Tyra Rensch, David Rios, Micah Sherman-Raz, Wilson Wan, and Vicky Wang

Photo provided

Orinda Academy, a private day school for students in grades 8-12, celebrated its 33rd commencement exercise June 12 as 16 seniors received their diplomas before a crowd of proud parents, family and friends. Leading the Class of 2015 was valedictorian, Michael Livanos, who will attend the University of Minnesota Twin Cities. He was the recipient of the \$30,000 Gold National Academic Scholarship by the University of Minnesota. In addition, Livanos received a memorial scholarship at the Greek Orthodox Folk Dance Festival and the Nativity of

Christ Greek Orthodox Church Philoptochos scholarship.

Orinda Academy's graduates represent an international community. They will be heading off to the following public and private colleges and universities throughout the nation: California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo; Diablo Valley College; Hampshire College; Landmark College; Linfield College; Pasadena City College; San Francisco State University; University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign; University of Minnesota, Twin Cities; Willamette University; and Univer-

sity of Redlands.

Along with Orinda Academy's graduation ceremonies, the following students received academic achievement awards: Most Outstanding Student Award – graduating senior David Rios; The Monte Melnick Community Service Award – graduating senior Raina Arberry; Colin Pugh Award for the student having the most positive impact on the Orinda Academy Community – graduating senior Michael Livanos, who also received this award in 2014; and The Zeke Nierenberg Award for Social Activism – 11th grade student Dylan Seidler.

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Sept 29th – **Feng Shui & Wellness**
with **Michele Duffy, BTB, MFS**

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with **Osteopenia or Osteoporosis**
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'Minions'

By Derek Zemrak



**MEET
STUART
KEVIN
& BOB**



MINIONS

SUMMER 2015

Image provided

Yes, those single-celled organisms that look like yellow Tic Tacs in blue jean overalls from the blockbuster film franchise "Despicable Me" have their own movie. We all saw this coming when the first "Despicable Me" grossed \$251 million at the box office and "Despicable Me 2" grossed \$368 million. It makes business sense to continue the franchise with a Minion movie.

This movie teaches us about the history of the Minions' long journey to find their leader. They had many failed masters over time from T-Rex and

Dracula to Napoleon, entertainingly narrated by Geoffrey Rush. As they continue to lose masters, they fall into a deep depression. One Minion, Kevin, steps forward to make everything better for his fellow Minions as he goes on a quest to find their new leader. Only two other Minions, one-eyed Stuart and childlike Bob, step forward to assist Kevin in his expedition. Their mission takes them to New York City, where they discover their trademark blue jean overalls and learn about "Villain Con" in Orlando. They head to Orlando to meet and hopefully discover their new leader Scarlet Overkill (Sandra Bullock), the most powerful villainess in the world. Scarlet takes the Minions under her wing but she has her own evil plan with her husband, Herb (Jon Hamm), to steal the Queen of England's royal crown. Kevin, Stuart and Bob are whisked away to London.

As in the "Despicable Me" movies, the Minions stay true to their characters, which would be best described as cute, wacky and loony. If one can get past their language, which for me was annoying at times, there are some funny scenes in the movie. The music soundtrack is a real treat for adults. I think you will be singing "Mellow Yellow" as you exit the theater.

Minions is rated PG with a TRT (Total Running Time) of 92 minutes.

Below are a few Minion words to prepare you for the movie:

Minion	English
Bello	Hello
Poopaye	Goodbye
Tank yu	Thank you
Me Want Banana	I'm hungry
Tulaliloo ti amo	We love
Underwear	I swear

**Service Clubs
Announcements**



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OTHER ... continued

Summer Wine Festival 2-5 p.m. on Sunday, Aug. 16 at Saint Mary's College Soda Center in Moraga. Tickets are \$50 per person before Aug. 3. Register at Stmarys-ca.edu/wine or (925) 631-8744.

Lafayette Joins National Night Out on Aug. 4 - Organize your block or neighborhood for a gathering and join the millions across the country who are celebrating the 32nd National Night Out. The purpose of the national event is to bring together neighbors for the mutual goal of learning what is already in place for emergency preparedness and crime prevention and what still needs to be done. Most important is that neighbors knowing neighbors saves lives and property. For questions or assistance, contact Carol Yates, NNO Director for Lafayette, at lepccarol@gmail.com.

Lindsay Wildlife Experience: "Wild Cats at Lindsay Wildlife" on July 25 and Aug. 22 at the Lindsay Wildlife Museum in Walnut Creek.

Celebrate the Lindsay's "Summer of Cats- Felines: Fierce and Friendly" with Barbara and Rob Dicely of Wild Cat Conservation and Education Fund, who will bring their big cats to the Lindsay to introduce them to the public and provide a valuable learning experience. For info, visit <http://lindsaywildlife.org/summer-of-cats/>.

SENIORS

The 7th Annual Senior Symposium "Aging by Design," sponsored by the Lafayette Community Foundation, will be held from 8 a.m. to noon Saturday, Aug. 1. This free event is an informative resource fair for seniors in the Lamorinda community, with more than 40 booths sponsored by local vendors that provide services to seniors, as well as many nonprofit organizations that serve seniors in the community. This year, the event will be held in downtown Lafayette, at Lafayette Elementary School, 950 Moraga Road. Advanced registration qualifies for a special raffle prize. Either call (925) 284-8214 or visit the Lafayette Community Foundation's website: www.lafayettelcf.org.

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Greek Chickpea Salad is the Perfect Summertime Party Fare

By Susie Iventosch



Greek Chickpea Salad with Tomatoes, Basil, Celery and Kalamata Olives Photo Susie Iventosch

Summertime usually means large group gatherings and it's nice to have some good, dependable recipes for such occasions. We had a group of 10 guests staying at our summer cabin over the past couple of weeks, and, as you can imagine, there is a lot of time spent in the kitchen feeding so many people three meals a day.

Over the past few years, we've settled in on a great set of menus and included in them is the fabulous Turkish meatball recipe from Michaela and Avi Ben-Ari, owners of Kabab-Burger in Lafayette. We ran this recipe a few years ago, and ever since, I make them every few months, and they are always a big hit with

our guests (see recipe in the Lamorinda Weekly archives at <http://www.lamorindaweekly.com/archive/issue0625/Turkish-style-meatballs-in-tomato-sauce.html>). They are perfect with a little homemade hummus, flat bread and salad.

This chickpea salad, made with chopped celery, tomatoes, basil and Kalamata olives is the perfect accompaniment to the meatballs. It is especially great now that locally-grown tomatoes are starting to make their way to the farmers' markets. If you add a little pre-cooked, diced chicken, this salad could be a great summer meal all by itself, too.

RECIPE

(Serves 8-10 as a side dish)

INGREDIENTS

Two 16-ounce cans chickpeas (garbanzo beans), drained and rinsed
5-6 medium tomatoes, coarsely chopped (or can use 10 oz. or so, cherry tomatoes, halved)
6 stalks celery, coarsely chopped
1/2 cup Kalamata olives, pitted and cut into quarters
8-10 basil leaves, chiffonade (finely sliced or shredded)
2-3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
Juice of 1 lemon
Salt and freshly ground pepper, to taste

DIRECTIONS

Place chickpeas in the bottom of a large salad bowl. Layer celery, tomatoes, olives and basil, ending with shredded basil on top. (This is just for looks before you toss it.) Drizzle olive oil and lemon juice over all and toss gently. Season with salt and pepper and adjust with more olive oil or lemon juice as desired.



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.

Day Trippin' A Silicon Valley Weekend

By Fran Miller



HanaHaus at 456 University Ave. in Palo Alto, the site of the historic New Varsity Theatre, offers communal entrepreneurial workspaces and Blue Bottle Coffee. Photos Fran Miller

Lamorinda fans of the HBO hit television series "Silicon Valley" know that the show's humor is derived from the 'truth is stranger than fiction' school of comedy. Hoodie-wearing 'Pied Piper' doppelgangers can be found in any Palo Alto restaurant and café, as can the VCs (venture capitalists) and 'treps,' (entrepreneurs) that the show so humorously satirizes. Silicon Valley is entertaining because Palo Alto and its inhabitants are entertaining. But why sit on the couch and watch the television show when one can so easily experience the real thing?

Palo Alto, just an hour drive south, buzzes with energy and an entrepreneurial spirit that is palpable. A trip, whether for the day or a weekend, inspires, and the hotels that cater primarily to weekday business travelers tend to spoil

weekend guests. Our weekend home base, the Four Seasons Hotel Silicon Valley at East Palo Alto, was no exception. The glass of champagne offered at check-in set the tone for an indulgent stay that included treatments at their serene spa, lounging by the sumptuous third floor pool, and dinner and music at Quattro, their onsite Italian restaurant.

Quattro's Friday evening summer entertainment, dubbed Chronicle Nights, is alone worth a stay at the hotel. Designed in playful opposition to the area's unceasing tech progress and advancement, Chronicle Nights invites guests to step back in time and enjoy music and cocktails from previous decades. Quattro manager David Farah keeps the musical acts under wraps until just days prior, employing the Forrest Gump approach: "Like a box of chocolates, you never

know what you're going to get." What we got was Santana lead singer Tony Lindsay, accompanied by jazz saxophonist Michael O'Neill, sitting a few feet away, serenading an intimate crowd with '30s standards.

Beyond the hotel's happenings, Palo Alto offers all kinds of activities. Lafayette Reservoir devotees might enjoy a hike around The Dish. Named for its iconic hilltop landmark, the 150-foot diameter radio telescope built by the Stanford Research Institute in 1966 sits on Stanford property and is one of most popular trails on the entire Peninsula. Walkers and joggers traverse the hilly, well-paved path and are rewarded with panoramic views of the Stanford campus and the Bay Area. Two entrance points provide a 3.7-mile loop, the Stanford Gate at Stanford Avenue and Junipero Serra Boulevard, and the Gerona Gate near East Campus Drive, and the third Alpine Gate entrance off of Highway 280 takes you on a five-mile lasso loop.

For a less strenuous hike, step out the door of the Four Seasons and explore the stately traditional homes, beautiful gardens, and wide, tree-canopied streets of the Crescent Park neighborhood, home to many Bay Area high rollers. Head down University Avenue to find great shopping and restaurants. Dine at Rangoon Ruby for lunch or dinner, and you may find yourself sitting next to Mark Zuckerberg who frequents the Emerson Street Burmese restaurant, the cuisine of which is a combination of Indian, Chinese and Thai.

For a real Silicon Valley-esque experience, head to HanaHaus at 456 University Avenue, the former site of the historic 1920s New Varsity Theatre and more recently a Borders bookstore. The space is now home to the Peninsula's first Blue Bottle Coffee outpost and a 15,000-square-foot community workspace that bills itself as "a community of purpose defining a new café experience where creative individuals and entrepreneurs can come together to meet, socialize, share ideas and connect with experts." HanaHaus is to the current generation what garages were to Hewlett, Packard, Jobs and Bezos – a communal simulation of "Silicon Valley" character Erlich Bachman's "Incubator."

For additional weekend activities, wander the gloriously landscaped two and a half acre Gamble Gardens and the historic house, tea house and carriage house at 1431 Waverley Street (all free), or visit Stanford's Cantor Arts Center with its diverse collections that span 5,000 years of art history and include one of the largest presentations of Rodin bronzes outside Paris – 200 works in all. Twenty are on display in the Sculpture Garden, a fun place to visit at night due to the artistic lighting. Admission to the Cantor galleries, gardens and café is free.

Whether exploring University Avenue and the Stanford campus, plugging-in and caffeinating with the treps at HanaHaus, or just relaxing poolside at the hotel, a weekend in Palo Alto provides just the right combination of stimulation and relaxation, and leaves visitors with an "in-the-know" understanding of the self-deprecating humor of Silicon Valley.



The Dish, a five-mile hiking and jogging path, offers panoramic views of the Stanford Campus.

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LAMORINDA SPORTS

40th Annual Bottoms Up Invitational Lets the Underdogs Shine

By Clare Varellas



Photos Gint Federas

Nearly 1,800 people gathered at Campolindo High School's Soda Aquatic Center on July 12 for what has become a favorite yearly tradition for the Orinda Moraga Pool Association: the Bottoms Up Invitational.

The swim meet, hosted by Moraga Valley Pool (a member club of the OMPA), was held for the 746 swimmers in the league whose ages pin them at the "bottom" of their swimming age groups. For example, the 5-year-olds of the 6-and-unders compete against other 5-year-olds while the 7-year-olds of the 7-8s compete against other 7-year-olds.

The philosophy of the meet has remained the same since its original organization by Moraga Valley Pool parents Craig and Linda McCay in 1976. But this year, commemorating the meet's 40th anniversary, Moraga Valley Pool also organized an awards ceremony to follow the meet in an effort to honor the high point swimmers and to announce the team results.

"None of the other invitationals

have immediate recognition," said Bottoms Up co-chair and Moraga Valley Pool parent Kristen Williams. "This is the one meet where we recognize kids before they leave the pool deck, and their parents get an opportunity to cheer for them and their friends get an opportunity to cheer for them."

There was certainly a reason to cheer for the swimmers, who together broke three individual meet records and two relay meet records. Orinda Country Club, the reigning OMPA champion earned the most points, followed by Orinda Park Pool, then the Sleepy Hollow Legends.

The meet, which takes place around the midpoint of the busy summer swim season, provides an optimal venue for measuring swimmers' progress and speed as teams approach the OMPA Championship meet on August 7-9. The competitive atmosphere is balanced with fun, as suit-clad swimmers enjoyed pizza, shaved ice, airbrushed tattoos, and CREAM

ice cream sandwiches sold from company booths on the pool deck between swims.

While looking ahead to OMPA, swimmers still have some work to do (and some fun to have) before the peak of the season arrives. As 9-year-old Moraga Valley Pool swimmer Beckett Randolph Malashowsky says, it's not quite OMPA yet.

"I'm really working on trying to pop my time in backstroke, because I've had some trouble in backstroke lately," said Malashowsky, illustrating with the backstroke arm motion. "My arms aren't moving fast enough, and I really need to get my arms through the water more."

The "bottom-year" format makes for some boosting of younger swimmers' confidence and a demonstrated reward for hard work in practice.

"It's a great opportunity for them to showcase their skills without having older kids there," said Mary Anderson, a coach at Sleepy Hollow Swim and Tennis Club. "It's a great philosophy."



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Coaches, Students and Community All Contribute to Remarkable Success of Lamorinda Prep Programs

By Karl Buscheck



Kelly Sopak led the Mats' girls' basketball team to another NCS title. Photos Gint Federas

The Lamorinda prep sports programs have been racking up NCS banners at a furious rate, but there's no single factor that accounts for the tremendous success.

"I think we're really lucky to live in a community that strongly supports our young people," said Tom Renno, the athletic director at Campolindo. "And you kind of see that through having such strong coaches, having such strong financial support and that really allows our student-athletes to work hard and be great. And so, I think when everyone buys in — parents, coaches, athletes — then you're able to achieve special results."

According to Renno, the biggest challenge in the process of achieving those special results is finding and retaining top-tier coaches.

"We're so lucky to have so many great

coaches involved with our programs and the coaches are so willing with their time," Renno said.

Vince Dell'Aquila, the athletic director and head baseball coach at Miramonte, shared a similar perspective.

"Our coaching staff and our philosophy of hard work and being smart about what we do, it really goes a long way," Dell'Aquila said. "Ourselves, Campolindo and Acalanes, that's what we rely on."

Like Renno and Dell'Aquila, Randy Takahashi, the athletic director at Acalanes, couldn't overstate the influence that the coaches have on their programs.

"Having good coaches is greatly important," Takahashi said. "There's so much that you have to do as a high school coach in the Lamorinda community. You have to not just know your sport well, but you also have to be very organized. You have to be a great communicator. You have to be a fundraiser. You have to be a counselor to the kids."

At Campolindo, there is such an array of standout coaches that whittling down the list to just a few stars isn't even possible.



Coaches David Chen and John Vuong celebrate with the Campolindo boys' volleyball team.

"It's really hard to single out coaches because we have such a great overall staff," Renno said.

While Renno had a difficult time singling individuals out, the broader sports community didn't. This season, the Cougars had three staff members who were named East Bay Coach of the Year for their respective sport.

Kevin Macy, who led the Campolindo football team to the CIF Division III State title, was the first name on that list. David Chen and John Vuong, who are the co-coaches of the boys' and girls' volleyball squads, also earned the distinction. Overall, the Cougars claimed five NCS titles last year, with football, boys' volleyball, girls' water polo and both cross country programs adding to the school's trophy collection.

Miramonte also snagged five NCS titles. The list of champions for the Mats included boys' water polo, girls' basketball, girls' lacrosse, girls' soccer and the boys' doubles tennis team.

According to Dell'Aquila, the students — both past and present — play a big part in all that success.

"We rely on alumni," Dell'Aquila said, when explaining the process of hiring coaches. "We have a few alumni who are head coaches in key places and that really helps."

While acknowledging that there is plenty of pressure on coaches to deliver results on the field, Takahashi pointed out that there are also all sorts of off the field expectations.

"I think it's really important, and I know the other schools emphasize this as well — our athletes and our coaches — they represent this whole community, their families, everybody," Takahashi said. "And so, we expect the most out of them."

One of those expectations is that the students will thrive in the classroom while also winning on the field. According to Takahashi, 25 percent of the Dons' student-athletes maintained a grade point average of 3.5 or higher.

"I know that for all of our coaches — winning's important don't get me wrong — winning is always important," Takahashi said. "But it's more than just winning and our coaches definitely take that to heart."




Kevin Macy led the Cougars to a football state title.



Acalanes High School girls' soccer coach Evan Sassano, center, with the team.

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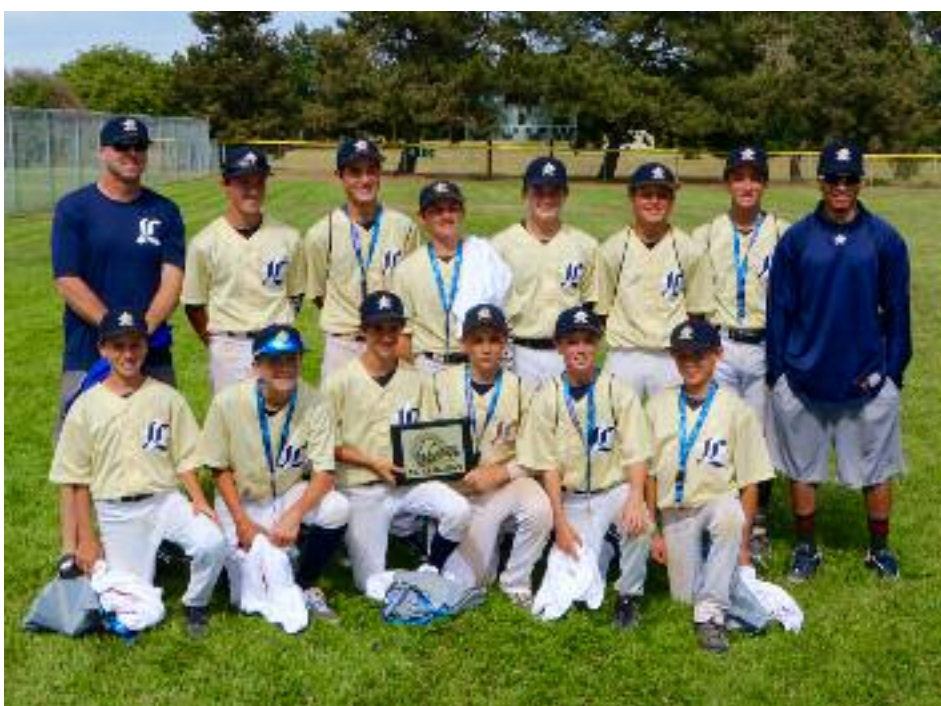
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Summer Starts Hot for Seals

Submitted by Brian Miles



From left, back row: coach Jon Zuber, Grant Harper, Tommy Thrasher, Will Windatt, Brett Donat, Nick Kresnak, Nicolas Bamont, coach Austin Booker; front row: Luke Miles, Declan Curran, Jack Muren, Vince Bianchina, Ryan Reilly, Owen Hansen
Photo Matt Hansen

The 13U Advanced Baseball Seals won the All World Spring into Summer tournament in Martinez. The Seals won four straight games to take the title. It was a total team effort for the Seals, who outscored the opposition 22-3 in their championship run. The Seals, led by manager Jon Zuber, posted a record of 29-10 this spring.

Mavericks Win in San Diego

Submitted by Dave Manousos



Photo provided

The 12U Moraga Mavericks baseball team won the Xtreme World Series AA tournament in San Diego on July 27-28. In the title game, the Mavericks completed a come-from-behind effort to beat the Delta Dawgs 11-5. While in San Diego, the team also got to visit the Padres' batting practice session and received a tour of the indoor batting cages.

International Debut for Local Pitcher

Submitted by Ashleigh Hodges



Photo provided

Elijah Hodges, a junior at Miramonte High School, has been selected to join the U.S. 16U baseball team that will be traveling to the Dominican Republic to compete in the Latin American Baseball Classic this August. Hodges participated in a competitive evaluation earlier in the year and was excited when he received word that he was one of only 17 players selected after a nationwide search. The left-handed pitcher and centerfielder has loved the game of baseball since he started playing at age four. He has played various levels of OBA (including a visit to Cooperstown), and he has competed on a travel team. Last spring, Hodges completed his second season on Miramonte's junior varsity squad.

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Mustangs Win Two Tournaments

Submitted by Anna Marie Gamboa



From left, back row: coach Todd Meyer, coach Paul Dolan, coach Sean O'Brien, coach John Williams; middle row: Ben Boccabella, Louie Giles, Luca Gamboa, Brian Dolan, Max Friedman; back row: Nolan O'Brien, Michael Bohm, Bennett Leary, John Williams, Jack Nixon, Nate Meyer; not pictured: Dylan Chan, Leo Bronfman
Photo Carolyn Leary

The OBA Mustang 10U Summer All-Stars won two tournaments. They competed in and won the Pleasant Hill All Star 2015 tournament on June 19-21. Then, over the holiday weekend, the baseball team competed in and won the Dale Wilson 4th of July tournament on July 3-5 in San Bruno.

All-Star Experience

Submitted by Kelly Peterson




Photo provided

Gregory Palamountain of Lafayette earned the opportunity to participate in the Major League Baseball Pitch, Hit and Run event at MLB's All-Star festivities this week. Competing at a skills program, the 10-year-old earned the chance to represent the San Francisco Giants in an array of events, including shagging fly balls in the outfield during the Home Run Derby.

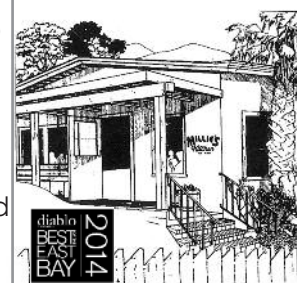
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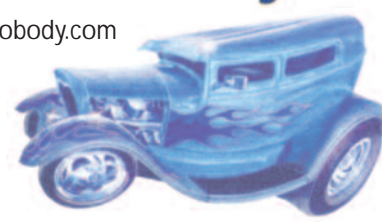
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Lamorinda OUR HOMES

Lamorinda Weekly Volume 09 Issue 10 Wednesday, July 15, 2015



Digging Deep with Cynthia Brian
...read on page D10

Acorn Woodpeckers Are Beauties

But they can damage houses and outbuildings

By Chris Lavin



This acorn woodpecker is where he or she is supposed to be, on a snag at Valle Vista Staging Area in Moraga, storing acorns in a tree, not in the side of a house.

Photo Chris Lavin

The males' brilliant red heads are spectacularly beautiful – there is even a small patch of green feathers in the middle of their backs if you manage to get a close look – but there is a problem with acorn woodpeckers in Lamorinda. Their domain is spread throughout the area, but they don't just focus on trees.

"They love any wood," said Mario Martinez, of All N One Pest Control in Concord. He makes his living clearing people's houses from the mammals and birds that want to cohabitate against the owners' will. Does he get calls about acorn woodpeckers? "Oh, yeah," he said.

Acorn woodpeckers are brilliantly colored, small woodpeckers, about 8 inches long. Their call is like a laugh in the woods – general folklore has it that the laugh of Woody Woodpecker in the cartoon features the acorn woodpecker laugh, while the character's body is more like that of a pileated woodpecker, which is much larger. Lamorindans have the benefit of each species, and more.

According to Kate Marianchild, who wrote "Secrets of the Oak Woodlands: Plants & Animals Among California Oaks" (Heyday, Berkeley, 2014) acorn woodpeckers have an extremely developed social structure. They are one of the few species to raise their young in groups – yep, they share nests – which causes large numbers, up to 15 individuals, to congregate in one area. Not good for homeowners with large oak trees, where the birds collect the acorns and look for the best possible place to put them for winter.

The summer acorns are their prime target. The woodpeckers hammer out a hole that will just fit the acorn, then fetch it and deposit it in their granary. Hundreds or thousands of acorns can be deposited in a single tree.

While the International Union of Conservation of Nature does not list acorn woodpeckers as endangered, trapping them or killing them is still a no-no.

That has led to some homeowners setting up nets outside their houses to prevent the woodpeckers from landing in the first place. A new hole getting drilled right outside the bedroom window at 6 a.m. is not exactly a welcome sound.

... continued on page D4



Lynn Molloy

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Lamorinda Home Sales recorded

City	Last reported:	LOWEST AMOUNT:	HIGHEST AMOUNT:
LAFAYETTE	19	\$850,000	\$3,900,000
MORAGA	10	\$263,000	\$1,540,000
ORINDA	10	\$909,000	\$2,475,000

Home sales are compiled by Cal REsource, an Oakland real estate information company. Sale prices are computed from the county transfer tax information shown on the deeds that record at close of escrow and are published five to eight weeks after such recording. This information is obtained from public county records and is provided to us by California REsource. Neither Cal REsource nor this publication are liable for errors or omissions.

LAFAYETTE

- 3361 Betty Lane, \$960,000, 3 Bdrms, 1154 SqFt, 1954 YrBlt, 6-4-15;
Previous Sale: \$450,000, 04-02-12
- 1207 Camino Vallecito, \$1,795,000, 6 Bdrms, 4185 SqFt, 1979 YrBlt, 5-26-15;
Previous Sale: \$1,527,500, 12-19-13
- 1195 Glen Road, \$1,600,000, 6 Bdrms, 2698 SqFt, 1957 YrBlt, 6-1-15
- 3340 Johnson Road, \$850,000, 2 Bdrms, 1264 SqFt, 1936 YrBlt, 6-5-15
- 3394 Las Huertas Road, \$2,200,000, 4 Bdrms, 3769 SqFt, 2006 YrBlt, 6-3-15
- 7 Maloyan Lane, \$1,975,000, 4 Bdrms, 3272 SqFt, 1988 YrBlt, 5-26-15;
Previous Sale: \$1,140,000, 08-29-03
- 8 Middle Road, \$1,610,000, 4 Bdrms, 2948 SqFt, 1951 YrBlt, 6-3-15;
Previous Sale: \$1,445,000, 07-28-10
- 3474 Moraga Boulevard, \$910,000, 3 Bdrms, 1686 SqFt, 2011 YrBlt, 6-2-15;
Previous Sale: \$135,000, 01-26-96
- 1186 Pleasant Hill Circle, \$1,700,000, 3 Bdrms, 2428 SqFt, 1951 YrBlt, 6-2-15;
Previous Sale: \$62,000, 08-09-84
- 1291 Quandt Court, \$1,200,000, 3 Bdrms, 1656 SqFt, 1957 YrBlt, 6-2-15;
Previous Sale: \$600,000, 09-04-02
- 2095 Reliez Valley Road, \$1,209,000, 3 Bdrms, 2230 SqFt, 1986 YrBlt, 6-2-15;
Previous Sale: \$769,000, 06-26-03
- 33 Sanford Lane, \$2,903,000, 4 Bdrms, 3892 SqFt, 2006 YrBlt, 5-22-15;
Previous Sale: \$2,903,000, 05-22-15
- 1036 Sunnybrook Drive, \$1,285,000, 2 Bdrms, 2102 SqFt, 1941 YrBlt, 6-5-15;
Previous Sale: \$640,500, 09-17-10
- 860 Tanglewood Drive, \$1,500,000, 4 Bdrms, 3761 SqFt, 1969 YrBlt, 6-5-15
- 1258 Upper Happy Valley Road, \$3,900,000, 3 Bdrms, 4411 SqFt, 1964 YrBlt, 6-2-15;
Previous Sale: \$1,365,000, 08-23-96
- 117 Wilderness Lane, \$3,300,000, 5 Bdrms, 4397 SqFt, 1964 YrBlt, 6-5-15;
Previous Sale: \$4,195,000, 04-29-15
- 1009 Windsor Drive, \$1,250,000, 4 Bdrms, 2417 SqFt, 1960 YrBlt, 6-5-15;
Previous Sale: \$1,176,000, 06-20-14
- 3275 Withers Avenue, \$1,260,000, 4 Bdrms, 2680 SqFt, 1951 YrBlt, 6-5-15;
Previous Sale: \$525,000, 08-06-99
- 3348 Victoria Avenue, \$1,850,000, 3 Bdrms, 2525 SqFt, 1941 YrBlt, 5-22-15;
Previous Sale: \$825,000, 03-22-02

MORAGA

- 1155 Alta Mesa Drive, \$1,200,000, 4 Bdrms, 2785 SqFt, 1974 YrBlt, 5-26-15
- 1905 Ascot Drive, \$720,000, 2 Bdrms, 1379 SqFt, 1973 YrBlt, 5-22-15;
Previous Sale: \$330,000, 08-01-00
- 126 Ascot Court #D, \$295,000, 1 Bdrms, 858 SqFt, 1970 YrBlt, 6-4-15;
Previous Sale: \$308,000, 08-03-07
- 2087 Ascot Drive #125, \$263,000, 1 Bdrms, 761 SqFt, 1971 YrBlt, 6-3-15;
Previous Sale: \$159,500, 02-03-11
- 50 Corte Maria, \$1,500,000, 4 Bdrms, 3243 SqFt, 2001 YrBlt, 5-22-15;
Previous Sale: \$975,000, 10-17-01

... continued on page D6

KPG SELLER REPRESENTATION

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496 Silverado Drive,
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- Offered at \$1,295,000

1438 Sunnybrook Road,
Alamo



- 2401± sq. ft., .28± acre lot
- Offered at \$1,275,000

623 Lucas Drive,
Lafayette



- 5BR/3BA, 3450± sq. ft.
- Offered at \$2,150,000 | 2 Offers

3160 Somerset Place,
Lafayette



- 2700± sq. ft., .5± acre
- Offered at \$1,495,000 | 4 Offers

616 Lancaster Drive,
Lafayette



- 4BR/2BA, 2300± sq. ft.
- Offered at \$1,295,000 | 3 Offers

3139 Sweetbrier Drive,
Lafayette



- 4BR/2BA, 1700± sq. ft.
- Offered at \$919,000 | 4 Offers

3184 Lucas Drive,
Lafayette



- 3BR/3BA, 2200± sq. ft.
- Offered at \$989,000 | 4 Offers

3538 Silver Springs Road,
Lafayette



- Stunning remodel on .5± acre
- 5BR/4BA, 3536± sq. ft. | 2 Offers

1036 Sunnybrook Drive,
Lafayette



- 2401± sq. ft., .28± acre lot
- Offered at \$1,275,000 | 4 Offers

2435 Burlington Street,
Oakland



- Spanish style 2BR/1.5BA cottage
- Offered at \$749,000

1186 Pleasant Hill Circle,
Lafayette



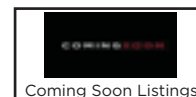
- 4BR/3.5BA, 2700± sq. ft.
- Offered at \$1,695,000 | 5 Offers

761 Tofflemire Drive,
Lafayette



- Ranch style home on 1.55± acre
- Offered at \$1,549,000 | 2 Offers

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Acorn Woodpeckers Are Beauties

... continued from page D1



Some houses, such as this one in Orinda, sport bird nets to keep the woodpeckers away from the siding.
Photos Chris Lavin

“Plus they cause hundreds of dollars in damage,” said one Orinda homeowner.

Here are some common deterrents to woodpecker visitations, besides nets:

- If you have a dark-colored house, paint it a lighter color. Easier said than done. Plus, expensive.
- Hang nets that will deter the birds from getting to your wood siding in the first place. This should be done especially if you have aluminum siding and the birds are convinced it's wood. (More annoying in the morning.)
- Put a plastic owl on your house that has paper wings that will flutter in the wind.
- If you are technologically enabled, set up a sound system with woodpecker distress calls, and include the call of a hawk. An enterprising young person in the Lamorinda area who does not like to be awakened by woodpeckers might consider putting this on YouTube for distribution to the general public and the Overall General Good, plus for adding to a college application.

If all else fails, one may set up a camera, a suet bag or feeder, snap away at the clown-like birds that live everywhere in this area ... and put up “Most Wanted” posters.



Architect George Kinnell demonstrates how to prevent acorn woodpeckers from burrowing into your house, especially when it's been freshly painted.

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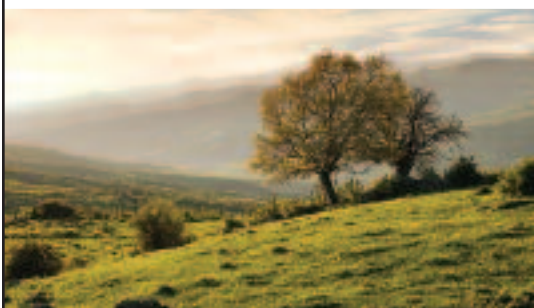


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CalBRE01788548

Lamorinda Home Sales recorded

...continued from Page D2

MORAGA ... continued

29 Corte Yolanda, \$1,163,000, 4 Bdrms, 2066 SqFt, 1967 YrBlt, 6-2-15
127 Longfield Place, \$1,540,000, 4 Bdrms, 2436 SqFt, 1967 YrBlt, 5-22-15;
Previous Sale: \$168,000, 12-28-77
149 Miramonte Drive, \$555,000, 2 Bdrms, 1525 SqFt, 1965 YrBlt, 6-1-15
153 Miramonte Drive, \$713,000, 2 Bdrms, 1525 SqFt, 1966 YrBlt, 6-8-15;
Previous Sale: \$555,000, 04-19-07
12 Via Barcelona, \$879,000, 3 Bdrms, 2109 SqFt, 1987 YrBlt, 5-22-15;
Previous Sale: \$660,000, 07-22-10

ORINDA

98 Barbara Road, \$1,375,000, 4 Bdrms, 2563 SqFt, 1994 YrBlt, 6-3-15;
Previous Sale: \$485,000, 10-15-97
30 Charles Hill Circle, \$1,000,000, 4 Bdrms, 2077 SqFt, 1952 YrBlt, 6-5-15;
Previous Sale: \$50,500, 08-21-74
15 Lavenida Drive, \$1,305,500, 3 Bdrms, 2277 SqFt, 1954 YrBlt, 6-5-15
16 Lind Court, \$909,000, 3 Bdrms, 1411 SqFt, 1955 YrBlt, 6-8-15
129 Lombardy Lane, \$2,045,000, 4 Bdrms, 2550 SqFt, 1948 YrBlt, 6-8-15
649 Miner Road, \$1,500,000, 4 Bdrms, 3114 SqFt, 1977 YrBlt, 5-22-15;
Previous Sale: \$820,000, 05-06-11
9 Sally Ann Road, \$950,000, 4 Bdrms, 2527 SqFt, 1950 YrBlt, 6-3-15
116 Stein Way, \$1,255,000, 5 Bdrms, 3113 SqFt, 1965 YrBlt, 6-3-15;
Previous Sale: \$337,500, 12-29-88
611 Tahos Road, \$1,245,000, 4 Bdrms, 2532 SqFt, 1964 YrBlt, 6-5-15;
Previous Sale: \$385,000, 09-06-89
31 Via Hermosa, \$2,475,000, 2 Bdrms, 1642 SqFt, 1936 YrBlt, 6-5-15;
Previous Sale: \$690,000, 04-05-13



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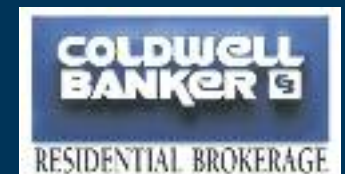
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The Real Estate Quarter in Review

By Conrad Bassett, CRP, GMS-T

The second quarter of 2015 continued with an increase in activity on the residential side of Lamorinda real estate with supply continuing to be low, pending sales down slightly, and closings up with the average sales price higher in Lafayette, Moraga and Orinda – much higher than the same period a year ago.

Per Contra Costa Association of Realtors statistics reported from April 1 through June 30, 128 single-family homes closed in Lafayette versus 100 in the same period one year ago. Sales prices ranged from \$680,000 to \$7.2 million, averaging 19 days on market, similar to the same quarter in 2014 and 2013. The average sales price was \$1,670,209, a significant increase from the year ago quarter of \$1,396,941. Previous second quarter averages were \$1,226,216 in 2013 and \$1,053,173 in 2012.

In Moraga there were 40 single-family closings, about the same as the 43 in 2Q2014 and up from 36 in 2Q2013. Prices ranged from \$925,000 to \$2,572,025. The average sale price was \$1,368,425, a slight increase from the \$1,301,236 for the same period a year ago, and up from \$1,144,668 in 2013 and \$983,785 in 2012. The average marketing time was 13 days, similar to the same period in 2014 and 2013.

There were 86 single-family closings in Orinda. Sales prices ranged from \$624,000 to \$3.738 million with an average price of \$1,532,761, up from the same period in 2014 of \$1,434,930 and \$1,282,236 in 2013. It took an average of just 19 days on the market to sell.

In the quarter ending June 30, on an average price per square foot basis, Lafayette detached single-family homes sold at \$594 per square foot, versus \$537 per square foot in 2Q2014 and \$495 per square foot in 2Q2013. Moraga homes sold for \$538 and Orinda for \$558. In 2014, in the same calendar quarter, these amounts were \$506 and \$530, respectively.

In Lafayette, the average sales price was 103.9 percent of the final asking price. In Moraga it was 104.5 percent and in Orinda it was 105.1 percent.

In the condominium/town home category, Lafayette had four closings between \$585,000 and \$701,000, Moraga had 20 ranging from \$260,000 to \$879,000 and Orinda had two listed at \$466,000 and \$875,000.

As of July 10, there were 85 homes under contract per the MLS in the three communities combined with asking prices of \$239,000 to \$6.5 million. A year ago there were 119 pending home sales. There is only one “Potential Short Sale” that is currently pending and subject to lender approval, compared to three at this same time in 2014, nine in 2013, and 29 in 2012!

This is due to property values continuing to increase versus three years ago, with many of those sellers who no longer “under water” or who have refinanced their homes and are no longer at the point of foreclosure.

Inventory, however, remains low, but it has finally started to increase after several quarters of decline. There are 110 properties on the market in the three communities combined compared to 126 a year ago. This is quite a change from July 2011 when the inventory was at 219 homes.

There are “only” 49 properties on the market in Lafayette – similar to the 47 at this same time a year ago. Asking prices in Lafayette currently range from \$780,000 to \$4.25 million. In Moraga, buyers have their choice of only 21 homes or condominiums listed between \$299,000 and \$3.65 million, versus 17 a year ago, and there are only 40 in Orinda, way down from the 62 on the market at the same time a year ago. The list prices range from \$875,000 to \$7 million.

There is only one bank-owned or short sale currently in the MLS available in any of the three communities.

At the high end, 42 homes sold above \$2 million in the three communities combined. A year ago there were 32 and in 2013, a total of 12 sales in the \$2 million-plus range closed in the second quarter. There are 35 currently available above this amount in the three communities combined.

Interest rates continue to be at very attractive levels and many corporations have expanded their businesses and continue to relocate families both into and out of the area.

Lastly, it is important to look at what homes are selling for versus their list prices. Often homes come on the market at unrealistic prices, and they do not sell, but in the second quarter of this year many homes have had multiple offers and have sold at or above the list price.

We are also seeing many buyers having to make offers without the traditional contingencies of obtaining financing or having a home appraised or even having the home inspected. Many sellers are now opting to obtain pre-sale inspections in order to understand the condition of their homes and to also prevent a buyer from trying to renegotiate a lower price or repairs.

Of the 128 single-family sales that closed in Lafayette in the second quarter of 2015, 95 sold at or above the list price. All four of the non single-family homes in Lafayette sold at or above the asking price.

In Moraga, 31 of the 40 sales were at or above the asking price and in Orinda, 59 of the 86 sold at or above the final listing price.

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51 San Pablo Court, Moraga

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Jason Evans

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Jason.evans@camoves.com
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Digging Deep-Gardening with Cynthia Brian

Bug Out!

By Cynthia Brian

“Imagination is everything. It is the preview of life’s coming attractions.” ~ Albert Einstein

Df 60 is the new 40, golden is the new green, and driving a dirty car is the sign of being environmentally correct, it’s time to talk about what’s really bugging us. With the drought, many homeowners are experiencing an invasion of uninvited insects and varmints hungry to eat what’s left of our crops while some are dining on us as main courses.

Although many of the insects such as lady beetles, ground beetles, lacewings, praying mantis, and predatory nematodes that visit our gardens are beneficial biologicals, the ones that we want to bug out are the bugs (arachnids, arthropods, and other entomological species) that bother, interfere, destroy and traumatize.

ANTS

Ants in the garden are actually dining on the sweet honeydew made by mealybugs and aphids. Although some species of ants feed on soft plant tissue or seeds, you’ll usually find ants crawling up and down plants where they are herding colonies of aphids or mealybugs. If you grow artichokes, you’ve probably witnessed ants infesting the chokes. Armies of ants on the kitchen counter in summer are scream-able. Make a tea of cayenne pepper, lemon rind, mint, rosemary and clove. Spray on the soil ... and in your kitchen.

FRUIT FLIES

Stone fruit like apricots, peaches, plums, prunes and nectarines are ripe and ready right now. Whether you buy them at the farmers’ market or grow them in your backyard, if left in the fruit bowl, fruit flies will appear. The eggs could be in the fruit, or the flies could be flying in through an open window or door. Fruit flies are just a nuisance doing little harm except being annoying. Keep your compost bucket outside and covered during the summer. If they are bothering you indoors, add vinegar, wine, and a piece of any fruit to a bowl. Cover tightly with foil. Punch holes in the foil and watch them drown!

TICKS

Ticks are not going to damage your garden, but they could cost you a trip to the emergency room or hospital. Ticks attach themselves to the fur and feathers of animals and birds. Often they reside on grasses or brush and hop onto a warm-blooded creature where dinner awaits. As gardeners, hikers or animal lovers, ticks are a common problem. Wearing long

sleeves, removing clothing, and washing hair after being outdoors may help in the prevention of tick bites. However, because of the possibility of Lyme disease or a severe allergic reaction, it’s best to see a medical professional immediately when bit. If you remove the tick, make sure to save it in a jar for identification.

MOSQUITOES

Buzzing bloodsuckers, these tiny vampires wreak havoc on humans. They are considered “public enemy number one” in the fight against global infectious diseases. Interestingly, only the female has the mouthparts to suck our blood, homing in on exhaled carbon dioxide, certain body odors, heat and movement. The itchiness you feel after a bite is an allergic reaction to the saliva. The only good news about these vectors is that birds, frogs, bats, turtles and dragonflies eat them in the garden. Empty any standing water as they breed rapidly, slather on the DEET, and when outdoors, plug in a large fan to blow them away. Planting citronella on the patio may help.

APHIDS

These true bugs puncture plant tissue and suck the juice, attacking our peppers, tomatoes, cucumbers, carrots and many flowering plants. They prefer to be upwind in a garden and often are herded by ants. Overfeeding with nitrogen encourages aphid infestation as they eat new growth. Aphids multiply rapidly. Spray with water mixed with dishwashing detergent and use row covers on crops.

EARWIGS

It’s a myth that the name was derived because these pinchers drilled into the ears of sleeping humans, burrowing into their brains. They are omnivores who tunnel into fruit and bulbs as well as dine on lettuce, potatoes, roses, zinnias, artichokes, corn and many other plants. Make traps out of small cardboard boxes baited with a piece of meat and oil. They’ll hide at night and you’ll get them in the morning. Despite nibbling on plants, they do help gardeners by devouring other predatory insects.

With the California drought a reality, expect more intruders into your landscape pillaging, biting and sucking. Get creative with natural tonics and use your imagination to keep the stinging, nibbling and gnawing at bay. Enjoy the coming attractions of summer!

Happy Gardening and Happy Growing!



Prunes and apricots along with herbs make a great summer gift.

Photos Cynthia Brian



Vetch adds natural nitrogen to the soil without overdoing while tangling with the euphorbia.



Red dahlia

Cynthia Brian's Mid-Month Tips for July

- **PERUSE** bulb catalogues for the varieties of tulips and daffodils that you'll want to buy this fall for November through January planting.
- **PLANT** succulents and cactus for the most effective waterless garden.
- **DISCOVER** the benefits of Miniclover® as a lawn alternative. I have found that Miniclover® stays green when the rest of my lawn is "golden" and it is very low maintenance. Although I mow, it probably would be fine without mowing. Check out www.outsidepride.com for more information.
- **SPEND** a morning at your local farmers' market and load up on veggies and fruits that you are not growing in your garden.
- **HARVEST** beans, eggplants, greens and peppers before they reach their full size. Smaller vegetables are tender and tasty.
- **BEAUTIFY** your landscape with pavers or crushed granite paths. Plant creeping thyme between the stones.



Succulents and cactus create artistic and imaginative drought-resistant landscapes.



Cynthia Brian in the Shasta Daisies

©2015

Cynthia Brian

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Who doesn't hear the words "summer" and "bugs" and think of a neat line of ants getting ready to trespass on plaid blanket supporting a picnic basket full of delicacies. But pests can be a serious summer problem, and can threaten more than your turkey sandwich and potato salad. Left unchecked, these summer invaders can quickly turn your tree and landscape assets into liabilities. That's why insect and disease management is such an important part of summer tree care. A keen eye is essential, and proactive monitoring goes a long way towards early detection.

So don't wait until it's too late, have a complete inspection by a Certified Arborist at Advance Tree Service and Landscaping.

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New Listing

134 El Toyonal Charming one level, 3 bed/2 bath, easy open living floor plan, very light+bright exposure on ideal knoll. Exceptional in/outside living, nature at your doorstep. Truly lovely native landscaping.

\$895,000

ORINDA



New Listing

216 Crestview Drive Charming 2825sf home on 1.4 serene acres. 3bd/2ba main house level-out to yard + 2-story guest house/ art studio w/ 1ba & kitchen. Needs some TLC. Tons of potential!

\$1,100,000

ORINDA



20 Austin Court Beautiful 2 story, 2529 sf home situated on cul de sac on private 1.45 ac. lot w/pool, spa & extensive patios, master retreat, office, gourmet kitchen, spacious living room & formal dining room.

\$1,350,000

ORINDA



2 Cedar Lane Private setting, Inviting Pool, Expanded Master Suite + 3 bedrooms, 2.5 baths, playroom/ art studio & detached workshop. Lots of outdoor living space.

\$1,350,000

ORINDA



New Listing

39 Zander Drive Fabulous 2930sf one level custom home. Incredible 2+ac knoll, unobstructed views of valley & Mt. Diablo. Beautifully maintained w/sunflooded rooms. Hardwood floors throughout.

\$1,639,000

ORINDA



31 Crestview Drive Enjoy incredible views from this remodeled & renovated contemp. 5bd/3+ba, 3275sf home on .49ac lot. Hdwd flrs, Marvin windows, large fam rm & master. Drought tolerant gardens. Top schools.

\$1,795,000

ORINDA



New Price

73 Scenic Drive Secluded Glorietta custom w/high ceilings, 2 spacious fam rms, 3 of 5 bdrms are ensuite, 6 baths. Level lawns, new decks, views, chef's kitchen, master retreat w/private deck. 3 car garage.

\$2,195,000

ORINDA



74 Van Tassel Lane Exceptional Custom Single Story Contemporary w/ open floor plan perfect for families/ entertaining built in 2006 in The Heart of Sleepy Hollow. Apx. 4000sf, 4bed+office, 3.5bath on .48ac.

\$2,895,000

ORINDA



25 Rustic Way Impressive property w/ top-of-the-hill privacy, fab. views & custom built 6bd/5.5ba home of apx. 8514sf on 8.14 acres. Racquetball court, pool w/ unique water-slide, tennis court. Mins to top-rated schools.

\$3,695,000

MORAGA



New Listing

8 Berkshire Street Stunning remodeled single level, Plan 2 in Moraga Country Club. Chef's kitchen, spa-like master bath. Beautiful setting. Former MCC Home Tour Home.

\$885,000

LAFAYETTE



New Listing

3638 Bickerstaff Road Totally adorable cottage-styled 2 bed home. Walk to town, great schools, restaurants & BART! Hardwood floors, granite kitchen & big level lot perfect for expansion/ pool/ gardens!

\$848,000

LAFAYETTE



New Listing

3108 Del Oceano Charming ranch home w/hdwd flrs, tons of natural light & private setting. Updated eat-in kit adj. to FR. Level yard with patio, lawn, play areas, raised garden beds & RV parking if needed.

\$900,000

LAFAYETTE



New Listing

14 White Oak Drive Dramatic 2900+sf mid century contemporary nestled among majestic oaks on fabulous level 1/2 acre. Soaring ceilings, spacious kitchen, in-law apartment. Private swim/ tennis club.

\$1,250,000

LAFAYETTE



New Price

4038 Happy Valley Road Premium Happy Valley loc, 2+ac gated estate. Stylish 3bd + 2 Offices, soaring ceilings, walls of glass, spectacular views from every room. Beautiful updates, Resort pool/spa, great schools.

\$2,295,000

LAFAYETTE



3921 Happy Valley Road Fabulous gated estate in coveted Happy Valley. Custom home w/beautiful landscpng, pool w/waterfall, patios & decks. Hdwd & marble floors. Chef's Kit/Fam. room. Au pair set-up. Walk to HV School. Views!

\$2,595,000

WALNUT CREEK



New Price

172 Rudgear Drive Amazing priv. setting in desirable South W.C. w/spectacular views of Mt Diablo & Shell Ridge. Open Kit/Fam rm combo, Liv rm w/vaulted ceilings, formal dining & Bonus 2nd family room!

\$1,399,000



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