

Building Bridges

Orinda resident participates in Bridges To Prosperity projects

By Sophie Braccini



The happy team in front of the finished bridge

Photos provided

Naya Olmer simply wants to be treated like one of the guys when she works on a construction site. When the 22-year-old Orinda resident signed up to build a bridge in Panama this summer, she knew what she was doing: she had already worked on a similar project in Rwanda, proving that she had the stamina as well as the desire to handle serious manual labor. The slender young woman got plenty of chances to prove herself again in the small Panama village of Los Canones while helping to build a new footbridge so children could get to school safely.

"I love to build things, I love to use tools," says Olmer, who thinks building a new bridge from scratch is one of the coolest projects she has done in her life. Besides working with her hands, what she also appre-

ciated was the long-lasting and significant impact this charitable venture has on an entire community.

The bridge in Rwanda serves 10,000 people, in a community that is separated by a river. "On one side of the river you have the hospital, the market, the school, access to main roads, and the other side is just farmland," she explains, noting that residents lived on both sides of the river. "During the dry season people can cross on foot, but during the wet season they can't. The situation was similar in Panama," says Olmer. "The main purpose of the bridge was for school children to access the school safely." The old bridge was made of tree trunks and branches.

On site, the team of 10 American volunteers – mostly male professional engineers, one intern from the non-

profit Bridges To Prosperity (BTP) and another young woman – worked with three local volunteers.

BTP constructed the concrete foundation ahead of time and the group Olmer was a part of had 12 days to build the suspension bridge. It is made of steel towers, steel cables going across the towers and steel suspender cables coming down from the towers to the decking, which is a steel base with a wooden top. Olmer worked all jobs, including on scaffolding where she loved the bird's-eye view of the site. By the end she worked on decking the bridge. "There is nothing in front of you, and you look down (at the river), and you think that you're literally bridging that river," she says, adding that the feeling of accomplishment was overwhelming. ... continued on page B3



The old bridge was made of branches from trees growing on both sides of the river.



The left bank team with Naya Olmer was the first to cross the bridge.

Life in LAMORINDA

Vino is not your typical restaurant. Our food is made only with the freshest and finest ingredients. We do not use any commercial sauces, hydrogenated oils or trans-fats. What we serve you is delicious, healthy food made with passion.

A few selections:

- Beet Salad:** fresh mint, tomato, golden raisins, goat cheese, herb vinaigrette....7
- 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 toast...19
- Roasted Scallops:** spinach, saliccia sugo19
- Roasted Wild Salmon:** white wine, capers, braised greens, and potato gratin...17
- Veal Scallopini:** mushrooms, garlic, marsala wine17

3531 Plaza Way, Lafayette, (925) 284-1330
Open for dinner Wed. – Sat. 5 - 8:30 p.m.

TOWN HALL THEATRE COMPANY
LAMORINDA'S PREMIER LIVE ENTERTAINMENT VENUE

THE MUSICAL COMEDY
WHERE YOU DECIDE THE ENDING

BOOK, MUSIC, AND LYRICS BY RUPERT HOLMES
DIRECTED BY JOEL ROSTER

OCTOBER 3-24

TOWN HALL THEATRE.COM
925.283.1557
3535 SCHOOL ST. LAFAYETTE, CA

LANCÔME

PARIS

Choose Your Moisturizer
RENERGIE LIFT MULT-ACTION NIGHT
Lifting and Firming Night Cream
BIENFAIT MULTI-VITAL NIGHT
High Potency Night Moisturizing Cream

Choose Your Lipcolor
COLOR DESIGN Lipcolor (2 shade choices)

Receive
ADVANCED GENIFIQUE
Youth Activating Concentrate
CRÈME RADIANCE Cleanser
DEFINICILS Mascara
BI-FACIL Eye Makeup Remover
Cosmetics Bag

FREE Gift with Purchase!

7- PIECE GIFT- YOURS WITH ANY
\$35 LANCOME PURCHASE (\$90.00 – 98.00 VALUE)

McCaulou's

Gift Dates:
Oct. 21 – Nov. 8

Lafayette
Plaza Center
(925) 283-3380

Montclair
6211 Medau Pl., Oakland
(510) 339-2210

Auburn
Next to SaveMart & CVS
(530) 885-0500

Offer good while supplies last. One gift per customer, please.