

Published June 29, 2016

## PDs Three Words: Slow Down Lamorinda!

By Sophie Braccini



Electronic speed signs like above on Moraga Road in Lafayette help to build awareness among drivers. Many drivers hit the brakes when approaching the sign last Saturday.

Photo Andy Scheck

lost control of the car, packed with seven kids. "The majority were transported to the hospital with injuries and I imagine they are still suffering the consequences of that day," says Christensen.

He says that summer and freedom from schools mean that more young or less experienced drivers socialize with their friends, in cars that can go very fast. Moraga Interim Police Chief Jon King adds that speed is a contributing factor to the seriousness of accidents and that recent complaints have made his department aware that speeding is again becoming more prevalent. For example, in mid-May the police caught a driver doing 76 mph on a 35 route, and the citations for the first five months of the year have increased by 15 percent from 317 last year to 362 in 2016, with the same amount of enforcing.

King also knows that public works departments typically take advantage of the summer to conduct various road repair projects, and that drivers should pay more attention on their routine routes.

King and Christensen met with Orinda Chief of Police Mark Nagel and decided to revive the Slowdown Lamorinda program that had not been activated last year.

The program consists of dedicating five to six police officers that will work all summer long, choosing one day a week, in different places each time, to conduct hours of enforcement. Nagel says that the main purpose of the program is to bring awareness to drivers on the dangers of driving at high rates of speed and distracted driving.

King adds that the police forces have no hidden agendas, they just want to keep the streets safe, and since they are about prevention, the three departments are making sure people know about the campaign and won't be taken by surprise by the surge of enforcement.

King ordered banners that will be displayed in the three cities that recommend slowing down and

A happy summer in the suburbs should mean sun, fun, friends and relaxation. No one wants increased traffic speed, inexperienced drivers and carelessness to lead to more accidents.

This is why the three Lamorinda police departments are reviving the Slow Down Lamorinda campaign that started in June of 2007 in the aftermath of three local speed-related deaths. The three police chiefs say they'll be happy if this leads to zero infractions, because the campaign is about prevention and keeping people of all ages and in all modes of transportation safe.

Lafayette Police Chief Eric Christensen still remembers when his department received a call of an accident on one of Lafayette's long winding roads along the Orinda border a couple of years ago. The call was about a car into a tree, with several people trapped inside the vehicle and at least one person ejected from the vehicle. When officers responded, they found that the driver had

stop distracted driving. The three chiefs are also using Nextdoor, their city's newsletters, and other media to end complacency over high speeds on local roads.

This program is not the only time the three police departments work together. They routinely assist each other monitoring common DUI checkpoints, training together with active shooter drills, and on a daily basis, depending on the severity of calls for service, assisting each other for backup when necessary.

Slow Down Lamorinda will continue until the end of summer and might resume for the holidays. People wanting to support the program can go to their police department, take the pledge of following traffic laws and get a bumper sticker that says 'Slow Down Lamorinda.'



Moraga interim Chief Jon King with the Slowdown banners and the Slow Down Lamorinda bumper sticker. Photo Sophie Braccini

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