

Moraga Education Foundation Celebrates 35 Years of Unwavering Community Support

By Sophie Braccini



Original MEF board members pose during a recent event: From left, Sandy Ruliffson, Marna Eyring, Fred Weil, Barby Eppinger, Lee Marona, Peggy Cabaniss, Judith Glickman, Bill Jasper, Stephany Gooch and Sam Sperry. Not pictured: Jack Balousek, Pat Elam, Joan Evans, David Goodman, Carol MacNulty and Bill Osborne. Photo provided

It took some vision and creativity for a group of 15 Moraga residents 35 years ago to form the Moraga Education Foundation. Their goal was to supplement declining funding for schools. MEF started with a modest goal for their first campaign — \$50,000.

Thirty-five years later MEF is on its way to raising \$2.2 million for the Moraga School District and Campolindo High School. A gala on March 11 will celebrate past and future achievements and raise funds for MEF's endowment.

Peggy Cabaniss remembers the growing discontent over schools' funding in the late 1970s when she was serving on the MSD school board. Sam Sperry explains that Proposition 13 had frozen the percentage of property tax that Moraga would ever get to a very low level, and adding to this shortcoming, Moraga was never eligible to get money that was directed to disadvantaged school districts. The desire grew in some Moraga residents to look for a source of revenue that would be independent of the state funding and property taxes revenues.

"We had to constantly cut back programs, teachers were getting frustrated because we could not get them any raises and they were thinking that the board was being mean," remembers Cabaniss. "We were not mean, we had no money!"

The frustrated parents heard about a school district in Marin County and one in Piedmont that had started foundations to supplement state funding. Fred Weil, a Moraga lawyer and father, got information from both. They had competing funding models, one drew from membership dues, and the other on fundraising. The first MEF volunteers decided on the latter, thinking there was more potential for growth there.

The first year 15 people joined the MEF board. Sperry said he put

himself on the board due to his prior involvement at Rheem School and to secure school buses program. Cabaniss represented the school board, Ruth Habbot, a teacher, was invited to be on the board, as well as Judy Glickman, the MSD superintendent at the time who, according to the former board members, was of great help and support. The legal structure was established in December of 1981. The first campaign started in the spring of 1982 with a phone-a-thon and a lofty goal of \$50,000.

"One problem we had was that retired people felt that they had already put their children through school, and they did not have the means or the inclination to contribute to MEF," recalls former board member Joan Evans. Sperry added that it took a while for these people to realize that they were still MSD stakeholders as the value of their homes were tightly related to the value of the schools. Sperry credits the real estate professionals for joining MEF in carrying that message.

Today's MEF president Heather Davis reports that 27 percent of all donors do not have kids in the schools — community members represent 24 percent and business and civic sponsors represent 3.3 percent of donations. The bulk of donors remain the residents who have children in schools with 73 percent of all contributions. She adds that about 58 percent of parents give to MEF.

The group was very pleased and surprised to reach their goal for the first campaign. The objective for the 1982/83 school year grew significantly to \$186,000. Davis adds that MEF today is responding to the same political and economic conditions that motivated the founders 35 years ago, and that communities — like Moraga and Lafayette — are getting together to support the classes and programs

funded by MEF that have become essentials in all the schools.

MEF's goal this year is to raise \$2.2 million. The trend of increase in funding made a significant jump in the early 2000s when MEF funding increased from \$1 to \$2 million between 2007 and 2013. Today MEF funds teaching positions — art, music, PE, and 15 class sections in high school, as well as programs such as writing programs, teacher aids, technology instructors, tutors, counseling and several grants. Davis is adamant that MEF does not decide how the money is used; this decision is made by the school boards (MSD or Acalanes Union High School District). As the foundation tag line says, MEF serves every student, every day.

The celebration gala will be held at the Claremont Hotel. MEF expects 360 residents to join in the dinner, dancing, and live and silent auctions. The proceeds will contribute to the MEF endowment that has recently reached the half a million dollars level. The \$150 tickets for the gala "Under the City Lights" are on sale on the website www.MEF35th.com.

Life in LAMORINDA

The Saklan School

think creatively

act

live courageously

Where Learning Meets Happiness

Schedule your private tour today!

Pre-K-8th saklan.org 925.376.7900

TOWN HALL THEATRE COMPANY

LAMORINDA'S PREMIER LIVE ENTERTAINMENT VENUE

PETTY THEFT

THE BAY AREA'S BEST TRIBUTE TO TOM PETTY & THE HEARTBREAKERS

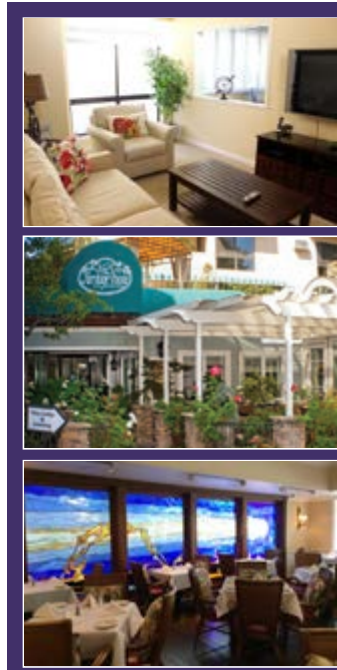
JANUARY 27 & 28

DOORS AT 7 - MUSIC AT 8

TOWNHALLTHEATRE.COM

925.283.1557

3535 SCHOOL ST. LAFAYETTE, CA



The Heritage Downtown

A Senior Resort Rental Community

The Heritage Pointe has not moved... we just changed our 'Pointe' of View!

Located walking distance to the best of Walnut Creek!
Shopping, Restaurants, the Arts, Cinema and Events
Offering latest in Technology, Fitness and Care
All Inclusive Amenities/Social Events/Transportation
Mouth Watering Dining in Newton's on-site Restaurant

Never toured The Heritage Downtown??

Come...Tour...Dine...Reserve your new home... We have your keys!

Lock your rent in til 2019...

1,2 and 3 bdrm Luxury Apartments!

925-943-7427

1785 Shuey Avenue • Walnut Creek, CA 94596

www.theheritagedowntown.com

Find us on



Gold Coast Chamber Players Perform 'Intermezzo' in Lafayette

Submitted by Pamela Freund-Striplin



Kindra Scharich Photo provided
The Gold Coast Chamber Players will ring in the new year at a winter concert Jan. 27 entitled "Intermezzo."

The performance will include

pieces by Gustav Mahler, Max Bruch, Charles Loeffler, Frank Bridge and Francis Poulenc. The musicians are Kindra Scharich, mezzo-soprano, Pamela Freund-Striplin, viola, Tony Striplin, clarinet and Jeffrey LaDeur, piano.

The 7:30 p.m. concert, to be held at the Community Hall at the Lafayette Library, 3491 Mt. Diablo Blvd. in Lafayette, will include a pre-concert talk 30 minutes prior to the show.

Tickets can be purchased and more information is available at www.gcplayers.org or by phone at (925) 283-3728.

At Care Indeed, you have a voice because we listen.

We take the time to understand your needs, and offer solutions that address every aspect of your care... the kind of care that you want and makes you happy.

At Care Indeed, we listen because we care.

(925) 317-3080 • (925) 402-4411

www.careindeed.com

info@careindeed.com

Serving the Greater Bay Area

Care Indeed™

YOUR 24/7 HOME CARE SPECIALIST

HCO#414700023