

Lamorinda OUR HOMES

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Digging Deep with Cynthia Brian

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Uncovering the Pros and Cons of Pool Covers

By Cathy Tyson



A pool alarm helps with safety.

Photo Vickie Martin

When the mercury rises, families are ready to dive into a community or backyard pool, but how to keep pools safe and warm is an ongoing concern for homeowners with pools. While pool covers provide a level of safety and can reduce heating costs, depending on the type, they can be frustrating to take on and off.

Before installing a cover, a Moraga couple reports that their regular pool temperature was about 64 degrees, a little chilly for a quick dip. Since adding a cover in May, the average pool temperature is up to 76 degrees, and more efficiently heated up to 80 degrees with assistance from a gas heating system. The happy homeowners credit the use of a cover roller suggested by their neighbor, which easily opens and closes, in keeping the pool consistently warmer and encourages more summertime enjoyment.

A number of pool cover options are on the market, and of course each has pros and cons. One aspect that many pool owners consider is safety.

“The first line of defense is always supervision” said Paul Barendregt of Very Nice Pools in Lafayette, who has been in business for over 35 years, regarding potential drowning accidents. However in addition to vigilance, pool owners can consider automatic covers, safety alarm buoys, nets and fences for peace of mind and for a more inviting swim.

It’s important to note that drowning takes the lives of more California toddlers than any other kind of accident, according to the California Department of Public Health, and children who manage to survive a near drowning often suffer permanent brain damage.

When Jeanine and Jim McDermott moved into their Moraga home when their daughter was just six months old, installing a pool cover was the first thing they did. Fast forward approximately 10 years and after repairing it twice, they had it removed. Because their pool was kidney shaped, the tracks were on the decking and “it drove us crazy,” says Jeanine McDermott. When it rained, it also created another pool on top of the pool, a hassle to address. The now empty-nesters still use the pool and backyard all the time, as they consider it an extension of their house, but prefer to go coverless. ... continued on page D4