

LAMORINDA WEEKLY

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26,000 copies delivered biweekly to Lamorinda homes & businesses

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Norman Pease of Orinda stands by his Tesla Model X No. 65. Tesla is one company gaining traction, despite a decrease in electric car sales.

Photo Andy Schreck

Are Electric Cars Losing Their Charge?

Statistics show that U.S. plug-in electric vehicle sales dropped in 2015

By Nick Marnell

Could the electric car be on the brink of fading consumer interest? The electric car has battled the gasoline-powered car through one roadblock after another, from higher prices to cheap oil to a subsidized infrastructure. Today it faces those same challenges, plus limitations of the distance capability of

a charged battery and radical government proposals that seek additional revenue to repair the roads and highways. Electric cars came onto the scene in the late 19th century, about the same time as gasoline-powered cars, but quieter, easier to drive and they smelled better. Then along came Henry Ford, and thanks to mass production, gasoline cars dropped

to one-third the price of electric ones by 1910. The U.S. developed roads to connect its cities, gasoline prices fell and gas stations popped up all over the country, making gasoline — unlike electricity, which was limited to major U.S. cities — readily available in even the smallest towns. By the 1930s, electric cars had all but disappeared. ... continued on page A14

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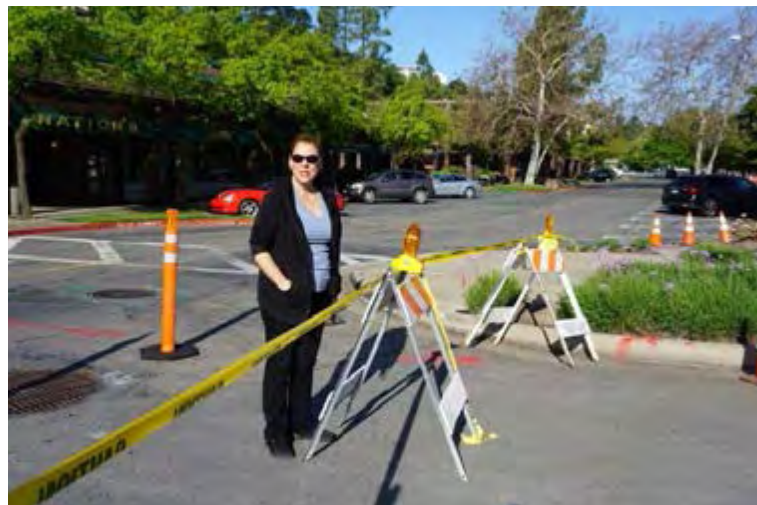
New This Week!

47 El Gavilan Road
Orinda

More information inside.

Sinkhole May be Swallowing Local Businesses

By Cathy Dausman



Gayle Somers, Home Made Cafe at the Moraga sinkhole Photo Cathy Dausman

It's not business as usual at the Rheem Center. Life has taken on a twist for the merchants at the center since a sinkhole opened a portion of Rheem Boulevard March 13 and closed a major Moraga intersection.

Moraga Chamber of Commerce event March 14, right when natural gas service was shut off. Owners Gayle Somers and Aly Bean Miller improvised by cooking 10 pounds of pasta over a propane camp stove. "It's a good thing we grew up in the San Joaquin Valley," Somers laughed, referring to their camping know-how. When asked how the detour has affected business, though, Somers gets serious. She says traffic signage is confusing, parking is challenging and people don't even know Rheem Center businesses are open. The week of April 4 was "the toughest week we ever had," Somers said, citing a perfect storm of spring break downturn and traffic detour woes. Rheem Valley Pet Shoppe lost a day of business when the sinkhole appeared. "People drive

crazy," owner Jennifer Lenfestey explained, adding the detour is at times little more than a parking lot and is "getting old at three-plus weeks." The pet store takes deliveries twice weekly from large trucks, and that has been challenging. "Why not open at least half the street?" Lenfestey wondered. Elite Unisex Hair Design owner Martha Estrada was disappointed that the only walk-in one spring break afternoon was not a customer but a Lamorinda Weekly reporter. Estrada says the street closure and detour has definitely affected her business, leaving little or no nearby parking for her customers. She says it has been so quiet many days she has had to close. Estrada makes this plea to those who might visit her shop: "Be patient!" ... continued on page A13

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Moraga Road to become three lanes. — page A5

MOFD News A8

MODF paramedics save the life of local man.— page A8

Life in Lamorinda B1-B8

Carr Gala will showcase scenic beauty of Carr Ranch. — Page B1



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Lamorinda baseball teams have high hopes. — Page C1



Our Homes D1-D20

Garden Tour highlights several local beauties. — Page D1

