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expo

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Brian Waters, foreground, and Reginald Barrett of Friends of Orinda Creeks look at debris at what is known as SP201, an East Bay Municipal Utility District "drop structure," or dam, that gets clogged and has prevented native rainbow trout from migrating upstream. Photo Chris Lavin

SP201 – Call It a Dam

A technical term for an environmental barrier

By Chris Lavin

The recent rains are the bane of Friends of Orinda Creeks' (FOC) efforts to re-enable native rainbow trout ingress into Upper San Pablo Creek. They say that is because the East Bay Municipal Utility District structure known as SP201 has stood in the way of the native rainbow trout's ability to swim upstream from San Pablo Dam Reservoir

to spawn in their native creek for as many as 20 years. "I would say that the existence of trout has been gone for about 10 years, probably 20 years," said Reginald Barrett, a professor emeritus of wildlife management at UC Berkeley, who lives in Orinda. He now spends time doing as much for the creeks as possible. "We've been trying to

change that trend for more than 10 years." He laughs often at comments that he makes. "It takes having a sense of humor to be doing it as long as we have," he said, referring to appealing to the governmental organizations that provide municipal services to the area. ... continued on page A6

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Building on residential lots can be a long endeavor – page D1.



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Lamorinda Frustrations Mount Due to Bus Driver Shortage

By Sophie Braccini



A booming economy can have negative unintended consequences, such as the mounting difficulty to find bus drivers. The Lamorinda School Bus Program (LSBP) contracts with the largest company, First Student, which is not immune to the phenomenon. During the month of December, out of an estimated 1,320 runs that month, 25 runs were missed in Lamorinda due to lack of drivers.

"As a working parent and someone who depends on the bus to take my son to school every morning, it was very stressful trying to figure out how he was getting to school this morning with such late notice. I was already on my way to work," wrote a parent about a December incident on route 23 that goes to Stanley Middle School. That parent received a text message sent at 6:05 a.m. by Juliet

Hansen, LSBP program manager, who communicates that way with parents and schools every time something affects a route. One parent yelled at a bus driver for being late, which led to this new driver resigning his position. In a letter to parents, Hansen asked parents not to take out their frustration on drivers. "This person (the parent) was probably having a bad day and he apologized," said Hansen. She says that LSBP has been using the text messaging system more than ever before to notify parents of changes in service, often very early in the morning. "However, even with notification, canceled or combined routes create a huge disruption to families who rely on the school bus for transportation. ... continued on page A12



Public Meetings

City Council

Monday, Feb. 8, 7 p.m.
Lafayette Library & Learning Center,
Community Hall, 3491 Mt. Diablo Blvd.

Planning Commission

Monday, Feb. 1, 7 p.m.
Lafayette Library & Learning Center,
Community Hall, 3491 Mt. Diablo Blvd.

Design Review

Monday, Feb. 8, 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.aalanes.k12.ca.us

Lafayette School District

Wednesday, Feb. 10, 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

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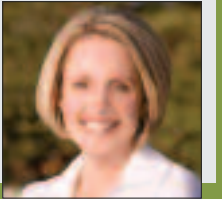
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Should the City Pursue a Downtown Park?

By Cathy Tyson



Property on Golden Gate Way under consideration



Photos C. Tyson

A rare opportunity for Lafayette presented itself when the owner of the vintage apartment building and adjacent large parking lot directly be-

hind the Lafayette Library and Learning Center on Golden Gate Way indicated he would be willing to consider negotiating the sale of both properties.

In the city's 2012 Downtown Specific Plan, one of the many itemized goals was for the creation of a central Library Park to complement the library, due to its proximity to schools and residences. At a recent city council meeting, lawmakers expressed interest in a park at that location, but acknowledged a concern for potentially displaced residences and businesses, as well as the cost.

After a brief discussion, all agreed that it was worth proceeding to split the price of an appraisal for the roughly one and a half acre parcel with the seller, John Protopoulos, president and CEO of Madison Park

Financial Corp., a real estate firm based in Oakland. Up to \$5,000 was authorized to be spent on the city's share of the appraisal, to get an accurate assessment of the property's value. Staff estimates the value of the property to be between \$6-10 million.

"When that information is determined, we can either walk away or negotiate the purchase," said City Manager Steven Falk. He made it clear to the seller that the city does not have that kind of money, and conveyed that it could take up to 18 months to get financing or grant funding together. Falk emphasized the importance of pursuing this opportunity as a city park, because the likely alternative if another party purchased the land would be multi-family housing.

Also to be determined is finding a replacement location for some of the city's required potential affordable housing units that are counted on the property, and are part of the state-mandated Housing Element.

"This may be a one-time opportunity," said Council Member Brandt Andersson, noting the channelized creek on the southern edge of the property could make it a "perfect jump start" if the city was going to address creek restoration.

Council Member Don Tatzin was supportive of proceeding, but was unsure of the city's obligations. The apartment complex, called the "Lincoln Building," currently houses a mix of 47 residential and business units.

Lafayette Police Department Incident Summary Report Jan 3-16

- Alarms** 54
- 911 Calls (includes hang-ups)** 23
- Noise Complaints** 5
- Traffic Stops** 79
- Suspicious Circumstances** 11
- Suspicious Subjects** 27
- Suspicious Vehicles** 16
- Abandoned Vehicle**
 - 3400 block Sweet Dr
 - La Playa Dr/Diablo View Rd
 - El Nido Ranch/Acalanes Rds
 - Mt Diablo Blvd/Acalanes Rd
- Animal Control**
 - 4000 block Happy Valley
- Burglary, Auto**
 - 3200 block Marlene Dr (2)
 - 3400 block Lana Ln
 - 3300 block Dyer Dr
 - 1000 block Walnut Dr
 - 3700 block Mt Diablo Blvd (3)
 - 900 block S Thompson Rd
 - 3400 block Munroe Ave
 - 3200 block Palomeres St
 - Pleasant Hill Rd/Olympic Blvd
 - 700 block Tanglewood Dr
 - Lafayette Park Hotel (2)
- Burglary, Commercial**
 - Jackson's Wines & Spirits
 - 3200 block Mt Diablo Ct (2)
- Burglary, Miscellaneous**
 - 20 block Toledo Ct
- Burglary, Residential**
 - 3500 Moraga Blvd
- Civil Problem**
 - 1200 block Warner Ct
 - 1300 block Summit Rd
- DUI**
 - Pleasant Hill Rd/Green Valley Dr
- Dispute**
 - Chevron
 - 900 block Paulson Ct
- Fireworks**
 - Walnut St/Chestnut St
- Found Adult**
 - 10 block Silver Leaf Ct
- Missing Adult**
 - 900 block Janet Ln
- Fraud, Credit**
 - 1000 block Timothy Ln
- Harassment**
 - 1000 block Brown Ave
 - 1000 block Aileen
 - 700 block Arroyo Ct (by phone)
- Hit & Run**
 - 1000 block 2nd St
 - Lafayette Park Hotel
 - Ace Hardware (3)
 - 3500 block Mt Diablo Blvd (2)
 - Acalanes High School
 - 3700 block Mt Diablo Blvd
 - Whole Foods
 - Mt Diablo Blvd/1st St
- Indecent Exposure**
 - Safeway
- Police/Fire/EMS Response**
 - Moraga Rd/Sky Hy Dr
 - 3300 block La Caminita
- Public Nuisance**
 - Dawkins Dr/Helen Ln
 - 600 block Huntleigh Dr
 - Rosedale Ave/St Mary's Rd
 - Black Hawk Rd/Springhill Rd
 - 3300 block Springhill Rd
 - 1300 block Martino Rd
 - Silver Springs Rd/Moraga Rd (2)
 - 3400 block Munroe Ave

- 3800 block Happy Valley Rd
- 1200 block Panorama Dr
- Little Ln/Foye Dr
- 3200 block La Canada Rd
- Mariposa Rd/Upland Dr
- 600 block Glenside Dr
- 3300 Las Huertas Rd
- 1400 block Reliez Valley Rd
- 700 block Glenside Circle
- 600 block Murray Ln
- 3200 block Los Palos Cir
- 3300 block Walnut Ln
- 3300 block Sweet Dr
- 800 block Solana Dr (2)
- 1100 block Garden Ln
- Oliver Ct/Moraga Rd
- Promiscuous Shooting**
 - Glen Rd/N Thompson Rd
 - Dolores Dr/Monson Ln
- Reckless Driving**
 - Hawthorn Dr/Moraga Blvd
 - St Mary's Rd/Campo Dr
 - Oconnor Dr/Moraga Rd
 - St Mary's/Moraga Rds
 - Mt Diablo Blvd/Moraga Rd
 - Reliez Station/Glenside Rds
 - Brook St/Moraga Rd
- Shoplifting**
 - Safeway (2)
- Theft, Petty**
 - 3800 block Happy Valley Rd
 - 1700 block Reliez Valley Rd
 - 1100 block Oak Hill Rd
 - 10 block Roxanne Ln
 - 4100 block Happy Valley Rd
 - 1200 block Quandt Ct
 - 900 block Acalanes Rd (from vehicle)
 - Deer Hill/Orchard
 - 3600 block Baker Ln
 - 1000 block Orchard Rd (2)
 - 3300 block Springhill Rd (2)
 - 3600 Baker Ln
 - Deer Hill/Oak Hill Rds
- Theft, ID**
 - 600 block Huntleigh Dr
 - 1000 block Hoedel Ct
 - 1100 block Vacation Dr
 - 3800 block Los Arabis Dr
 - 1100 block Oak Hill Rd
 - 3900 block Happy Valley Rd
 - Reported to police
 - 1100 block Upper Happy Valley Rd
 - 1100 block Oak Hill Rd
 - 900 block Pleasant Hill Rd
 - 3600 block Chestnut St
 - 1200 block Redwood Ln
 - 3300 block N Lucille (2)
- Theft, Grand**
 - 3700 block Mt Diablo Blvd
 - 3600 block Mt Diablo Blvd
- Theft, Vehicle**
 - 3300 block Mt Diablo Blvd
 - Sundale Rd/Village Center
- Threats**
 - Acalanes High School
- Unwanted Guest**
 - 3500 block Mt Diablo Blvd
 - 900 block S Thompson Rd
 - Safeway
- Vandalism**
 - 3100 block Lucas Dr
 - N Lucile Ln/Florence Dr
 - 3200 block Mt Diablo Ct
 - 1200 block Sunset Ln
 - 100 block Iverson Dr
 - 3300 block Springhill Rd

Lennar Project Jumps DRC Hurdle

Still needs Planning Commission okay

By Cathy Tyson

Acknowledging that constructive comments at past meetings called for more than cosmetic changes, architect Chek Tang of Studio T-Square recently presented to the Design Review Commission the significantly revised 66-unit mixed-use project

on a two-acre parcel at the corner of Dolores Drive and Mt. Diablo Boulevard, the site of now-closed Celia's restaurant. The new and improved plans feature interior courtyards, better landscaping and changing the building layout to diminish the scale of the project.

This will be a predominately market rate project, however, as 10 of the 66 for-sale condominiums will be sold at affordable prices to moderate- or low-income households.

...continued on page A9

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Photo by Megan Allen

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2016 Citizen of the Year Nominations Requested

Do you have a person in mind for the City of Lafayette to honor as 2016 Citizen of the Year?

Criteria are as follows:

- Must NOT be a current elected or paid member of any city council, school board or commission;
- Must be a current Lafayette resident;
- Must be someone who has given of their time, money or energy to help make Lafayette a healthy community, where people will want to live, work and shop;
- Must be someone who models excellence in everything they do;
- Must be someone who brings this community together and/or makes us proud to be a member of the community.

A celebration dinner will be held on Friday, March 18 at the Lafayette Park Hotel and Spa to honor the winner. The deadline for submitting nominations is Friday, Feb. 12. The 2016 Lafayette Citizen of the Year Award is co-sponsored by the Lafayette Chamber of Commerce and Lamorinda Weekly. Please email your nomination to Lafayette Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Jay Lifson at jay@lafayettechamber.org or send your nomination to the Lafayette Chamber of Commerce, attention Lafayette Citizen of Year nomination, 100 Lafayette Circle, Suite 103, Lafayette, CA 94549. – C. Tyson

Bond Feasibility Study Results Presented

By Cathy Tyson

Lafayette School Board members got a resounding “yes” when consultants at a Jan. 13 meeting held at Stanley Middle School presented the results of a bond feasibility survey to see if there was potential voter support to maintain the quality of education in local public schools.

A telephone survey reached out to 400 random Lafayette households of residents who would likely vote in either the June or November elections. The very first question asked by consultant True North Research determined how the issues stacked up in voters’ minds, with 90 percent of respondents agreeing that maintaining the quality of education in local public schools was either extremely important or very important.

The Lafayette School District has a two-fold problem: The average age of schools is 62 years old, with associated serious infrastructure issues related to buildings that age – plumbing, roofs, electrical – and there is a need to accommodate a growing number of students.

With no matching money available from the state due to significant budget cutbacks that started in 2008, the Lafayette School District is grappling with “a place where time has stood still,” said architect and consultant Dara Youngdale when presenting facilities assessment findings in October.

Tim McLamey of True North Research explained at the Jan. 13 school board meeting that there was “robust support” for a \$64 million general obligation bond measure with independent citizen oversight that would provide modern, safe classrooms and facilities at elementary and middle schools, and no money for administrative salaries.

Potential voters were also asked about their comfort level with a tax threshold of amounts ranging from \$30 to \$21 dollars per \$100,000 of assessed value that would cost the average homeowner in Lafayette \$194 per year. At each of four price levels sup-

port remained similar, ranging from 63 to 66 percent of likely voters who would vote definitely yes or probably yes.

When respondents were asked how they would choose to spend the bond proceeds, almost three-quarters said they preferred to renovate and upgrade existing schools. Only 15 percent were in favor of reoccupying and renovating the White Pony School that is currently being used by The Meher Schools.

While the consultant’s survey demonstrated voters’ understanding that maintaining the quality of education is the most important issue facing the community, it will be up to the school board to decide if and when to place a bond measure on the ballot.

The November 2016 ballot will likely be long and may have other tax measures from the Contra Costa Transit Authority and the City of Lafayette for a bump in the rate of sales tax. This can “definitely create a headwind,” said District Superintendent Rachel Zinn.

Further public discussions are slated to address Bond Capacity and how to balance multiple objectives: assessment of facility needs and wants, assessment of voter support, and development of a prudent financing plan.

“We’re encouraged by the very positive survey results,” said Zinn, but she cautioned that even with voter support of a \$64-\$70 million bond measure, all the district facilities were evaluated in 2015 and \$130 million worth of repairs and renovations were needed for the district’s four elementary schools and one middle school. With California ranking 46 out of 50 in per-student state spending, according to Ed Source on Jan. 7, 2015, the \$64 million question becomes whether voters will be willing to tax themselves, and if so, what the priorities will be to keep students, safe, dry and warm, while accommodating an increasing number of pupils.

Will City Ask for Increased Sales Tax?

The Sales Tax Subcommittee presented its findings, which determined the amount of available funds as compared to the estimated cost for a variety of potential projects, to the Lafayette City Council at its Jan. 11 meeting. Recent Community Conversations gathered information on a variety of city priorities and residents’ willingness to pay for those items – preserving open space and crime surveillance topped both of those lists.

At issue is a new additional sales tax that could generate revenue for the next 10 years: a one-cent tax level would generate \$30 million, and a half-cent would garner \$15 million. City council members unanimously agreed to have the Sales Tax Subcommittee investigate further. Council Member Traci Reilly suggested narrowing down the focus of priorities in order to set realistic expectations. Everyone agreed with Mayor Mark Mitchell who was “willing to go to the next step” to clearly define parameters. The issue will be heard again at the Feb. 22 council meeting. – C. Tyson.

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Moraga

Public Meetings

Town Council

Wednesday, Jan. 27, 7 p.m.
Wednesday, Feb. 10, 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, Feb. 8, 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

Slight DUI 1/16/16 Busted tail lights got cops' attention on Moraga Road at 11:30 p.m. The 24-year-old female driver of an Audi didn't respond until multiple sirens were activated – kind of a tip off. Surprisingly the driver smelled of alcoholic beverages, and according to her first blood alcohol test, she was barely drunk with a reading of 0.10, but upon a subsequent test at the Moraga Police Department she had a 0.08 reading – which is the legal limit. She was issued a citation and released to a sober adult.

Drunk fighting 1/17/16 There was fighting in the street at almost 1 a.m. near the police department on Rheem Boulevard. Cops determined that a female subject who had just been released after being arrested for DUI was being "uncooperative" and had walked away from her sober caretaker. The subject was located and still had an odor of alcoholic beverages on her person and police surmised that based on her behavior, she was unable to care for herself. "After trying to reason with the subject and get her to return home, she said, 'Then take me to jail, I'm not going back to my mother's house,'" noted the police report. No other sober adult could be found at that hour, so she was arrested for public intoxication and taken to the Martinez jail. Just can't make this stuff up.

Loud party 1/13/16 The loud party reported to be occurring in a residential apartment complex at 11:30 p.m. was actually six college-aged people engaged in loud conversation inside an apartment. Cops wisely concluded this gathering did not constitute an actual loud party as defined by the Moraga Municipal Code. The resident was advised to keep it down.

Bad behavior 1/14/16 A noise complaint reported that a number of subjects were screaming and jumping in front of cars at 1 a.m. in front of a local convenience store. Two subjects were arrested for being drunk in public, using a fake ID to purchase alcohol, as well as being minors in possession of alcohol, and a probation violation. Genius.

Kid locked in gym 1/14/16 The fire department responded to a call about a student locked in an interior room

Hard to Choose an Image for Moraga

Pear or no pear – that is the question

By Sophie Braccini



Option 1



Option 2



Option 3



Option 4

Four wayfinding sign options

Image provided

Taking public surveys and having multiple meetings that go on for hours about the colors and symbols on new town wayfinding signs could seem frivolous to a misinformed outsider. But the matter is not trivial. As the passionate controversy over the new electronic town marquee showed a few months ago, Moragans are demanding when it comes to signs – and for good reason. Formal or whimsical, low- or high-tech, subdued or flashy, public signs say a lot about how a town sees itself.

Last year the town received a \$50,000 Transportation Development Act grant for a comprehensive update of its Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan. The project includes the creation of a wayfinding directional signage program for cars, pedestrians and cyclists. Town staff has been working with consulting firm Studio L'Image, which created the San Leandro wayfinding plan; together they proposed four design options that have been created to differentiate Moraga from its neighboring cities and to reflect the character of the town.

The four members of the Design

Review Board met on Jan. 11 to decide whether there should be a pear or no pear on the signs, and a blue or a green sky over a silhouette of hills. As a historical symbol of the town of Moraga the pear has merits, according to Helder and board member John Glover. The other two members, Ramona Escano-Thompson and Chris Crews, were less enthusiastic. The blue sky also garnered no real consensus for or against.

Glover was less concerned about the color palette than the number of future signs planned, "so Moraga does not start looking like Las Vegas," he said. What was important to Glover was that the number of signs be limited to what was needed for direction and safety. The consultant said a preliminary study showed that about 18 vehicular signs, five pedestrian signs, and 20 bike signs would be included.

The four sign options were proposed to the public through an online survey. Option one is all green with a white pear outline in the top left corner, option two is the same as option one with no pear; option three adds a

blue sky with a pear, and option four has a blue sky with no pear. Of the 123 votes submitted in the online survey, nearly half were for option four. None of the other three options received more than 20 percent of the vote.

The four options were also presented to the citizens committee that meets to discuss the pedestrian and bicycle plan. Their comment was that the blue sky could distract passers-by from the main objective of the sign, which is to inform about direction, so

that would eliminate options three and four.

Escano-Thompson suggested creating temporary mockups of the different versions so people could get a better feel for what these signs would look like. The consultant agreed that paper mockups could be made.

The town council will have a chance to weigh in on the proposed signage within a few weeks. Studio L'Image will then finalize the plan, including positioning and material used.

Moraga Planning Director Ellen Clark noted that the four gateway signs that signal the entrance to Moraga on Canyon Road, Moraga Way, St. Mary's Road and Moraga Road are going to be redone thanks to a donation from the Moraga Movers.

The financing of the new wayfinding plan was not discussed. The grant only funds the study.

Moraga Movers Gives \$40,000 to the Town and Local Groups

The largest dues-paying organization in Moraga, the Moraga Movers, gave the town of Moraga \$10,000 to build four gateway signs at the entrance of the town. Philip Arth, president of the Moraga movers, indicated at the Jan. 13 council meeting that in 2015 the seniors group found itself with a \$40,000 surplus and decided to donate half of that money in 2015, and the remainder in 2016. Other Movers' beneficiaries are the Saint Mary's Scholarship Program, the Saint Mary's High Potential Scholarship Program, and Lamorinda Adult Respite Care. "The feeling was that they (the gateway signs) are worn, they are too low to the ground, they are dated, and some are obstructed by vegetation," said Arth, when explaining why the group decided to give money to the town.

Council Seeks Funds for an Elevator at the Hacienda

By Sophie Braccini

While renovation and development plans for the Hacienda de las Flores have not been finalized, and the upper floors of the Hacienda are underused, the Moraga Town Council asked staff during its Jan. 13 meeting to pursue a grant that would provide partial funding for the installation of an elevator at the facility. Staff identified a grant opportunity through the Contra Costa County Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program. Moraga could get \$96,000 from that fund, which would cover a little less than one-fifth of the half million dollars needed for the project.

Former mayor Graig Crossley, who uses a wheelchair, spoke at the meeting, saying, "I am interested in accessibility at the Hacienda. Location and money have been key issues." But Crossley asked if the

town was not moving ahead of itself, adding "I'm not making the assumption that Gould Evans (the architect in charge of designing the renovation of the Hacienda) is going to go through (with the completion of their plans), so the access to the second level should be pursued." Crossley added that he wanted to know how those upper

levels would be used.

The council members also questioned the timing, and councilmember Teresa Onoda, asked if the architect had weighed in on where the elevator should be located. Gould Evans is scheduled to present its plan to renovate and develop the Hacienda in the coming months. Jay Ingram, the parks and recreation director who

was presenting the project, assured Onoda that the two possible locations for the new elevator made sense for them.

Onoda also questioned the town's use of the upper floors at this time. "The upper levels are not ready for prime time," she said. "It would cost a lot to have classes up there."

... continued on next page

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Fundamental Shift Heralded at Moraga Business Symposium

By Sophie Braccini



From left: Ellen Clark, Ron Mucovich, Jay Kerner and Prof. Kris Chase

Since the 1960s there has been a lack of integration and vision in Moraga's two shopping centers, but that may all soon change. At the Jan. 19 business symposium at Saint

Mary's College, organized by the Moraga Chamber of Commerce, planning director Ellen Clark spoke about an approach to planning that stresses results over regulations and

embraces such concepts as creating human-scale spaces, optimizing connectivity, and encouraging pedestrian access.

... continued on page A11

Funds for Elevator Sought

Mayor Mike Metcalf made a strong argument for going after money while it is available. "It would be utterly stupid not to take advantage of an opportunity to get a good chunk of the

money to put an elevator there," said the mayor, noting that he had no idea where the rest of the money would come from, but that ways could be found to get the missing \$400,000. "If

Moraga does not take advantage of this, it's silly," he added.

The council unanimously approved the decision to submit an application for the CDBG grant.

... continued from page A4

2016 Moraga Town Goals

Cameras and Rheem in, dog park out

By Sophie Braccini

Two community-proposed items rose to the top of the list of 2016 goals for the town of Moraga during the Jan. 21 council meeting: support the Rheem Theatre and implement a surveillance camera system in town.

Residents were invited to suggest their own priorities in preparation of the adoption of the 2016 goals, and the public engagement led to a lively debate. Items such as revisiting the dog park issue, or limiting development did not make the final list.

The meeting started with councilmembers disagreeing on the mayor's first goal to complete a community preference survey and develop a revenue measure for the 2016 ballot. Councilmember Teresa Onoda said the two elements were quite different and her colleagues agreed that surveying the residents was key and would lead to a decision of whether the town needed to look into new revenue sources.

Other ongoing or recurrent town goals such as maintaining sound financial practices, developing a funding strategy for the town's assets and infrastructure, developing plans for the Hacienda de las Flores, reopening discussions with

the school district for new and shared community recreation facilities, completing the update of the hillside and ridgeline regulations, completing the Moraga Center Specific Plan zoning project were adopted with not much squabble.

William Carman, the chair of the Parks and Recreation Commission, defended the goal of improving interconnectedness and public awareness of Moraga's trail system.

Resident Richard Harris asked that adding sidewalks to pedestrian school routes be added to the goals. Planning Director Ellen Clark summarized the different studies such as the Livable Moraga Road Project and the Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan updates that are underway and should lead to grant seeking and sidewalk improvements in 2016.

At the Jan. 13 town council meeting, residents Christine Beckwith and Chuck Pruitt spoke passionately about safety cameras in town. Beckwith had witnessed burglars stealing mail from her neighbor's house, and got their car's license plate. She alerted the police and since then has been spearheading a local campaign to give the police the tools to keep residents safe.

... continued on page A11

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 CalBRE#01029160








3435 Little Ln, Lafayette
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 CalBRE#01029160

2121 Donald Dr #5, Moraga
 COMING SOON
 2BR/1.5BA townhome across from the Moraga Hacienda Park. Trust sale and sold as is! Offered at \$399,000. Call Jim Colhoun at 925.200.2795 for an early preview and additional information!
 CalBRE#01029160

1034 Ramona Ave, Albany
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 This tastefully updated 2 bedroom and 1 bathroom bungalow offers many opportunities; as a perfect starter home to a long-term investment, expanding when you need to. A great space for entertaining, gardening and playing. Offered at \$799,000 by Janine Hunt, 510.409.6266
 CalBRE#01909766

TIP OF THE WEEK
 For the first time in nearly a decade, the Federal Reserve raised its benchmark lending rate last month, bringing to an end an extraordinary era of interest rates at nearly zero. Fed officials emphasized that they intended to raise rates gradually, and only if economic growth continues. Interest rates on mortgages are likely to remain low for years to come, making this a great time to buy and sell real estate!

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Orinda

Public Meetings

City Council

Tuesday, Feb. 2, 7 p.m.
Auditorium, Orinda Library,
26 Orinda Way

Planning Commission

Tuesday, Feb. 9, 7 p.m.
Auditorium, Orinda Library,
26 Orinda Way

Citizens' Infrastructure Oversight Commission

Wednesday, Feb. 10, 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 Jan. 3-16

Alarms	54
Noise Complaints	1
911 Calls (includes hang-ups)	6
Traffic stops	49
Suspicious Circumstances	6
Suspicious Subjects	16
Suspicious Vehicles	24
Barking Dog	
20 block Charles Hill Rd	
10 block Daryl Dr	
Burglary, Auto	
70 block La Cresta Rd	
Miramonte High School	
Burglary, Residential	
100 block Las Vegas Rd	
40 block Loma Vista Dr	
30 block El Gavilan	
Death, Non-criminal	
10 block Ridge Ln	
Disturbance	
Juniper/Hidden Valley Rd	
30 block Hall Dr	
60 block Rheem Blvd	
Orinda Theatre	
Europa Hofbrau	
Embezzlement	
20 block Camino Del Diablo	
Hit & Run	
Glorietta Blvd/Moraga Way	
McCaulous	
Reported to police	
Hwy 24/St Stephen's Dr	
20 block Las Cascadas	
ID Theft	
300 block Dalewood Dr	
10 block Monte Vista Rd	
30 block Estates Dr	
300 block Village Square	
10 block Rabble Rd	
20 block Orinda Way	
10 block Owl Hill Ct	
Reported to police	
Loitering	
Donald/Hall Drives	
Missing Adult	
10 block Ridge Ln	
20 block Crest View Terrace	
Ordinance Violation	
Orinda/Camino Sobrante	
Panhandling	
Rite Aid	
Promiscuous Shooting	
Muth Dr/Wanda Ln	
Wovenwood Dr/Orindawoods	
Public Nuisance	
100 block Leslee Ln	
60 block Loma Vista Dr	
Ivy Dr/Coral Dr	
10 block La Bolsita Way	
100 block Glorietta Blvd	
20 block Altamount Dr	
Post Office	
Rite Aid	
100 block Stein Way	
20 block Miramonte Rd	
Reckless Driving	
Rheem /Glorietta Blvds (2)	
Hwy 24/Camino Pablo (2)	
Miner Rd/Camino Pablo	
St Stephen's Church	
San Pablo Dam Rd/Bear Creek	



Peter & Darlene Hattersley



REAL ESTATE THOUGHTS 2016

Real estate prices will be affected by the unrest in the financial markets, interest rates, availability of properties and political rhetoric this year. We continue to see more Buyers than Sellers, as we have this past year. Uncertainty highlights the importance of working with experienced professionals when selling or buying your home in this unpredictable market. With over thirty years as local real estate professionals, let us 'Help You Reach Your Real Estate Goals.'

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Public Invited to Air Downtown Parking Concerns at Orinda Meeting

By Victor Ryerson

Orinda residents, members of the city's business community, and others are invited to attend a meeting from 7 to 8:30 p.m. Wednesday Jan. 27 to discuss their concerns about downtown area parking issues. The public outreach meeting, which will be held in the Orinda Library Auditorium at 26 Orinda Way, is part of the kickoff for the six-month Downtown and Affected Neighborhoods Parking Study being conducted on behalf of the city by TJKM Transportation Consultants.

The format of the meeting will include a presentation of the scope of the study, followed by an opportunity for members of the public to share their ideas and concerns about parking in the downtown area and adjacent neighborhoods, a growing topic of discussion with the city. "Comments from the public will be reviewed and considered when the final downtown parking improvement study is prepared," according to the city's announcement.

The study will cover a lot of

ground. Topics that were identified late last year by the Orinda City Council include:

- The existing parking supply, demand, and current utilization.
- Current parking policies and alternatives to maximize utilization of existing spaces.
- Parking enforcement strategies.
- Intrusion of BART commuters into local business and residential neighborhoods.
- Enhanced customer satisfaction.
- Public-private partnership oppor-

tunities.

- Permit parking for various users.
- ADA compliance of on-street parking spaces.

Downtown residents, business owners, employees, customers, neighborhood residents, and other stakeholders are encouraged to attend the meeting and discuss these concerns.

Further information is available from Tonya Gilmore at (925) 253-4291 or tgilmore@cityoforinda.org.

SP201 – Call It a Dam

... continued from page A1



Recent rains have swelled San Pablo Creek beyond its banks, sending debris downstream that clogs up small opening in the "drop structure," SP201. Photos Brian Waters

That would include EBMUD, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, the California State Water Control Board, and local authorities. He smiled at his friend Brian Waters, who is also on the board of FOC, as he said this. The two have been in the same fight for a decade, and even were roomies at Humboldt State back in the day. "We were roommates 56 years ago," said Waters, after laboriously climbing over a fence to get a current picture of the water barely trickling through the SB201-structure that is keeping rainbows from running up the creek. "But who's counting?"

Now they are united again in trying to get barriers removed, and to increase water quality, restoring standards to where they were before highway and major construction caused massive disruption in the landscape, and thus, to native trout populations.

Standing outside the library in downtown Orinda, Barrett pointed to the U.S. flag flying outside the Orinda city offices in front of the grand art deco building. "When I was in the fifth grade, that was my school, and I raised the flag on that flagpole," Barrett said about the city office complex that was once an elementary school. "When I looked out, there was none of this." He turned around to survey a strip mall, the highway, parking spaces, RiteAid, Safeway, and the hill below where a creek once ran openly through it. "There was a creek there, once," Barrett said. "And lots of fish. I know, because I saw them, all the time."

But now there is hope. Water quality has improved, and trout need clear water. They may yet be able to

migrate back up into Upper San Pablo Creek, Waters and Barrett say.

Yet while trout populations are healthy along some East Bay creeks, trout have been largely absent since the construction of the highways and dam systems along the parts of San Pablo Creek to the south of the dam (the creek flows north), ever since the major construction of shopping areas and national and state highway systems were built. To complicate the issue, what the California Department of Fish and Game call "drop structures," or cement fortifications, were put in along creeks in the 1960s to, according to whom one talks, either impede water flow to decrease debris or to slow the water to keep it cleaner once it hits San Pablo Reservoir.

"The drop structure was put in place in the 1960s and its purpose is to prevent erosion of the creek onto EBMUD's aqueduct system and the erosion of the Bear Creek Road Bridge," said EBMUD public relations representative Nelsy Rodriguez via email. "EBMUD does on occasion clear the drop-off structure of debris, however it is not a regular practice."

Waters and Barrett have regularly tried for 10 years to get the drop structure, which has a grocery-cart sized opening in it, cleared so that trout can swim upstream.

San Pablo Dam was built circa 1960. Water flows down to it from San Pablo Creek originating in Orinda and flows north toward the bay. The San Pablo Dam holds up the water so that it can be stored and pumped and used otherwise, then the overflow drains again toward the bay. Trout still live in that part of the creek. But the upper part of the reservoir's source – the down-flowing part of San Pablo Creek – has the "drop structure" that keeps fish from going upstream again.

Roaches and sticklebacks are plentiful in the watershed upstream of



The opening in the drop structure on upper San Pablo Creek unexpectedly blew out last fall, which would have allowed fish to migrate up into its native waters. The opening is clogged again.

the dam. But the trout have disappeared. "I think it's been at least 10 years since anyone has seen a trout," Barrett said. Chalk that up to 1960s construction, the paving over from highways, you name it. But the water quality is now such that a re-introduction of the fish makes sense, according to Waters and Barrett.

But fish can't get through a blocked "drop structure," which people from Friends of Orinda Creeks call a dam, so there is quite the literal impasse between the organization and its compatriots, all of whom would like to see the return of the native rainbows to their native homeland. The question is, when?



NOTICE OF OPPORTUNITY TO SERVE ON A CITY OF ORINDA COMMISSION OR COMMITTEE

The City of Orinda is seeking applications from **resident volunteers** to serve on the City's:

- Art in Public Places Committee (1)**
- Citizens' Infrastructure Oversight Commission (3)**
- Historic Landmark Committee (2)**
- Parks & Recreation Commission (2)**
- Planning Commission (3)**
- Public Works Aesthetic Review Committee (1)**

The City of Orinda is also seeking applications from **resident volunteers** to serve as the City's Liaison to the following local agencies:

- Contra Costa Mosquito and Vector Control District Trustee (1)**
- Contra Costa County Advisory Council on Aging (1)**
- County Connection Citizens Advisory Committee (1)**

Statement of Interest forms are available from the Orinda City Clerk's Office, 22 Orinda Way, Orinda, CA 94563. If you have any specific questions regarding the recruitment, please contact Michele Olsen, City Clerk at 925-253-4221 or molsen@cityoforinda.org. Application forms may also be downloaded from the City's website at www.cityoforinda.org.

EXTENDED DEADLINE: Completed Statement of Interest forms must be submitted to the City Clerk's Office by Wednesday, February 10, 2016 at 5:00pm.

Qualified applicants for City Commission and Committee appointments will be invited to interview before the full City Council.



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The Orinda City Council recognized retiring Orinda Chamber of Commerce Board President Sylvia Jorgensen, Secretary Patti Camras, and Executive Director Candis Kattenburg on Jan. 12. The council also welcomed incoming President Roy Hodgkinson and Executive Director Sophie Braccini at the meeting. Photo Victor Ryerson



The Orinda City Council recognized outgoing Orinda Union School District Superintendent, Dr. Joe Jaconette, at its Jan. 12 meeting. Jaconette, who served as the superintendent of Orinda schools since 2007, announced his retirement from the OUSD in September. A search committee was established to find a replacement and the Orinda School Board recently announced it is in the second phase of the interview process. The board hopes to announce a new superintendent appointment by Feb. 8. Photo Victor Ryerson

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Laura Abrams CalBRE# 01272382



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Elena Hood CalBRE# 01221247



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ORINDA \$895,000
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Elena Hood CalBRE# 01221247



ORINDA \$1,765,000
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Elena Hood CalBRE#01221247



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Tom Stack CalBRE# 01501769



BERKELEY \$1,049,000
4/2. West Berkeley Charmer. Renovated home is in move-in ready. New paint w/hrdw flrs throughout.
Tom Stack CalBRE# 01501769



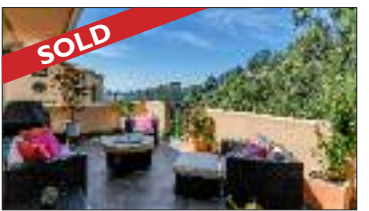
MORAGA \$1,550,000
3/2.5. Beautiful finishes, 2643 sqft, lovely landscaping, new appliances, remodeled master bath.
Elena Hood CalBRE#01221247



MORAGA \$1,430,000
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Elena Hood CalBRE#01221247



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Laura Abrams CalBRE# 01272382



OAKLAND \$1,395,000
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Tom Stack CalBRE# 01501769



ORINDA \$1,685,000
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Diane Petek CalBRE# 01703677



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Fire Districts

Public Meetings

Moraga-Orinda Fire District

Board of Directors
Wednesday, Feb. 3, 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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Lafayette Station 16 Rehabilitation Update

By Nick Marnell

Firefighters assigned to Contra Costa County Fire Protection District station 16 in Lafayette likely feared less for their lives entering a burning building than they did when they returned to the station. The building suffered possible mold contamination from rodent infestation, and the county pulled out the engine company and closed the distressed fire station in 2012. An on-again, off-again joint venture with the Moraga-Orinda Fire District to build a fire station in north Orinda crumbled in August when ConFire chose to rehab station 16.

"I am almost embarrassed to say that I had been convinced that station 16 was condemned and could not be fixed," said fire chief Jeff Carman, given a report by a

building contractor indicating that the 58-year-old structure was not beyond repair. Based on that preliminary information, the chief presented a rehabilitation plan in August to his board of directors, which unanimously supported the effort and told Carman to report back with a final proposal.

Not willing to be fooled again, Carman demanded a written report confirming that the Los Arabis Drive fire station was repairable, so the district hired H. D. Rueb Structural Engineers of Pleasant Hill to do the assessment. The company visited the station site four times in September and October and its report, delivered to ConFire Dec. 7, concluded, "The general structural appearance of the building appears to be adequate."

The report noted that the structure will require seismic upgrades and that the interior concrete slabs, one of them significantly cracked, should be replaced. It also recommended a geotechnical analysis on the soil below the slabs, which deputy chief Lewis Broschard said will soon be completed.

"The concrete floor has sagged considerably and we need to determine why," said Carman. "So we will cut a couple of access points in the slab floor to determine soil quality and get a look at what happened to cause the sag." The rehab plan was to jackhammer up the slabs and replace them with new ones, but the chief said he must be assured that whatever happened below the floor will not happen again.

Design work must also be completed, from which the district can develop construction documents and then determine approximate costs to rehab the station. "I think before we go after design work we want to make sure there isn't something bad going on under the slab," said Carman.

Notwithstanding the unknown below the interior building slabs and the holdup in completing the station design, Carman said he still expects to present the board a financial plan for the rehab by March.

"It's an aggressive timeline, but I think we can do it," said the chief.

The initial estimate for rehabbing station 16 was \$1 million.

El Nino Preparedness: Listen and Learn

By Cathy Dausman



During the recent rains, this section of trees was flooded near The Bluffs neighborhood in Moraga. Photo Wendy Schreck

When there's something strange – perhaps an El Nino gully-washer in your neighborhood – who ya' gonna call? The answer depends on what you want to know, and where you live in Lamorinda. Always call 911 for emergencies, reminds Moraga-Orinda Fire District Chief Stephen Healy. All three Lamorinda communities use Nixle alerts to notify residents of public safety issues through a smartphone app. Dennis Rein, Lamorinda's Emergency Preparedness Coordinator, suggests using two-way radios for neighbor-to-neighbor communications during emergencies when even telephone service disappears. The radios, known as FRS or FRS/GMRS radios, are inexpensive and readily available both online and in stores. Contra Costa

County Community Warning System alerts the public to imminent life and safety threats using sirens, phone, text messaging and email. CWS also maintains a presence on Twitter and Facebook. The National Weather Service provides local radar and satellite imaging and detailed forecasts from the San Francisco Bay Area south to Monterey. Local radio and television stations broadcast weather warnings through their Emergency Alert System. The EAS is a 1997 update of what was formerly known as the Emergency Broadcast System. Although EAS is designed primarily to deliver nationwide warnings, state or local authorities may also use it to deliver area specific emergency information. Staying plugged in to local websites and social media may make it easier for you to weather the storm.

Website contact information:

- Nixle: www.nixle.com
- County community warning system: <http://www.cococws.us/>
- National Weather Service: <http://www.wrh.noaa.gov/mtr/>

Phone contacts:

Lafayette:

- Police: 24-hour dispatch: (925) 284-5010
- Fire (Contra Costa County Fire) dispatch: (925) 933-1313 website: www.cccfpd.org
- Public Works: (925) 934-3908

Moraga:

- Police: office: (925) 376-2515 24-hour dispatch: (925) 284-5010
- Fire (Moraga-Orinda Fire District) website: www.mofd.org
- 911 for emergency; (925) 258-4599 non-emergency
- Public Works, business hours: (925) 888-7026 or (925) 888-7029 (shop)

Orinda:

- Police, 24-hour dispatch: (925) 646-2441
- Fire (Moraga-Orinda Fire District) website: www.mofd.org
- 911 for emergency; (925) 258-4599 non-emergency
- Public Works: (925) 253-4252

Note: At times landline telephones (although not portable wireless phones) continue to work even when the power is out.

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/>.

Moraga

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.

Camino Pablo Elementary

1111 Camino Pablo
(925) 376-4435

Donald Rheem Elementary 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

90 Laird Drive
(925) 376-4441

Los Perales Elementary

22 Wakefield Drive
(925) 631-0105

Orinda

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.

Del Rey Elementary School

25 El Camino Moraga
(925) 258-3099

Glorietta Elementary School

15 Martha Road
(925) 254-8770

Sleepy Hollow Elementary

20 Washington Lane
(925) 254-8711

Wagner Ranch Elementary

350 Camino Pablo
(925) 258-0016

The Lafayette School District registration for kindergarten/transitional kindergarten took place on Jan. 19 and 20 at its four elementary schools. For information, visit www.lafsd.k12.ca.us.

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Letters to the Editor

Opinions in Letters to the Editor are the express views of the writer and not necessarily those of the Lamorinda Weekly. All published letters will include the writer's name and city/town of residence -- we will only accept letters from those who live in, or own a business in, the communities comprising Lamorinda (please give us your phone number for verification purposes only). Letters should be 350 words or less; letters of up to 500 words will be accepted on a space-available basis. Visit www.lamorindaweekly.com for submission guidelines.

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



Editor:

I would suggest that the Town Council, and particularly the Planning Committee drive over to Camino Ricardo and take a long look at the behemoth houses now currently under construction there. I can only assume that the Planning Committee made obvious errors in determining height limitations in allowing the construction of these monstrosities.

Truckloads and truckloads of soil were scraped from the top of that beautiful orchard hillside. Day after day they lined up for their fill and trucked it away to somewhere. This was done, I assume, to bring things into agreement with ridgeline rules. In its place hotel-like houses are being built.

These structures have no esthetic value and do not fit into the rest of Camino Ricardo's homes.

We used to consider Moraga as semi-rural. Recently I was told we are no longer a town, but a city. If that is so, I guess it doesn't matter that, as you drive down Camino Ricardo to the light, the distant hills are no longer visible. Does the Planning Committee care about our once lovely town and sees only dollar signs? Shame.

In their recent letter to this newspaper, the Committee to Stop Town Center Homes has it right. Another blight coming!

Dolores Humm
Moraga

Public Forum

If you have significant knowledge about an issue facing Lamorinda, or one of its communities, that requires more than the 350 words to which we must limit Letters to the Editor, don't despair! You can submit your letter to our Public Forum section. Just send your letter to letters@lamorindaweekly.com and let us know you'd like to be considered for the Public Forum. We will not accept Public Forum submissions regarding a current ballot measure or candidate for public office. Opinions expressed in Public Forum are the express views of the writer and not necessarily those of the Lamorinda Weekly.

Lafayette

Lennar Project Jumps DRC Hurdle

... continued from page A2



Proposed Lennar project

The new three-story development will also feature a restaurant anchoring the Dolores Drive corner, some commercial space, underground parking, a lap pool and pool house, two lobbies, a fitness room, bike storage and public art. Conditions of approval imposed by the city also necessitate improving the East Bay Municipal Utility District right-of-way with bicycle and pedestrian path upgrades and enhanced landscaping; the utility has an easement for an underground pipeline that diagonally bisects the property, which cannot be built upon, leaving a small triangle near the freeway that will house the pool and pool house.

The handful of volunteers who make up the DRC complimented the overall changes, noting that the project has "come a long way" from the original version presented in 2014, but still offered constructive criticism. Gordon Chong shared how pleased he was that the architect successfully "captured the relationship of interior and exterior

spaces," while J. Alan Sayles called it "a beautiful project -- but I'd rather see it in downtown Walnut Creek. It's just too much."

In a detailed staff report, Planning and Building Director Niroop Srivatsa itemized how Lennar Homes has responded to the "overwhelming majority of comments raised at previous meetings" and recommended approval.

The DRC Commissioners unanimously agreed to recommend approval to the next review body, the Planning Commission, knowing that the project would be back at the DRC for more detailed design suggestions in the future. That Planning Commission public hearing is scheduled at 7 p.m. on Feb. 1 in the Community Hall of the Lafayette Library and Learning Center.

In a lengthy letter to the members of the DRC, Tang wrote that the goal of the project is to create a "village layout that ties in with Lafayette's small-town character, and fosters community-building by encouraging interaction among new

residents, and providing public and private-common spaces for gathering and socializing." Some of that community building has begun already with on-going talks with across-the-street merchant Diamond K to find a solution that works for both parties.

Image provided



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Lafayette Volunteer Vacancies:

- Banner Advisory Committee** develops the downtown street pole banner program.
- Bicycle Pedestrian Committee (BPAC)** advises the Circulation Commission on issues related to non-motorized vehicles and pedestrians.
- Capital Projects Assessment Committee** reviews the current Capital Improvement Program (CIP) and develops the long-range capital improvement plans for the City.
- Community Center Foundation** is dedicated to renovating and expanding the Lafayette Community Center.
- Creeks Committee** encourages beautification of Lafayette's creeks and improves residents' awareness of creek maintenance and pollution prevention policies.
- Crime Prevention Commission** studies safety issues in the City and works to educate the public.
- Emergency Preparedness Commission** coordinates preparation and planning efforts to mitigate the effects of natural and man-made disasters.
- Environmental Task Force** is committed to developing and implementing environmental policies and programs that will enable the City and its residents to meet their present needs without sacrificing the ability of future generations to meet their needs.
- Parks, Trails & Recreation Commission** supports effective management and operations of existing park facilities to maximize public enjoyment and continue to pursue easements for trails as shown on the Trails Master Plan.
- Public Art Committee** oversees the city's public art program and its administration.
- Senior Services Commission** identifies senior concerns and needs; provides information about resources; and promotes community programs and services that enable seniors to live meaningful lives.
- Lafayette Representative** to the Contra Costa County Advisory Council on Aging.

For applications and additional information visit the city's website www.ci.lafayette.ca.us or call Joanne Robbins, City Clerk 925-284-1968.

Application deadline March 31, 2016.

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Business

Deer Hill Winery Takes Over Owner's Basement

By A. K. Carroll



Photos courtesy Bill Scanlin



Sometimes a little hobby turns into a big one, expanding its influence as it takes over your free time, your resources and even your home. This has been the experience of Lafayette resident and owner of Deer Hill Wines, Bill Scanlin, whose backyard vineyard turned into a project that turned into a business that is taking over his home.

"We wanted a place (where) we could entertain," Scanlin said of the hosting room that he recently added to the ground level of his house. The room was six months in the making, which seems relatively quick when you consider the final result. The room is rustic and dimly lit with marble counters, beige stone walls and large arched doorways.

Though the wet bar is stocked with sparkling glass goblets and there are murals of vineyards painted in the alcoves and racks of bottles alongside one wall, Scanlin insists that it isn't a designated wine room.

"It's not a public tasting room," he clarified. "I have to get to know

somebody before I have them over." Some of this is on account of city regulations and some of it is simply fitting to the level of Scanlin's winemaking, which is currently something between a hobby and a business.

Scanlin planted his vines shortly after moving into his current home in 1998. When a friend of Scanlin's visited his new property for the first time, he remarked that it would be ideal for growing grapes. "I thought 'what the heck?' It sounds like fun," said Scanlin. "Then you start to get into it."

Scanlin primarily grows cabernet sauvignon, with 600 vines covering roughly three quarters of his 1.5 acres. He also plants patches of cab franc and merlot, which he uses for blending his 95-percent cab. Scanlin's wine is "field-blended," which means that he does little to manipulate it once it has been crushed and fermented. "It is what it is," said Scanlin. And it is pretty good for an in-home production.

But like any hobby, Scanlin

started out slowly and had to learn from his mistakes. He began making wine with a few friends just for fun, and eventually his own vineyard started producing fruit. "I had my mistakes," said Scanlin. "I lost a few years for different reasons. I remember pumping a couple hundred gallons of it down the drain."

There were also the infamous Lamorinda deer to contend with. "I had a lot of problems in the beginning with deer breaking in and ruining the crop," said Scanlin. "So I didn't get a crop for maybe four years." Despite this fact, Scanlin's label bears an emblem of the animal. "I finally conquered them," he said.

Scanlin is a member of the Lamorinda Wine Growers Association, a group of 90-100 grape growers that formed in 2005. Only a handful have bonded wineries, including Scanlin. "It kind of legitimizes the hobby," he remarked. "I just thought it would be a good thing to do."

The association is currently pushing for Lamorinda to gain approval as

its own American Viticultural Area (AVA). Right now they are recognized as a part of the San Francisco Bay Area, but that doesn't account for Lamorinda's unique terroir and climate, which Scanlin compares to Napa, with cool nights and warm days. The AVA approval, which should go through by April 1, is exciting for a winemaker like Scanlin. "We get to say there's something special about Lamorinda – the soil, the weather – there's something special about the wine in this area."

Like most hobbies, winemaking is one that Scanlin has scaled up to slowly, but surely. "I've gone to classes. I've talked to people. I've done a lot of reading," said Scanlin. He gets help with some of the physical labor, but calls all of the shots on the overall process. Scanlin describes his wine as drinkable and hearty. "I really like full-bodied, rich wines," he said. "I try to make my wines have that characteristic." He and his wine have made appearances at the Lafayette wine show, the Orinda

Trivia Bee and other local events.

"I haven't pushed it yet," said Scanlin. "I still need to go out and get this put into stores and in restaurants around here." Deer Hill Wines isn't his priority right now, but like the vines in his yard and the number of bottles on his wine rack, the hobby is growing on him.

"If I can produce wine that can command a high price, that'd be great," said Scanlin, who considers wine as a potential retirement business. "I'd like to make and be known for having a really good boutique wine that everyone's after. But I'm not that widely known yet."

Scanlin's dreams for Deer Hill Wines are much like his dreams for the new space in his home, where he envisions winemakers' dinners, corporate business meetings, and social gatherings in the future. "I think a lot of possibilities can happen."

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

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

Reve Bistro Opens in Lafayette

960 Moraga Road
(925) 385-0793 – www.revebistro.com

Executive chef Paul Magu and his wife, Laura, opened Reve Bistro at the former site of Chevalier on Moraga Road in Lafayette. Touted as "your classic everyday French bistro," 5-star chef Magu plans to "pay homage to the French comfort food he fell in love with as a boy growing up in Paris."

Lafayette Green Awards Nominations Requested

The annual Lafayette Awards of Environmental Excellence, more commonly known as the Lafayette Green Awards, recognize outstanding efforts that contribute to a more sustainable community and help the City achieve its environmental goals. Winners are selected by Lafayette's Environmental Task Force using the following criteria: How successfully does the candidate's activities reduce their footprint (current and future)? How much has the candidate's activities helped achieve the city's environmental goals? How much has the candidate's activities inspired others in the community? Can it be replicated? The nomination form can be downloaded from the city of Lafayette website, filled in and submitted online at www.lovelafayette.org. Deadline March 9.

Zach Smith Named January Moraga Employee of the Month

Waiter and barista Zach Smith of Home/made kitchen café and bakery is the Moraga Employee of the Month for January. Since the restaurant opened in 2014, Smith has played an important role as a waiter and barista while also serving as the eatery's beverage manager. He has a popular following among patrons of the popular restaurant. "Zach is a superb representative of Home/made kitchen," said owner and manager Gayle Somers. "He has a gift for remembering names and peoples' preferences when they come for lunch or dinner. He's a big part of our success due to his great customer service." The Moraga Rotary and Chamber of Commerce will present Smith with his award and gift cards to Safeway and TJ Maxx in Moraga at an upcoming Moraga Rotary lunch in February.



From left: Chamber President Wendy Scheck, Zach Smith, Home/made kitchen owner Gayle Somers, and Rotary President Roger Gregory. Photo provided

News from the three Chambers of Commerce

Lafayette

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/>.

Ribbon Cutting for Farmyard Darlings at 5 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 11 at 20 Lafayette Circle.

The kickoff event of the Lamorinda Business Forum (formerly Entrepreneur's Club) will be held at 5:30 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 11 at the Bank of the West, 3583 Mt. Diablo Blvd. Attorney Asha Wilkerson will discuss "Small Business Law – What You Need to Know."

Monthly Mixer at 5:30 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 24 at Las Trampas, 3460 Lana Lane.

Coffee with the Mayor, Mark Mitchell, at 8 a.m. Friday, Feb. 26 in the Chamber Conference Room.

Moraga

Save the date for the 2016 Business Person of the Year Dinner at 6 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 23 at the Moraga Country Club. Cost: \$50 per person. For information, email Kathe Nelson at kathe@moragachamber.org.

Valentine-themed Ribbon Cutting for Natasha Grasso Jewelry at 4 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 4 at 386 Park Street, Suite A.

Orinda

Ribbon Cutting at 7 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 4 at Cine Cuvée in Theatre Square.

Outgoing president Sylvia Jorgensen, and retiring executive director Candy Kattenburg will be recognized at the Awards and Recognition Luncheon at noon on Friday, Feb. 12 at the Orinda Country Club. 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.

Save the date for "A Night of Comedy," featuring headliner Brad Williams from Showtime's highest rated comedy special, "Fun Size," and Ben Feldmen at 7:30 p.m. Friday, March 4 at the Orinda Theatre. For ticket and event information, visit www.orindachamber.org, or call (925) 254-3909.

Celebrating an Anniversary?

If your business is celebrating a significant anniversary (5, 10, 20 years or more ...) send us a photo of your business, the owner(s) or the staff with specific information about your business and what you're celebrating, and we'll include it in an upcoming issue.

Coyote Sightings on the Rise

But fear not – they're a natural part of Lamorinda's landscape

By Chris Lavin



This coyote was spotted at 7:45 a.m. on Jan. 12 near the upper parking lot of Glorietta Elementary School. Photo Paul Greenstone

Tales have seemed abundant of late: A grandmother sees two coyotes near the trail where she is pushing her grandchild in a stroller, a father snaps a photo of another trotting near the gate of Glorietta Elementary School in Orinda, a big coyote is seen perched in the middle of the road in Canyon, prompting neighbors to

email each other about keeping their cats inside.

Coyote sightings are everywhere throughout Lamorinda, but is it the time of year, or are there actually more coyotes around?

"Absolutely there are more coyotes," said Kate Marianchild, author of "Secrets of the Oak Woodlands: Plants and Animals

Among California's Oaks," published by Heyday Books in 2014. "Coyote populations are on the increase because of the human predation on them."

And therein lies the irony: Killing a coyote, she says, actually prompts something in the pack's females to have more pups, "because there is more food available." So whether they are eating red squirrels or ground squirrels or rats or chickens or cats or little dogs, by eliminating an adult coyote from the pack, it is a yearlong Thanksgiving buffet for the local coyote populations until the reproductive cycle starts again.

"Coyotes are very, very resilient and adaptable animals," Marianchild said. "They adapt to urban areas quite easily."

Many times it is the people in areas like Lamorinda who are causing the influx. Coyotes are so much fun to see that people start to feed them and begin to leave out food at their homes, or when hikers or residents see coyotes along a park or trail, they might toss them a bit of sandwich.

"People who see coyotes want to get close," said Camilla Fox, probably the best local expert on coyotes moving into urban areas. She started Project Coyote in Marin County 20 years ago. She said what people don't recognize is that the coyote, which has been around since the Pleistocene

Epoch, is a top predator in the area, keeping rats, squirrels and other small mammals in check. It's a healthy balance, she said.

"There is a whole variety of variables as to why people are seeing more coyotes," Fox said. "We are right now moving into breeding season so we might be seeing more movement." With breeding season starting, Fox said it is young adults – probably like the coyote seen at Glorietta Elementary – that are breaking out from the pack and branching out. "It's not possible to say whether it's a female or male," she said about the Glorietta photo, "but it's probably a young adult."

And coyotes do, indeed, get into trash when they are hungry. "If people don't secure their garbage, yes, coyotes and other animals will get into the bins," Fox said. But the presence of coyotes is a good thing, she said. They help control hanta virus and plague, and other illnesses that exist in the area, by eating rodent populations.

Coyotes will also eat cat or dog food that is left out on porches or decks, or the dogs or cats themselves. "I had a neighbor who lost two cats to coyotes, right off his front porch," said Bill Swearingen of Burton Valley. "He ended up shooting it. You have to be careful about what kind of gun you use in an urban area." (The writer of this piece resisted using an exclamation point on that last sentence.) Ac-

ording to Marianchild, shooting a coyote only exacerbates the situation.

Marianchild and Fox both said that instead of luring coyotes in, it is best to keep the animals' instincts intact. "When you see one, wave your hands or a scarf and yell at them," Fox said. "That will keep them believing that you are a threat."

As far as the Moraga grandmother who wrote to this newspaper to report seeing two coyotes in Lafayette near the trail where she was pushing her 4-month-old granddaughter in a stroller, Fox said she probably has nothing to worry about.

"Of course there is reason for concern," Fox said. "Anybody would be concerned if they had a small child with them." But she postulates that any aggressive act from a canine in the field may be a hybrid of dog and coyote – the dog part wants to approach people and the coyote part wants to run away.

"Coyotes will be digging their dens soon," Fox said, so look forward to April. And don't toss those wild coyotes any sandwiches. Scare them, instead, and watch them run.

More about Kate Marianchild's wildlife essays can be found at www.katemarianchild.com. Information about Project Coyote can be found at www.projectcoyote.org.

Moraga

Fundamental Shift

... continued from page A5

Jay Kerner, CEO of U.S. Realty Partners, the new owner of a large portion of the Rheem Valley Shopping Center, spoke of revitalizing the center into a community and shopping space that everyone will be proud of, adding a central gathering area, indoor and outdoor dining or offering entertainment options.

"We would want the center to provide a social experience, a place to go to be part of an event, a place for a family outing," he said.

Clark said that she was excited for the opportunity to work with Kerner and his team on initiatives to revitalize the Rheem Center. "It's been a long-standing community goal to improve and revitalize the Rheem Center, and one obstacle has been the willingness of the shopping center owner to engage with the town in that process," she said.

"We are here to improve the experience," Kerner said. "This is a great time for retail. We are now getting a lot of inquiries from new local shops and regional tenants that want to start or develop their businesses."

Presenting a pertinent view of Moraga's fundamental economic parameters, Clark noted that the town suffers from being away from major transportation, both Highway 24 and BART, and suffers a significant sales tax leakage: only 25 percent of dollars spent by residents are spent in town, but it is not as bad as other neighboring cities, such as Orinda.

Clark noted that Moraga collects half of what Lafayette gets in sales tax per capita, but she noted that Moraga has strengths when considering potential growth of its economy. There are a lot of unmet needs in Moraga. Residents get almost none of their recreation products in town and they spend only 29 percent of their restaurant dollars in town. Also, contrary to other towns, Moraga has available space to

grow, plenty of parking spaces, and attracts many shoppers from out of town to shops like T.J. Maxx.

Kerner said the first order of business was to make sure that the operations at the Center were in order, and that his firm had also started on its marketing plan. "We want to get buy-in from the community," he said. "We will propose sketches and start a discussion." He of course warned the community that while his firm had set aside funds to invest in the center, these were not unlimited. He added that he thought that Moraga's population was large enough for the type of businesses he hoped to bring to town.

Commercial real estate professional Ron Mucovich and Saint Mary's Economics Professor Kristine Chase also spoke at the symposium. Mucovich noted that commercial real estate in Moraga was in good shape with only an 11.5 percent vacancy rate, and that the town benefited from a relatively low average rent price of \$2 per square foot per month. He added that the retail was suffering from nearby as well as online competition. Chase placed Moraga in the context of the Bay Area and Contra Costa County, explaining that our county may not grow as fast as the peninsula but is producing more long-term stability. In that context, she noted the importance of the college in Moraga's economics that adds to the stability and also offers an opportunity to diversify the customers' characteristics.

"Although it's not realistic to think there's a silver bullet that's going to fix everything overnight," Clark said after the meeting, "there are a lot of practical things we can do, like updating the commercial zoning regulations, that could make a real difference for businesses in the Rheem Center and our other commercial districts. I'm looking forward to it."

Moraga

2016 Moraga Town Goals

... continued from page A5

The residents met with Moraga Police Lt. Jon King, and Chief Bob Priebe, now interim town manager, confirmed that his department would soon come with a cost proposal for the council to make a decision. All agreed at the goal setting meeting to add the cameras to the list of objectives for 2016.

Vice-Mayor Trotter and Councilmember Roger Wykle backed a public suggestion to support building a long-term strategy for the Rheem Theatre. Their request was met by the mayor's skepticism, as he was not sure there is much the town could do. But Trotter insisted that the goal had both a symbolic and a practical aspect since the town started working with that property owner on a development

agreement. All agreed to add the support of the local theater to the list of 2016 goals.

Some residents had asked that a new off-leash dog rules be studied. Councilmembers remembered the considerable amount of time spent on the topic of a dog park from 2009 to 2012 and unanimously refused to add that goal to their 2016 list. Several residents had also asked that further limits be placed on development. Jill Keimach, who was sitting in the town manager's seat for the last time, said that the ridgeline and hillside development study should be completed first and that it may be enough to address this concern. No one decided to push that topic any further.

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Giving Dreams an Address

Lamorinda Frustrations Mount Due to Bus Driver Shortage

... continued from page A1

It's been very stressful for everyone," Hansen said. "Our recommendation is to have parental supervision at bus stops and a backup plan for transportation for the students." She noted that the beginning of January was almost flawless.

According to Hansen, First Student currently has four routes without permanent drivers. "First Student asks drivers from Santa Rosa or Stockton to fill in, but it continues to be a challenge." The Cincinnati-based company cannot pull human resources from across state lines, since California law does not recognize bus driver certificates from other states. In its July 2015 edition, "School Bus Fleet" surveyed bus operators nationwide and reported that 94 percent of school bus contracting companies did not have enough drivers, compared to 85 percent in 2014.

When First Student fails to provide service or when buses are significantly late, LSBP charges the company a fee. It amounted to \$19,000 in December. Some

parents are now asking to be refunded for the lost days. "I'm hoping that there will be some kind of reimbursement for the days service that was not/will not be provided as we had to make other last minute adjustments to our schedule," wrote one parent on route 17 in Orinda.

The LSBP board will consider in February refunding parents when service cannot be performed. The current LSBP contract does not have that type of provision. The only existing partial refund happens when students drop a route for the rest of the year. At the Jan. 11 LSBP meeting, staff proposed four different options for compensating the parents: refund them based on actual fee - \$2.53 per round trip day; provide a pass in lieu of daily refunds; provide a voucher toward next year's annual bus pass; offer a choice of one trip pass or a voucher for next year. The LSBP board will decide at its next meeting in February which route they want to go.

"Drivers shortage is a national

trend that affects any form of over-the-road transportation, including freight and bus drivers," says Chris Kemper, spokesman for First Student. The company employs 57,000 persons and owns close to 50,000 buses, and Kemper says it is putting more emphasis on recruiting drivers.

Mike Metcalf, the Moraga council member who sits on the LSBP board, said at the recent council meeting that the shortage in our area is also fueled by defections of bus drivers hired by private companies running shuttles that simply double their wages.

"It is true," confirmed Hansen, "and First Student is looking at new wages/benefit packages for their drivers." She adds that if anyone is interested in becoming a school bus driver (retired folks make great drivers), they should call First Student at (925) 363-7327.

For meeting dates and more information about The Lamorinda School Bus Program, visit www.lamorindaschoolbus.org.



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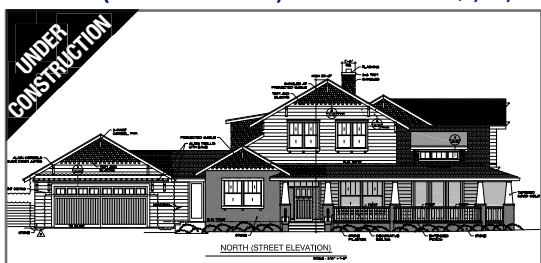







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One Orinda Student's Passion for Paper

By Diane Claytor



Alex Meckes' origami sculptures fill up the family dining room table. Photos Diane Claytor

single flat sheet of paper into a finished sculpture using only folding and sculpting techniques. Meckes found that not only did he really like this art form, he was really good at it. His mom, Wendy Meckes, described her son as "always being very focused. He's like a builder and once he finds something that captures his interest, he sticks with it."

"I started out making very simple origami objects and then this happened," Meckes exclaimed as he pointed to a dining room table covered in a myriad of geometrical shapes in varying sizes and colors, or, as he called them, platonic solids. According to the precocious Meckes, "geometers have studied the mathematical beauty and symmetry of the platonic solids for thousands of years."

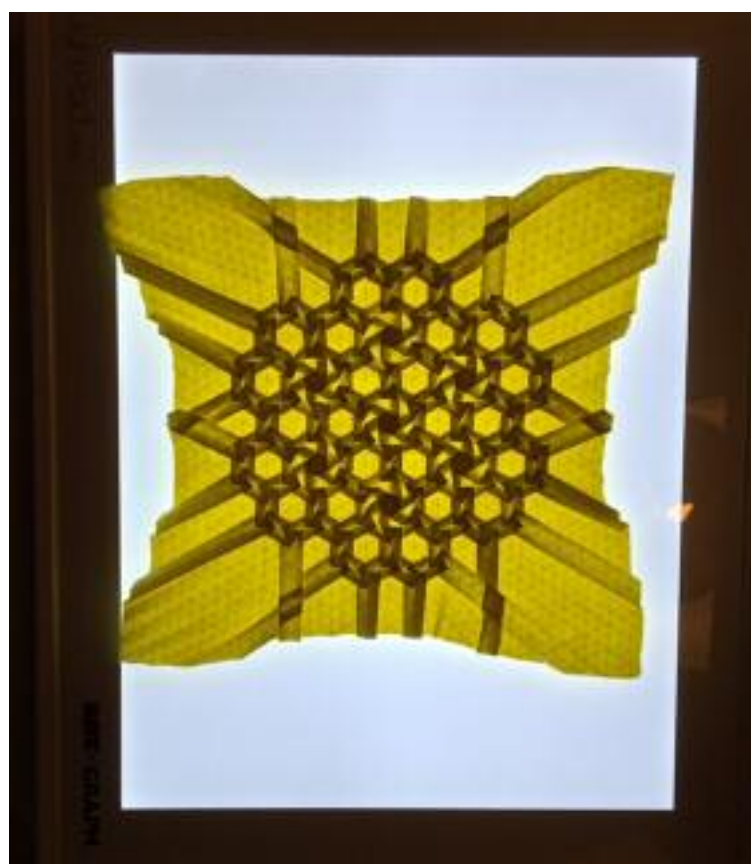
In addition to platonic solids, Meckes' makes tessellations (also called tilings) – shapes that are arranged side by side to produce a pattern with no gaps in between. An origami tessellation is made from one piece of paper that is folded over and over until it has a tessellated pattern. When Meckes begins folding his small sheet of paper, he typically has only a vague idea of what the finished pattern may look like. ... continued on page B2

Repeatedly folding small squares of paper hour after hour may not sound like a good time for most pre-teens. But for 12-year-old Alex Meckes, it is a great way to spend an afternoon.

A recent Nielsen study reported that middle school boys spend an average of 6.3 hours per week playing video games. While that may, indeed, be the case, it is doubtful that Meckes spends anywhere near that amount of time. Although he admits to liking video games, the Orinda Intermediate School seventh-grader doesn't have that many hours to spend in front of the computer; he is way too busy practicing his origami skills. And considering that his second Orinda Library origami exhibit closed at the end of December, his skills are obviously excellent.

Always an avid reader, Meckes made regular trips to local libraries. He remembered as a second grader walking around the Wagner Ranch School Library. "I was getting bored with the books I'd been reading. I wanted something different. I saw a book on origami and thought, 'cool, I'm going to take this home

and try it,'" he said. Origami is the art of paper folding. Its goal is to transform a



One of Alex Meckes' tessellations placed on a light board, showing all the different shapes and patterns that come from the art of origami.

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Youth Homes Celebrates 50 Years of Service

By Adam Blake



Youth Homes staff at their annual summer barbecue

Photos provided

As I sat down with Youth Homes CEO Stuart McCullough in his office he warned me that I was about to enter a world much different than my own. He painted a picture of a teenager who has grown up in a troubled, often abusive home, is then removed by the court as a teenager, and dropped into the foster care system where his/her world is turned upside down. Many find themselves struggling in this system, running away and getting bounced from home to home. "These are the kids we get," says McCullough

The organization of 100 employees oversees four homes: one in Lafayette, two in Concord, and one in Pleasant Hill. As the latest in a line of good doers, Youth Home's views its first job as to help the kids understand they are in the clutches of adults that know what they're doing. "In a short time were going to help them heal some of the profound shame, anger, and loss they feel and create some life goals," McCullough said.

This year Youth Homes celebrates its 50th anniversary, the last 23 helmed by McCullough. In that time the organization has transformed from "dead broke" with a "spotty reputation" to financially stable and highly regarded. Most important however are success rates of the clients who come through Youth Homes. "We're fiercely committed to real tangible, measurable, time bound outcomes," McCullough said. The outcomes are positive: 70-75 percent of clients leave Youth Homes according to their treatment plan; 82 percent graduate from high school (outperforming California public school graduation rates); and 42 percent of their Aftercare program participants are in college or vocational school.

Residents of Youth Homes spend up to 90 days at the short-term shelters and no more than a year at the long-term ones. "It's a very short time to try and turn around a lifetime of family abuse and system inadequacy," McCullough acknowledged. To accomplish as much as possible in such a short time frame, Youth Homes implements a variety of programs to help their clients achieve long-term success. These include 24-hour care, therapeutic behavioral services, a mentoring program and a garden summer job program, among others.

McCullough, set to retire at the end of 2016, reflected upon several key turning points in the organization's history. He remembers getting their first mental health contract in 2002, revamping the organization's fundraising approach, and most recently earning national accreditation

in 2014. At the end of the day, however, he attributes the organization's sustained success to an extremely dedicated and highly skilled force of staff and volunteers.

The unwavering dedication to quality care became evident when I toured the homes myself. McCullough first took me to an all-girls long-term shelter in Concord called Andersen house. What struck me most was the homey atmosphere with inviting living spaces, colorfully decorated bedrooms, and friendly adults. "I wish you have seen the Christmas tree we had up," exclaimed the house supervisor showing me around.

As the girls trickled in from school I returned to the dining room where McCullough was chatting with the girls, trying to convince one that she should be saving more of the money she earns for college. After we left he tells me one of them had recently gone back to her parent's home and returned to the shelter with a tattoo. "She said she's getting back on track just now, though I loved it," he said glancing back at the house.

Next we headed to one of the short-term shelters called "East Bay." The children here cycle in and out frequently, the most recent one arriving one week prior on Christmas Day. In the living room I noticed a white board with all the resident's names and next to it their "level," which is determined by behavior and describes

their privileges. McCullough offered a sincere congratulations to a girl we talked to on "gold" who proceeded to show me around the house starting with the dining room. "Even if we don't eat, everyone must stay there for at least 10 minutes every night," she explained.

On the drive back McCullough recalled a story when he took his then teenage daughter on a short drive into an impoverished neighborhood instead of their routine Sunday brunch. He described her shock at the abject poverty she observed from the car window. "This is 15 minutes from our door and it is a world completely different from our own," he remembered saying.

Before going our separate ways he flipped open to a page in a book he had handed me earlier titled "A Framework for Understanding Poverty." He opened to a couple sections he suggested I read, part of his determination for me to gain a nominal understanding of the issues these kids face.

Driving home I reflected on the different homes, faces, and stories. While undeniably a chilling experience, I remembered a comment he made earlier how he felt there was a "vortex of good stuff going on" at Youth Homes. In the daunting world of foster care, this organization pushes forward with an unremitting desire to learn, improve, and make a difference only 15 minutes from our doors.



Youth Homes CEO Stuart McCullough

One Orinda Student's Passion for Paper

... continued from page B1

It can take him several days folding a small square – he starts with a grid and every fold must be lined up precisely. But the most amazing feature of these beautiful pieces can be seen when the finished tessellation is placed on a light board. Suddenly, hidden shapes and patterns appear that were not seen before; flip the paper over and a whole other array of shapes and patterns show up.

Art and creativity fill Meckes. He loves both acting and singing and participating in the Lamorinda Idol competition for three years (winning the

K-2 category in first grade). He is a drummer and last year taught himself the glockenspiel, which he now plays in the school band.

While it is likely that not many young boys are spending their time constructing origami objects, as Wendy Meckes explained, "once you start doing something a lot, you find a whole subculture of people doing the same thing." There's an organization that meets monthly in a San Francisco library – BARF (Bay Area Rapid Folders) – where people of all ages and all levels of expertise gather

to quietly fold paper, learn something new and sometimes talk about what they're creating. Meckes, who said these meetings are fun, attends these gatherings when he can.

The Orinda Library's art gallery is organized and curated by the Lamorinda Arts Council; it is believed that Meckes is the youngest independent artist who has ever been an exhibitor. Experiencing his talent and dedication, it is likely that Meckes will have other exhibits in the Lamorinda area well into the future.

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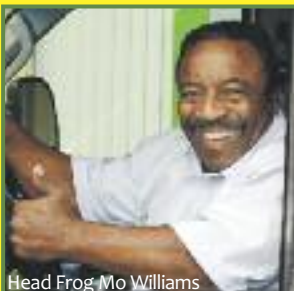
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Mardi Gras Gala Planned to Fund Crohn's Vaccine Research

By Sophie Braccini



From left: Dina Fiatarone and Annabelle Hall Photo Sophie Braccini

Planning a benefit gala is never easy, but as Orinda activist Hannabelle Hall puts it, "When it involves your kids, you just do it."

Hall and two other Orinda mothers, Dina Fiatarone and Christine Pitt, are organizing a Mardi Gras fundraising gala in February, with all proceeds going to fund Crohn's disease MAP vaccine research.

The three organizers are mothers of young adults whose lives have been profoundly altered by the onset of Crohn's disease. "This disease is horrific and can be fatal," says Hall. According to the Crohn's and Colitis Foundation of America, up to 700,000 people in the United States have Crohn's, a debilitating inflam-

matory disease that can affect the entire digestive tract from the mouth down. Men and women are equally likely to be affected, and while the disease can occur at any age, Crohn's is more prevalent among adolescents and young adults between the ages of 15 and 35.

There is no cure for the disease, but there are ways to manage it. Unfortunately, management can include painful surgeries and medication that can have disturbing side effects.

But Hall believes that Professor John Hermon-Taylor at King's College London has discovered the real origin of the disease—a bacteria, Mycobacterium avium subspecies paratuberculosis, or MAP—and has developed a vaccine to combat it. "Groups all over the world are now raising funds to finance the start of human trials," explains Hall. She says that foundations give money to emerging research, and that corporations invest to develop drugs that have already been tested on humans, but that there is a funding gap between the two that is hard to fill.

So far, associations around the globe have collected half of the necessary funds for the continued MAP vaccine research. Another \$330,000 is necessary, and the three Orinda mothers intend to do their part.

"My first fundraising event was the Orinda Fun Dog Show last October," says Hall. "That is where I met Dina and Christine." The three reconvened in the days that followed the event and brainstormed their next steps. "We wanted something very fun that would get people excited," says Hall, who spent her childhood in Louisiana and always had fond memories of the exuberance of Mardi Gras. "I remember the music, the food, people dancing in the streets," she says. "Planning an event in February, Mardi Gras seemed to be the best idea."


A self-professed wallflower, Hall says she has relied on Fiatarone and Pitt, who are more socially connected, to start making phone calls. Friends such as Ksenija Olmer gave them advice on how to organize their event, the auction and the entertainment. "So many people have come forward to help," says Fiatarone, "it has been

very empowering."

Attune Wines of Sonoma County will be donating wine for the wine tasting, and Serge Hanne, who was executive chef at the Blackhawk Country Club, will use the sausages donated by Fabrique Delice, the French artisanal charcuterie of Oakland, for the jambalaya, and Orinda's Republic of Cakes has donated cupcakes, says Hall. Corporate sponsors are also helping such as Orinda Village Associates and Forma Gym in Walnut Creek. The gala will take place from 5 to 11 p.m. Feb. 6 at the Lafayette Community Center, where there will be music by Rue Prince band, and people are expected to dance into the night after the dinner.

"This is an opportunity for people to have a great night of fun and also to become part of history," says Hall, who is keeping her sights on the main goal: Having a Crohn's disease vaccine to give her son and all those affected by Crohn's disease, and a chance at a normal life.

For tickets, visit: <http://ahallgout.wix.com/mardigrasgala>. For more information about Crohn's disease, visit www.cdfa.org. For information about the Crohn's MAP vaccine, visit www.crohnsmapvaccine.com.



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Jimmy Fiatarone Photos provided



Maria Pitt



Anthony Gout (Hall's son)



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Where's the Greed, Lamorinda?

By Nick Marnell

With rates skyrocketing for hotel rooms and home stays around the Super Bowl 50 weekend, I figured that property owners in Lamorinda would participate in the shakedown. And why shouldn't they? We're only a few hundred dollar-limo ride from Levi's Stadium, and visitors staying in Lamorinda will have less to worry about safety-wise than nearly any other place in the Bay Area.

I used the four-day period of Feb. 4-8 as my example when I called around to Lamorinda real estate agents to ask if they had seen any interest from their clients in renting for that big game weekend.

"Not really," was all I could get from Julie del Santo, broker at the Dudum Group, though I do believe I heard the sounds of a child in the background who required more of her attention that I did. I then tried Dana Green of Pacific Union.

"I don't really know anybody who's trying," said Green. "They probably don't need us for that, anyway." She directed me to Airbnb, VRBO and Craigslist, and she also supplied me with a dose of reality.

"The renters probably don't want the cities to know about it," she said.

VRBO, Vacation Rentals by Owner, part of the Home Away group, listed very few availabilities

in Lamorinda. A stunning custom adobe estate in Hunsaker Canyon blew me away: only \$1,150 a night for those four days. But Karen Schneider, the owner, told me she had received no requests for that period. "It is not rented for Super Bowl weekend and we have not made any special effort to do so. We are sort of enjoying the lull since December and New Year's," she said.

Craigslist posted a rental in Orinda – a 2 bedroom, 1150 square foot flat – for only \$125 a night. Surely the opportunity was there to make a killing for the big game weekend. I asked the owner what it would cost to rent for that four-day period.

"Sorry, the minimum required stay is two weeks," was the response I received through the website.

Airbnb property owners were my last resort. I contacted the owner of this breathtaking property for rent near Camino Encinas in Orinda:

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"Hmmm. I haven't had any interest so far, but you've reminded me that I should probably raise the price for that weekend," said the owner. Not only that, but he pointed out another angle to fatten the golden goose.

"There's the two-week lull before the game. As the game approaches, and last-minute visitors from the teams' cities need lodging, interest may increase," he said.

The owner of an Airbnb "clean and bright townhome in Moraga," who had not heard from any prospective clients yet, needed no jump start from me. "Of course I've thought about that," she said. "I've doubled the price for that weekend. And I don't really know much about football." She does know economics.

Which may explain what is really going on here: economics. The affluent residents of Lamorinda understand the rules of supply and demand, and if they are going to take advantage of this special event window, they will probably not advertise until the last minute when they can charge visitors from Denver and Charlotte a lot more than they can today.

And if they haven't thought about that, then they can thank their humble columnist for bringing this wonderful opportunity to their attention.

Colleges You Ought to Know

By Elizabeth LaScala, PhD

What makes a "good" college? Sometimes it's a school that has a familiar name. But often times it isn't. Students who are beginning their very first college search should keep in mind that some very "good" colleges are ones they have never heard of before.

In Northern California we are blessed to have several very fine and very well-known research universities, among them Stanford and the University of California at Berkeley. These schools enroll some of the brightest minds in the world. But these are also among the most difficult places to gain admission. Last year Stanford accepted only five percent of the students for its incoming freshman Class of 2016. Berkeley accepted only 16 percent. Each year acceptance rates to selective colleges decline, the number of applicants rises, while the number of available seats in a freshman class does not. Hence the frenzy related to selective college admissions.

One key sign of a "good" college is their four-year graduation rate. Last year Stanford reported that 76 percent of students who entered in 2010 graduated within four years. UC Berkeley's graduation rate was 72 percent, UCLA's was 69 percent and Davis only graduated 51 percent within four years. Why use this indicator? Because, in my humble opinion, the four-year graduation rate is the best measure of how well colleges do their job. Interestingly, there are many schools that, while less selective, do at least as well as Stanford at graduating a freshman class. One example is a public university: the University of Virginia. This school took 30 percent of its applicants last year and had a better graduation rate than Stanford, Cal and each of the other UC campuses. Eighty-seven percent of its

2010 freshman class graduated on time. It even beat Harvard (86 percent) – but only by a smidgen!

This example helps show that selectivity only measures demand for seats in the freshman class, and selectivity may not always directly correlate with the quality of the education that a college offers, or how well that school retains and graduates the students they accept. Higher education is the only service business that is rated in part by the percentage of potential customers who do not get to use it. I doubt that you read of banks or hospitals that are considered the best because they turn more customers away. Service businesses are highly regarded when they provide superior customer service, which strong colleges do for their students and alumni, giving them a good education and graduating them on time. This includes helping them to set academic and career directions early in their college years, and providing opportunities to test those directions both in the classroom and through experiences and internships beyond coursework. It also means building and supporting a strong professional network that will be there for the rest of their graduates' lives.

There are many good colleges in the U.S. that offer as much for their students as Stanford, UC Berkeley and the University of Virginia. Their names are less familiar to college-bound students and families because they are in less popular locations. As a college advisor I often feel that the U.S. is very small indeed – students who are willing to explore new places outside of California are in a far more advantageous position from an admissions perspective than their peers who wish to stay with familiar and well known places like San Francisco, Los Angeles, New York and Boston.

Other good colleges may be less well known because they have smaller student bodies, or more regional alumni bases. They might have lower profiles because their football or basketball teams are not covered by the national media or their faculty is not always quoted for breaking news stories. But these good colleges do accept a larger percentage of the students who are interested in joining their freshman class. And the best news is that those who take advantage of the resources provided by these schools can reap the same or even better rewards had they gone to one of the 'elite' schools.

This year I will tell you about a few of these schools. Some are small liberal arts colleges, others larger and more comprehensive universities, offering undergraduate and advanced degrees as well. Some may be in places you know and others in places that might be unfamiliar. But all of them do what a good college is supposed to do.



Elizabeth LaScala, Ph.D. is an independent college advisor who draws upon 25 years of higher education experience to help guide and support the college admissions process for students and their families. Dr. LaScala is a member of NACAC, WACAC and HECA. She can be contacted at (925) 891-4491 or elizabeth@doingcollege.com. Visit www.doingcollege.com for more information about her services.

Town Hall's "Angels in America" Wins Best Play Award

THT's Part II 'Perestroika' production opens Feb. 27

Submitted by Linda Drucker



"Angels in America: Millennium Approaches" cast on stage to receive the Outstanding Production of the Year award. Photos Mike Kirwan



Town Hall Theatre cast of "Company" performs at the Jan. 16 Shellie Awards in Walnut Creek.

Town Hall Theatre of Lafayette was honored with a record-breaking seven Shellie Awards, including an award for the Outstanding Production of the Year, for its 2015 production of "Angels in America: Millennium Approaches." The awards were bestowed at a lavish black-tie ceremony Jan. 16 at the Leshler Center For The Arts in Walnut Creek. Patterned after the Tony awards, the Shellies have honored outstanding achievement in the

performing arts for the last 37 years in Contra Costa County, and for the third year in a row, Town Hall Theatre has been selected from among 10 local theatre companies to receive the prestigious Outstanding Produc-

tion of the Year award.

"I'm thrilled that theatre professionals selected Town Hall to receive the highest honor of the night," said the company's board president Lauren Rosi. "These accolades confirm what we already knew: that Town Hall consistently provides our community with a first class artistic experience."

Four of the awards Town Hall won were for its jaw-dropping production of "Angels in America: Millennium Approaches" in February 2015. "Millennium" is the first part of Tony Kushner's epic Pulitzer-winning masterpiece about the unfolding of the AIDS epidemic in America. In addition to the Outstanding Production award, "Angels" won awards for Best Director (Joel Roster), Best Supporting Actor (Dennis Markam), and Best Supporting Actress (Kerri Shawn). The awards for "Angels" come as Town Hall prepares to launch its conclusion of Kushner's saga, "Angels in America: Perestroika," which will open in February at Town Hall.

"For a 'riskier' endeavor, it's incredible to see the play received so warmly," said Artistic Director Joel Roster. "And with 'Perestroika' just around the corner, it's fair to say that we're just getting warmed up."

Town Hall also won two awards for its production of the musical "Company" from October 2014: Best Supporting Actress (Suzie Shepard) and Best Lighting Design (David Lam). Town Hall Theatre Managing Director Dennis Markam, who has filled multiple roles at the company over the past seven years, received a special Contribution to the Arts award.

Numerous local government officials, including Lafayette Vice Mayor Mike Anderson and the mayors of Walnut Creek, Concord, San Ramon, Antioch and Brentwood, attended the glitzy awards ceremony. In introducing himself, Anderson noted that he was "from the little city of



Dennis Markam Best Supporting Actor In A Play



Lafayette Vice Mayor Mike Anderson presenting Shellie Award for Musical Direction

Lafayette, home of the great Town Hall Theatre."

Town Hall's next production "Angels in America: Perestroika," which is R-rated, opens on Saturday, Feb. 27. Included in the show's program will be a summary of events of "Millennium," leading up to the start of "Perestroika." For those desiring further information on Part I, staged readings of "Millennium" will be taking place on Saturday afternoons during the run of "Perestroika." Tickets for both Part I and Part II, which cost \$25 to \$32, can be purchased online at www.townhalltheatre.com or by calling the box office at (925) 283-1557.

NCL Celebrates Volunteerism and Leadership Development

Submitted by Lauren Webster



Photo Jackie Welch

The National Charity League, Inc. - Acalanes Area Chapter, which performed over 10,000 hours of hands-on volunteerism in 2015, hosted its prospective member and all-chapter meetings Jan. 10 at Moraga Valley Presbyterian Church. This local philanthropy organization fosters leadership development and encourages cultural experiences in girls who live in the Lafayette, Moraga and Orinda areas. For more information, visit www.nclacalanesarea.org.

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Community Service

We are pleased to make space available whenever possible for some of Lamorinda's dedicated community service organizations to submit news and information about their activities. Submissions may be sent to storydesk@lamorindaweekly.com with the subject header In Service to the Community.

Troop 200 Honors New Eagle Scouts

Submitted by Suzanne Everly



From left: Kyle Everly, Connor Williams, Nico Brightbill and TJ Low. Photo Dawn Brightbill

Boy Scout Troop 200, chartered by Our Savior's Lutheran Church in Lafayette, honored its most recent Eagle Scouts, Kyle Everly, Connor Williams, Nicholas "Nico" Brightbill, and Anthony "TJ" Low at a National Court of Honor ceremony, held on Sunday, Jan. 10 at St. Perpetua Church in Lafayette.

To become an Eagle, the candidate must earn a minimum of 21 merit badges, including 13 Eagle-required badges, demonstrate leadership and scout spirit, and successfully complete an Eagle service project that benefits the community.

For his Eagle project Everly, a senior at Acalanes High School, constructed and hung backpack racks for four classrooms on the 800 wing at Stanley Middle School. Williams, a senior at Bentley School in Lafayette, planned and carried out a donation drive to replenish the art and game supplies for Youth Engagement Advocacy and Housing (YEAH), a seasonal homeless shelter for youth, located in Berkeley, California. Acalanes senior Brightbill designed and built four large, heavy-duty wooden utility

carts for Burton Valley Elementary School. The carts are used daily all over campus for movement of goods (e.g. library books, compost/recycling in the cafeteria.) And Acalanes senior Low refurbished ten wooden picnic tables for Burton Valley Elementary School by replacing boards, bolts and screws. He finished the project by repainting all the tables.

Troop 200 recently celebrated its 10th anniversary. Founded in 2006, Troop 200 continues to thrive by operating a program that is compelling, exciting and challenging for its youth. In addition to planning many outings and advancement opportunities, Troop 200 is proud to provide over 1,000 community service hours in the Lamorinda community and the greater East Bay. The troop provides many leadership opportunities for its youth and adult leaders. Its youth leaders plan meetings, outings and activities under the mentorship of a dedicated group of uniformed leaders and parent volunteers. Membership applications are currently being accepted. For questions, please contact Scoutmaster Mark Weyland at jadesigns@sbeglobal.net.

Burton Valley AIM Class Shoots High to Raise Money for The Hidden Genius Project

Submitted by Cathy Martinsen



Photo provided

The Book Bonanza is an annual fundraiser that has been a long-standing tradition at Burton Valley Elementary School. Every year, students from Ms. Martinsen's class collect, price, and, of course, sell books ... at incredibly low prices (some books are as cheap as 10 cents). All proceeds go to a charitable cause, and this year the students chose to support The Hidden Genius Project. Based in Oakland, this non-profit organization provides Oakland (and surrounding area) black male youths with the knowledge, skills, mentors, and experiences to obtain and complete jobs in this new, global, 21st-century economy. The whole

fourth- and fifth-grade class banded together to complete each step in the process, and after three weeks of collections and pricing, the two-day sale was on. Classes from the Burton Valley community came to support the AIM class, buying books and dropping in donations to the donation jar. After the frenzy, the students counted their change bags and were thrilled to realize they had surpassed their goal and actually raised \$1,439.21. The students presented a check to Brandon Nicholson of The Hidden Genius Project right after winter break and felt good knowing they had made a difference in many disadvantaged children's lives.

The Moraga Historical Society Concludes its Celebration of 50 Years

Submitted by Susan Sperry



Photo provided

Following the 50th Anniversary Banquet of the Moraga Historical Society, featuring Laura Akley, architectural historian and author of "San Francisco's Jewel City: The Panama-Pacific International Exposition of 1915," second vice president Dick Olsen orchestrated a fun-filled, informational "Romeria" (field trip) highlighting Exposition art and architecture. The group traveled to the De Young Museum to view masterpieces that were displayed at the Palace of Fine Arts during the Exposition, some of which have not been viewed since the culmi-

nation of the event. Then it was off to the Palace of Fine Arts to view a model of the Exposition and learn more of the planning and execution of this spectacular undertaking. The trip concluded at the California Historical Society Museum.

Membership in the Moraga Historical Society enables you to receive the "Quarterly" – a publication filled with Moraga, Contra Costa and California historical information and fascinating stories. For membership information, contact Bill Lund at (925) 376-3520 or the History Center at (925) 377-8734.

Lafayette Rotary Continues Donation of Coats and Gifts to Families in Need

Submitted by Michael Heller



From left: Norma Evens, Michael Heller, Dino Rigio and Mike Henn Photo Andy Schreck

For the last 13 years the Rotary Club of Lafayette has been collecting coats for the Concord Shelter and Shelter Inc. in Martinez and delivering wrapped gifts to the children of families at Shelter Inc. Rotary club member Peggy Harbarth started this project after reading about the need for coats and other items in the newspaper, and along with Joan Heller, set the wheels in motion to have this project as part

of its annual Holiday Party meeting. Today Shelter Inc. has a great program where the public can call up and get a family assignment to shop for exactly what the family needs, then wrap the presents and bring them to the office in Concord. Lafayette Rotary would like to thank all community members who dropped off coats at the Lafayette Chamber office and at Blodgett's Abbey Carpet and Flooring.

Grateful Moraga Couple Applauds MOFD Response

By Nick Marnell



Tom and Millicent McCormack

Photo Andy Scheck

At about 2 a.m. on Dec. 22, Moraga Bluffs resident Tom McCormack was sitting on his bed and he said that he couldn't breathe. "He told me to call 911," said his wife, Millicent. According to the dispatch records of that night's emergency call, the Moraga-Orinda Fire District crew arrived in 11 minutes and they immediately commenced continuous positive airway pressure therapy, a procedure used for years by fire departments and other emergency service providers.

"My husband fought them over the mask they tried to put on his face," said McCormack. She and

the paramedics convinced her husband that wearing the mask would probably save his life.

The mask that the paramedics strap over the patient's nose and mouth attaches to a tube connected to the ambulance oxygen supply. For many patients who have trouble breathing, like McCormack's husband, slamming a mask against their face seems counterintuitive. Convincing the patient to allow the intrusion of that mask is often a stressful aspect of the emergency call, according to firefighter-paramedic Dave Iman.

The crew bundled up the patient and carried him into the ambulance

and drove him to Kaiser Medical Center in Walnut Creek, where he spent two days in the intensive care unit before he was released.

"The MOFD crew knew what they were doing. The Kaiser doctor said that the crew saved my husband's life with the use of that mask," said McCormack.

"I can't say if we saved his life, but with the mask the patient was definitely better off," said firefighter-paramedic Andrew Leach.

McCormack says: "We're all in the 'departure lounge' of life. None of us know whose plane is taking off first. I'm just grateful to God that I still have my Tom."

'A Brilliant Young Mind'

By Sophie Braccini



A BRILLIANT YOUNG MIND

Photo provided

Understanding the inner workings of a teenage mind on the autistic spectrum is not easy, but in "A Brilliant Young Mind," British director Morgan Matthews manages to lift a corner of the veil, exposing the world of a young math genius on the spectrum, and allowing the audience to feel that they can reach out to this young man and accompany him on his journey. While the film, at times, tries a little too hard to manipulate the audience's emotions, this small weakness is amply compensated by the sensitive and remarkable performances of all of the actors involved.

Nathan (Asa Butterfield) is a teenage boy who was diagnosed

with autism at a young age. Lacking the ability to understand emotions, he instead has an exceptional gift for mathematics. Nathan finds the security he needs in numbers and predictable sequences, and he says that there is nothing he likes more than mathematics. The young boy works with a private professor and is selected to go to Taipei, Taiwan, to train with other youth who want to be selected for the International Mathematical Olympiad. There he meets a Chinese girl mathematician, Zhang Mei, and is faced with a different type of challenge.

Throughout the movie, Nathan struggles with expres-

sions of love. His father, who was the only one able to connect with him and make him laugh, was killed in a car accident when he was little. Nathan's mother, longing to share emotions with her son, has more difficulty. Sally Hawkins who plays the mother gives a very subtle interpretation of her role. She is vulnerable, well intended and fragile. The depiction of her struggle to live a full life as a woman and a mother is shown with compassion, but could have been more developed.

Butterfield as Nathan is as socially challenged as expected, but with a charm and candor that connects with the audience. His difficulties to make sense of love, his fears and blockings are more moving than awkward, and one ends up feeling empathy for the young man.

Some scenes in the movie are funny; others are quite dramatic. As Nathan joins the group of young mathematicians in Taipei, he meets another boy on the spectrum. Nathan is never abused or taunted, while the other boy is. His oddities are not as charming somehow. What ensues makes the spectator wonder what society accepts and supports when it comes to eccentricity. Is one accepted because he is cuter, quieter, or more submissive to the norm? Audience members will find the end both moving and heart-warming.

"A Brilliant Young Mind" is part of the Orinda International Film Showcase and will run for one week beginning Jan. 29 at the Orinda Theatre. Beginning its sixth year, the showcase has been bringing premieres of foreign films selected by Efi Lubliner and Jo Alice Canterbury to Orinda. "A Brilliant Young Mind" will be a Bay Area premiere.

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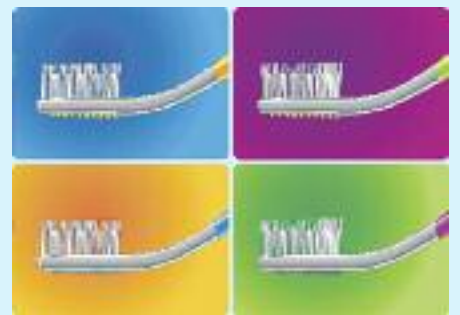
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In Memory

WILLIAM REGINALD SHEPHERD, JR., 83



William (Bill) Reginald Shepherd, Jr. of Lafayette, California passed away peacefully on Sunday, January 17, 2016 after a long and valiant battle against Parkinson's Disease. Bill was born in Fargo, North Dakota to Zoe and William Shepherd, Sr. and spent his childhood in Pittsburg, California.

Bill had a successful career in the auto business as the owner of several car dealerships, including Shepherd Chevrolet, Shepherd Volkswagen, Shepherd Pontiac, and Shepherd Honda/Suzuki. He was given his love of cars by his father who owned Chevrolet dealerships in Pittsburg and Antioch. Young Bill washed windows at his father's dealership and took note of how to run a successful business. In 1990, Bill was honored by being named Time Magazine's Car Dealer of the Year.

Bill graduated from Acalanes High School (1951) and attended Stanford University and University of Oregon, earning his degree in 1955. During college, Bill enlisted in the Air Force and served four years as a Reservist.

Bill was introduced to the love of his life, Mary Jo Miller, by dear friends while water skiing on the Sacramento River. Their meeting was "love at first sight", and the two married three months later in 1961. Soon after their marriage, they started to grow their family and had four boys in the span of six years. Life was full, fun and exciting with summers spent on the lake at Tahoe and winter weekends spent skiing at Squaw Valley. Bill and Mary Jo loved raising their family in Lafayette and took great pride in all that their boys achieved. When asked how they happened to have four boys who were all so tall, they replied, "A lot of love." Bill had a generous nature and welcomed strangers as if they were family. He took a genuine interest in the lives of others and enjoyed sharing stories into the wee hours of the morning.

Bill enjoyed boating on Lake Tahoe and acquired several antique wooden boats over the years. He was able to enjoy rides on the lake last summer, which was a highlight during his final year. Bill and Mary Jo loved traveling together, entertaining, spending time with friends, dining at Trader Vic's, vacationing in Hawaii, cheering on the Golden Bears, celebrating Christmas, and skiing. As a couple, they hardly spent a day apart. It was rare to find Bill without a book in his hand, as he was an avid reader. Bill enjoyed hunting and the outdoors. He was also a supporter of Boy Scouts, proudly leading all four sons to receive their Eagle Scout award.

Above all, Bill loved his family. Family was the center of his life. He was an incredibly devoted and caring husband, a loving and supportive father, and a dedicated "Grampy" to his grandchildren. He is survived by his wife Mary Jo of 55 years; his sister Nancy Hudson of Alamo; his sons William, Robert (Kimberly), Richard (Lisa), and James (Jennifer). He is also survived by his ten grandchildren: Katherine, Morgan, Kristoffer, Anne, Elizabeth, Amanda, Jeffrey, John, Matthew and Sarah.

The family would like to extend their heartfelt gratitude to Vic Guterrez for his loving care and support of Bill and Mary Jo during Bill's illness. We will forever appreciate the loving friendship he shared with Bill.

Bill will be remembered for his kindness, ready smile, saint-like patience, quick one-liners and humor, captivating storytelling, genuine character, and warm personality. Bill's sons and grandchildren will continue his legacy while holding their cherished father and grandfather in their hearts.

A memorial service will be held on Friday, February 5, 2016 at 4:00 PM at the Lafayette Orinda Presbyterian Church (49 Knox Drive, Lafayette). A celebration of Bill's life will follow immediately at Orinda Country Club (315 Camino Sobrante, Orinda).

In lieu of flowers, memorial gifts in Bill's honor may be made to The Friends of Cal Crew - 10 Clay Street, Suite 200, Oakland, CA 94607 or by visiting <http://calcrew.com/donate.html>

Lamorinda's Religious Services

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ART

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. For info, visit www.lafayetteartgallery.com.

Diablo Fine Art Gallery is presenting a one-day exhibition of nearly 30 paintings by well-known plein-air artist and instructor, Mark Jezierny, from 2 to 5 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 30. Refreshments will be served and there is no cost. For info, call (925) 933-4ART or visit www.diablofineart.com.

Jennifer Perlmutter Exhibit - Collage and Mixed Media Paintings. In a collection of paintings by the artist, Jennifer Perlmutter uses ephemera and a variety of media to tell her story of surprises in the everyday. Processing life and creativity through collage and painting, Perlmutter expresses an emotional world view like a writer with a diary. The exhibit runs through Feb. 5. For info, call (925) 284-1485 or visit www.jenniferperlmuttergallery.com.

MUSIC

Contra Costa Chorale presents "Amazing Grace." Celebrating the rich musical heritage of the African and African-American cultures in commemoration of the 50th Anniversary of the Civil Rights March in Selma. The concert will feature African drummers and accompanist Cara Bradbury. The concert starts at 7:30 p.m. Friday, Jan. 29 at St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Walnut Creek. All tickets sold at the door.

Our Savior's Lutheran Church Concert Series presents renowned jazz and blues vocalist Faye Carol, with Joe Warner on piano, in a program of tremendous variety, spanning blues, stride piano, funk, boogie-woogie, straight-ahead jazz, and The Great American Songbook at 4 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 31 at OSLC, 1035 Carol Lane, Lafayette.

THEATER

Role Players Ensemble presents "Good People" by David Lindsay-Abaire. Quirky, unpredictable and grounded in a genuine humor that comes from hitting rock bottom, "Good People" will have you laughing one moment and crying the next as it explores the nature of our loyalties and our hopes. The show runs Jan. 29 through Feb. 14 - 8 p.m. on Friday and Saturday and 2 p.m. on Sunday at Village Theatre, 233 Front Street, Danville. Tickets: \$20-28; online at www.RolePlayersEnsemble.com; at Danville Community Center, 420 Front St, Danville; or call (925) 314-3400.

LECTURE & LITERATURE

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.

Moraga Movers and the Moraga Library present "Book Talking" at 2 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 10. This program will take place in the Mosaic Room at the Hacienda de Las Flores, 2100 Donald Drive. Joann Reid will discuss "In the Kingdom of Ice" by Hampton Sides. This hour-long program will consist of a brief book review, including critical viewpoints and key components of the book as well as time for discussion.

Zulu nurse and healthcare activist Sister Abigail Ntleko, author of "Empty Hands" and a recipient of His Holiness, the Dalai Lama's Unsung

Heroes of Compassion Award will be visiting from South Africa to share her incredible story of overcoming poverty, racism, and sexism to earn her education, and live a life in service to her community by adopting dozens of children orphaned by the HIV/AIDS pandemic over the course of her eighty years. This free program will be held from 7 to 9 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 24 at the Lafayette Library and Learning Center in the Community Hall. Register online at tinyurl.com/EmptyHandsLAF.

KIDS, PARENTS & TEENS

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.

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/LAF-geocache.

Groundhog Day and Shadow Play at the Moraga Library from 4 to 5 p.m. on Tuesday, Feb. 2. We'll listen to a story about Groundhog Day and then make shadows on the wall, draw silhouettes, and do a craft. This event for children and families is free; no registration necessary.

Join Our Savior's Lutheran Church for a festival service celebrating the New Orleans tradition of Carnival at 9:30 a.m. Tuesday, Feb. 2. Featuring the Jambalaya Jazz Band, kids' activities, creative reflection time for adults, and king cake, beignets and beverages, there will be something for everyone, 1035 Carol Lane, Lafayette. For more info, call (925) 283-3722 or visit www.oslc.net.

The Lafayette Library and Learning Center presents Teen Monthly Makers - MinecraftEdu from 3:30 to 5 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 9 in the Arts and Science room. Register online at tinyurl.com/LAFminecraft.

February Holiday Crafts at the Moraga Library from 4 to 5 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 9. Mardi Gras, Chinese New Year, Valentine's Day - make crafts to celebrate February holidays! This event for children and families is free, no registration necessary.

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/.

Contra Costa Camp and School Fair - 4th annual free event with booths for camps, schools, preschool, daycare, STEM and STEAM programs, sports, martial arts, gymnastics, enrichment, performing arts, scouts and family vacations from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Sunday, Feb 21 at Acalanes High School, 1200 Pleasant Hill Rd., Lafayette. Free admission and parking. For info, visit www.ContraCostaCampFair.com.

The 30th session of the California State Summer School for the Arts seeks teen artists, writers and performers for summer 2016 (July 9 through Aug. 5 - four Weeks of embracing creativity). Applications must be completed by Feb. 29. Financial aid available. For info, visit CSSSA.ca.gov.

OTHER

Find your 'forever' friend at Community Concern for Cats weekend

adoption event. Hours are noon to 3 p.m. on Saturday, Jan. 30 and 1 to 4 p.m. on Sunday, Jan. 31 at the Lafayette Pet Food Express. Hours at other sites are 1 to 4 p.m. Saturday and Sunday. For more info, visit www.communityconcernforcats.org.

Lamorinda Home Expo '16 - Meet face-to-face with leading design/build firms, contractors, landscapers and more between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 31 at the Lafayette Veterans Memorial Building, 3780 Mt. Diablo Blvd., Lafayette. Over 45 exhibitors - all related to home improvement - will be on site to discuss your plans, ideas, issues or problems. Enter the free drawing and take home a valuable resource guide that includes information about each of the sponsors and exhibitors. For info, visit www.HomeExpoEvents.com/Lamorinda.

Valley Stitches and Fiber Artists Guild will hold their February meeting at 9:30 a.m. Monday, Feb. 1 at Faith Lutheran Church 50 Woodsworth Lane, Pleasant Hill. Marie Bergstedt will be the February speaker. Visitors are always welcome. There is a \$5 charge per person.

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.

Holy Trinity Serbian Orthodox Church 11th Annual Crab Feed and Dance from 6 to 11 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 6. New and exciting this year: silent auction. For non-crab lovers: chicken is available by special advance order. Dinner and Dance: \$50. Dinner tickets must be purchased in advance. For tickets and reservations, call Thea at (925) 672-6799 or (925) 890-0918.

Moraga Valley Presbyterian Church invites you to Caregiving: A Labor of Love, a workshop for those caring for family members, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Saturday, Feb. 6. The Rev. Dr. Mary Holder Naegeli will be the guest speaker and lunch plus breakout sessions on various topics will be included. Attendance is free, and adult care will be provided; register by Feb. 1: ballen@mvpctoday.org.

The public is invited to a genealogy workshop from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 6 at the Ygnacio Valley Library, 2661 Oak Grove Road, Walnut Creek. The workshop is being given by the Anne Loucks Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution, and will include short lectures on various topics. Coffee, tea and cookies will be provided. Please make a reservation by calling (925) 938-9137 or email sally-holcombe@mac.com.

The Anne Loucks Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution has two scholarships available. One is awarded annually to a student entering college, and the second is a one-time award to a mother re-entering school. The deadline for submitting applications is Jan. 30. For more details please contact E. A. George, PO Box 2733, Danville, CA 94526.

Pixar's Chris Ford will address the Moraga Movers dinner meeting at 5 p.m. Monday, Feb. 8. Members meet at Saint Mary's College Soda Center at 5 p.m. for a social hour followed by dinner at 6. Those who wish to find out more about the Moraga Movers or would like to attend this meeting should go to www.moragamovers.org or call (925) 376-6622.

... continued on next page

MOVIE REVIEW

'Kung Fu Panda' is Back!

By Derek Zemrak



Po (voiced by Jack Black) and his long-lost panda father Li (voiced by Bryan Cranston) pose for a portrait in DreamWorks Animation's 'Kung Fu Panda 3.' Photo DreamWorks Animation

One of the most successful animated franchises in the world returns to theaters nationwide this week. "Kung Fu Panda 3" is the third movie of everyone's favorite, loveable, kung-fu-fighting panda Po, where he finds his long-lost panda father. The reunion takes Po to a secret panda paradise where hundreds of cute, cuddly, humorous pandas live a simple happy life.

I love this movie franchise. It has great messages for the kids of all ages as well as adults. One of the first quotes in the movie is "He who takes - loses out." I think we can all learn from that. I had the opportunity to interview producer Melissa Cobb, and directors Jennifer Yuh Nelson and Alessandro Carloni at the Ritz Carlton Hotel in San Francisco. Everyone loves Po, voiced by the ultra-talented Jack Black.

I asked Cobb, who produced all three Kung Fu Panda movies, when she knew she had something special and she responded: "It really was when we finally recorded Jack Black and started seeing him in the character. There is a moment in the beginning of 'Kung Fu Panda' when he's in a Dojo and

he is kind of embarrassed, not ready to spar and playing with the training dummy; the animation of that when it finally happened, we all went 'aw' that is Po. We love him."

Nelson returns to direct along with Carloni. When Nelson directed "Kung Fu Panda 2," she was the first woman to solely direct an animated feature film from a major Hollywood studio. She went on to receive an Academy Award nomination.

"Kung-Fu Panda 2" is the second-highest grossing film ever directed by a woman, with "Frozen" taking the No. 1 spot. When I asked Nelson what she feels is Po's greatest trait, she responded: "He would not be embarrassed if he really screwed up and is a geek joy that compared to his sensitivity is what makes Po so special."

All the original voice actors return, including Jack Black as Po, Angelina Jolie (Tigress), Dustin Hoffman (Shifu), Jackie Chan (Monkey), Seth Rogen (Mantis) and Lucy Liu (Viper). When I asked how difficult was it to get the entire cast to return, Cobb said, "They were all happy to return for they love the franchise and the positive messages in the movies." The addition of Bryan Cranston as Po's father is an added bonus to the already amazing cast.

"Kung Fu Panda 3" is rated PG with a TRT (Total Running Time) of 1 hour and 35 minutes. Go see a quality movie for all ages to enjoy.

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January 29:
Brad Davis will undoubtedly
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episodes from his glorious past.

February 5:
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Peeks discuss Rotary District
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February 4:
Budd MacKenzie will be
speaking about schools in
Afghanistan.

February 18:
John Coleman from East Bay
will be speaking about the
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www.rotarylafayette.org

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Meeting 6:00 - 8:00 p.m.

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For more information, contact:
Regina Englehart @925-876-9076
or go to: soroptimist24-680.org

Not to be missed

OTHER ... continued

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.

On the Bayou/New Orleans Style dinner and silent auction at 6 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 14 on the Saint Mary's College campus in Moraga. Music will be provided by the "and that's jazz" band from alameda. The price for dinner and entertainment is \$45 per person. For info, call (925) 254-3645.

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.

SENIORS

Valentine Exchange/Sing-Along with the Lafayette Community Center preschoolers from 11:45 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 10 at the Cedar Room, Lafayette Community Center. Celebrate Valentine's Day with the darling little ones you see bouncing around the Community Center on a daily basis. Share their joy and enthusiasm by singing along with them to favorites such as "You Are My Sunshine" and "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star," all the while enjoying cookies and punch. Valentine cards will be provided for you to exchange with your little buddies. Wear pink or red if you're able! Free.

Men "of a certain age" (semi- or fully-retired) are invited to hear a presentation from Linus Eukel who is the Director of the John Muir Land Trust during their regular lunch meeting at 11 a.m. Wednesday, Feb. 10, Holy Trinity Church, 1700 School Street, Moraga. SIRs welcomes new members. For details, visit www.branch174.sirinc2.org or call Tyler at (925) 284-5561.

Discovering Opera: Bizet's "Carmen," presented by Bradford Wade, opera lover for 35 years from 1:30 to 3 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 11 at the Lafayette Library, Arts and Science Room. Lecturer Bradford Wade will give a guided tour of Carmen, with a description of the plot interspersed with musical examples. This lecture is given in conjunction with Opera San Jose's production of "Carmen," Feb. 13-28, 2016. Members: free; non-Members: \$10.

Sons In Retirement - Las Trampas Branch 116 welcomes guests to socialize at its monthly luncheon beginning at 11 a.m. Monday, Feb. 15 at the Walnut Creek Elks Lodge, 1475 Creekside Drive. The speaker will be SIR Joel White, physician, who will explore the concept of shared-decision making in medicine in his presentation entitled "What you need to know and do unless you are certain you will live forever," information which will assist in creating better options and making choices that can comfort and enhance our experience even to the end, providing not only a good life but also a good end. Please call (925) 322-1160 to make lunch reservations. Cost for lunch: \$15.

Ready to give your brain a boost? Join author of Strengthen Your Mind, Kristin Einberger, for a workshop on the benefits of stimulating your brain and ways to strengthen your mind on Friday, Feb. 19 in Lafayette. You'll be engaged in brain games and activities that will stimulate your mind, memories and senses! Workshop is open only to individuals with Mild Cognitive Impairment (MCI), early stage Alzheimer's disease or a related dementia, and their care partners. Cost:

\$15 per participant. Pre-screening is required. Exact time and location will be provided upon complete registration. For more information or to register, please contact Lan Trinh at 1.800.272.3900 or ltrinh@alz.org.

GARDEN

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@mcdonnell-nursery.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.

The Walnut Creek Garden Club will hold its February meeting at 9:30 a.m. on Feb. 8 at the Gardens at Heather Farm. Program: "Roses: How to Combat Those Nasty Pests & Diseases." Jolene Adams of the CC Rose Society will share her extensive expertise.

Montelindo Garden Club meeting will be at 9 a.m. on Friday, Feb. 19 at St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, 66 St. Stephens Drive, Orinda. Visitors welcome. Presentation: "Incorporating Succulents Into Everyday Garden" by Rebecca Sweet, owner of the garden design company Harmony in the Garden, author, and speaker.

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, 2016. If you are interested in getting more information, please go to the garden website at 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. Questions? Call (925) 946-0563.



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Twist It Up for Super Bowl

By Susie Iventosch



Homemade pretzels

Photos Susie Iventosch

There is still more than a week before Super Bowl kickoff and I thought it might be fun to try another finger food to serve up during the big game. I was recently in Austria and Germany, and they have pretzels for everything ... pretzel sandwiches, pretzels with nuts, pretzels with cheese toppings, pretzels drizzled with chocolate, both white and dark, and pretzels with cream cheese and chives. There are pretzels to suit anyone's fancy over there. So many pretzels made me realize this could be a fun thing to make for Super Bowl Sunday, whether you plan to go to a party, have guests over yourself, or just stay home and watch the game with the family.

This set me on the project of making my very first (and second) batch of pretzels ever. I had to make them twice, because even though the first batch tasted fantastic, they really didn't look all that much like pretzels, but more like big rolls. The trick is making the tubes of dough long and skinny enough to make a pretzel twist that will hold its shape in the baking.

The key to making pretzels taste like pretzels is putting them in a boiling baking soda bath for just a few seconds before baking. This gives them that distinct flavor that pretzels have. The way the professional pretzel makers do it is to use an edible lye bath, but the more common way for truly home-baked pretzels is to use

baking soda, which is normally stocked in every household pantry.

You can decide what you want to top them with, or what to dip them in. Cheese sauce would be yummy, and so would mustard. In fact, I tried to make homemade Dijon mustard to go with these, but unfortunately, that result was disastrous, and Dijon shall have to wait for another issue. If you have a small group, these pretzels would make fantastic sandwiches, too. Just slice them in half horizontally, and fill them up with your favorite cold cuts and cheese.



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.

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Pretzels
(Makes 6 large or 8 medium)

INGREDIENTS

- 1 ½ cups warm water, at about 110-115 degrees
- 1 packet active dry yeast (2 ¼ teaspoons)
- 1 teaspoon salt (1 use about 12 grinds from my Himalayan pink salt grinder)
- 1 tablespoon light brown sugar
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 3-4 cups all-purpose flour (use any excess for kneading dough)

For Water Bath

- 6 cups of water
- ½ cup baking soda (that's right ... ½ CUP!)

For topping

- Coarse crystal sea salt
- 1 beaten egg or ¼ cup Egg Beaters (for brushing on top of the bagels before baking)

DIRECTIONS

Pour warm water into a large mixing bowl and sprinkle yeast over the top. Whisk together and allow to sit for a few minutes. Add sugar and salt and stir well. Add flour, one cup at a time, mixing with wooden spoon until mixture becomes a thick dough. Dough will still be sticky, so continue to add just enough flour until the dough is no longer sticky.

Turn dough onto a cutting board, or cloth, and knead for about 5 minutes. Place dough into a greased or oiled bowl, turn once to coat both top and bottom with the oil. Cover with a damp towel, and allow to sit until doubled in volume.

Meanwhile, mix the 6 cups of water and baking soda in a large pot and bring to a boil, so that the baking soda dissolves. Remove from heat until ready to use.

Preheat oven to 425 F and line a baking sheet with parchment paper. I also spray the parchment paper to ensure the pretzels will easily come off paper after baking.

Divide dough into the number of pretzels you wish to make. Form a little ball out of each section of dough. Roll the dough ball between your palms until it forms a long, skinny tube – about 20-25 inches long. This can take a little while. Place the doughy pretzels on a flat surface that is dusted with flour until all of them are shaped.

Now, bring the baking soda bath back to a boil, and taking one pretzel at a time, drop them into the bath for about 20 seconds. Flip and repeat on the other side. Remove from bath with a slotted spatula and shake slightly to drip off excess water. Place pretzels onto the prepared baking sheet.

Brush each pretzel top with the egg and sprinkle tops with coarse salt.

Bake for approximately 10 minutes. Remove from oven, and turn the oven up to broil. When ready, place pretzels back under broiler for just 10-20 seconds, or until tops are golden brown.

Can prepare a day or two ahead of time and reheat before serving.

Bon appetite and may your favorite team win!



LAMORINDA SPORTS



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Lady Mats Continue Undefeated March

By Karl Buscheck



Senior All-American Sabrina Ionescu (20), Aubrey Wagner (10) and Haley Van Dyke (11) Photos Gint Federas

The Miramonte girls' basketball team is still sporting an unblemished 17-0 record (5-0 in league), as the squad carves through the DFAL schedule and a daunting slate of non-league challenges.

The team's banner win came on Jan. 15 at the MLK Showcase in Stockton when the Mats breezed past Mater Dei – then the No. 7 team in the state – 65-47.

"I think outside of postseason, this is one of the biggest wins in school history, for sure, to beat a team like Mater Dei," head coach Kelly Sopak declared, as he stood inside Morelli Gym, the home of St. Mary's of Stockton, the top-ranked team in nation.

The Mats were on the wrong side of a 67-45 score-line against Mater Dei in the same building during the 2015 edition of the Showcase. With that in mind, junior Ellie Louie agreed with her coach's assessment.

"Last year we lost to Mater Dei and we didn't feel very good about it," Louie said. "So, this year was revenge."

The most impressive part about Miramonte's comfortable win over Mater Dei was that the team got its

revenge without even playing its sharpest game.

"We could've [played better]," Louie admitted. "We were sloppy on some plays, but that's just kind of how our system goes. There's turnovers and mistakes and we've just got to play through it."

With a group of college coaches watching from the stands, senior Sabrina Ionescu dropped 26 points on the perennial powerhouse.

"I've watched her a lot over the years, and the scouting report... she can do everything," said Jonas Chatterton, an assistant for Oregon State, one of the programs chasing Ionescu. "She's shooting the ball so well right now in her senior year as well as just running her team and leading her team. And I think she's as good as she wants to be."

On Jan. 18, Ionescu was one of 24 players from across the country tabbed to play in the McDonald's All-American Game. The guard will suit up for the West squad in the exhibition clash on April 1 at the United Center in Chicago.

In the DFAL, Ionescu and her teammates have made quick work of their league opponents. The Mats thumped Alhambra 80-17 on the

road on Jan. 12, handled Dublin 73-35 at home three days later and rolled past Dougherty Valley 94-46 during a trip to San Ramon on Jan. 22.

One day after taking down Dougherty Valley, the Mats picked up yet another win against a big-time non-league opponent, Carondelet, whom they beat 89-65 in the Lamorinda Classic at Bentley in Lafayette.

Even though the Mats posted a double-digit win against the perennial powerhouse Cougars (ranked No. 48 in the state), it was far from a flawless night for Miramonte. In the first half alone, the Mats were called for 12 fouls.

"You've got to adjust to the officials," Sopak said. "We have to do a better job of maintaining composure and not expressing emotions, you know?"

The team also struggled from the field throughout the contest, leaving Sopak less than thrilled with the final result.

"I mean, I'm just very disappointed overall in our effort and our shooting," Sopak said. "We're not going to get very far with how we played. So we're going to have to get a lot better."



Junior Ellie Louie (13) and Aubrey Wagner (10)

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Saint Mary's Beats Gonzaga For First Time Since 2012

By Dean Boerner



Evan Fitzner

Photos Tod Fierner



In front of a deafening McKeon Pavilion crowd last Thursday, the Saint Mary's men delivered a dramatic victory over perennial powerhouse and conference rival Gonzaga, 70-67. With the win, the Gaels (17-2, 8-1) captured sole possession of first place in the WCC and continue to bolster their case for an NCAA tournament bid in March.

The Gaels overcame a miserable first half against the Zags in which they shot just 38.5 percent from the field. The Gaels' struggles extended into the second half too, as they fell into a daunting 15-point hole with only 13 minutes left.

"For 32 minutes, it just wasn't going our way," said junior guard Joe Rahon.

Then, all of a sudden, something clicked. Thanks in part to three-pointers from Emmett Naar and Calvin Hermanson, the Gaels chipped the Gonzaga lead to 10 with about seven minutes left. At that point, the most efficient offense in the nation was just getting started.

"The last 8 minutes were pure chaos," said Rahon, who along with Naar played a game-high 40 minutes. "You can't really hear what each other is saying, so you're relying on your signals to call plays."

The Gaels would go on a quick 7-0 run, dwindling Gonzaga's lead to just three at 58-61. Gonzaga guard Eric McClellan promptly responded with a step-back trey for three of his game-high 23 points.

"McClellan was hitting shots that that we didn't really think he could make," remarked Gaels coach Randy Bennett after the game. McClellan, who came into the game shooting just 27 percent from beyond the arc, scored 16 points in the first half.

A Rahon three-pointer put the Gaels within three once again, and a subsequent steal by Rahon led to an Evan Fitzner fast-break layup and a one-point game.

"Fitzner had a great second half against a preseason All-American in Kyle Wiltjer," said Rahon. While leading the Gaels with 20 points on the night, the redshirt freshman Fitzner helped hold Wiltjer to a season-low six points.

By the time Joe Rahon finally put the Gaels up 65-64 on a driving layup with less than three minutes to play, McKeon Pavilion had turned into absolute bedlam. "That was one of the loudest games I've heard in here," said a relieved Bennett after the game.

A layup by Fitzner put the Gaels up 67-64 with a minute to play, but a free throw by Gonzaga forward Domantas Sabonis and layup by Kyle Dranginis tied the game at 67 with just 21 seconds remaining.

Instead of holding for a final shot, Rahon drew a questionable foul on a fading jump shot and made his way to the line. Rahon made the first free throw, but drew iron on the second. Rahon intentionally fouled a dribbling McClellan, mistakenly believing the Gaels had a foul to give – Rahon called it a "brain fart" after the game.

What could have spelled disaster for Saint Mary's, however, turned into a mere footnote, as McClellan missed the first free throw and Fitzner iced the game with two clutch foul shots.

After a last-second Gonzaga heave fell short, the Gaels finalized their first win over Gonzaga since 2012 – the last time they won the WCC.

With the win, the Gaels – who were projected to finish fourth in the WCC – are no longer conference underdogs. Behind a potent, methodical offense, Saint Mary's has defeated quality opponents like BYU, Stanford, and now Gonzaga. Before the Gaels can start thinking about NCAA tournament aspirations or even the WCC Championships though, they have highly consequential road games scheduled against WCC powerhouses BYU and Gonzaga. For a team hovering just outside national rankings, these two games will determine exactly how well the Gaels are positioned come March.

On Saturday night, the Gaels finished the week by thoroughly dismantling the Portland Pilots 89-74, and shooting 63 percent from the field. Australian imports Dane Pineau and Emmett Naar led all scorers with 20 points apiece.

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LMSC Players Make U.S. National Team Training Programs

By Emily Dugdale



Cecilia "Ceci" Gee

Photo Gint Federas



Adrian Guzman

Photo provided

Two Lamorinda Soccer Club (LMSC) players were invited to train with the youth U.S. National Teams in December. Forwards Cecilia "Ceci" Gee, 17, and Adrian Guzman, 13, were called into training programs for the U18 and U14 teams, respectively, a "huge honor" according to LMSC head coach and director Mohamed Mohamed.

"You could see from the early years how those two have put so much dedication into the game," Mohamed said. "Their work ethic is unbelievable – it's not easy for the young players to give up a lot of their social life."

Gee, a tall, humble senior at Miramonte, chose early on to forgo the traditional aquatic sports that dominate the region. "When I started playing competitive for [LMSC] I realized how much I love playing soccer," she

said. "I've dedicated a lot of time to the sport – just staying that extra hour after practice and working hard."

Gee's mother, Carmen Ancinas-Gee, says that while they're a "tennis family," they've supported Ceci's growth as she makes waves in the elite soccer culture. "Ceci is unique because she dedicated a lot of time to this without anyone telling her," she said. "It was the perfect sport for her."

"Her feeling for the team and appreciation for the game is outstanding," Mohamed said.

Gee was invited to train with the U.S. Women's National Team training camp last month in Chula Vista, California – the sole Lamorinda-area player. The camps are monthly, and attempt to cut quickly through the large recruiting pool for the coveted few spots on the national teams. "I thought the soccer was amazing, in-

tensity wise," Gee said. "It was a really fun experience, especially being exposed to the different coaching styles."

Guzman was brought on for an Olympic Development Program (ODP) – a feeder program for U.S. National Team programs – in Casa Grande, Arizona last month. The talented player musters a daily commute up to LMSC's training sessions in Moraga from his family home in Richmond.

"Soccer was his number one sport from day one," Mohamed said of Guzman. "His attitude and respect for the game is very unique."

Despite not growing up in the Lamorinda area, Guzman has thrived in the competitive soccer culture at LMSC, easily rising to the top of his peers. At just 13, he manages to capture the attention of any audience when he strides onto the soccer pitch. "He was just able to gel instantly with the team," Mohamed said.

Most impressive is that both Gee and Guzman were able to make the highly competitive national training camps without being connected to the traditional recruiting outlets. Due to their small size, LMSC does not usually send players to ODPs, and the club also doesn't participate in major national leagues such as the girl's Elite Clubs National League (ECNL).

"Every single girl at the training camp was on (ECNL) except for me," Gee said proudly. "It was really exciting."

According to Mohamed, the key to Guzman's and Gee's success lies in the "possession-style" soccer championed by both the national teams. The play relies less on physical strength and more on tactical, intelligent play, according to Gee.

"You don't rely on a few players,

or opportunistic opportunities where you rely on your opponent to make mistakes," Mohamed said. "Instead, all of our players are engaged. It's the style of play that the college recruiters recognize about our teams."

While the younger Guzman is just starting to receive college scout attention, Gee has already verbally committed to Stanford in 2017. The prestigious university boasts several players on the U.S. National Teams – a learning opportunity like no other for Gee.

"I've watched a bunch of their games and the players on the teams, so I'm super excited," she said, adding that they also play the "possession-style" game that she is accustomed to at LMSC.

For now, both Guzman and Gee will continue to train and await the phone call that signals their return to the national training pitch. "They're the kind of players that any coach would love to have on their teams," Mohamed said.



Cecilia Gee

Photo provided

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Wando's Magic

Submitted by Greg Davis



California Magic Soccer Club U11 Boys players pose with USMNT star Chris Wandolowski on the green-turf carpet. Photo provided

US Men's National Team player, San Jose Earthquakes star, and Danville-native Chris Wandolowski was the honored guest and keynote speaker at the Cal Magic season-end celebration of club and community. Wandolowski inspired the Cal Magic players with his message of perseverance, patience, and self-belief on the road to achieving goals in sports and life.

Submit stories to sportsdesk@lamorindaweekly.com

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Lamorinda OUR HOMES

Lamorinda Weekly Volume 09 Issue 24 Wednesday, January 27, 2016



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

Real Estate Dealings from the Ground Up

By Cathy Dausman



Story poles can help to visualize the impact of the development in an existing neighborhood Photo Cathy Dausman

Residential real estate often comes in two varieties: move-in ready and do-it-yourself. In the former, the house is usually available for occupancy shortly after close of sale. Yet some clients prefer to work literally from the ground up, by locating and buying a lot, and then building.

"Several of my clients got so frustrated with trying to buy an existing home and losing out in multiple offer situations that they pursued the idea of buying a lot and building their own home," explains Diane Reilly of Orinda's Alain Pinel Realtors.

Reilly, who has subdivided parcels of land in Butte and Plumas counties, says "there are many things to consider when purchasing land to build a home." As this story went to press, the multiple listing service showed a total of 19 Lamorinda land or lot properties for sale, ranging in price from \$90,000 to \$4 million. In that same period there were 28 houses for sale.

Cary Amo of Bay Sotheby's International Realty says agents can be unfamiliar with raw land purchases and some clients arrive "blissfully unaware"

of the challenges they face converting raw land or even a lot into home sweet home. Before Amo takes them out, he gives his prospective clients a crash course in reality.

"If it doesn't put the fear of God in them, then it should," he says.

Unlike a home purchase, the cost of a lot is usually a cash deal. In his 25 years in real estate, Amo says he has found only one bank willing to offer loans on raw land, and then only if the purchaser commits to 30 percent down. Lots priced under \$500,000 generally require a road to access the building site, which may necessitate costly bedrock excavation or retaining wall construction which cannot be done from November to April, so timing the groundbreaking itself is important. In addition to soil and engineering studies, other so-called non-construction related "soft costs" might include tree removal, slope feasibility studies (slopes with a greater than a 30 percent incline are generally considered unbuildable) and utility hookups. The combined cost of utility hookups can run from the tens of thousands of dollars into the more than \$100,000 range, Amo says.

Additional soft costs include city building fees, permits, design review, school district assessments, and transportation impact fees. Subdividing acreage can run an additional \$20,000 to \$30,000. A local architect, one familiar with the community's ridge-line ordinance and zoning issues, is a valuable resource, Amo says. He strongly recommends his clients hire a project manager as well.

... continued on page D4

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Lamorinda Home Sales recorded



City	Last reported:	LOWEST AMOUNT:	HIGHEST AMOUNT:
LAFAYETTE	15	\$750,000	\$3,750,000
MORAGA	5	\$610,000	\$1,900,000
ORINDA	12	\$425,000	\$2,283,000

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

- 593 Antonio Court, \$1,415,000, 4 Bdrms, 2070 SqFt, 1956 YrBlt, 12-22-15;
Previous Sale: \$1,190,000, 09-20-13
- 570 Arrowhead Drive, \$1,575,000, 4 Bdrms, 2471 SqFt, 1960 YrBlt, 12-15-15;
Previous Sale: \$85,000, 04-01-74
- 825 Avalon Avenue, \$1,361,500, 3 Bdrms, 1652 SqFt, 1951 YrBlt, 12-18-15
- 3617 Cerrito Court, \$750,000, 2 Bdrms, 818 SqFt, 1930 YrBlt, 12-10-15;
Previous Sale: \$750,000, 04-15-05
- 14 Diablo Oaks Way, \$1,734,000, 3 Bdrms, 3517 SqFt, 2001 YrBlt, 12-22-15;
Previous Sale: \$1,460,000, 09-28-12
- 727 Glenside Circle, \$1,025,000, 3 Bdrms, 1164 SqFt, 1949 YrBlt, 12-17-15;
Previous Sale: \$787,000, 10-26-04
- 4075 Happy Valley Road, \$3,750,000, 4 Bdrms, 3710 SqFt, 1956 YrBlt, 12-10-15;
Previous Sale: \$2,965,000, 10-19-06
- 3410 Moraga Boulevard, \$1,100,000, 2 Bdrms, 1263 SqFt, 1938 YrBlt, 12-22-15
- 810 Mountain View Drive, \$3,500,000, 4 Bdrms, 4408 SqFt, 2003 YrBlt, 12-18-15;
Previous Sale: \$2,900,000, 02-23-05
- 857 Mountain View Drive, \$1,380,000, 4 Bdrms, 3334 SqFt, 1989 YrBlt, 12-21-15;
Previous Sale: \$977,000, 05-20-03
- 9 My Road, \$1,090,000, 2 Bdrms, 2019 SqFt, 1975 YrBlt, 12-16-15;
Previous Sale: \$880,000, 02-10-15
- 3419 St. Mary's Road, \$790,000, 3 Bdrms, 1697 SqFt, 1952 YrBlt, 12-18-15
- 3327 Sweet Drive, \$1,275,000, 4 Bdrms, 2034 SqFt, 1952 YrBlt, 12-23-15;
Previous Sale: \$607,000, 08-22-12
- 1008 Woodbury Road #101, \$1,289,000, 12-22-15
- 1001 Woodbury Road #102, \$1,340,500, 12-23-15

... continued on page D9

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What to expect in 2016

By Andi Peterson Brown

The 2015 Lamorinda housing market remained incredibly strong as the Bay Area economy continued to thrive, bringing us a steady stream of well-capitalized buyers. As compared to 2014, Orinda's average sales price increased 8% to \$1.49M, Lafayette's increased 14% to \$1.53M, and Moraga's increased 7% to \$1.29M. Despite the stock market's shaky 2016 start, industry experts still anticipate the national housing market to have a positive performance this year. Here in Lamorinda, we can expect to see:

- **Inventory to gradually pick up as we head into February.** There is historically very little inventory in January, and this month was no exception. We anticipate a more significant rise in inventory after the Super Bowl, the unofficial yet official start of the spring market.
- **Buyer competition for homes to ease as the year progresses.** Sellers will still have the advantage, but the advantage will be reduced.
 - **A more gradual increase in sales as prices moderate.** Many industry experts believe we're heading towards a more balanced market.
- **Rates to remain steady, with a possible rise toward year's end.** Mortgage rates have actually improved in January due to global economic uncertainty. Industry experts expect them to increase towards the latter half of the year.

In addition, I'm happy to talk in more detail about the market if you have further questions.



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Real Estate Dealings from the Ground Up

... continued from page D1



Amo said one client bought a bank-owned lot for a song then used an architect unfamiliar with local planning commissions. The client spent twice as much as was necessary to complete the work before house plans were approved. In the end that buyer purchased an existing home.

Terry Murphy has 30 years in real estate, 25 years as a licensed California general contractor and 16 years experience as developer and project manager. Murphy, who mentored Amo, says most first-time land buyers are "blissfully unaware of reality" and Murphy warns the process itself could be "onerous."

"People are unaware of what it takes in terms of time and money to build their dream," he says. Even realtors need to understand this. Clients must determine if their building plans are within personal property rights and will not adversely impact the neighborhood. It may take several months before the engineer and architect can work on the project. The design review aspect of land acquisition is a fairly recent component, with its pros and cons, Murphy says.

The state Permit Streamlining Act (www.ca-ilg/ounce-of-prevention) now requires agencies like design review boards to make more timely decisions to facilitate the process.

Buying land with the intention to build "usually takes longer than people think," says Ron Carter of DirtBrokers. Carter began his real estate career in the early 1970s; by 1979



One alternative to building on a lot is a complete remodel, as shown at this Lafayette location. Photos Cathy Dausman

he was focused solely on lot and land brokerage. Carter estimates approximately one-third of real estate expenses incurred are in the lot cost, including improvements. Simply pricing the lot is a challenge when there may be no readily available comparable lots.

So why buy to build at all? "There are so many answers," Carter says. The buyer may be an empty nester ready for something new and flat; the buyer may not like what the market has to offer or the buyer could be a spec builder. Still, whether buying raw land or a finished lot (Carter defines the latter as a buildable lot which has all the necessary improvements, including utilities, driveway access, curbs, gutters, sidewalks, etc.) the experience is "a different animal" from purchasing an existing home.

"It often takes longer to build start to finish than people think," says Carter, citing time spent in the design process, and if needed, design review. Seasonal conditions as well may affect a work schedule. You may even have to wait for that idyllic piece of land to first become available, because most landowners are in position to wait out unfavorable market conditions before they even place their lot on the market, Carter says, adding that some people buy lots and never build because of problems.

Still, Carter says, "it is a lot of fun to find a lot and watch it develop. I encourage it."

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The Real Estate Year in Review

By Conrad Bassett

It was another extremely strong year for sellers of residential real estate in Lamorinda, as sales volume in 2015 was consistent and the average sale price was up significantly in Lafayette, Moraga and Orinda. Like in 2014, homes stayed on the market for a limited time and prices climbed as supply remained quite low. In 2015, 102 Lamorinda homes sold for \$2 million or more, compared to 81 homes in that range in 2014, a significant increase from the 40 homes that sold at or above \$2 million in 2013, 28 in 2012 and 17 in 2011.

Interest rates have remained historically low and are still very attractive to those with down payments of at least 20 percent. Corporations continue to expand and contract and also to relocate families. The minimal amount of single-family new construction has helped keep supply and demand within a better balance than a lot of other neighboring communities. The East Bay and communities closer to San Francisco, like Lafayette, Moraga, and Orinda as well as Piedmont and several neighborhoods in Oakland and Berkeley, continue to benefit from their proximity to the city where prices remain very high. The East Bay is a "bargain."

Per Contra Costa Association of Realtors statistics reported for closings Jan. 1 through Dec. 31, 2015, 338 single-family homes closed in Lafayette versus 302 in

2014, 314 in 2013, 302 in 2012 and 245 in 2011. There was one sale where the sales price was not reported to the MLS. For the 338 reported closings, sales prices ranged from \$680,000 to \$7.2 million and the average time on market was 24 days, almost the same as 23 days in 2014 and 31 days in 2013. The average sale price was \$1,531,604, up from \$1,339,303 in 2014 and \$1,248,532 in 2013, \$1,042,921 in 2012 and \$1,040,014 in 2011. The average sales price was 102.4 percent of the final list price. The property sale that was excluded from the MLS did show a sales price of \$7.6 million in the county records so including that property would change the statistics slightly. There was only one short sale reported in the MLS for the year in Lafayette, down from five a year ago.

In Moraga there were 135 single-family closings, down from 150 in 2014, but almost identical to closings in 2013. There were 150 single-family closings in 2012 and 124 in 2011. Prices ranged from \$750,000 to \$2,572,025. The average sale price was \$1,290,804, up from \$1,205,576 in 2014 and \$1,147,207 in 2013. In 2012, it was \$991,469 and in 2011 it was \$894,768. Homes stayed on market 17 days in 2015, fairly similar to the 21 in 2014 and 23 in 2013. In 2011, homes typically stayed on the market for 40 days. The average home sold for 102.5 percent of its last list price – the

same as 2014. Ninety-five sold at or above their listing price.

In Orinda there were 256 single-family closings, down from 276 in 2014. There were 262 in 2013, 219 in 2012 and 164 in 2011. The reported sales ranged in price from \$480,000 to \$4.05 million with an average price of \$1,481,443, versus \$1,370,088 in 2014. In 2013 it was \$1,240,158 and in 2012 it was \$1,068,303. The average was \$1,021,751 in 2011. The average market time was 26 days, about the same as in 2014 and 2013 when it was 28 and 27 respectively. Homes typically stayed on the market 50 days in 2011. The sales price was an average of just under 103 percent the final list price for the reported sales. There were no short sales and two REO (bank owned) sales in Orinda in 2015.

There were no reported sales in the MLS in Canyon in 2014 or 2015.

On an average price per square foot basis for reported sales in 2015, Lafayette homes sold for \$585.87 – a slight increase from 2014 when it was \$546.87. In 2013 it was \$488.60 per square foot, and \$431.45 in 2012. In 2015, Moraga homes sold for \$532.90 per square foot up from \$495.15 in 2014 and compared to \$455.90 per square foot in 2013 and \$398.99 in 2012.

... continued on page D10

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Lamorinda Home Sales recorded

... continued from page D2

MORAGA

- 762 Camino Ricardo, \$1,525,000, 4 Bdrms, 2259 SqFt, 1965 YrBlt, 12-10-15;
Previous Sale: \$775,000, 05-10-02
- 105 Miramonte Drive, \$610,000, 2 Bdrms, 1134 SqFt, 1965 YrBlt, 12-18-15;
Previous Sale: \$570,500, 06-23-06
- 250 Rheem Boulevard, \$995,000, 3 Bdrms, 1442 SqFt, 1955 YrBlt, 12-22-15;
Previous Sale: \$850,000, 12-28-06
- 96 Sanders Ranch Road, \$1,900,000, 4 Bdrms, 3023 SqFt, 1989 YrBlt, 12-21-15;
Previous Sale: \$529,000, 08-19-88
- 412 Woodminster Drive, \$660,000, 3 Bdrms, 1572 SqFt, 1974 YrBlt, 12-15-15;
Previous Sale: \$163,000, 10-05-88

ORINDA

- 73 Brookwood Road #33, \$425,000, 2 Bdrms, 882 SqFt, 1962 YrBlt, 12-23-15;
Previous Sale: \$466,000, 05-27-15
- 3 Camino Del Diablo, \$1,220,000, 2 Bdrms, 2277 SqFt, 1983 YrBlt, 12-22-15;
Previous Sale: \$850,000, 12-22-04
- 316 Camino Sobrante, \$1,139,000, 5 Bdrms, 2286 SqFt, 1950 YrBlt, 12-17-15;
Previous Sale: \$910,000, 12-02-13
- 135 Crestview Drive, \$965,000, 2 Bdrms, 1287 SqFt, 1972 YrBlt, 12-22-15;
Previous Sale: \$332,500, 09-20-95
- 45 Donald Drive #A, \$1,075,000, 6 Bdrms, 2898 SqFt, 1974 YrBlt, 12-16-15;
Previous Sale: \$1,075,000, 04-09-15
- 5 Edgewood Court, \$1,113,000, 3 Bdrms, 1504 SqFt, 1958 YrBlt, 12-11-15;
Previous Sale: \$925,000, 11-12-14
- 65 Evergreen Drive, \$1,200,000, 4 Bdrms, 2077 SqFt, 1966 YrBlt, 12-15-15
- 10 Las Palomas, \$2,283,000, 5 Bdrms, 3832 SqFt, 1939 YrBlt, 12-15-15;
Previous Sale: \$1,825,000, 11-07-11
- 56 Longridge Road, \$800,000, 3 Bdrms, 1753 SqFt, 1950 YrBlt, 12-11-15;
Previous Sale: \$730,000, 08-20-04
- 23 Muth Drive, \$825,000, 3 Bdrms, 1902 SqFt, 1960 YrBlt, 12-22-15
- 85 Underhill Road, \$1,300,000, 3 Bdrms, 2978 SqFt, 1983 YrBlt, 12-14-15;
Previous Sale: \$500,000, 11-20-97
- 42 Valley Drive, \$1,420,000, 4 Bdrms, 3155 SqFt, 1971 YrBlt, 12-14-15



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The Real Estate Year in Review

... continued from page D8

In Orinda last year it was \$560.79, again an increase from \$520.77 in 2014. It was \$489.85 in 2013 and \$422.68 in 2012. In 2011, Lafayette homes sold for \$402.15 per square foot, Moraga homes for \$381.61, and in Orinda it was \$423.17.

In the condominium/town home category, Lafayette had 10 closings in 2015, a large drop from the 21 closings in 2014. As new developments of condominiums and townhomes are being developed in Lafayette, some new construction sales will not go through the MLS. The actual sales if the new homes are included would increase the total. Prices ranged in 2015 from \$595,000 to \$1.498 million. Moraga had 81 versus 86 in 2014, 70 in 2013 and 65 in 2012. Sales ranged from \$255,000 to \$950,000. This includes attached homes in Moraga Country Club. Orinda had seven closings, compared to 12 in 2014. They sold from

\$466,000 to \$1.03 million.

It should always be noted that there are also a few direct sales that do not go through the MLS and they are not reported here. These include some foreclosures that were sold at the courthouse as well as some sales between private individuals.

As of Jan. 20, 2016, there were 34 dwellings under contract per the MLS in the three communities combined, with asking prices of \$349,000 to \$3.55 million. There are only two "Potential Short Sales" that are currently pending and one REO. In each case, the anticipated closing date may be several months into the future as the sellers await approval of their particular lender or lenders. As prices have continued to rise over the last few years, more owners now have equity in their homes and have not had to go the short-sale process.

A comparison of year-end inventory in the three

communities combined shows only 34 homes on the market – the same as at this time last year. At the end of 2014 there were 51. Typically the biggest inventory is in the spring and early summer, however this current number may point to another year with a combination of qualified buyers vying for a continued limited supply. The current asking prices range from \$499,000 to \$5.599 million in the three communities combined.

The trend in the three Lamorinda communities of the seller receiving multiple offers and homes selling for above the list price that began in 2011 continues today. This, when coupled with an extremely low supply and a willingness by sellers to be realistic in their pricing, should continue to fuel a strong market in 2016.



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Digging Deep-Gardening with Cynthia Brian

Coming Up Roses

"I don't know whether nice people tend to grow roses or growing roses makes people nice." – Roland A. Browne



A rose garden can have various types and colors of roses.

Photos Cynthia Brian

Roses are the most popular bloomers in the world with a long and colorful history as symbols of love, war, beauty, friendship and politics. According to fossil evidence, the majestic rose is older than humankind, dating to over 35 million years ago. The cultivation of garden roses most likely began in China over 5,000 years ago. Throughout the Northern Hemisphere, the genus *Rosa* includes 150 species. Roses were used for celebrations, perfume, medicine, fashion and décor.

The Persians considered the rose a representation of love, the Romans planted extensive public rose gardens, the Greeks wrote about roses, and pagan goddesses were associated with this fragrant flower. During the 15th century, "The War of the Roses" saw the House of York with its white rose fighting against the red rose House of Lancaster for control of England. In France, Napoleon's wife Josephine planted an extensive rose collection at Chateau de Maimason which is where the famed illustrator, Pierre Joseph Redoute, completed what is considered one of the finest records of botanical illustration with his watercolor collection, "Les Rose."

Contrary to popular belief, roses are extremely

easy to grow with relatively low maintenance and rewards that far outweigh any efforts on their behalf. This is the time of year when heavy pruning is in order as well as planting bare root specimens.

Let's look at the different kinds of roses and how to care for them:

Floribunda

These versatile sun-loving shrubs have the most blossoms of the hybrid teas setting clusters of three to 15 blossoms per stem.

Hybrid Tea

Ideal for cutting, these tall, striking long-stemmed roses are the ones you will find in florist bouquets. Hybrid teas have only one flower per stem with many varieties revealing a lovely rose fragrance.

Grandiflora

These repeat bloomers are a cross between a floribunda and a hybrid tea. Growing up to six feet tall, these elegant roses feature clusters on shorter stems.

Shrub and Carpet

Disease resistant, compact growth, impressive clusters with little to no maintenance makes these a great selection for hillsides. These landscape roses spread growing

close to the ground, which is why they are often referred to as "carpet roses." Whack them off at the end of the season for even more blooms in the months to come.

... continued on page D14



A bouquet of perfect red hybrid teas.



Salmon and orange-hued roses are welcome gifts any time of year.



A row of peach floribundas is a focal point of this landscape.



A favorite climbing rose by David Austin Roses called Gertrude Jekyll.



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Coming Up Roses

Climber

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Tree

Hardy rootstock is grafted to a long-stemmed rose then grafted again to a rose bush at the top of the stem to make this elegant rose. Additional care is necessary to maintain these specimens.

Miniature

Perfect for container gardening, these very resilient roses range from six inches to two feet in height. They flower consistently and are great for small spaces. My favorite is called Sun Sprinkles with creamy butter yellow florets on a plant that is only about one foot tall.

Grades

When you buy a rose, you'll see a number

on the tag: 1, 1 ½ and 2. These are grades showing the size and quality of the plant with the best being No. 1, which will have bigger and better canes, will grow faster, and provide more blooms in the first year. It is always worth buying the best quality rose appropriate for your particular micro-climate.

Patents

Some breeders have registered their roses with the patent office so that they cannot be duplicated. This means that you cannot legally propagate it without permission.

Growing Roses

The most important thing to remember for pest protection is to buy a top quality specimen that is appropriate for your conditions. Although most roses prefer full sun, there are varieties that grow beautifully in light shade. Roses need good drainage in acidic soil. Improve clay soil by

... continued from page D12



Shrub roses, also called carpet roses, blanket this hillside with frilly blooms.

working organic matter into the beds to a depth of 12 inches. Gypsum, pine needles, redwood leaves and coffee grounds will reduce alkalinity. Fertilize in March with a mixture of alfalfa pellets and diatomaceous earth. For insect control, companion plant with lavender and alliums.

Deadheading and Pruning

After blooms are spent, deadhead to encourage repeat blooming. Don't worry about how you cut the stems. Roses aren't fussy. You can pinch off the blooms with your fingers or use a sharp shear to cut to the fifth leaf. Once a year at the end of January, prune the wood to half size for all modern varieties. For floribundas, hybrid teas, and grandifloras, early spring just as the buds are swelling is a good time to prune. Old-fashioned roses and climbers need pruning after flowering as they bloom on old wood. If you don't know what kind of rose bush you have, don't worry. Prune in late January or February and let nature do its magic. Roses cannot

be killed by heavy pruning.

Rose Hips

If you don't deadhead, you'll notice tiny little orange to red balls forming where the bloom used to be. The birds love these rose hips as nutritional food and they are also food for humans, especially flavorful in teas. However, by allowing rose hips to form, the bush will stop blooming as the hips signal it is time for a rest. Make sure to prune them off to enable lots of spring flowers.

Thorns

Most roses do have thorns, some more so than others. I am willing to put up with a few cuts now and then because of the pleasure roses provide. I repeat what our great president of the United States, Abraham Lincoln, had to say about roses: "Some people are always grumbling because roses have thorns. I am thankful that thorns have roses."



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Being a rosarian does breed kindness in people. This year plant a rose garden and enjoy years of beauty, fragrance, and armfuls of bouquets to share throughout every season; 2016 is coming up roses.



Cynthia Brian with an ever blooming grandiflora rose, Tournament of Roses

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Cynthia Brian

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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.

\$5,599,000

ANTIOCH



New Listing

4306 Spaulding Street
Spacious single level traditional home built in 1992. Vaulted ceilings, new carpet & lovely laminate flrs, granite kitchen counters, laundry rm, fireplace, & walk to Mno Elementary.

\$329,000

DANVILLE



New Listing

2 Meadowbrook Lane
Remodeled 4 bedroom/3bathroom home. Quality finishes with open floor plan. Flat yard with sport court and expansive grass area.

\$1,495,000

WALNUT CREEK



New Listing

0 Brodia Way
Beautiful 1.2 acre lot in La Casa Via area. Build your dream home or a custom home for resale. Incredible country living yet great location in WC. Valley views & walk to Shell Ridge Trail.

\$650,000

WALNUT CREEK



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

\$1,700,000

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