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A colorful male Hooded Merganser duck and three females head upwind in search of small fry at the golf course in Moraga.

Photo Chris Lavin

Fancy Hats Are For the Birds

Winter bird watching in Lamorinda

By Chris Lavin

It used to be, about 100 years ago, that the great egret in the Lamorinda area was targeted for shooting. Its plumage, especially in particular its wide-spreading tail that opens into a magnificent fan (in breeding season, which starts here soon) meant that hanging out at the area around the Moraga Creek and golf course, the Lafayette Reservoir, the San Pablo Reservoir in Orinda, and elsewhere, made for ripe plumage, and curtains for

the bird, which got shot and plucked. Fancy hats awaited as far off as New York.

"It turned out that it was almost an extinction," said Cindy Margulis, the executive director of the Golden Gate Audubon Society, about the birds' plight. "Their entire line could have died out."

Thanks in part to federal legislation that outlawed its slaughter,

the egret has survived, and is thriving now throughout Lamorinda. Its smaller cousin, the snowy egret, seems to be doing well, too, Margulis said. "Egrets are fascinating because they are designated as a migratory bird, but they don't always migrate," she said. "That's the case a lot around here." She said that global warming is keeping more birds around the area that would usually fly south for the winter.

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One-Year Reprieve for Rheem Theatre

By Sophie Braccini



Photo A. Scheck

Over the holidays a new Rheem Theatre drama unfolded. By mid-December Derek Zemrak and Leonard Pirkle, the present operators

of the business, thought the theater would close, but Zemrak exacted a final agreement on Christmas Eve, securing one more year for the historic theater. The property is still for sale, however, and the long-term survival of the theater is not secured. The new Moraga Community Foundation will step up in 2016 to support the local cultural asset.

Rumors began among local cinema lovers in the last weeks of December, with closure dates of the Rheem Theatre circulating within the community. "When Mahesh Puri proposed a new lease for just one year with unsustainable conditions for us, we decided we would have to close by January," said Zemrak. When he told the studios that the theater would close by the end of January, their response was that they would stop sup-

plying movies by Jan. 13. The community once again braced for the potential loss of the theater.

But Zemrak did not give up. He and Pirkle also manage the Orinda Theatre, and they run the California Independent Film Festival in both locations – as well as at the Castro in San Francisco. And they have invested a lot at the Rheem, adding new seats, three digital projectors, and the Classic Film Hall of Fame and Museum that includes Zemrak's lifelong collection of cinema memorabilia. They returned to the negotiating table.

"Mahesh Puri and I came to a 12-month agreement on Christmas Eve morning," said Zemrak. The theater has been on a month-to-month lease for the past 18 months, and Zemrak has been working with Puri to secure

a longer-term lease. "The Rheem Theatre will remain open through 2016. This 12-month extension will give the Moraga Community Foundation more time to develop a long-term plan for the Rheem Theatre. A great holiday gift for the Lamorinda area."

"Since last summer we were hoping that the operator would be able to sign a lease agreement and the Rheem Theatre could stay open while a long-term solution could be found," said Andy Scheck for the foundation. "The Moraga Community Foundation has finished the setup process and is waiting for the approval from the IRS on its nonprofit status. We are looking forward to working with the community and raising money that will help secure the future of the Rheem Theatre."



Public Meetings

City Council

Monday, Jan. 25, 7 p.m.
Lafayette Library & Learning Center,
Community Hall, 3491 Mt. Diablo Blvd.

Planning Commission

Tuesday, Jan. 19, 7 p.m.
Lafayette Library & Learning Center,
Community Hall, 3491 Mt. Diablo Blvd.

Design Review

Monday, Jan. 25, 7 p.m.
Lafayette Library & Learning Center,
Arts & Science Discovery Center,
3491 Mt. Diablo Blvd.

School Board Meetings

Acalanes Union High School District
Wednesday, Feb. 3, 7:30 p.m.
AUHSD Board Room
1212 Pleasant Hill Road, Lafayette
www.acalanes.k12.ca.us

Lafayette School District

Wednesday, Jan 13, 7 p.m.
Regular Board Meeting
District Office Board Room
3477 School St., Lafayette
www.lafsd.k12.ca.us

Check online for agendas, meeting notes and announcements

City of Lafayette:

www.ci.lafayette.ca.us
Phone: (925) 284-1968

Chamber of Commerce:

www.lafayettechamber.org



Lafayette Police Department Incident Summary Report Dec. 20 to Jan. 2

Alarms	70
911 Calls (includes hang-ups)	17
Noise Complaints	5
Traffic Stops	106
Suspicious Circumstances	16
Suspicious Subjects	21
Suspicious Vehicles	35
Abandoned Vehicle	
Marlene Dr/Carol Ln	
Assault/Deadly Weapon	
3500 block Mt Diablo Blvd	
Burglary, Auto	
Reported to police	
3200 block Marlene Dr (2)	
Battery, Sexual	
Las Trampas School	
Burglary, Residential	
1000 block 2nd St	
Civil Problem	
3600 block Mt Diablo Blvd	
Mt Diablo Blvd/Happy Valley Rd	
Safeway	
Defraud Innkeeper	
3500 block Mt Diablo Blvd	
Dispute, Verbal	
1000 block 2nd St	
3700 block Mt Diablo Blvd	
Post Office	
Disturbing the Peace	
1000 block 2nd St	
Fireworks	
Victoria Ave/Moraga Blvd	
Found Adult	
Mt Diablo Blvd/Village Center	
Harassment	
80 block Lafayette Cir (phone)	
10 block Wendy Ln (phone)	
Reported to police	
Health & Safety Violation	
Safeway	
Hit & Run	
Bickerstaff/Dewing Ave	
Mt Diablo Blvd/Moraga Rd (2)	
Trader Joe's	
Diablo Foods (2)	
Round Up	
Littering	
2900 block Rohrer Dr	
Missing Adult	
900 block Mt View D	
Police/Fire/EMS Response	
3500 block Mt Diablo Blvd	
1200 block Rose Ln	
Oak Hill Rd/Deer Hill Rd	
Brown Ave/Deer Hill Rd	
Public Nuisance	
600 block Lucas Dr	
Mt View/Crescent Dr	
3500 block Moraga Bl	
Dyer Dr/Hampton Rd	
Brook St/Dewing Ave	
Plymouth Rd/Quandt Rd	
3400 block Moraga Blvd	
Reliez Valley Rd/Almaden Ct	
3500 block Rossi St	

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Tweaking Signal Timing on Pleasant Hill Road

Will adjusting traffic lights reduce delays?

By Cathy Tyson

Looking to reduce overall travel time along the Pleasant Hill Road corridor, Lafayette lawmakers recently approved a three month, \$20,000 study to “enhance operations” on the northern portion of this busy thoroughfare. The study will look at existing conditions during the peak morning and afternoon commute timeframes and develop ways to improve the frustrating situation.

Analysis of peak hour car volumes, along with pedestrian and bicyclist counts will be made at five intersections along Pleasant Hill Road: at Deer Hill Road and Stanley Boulevard, at Springhill Road, at Reliez Valley Road, at Greenvalley Drive and at Rancho View Drive.

Delays, queue lengths, individual cycle length for traffic lights at each intersection, along with coordinating signal timing along Pleasant Hill Road to help alleviate congestion, will all be examined by consultant TJKM to find the best solution for optimal traffic signal timing that is specific to the time of day.

“Congestion on both Pleasant Hill Road and Deer Hill Road has gotten noticeably worse than it was even two or three years ago, and it’s not because of development in Lafayette, because we haven’t developed that much in the last couple years,” said Council Member Don Tatzin. “It’s really traffic coming in from other communities.” He suggested holding a workshop with the Circulation Commission at Springhill Elementary School and inviting the neighborhood to share their observations and feedback with the study consultants.

In addition to traffic coming from beyond the city limits, Acalanes High School and Springhill Elementary School have a combined total of over 1,800 students, as well as teachers and staff that add to the gridlock on a daily basis.

School start times will be part of the mix that consultants need to consider to figure out the best congestion solution, however both nearby campus start times are fairly close together. Learning begins for Period 1



Photo C. Tyson

at Acalanes promptly at 8 a.m., while just up the street at Springhill Elementary, kindergarteners in the early section start at 8:15 a.m. and students in first through fifth grade start at 8:30 a.m. ... continued on page A12

Custom Homes Take Step Forward in Burton Valley

Phase I permits approved on split votes, phase II review awaits

By Cathy Tyson

After three large homes received three split votes, Soldier Field Partners finally received approvals for Phase I hillside development permits in Burton Valley. This hurdle is not the final authorization, simply a green light on the siting and massing of the proposed custom homes. The

other five lots in the Lucas Ranch Estates subdivision are also clustered on the southern portion of the 88-acre parcel, two-thirds of which will remain open space. The Phase I permits for lots one, two and three have been approved; there has been no application for the remaining two parcels, lot five and lot eight. Of the eight home

plans, the six that have garnered Phase I approval will all still need to go through the Phase II review process.

The most controversial of the three proposed homes that were addressed at the Jan. 4 Planning Commission meeting is on lot four.

... continued on page A11



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Breaking Ground for the Diablo Vista Pumping Plant



Photo C. Tyson

Christmas Eve was the first day of work for crews from the East Bay Municipal Utility District who started construction of what will be the Diablo Vista Pumping Plant. Orange cones diverted traffic and a row of trees in front of Blodgett's Abbey Carpet were removed. Crews also began a process called "pot-holing" to find the location of utilities under the street. Drivers looking to park along the street should wear comfortable shoes, as parking is restricted on both sides of the street, and they may have a long walk to an available parking space.

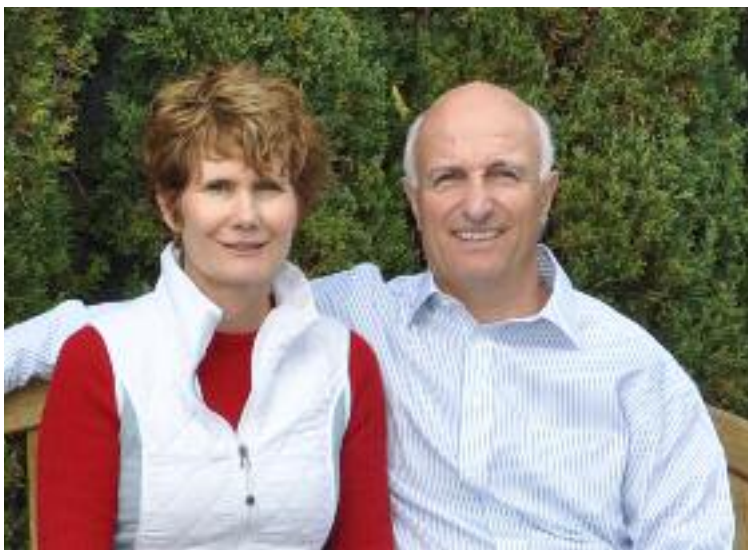
Pictured above are new drain pipes that will be installed underground that reroute the existing storm drain to round the corner into Mt. Diablo Court instead of cutting diagonally through the lot. This is the first

step of a long project, slated to be complete in the fall of 2017, which will ultimately replace the aging Diablo Vista Pumping Plant and associated pipes with a new facility at the corner of Mt. Diablo Boulevard and Mt. Diablo Court. Later on this year, motorists can expect more cones and traffic diversions as the hefty 30-inch diameter water pipeline is installed.

Despite the rain, the project has moved fairly smoothly so far and the utility has responded to neighbors' line of sight concerns. "The city, EBMUD and the contractor met and decided to remove the corner fencing. We also moved a portable sign warning eastbound drivers of cross traffic closer to the intersection," said EBMUD Community Affairs Representative Michelle Blackwell. — C. Tyson

Lamorinda Weekly Publishers Named Lafayette's Business Persons of the Year

By Lou Fancher



Wendy and Andy Scheck

Sometimes, the way to break out of the box in the business world is to stay contained within tight parameters.

Putting that counterintuitive practice into play, Andy and Wendy Scheck, owners of the locally-owned, independent Lamorinda Weekly newspaper, are the Lafayette Chamber of Commerce's 2016 Business Persons of the Year. A dinner Jan. 29 at the Lafayette Park Hotel and Spa will honor their contributions and include a State of the City address by Mayor Mark Mitchell and the introduction of the 2016 Chamber Board of Directors.

Keeping a tight watch on expansion, never sacrificing quality for profit, and an unflinching dedication to core staff have been the Schecks' continued goal, and print — on old-fashioned paper — remains their primary objective.

Lafayette City Manager Steve Falk recalls how virtually no news was published about the bustling city during the year before the weekly launched in March 2007, as more media outlets shifted to the Internet. He wondered how an un-informed citizenship could behave responsibly. "America's founders understood this; that's why they added the first constitutional amendment guaranteeing a free press," Falk writes in an email. "For there to be good government, it is critical that every resident have access to trustworthy news."

But powering social change, performing the role of independent watchdog, uncovering corruption and inspiring the public with uplifting stories demands more than just freedom, newsprint or an open

mouth. Discernment, honesty, investigation and reflection — and compassion, a characteristic not often used in conjunction with the press — lend credibility and spark loyalty. "They say the darkest hour is right before the dawn, and the Schecks arrived at just the right time to fill the local news void left by the Internet revolution," Falk says. "Lafayette and all of Lamorinda is better off as a result."

Chamber Executive Director Jay Lifson says the Schecks have been nominated for the award numerous times and he told them to let people know their news. "There are a lot of people who really appreciate what they do," he says.

Despite some hesitation — even resistance — to "tooting their own horn" in their paper, the Schecks are justifiably proud to be planning their 10th anniversary year coming in 2017. They credit their success to a business model based on their original concept and principles. And without longtime contributors — former editor Lee Borrowman, current editor Jennifer Wake, senior staff writers Cathy Tyson and Sophie Braccini and others — the Schecks say the Lamorinda Weekly would not have achieved their final goal: a 100 percent focus on editorial content.

Although it pains her to do so because she is the paper's primary sales force, Wendy says they occasionally turn advertisers down. "We were going to expand last year. We had a lot of advertising and the pages were getting full. We started to do a second press run, add more sections, create more content.

... continued on page A12

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Moraga Home Price Comparison Between 2014 & 2015

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	2014	2015	2014	2015	2014	2015
Total Homes Sold	29	30	53	46	47	43
Avg. Days on Market	26	16	21	17	14	18
Sold Over Asking Price	16	16	28	33	32	24
Sold Under Asking Price	6	8	15	9	12	17
Sold at Asking Price	7	6	10	4	3	2
Avg. Sales Price	\$892,000	\$1,032,940	\$1,166,000	\$1,243,187	\$1,488,000	\$1,601,111
Avg. Sales Price Per Sq. Ft.	\$538	\$575	\$517	\$525	\$441	\$498

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Moraga

Public Meetings

Town Council

Wednesday, Jan. 13, 7 p.m.
Wednesday, Jan. 27, 7 p.m.
Council Chambers and Community Meeting Room, 335 Rheem Blvd.

Planning Commission

Monday, Feb. 1, 7 p.m.
Council Chambers and Community Meeting Room, 335 Rheem Blvd.

Design Review

Monday, Jan. 25, 7 p.m.
Council Chambers and Community Meeting Room, 335 Rheem Blvd.

School Board Meeting

Moraga School District
Tuesday, Feb. 9, 7 p.m.
Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School Auditorium
1010 Camino Pablo, Moraga
www.moraga.k12.ca.us
See also AUHSD meeting page A2

Check online for agendas, meeting notes and announcements

Town of Moraga:

www.moraga.ca.us
Phone: (925) 888-7022

Chamber of Commerce:

www.moragachamber.org

Moraga Citizens' Network:

www.moragacitizensnetwork.org



Moraga Police Department

Big identity theft 1/04/16 An unknown suspect accessed an Arroyo Drive resident's information and was able to obtain approximately \$40,000 in services before the fraudulent credit card use was discovered. The suspect attempted to open three additional credit card accounts with the homeowner's information. No idea how the bad guy got the personal information to begin with.

Mail opened 1/04/16 A Country Club Drive resident told police that her mail appeared to have been tampered with. Envelopes looked like they had been opened; she informed the postal service but opened envelopes continue to arrive. Cops wisely suggested that a locking mailbox would help address the problem.


Not so happy New Year 1/01/16 An intoxicated adult was reported missing by his friends from an Eileen Court residence at 3:30 a.m. They were concerned because he couldn't be reached by his cell phone. The subject was located nearly half a mile away by friends who were searching the area for him. Paramedics responded to check on his injuries sustained in a fall and exposure to below freezing temperatures for over an hour while only wearing a T-shirt and jeans. The fellow declined further treatment and was released to his pals.

Bathroom New Year drama 12/31/15 Moraga officers responded at 10:30 p.m. to the ladies' restroom at Moraga's major grocery store to someone who was causing a disturbance. The subject was found to be under the influence of alcohol and on probation. She was arrested and transported to the Martinez Detention Facility.


DUI 12/29/15 Just shy of 2 a.m., a silver Mercedes was pulled over on Camino Ricardo for a speed violation. Cops noticed signs of driver intoxication, and had the fellow do a field sobriety test, and a breathalyzer test that showed a 0.11 blood alcohol level - slightly above the legal limit of 0.08. The driver was arrested.

Identity theft 12/24/15 Fraud in progress was reported at a Moraga Way store. Police dispatch was advised that a female suspect was attempting to use a fraudulent credit card to buy items from the merchant.

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A New Era for the Rheem Shopping Center?

By Sophie Braccini



Jay Kerner, president and CEO of U.S. Realty Partners. Photo provided

Heading the wishes of Moraga residents demanding to see the evolution of the Rheem area, the new owners of the Rheem Shopping Center have vowed to help bring the center into the 21st century.

"We buy anchored shopping centers that are well located in nice communities, and that have potential for improvement," says Jay Kerner, president and CEO of U.S. Realty Partners. In December, the privately held real estate investment company acquired the Kimco portion of the center, which stretches from CVS to CAPA and includes most of the center, with the exception of Home Goods to the south and the property around the movie theater, including Ristorante Amoroma to the west. "The Rheem Center is exactly what we are looking for, it is a well located property in an affluent community. The center has room for improvement and we plan to make it better over time."

The Rheem Shopping Center was one of hundreds owned by giant

Kimco; it is now one in 10 for the new owner.

Kerner says that he is aware of the challenges and questions that surround Rheem and that they are not unique to Moraga. "I have seen the same dynamics at play in Southern California where I live," he says, "shopping centers that aged, but that can be updated to become very appealing again." He understands some of the dynamics at play in Moraga where the younger population wants to see change and more upscale retail coming in, while more senior residents are happy to see things stay the same. "I heard of the discussions that took place when the Dollar Tree came to Moraga," adds Kerner.

At this time, he and Tina Colacino, with whom the strategy is designed, plan to get involved in the town, and meet with officials and stakeholder groups to get a feel of what is needed, desired and feasible. "Our first step is to meet the powers in the community and get a sense on how we fit in," says Kerner, "then we will plan accordingly." He adds that his firm wants to have a positive impact in Moraga, understanding the needs and the wants of residents, and trying to find an equilibrium that makes sense. "Once we've come up with a plan, we will study how to get the right support to get improvement," he adds.

Building on his 30 years of experience with shopping centers, Kerner believes that a mix of chain stores and original retail is the right combination for a shopping center. "Chains are needed for the daily needs," he says, "plus local retail such as restaurants

or specialty stores for particular services. A balance of the two is needed." For the day-to-day property management operations, Kerner works with

JG Management Co. The local manager in Northern California is Yvette Deguero, who can be reached at (916) 342-7867.

Moraga Business and Community Symposium Jan. 19

CEO Jay Kerner one of four panelists to discuss business trends and influences

The four distinguished panelists, including Jay Kerner, the president and CEO of U.S. Realty Partners, will be examining various trends and influences on the Moraga business community and the challenges and opportunities for business in the town at a free business and community symposium, "Challenges and Opportunities in Moraga's Cul-de-sac Community," at 6:30 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 19 at the Saint Mary's College Soda Center. Panelists will discuss everything from demographic challenges in a small but affluent town, the influences of pro-growth and no-growth factions in the area, the current state of the business community, and future plans for the retail core of the town's shopping centers.

"Our chamber felt it would be of great value to bring together some of the key stakeholders in our local community and examine the issues related to our current business environment and prospects for future growth," said Kevin Reneau, past president and organizer of the event. "Everybody wants to know why we don't have everything from a Trader Joe's or an In-an-Out Burger or more restaurants here in town. This night will give us an opportunity to address those issues and more. We feel it will be very informative both for our businesses and the community in general."

Kerner will share his company's decision to come to Moraga and changes coming to the town's shopping hub and his vision for the future.

Other panelists include: Saint Mary's College Professor of Economics Kristine Chase, who will present 2016 demographic trends and the retail industry and discuss how Moraga's population impacts the local business environment; Town of Moraga Planning Director Ellen Clark, who will give an overview of current and future business patterns in Moraga; and Ron Mucovich, a commercial and investment property specialist with Westfield Brokers in Moraga, who will discuss the current state of Moraga's office rental and commercial real estate environment.

The evening will start with light refreshments at 6:30 p.m. and the formal program will begin at 7 p.m. There will also be an opportunity for the audience to submit questions to the panelists. This event is presented by the Moraga Chamber of Commerce and is made possible by generous sponsorships from Saint Mary's College, Union Bank, Aegis Living of Moraga, and Republic Services.

Cops arrived and found the woman, who gave them a name that was different from the name on the card. It was later determined that the suspect had used the card to buy over \$800 worth of gift cards, which - unfortunately for her - were still in her possession. She was take to county jail.

Unauthorized shopping 12/24/15 Chase Visa card fraud investigators called a Moraga citizen, who then called the cops about suspicious charges on his account. One transaction had been completed at the Orinda Safeway and another had been completed at the Moraga Safeway, when about an hour later the suspect attempted to buy more at the Moraga Safeway, where she was apprehended. Greed is not good.

In addition, the following crimes occurred in Moraga between Dec. 23 and Jan. 5:

- Damaged Mail Boxes** - Bollinger Canyon Road
- Shot Heard** - outside of town limits
- False Alarm** - Rheem Boulevard, Carr Drive, Moraga Way, Hardie Drive, Paseo Del Rio, Moraga Road, Draeger Drive, Corte Monterey, Haven Court
- Car Mirror Dinged** - Country Club Drive
- Identity Theft** - Via Barcelona
- Lost Wallet** - Rheem Boulevard
- Domestic Disturbance** - Benedita Place
- Out of Control Student** - Wakefield Drive
- Tenant Dispute** - Kent Court
- Stored Vehicle** - Camino Peral
- Resisting Officer** - undisclosed location
- Flat Tires** - Ascot Drive
- Smash and Grab** - Rheem Shopping Center

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Getting ready for ski season?

Holiday traveling?
Avoiding accidents?



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Town Manager Moves On

By Sophie Braccini



Jill Keimach Photo Andy Scheck

“You can’t hold a good person back,” said Moraga mayor Mike Metcalf when expressing his regrets that Town Man-

ager Jill Keimach was leaving her position. Keimach was offered the job of city manager for the city of Alameda.

“Jill had a real knack and a unique talent to respond respectfully to the public concerns while revealing all of the facts related to any issue,” said Roger Wykle, who worked with Keimach when he was mayor in 2015. “In my view, she offered sound advice to the council on a litany of issues and was always on point. She will indeed be missed and we wish her well in her new endeavors with the city of Alameda.” Keimach says her last day in the Moraga office will be Jan. 28. The council chose Chief of Police Bob Priebe to serve as interim town manager; he will start on Feb. 1.

Keimach says she was ready for a new challenge, but speaking from the heart, she expresses her sadness at leaving behind the many friends she has made in the community and within her staff, as well as a job that

made every day a pleasure.

It was just last November that a surprise celebration was organized by the community to honor the fifth anniversary of the Moraga town manager. According to the International City/County Management Association the average tenure of managers has been growing over the years and was averaging 6.9 years in 2000. “When I took the position, I thought that I would stay for two or three years,” says Keimach. “I didn’t think that there would be so many topics of interest.” But Moraga’s calm and bucolic feel was deceiving, and Keimach quickly understood that there were many stimulating issues to tackle.

The first one was the dog park dispute that ignited heated community debate; then the matter of the newly paved Moraga Road that started to peal. “I realized that this was going to be very interesting,” she says.

... continued on page A8

Moraga Center Specific Plan Implementation Open House on Jan. 25

Residents are invited to an open house from 6 to 7 p.m. Monday, Jan. 25, at the Council Chambers, 335 Rheem Boulevard, to review a draft “Vision Concept” for the Moraga Center Specific Plan area. The open house will be followed at 7 p.m. by a special joint meeting of the Planning Commission and Design Review Board to consider and discuss the Vision Concept. “The Vision Concept is a key step in the process to develop implementing zoning regulations for the 2010 Moraga Center Specific Plan,” says Ellen Clark, planning director for the town of Moraga. “(It will) provide clear and well-defined standards guiding building design and types; building envelopes (such as height, setbacks); public and private open space; and circulation system improvements within the Specific Plan area.” For more information, contact Holly Pearson, senior planner, or Ellen Clark, planning director at (925) 888-7041 or visit www.moraga.ca.us. – S. Braccini

New Art in Public Spaces Committee Needs Volunteers

By Sophie Braccini

The newly approved Moraga Art in Public Spaces Committee has openings for three residents. “The Art in Public Places committee will decide the kind of art we want on display in Moraga,” says Council member Teresa Onoda, who was the force behind the approval of the new art policy. “It will inform residents and visitors alike about the way this community sees itself and the way it wants to be seen by others. Are we

playful or serious? Bold or refined? Progressive or traditional?”

At the end of 2015, the council approved a town policy that will allow artists to submit pieces of art to be displayed in public places for at least a year, similar to what the city of Orinda is doing with pieces of all shapes and forms that adorn its downtown. Onoda will be sitting on the new committee with one park and

recreation commission member, one design review board member, one Moraga park foundation member, and three Moraga community members.

“This committee is just one element of a larger effort to support and leverage the enormous pool of artistic talent we have in Lamorinda,” adds Onoda.

... continued on page A8

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Orinda

Public Meetings

City Council

Tuesday, Jan. 19, 7 p.m.
Auditorium, Orinda Library,
26 Orinda Way

Planning Commission

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

Citizens' Infrastructure Oversight Commission

Wednesday, Jan. 13, 6:30 p.m.
Sarge Littlehale Community Room,
22 Orinda Way

School Board Meeting

Orinda Union School District
Monday, Feb. 8, 6 p.m.
OUSD Office, 8 Altarinda Road,
www.orindaschools.org
See also AUHSD meeting page A2

Check online for agendas, meeting notes and announcements

City of Orinda:

www.cityoforinda.org
Phone (925) 253-4200

Chamber of Commerce:

www.orindachamber.org

The Orinda Association:

www.orindaassociation.org



Orinda Police Department Incident Summary Report Dec. 20 to Jan. 2

Alarms	71
Noise Complaints	3
911 Calls (includes hang-ups)	4
Traffic Stops	101
Suspicious Circumstances	13
Suspicious Subjects	6
Suspicious Vehicles	26
Abandoned Vehicle	
10 block Altarinda Rd	
Battery, Sexual	
10 block Altarinda Rd	
Burglary, Auto	
10 block Theatre Square	
Civil	
80 block Brookwood Rd	
30 block Barbara Rd	
Dependent Child	
60 block Moraga Way	
Disturbance	
BevMo	
10 block Theatre Square	
DUI	
Camino Pablo/Hwy 24	
Moraga Way/Altamont Dr	
Hit & Run	
80 block Davis Rd	
ID Theft	
90 block Sleepy Hollow Ln	
Police/Fire/ EMS	
100 block Crest View Dr	
4200 block El Nido Ranch Rd	
10 block Bel Air Dr	
Promiscuous Shooting	
200 block Camino Pablo	
100 block Camino Pablo	
40 block Ardiilla Rd	
Public Nuisance	
10 block Theatre Square	
Shoplift	
Safeway	
10 block Orinda Way	
Theft, ID	
10 block Jewel Ct	
Theft, Petty	
10 block El Corte	
400 block Miner Rd	
600 block Miner Rd	
200 block Lomas Cantadas	
Hwy 24/Camino Pablo	
10 block Oak Rd	
Shell Station	
10 block Orinda Way	
Theft, Vehicle	
Orinda Theatre	
Threats	
Safeway	
Trespass	
Wildler/Gateway Blvds	
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Vandalism	
Shell Station	
Verbal Dispute	
Safeway	



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New President Takes the Helm at Orinda Chamber of Commerce

By Victor Ryerson



New Chamber of Commerce executive director, Sophie Braccini, and new president, Roy Hodgkinson
Photo Vic Ryerson

There are a lot of new faces in the leadership of the Orinda Chamber of Commerce this year. At the top of the list is Roy Hodgkinson, who started his three-year term as president on Jan. 1, succeeding Sylvia Jorgensen. Joining him are four new board members, a new chair of the chamber's volunteer ambassadors, and a new executive director. The new faces bring with them "lots of new energy and enthusiasm," Hodgkinson says.

Hodgkinson, who previously served as the chamber's vice president, is a 20-year Orinda resident. He is a retired information technology executive and consultant with four decades of business experience under his belt. He and his wife moved to their home, which they remodeled, in 1995. Their architect, Rick Kattenburg, is the husband of the outgoing executive director of the chamber, Candis Kattenburg, and Hodgkinson first became aware of the organization's activities through that connection.

The chamber is a nonprofit organization that promotes Orinda businesses and business interests by providing information, communication, and activities to enhance the community. Activities include the upcoming March 4 "Live at the Orinda Comedy Night," and right now Hodgkinson says he and the planning team are busy preparing for that event, which attracts national talent. The chamber is also preparing for its annual Business Awards and Recognitions Lunch, to be held this year on Feb. 12 at the Orinda Country Club.

In his role as president of the chamber, the affable Hodgkinson represents a diverse membership in marketing, communicating, and advocating its members' interests,

working in cooperation with the City of Orinda. He is careful to take a neutral position on such issues as parking and commercial real estate improvements, but says he is "glad to see something moving" on these concerns. He has faith that Orinda will continue to have a "vital business community," and observes that business owners are smart, responding to demand for retail facilities and professional services elsewhere with complementary and unique offerings in Orinda.

Joining him in the new leadership of the organization is Sophie Braccini, the chamber's incoming executive director. No stranger to Lamorinda Weekly readers, Braccini has been a staff writer for this paper from its start nine years ago, and her byline has appeared on many business stories. She sought the position with the chamber, she says, because she knows and loves the Orinda business community from her exposure as a reporter, and considers it to be a very important aspect of Orinda's character. Originally from France, she came to the United States 25 years ago as an information technology worker in customer service and sales. Later in her career she became the president of a nonprofit company involved in work with newcomers to this area, and in that capacity engaged in volunteer management, event planning, and board decision making, all of which she feels will be helpful experience in her new role. She also believes her background in sales will be helpful, as recruitment of new members is an important aspect of the job.

Information about the mission, membership and activities of the Orinda Chamber of Commerce is available at orindachamber.org.

Orinda Wine Bar Opens for Business

By Victor Ryerson



Photo Ohlen Alexander

Ciné Cuvee, the long-awaited wine bar next to the Orinda Theatre, made a "soft" opening Dec. 31, serving wine and beer to moviegoers and others who happened to wander in. The official grand opening was Jan. 8.

Conceived as "an extension of the (theater's) refreshment stand," co-owner Derek Zemrak explains that the intimate Hollywood-themed venue capitalizes on a growing trend of offering alcoholic beverages in movie theaters. Some theaters, like the Rialto Cinemas Cerrito in El Cerrito, serve food, as well as beer and wine, at moviegoers' seats. Architectural and other limitations currently prevent expansion of Cine Cuvee's offerings to that extent, but eventually Zemrak hopes to isolate the small theater in the Orinda complex and limit attendance to those over 21 years old so alcohol can be served. That may

be a long time coming because of daunting Alcoholic Beverage Control Board regulations and other requirements. It was difficult enough to obtain approval for what has been done to date, he says, and the complexities of doing so caused significant delays in opening the cozy venue.

As a film lover, theater operator, and founder and president of the California Independent Film Festival, Zemrak is in a unique position to run the wine bar, which features wines with a Hollywood connection. He plans to host special event tastings, tentatively starting in February with one at which Vincent Price's daughter, Victoria Price, will present wines from the family's Vincent Price Signature Wine Collection.

Cine Cuvee's hours are Sunday through Thursday, 11 a.m. to 10 p.m., and 11 a.m. to midnight Friday and Saturday.

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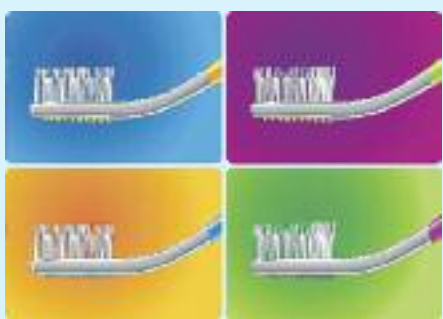
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The Orinda Park and Recreation Foundation 40 Years Strong



The Orinda Park and Recreation Foundation turned 40 years old in 2015. The foundation provides enhancements and improvements for Orinda's parks and recreational facilities as part of its work on behalf of the community. The Orinda City Council gave official recognition to the occasion at a Nov. 3 council meeting. Shown here are present and former OPR Foundation board members with the Orinda City Council. Photos provided



Orinda Park and Recreation Foundation president, Bill Wadsworth, and City of Orinda Parks and Recreation Director Michelle Lacy with one of three automated external defibrillators donated for installation at Orinda's sports fields. - Victor Ryerson

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Fire Districts

Public Meetings

Moraga-Orinda Fire District

Board of Directors
Wednesday, Jan. 20, 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, Feb. 9, 1:30 p.m.
Board Chamber room 107,
Administration Building,
651 Pine St., Martinez
For meeting times and agendas,
visit <http://alturl.com/5p9pu>.

Emergency response information and training:
Lamorinda Community Emergency Response Team (CERT)
www.lamorindacert.org

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Evans Once Again an MOFD No-Show

By Nick Marnell

The Moraga-Orinda Fire District elected directors Fred Weil and Brad Barber to the district finance committee at its Jan. 6 meeting. Weil replaces Steve Anderson, who took over as the 2016 board president. North Orinda Division 5 director Alex Evans was not present.

According to MOFD public records, since joining the board in late 2012 Evans has missed 14 of the district semimonthly meetings, far more than any other director. Evans turned down a nomination for the board presidency in 2014, blaming his heavy workload in even-numbered years; he did not attend five meetings that year. Yet in 2015, the year for which he served as president, Evans missed six more meetings.

"I have been out of town for work more than I had expected would be necessary," said Evans. "I do my best to plan around MOFD meetings but unfortunately it is not always possible."

Evans is the president and co-founder of

EMC Research, Inc, which conducts opinion and market research for a wide range of political, corporate, public agency and not-for-profit clients across the country. Local clients include Sutter Health and Oakland mayor Libby Schaaf. The company announced Jan. 4 that it merged with Hamilton Campaigns, an Orlando-based research firm.

"I'm not trying to dismiss the issue of my attendance," said Evans, refusing to cite the merger as an excuse for his truancy.

North Orinda has been at the apex of much of the recent district turmoil. MOFD purchased property on Lorinda Lane in 2013 as the site for proposed fire station 46, a joint venture with the Contra Costa County Fire Protection District. The project was assailed by residents of the Honey Hill neighborhood, who claimed that station 46 would result in higher response times. The venture never got off the ground, and the

district plans to sell the property.

Also in Division 5, a structure fire in June destroyed a home on Charles Hill Road, and neighborhood residents questioned the district fire response. Fire marshal Kathy Leonard labeled private roads in north Orinda as some of the most treacherous in the district due to their unruly vegetation. And the district plans to spend \$4 million this year to rebuild dilapidated fire station 43 on Via Las Cruces.

North Orinda Ellen Dale said that residents are aware of Evans' absences. "We expect he may well have to miss many additional board meetings in 2016, given that it is a presidential election year," she said. "We are very concerned about this possibility since there are a number of critical decisions that the MOFD board must make this year - not the least of which is finalizing the process of rebuilding our Honey Hill Fire Station."

Andersen Takes Over as Chair of Board of Supervisors

By Nick Marnell



Candace Andersen is sworn in as the 2016 Board Chair by presiding Contra Costa County superior court judge Steve Austin on Jan. 5.

photo provided

The embattled Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors, criticized throughout 2015 by groups ranging from labor unions to public officials, elected District 2 Supervisor Candace Andersen as Chair at its Jan. 5 meeting. Andersen, whose

district includes Lamorinda, replaces outgoing Chair John Gioia.

Supervisors delivered a pointed, if somewhat defensive, message to those who disapproved of the board's actions, including union leaders who lambasted the supervisors over their ill-fated pay raise, and directors of the Moraga-Orinda Fire District, who called the county leadership "unreliable" and "ineffectual" over its vacillation of support for proposed fire station 46.

"Critics often say that government can't play a role in improving lives. Some say it even gets in the way," said Gioia. He highlighted the passage of Laura's Law, the ambulance contract awarded to the Contra Costa County Fire Protection District and the enrollment of 200,000 residents into the county health insurance plan, all accomplished by staying within the county's \$3 billion budget.

"How many public agencies can say they've positively impacted hundreds of thousands of lives while exercising the highest level of fiscal management?" said Gioia.

"Residents don't understand how county government serves them in so many ways," added Su-

pervisor Karen Mitchoff.

Andersen often voted as the lone wolf, not only against county measures such as a health care program for adults not covered by the Affordable Care Act, but even against her own pay raise. "We've had the opportunity to agree to disagree on tough issues, but we've always found our way back to the family, to get back to doing the work of the people," said Supervisor Federal Glover, who returned to the chambers after an eight-month medical absence.

New vice chair Mary Piepho expressed tearful gratitude to her family, friends, staff and constituents as she begins her final year as District 3 Supervisor. She announced in December that she will not seek reelection after three terms in office.

Andersen, who vowed to continue to steer the county on its path of fiscal sustainability, later offered high praise to Lamorinda. "The Town of Moraga and the cities of Lafayette and Orinda are unique and special communities," she said. "I look forward to another year of us working together to help them accomplish their goals and to preserve the outstanding quality of life Lamorinda residents enjoy."

Moraga

Town Manager Moves On

Coming from Fremont, where on the best nights two people from the community attended the council meetings, Keimach was impressed by the level of community engagement. She noticed a remarkably high number of community volunteers. She remembers when she was asked to draft a timeline for the Measure K campaign, "I did it and thought, there is so much to do! How will I be able to do this along with everything else? But when I presented it to the volunteer committee, they took charge of everything. I had never seen such a thing, they actually did the work."

Among her achievements of the past five years, Keimach is quite proud of the town chamber that was built at 335 Rheem. "We kept the cost below \$1 million, when in most communities such high-tech meeting places come to many millions," says Keimach. On the administrative side, she said that budget, contracts and oversight processes have improved every year. "I feel very good about all the foundation stuff that was done in cooperation with the department heads," she says. She hired them all, except for the chief of

police, parks and recreation director, and town clerk.

When Keimach came on board, she had questions about the staff. "When I visited the office before I was hired it was so silent, everyone had their door closed and I was concerned I would be lonely," says Keimach. Her actual experience was completely different. "There is something special in the way people work here and the culture of openness among staff," she says. "This is very unique to this town." At the time of the economic downturn, it was impossible to give staff raises, so Keimach found a way to reward her staff that did not cost a penny to the community: she gave them every other Friday off.

"It's impossible to adequately describe what working with her has meant to me," says Priebe. "She's brilliant, a consummate professional, engenders trust with everyone and goes about her job and life with a great positive approach and sense of humor. I am blessed to have her as a mentor and be able to learn so much about so many things from her."

There are some big issues that Keimach did

... continued from page A5

not supervise to completion that her successor will need to address, such as the Hacienda de las Flores plan. The architects were supposed to submit a proposal last October, but the options on the table were too grandiose for the town. "They will come back with a smaller scale project that would be implemented in phases," says Keimach, who believes that it is also important to include public use for the Hacienda. The other big unresolved issue is the delayed maintenance of many assets, including the drainage system. Keimach is also concerned about traffic.

"In general the town is in good hands," she says. "There is a good public debate going on regarding how much and what kind of development. Hopefully it will continue as a civil debate." She knows that every community in the Bay Area is struggling with this issue, which is the result of a good economy that creates jobs and the need for more housing.

A goal setting session for the town is scheduled on Jan. 21. The search for a new town manager has begun, but it can take several months to find a qualified candidate.

Moraga

New Art in Public Spaces

... continued from page A5

"Moraga is a town filled with musicians and painters, craftsmen, dancers and singers. Public art signifies that we celebrate this part of our lives in the way athletics fields mark our love of sports."

For those interested in participating in the administration of the town,

other volunteer opportunities are available on different boards and committees: the Audit and Finance Committee, the Design Review Board, the Local Sales Tax Oversight Committee, the Park and Recreation Commission, and the Planning Commission. If interested in any position,

residents are invited to complete the application and questionnaire found online at moraga.ca.us, and submit a letter of interest and resume to the town clerk's office, 329 Rheem Boulevard, or to the town clerk by 5 p.m. Friday, Jan. 22.

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



Letters to the Editor



Editor:

In January, the City of Lafayette will post notices for a public meeting on the Olympic Blvd/Reliez Station Road corridor improvement, which include a rest-on-green traffic signal light on Reliez Station.

This rest-on-green traffic signal is essential for the safety of our neighborhood, families, friends, guests, and through traffic. We have seen the increase in traffic flow turn this intersection from scary to dangerous. The corridor improvements will increase traffic flow even more, which means fewer traffic gaps, which will threaten the safety of drivers and pedestrians. Drivers now have one half the CalTrans recommended time to avoid an accident at this intersection.

A rest-on-green signal means that through traffic stops only when a car or pedestrian is present at the intersection — unlike the Condit traffic light. As you drive through our neighborhood, make a mental note of how often you see a car or pedestrian on the side roads and you will get an idea of how infrequently you would have to stop. Or, try crossing in the crosswalk at the top of Reliez Station and see if you feel safe — imagine doing this with a stroller, young child, or a disability. Traffic will continue to increase with new construction along St. Mary's Road and Moraga to our south. Expanding programs at St. Mary's College, including night programs, create dangerous conditions at all times of day. We hope that our neighbors to the south understand that a rest-on-green signal may slightly inconvenience them, but will greatly enhance the safety for all of us. We would expect that, presented with a similarly dangerous intersection in any neighborhood, residents would advocate strenuously for a safe solution. It is the obligation of our city to provide all drivers, pedestrians, and cyclists with a safe means to access and use local streets. We should all be able to support this thoroughly studied and reasonable solution for an important traffic problem that affects us all. Please attend the upcoming City meeting with an open mind about this plan to move traffic safely through our neighborhood.

Signed by 76 Reliez Station
Neighbors
Lafayette

Editor:

At Moraga's annual goal-setting meeting on Jan. 21, let us try to spend more time on long-term priorities than on short-term goals that generate more excitement. Goals come and go with single-issue emotions, while long-term priorities sometimes drop off the radar screen. I believe the primary long-term challenge Moraga faces is traffic. The narrow arteries that connect us to the outside world are often clogged, and those people who would consider moving here in the future could find the commute unbearable. Good schools

can do only so much. Recently I talked to a young woman who moved to Moraga a year ago. Her husband has found the commute traffic so bad that they are looking at homes in Oakland. I know, just one couple, but we will let this become a trend at our peril. While we cannot simply ignore fifth-amendment property rights, and achieving what Mayor Metcalf has described as "balance" and "compromise" is going to be very difficult, I believe that we should officially acknowledge Moraga's unique and fundamental problem. How can we negotiate with the State of California and ABAG on population requirements if we don't try to make this case? There are those who say that we should increase the number of customers in Moraga in order to revitalize and expand local business, but I believe that our business base should be determined by our population, not the other way around.

Unfortunately, we are burdened with an excessive amount of retail space that was developed years ago for a population three times what we now have. A few years ago we rejected a proposal to add a large building at the Rheem center for, of all things, Blockbuster. This led to a "compromise" building that is now home to Starbucks and yet another vacancy. No new space was needed. Blockbuster moved into existing space before its predictable demise and Starbucks could have occupied one of the many other vacancies in town. Many Moragans probably are not aware that the Moraga Center Specific Plan calls for 90,000 square feet of new retail space, along with housing to provide customers and still more cars. Another long-term priority for Moraga is maintaining our infrastructure to avoid the costly trap of deferred maintenance. This is a simpler problem than population and traffic because we understand it and know how to solve it; all it takes is money. Mayor Metcalf says we will need a new revenue measure this year to address our storm drains, which age and deteriorate out of sight, meaning out of mind. As with our streets, the longer we wait the more it will cost to fix the storm drains.

Dale Walwark
Moraga

A Letter to the Community:

My children and I would like to extend our sincere gratitude and appreciation to all of you who supported us during our bereavement at the sudden loss of my husband and my children's father, Scott Rickman. We have been blessed beyond words by all of the thoughts, prayers, cards, meals, generous donations, endless phone calls, kind words and messages of condolence and sympathy that we have received from you — our relatives, friends, my employer — the Berg Family, Wilson Family and Moraga Royale Assisted Living residents and families, Rheem Elementary Principal Ms. Frank, staff and

Rheem families, Creative Playhouse Preschool, Moraga Valley Presbyterian Church, Moraga Rotary Club, and the whole Moraga Community. Your prayers, words of encouragement and visits have helped strengthen us during our time of bereavement. Your presence at the funeral services of my dear husband meant a lot to us and we say thanks to all of you for being there for us. Sometimes we often wonder why God allows us to go through such a devastating situation, but during these times, we get to know who our family and friends are, indeed. Our family will forever cherish your kindness.

Once again, please accept our wholehearted thanks and appreciation for being there to help console us during our great loss. We will always treasure your expressions of sympathy during this

most difficult time. May God continue to bless, guide, and protect all of us.

Loto Rickman
Moraga

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Elen Clark
Planning Director
Overview of Moraga's Business Environment with current and future patterns.

Jay Kerner
I.S. Realty Partners, Inc.
The new owner/operator shares his vision & upcoming changes at the Rheem Shopping Center.

Ron Mucovich
Real Estate Veteran
The current state of Moraga's office rental & commercial real estate environment in 2016.

Prof. Kristine Chase
Economics Professor
Current demographic trends and the retail industry in 2016; How Moraga's population impacts business environment.

Tuesday, January 19 6:30 p.m.
Saint Mary's College
Soda Center

The Moraga business community and the public is invited to this free event.

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Business

Lessons Learned From A Major Disaster

By Sophie Braccini



Fire at Sam Clar Furniture in Concord on Nov. 26, 2015

Seeing one's business go up in smoke can be a terrible blow, but that is exactly what happened to Moraga resident John Schwartz and his family on Thanksgiving night last November when fire broke out at Sam Clar Furniture in Concord. Fortunately, Schwartz was well prepared and insured, so a long-term catastrophe was avoided and Sam Clar is now moving seamlessly into 2016.

This was not the first time fire has struck the Schwartz family. Sam Clar offices located in Oakland caught fire 40 years ago, after Schwartz's father, Jeff Schwartz, took over the business from his father. The business was originally started in 1939 by Jeff Schwartz's grandfather. "The lessons learned back then and that had been ingrained in me saved us the second time around," said John Schwartz.

On that Thanksgiving night, as dessert was about to be served, Schwartz got a phone call from one of his employees telling him there

was a fire in their Concord offices. "I immediately jumped in my car and reached the freeway, hoping that it would just be a small fire outside the structure," he said. But as he approached his exit on 680, Schwartz saw the heavy plumes of dark smoke blocking the sky: not good.

The Concord firefighters were already at work, with two fire trucks on site. "The building was 20,000 square feet, divided into three sections," explained Schwartz. "At the center was the warehouse that was full of merchandise ready to ship, the showroom on one side, and the corporate offices on the other side." The fire started and was contained in the middle section; two firewalls insulated the other two sections.

"I got in touch with the fire captain," said Schwartz, "and asked him how fast I could get our computers, which are the brains of the company." Sam Clar designs, procures, installs and services office furniture around

the world. Ten percent of the sales come from the showroom, 90 percent from contracts with clients. The information system is at its core, and even if the company had outside backups, Schwartz knew that getting his servers would insure the smoothest possible recovery.

"In the meantime, my family, parents, children, siblings and employees had been checking the local TV news stations and had seen the images that were quite impactful. Everyone came to help," said Schwartz. Once the firefighters gave him the OK, Schwartz got into his office with his older son, his director of operations, and two firefighters, and they started removing the business servers. "It's a good thing that the computers were installed in towers that set them off the floor," he said, "because by the time we got in, there was already six inches of water in the office." All of his corporate documents were stored in fire files. Schwartz, his family and



From left: John Schwartz in his home office, with sons Trent and Ethan

Photo Sophie Braccini

employees left by 11 p.m. "The fire was contained by then," he said. "The roof caved in around 1 a.m. Luckily, no one was hurt." The entire building was uninhabitable due to the smoke and water damage.

The next morning, Schwartz met with his managers and the information technology and phone providers. The servers were transferred to the IT consultant, Endsight, to run the system through their office, which, coupled with phone lines, got Sam Clar back in business, though in a reduced capacity. "We were able to have the emails running on Saturday and to take some business calls on Monday," he said. Schwartz found a place to rent at 2500 Visso Lane in Concord. By Dec. 10, less than one month after the fire, the business and all the 28 employees were back working at 85 percent capacity, mostly from home at first. The warehouse reopened on Dec. 15.

"There were a few steps that were critical," explained Schwartz. "First, I learned from my father that when the insurance broker comes to walk you through the coverage, you pay attention (and make sure) that everything is accurate." The insurance company he works with, Uniguard, offers a policy that covers everything, including business interruption cov-

erage tied to the current level of what the business is, lost profits, getting into new spaces, rebuilding, and potential business loss. "I also hired a public adjuster to negotiate with the insurance companies, a process that can last six to eight months."

As far as emotional stress is concerned, Schwartz believes that he was able to keep calm through it all because he focused on the practical aspects of going through the crisis, and not on the years of personal and family history that were lost. He acknowledges that there was a shock, for his wife Julianne who works for the company, his sons, his parents Edy and Jeff Schwartz, and the employees.

"The silver lining of the fire is that we have the opportunity to redesign our operations, to rethink everything from the ground up," said Schwartz. "We will probably increase our use of shared documents and have our information system off the premises." He added that it has been gratifying and humbling to see the people he works with, including employees, clients and suppliers, stepping up and dealing with relatively large adversity.

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

Cine Cuvée Opens in Orinda

4 Theater Square, Orinda - (925) 254-9065

The first Orinda lounge and wine bar celebrated its grand opening on the evening of Friday, Jan. 8. The establishment is located next to the movie theater and is owned by the theater's operators. The wine bar had been a long time coming, the planning process proving to be much longer than anticipated. But it did not stop those who came to the celebration from having a very good time. (See story on page A6.)

New Pediatric Dentistry Opens in Lafayette

Lamorinda Tooth Buds - 3501 School Street, Lafayette

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Dr. Barnali (Bonnie) Roy is opening a new pediatric dentistry office in Lafayette. She grew up in Southern California and obtained her doctor of dental surgery (DDS) degree from Columbia University College of Dental Medicine where she was honored with an award for Academic Excellence in Pediatric Dentistry. During dental school, Dr. Roy realized her passion for working with children. She completed a postdoctoral residency program in pediatric dentistry at Columbia University-New York Presbyterian Hospital. During residency, she gained extensive experience working with children with special healthcare needs, craniofacial anomalies, interceptive orthodontics, and treatment with IV and oral sedation. Dr. Roy is board-certified by the American Board of Pediatric Dentistry, she is an assistant professor at the UCSF School of Dentistry, and she also serves as a committee member on the California Society of Pediatric Dentistry. Each year, Dr. Roy participates in global mission trips to help provide dental care to children in various underserved parts of the world.



Dr. Barnali (Bonnie) Roy
Photo provided

Lafayette Tennis Club and Living Lean Launch Party

3125 Camino Diablo, Lafayette
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www.livingleanprogram.com

The launch party of the new Lafayette Tennis/Living Lean partnership took place on Jan. 8 with healthy

gourmet, living-lean approved food. The class schedule for both the Lafayette and Orinda locations was released and people started to join. The transformation of the Lafayette club into a high-end, Living Lean Fitness Complex, similar to the Orinda location but on a much grander scale with a boxing, circuit room, spinning studio, TRX, personal training gym and yoga, is scheduled for completion within six months. Combined tennis and fitness memberships will be available at the remodeled location. For more information, contact Sheena Lakhota at (925) 360-7051.

News from the three Chambers of Commerce, Lafayette

Business Issues Forum (formerly the Entrepreneurs' Club) at 8 a.m. Friday, Jan. 22 in the Chamber Conference Room.

Green Committee Meeting at noon Tuesday, Jan. 26 in the Chamber Conference Room.

Business Persons of the Year Dinner and State of the City Address at 6 p.m. Friday, Jan. 29 at the Lafayette Park Hotel and Spa, 3287 Mt. Diablo Blvd. For reservations, visit <http://www.lafayettechamber.org/event/2016-business-persons-of-the-year-dinner/>. (See story on page A3.)

Moraga

Moraga Business and Community Symposium features four distinguished panelists who will discuss various trends and influences on the Moraga business community at 6:30 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 19 during a free event at the Saint Mary's College Soda Center. (See story on page A4.)

Orinda

Save the date for the Awards and Recognition Luncheon at noon on Friday, Feb. 12 at the Orinda Country Club. Outgoing president Sylvia Jorgensen, and retiring executive director Candy Kattenburg will be recognized. Five chamber awards will be presented to the Business Person of the Year, the Small Business of the Year, the New Business of the Year, the Chamber Member of the Year and the Ambassador of the Year. For reservations, visit Orindachamber.org.

If you have a business brief to share, please contact storydesk@lamorindaweekly.com

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Custom Homes Take Step Forward in Burton Valley

... continued from page A2



Proposed Lucas Ranch Estates rendering on lots four, six and seven from Ward Young Architects, viewed from the trail head at the end of Rohrer Drive. Image courtesy Ward Young Architects

The original design guidelines from 2006 call for a very low single-story home. While technically the architectural plans meet the letter of the law, there is a substantial basement on the hillside property, which is only partially subterranean, and when viewed from below, makes the home appear to be two stories tall.

Commissioner J. Allan Sayles asked if the home met the single story rule. "Yes and no," replied Senior Planner Michael Cass, describing the

modifications that the applicant made and also noting that the topography is challenging; there is going to be some "under area."

"There's very little impact for the majority of the neighborhood," explained Cass, "but where there is an impact is from the Goldwyn's Property." The nearest neighbor, Bryan Goldwyn, called the home "massive" and that it boggles the mind that it qualifies as a single story home.

Conditions of approval are part of

the application that was approved on a four to three vote, including a privacy study to be completed during the next phase of review along with a landscape plan that requires vegetation cascading down the hill.

"I don't believe the application for lot four meets the standard of a low one-story house," said Commissioner Will Lovitt, who had issues with the size of the 8,600 gross square foot home, adding that he also had real concerns about landscaping on

the southern slope that would screen the home.

Dave George, a Burton Valley neighbor, "really feels like this is an abomination" and that this action is "gutting the hillside protection ordinance." Along with support from other neighbors, they plan to file an appeal to the city council.

"We have done everything you've asked," argued attorney for the developer, Allan Moore, ticking off reasons why commissioners should

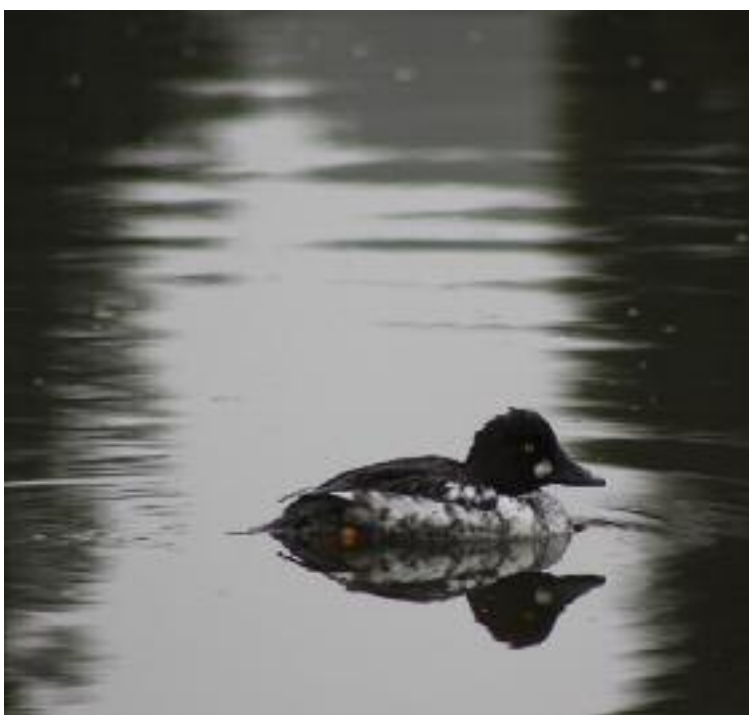
vote for approval: the city council approved lots in those locations, as well as basic footprints in 2006; homes are clustered together in order to preserve open space; lots are sited to minimize loss of privacy; massing has been reduced by more than 20 percent, and more.

Validating neighbors' sincere and valid comments, Moore pointed out that there is a difference between visibility and privacy, noting that adjacent homes are 300 to 500 feet away from the proposed Lucas Ranch homes.

Less prominent homes on lots six and seven were also approved on split votes. One of the planning commissioners who voted to approve lot four, Tom Chastain, clarified that the task before the next review body, the Design Review Commission, is that the house should appear as a one story house, when viewed from any direction, acknowledging that this will likely involve shrinking the size of the proposed home.

Fancy Hats Are For the Birds

... continued from page A1



A sub-adult male Goldeneye takes a swim.

Photos Chris Lavin



Many great egrets have ended up sticking around in the Lamorinda area in recent years, preferring to stay put rather than migrate. The birds' feathers used to be highly valued for women's hats, which almost wiped out the entire species. A federal regulation called a stop to shooting them; now global warming is keeping them put.

So while the springtime cacophony of songbirds might be silent in these darkest of days, there are still a lot of interesting birds to watch in the wintertime.

"There's not a whole lot to see right now," said Bill Swearingen, a master falconer who lives in Bollinger Canyon and has a propensity for merlin falcons. "But on the water you can still see a lot of birds. And offshore you're still seeing some merlins once in a while, the ones who aren't migrating. And you can still see ospreys,

golden eagles and bald eagles, too."

But sit in one spot long enough, and you will hear and see birds, Margulis said. "We have 300 to 400 species just in this area," she said, including five species of grebes "and bunches of ducks." So get out the binoculars, she advises, and start sitting still.

The Audubon Society offers local beginning and advanced bird-watching classes, starting now. For a list of classes visit www.goldengateaudubon.org.



Buffleheads disappear in an instant, diving underwater in search of snacks, and then popping up again. If you're with kids, you can make a game out of guessing how long it will take for the bird to resurface.

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Tweaking Signal Timing

... continued from page A2

Waiting at the Springhill Road intersection may seem particularly lengthy, as motorists pause at the light to give young pedestrians, with the help of a crossing guard, time to cross six lanes of traffic to get to school.

The study is slated to wrap up around the end of March with a report to the city council. City engineer Tony Coe made a point of managing expectations for the ability to improve the evening commute, cautioning that the main congestion feeder comes from the freeway, which is a CalTrans issue: "It's not under Lafayette's control."

Coe confirmed there will be a forum hosted by the Circulation Commission for the Pleasant Hill Road signal operations study to provide an opportunity for interested people to add their observations and solution suggestions before any work in the study begins. As of press time, the date had not been determined, but those interested can keep an eye on the city website for meeting details at www.lovelafayette.com.

Design Review Open House Regarding Reliez Station Road Planned

In related transportation news, there will be a design review open house for the proposed signals along Reliez Station Road later in January. A date was yet to be determined as of press time.

Also the proposed roundabout design at the intersection of Pleasant Hill Road and Olympic Boulevard will go back to the Circulation Commission to resolve mainly bike operations-related comments. See the city website, www.lovelafayette.com, for meeting information. To see a video simulation of the roundabout in action, go to the city website, click on "Hot Topics" then click on Reliez Station Road/Olympic Corridor Improvements.

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Lamorinda Weekly Publishers

... continued from page A3

Then we realized it was burning everybody out, our costs were going up, the paper was getting too thick. People couldn't read it all. We made a hard decision to limit it to 36 pages. We had to say no to some advertisers. It saved us from going insane."

It also preserved their main customer base: readers. "In a community newspaper, we don't report on national news. If we don't get local people to read it, the advertisers will realize there's no value in the paper," says Andy. "That's why we focus on the reader."

During a time when Wake battled breast cancer, she remembers being rejuvenated by silly staff meeting photos sent by Andy with everyone wearing Hawaiian leis and holding encouraging signs. "It helped me get through it. It's like that with Andy and Wendy. People first."

In the end, what takes a 16-page paper and builds it into a 36-page bi-weekly that reports local stories that range from critical governance and development news to swim meet scores to gardening and homes is a belief in intensity and quality, not size. "There

is a long list, a history of people who have grown their companies and changed their characters. We don't want to be on that list," Andy says.

Instead, "continued trust" are the operative words and the future dream. Oh that, and maybe a vacation longer than one week during their 10th anniversary as owners and publishers of The Lamorinda Weekly.

For an archival run up of the paper's early history, visit Milestones: http://www.lamorindaweekly.com/arc_hive/issue0601/Lamorinda-Weekly-Milestones.html

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Best wishes to our families, friends and neighbors for a happy, healthy and peaceful 2016.



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Front Row (L-R): Dexter Honens II, Lynda Snell, Joan Evans, Tara Rochlin, Christine Clark, Caitlin McNally, Carol Stevenson, Ann Ward, Linda Ehrlich, Patricia Battersby, April Matthews, Ashley Battersby, Judy Schoenrock

Middle Row (L-R): Linda Friedman, Molly Smith, Sue Olsen, Amy Rose Smith, Angie Traxinger, Jenny Lyons Wilhite, Jaime Roder, Joan Eggers, Anne Knight, Shannon Conner

Back Row (L-R): Ignacio Vega, Ben Olsen, Altie Schmitt, Charles Levine, Marianne Greene, Clark Thompson, Dan Weil, Erin Martin, Sue Layng, Art Lehman

Not Pictured: Joan Cleveland, Karen Murphy, Ann Sharf, Jeff Snell, Terri Bates Walker and Margaret Zucker



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54 Kids and Counting

Two amazing Moraga 'angels' fostering babies

By Diane Claytor



Foster Moms Kristin Koelzer, left, and Nancy DeWeese look at a recent picture of former foster child and newest member of the Koelzer family, Isaac. Photo Diane Claytor

For 26 years, Moragans Nancy and Gary DeWeese have had a hand in lovingly raising 34 kids. And that's not even counting their four biological children, all now adults. On the other side of town, Kristin and Tim Koelzer have, over the past 12 years, warmly and caringly welcomed 20-plus children who temporarily lived with them in their beautiful Sanders Ranch home. And that's in addition to their daughter, now a college senior, and twins, who will graduate from high school this year.

The DeWeese and Koelzer families can easily be called angels. They are foster families, unselfishly taking in, nurturing, caring for and loving babies who, through no fault of their own, are unable to safely live with their biological families. In 2014, Contra Costa County alone had close to 1,200 children in the foster care system.

Nancy DeWeese proudly states that she has always been a baby person. "I wanted 6 or 7 kids," she proclaimed. But once they had four healthy, happy kids, "My husband said that's enough. And he was right," she acknowledged. "Teenagers are more challenging for me. I'm not good at the discipline part. But I'm really good at getting up at 2 a.m., feeding a

baby, getting him back to sleep." A neo-natal nurse at Children's Hospital Oakland, DeWeese was working in the intensive care nursery, taking care of very sick babies who were often there for months. Knowing many did not have strong families to go home to, DeWeese said she would worry about them long after they were gone. "I kept thinking, here I've done all this work to get them better and I'd love to be involved in their development, see them grow." So she went home and convinced her

family that they should foster children. "Our youngest child was in first grade. All four were happy, healthy, doing well in school and a joy to raise. We had the resources to help others. It was something I was so passionate about," DeWeese reported. "I really wanted more children in the house. I love what having a baby in the home does for a family."

Luckily, the rest of the DeWeese family agreed, with one caveat. "We would take babies in, care for them and do whatever was needed for as long as it was needed, but we would not adopt," DeWeese explained.

For the next 26 years, that's exactly what they did - 34 times. Most of their babies lived with them for up to a year - some less, some more. Most were picked up directly from the hospital. "Our home was their first home," DeWeese noted. The majority had been exposed to drugs and/or alcohol and many of their birth mothers had received no pre-natal care.

The goal of the foster care system is to reunite children with their biological family. Sometimes this is not possible; in those cases, the hope is that a family will come forward to adopt the children, providing them with a loving home in which to grow and flourish.

DeWeese sounds like every proud parent when she talks of her 'kids.' Her eyes light up as she tells story after story.

... continued on page B5



Five-year-old twins Matt and Maddie Koelzer hold Calvin, the first Koelzer foster placement, in 2003. Photo provided

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Emily Hause and Grete Stenersen

Photos provided

Every year Saint Mary's January Term provides students and instructors alike with the opportunity to explore new academic realms and engage in perspective-changing conversations and thought-provoking activities. Saint Mary's January Term Department also hosts a series of talks given by diverse and talented speakers who share deeply from their personal experiences on a broad range of topics. This year's speaker series, which is free to the public, features author Roland Merullo, social justice activist Rev. Osagyefo Uhuru Sekou and an engaging discussion between psychology professor Emily Hause and leadership professor Grete Stenersen. Lectures will take place in the afternoon and evening in various locations on campus.

Hause and Stenersen will kick off the series with a presentation entitled, "Before I Die," a discussion on death and dying. The presentation will take place at 1 p.m. on Wednesday, Jan. 13 in the Hagerty Lounge of De La Salle Hall and will be based on one of Saint Mary's most popular January Term courses, Death and Dying.

"My team teacher Emily Hause, came to me with the idea some years ago," said Stenersen. "She suggested that we team up and create a class that would be as hands-on as possible. We've had a wait list every single year we've taught it." Now in its seventh year, the class focuses on insights from "Before I Die," a public art installation created by artist Candy Chang. Originally done on an abandoned building in New Orleans, the work invites locals to share their life's wishes on a public wall. It has since become a global phenomenon and has been replicated in over 60 countries around the world.

"We were really struck by how many of these young people had been touched by the death of someone close to them," said Stenersen. "Part of what we're helping them to do is give them tools to talk about their experiences." During the presentation on Jan. 13, Stenersen and Hause will show a couple of videos and share the background of the course, as well as what they've learned individually as instructors. At the close of the presentation, audience members and community members will be invited to take part in SMC's own "Before I Die" installation, which will be located in Dryden Hall and will remain on display for several weeks.

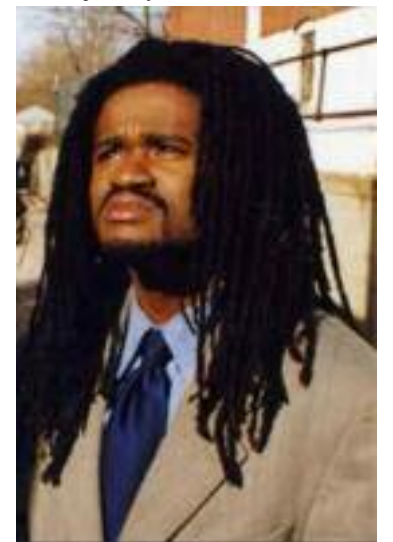
"It's much more about living than it is about dying," said Stenersen. "Our intention (for the lecture) is parallel with our intention and goal with the course itself in that all of us—whatever we believe might happen after we die—will at some point have that experience. By having healthy ways to look at and explore it we believe we have a more positive experience of embracing what life itself is."

The following week, Reverend Osagyefo Uhuru Sekou will speak on the topic "After Ferguson: The Dream for Justice." A leader within the Black Lives Matter protests that followed the shooting and death of Michael Brown, Sekou has since trained over 800 people in nonviolent civil disobedience and is considered a leader in his generation. His collection of writings includes "Gods, Gays, and Guns: Essays on Religion and the Future of Democracy." Sekou will speak at 7 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 19 in the Soda Center.

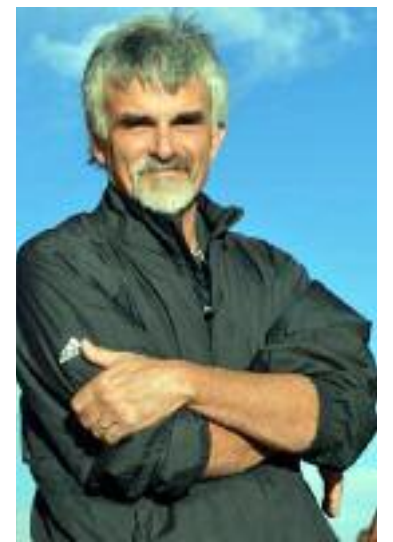
The series will conclude with Roland Merullo, renowned author of 20 books, including the much-loved

trilogy "Breakfast with Buddha," "Lunch with Buddha" and "Dinner with Buddha." Merullo will speak at 7 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 26 in the Soda Center.

For more information on the Jan Term Speaker Series, contact the Jan Term office by phone at (925) 631-4771 or by email at janterm@stmmarys-ca.edu. Visit the Speaker Series online at stmmarys-ca.edu/january-term.



Rev. Osagyefo Uhuru Sekou



Roland Merullo

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Under Arrest: Tales of Classical Music's Most Notorious Felons

Submitted by Pamela Freund



Gold Coast Chamber Players with Soprano Christine Brandes at a concert last January.

Photo provided

Although the connection between classical music and notorious crimes may seem obscure,

the Gold Coast Chamber Players' collaborative spirit will be highlighted in Alessandro Stradella's Sinfonia for Strings and Harpsichord. Each player gets a chance in the spotlight, yet the ensemble ultimately works as one unit. Stradella was also a well-known philanthropist in his day, which ultimately led to his sticky end. The most dramatic of the crimes involves Carlo Gesualdo, who caught his wife and her lover in flagrante and brutally murdered them on the spot. His song, "Moro,

Carlo Gesualdo – lay scandal, intrigue, and mystery.

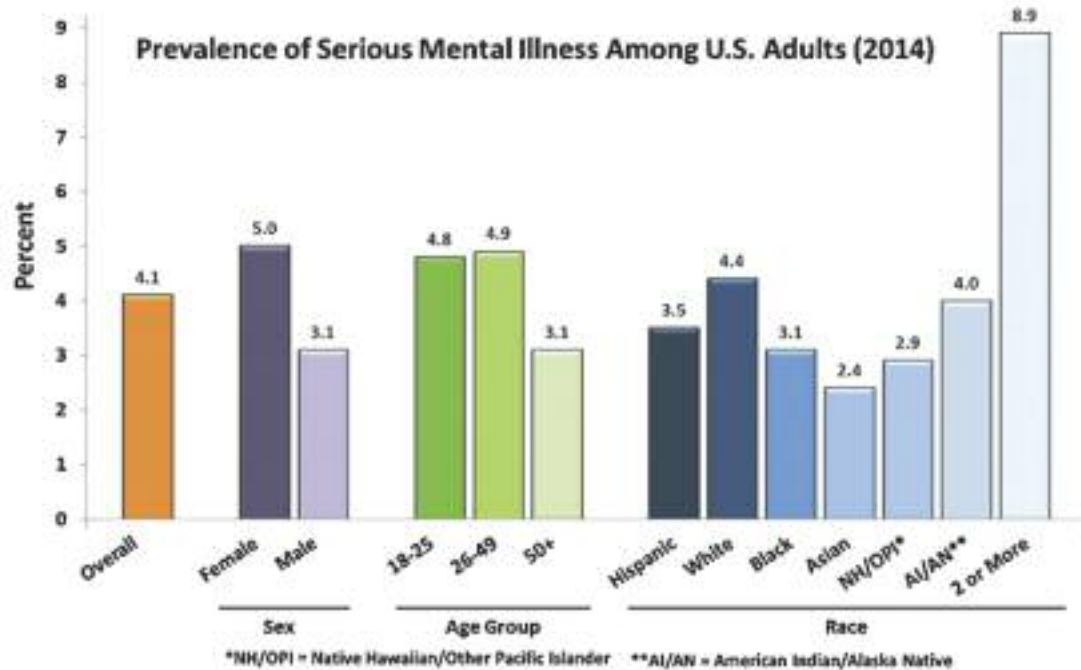
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... continued on next page

Getting Past a Stigma of Psychosis

By Daniel Smith



Data courtesy of SAMHSA

Lamorinda resident Chantel Garrett launched Partners for StrongMinds in November, a mental health nonprofit with a mission to raise awareness about psychosis and transform the way it's "detected, treated and understood in the United States." Her brother was diagnosed with schizophrenia when she was 22 and Garrett hopes that her organization can help future families detect the warning signs that hers missed.

To most Americans, the adolescent behavior of Garrett's brother sounds typical of the teenage blues: anxiety, depression, lack of focus, social withdrawal. Garrett came to suspect something more was the matter, though, in the months preceding her brother's abrupt departure for the Marine Reserves. "Something was off... something wasn't right," she says. Some of her family members thought perhaps drugs were to blame, but no one suspected they were witnessing the onset of schizophrenia. How many of us would?

The shock was unimaginable when Garrett received the news that her brother, at age 20, had just experienced a psychotic break. He was treated for the next three months through forced hospitalizations and medications, but by then "it was almost too late," she says. What followed was a 15-year period marked by resurgent psychotic episodes, unemployment, diminished social interaction and a quality of life that remains below what the Garrett family, like any loving family, had hoped for.

Garrett later learned that the rapid decline she witnessed in her brother were "prodromal symptoms" – a typical prelude to psychosis.

"There's a whole stage of this illness that happens far before a psychotic break," says Garrett, and adds that the symptoms of this stage are detectable if people know what to look for and seek proper professional help. Through Partners for StrongMinds, Garrett plans to "put these early warning signs on the road map for parents and for young people."

Partners for StrongMinds believes that early detection leads to the potential for full recovery from an initial psychotic break through "a more

effective, more empowering treatment." Early psychosis intervention begins treatment before or immediately after the first psychotic break, reducing the accelerated loss of social and cognitive function experienced by individuals with persistent psychosis. The treatment model is more empowering than traditional medication-based treatments, with an emphasis on patient-professional collaboration and support networks in addition to medicine. Despite success abroad, early psychosis intervention facilities are relatively new in the United States and virtually unknown to the public.

Garrett was largely inspired to start Partners for StrongMinds by this shortage of early psychosis intervention treatment centers, as well as the striking lack of public awareness on the subject – Garrett herself advocated for her brother's care for a decade before learning of early intervention. A former marketing professional, Garrett remembers thinking, "a lifesaving intervention for young people like my brother that no one knows about? That's a product I can market all day long."

Putting thought into action, Garrett's primary focus for her nascent organization has been a website and a social media campaign to raise awareness about psychosis treatment and symptoms. The campaign, still in development, is targeted at teens and young adults – those most likely to experience their first psychotic break – and utilizes a social media-savvy Youth Leadership Board, comprised of age 30-and-under volunteers recruited to share their own experiences with psychosis and early intervention.

Bay Area resident Andrew Echeguren – himself a former patient in San Francisco's Prevention and Recovery in Early Psychosis program – is one such youth leader. Echeguren was recently interviewed in a YouTube film for the campaign, which he hopes will educate and "destigmatize mental health and mental illness." The latter part is crucial to Echeguren, who believes that Partners for StrongMinds "promotes dialogue, which ultimately leads to recovery."

In addition to YouTube, Partners

for StrongMinds is also busy creating content for other social media channels including Tumblr, Instagram and Snapchat.

Garrett has not overlooked the older generation, who despite their probable lack of Instagram accounts, have an important role as "youth influencers." Partners for StrongMinds is currently engineering educational curriculum to be disseminated through the school system to parents and teachers, as well as students. This way youngsters have access to informed adults who are receptive to a conversation regarding psychosis and capable of directing them to the proper services.

Garrett is well aware of the challenges facing Partners for StrongMinds. Psychosis remains an uncomfortable, hush-hush topic, which has led to continued ignorance and preventable suffering. With early detection and treatment, psychosis does not have to ruin lives. And Garrett is going to make sure everybody knows it.

More information can be found on the Partners for StrongMinds' website: <http://partners4strongminds.org>

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Under Arrest ... continued from page B2



Christine Brandes Photo provided

The concert will be held at 7:30 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 23 at the Lafayette Library Community Hall in Lafayette. A pre-concert talk at 7 p.m. with Kai Christiansen will start the evening.

Soprano Christine Brandes, who was praised by San Francisco Classical Voice for her "delicate but tightly focused and superbly accurate voice," will be highlighted in a selection of vocal pieces and arias. An international performer, Brandes has performed locally with the Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra and San Francisco Opera and is known as an expert on Baroque and early classical music.

Brandes commented in an interview that Bay Area audiences were especially receptive to early music when it became popular in the 1970s and '80s. As a small subset of mainstream classical music, historical performance meshed beautifully with the alternative ethos of the Bay Area.

Strings and harpsichord make up the core ensemble for "Crime and Punishment." Violinist Mitchell Newman of the Los Angeles Philharmonic will appear, as well as violinist Lisa Weiss of the New Esterházy Quartet. Harpsichordist and early music specialist Katherine Heater will perform, as well as Gold Coast Artistic Director and violist Pamela Freund, and cellist Eric Gaenslen of the San Francisco Chamber Orchestra.

Ticket price includes complimentary champagne, the pre-concert talk at 7 p.m., and a reception with the musicians following the performance. Tickets are available at www.gplayers.org and by phone at (925) 283-3728. Limited seating, reserve early.

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<p>Lafayette Open House Jan.25th, Feb.22nd 6:30 p.m. 984 Moraga Road (925) 284-4321</p>	<p>Walnut Creek Open House Jan.11th, Feb.8th 6:30 p.m. 55 Eckley Lane (925) 934-1507</p>
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Kindergarten and Transitional Kindergarten Registration for Lamorinda Schools

Kindergarten registration in Lamorinda's school districts begins in January and February. To be eligible for kindergarten, a child must turn 5 years old by Sept.1. To be eligible for the transitional kindergarten program, a child must have his or her fifth birthday between Sept. 2 and Dec. 2. Children currently enrolled in transitional kindergarten are not required to complete the kindergarten registration process for next year. New immunization requirements for 2016, under a new law known as SB277 that began Jan. 1, state that exemptions based on personal beliefs will no longer be an option for the vaccines that are currently required for entry into child care or school in California. For more detailed information, visit: <http://www.shotsforschool.org/laws/sb277faq/>.

<p>Lafayette</p> <p>The Lafayette School District registration for kindergarten/transitional kindergarten will take place at the district's four elementary schools on Tuesday, Jan. 19 and Wednesday, Jan. 20 at the following times:</p> <p>Burton Valley Elementary 9-11 a.m. and 1-3 p.m. 561 Merriewood Drive (925) 927-3550</p> <p>Happy Valley Elementary 9-11 a.m. 3855 Happy Valley Road (925) 927-3560</p> <p>Lafayette Elementary 9-11 a.m. 950 Moraga Road (925) 927-3570</p> <p>Springhill Elementary 9-11 a.m. 3301 Springhill Road (925) 927-3580</p> <p>Registration packets can be obtained from the schools. For more information visit the district's website, www.lafsd.k12.ca.us.</p>	<p>Moraga</p> <p>Online registration for incoming kindergarten/transitional kindergarten students in Moraga is now open – go to https://moragaesd.asp.aeries.net/air to begin the registration process. Registration paperwork dates are Feb. 4-5. For more information visit the district's website, www.moraga.k12.ca.us.</p> <p>Camino Pablo Elementary 1111 Camino Pablo (925) 376-4435</p> <p>Donald Rheem Elementary 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. 90 Laird Drive (925) 376-4441</p> <p>Los Perales Elementary 22 Wakefield Drive (925) 631-0105</p>	<p>Orinda</p> <p>The kick off registration days for transitional kindergarten and kindergarten children entering an Orinda public school in August 2016 will be from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Feb. 1-4 at each of the four elementary schools. For information, visit www.orindaschools.org.</p> <p>Del Rey Elementary School 25 El Camino Moraga (925) 258-3099</p> <p>Glorietta Elementary School 15 Martha Road (925) 254-8770</p> <p>Sleepy Hollow Elementary 20 Washington Lane (925) 254-8711</p> <p>Wagner Ranch Elementary 350 Camino Pablo (925) 258-0016</p>
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Lafayette Art Gallery Announces New Exhibition: "12x12"

Submitted by Geoffrey Merideth



"Woman on the Beach" by Geoffrey Merideth Photo provided

The Lafayette Art Gallery's newest show, titled "12x12," opened Jan. 12 and features small works all done in a 1-foot by 1-foot format – just right for affordable gifts of original art, or to add to or begin a fine art collection. Exhibiting artists include: Susan Erickson, who paints fun and whimsical yet very sophisticated pieces; David VanderJagt, a well-known local ceramicist who is also chair of Friends of the Arts in Walnut Creek; Geoffrey Merideth, who paints in oils and is also a commissioner of the Arts and Culture Commission of Contra Costa County; and Judy Miller, who is a wonderful sculptor and was one of the original founders of the Lafayette Art Gallery. Some other, larger works in a square format will also be on display. In addition, a talented group of local member artists will be exhibiting numerous new works in various mediums: ceramics, glass works, sculpture and jewelry. Since its inception in 1999, the Lafayette Art Gallery has presented over 130 different shows of local artist's works, continues to extend the member artists' expertise to dozens of community groups and non-profit organizations. In addition to the current exhibit, a Valentine's Day-themed reception called "Bubbles, Baubles and Bling" will be held from noon to 6 p.m. Feb. 6, with extra emphasis on jewelry and gifts. New gallery hours are from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday, 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Sundays. Closed Mondays. The gallery is located at 3420 Mt. Diablo Blvd., in the historic Forge. For information, visit www.lafayetteartgallery.com.

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54 Kids and Counting

... continued from page B1



The Koelzer family, from left: Tim, Kristin, Isaac, Maddie and Matt
Photo Terry Riggins Photography

A back bedroom is filled with children's furniture and toys and hanging prominently on the wall is a collage featuring photos of 34 beautiful babies. Eleven of the DeWeese foster children were adopted and DeWeese maintains an excellent relationship with most of them, as well as their adoptive families. Over the years, she's attended their sporting events, family gatherings and birthday parties. She receives updates, cards and pictures. One of her 'kids' recently called to excitedly report that he is about to become a parent himself. She proudly displays pictures of these 11 kids in her living room and, as she shows them off, touching each one, the love she feels is obvious.

DeWeese readily admits that it's always hard having to give a child up; she said she could never have done this if she hadn't known that her own children could never be taken away from her. "We came in knowing we wanted to help lots of children and that we weren't going to keep any of them. That doesn't mean that I didn't get emotional and weak-kneed each time one had to leave," she said.

As president of the Contra Costa Foster Family Network, DeWeese works with foster families throughout the county, offering education, advice and support. "I always advise new foster parents that their job is to love and nurture their foster children for whatever time they have them."

As for her biological children who are now having children of their own - nine and counting - DeWeese said she loves what being a foster

family did for them as they were growing up. "It definitely had a positive effect and I imagine that some, if not all, will become foster parents themselves someday."

Kristin and Tim Koelzer also love kids and love being parents. New to Moraga in 2000, Kristin Koelzer saw DeWeese at church holding an adorable five-week-old baby. Koelzer started asking questions. As she learned more about what DeWeese did, she and her husband decided fostering would be a good way for them to give back and continue having young children in their lives. They began the foster training and approval process. "We also wanted to get approved for adoption," Koelzer said, "just in case we were ever in a situation where we fell in love with a child we were fostering." And it's a good thing they did.

In 2003, the Koelzers received their first foster placement. "Calvin was a beautiful, five pound African-American boy and we all instantly fell in love with him," Koelzer said. In fact, she noted, everyone fell in love with him. "He became a fixture in Lamorinda; everyone embraced him." After six months, the County found the home where his two older siblings, also adopted, were living; the adoptive parents wanted to add Calvin to their family. But, Koelzer said, "We loved him, knew we could give him a good home and wanted to adopt him. I absolutely did not want to give him up." The County believed the other home would be a better fit. As Koelzer told the story of losing

Calvin, even now, 12 years later, her eyes filled with tears and her voice choked up. "It was such an amazing experience having him," she said. "And it was very tough on all of us when he left - we had to grieve the loss of a child." While the Koelzer family remained close with both Calvin and his adoptive family, and, in fact, still have contact, "I knew I never wanted to go through anything like that again," Koelzer explained.

Although there were several other longer-term placements over the next 12 years, the Koelzers began doing mostly short-term respite care - taking in kids whose foster families needed relief, were going on vacation, looking for a short break. "It was similar to babysitting," Koelzer noted. "It was great still having babies around, but because we knew it was for a short time, we didn't get quite so emotionally attached."

In 2012, when their older daughter went off to college, "instead of getting a puppy, I put our name back on the emergency care list," Koelzer said with a chuckle. Six weeks later, 2-month-old Isaac came into their lives. "His birthday is the same as mine, which we took as an omen." There were so many other signs that "Tim and I knew this child was placed in our lives for a reason," Koelzer, a spiritual woman, continued. "He deserved a good life, we loved him and we certainly didn't want him to go back into the system." Within the year, the Court terminated the birth mother's parental rights and the Koelzers began adoption proceedings. It was a very lengthy process, but last year, Isaac officially became a member of the Koelzer family.

Koelzer knows Isaac's biological mother and knows that she loved him but, sadly, was unable to care for him. "Isaac will always know where he came from and that he was loved. He is social, funny and energetic. He just exudes happiness," Koelzer reported. But, she admitted, he has issues that are common in children whose birth mothers abused drugs. "It's nothing we can't handle and every day it gets better. He's already in an early inter-

vention program through the Moraga School District and is receiving amazing support."

Koelzer, who is a marketing consultant and teaches at Saint Mary's College, plans to continue doing respite foster care. DeWeese, who still works at UCSF Benioff Children's Hospital and helps out with her grandchildren, said once she retires, she'll "definitely take in babies again."

Like DeWeese, Koelzer believes fostering has taught her biological kids so much. "I know this experience has had such a positive impact on them and I know one thing for sure,"

she said. "They will always serve others ... because of what they've seen and experienced."

Both Koelzer and DeWeese praised the Lamorinda community for the love and support they so willingly gave. Local pediatricians provided services to all the foster children at no charge; friends have lovingly embraced the children over the years. And both are so humbled by their roles as foster parents. "It's been far more rewarding than I ever thought it would be," DeWeese said. "And it's had more of a far-reaching influence than I ever thought it would - on us, our children and our community."

Musings from a Lamorin-Dad 'Time is Fleeting'

By Paul Greenstone

Before I had kids, friends who had children told me time flies once you have them. I'd nod, smile and think: "Sure. Whatever." But next week my son will turn 7, and you know what I'm thinking? "Time sure has flown."

Twelve years ago, I was living in Los Angeles where I managed actors, writers and directors, and produced some films. Life was good but far from great - until I was set up on a blind date with an attorney in San Francisco. Life got great and in 2006, Naomi and I got married and San Francisco became my home.

When we had our son, David, Naomi and I decided I'd be a stay-at-home dad, which was both exciting and incredibly scary. I shut down my company and we moved to the East Bay. (Everyone moves out of SF when they have a kid, right?)

Naomi joined a mom's group, I became a playgroup leader, I took David to music and Gym-boree classes, book readings at the library. I'd get looks of: "Oh, the daddy's spending some quality time with his child," and too many (seven!) comments about how cute my grandson was. Harumph?!

It was few and far between when I'd meet another stay-at-home-dad. But on the "plus" side, thanks to my new mommy friends, I knew more about breastfeeding, nap schedules and parenting techniques than most of my guy friends.

In 2013, for various reasons, we decided to move and found our

"forever home" in Orinda. Naomi joined Lamorinda Moms and subset groups like, get this, Moms Who Are Lawyers and Moms Who Are Employment Lawyers. Amazing! I met a number of other stay-at-home-dads, continued as a playgroup leader and took David to swim classes. (Swimming's a big freakin' deal in Lamorinda!)

And David is now a first-grader at Glorietta Elementary School where he enjoys the daily meditation and/or yoga sessions after recess. (What?!)

When I think about what David is doing now, downward dog deep breathing aside, and what we get to experience with him in the future, the tick of the clock doesn't seem to matter as much anymore.



Paul Greenstone is an Orinda stay-at-home dad, photographer, writer and runs social media for executives and companies from his home. You can reach him at paulgreenstone@me.com and follow him on Twitter @paulgreenstone.

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925-283-8722 **LOPC.org**

 **Moraga Valley Presbyterian Church**
mvpcc

Sundays, 9 & 10:30am

10 Moraga Valley Lane | www.mvpctoday.org | 925.376.4800

ORINDA CHRISTIAN SCIENCE CHURCH
24 Orinda Way (next to the Library) - 254-4212

Sunday Service and Sunday School 10 - 11 am
Informal Wednesday Meeting 7:30 - 8:30 pm
Reading Room/Bookstore M - F 11 - 4; Sat 11 - 2

www.christianscienceorinda.org


Willow Spring Community Church
Loving God Loving People
Come and Meet our New Pastor

Sundays: 9:15am Adult Sunday School Classes
10:15am Pre-Service Fellowship (Free Coffee & Bagels)
10:45am Contemporary Worship Service

Wednesdays: 10:00am Community Bible Study

1689 School Street, Moraga (925) 376-3550
www.willowspringchurch.net

Holy Shepherd Lutheran Church
433 Moraga Way, Orinda, 254-3422
www.holyshepherd.org

 8:30 a.m. Traditional Worship
9:40 a.m. Education for all ages
10:45 a.m. Contemporary Worship
Coffee Fellowship at 9:30 and 11:45 a.m.
Childcare available for ages 5 and younger

SAINT GILES' EPISCOPAL CHURCH

9am Sunday School & Communion Service in the SMC Chapel

 stgiles-moraga.org
(925) 376-5770
traditional liturgy + inclusive theology

 **ORINDA Community Church**
10 Irwin Way, Orinda | 925.254.4906 | www.orindachurch.org

CHRISTMAS EVE
December 24, 2015
Family Candlelight Service, 5:00 p.m.

Moraga's Newest/Oldest Church
Living Truth Christian Center
155 MORAGA ROAD
"Just Look for the Cross"
www.livingtruthcc.com / 925.819.2127

Lafayette United Methodist Church

955 Moraga Rd., Lafayette
284-4765, office@thelumc.org, thelumc.org

Worship Sunday 10 am
Children & Teen Faith Formation Sunday 10 am
Teen Fellowship Sunday 6 pm

Opportunities for Worship, Love, Service

◆ Not to be missed ◆ Not to be missed ◆

ART

"Intercepting Light: The Mind's Eye" at the Moraga Art Gallery. The Moraga Art Gallery kicks off the new year with an exhibit of eye-catching landscapes by photographer Wenda Pyman, whose work calls to mind such masters as Ansel Adams and Eliot Porter. The show, which includes paintings, ceramics, jewelry, and more by the gallery's 15 member artists and several guest artists, runs from Jan. 13 to March 19. The public is invited to an opening reception from 5 to 7 p.m. on Saturday, Jan. 16.

The Lamorinda Arts Alliance invites you to its premier photography show at Town Hall Theatre Gallery in Lafayette. The new show, which features six local photographers, will run through Feb. 20. Works include black and white and color photos inspired by nature, travel and nostalgia. For more information contact JoAnn Lieberman, THT Curator at olabambola@sbcglobal.net.

The Lafayette Art Gallery's newest show, titled "12x12" will run through Feb. 28. It will feature small works all done in a 1-foot by 1-foot format with some other, larger works in a square format also on display. In addition, the talented group of local member artists will be exhibiting numerous new works in various mediums: ceramics, glass works, sculpture and jewelry. February will theme around Valentine's Day, with extra emphasis on jewelry and gifts, and a reception called "Bubbles, Baubles and Bling" will be held from noon to 6 p.m. on Saturday, Feb. 6. For info, visit www.lafayetteartgallery.com.

"My Hero! Contemporary Art & Superhero Action" opens Sunday, Jan. 17 at Walnut Creek's Bedford Gallery. Sunday's opening reception runs from 3 to 5 p.m. and features a wearable art runway with superhero designs by local artists.

MUSIC

Under Arrest: Tales of Classical Music's Most Notorious Felons. Although the connection between classical music and notorious crimes may seem obscure, Gold Coast Chamber Players' Crime and Punishment will expose the criminal lives of Bach, Gesualdo, and others. Soprano Christine Brandes will be highlighted in a program for strings, voice and harpsichord. The concert is scheduled at 7:30 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 23 (pre-concert talk at 7 p.m.) at the Lafayette Library Community Hall, 3491 Mt. Diablo Blvd. in Lafayette. Tickets and information: www.gcplayers.org, (925) 283-3728. (See story page B2)

THEATER

Tony Kushner's Pulitzer-winning magnum opus comes to its jaw-dropping conclusion on the Town Hall Theatre stage this February, as the entire cast of last season's critically-acclaimed "Angels In America: Millennium Approaches" returns to finish what they began, beginning work on Part II: Perestroika. The show will run from Feb. 27 through March 19. Check online for showtimes and ticket prices. For info, call the Town Hall Theatre Box Office at (925) 283-1557, or visit www.TownHallTheatre.com

LECTURE & LITERATURE

Moraga Movers and the Moraga Library present Book Talking at 2 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 13. Author Christopher Gortner will discuss his novel, "Mademoiselle Chanel," a creative reimagining of the life of iconic fashion designer Coco Chanel.

An Educational Happy Hour. All teachers and librarians from public and private schools are invited to a special event just for them at 4 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 14 at Orinda Books. Orinda Books staff will feature some of the exciting new titles coming out this spring and will also discuss what the bookstore can do to help teachers and librarians in their programs – by

arranging author visits to schools, for example. Also highlighted will be what Orinda Books offers in discounts for teachers and librarians when purchasing books for school use. Refreshments will be served. For info, visit www.orindabooks.com.

The Moraga Chamber of Commerce will present a Moraga Business and Community Symposium at 6:30 p.m. on Tuesday, Jan. 19 at St. Mary's Soda Center on the college campus. The event is free and open to the public and refreshments will be served. Four panelists will discuss various trends and influences on the Moraga business community and the challenges and opportunities for business in the town. (See story page A4).

A free lecture series, "Shared Humanity, Different Faiths," will be presented by Holy Shepherd Lutheran Church, at 433 Moraga Way, Orinda from 7 to 8 p.m. Wednesday evenings with Rabbi Mates-Mushin (Judaism) on Jan. 13; Professor Ali Ataie (Islam) on Jan. 20; Father Nicholas Borzghol (Orthodox) on Jan. 27; Dr. Kyle Schiefelbein (Lutheran) on Feb. 3. Add to your understanding of current events. All are welcome.

KIDS, PARENTS & TEENS

The Moraga Library presents Penguin Awareness Day, with 10:15 and 11:15 a.m. Penguin Storytimes, and a 4 to 5:30 p.m. Penguin Time on Wednesday, Jan. 20. Egg Waddle Races, Mr. Popper's Penguins Math, penguin craft, and a movie. Penguin costumes encouraged! Free program for children and families, no registration required.

The Saklan School Parents' Association will present "Helping Your Child Build a Happy and Meaningful Life" with Emily Campbell from the Greater Good Science Center. This free event will take place at 9 a.m. Friday, Jan. 22 at the Willow Spring Church, 1689 School Street.

Lafayette Library and Learning Center presents "After School Anime with Asian Snacks" from 3:30 to 5:30 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 28 in the Teen Center. Watch an anime film while enjoying some snacks. Register online at tinyurl.com/LAFanime. Then from Feb. 1-29, take part in the Lafayette Library and Learning Center's Geocaching Adventure. LLLC will hide multiple caches throughout Lafayette. Find them all to be entered into a raffle to win various prizes such as gift cards and books. After registering, pick up your geocaching log starting Feb. 1 at the Information Desk. Register online at tinyurl.com/LAFgeocache.

Practice SAT - The American Association of University Women (AAUW) Scholarship Committee has scheduled two tests for 8:30 a.m. check-in: one on Jan. 30 at Miramonte High School in Orinda, and the other on Feb. 20 at Campolindo High School in Moraga. A week or so later, parents and students return to receive their scores and participate in an interpretive discussion. Space is limited. Registration required. Cost: \$35. For more information and to register for the test, visit the website at Miramonte: oml-ca.aauw.net/mhs/ or at Campolindo: oml-ca.aauw.net/chs/.

OTHER

Lamorinda Meditation meets every Monday and Thursday morning from 10:30 to 11:30 a.m. at 1036 Country Club Drive, Suite 100 (Career Wisdom Institute). There is a suggested \$5 donation to help cover costs of the beautiful space. For info, contact Gaby Mozee at gcmoozee@gmail.com or call/text/leave a message at (925) 255-3046.

The League of Women Voters of Diablo Valley presents its monthly Saturday program and discussion about water – our precious resource by watching and discussing the award-winning film "Last Call at the Oasis" from 3 to 4:30 p.m. Saturday,

Jan. 16 in the Cedar Room, Lafayette Community Center. This film examines current water availability and distribution systems and introduces viewers to individuals who are trying to improve access. Learn, discuss and share. Light refreshments served. League and non-League members welcome.

Brush those January blues away with a wonderful cat or kitten from Community Concern For Cats this weekend, Jan. 16 and 17 at Pet food Express, 3610 Mt. Diablo Blvd. in Lafayette, from noon to 3 p.m. on Saturdays, and 1 to 4 p.m. on Sundays; and at 2158 Contra Costa Blvd., Pleasant Hill from 1 to 4 p.m. both days.

"Dementia: Understanding Behaviors and Finding Solutions" from 5:30 to 7 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 20 at Eldercare Services, 1808 Tice Valley Blvd., Walnut Creek. Includes tools on how to have conversations about needs when denial is present, giving you permission to "stretch the truth" for dignity, safety and self-esteem, and understanding the different types of dementia.

The Soroptimist 24-680 Crab Feed - silent auction, raffles, dessert auction, wine raffle. Cost: \$55, includes all-you-can-eat crab, pasta, salad, bread and dessert at 5:30 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 23 at the Shadelands Art Center 111 N. Wiget Lane, Walnut Creek. For tickets or more info, call (925) 283-2279 or visit www.Soroptimist24-680.org.

Lamorinda Lions Club's 35th annual Crab Feed-live auction and raffle. Cocktails and silent auction begin at 5:30 p.m. on Saturday, Jan. 23 at Trinity Serbian Church, 1700 School Street in Moraga. Dinner at 7 p.m. Cost: \$55 adults; \$27.50 for children 6-12. For tickets and information, contact Bob Murtagh at (925) 283-1841.

The City of Lafayette is providing another formal opportunity for the residents and businesses to comment on their Downtown Creeks Plan. A community workshop is scheduled for 7 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 2 at the Lafayette Library's Community Hall. Workshop facilitators will present options for creek enhancements and discuss priorities. For more information, contact Steven Goetz via email at sgoetz@ci.lafayette.ca.us and visit www.lovelafayette.org/creeksplan.

The Orinda Aquatics Masters, an adult swimming program, will be offering an evening workout at the Soda Aquatic Center (Campolindo High School) from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. running through Feb 4. These workouts will be held Monday, Tuesday and Thursday evenings. Swimmers may pay \$10 per swim. For more info, contact Tiffany Forbes at tforbes267@gmail.com.

Free Tax Preparation for the 2016 tax season is available starting February 2016 from AARP's Tax-Aide and United Way's Earn It, Keep It, Save It (EKS) programs. All tax preparers are trained and certified by the IRS. While both programs serve taxpayers of any age, Tax-Aide does not have an income limit in whom they can serve but EKS can only serve individuals whose incomes do not exceed \$50,000. For general information and site locations, call: (925) 726-3199. For information on EKS sites call 2-1-1 or visit www.earnitkeepsaveit.org.

Lafayette resident, Papa John Kiefer, will offer workshops on "How to Raise Your Own Chickens." Topics will include raising young chicks, laying hen maintenance, and sustainable coop construction. Workshops are free and will be held in Lafayette from 1 to 3:30 p.m., on Sundays, Feb. 14 and 28. Reservations are required. For info, contact jhkiefer@comcast.net.

... continued on next page

please...



...thanks

Please submit events to:
calendar@lamorindaweekly.com

MOVIE REVIEW

'The Revenant'

By Derek Zemrak



Kimberley French Copyright © 2015 Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation. All rights reserved. THE REVENANT Motion Picture Copyright © 2015 Regency Entertainment (USA), Inc. and Monarchy Enterprises S.a.r.l. All rights reserved. Not for sale or duplication.

The Revenant" is a highly intense, gripping, graphic film, which follows Hugh Glass (Leonardo DiCaprio), a frontiersman on a fur trading expedition in the 1820s who is on a quest after being brutally mauled by a bear. The opening scene sets the tone of the movie, as a group of Native Americans attack the fur hunters in a violent, graphic killing spree. Think "Saving Private Ryan." The intensity continues throughout the entire movie.

DiCaprio delivers a stellar performance as Glass. His dialogue is limited after he is attacked by the bear and must rely on his facial and body expressions to pull off this very different role. DiCaprio makes it all work and the audience will feel his pain and anguish. Tom Hardy ("Inception," "The Dark Knight Rises") gives an equally amazing performance as the nemesis, John Fitzgerald. I am surprised Hardy was overlooked for a Golden Globe nomination. His character will be remembered in cinematic history for years to come as one of the most hated characters, alongside Nurse Ratched and Hannibal Lecter. Director Alejandro Gonzalez Iñárritu, who won the Best Director Oscar last year for "Birdman," truly knows how to pull an audience in and not let go. Iñárritu will receive another Oscar nomination for "The Revenant" when they are announced.

The real standout for me in this film is the

amazing cinematography by Emmanuel Lubezki. It is truly breathtaking in many ways because it is very difficult to take such a dark subject matter and turn every shot into a masterpiece. I feel the remarkable photography helps one through the extremely explicit scenes. Emmanuel could very well win his third Oscar in a row for cinematography. He won in 2014 for "Gravity" and in 2015 for "Birdman."

"The Revenant" is not a movie for everyone due to the violent, realistic nature of the story, but it is one of the best films in 2015. It is rated R for brutal, realistic combat, violence with graphic gory images, sexual assault, strong language and brief nudity. The TRT (Total Running Time) is two hours and 36 minutes. I do have to say that due to the high intense pacing that Iñárritu delivers, the movie did not seem that long. Just remember to breathe deeply.

Best wishes to all in 2016. May it be a sweet 16! My top seven favorite movies of 2015 are:

- 1) "Trumbo"
- 2) "Spotlight"
- 3) "The Big Short"
- 4) "Brooklyn"
- 5) "The Revenant"
- 6) "Carol"
- 7) "Inside Out"

BDK America presents Discovering the Japanese Way of Tea



First Class: Jan. 20, 2016 @ 10:30 AM -12:00 Noon

As one of our first Japanese Arts and Culture programs, we are offering a six-week course on the background, culture and tradition of the classic Japanese tea ceremony and how this centuries' old tradition and experience can be enjoyed even in today's contemporary world, with friends and at home. No previous experience or study of the tea ceremony is necessary to participate. Seasonal Japanese sweets and green tea from Japan will be prepared and enjoyed at each class session. For further information, cost details and to register for the class, please contact Tea Ceremony instructor Yufuko Kurioka at: thenogatetea@gmail.com. Class to be held at the BDK America office location noted below.

BDK America Moraga Office
1675 School Street, Moraga CA 94556
Ph: (925) 388-0067

Service Clubs Announcements



Explore Lamorinda Rotary clubs The heart of Rotary is our clubs- dedicated people who share a passion for both community service and friendship. Learn about Lamorinda's Rotary clubs.

LAMORINDA SUNRISE Rotary
Friends, Fun, Service Above Self

We meet Friday mornings at 7:00 am at **The Lafayette Park Hotel & Spa**, 3666 Mt. Diablo Blvd, Lafayette. For more info, please email us at lamorindasunrise@gmail.com

January 15:
Club Assembly.
The Board will reveal plans and program for the upcoming year.

January 22:
Member Terri Khonsari will present the Sierra Leone International Project.

After building two gorgeous canoes, what next will this Rotary club do? Is a luxurious tear-drop trailer of interest to you?

Lafayette Rotary Club

Step in on a Thursday and join us for our lunch meeting.
Thursday at noon Oakwood Athletic Club, 4000 Mt. Diablo Blvd., Lafayette.

January 21:
Phil La Scola will be speaking about the Frank Sinatra you did not know.

January 28:
Michael Barrington from the Concord Rotary Club will be speaking about Rotary projects in Burkina Faso, West Africa.

www.rotarylafayette.org

◆ Not to be missed ◆ Not to be missed ◆

SENIORS

"Mindful Aging at the Moraga Library – Introducton to Tai Chi for Better Balance" at 1:30 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 14. Cynthia Black, trained in Tai Chi for a better balance and certified in Chair Chi, a form of Tai Chi practiced from a chair will show participants how to improve their balance through Tai Chi. This program will meet in the La Sala Building at the Hacienda de Las Flores, 2100 Donald Drive.

As this new year begins you may be thinking of activities you would like to pursue. SIRs Las Trampas Branch 116 welcomes guest to socialize at 11 a.m. Monday, Jan. 18 at our monthly luncheon at the Walnut Creek Elks Lodge, 1475 Creekside Drive, and learn of membership activities which include book discussions, bridge, computers, dine-outs, dominoes, fishing, golf, hiking/walking, investments, poker, travel, wine tastings and more fun things. For more info about SIRs activities for retired men, visit www.Branch116.org. Please call (925) 322-1160 for lunch reservations. Cost for lunch: \$15.

Cooking Basics: Soups and Chowders with Mike Weller, Byron Park executive chef and former Le Cordon Bleu director of education from 2 to 3:30 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 26 at Byron Park, 1700 Tice Valley Blvd, Walnut Creek. Who doesn't love the smell of a hearty batch of soup simmering on the stovetop? These one-dish meals are the ultimate comfort food on a cold winter's night. Come taste Chef Mike's scrumptious recipes and watch as he demonstrates these easy-to-prepare soups and chowders. Space is limited; reservations required by Wednesday, Jan. 20. Call Lafayette Senior Services: (925) 284-5050. Cost: free for members; \$10 non-members.

GARDEN

From the Ground Up - Enjoy your garden's bounty around home and hearth. Reap the benefits of cultivating a garden with a series of inspired classes designed to make green thumbs blossom. The Gardens at Heather Farm's Adult Education series, "From the Ground Up" continues in 2016 featuring practical lessons on developing gardens, then using the garden's bounty to create table arrangements and specialties for the home and body. The first class begins Wednesday, Jan. 13. Visit www.gardenshf.org or call (925) 947-1678 for more information. Classes typically range from \$15 to \$30.

The Lafayette Community Garden and Outdoor Learning Center is accepting applications for individual or family memberships for the 2016 season. The season opening is March 12. If you are interested in getting more information, visit www.lafayettecommunitygarden.org. To apply for membership, download and fill out a membership form and send it to the address on the form. If membership is full, you will be put on a waiting list. For info, call (925) 946-0563.

The Lafayette Garden Club monthly meeting will feature speaker Shari Bashin-Sullivan, who will give a container planting demo/presentation and answer container gardening questions from 9:30 a.m. to noon Thursday, Jan. 14 in the Lafayette Veterans Memorial Hall, 3780 Mt. Diablo Blvd. To see some of Bashin-Sullivan's projects, visit www.enchantingplanting.com. For info, email cpoetzsch@gmail.com.

Montelindo Garden Club's next meeting featuring speaker Sarah Malone, who will discuss Form and Foliage at 9 a.m. Friday, Jan. 15 at St.

Stephen's Episcopal Church, 66 St. Stephens Drive, Orinda. Visitors welcome. For info, visit www.montelindogarden.com.

Mt Diablo Nursery Winter Pruning Class will provide an informative, interactive pruning demonstration of fruit trees, roses and perennials by an experienced nurseryman who will answer pruning questions from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 16 at 3295 Mt Diablo Blvd Lafayette. Free. For info, visit mtdiablounursery.com or call (925) 283-3830.

The Moraga Garden Club will hold its general meeting at 9:30 a.m., Thursday, Jan. 21 at the Holy Trinity Church, 1700 School Street, Moraga. Guest speaker will be Nicholas Staddon, director of new plants for Monrovia, who will give a presentation entitled, "The New American Garden." Interested parties are welcome for the 9:30 a.m. social time, marketplace table and meeting at 10 a.m.

Winter Rose Pruning workshop at 10 a.m. Saturday, Jan. 30 at McDonnell Nursery, 196 Moraga Way in Orinda. To reserve a seat, call (925) 254-3713 or email info@mcdonnellnursery.com.

UC Master Gardeners of Contra Costa at the Moraga Library – "Growing Apples and Pears – The Basics" at 1 p.m., Saturday, Jan. 30. Master Gardener Darlene DeRosa will cover the basics of growing apples and pears and share tips on growing fruit trees in small spaces.

Please submit events to:
calendar@lamorindaweekly.com

Lamorinda Weekly

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Super Bowl Fan Fare

By Susie Iventosch



Chicken Philly Cheese(steak) sandwiches

Photos Susie Iventosch

We used to have season tickets to the Cal games some 20 years ago, and I just loved the smell of the Philly Cheesesteaks cooking on the grills in the concession stands! Though I usually never bought one, because I've never really eaten much beef, the aroma was out of this world!

Fast forward to this week, and my boys were talking about Chicken Philly Cheese(steak) sandwiches and my ears perked up. Why, I'd never thought of this, I don't know. Of course, I immediately decided to make a batch for dinner and real-

ized what a great dish this would be for a Super Bowl party.

While on the subject of Super Bowl parties, another recipe comes to mind. My son's friend, Theresa, brought this amazing Buffalo Chicken Dip to our house over Labor Day weekend. It is absolutely delicious and really easy to make.

Since Super Bowl is just a few weeks away, these might give you some fun new ideas to try on your family and friends while you root for your favorite team.

Chicken Philly Cheese(steaks)

(Serves 4)

INGREDIENTS

4 hoagie rolls, or a nice rustic baguette, cut into four sandwich-sized pieces
3 boneless, skinless chicken breasts, cut into thin strips
2 tablespoons olive oil
1 teaspoon Johnny's seasoning salt (or your favorite seasoning salt)
1 red bell pepper, cut into julienne strips
1 yellow or orange bell pepper, cut into julienne strips
1 red or yellow onion, halved and thinly sliced
8 slices provolone cheese, (4 cut into strips, and 4 kept whole)

DIRECTIONS

In a large skillet, heat olive oil and place chicken strips in pan. Season with Johnny's and cook over medium heat until cooked through. Remove chicken from pan.

In the same pan, add onions and bell peppers and cook until tender and just beginning to caramelize. Add chicken back into pan along with the strips of provolone. Heat until cheese is melted through and chicken is hot. Lay the remaining slices of cheese on top and cook until melted.

Meanwhile, toast or heat rolls. When ready to serve, spoon a healthy portion of the Philly chicken mixture over the bottom of each roll, trying to keep the melted cheese on top, and close up the sandwich with the other half of the roll. Enjoy!

Buffalo Chicken Dip

INGREDIENTS

1 8-ounce package cream cheese (I used light cream cheese)
1 cup of Ranch dressing (I used Lighthouse's OPA Greek Yogurt Ranch)
¾ to 1 cup of Frank's RedHot Buffalo Wing Sauce (medium temp)
1 cup cooked, shredded chicken
1 bag of your favorite dipping chips (Doritos, Fritos, Tortilla chips, etc.)

DIRECTIONS

Place all ingredients in an oven-safe dish. Bake at 350F for approximately 20 minutes, or until bubbly and heated all the way through. Remove from oven and dip away!



Buffalo Chicken Dip

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.



You can find most of the recipes published in the Lamorinda Weekly on our website. Click Food tab.

'Charlotte's Web' at Saint Mary's College a Pure Delight

By Sophie Braccini



Saint Mary's College students rehearse "Charlotte's Web" with director Will Huddleston

Photo Sophie Braccini

The graceful Charlotte the spider, a cutesy Wilbur the pig, a crafty Templeton the rat, and an innocent little girl, Fern, will be waiting for you at the Saint Mary's College Lefevre Theatre the end of this month as part of the college's winter children's play program. The play, directed by Will Huddleston, is sure to delight children of all ages – and parents, too.

Everyone knows the story by E.B. White of friendship and salvation set on a farm in the '50s. The children's classic "Charlotte's Web" was adapted to the theater in 1972 and has been produced numerous times, including many times by Huddleston, the San Francisco-based director who produced "Pinocchio" last year for the college. "This is one of the best American novels for young people," says Huddleston. "Most of the children have already read it and will have high expectations coming to the theater." As the students rehearsed under Huddleston's direction, it was obvious that the audience will not be disappointed.

Charlotte the spider is a graceful dancer

who spins her web with lightness and grace, singing along as needed. Wilbur in his pen is certainly the cutest pig one ever saw, buttermilk bathed or not. Templeton looks like a quite dangerous and selfish rat, and Fern has a heart of gold. None of the performers involved in the show are drama students, but their youthful energy, well directed by Huddleston, produces a very fresh and spontaneous rendition of the play.

"This is such a rich piece of work for all ages," says Huddleston. "We're aware that the story concerns natural death, which is a big heavy message. It is an animal show that children love." Huddleston points out that E.B. White was a professional writer who expansively revised the 1958 edition of the American English writing style guide, "The Elements Of Style," with William Strunk. "He loved words," says Huddleston. "What he also says in 'Charlotte's Web' is that what makes you a great writer is your choice of words. Charlotte only writes four words, but it saves someone's life."

The story encompasses many different universal issues including friendship and nature taking its course.

"I see this as a wonderful opportunity to expose children to live theater at a young age," adds Huddleston. "There is something very unique and real about sharing an emotion with someone on stage, as well as with the people around you. It is amplified. Something happens in the room that cannot be reproduced on a screen. It's unique and it is very old!"

Since 1991, the Saint Mary's College has been producing a children's play during its month-long January Term. The program is so popular that local schools book seats ahead of time and by the beginning of January, the morning shows were almost completely sold out, and the afternoon and evening shows were 50 percent sold. The play will run Jan. 26-29. Show times are at 9 a.m., 11 a.m., 4 p.m. and 7 p.m., depending on the days. More information and reservations can be found at <http://www.stmarys-ca.edu/charlottes-web>.

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LAMORINDA SPORTS



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Local Powerhouses Dominate DFAL Girls' Basketball Landscape

By Karl Buscheck



Sabrina Ionescu (20) scored 39 points with 10 steals and 8 assists against the Dons.



Aubrey Wagner (10), Ashley Thoms (23) and Jordyn Bryant (33) Photos Gint Federas

All three Lamorinda girls' basketball programs are flooded with talent, but right now, there's no match for the Miramonte Mats.

"We've got a once in a lifetime team here at Miramonte," head coach Kelly Sopak declared after his team dismantled its local rivals – Acalanes and Campolindo – by a combined score of 184-84 in the opening week of DFAL play. "I don't know if we'll ever be this good again. And I think you've got to take advantage of it."

After drubbing Acalanes 89-34 on Jan. 5 at home and cruising past Campolindo 95-50 on Jan. 8 in Moraga, the Mats have now reeled of 52 DFAL wins in a row and sit at 12-0 on the season and 2-0 in league.

Sabrina Ionescu, whom ESPN tabbed as the fourth-best senior recruit in the nation, is the star of the show. But Miramonte didn't climb to the No. 6 spot in USA Today's Super

25 national rankings by having just one name on the marquee.

The supporting cast includes senior Uriah Howard who is headed to Eastern Washington, senior Keana Delos Santos who will be suiting up for Utah Valley State next year and sophomore Clair Steele and junior Elle Louie.

Sopak's team has risen to national prominence thanks in part to a daunting non-league schedule. On Jan. 16, the Mats will travel to Stockton to take part in the MLK Showcase, which will also feature heavyweights like Mater Dei and the hosts, St. Mary's, who dumped the Mats out of the CIF Open Division NorCal regional finals last spring.

Like the reigning NCS Division III champion Mats, Campo also has lofty objectives for the season.

"Some of our team goals are to win 20 games, make NCS and also

the NorCal playoffs," head coach Art Thoms said. "Those are our three major, long-term goals."

Haley Van Dyke will play a crucial role in achieving those goals, as the sophomore leads the Cougars in points per game (17.1), rebounds (13.2) and assists 4.6. Sophomores Ashley Thoms and Jessi O'Reilly rank second in scoring and rebounds, respectively, but it's an upperclassman who represents the team's true heartbeat.

"This group of girls really cares and supports each other," Thoms said. "We also have great enthusiasm at practice every day. Senior Captain Emily Lyall has done a great job leading the group."

As the DFAL season ramps up, the Cougars can't help but look ahead to their Jan. 22 meeting with Acalanes in Lafayette.

"The kids and coaches are very familiar with each other," Thoms

said. "Both teams are evenly matched, which makes for a great competitive local game."

It's also the kind of matchup that can serve as a valuable learning experience for both sides.

"You look at teams like Miramonte, Campolindo, Dublin, Dougherty Valley," Acalanes head coach Chad Wellon said. "We're going to have tough competitive games in league, which I think is a good preparation piece for going into the postseason."

The league season will be a grind, but ultimately it's all just building toward the postseason.

"The big picture is the playoffs," Wellon explained. "So, obviously, always league is important to us, but really we're approaching league as like a stepping stone. As a program, we're hoping that we can make a deep run into the playoffs – both from an NCS perspective and a Nor-

Cal perspective."

On Jan. 8 in Lafayette, the Dons throttled Las Lomas 91-15 to improve league mark to 1-1 and the team's overall record sits at 12-3 after Acalanes edged Elk Grove 64-58 in the Pittsburgh Shootout on Jan. 9.

For Acalanes, all those wins have been the product of a true team effort.

"Emma [Godfrey] and Brooke Panfili have carried the load from a scoring perspective and they've been really consistent there," Wellon said of the juniors. "[But] really my starting five, Julia Lyons and Taylor Jones from a defensive perspective have done incredibly. And Roni Marrone is our player that can play every position. She can play point guard. She can play the five spot."

And then there's senior three-point specialist Alex Grant-Hudd, who Wellon said "has been [a] huge" part of the team's success.

Boys' Basketball: High Hopes, but Work to do as DFAL Play Begins

By Karl Buscheck



University of Oregon commit Eddy Ionescu (4) leads the Mats' offense.

Photo Gint Federas

Rivalry games highlighted week one of the DFAL boys' basketball slate. On Jan. 8 in Moraga, Campolindo took down Miramonte 65-55 thanks to a double-double from senior center Sterling Strothers and some lights-out fourth-quarter shooting from one Cougar who wasn't even supposed to be on the court.

Following the team's 65-56 loss to Las Lomas on Jan. 5, the win over the Mats evened Campo's league mark at 1-1. The team pushed its overall record to 7-8 a day later by beating St. Mary's of Stockton 57-48 at home.

The win against Miramonte also gives the Cougars temporary bragging rights over their neighbor, which always means something extra for the players.

"I think it does for the team," head coach Kearey Smith said. "But

for me, I'm just looking for consistency from my team right now. We've had a lot of games – injuries kind of hurt us a little bit – we let a lot of games go that I feel we should have won if we showed up."

In the third quarter, the Mats cut the deficit to just three points, after senior Ryan Anderson stole the ball in transition and slammed home the dunk, but Miramonte never managed to level the score – much less grab a lead.

"They came with focus and energy," Smith said of his players. "That was the difference in this game."

Drew McDonald, the head coach of the Mats, echoed that sentiment, praising the performance of the hosts when asked to explain what the missing ingredient was for Miramonte.

"They were much tougher than we were," McDonald said. "They're

a mentally tougher team than we are right now in the season."

Campolindo was also far more dangerous from beyond the arc – that was especially true for captain Austin Clark who was playing at less than 100 percent.

"Austin is on limited minutes. A minutes restriction (because of) a bad injury," Smith said of the senior forward, who sank a pair of fourth-quarter threes to foil Miramonte's late charge. "I wasn't going to let him play, but he's a fire guy. He's a leader on the team."

As Campolindo embarks upon the league campaign, the focus isn't on reaching a certain win total or advancing to a specific stage in the postseason, but rather on playing up to a simple motto.

"Consistency and effort. Those are the two things I think I need to see

from these guys," Smith said. "Everything else will take care of itself, but if we get consistency and effort, I feel the team will have an awesome opportunity and hopefully we can go deep in DFAL."


The Mats (11-5 overall, 1-1 in league) also have intentions of angling for the DFAL crown, but the setback against Campo served as a reminder that there is plenty that needs to be improved.

"We are hoping to compete for a league title," McDonald said. "I think that this team is a work in progress.

We have growth to do in front of us and that's the challenge for us – we need to grow."

While the team's first week of DFAL action ended on a disappointing note, the league opener on Jan. 5 couldn't have been more promising. With senior and Oregon commit Eddy Ionescu leading the way, the Mats smashed past Acalanes 77-41 at home. That clash gave the Dons a first-hand look at just how challenging it will be to contend for the top spot in league.

... continued on page C2




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Girls Soccer Teams Battle in Wide-Open DFAL

By Emily Dugdale



Acalanes' Regan Mcquain (13) and Campo's Kaylee Johns (10) fight for possession Photos Gint Federas

Girls' soccer is in full swing, and the pitch is heating up fast as the Lamorinda neighbors battle each other on the road to NCS. Campolindo, Acalanes and Miramonte entered league play last month, and each team features a different look than last winter.

"As always, the DFAL is the strongest league," Acalanes head coach Evan Sassano remarked. "There are no easy games."

At Acalanes, it's a new team, but the program's culture remains the same. "We like to play an attacking style of soccer that is fun to watch, and hard to stop," Sassano said.

The Dons sit at 3-0-2 overall with a team that includes talented Navy-bound seniors Reagan McQuain and Lexie Silva. Though the team has been plagued by injuries and other absences,

Sassano remains hopeful his girls could bring home the program's first NCS championship.

"The girls are working hard to build their chemistry and we have high expectations for ourselves," Sassano explained. "We still have yet to reach our potential, but the good thing about this group is that we have a very high ceiling."

Campo head coach Ernesto Silva also has a different look to his team this season. In past years, an estimated 90 percent of the players were members of the Lamorinda Soccer Club. This season, the Cougars feature players from more than five local clubs.

"This makes the process of gelling and establishing a system of play a bit more challenging," Silva said.

The Cougar's 4-5-1 record is reflective of

its inconsistency thus far. Silva says it's been a "mixed bag" of performances and "not-so-good" teamwork. However, he's not worried. "I like that with every game, we improve," he said.

Returning key players include senior defender Jessie Mano along with three powerhouse midfielders: seniors Bailey Yuen, Danielle Brown and junior Melissa Wilson.

Silva noted the relative parity amongst DFAL programs this winter, but thinks his team will stick around until the end. "Trying to predict a possible league champion is tough. However, I believe we will be in the mix."

Last season, Miramonte clinched the 2015 NCS Championship, beating the Cougars with an 80th-minute goal from Gina Crosetti. Long-time head coach Mohamed Mohamed has stepped down, however, passing the torch to

Matt Daus. His goal: win another NCS championship. "The pressure is on for a repeat," Daus said.

The Matadors are well into league play and currently own a 3-3-2 record. "I think we are just now starting to hit our stride," Daus said.

"Luckily, the transition of the program from last year to this year was completely smooth and natural and the girls were completely bought in from the beginning," he said.

This year's team boasts a strong senior class held down by co-captains Crosetti – committed to the University of Kentucky – and Kelly McKeen.

"After you win something you have a huge target on your back and everyone is going to give their best shot because they want to try to knock off the defending champion."



Acalanes' Emily Smith (2) and Campo's Melissa Wilson (9) contest a header.

Boys' Basketball: High Hopes, but Work to do as DFAL Play Begins

... continued from page C1

"We have high expectations and our goal always is to try and win league," head coach Dave Goldman said. "So, whether that's realistic right after losing by 36 points to Miramonte or not, time will tell."

The Dons rebounded from that dud by getting past Las Lomas 59-46 on Jan. 8. The win leaves Acalanes at 1-1 in DFAL and at an 8-8 overall. As Goldman explained, the Dons will be aiming to take the role of DFAL underdog.

"We're not a real deep team," Goldman admitted. "And our key is we have to play strong, aggressive (and) follow our game plan. We're a team that does not necessarily have the best basketball players or the best athletes night in and night out. So, we have to continually have a good game plan and players have to follow that game plan to win games."



Tom Caprio (5), Sterling Strother (44), Ryan Andersen (10 and James Rickson (5)



Photos Gint Federas Nick Price (11) drives to the basket.

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St. Perpetua Second-Grade Boys Win Holiday Tournament

Submitted by Tim Jones



Coach T. Jones, Reid H., Gavin B., Tucker J., Merek M., Alessandro C., Luke E. and Branson S. Not shown: Coach C. Dodge

On Dec. 29, the second-grade boys St. Perpetua basketball team won the MVP Third Grade National Holiday Tournament.

St. Perpetua Third-Grade Boys Win MVP Flight Holiday Tournament

Submitted by Luisa Miles



Top, from left: Ian Salmon, Jaden McClane, Austin Berry, Steven DeVinney Front: Gaetan Aviccoli, Brendan Miles, Mack Fisher Not Pictured: James Stadt, Brody Darin, Hayden O'Hare

St. Perpetua's third-grade American Team won the MVP Flight Holiday Tournament (Dec. 26-28) by winning three consecutive games against fourth-grade national teams. St. Perpetua won two of its three games by just one point. It was an exciting weekend of basketball.

St. Perpetua Fifth-Grade Girls Win Holiday Tournament

Submitted by Jon Zuber



The St. Perpetua American Girls fifth-grade team was crowned champions of the MVP Flight Holiday Tournament. The girls played inspired basketball, winning the final on a last-second shot and two-point margin in a hard-fought fast-paced game. The girls also came back from a six-point deficit to take the lead in the fourth quarter.

Photo provided

U11 Magic Crowned Champions of Gold Division

Submitted by Jon Zuber



Photo provided

The U11 Magic Girls East squad finished off the NorCal Region 3/4 Gold Division as league champions. They completed an 8-0 season, allowing just seven total goals in league play. The girls matched their tenacious defense with great passing and ball movement to score more than 30 goals in eight games.

St. Perpetua Sixth-Grade Boys Win Holiday Classic

Submitted by Erik Volk



Back, from left: Coaches Erik Volk and Jeff Thomason Middle: Noah Bloch, Cole Hink, Kyle Thomason, Brady Brinkman, Patrick Volk Front: Charlie Schofield, Graham Volk, Tony Curcuro, Cole Regan, Ben Goldzband Not pictured: Will Balassi and Dylan DeVinney

With the aid of some extra players who were available over the holidays, the St. Perpetua sixth-grade boys gelled to play some great basketball, winning three hard-fought games over the holiday weekend (Dec. 26-28).

Spartans win 5th grade girls Holiday Hoops Classic

Submitted by Stephanie Williams



Back, from left: Charlotte Arnsward, Kylie Williams, Marissa Castillo, Ava Garcia Front: Kristin Muraoka, Annie Coane, Leyla Nabipour

St. Monica CYO's fifth-grade Spartans depended upon balanced scoring and good team defense to prevail in the 15th annual Holiday Hoops Classic, a three-day tournament sponsored by MVP Flight Basketball. Missing several players due to vacation, the girls played heavy minutes and learned new positions en route to winning the final game in Martinez.

Photo provided

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Lamorinda OUR HOMES

Lamorinda Weekly Volume 09 Issue 23 Wednesday, January 13, 2016

Pink Flamingos Not Included *Pre-fabricated homes again all the rage*

By Chris Lavin



Jared Levy, below, and Gordon Stott, above, of Connect-Homes in front of a modular home in Orinda that was built customized for the family then constructed on site. Photo Chris Lavin

Long gone are the old days of plopping down a double-wide trailer and sticking a couple of plastic pink flamingos in the ground out front. Today's built-to-suit homes have clean lines and customizable features.

While prefabricated home trends have come and gone over the years, today's building materials, improved energy efficiency, and new manufacturing

techniques all coincide with the newest addition to the pre-fab homes: the Internet.

"People can get what they want," said Ben Munday of Orinda, the proud owner of a prefabricated home purchased from Connect-Homes. Two homes, actually – Munday put the smallest model out back to use as an office, although it still has a bedroom, kitchen and bathroom. After Munday and



Digging Deep with Cynthia Brian ...read on page D12

his wife, Sara, decided which company they wanted to go with, they began selecting colors, fixtures and appliances by cruising through the website and clicking away.

"From my point of view, we loved Orinda," he said. But in many cases if you don't have \$1.5 million to spend, middle-class families are often priced out of the market. The Munday's two-story modern home cost about \$600,000, with the smaller home, the company's cheapest model, running another \$230,000.

Perhaps the most mind-bending aspect of the new pre-fab homes is how quickly they go together. In the old days, a double-wide size home took up major highway space, often requiring a police escort, lead and follow-up cars, tons of flags and "wide load" signs. "It would cost thousands of dollars just for transportation, and then you couldn't just put it anywhere. A winding road or remote location was out of the question," Munday said.

The Munday's homes arrived in – get this – eight shipping containers, "at a cost of hundreds of dollars, not thousands," Munday said. All the kitchen and bathroom fixtures had been connected at the factory. Connect-Homes builds its homes out of its own factory in San Bernardino, so the trucks packed up and left early in the morning, arriving in Orinda just off Moraga Way at 9 a.m. the day before school started in August for 6-year-old Max and 4-year-old Zoe, who started pre-kindergarten. The amazing thing: The homes were built by 2 p.m. – the same day.

... continued on page D4

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67 Buckingham Dr, Moraga, Rep. Seller



3523 Wild Flower Way, Concord, Rep. Seller



35 Canyon View Dr, Orinda, Rep. Seller



1002 Santa Monica Ct, Pleasant Hill, Rep. Seller



11 Muth Dr, Orinda Represented Seller



97 Bunce Meadows Dr, Alamo, Rep. Seller



4056 Fiora Pl, Lafayette Represented Seller



3980 Clark Rd, El Sobrante, Rep. Seller



5408 Heatherland Dr, San Ramon, Rep. Buyer



774 Crossbrook Dr, Moraga, Rep. Buyer



1635 Siskiyou Dr, Walnut Creek, Rep. Buyer



La Fond Ln, Orinda Represented Buyer



114 Lucille Way, Orinda Represented Landlord



1 Culver Ct, Orinda Represented Landlord and Tenant



117 Coral Dr, Orinda Represented Landlord and Tenant

Lamorinda Home Sales recorded

City	Last reported:	LOWEST AMOUNT:	HIGHEST AMOUNT:
LAFAYETTE	19	\$640,000	\$3,750,000
MORAGA	6	\$395,000	\$1,525,000
ORINDA	10	\$480,000	\$4,050,000

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

- 3268 Brookwood Drive, \$1,359,000, 4 Bdrms, 3599 SqFt, 1964 YrBlt, 12-7-15;
Previous Sale: \$202,500, 12-19-86
- 3617 Cerrito Court, \$750,000, 2 Bdrms, 818 SqFt, 1930 YrBlt, 12-10-15;
Previous Sale: \$750,000, 04-15-05
- 2447 Cherry Hills Drive, \$840,000, 5 Bdrms, 2629 SqFt, 1963 YrBlt, 11-25-15
- 606 Francis Drive, \$730,000, 3 Bdrms, 2025 SqFt, 1967 YrBlt, 11-30-15
- 1201 Franklin Lane, \$821,000, 11-30-15;
Previous Sale: \$859,500, 10-21-15
- 660 Glenside Drive, \$2,450,000, 3 Bdrms, 1952 YrBlt, 12-2-15;
Previous Sale: \$1,150,000, 06-07-07
- 4075 Happy Valley Road, \$3,750,000, 4 Bdrms, 3710 SqFt, 1956 YrBlt, 12-10-15;
Previous Sale: \$2,965,000, 10-19-06
- 4157 Hidden Valley Road, \$1,200,000, 4 Bdrms, 2334 SqFt, 1998 YrBlt, 12-2-15
- 3320 Las Huertas Road, \$1,460,000, 4 Bdrms, 2173 SqFt, 1966 YrBlt, 12-3-15
- 1060 Leland Drive, \$865,000, 4 Bdrms, 1617 SqFt, 1964 YrBlt, 12-9-15;
Previous Sale: \$669,000, 12-30-03
- 3249 Marlene Drive, \$640,000, 4 Bdrms, 1449 SqFt, 1972 YrBlt, 11-30-15;
Previous Sale: \$420,000, 05-11-12
- 3784 Mosswood Drive, \$1,010,000, 3 Bdrms, 1634 SqFt, 1950 YrBlt, 12-2-15;
Previous Sale: \$749,000, 04-15-13
- 3986 North Peardale Drive, \$1,700,000, 5 Bdrms, 3682 SqFt, 1946 YrBlt, 12-2-15
- 3536 Oconner Drive, \$1,280,000, 4 Bdrms, 2996 SqFt, 1989 YrBlt, 12-4-15;
Previous Sale: \$463,000, 08-02-90
- 1064 Orchard Road, \$1,550,000, 5 Bdrms, 3665 SqFt, 1939 YrBlt, 12-9-15;
Previous Sale: \$450,000, 12-20-02
- 425 Read Drive, \$1,075,000, 3 Bdrms, 1615 SqFt, 1959 YrBlt, 11-20-15;
Previous Sale: \$335,000, 02-15-91
- 0821 Reliez Station Road, \$2,600,000, 4 Bdrms, 3059 SqFt, 1937 YrBlt, 12-1-15
- 3467 Stage Coach Drive, \$1,970,000, 4 Bdrms, 3979 SqFt, 1988 YrBlt, 12-8-15;
Previous Sale: \$635,000, 12-13-88
- 13 White Oak Drive, \$1,492,000, 4 Bdrms, 3068 SqFt, 1956 YrBlt, 11-20-15;
Previous Sale: \$470,000, 07-12-9

MORAGA

- 1086 Baitx Drive, \$930,000, 3 Bdrms, 1688 SqFt, 1930 YrBlt, 11-25-15;
Previous Sale: \$227,000, 08-05-88
- 1369 Camino Peral #C, \$395,000, 1 Bdrms, 951 SqFt, 1970 YrBlt, 12-4-15;
Previous Sale: \$400,000, 05-31-06
- 762 Camino Ricardo, \$1,525,000, 4 Bdrms, 2259 SqFt, 1965 YrBlt, 12-10-15;
Previous Sale: \$775,000, 05-10-02
- 1174 Cedarwood Drive, \$937,500, 3 Bdrms, 1631 SqFt, 1967 YrBlt, 12-9-15;
Previous Sale: \$260,500, 02-19-88
- 505 Chalda Way, \$510,000, 2 Bdrms, 1114 SqFt, 1974 YrBlt, 11-25-15;
Previous Sale: \$439,000, 10-05-06
- 1223 Rimer Drive, \$1,385,000, 4 Bdrms, 2290 SqFt, 1966 YrBlt, 11-24-15;
Previous Sale: \$906,000, 09-26-11

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Pink Flamingos Not Included

“There were still some gaps, but you could walk through and see what everything was going to look like,” Munday said. Lego models take longer to put together. Instead, their home construction was more like opening a pop-up children’s book. A time-lapse video of the Orinda construction can be seen at <https://vimeo.com/147523892>. And the company’s website will give you an idea of how pre-fab homes get sold at www.connect-homes.com.

The process goes something like this, or at least this is the way it worked for the Mundays. They found a piece of land they liked. They weren’t sure it would work for the company and the house they wanted, so while they were in escrow with the land, Connect-Homes representatives visited to see how the house would be best located, watching for views and sun exposure. Given the thumbs up, the Mundays closed escrow and spent three months building the foundation to specifications, worked with utilities to get pipes and electricity to the site, then waited for the arrival of the containers.

“It was surprisingly pretty easy,” Munday said.

The result is a modern house with clean lines, and most importantly to Munday, no cost overruns. “Whenever you have new construction, or even a remodel, the contractors come back and say, ‘this went over our estimate,’ or ‘this took longer than we thought,’ and it ends up costing twice as much as they quoted

you in the beginning,” he said. “Frankly, I was shocked. They sent me a bill for exactly what they said it was going to cost.”

Another thing he likes is that his choice is a safe one in earthquake country. “This is safer than a regular

house,” Munday said. “Each model has a steel frame and a slight bit of flex.”

But alas, with all that metal and glass, pink flamingos are not included.

... continued from page D1



Modular homes can come with outbuildings that serve as laundry or guest rooms.

Photo Chris Lavin

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Spacious, at 2907 square feet, with 4 bedrooms, 3 ½ baths and an easy floor plan. Master bedroom suite and two bedrooms and bath upstairs, with one bedroom and bath on main level. Large playroom downstairs with full bath, laundry room, and separate entrance. Large, spacious living room, with kitchen and dining room looking out to a fabulous deck and large brick patio with authentic brick barbecue and grill. Filtered views and gardens that go on forever! Surrounded by an exquisite neighborhood, this mostly original condition property has all the space and potential needed to create your very own "forever" home.

Conveniently located in the Sleepy Hollow Elementary School District. HWY 24, BART, and downtown Orinda are just a few miles away.

Price: Upon Request

Melanie Snow

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Stylish Solutions

Making a Plan to Refurbish and Refresh

By Ann McDonald



The photo above is one example of a great seasonal update. Indoor/outdoor so it can move from family room to outdoor patio, with heavy use – it bridges the gap for people who normally purchase very traditional patterns. This contemporary pillow would work well partnered with a tartan or floral or solid.

Photos Couture Chateau LLC

Ah, January – the perfect time for resets, clean-outs and editing. I love the month of January from a design standpoint. Last year, we wrote about the deep clean (see the Jan. 14 Lamorinda Weekly article “Stylish Solutions: The Intrinsic Nature of Deep Cleaning and Design” in the online archives) and this year I wanted to share our inside tips for developing your own yearlong home accessory update calendar.

Every year our design clients ask questions about how to update realistically with manageable time frames and budgets.

Just like you allocate time and funds for things like hair color, oil changes or cleaning supplies, taking the initiative to budget out accessory updates goes a long way to gaining mastery over your home. It no longer feels out of control when you realize it’s OK to spend “x amount of dollars” and “x amount of time shopping” on simple beauty during the year.

Some clients like the monthly approach, but I have found, for most, setting aside time to shop and money for each quarter of the year is more realistic. That way if you decide to host a spring party, you aren’t robbing from March to pay April, but instead have a larger allocation of both (time and money) for the “first quarter” to purchase the niceties you were hoping for.

First, divide the year into quarters. Just like a well-run business, a well-run home has seasons. Remember, this is not the line item for the deep clean or the changing of the dryer filter, this is for the seasonal updates you need to make so your home doesn’t look dated.

I like January through April (different from financial quarters to accommodate for Easter), then May through June, July to September and October to December.

One of the keys: Push yourself outside your normal limits of style. It’s OK to start small at first. Do you always purchase plaid? Try a contemporary style in a pillow or something non-committal. These small increments of money and time allow for great experimentation. If you are really unsure, experiment in guest rooms and home offices, where you can go and visit your new styles rather than live with them every day.

How to determine numbers? Use a simple per square foot model. If you allocate approximately \$1 to \$5 per square foot to update accessories throughout the year, for a 600-square-foot family room/kitchen area, you would be setting aside approximately \$3,000. That budget would be used for everything from updated pillows, throws, accessories and books for shelves, an ottoman or even an extra chair and side table.

Many clients with larger homes used for entertaining may set aside up to \$15 per square foot for accessory updates throughout the season and more.

... continued on page D10



A Moraga client had a plate as a family heirloom, and found these bunny plates that matched the color palate in a nice home-store catalog to possibly use seasonally, after the design of their kitchen is completed. For seasonal, inexpensive updates, this is an ideal influx of non-committal pretty.

1438 Camino Peral, Moraga

You'll love the many aspects of living in this terrific Moraga townhome. With its premium end-unit location, you are a short walk to the Moraga Commons Park and Trail, the year-round Farmers' Market, and the nearby community pool.

The home features beautiful hardwood floors and an updated kitchen with heated tile floors. The spacious rear patio is private and excellent for BBQ's and outdoor living. Additional storage is available in the large two car garage. Offered at \$649,000. See more at www.1438CaminoPeral.com



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Making a Plan to Refurbish and Refresh

... continued from page D8



We pulled the color wheel out using a simple app to match the colors in this heirloom plate. I like it because you can easily see how the colors work, even though at first glance the patterns might not seem like a good fit for a space.

A great exercise if you are unsure and have never done a line item or calendar for such things is to take a few hours and review your purchases from last year, or use a nice home catalog like Pottery Barn or a visit to Home Goods to come up with a baseline you are comfortable with.

Write down the items you might like to incorporate and add up the totals. You might be surprised at how quickly those numbers add up. While I love HGTV and the other design networks, the numbers are not always so forthright. Sponsor heavy shows, no tax and deep discounts are most often the reason for the low numbers. It is best to not use those programs as guidelines for your Lamorinda accessory updates or budget numbers. Use real time retail stores for baselines. That way, if you spot a bargain, you will be confident to jump on it because you will have done your homework.

Give yourself some time to have fun with this process. We once brought a group together in a workshop to add up a typical room of accessories only, out of a nice, but medium-priced home store catalog. It was a great exercise. It also showcased visually how you can pull a picture out, circle the items you like and then recreate that same look in your own home, all while knowing precisely what it would cost to achieve that look.

Tip: No need to reinvent the wheel. These large stores with beautiful catalogs hire excellent stylists, use their visual expertise and translate what you like from them into your own home.

Remember my strong feeling about colors, and use one of the color apps on your phone. Simply take a photo and let the app show you what will work and what won't.

Let me know how it goes! Just this past week, I used part of my first quarter budget to bring two new flower pots, a new candle and a sweet gold bird accessory to my desk at home. The simple fresh change of colors and display has energized me. Next? I'm looking at a teapot and new cup to match, along with some fresh pillows on the sofa I see from my desk. Not a lot of money, but simple and refreshing, and hopeful for the New Year.

Let me know how it goes and what you find this first quarter.

For more information on Couture Chateau LLC and how we can help you with your home redecorating, visit www.couturechateau.com.



Ann McDonald, IIDA, NAPO, is the Founder/CEO of Couture Chateau, a luxury interior design firm in

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Digging Deep-Gardening with Cynthia Brian

Houseplant Happiness

By Cynthia Brian

"I couldn't wait for success — so I went ahead without it." ~ Jonathan Winters



Pots of cymbidium orchids and azaleas can live outside on the porch or be brought indoors.

Photos Cynthia Brian

It's raining, it's pouring, the old man is snoring. And, oh, how happy we are all! As those of you who have been reading this column know, I am not usually a fan of winter because I adore basking in the sunlight of gardening bliss. But this January I am singing in the rain because raindrops keep falling on my head. El Nino translated means our natural surroundings are finally receiving a well deserved soaking.

Since it is wet and cold outside, we will bring the healthy spirit of the outdoors

in with beautiful houseplants. Many plants that we relish as indoor specimens grow wild in the tropics or warmer climates south of the equator. To start the year out with wellness as a resolution, we can provide physical and psychological benefits to our families by introducing the bold shapes, exotic foliage, and cool colors of houseplants. Inside plants absorb more than 87 percent of volatile organic compounds, including formaldehyde, benzene, and xylene from the air we breathe. VOCs come from newer, more energy-efficient buildings as well as household cleaners, carpeting off-gasses, drapes, furniture, and personal care products including hair spray and nail polish. The Environmental Protection Agency reveals that indoor pollution can be five to ten times greater than the outdoors.

Houseplants to the rescue!

Contrary to what many people believe, houseplants are extremely easy to grow, maintain, and enjoy with just a little TLC – food, water, sunlight and singing, if you so desire. Different plants require various amounts of each. Choose the right plant for your chosen location, then allow the healthy plant to take care of itself.

Some of the best plants to absorb airborne toxins include spathiphyllum, also known as the peace lily, orchids, pothos, Chinese evergreen, philodendron and dieffenbachia. All houseplants will clean the air and provide beauty.

... continued on page D14



The bright shiny anthuriums come in an array of colors, thrive indoors, and bloom for months.

Lamorinda Home Sales recorded

... continued from page D2

ORINDA

- 16 Brookbank Road, \$4,050,000, 6 Bdrms, 5874 SqFt, 1978 YrBlt, 12-3-15;
Previous Sale: \$345,000, 10-03-85
- 94 Brookwood Road, \$480,000, 3 Bdrms, 740 SqFt, 1925 YrBlt, 12-8-15
- 630 Greystone Terrace, \$1,350,000, 3 Bdrms, 2097 SqFt, 1974 YrBlt, 12-2-15;
Previous Sale: \$30,000, 08-13-73
- 37 Hillcrest Drive, \$2,100,000, 3 Bdrms, 1290 SqFt, 1950 YrBlt, 11-20-15;
Previous Sale: \$755,500, 06-10-14
- 38 Hillcrest Drive, \$1,282,000, 3 Bdrms, 1869 SqFt, 1952 YrBlt, 12-3-15
- 9 La Sombra Court, \$2,000,000, 3 Bdrms, 1689 SqFt, 1948 YrBlt, 12-1-15;
Previous Sale: \$1,155,000, 03-24-15
- 56 Longridge Road, \$800,000, 3 Bdrms, 1753 SqFt, 1950 YrBlt, 12-11-15;
Previous Sale: \$730,000, 08-20-04
- 10 Orchard Court, \$1,125,000, 3 Bdrms, 2195 SqFt, 1942 YrBlt, 11-25-15
- 136 Ravenhill Road, \$830,000, 2 Bdrms, 2216 SqFt, 1974 YrBlt, 11-25-15;
Previous Sale: \$334,500, 09-28-93
- 12 Tara Road, \$1,050,000, 3 Bdrms, 2388 SqFt, 1980 YrBlt, 12-2-15



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Houseplant Happiness

Scientific studies indicate that houseplants keep us healthy in multiple other ways including reduction in headaches, colds, sore throats and stress levels. Gardeners know that being in nature is good for our bodies, minds and spirits. Bringing the outdoors in during the dreary months is a health booster, improving creativity, cognitive skills, memory and problem solving. When you have the heat on, the plants also act as natural humidifiers relieving dried skin, chapped lips and discomfort.

My favorite indoor plants include the fiddle leaf fig for rooms with tall ceilings. In its native habitat of Africa the fiddle leaf will grow to 40 feet, but indoors it may reach 10 to 15 feet, living for three decades or more. For longevity of blooms, you cannot beat orchids or bromeliads. They need almost zero care yet flower for months on end. Another

constant bloomer with bright shiny green leaves is the peace lily. It tolerates all levels of light and abuse and brings tranquility to any room. Pothos has to be one of the easiest houseplants to grow. You can snip off a piece, stick it in soil, water, and let it do its thing. At this time of year, Christmas cactus are in full bloom. After the blossoms are spent, put them outside on a porch or patio until they bloom the following season. Azaleas in bloom can be put on patios, porches, and brought inside as accents for short periods of time. If you are looking for plants that only need an occasional spritzing, buy tillandsias, or air plants. They live on air, literally. Palms, anthuriums, ZZplants, and many more are all available at your local garden center.

If you think you have a brown thumb indoors, here is "the 101" on how to be a pro:



Rich red Christmas cactus thrives indoors.



This spathiphyllum peace lily is over 25 years old!

1. Before buying a plant, decide where you will want it to be placed. Is it sunny, dark, warm, or cold? Check plant tags for the information you'll need to keep your plant happy. My measuring trick for light is that if you can read a magazine in the space, the plant can grow in that low light.

2. Avoid putting any plants on or near radiators, air conditioners, TVs, or drafty areas.

3. Water only when the soil is dry an inch below the surface. Stick a pencil in the dirt and if it comes up dry, give your plant a drink. Don't over water. Yellowing and dropping leaves is usually a sign of too much moisture. Don't drown your plants or they will suffocate and die.

4. Always have a saucer under every pot and a protective element (a tile, coaster, CD disk, cork) under the saucer to prevent ruining furniture in the event of spills. Don't let plant containers sit in excess water.

5. Feed two or three times per year according to the plant tag directions.

6. Repot when root bound.

7. Enjoy clean air and a prettier interior with your houseplants.

Houseplants are happiest when



Fiddle leaf figs are great for rooms with high ceilings. Leaves are bright, shiny, green.
Photos Cynthia Brian

temperatures are between 70 and 80 degrees Fahrenheit during the day and 10 to 15 degrees lower at night, but thrive in basically the same temperatures that make humans comfortable.

Don't wait to be successful. Just buy a few houseplants and breathe in nature 365 days a year inside your home and office.



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Cynthia Brian's Mid-Month Reminders

PRUNE roses, berries and crape myrtles this month. Buy bare-root roses locally or to order the David Austin English roses, go to <http://www.DavidAustinRoses.com>. Use promo code UHA for 20 percent off your order through Feb. 19.

TREES cleanse the air, filter water, clean the air, provide shade and habitat for wildlife. Learn more about the benefits of trees at <http://www.AmericanForests.org>.

SUBSTITUTE eggplant for any meat dish. Burpee has developed a new flavorful eggplant called "Meatball" with a density and texture that makes it taste like a hamburger, eggplant steak cutlet, and can be used in any recipe calling for meat.

ASHES from your fireplace can be added to the compost pile when you clean your hearth. Make sure they are cold or pour water into the bucket before pouring into the bin.

PLANT arugula in a pot for winter salads. Seeds grow quickly and the bitter leaves add zing to your dishes.

Welcome the rain and bring health and wellness into your home for the New Year because, baby, it's cold outside!

Happy Gardening and Happy Growing!



Cynthia Brian gets her 15 minutes by the fountain.

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ORINDA



40 Dos Osos Incredible Orinda, San Pablo Dam, Mt. Diablo views + abundance of nature surrounds this supersized parcel bordering EBMUD land. Once in a lifetime opportunity raw land sale.

\$489,000

ORINDA



86 La Espiral Situated in heart of one of Orinda's most coveted & sought-after neighborhoods. OCC custom built contemporary, 4bd/2.5ba home on .69 acre with views of the East Bay Hills!

\$949,000

MORAGA



For Lease

589 Augusta Drive Fabulous Moraga Country Club. All member benefits. Single level detached home along 1st fairway. 3bd/2.5ba, 2687sf, family room off spacious kitchen. Excellent schools.

\$6,000/month

MORAGA



New Listing

491 Woodminster Drive Great unit in desirable Woodminster complex. Spacious home w/formal living & dining rm, family rm/kitchen combo, hwd flrs. 2 decks, attached garage, lovely view of open space.

\$659,000

MORAGA



Pending

176 Calle La Mesa Super opportunity in Campolindo. 4 bedroom, 2 bathroom home on .4 acre lot. Peaceful location with flat yard and views. Ready for your inspiration!

\$895,000

LAFAYETTE



Sold

1000 Hawthorn Drive Wonderful 3 bed/2 bath traditional home in the heart of downtown Lafayette. Remodeled kitchen w/large island, marble/Corian countertops. Hardwood floors. Park-like yard.

\$1,185,000

LAFAYETTE



New Listing

3402 Black Hawk Road Wonderful Springhill Valley nghbrhd located in a serene, park-like setting on .59 acres. 3bd/2ba w/hwd flrs, vaulted ceilings in living rm, family rm off kitchen. Walk to schools, trails.

\$1,188,000

LAFAYETTE



5 Burton Vista Court Spectacular 7bd/9+ba, 8986sf Estate w/luxury amenities in grand oversized spaces. Premium 2.25ac parcel w/sport court, sun-drenched pool, pavilion w/kitchen, dressing rms & showers.

\$6,595,000

PLEASANT HILL



20 Whitfield Court Great 2.58 acre parcel at top of knoll w/views of Mount Diablo & ideal privacy. Truly special setting sites for development zoned R-10 & R-15. Wonderful opportunity for investment.

\$1,750,000

WALNUT CREEK



Pending

1501 Canyonwood Court #2 Fabulous Sonoma Wrap w/2bd/2ba + washer/dryer in unit. Cultured marble countertops in kitchen/baths. Elec. chair lift at stairs. Rear veranda enclosed, side veranda open. Views.

\$365,000

WALNUT CREEK



Pending

887 Amberwood Court Beautiful New Construction Single Story Home (one of five) in desirable cul-de-sac neighborhood. 4 Bed/3.5 bath, den, chef's kitchen w/great room. Corner lot. Ideal location.

\$1,570,000

WALNUT CREEK



New Listing

31 Hanson Lane Beautiful Single Story New Construction in Walnut Heights nghbrhd. On .43 flat acre, 4 bd/3.5ba, den, chefs kitchen, hwd flrs. Backs up to Shell Ridge Open Space & elementary school.

\$1,700,000

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