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Into the Fall: Poker Night and Art Faire Planned at the Hacienda

By Sophie Braccini

Lamorinda nonprofit groups are always on the lookout for unique event ideas that connect with the community. On Oct. 2, the Hacienda de las Flores will turn into an upper class casino for a night, men and women invited to compete in rounds of poker for the "Best player in Lamorinda" crown at the first annual Lamorinda Texas Hold 'Em Tournament. And starting Dec. 4, a three-day artisans' gift faire will be held at the Hacienda; organizers are currently calling for local artisans to join in.

John Burgess has always loved poker, but he does not have a regular group established in Lamorinda. Since he is a board member of the Hacienda Foundation, he suggested organizing a poker night. "We will play Texas Hold 'Em style," he says – a poker variation where each player at a table gets two cards and five community cards are placed consecutively face up on the table. "I don't think that there is (a similar) competition in the area and this is a fun variation of the game." He says that professional dealers will handle each table, and that people can come one hour ahead of time to learn the basics. "We want everyone to have fun," he says.

For \$50 players will get 1,000 chips; if they lose them, they can purchase additional ones for \$20. "Food and drinks will be available for pur-

chase," adds Burgess. "It is an adult only night." The game will continue late into the night, and the winner will pocket \$500 to go with the champion title. "We are limiting the number to 100 players," explains Burgess. The tickets can be purchased online on the foundation's website, haciendafoundation.org, or at the Hacienda de las Flores, 2100 Donald Dr. in Moraga.

At the beginning of December, the first full-blown artisans faire will be held at the Hacienda. The organizers are seeking local talent to complement those already enrolled. "We will close the registration at the end of September," says Jackie Smith, one of the two organizers. Stemming from Smith's Tarabrook Holiday Boutique in Orinda and Hollie Lucas-Alcalay's herb business, Hollie's Homegrown in Moraga, the three-day event aims at showcasing those Lamorinda artisans who specialize in one craft and produce limited quantities. "Those are very talented people, and the winter boutique is often the only place they will sell," says Smith, a jewelry maker, who was holding a similar though smaller event in her home for 13 years.

"The price point of the sold items ranges from \$5 to \$150 dollars, and we are inviting 60 artisans," says Lucas-Alcalay. Forty have already signed up. The categories include

handbags and accessories, toys, cards, artisanal food (packaged), home goods, decorations, clothing, jewelry and woodworking. "The items have to be handmade," emphasizes Lucas-Alcalay. "People who use recycled material are particularly encouraged to contact us." A Faire committee approves the items for quality and to ensure diversity. Tables can be rented for \$40 or \$80 and patrons will pay at one central point so vendors do not have to be there all the time. "That way, people can be at two events at the same time," says Smith, who knows how important that season is for most of these small operations. She adds that the Lafayette Holiday Boutique will be open the same weekend, but that both events will cross-promote each other.

Each artisan will receive the full amount of their sale, but in addition to renting a table, they are asked to donate an item for a fundraising raffle. "We will create great gift baskets and the proceeds will go to the Hacienda Foundation," explains Lucas-Alcalay, who is on the foundation's board. Interested artisans should email HaciendaHolidayFaire@gmail.com.

Although a comprehensive plan to retrofit and partially repurpose the historic building with private investors is on its way, the Hacienda Foundation continues to raise money for the

town's beautiful venue and community center. "We have been discussing this and we are completely supporting the town's plans," says Lucas-Alcalay, "but big plans like that take a lot of

time, and meanwhile the facility needs to be kept up, events need to be put on to attract people, and we are still looking into improvements such as better signage."



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