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Published October 7th, 2015

New Lawsuit Filed Against Moraga School District

By Sophie Braccini

Over the past three years, the Moraga School District has settled four lawsuits with women who claimed to have been abused by former Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School teacher Daniel Witters, who committed suicide at the end of 1996. A fifth claim was filed in September by a woman who alleged that she was abused by Witters over a two-year period. She had not only until recently acknowledged the abuse and indicated in the claim that as she contemplated leaving her child for the first time at a daycare facility, she was overcome with fear, anxiety and panic, and decided to confront her past. "We will respond to this as we did with the other (lawsuits)," said MSD superintendent Bruce Burns, adding that he cannot comment on pending litigation. He noted that the Moraga School District now has a child abuse prevention program, which is run in the three local school districts, and it trains staff, teachers, parents and students so the children are safe and protected. "We are advocating beyond the district," he added. "I have spoken about this issue to all the superintendents in Contra Costa County, Alameda County, California School Board Association." Some of the key concepts taught to children include presenting age appropriate material affirming that if something happens that makes them uncomfortable they have the right to be defended and it is never their fault. The program, called Speak Up - Be Safe, is managed by the Child Abuse Prevention Council.

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