

Published April 5th, 2017

Many local parents continue to support 5th-grade teacher in 'Duct Tape' case

By Sophie Braccini



Parents wear their "I'm with Millie" badge: from left, Anne Naffziger, Natalie Doane, Janelle Chng, Laura Revelos, Sara Giordani. Photo Sophie Braccini

Many local parents continue to support a Moraga teacher in what is being referred to as "the duct tape story" despite an editorial in another local newspaper that claimed the teacher lied.

Los Perales fifth grade teacher Millie Tang was accused of placing duct tape over a child's mouth last year. Documents released to the East Bay Times spell out the Moraga School District's conclusions written after Los Perales Elementary Principal Amy Black interviewed seven students from the classroom, including the alleged victim, "John Doe." MSD's records indicated that a majority of the students as well as a colleague of Tang confirmed that the teacher herself placed the tape on Doe's mouth, which she denies.

But parents continue to support a teacher that they consider an exceptional educator, pointing out deficiencies in the district's inquiry and accusing the media of bias.

Parents of current and former students of Tang, as well as former students, continue to support the teacher, highlighting several elements they consider the MSD neglected. The parents first specify that only seven students out of 22 were interviewed, one by one behind closed doors in a manner that they feel was intimidating. One mother indicated to this newspaper that her child was interviewed and testified that the teacher did not put on the tape, but that "John Doe" did it himself as a humorous provocation.

The lawyer of the "Doe" family, Larry Cook, did not respond to our phone calls. The district attorney dismissed criminal charges in the case, but the civil suit is continuing. The documents filed by Cook refer to physical and psychological abuse of a child, stating that Tang placed the duct tape and ridiculed the child in front of the class, and that she also engaged in intimidation, coercion and threats. The documents also accuse Black of failure to prevent, correct, train and supervise the teacher, and states that the MSD authorized and/or ratified Tang and Black's misconduct toward "John Doe."

At this time, more than 80 letters of support for the teacher have been received and given to the MSD. The parents supporting Tang are dismayed that the East Bay Times never mentioned the letters that were sent to them. They wonder what is the reason, even calling it a "witch hunt."

At a recent fundraiser for the Moraga Education Foundation parents distributed "I'm with Millie" stickers and they say that parents all over the district, not only Los Perales parents, choose to wear them in support of the teacher.

Gregory Read, a partner with the San Francisco law firm Sedgwick, offered Tang to be her lawyer pro-bono. The well regarded trial lawyer said that Tang has already a lawyer appointed by the school district but that she needed a friend. Read has two grandchildren who are former students of Tang. He said that he did extensive interviews of the teacher and of parents and decided he should assist her. He says that the very petite teacher - often smaller than some of her fifth graders - is very distressed by what she feels in an injustice. Her whole life has been dedicated to teaching, as well as her humanitarian endeavors, and she finds these accusations and attacks on her character devastating, he said.

When parents talk about Tang, the emotions also run very high, between anger, disappointment and deep sadness. A group of parents plan to attend the April 11 MSD board meeting to continue to affirm their support and demand that the district not settle the case. They feel that MSD should support its teachers and not back down over what they consider frivolous lawsuits. Read is convinced that if the case goes to court the probability of winning is very high, but he warns that putting children on the witness stand could be a difficult experience.

Reach the reporter at: sophie@lamorindaweekly.com

[back](#)

Copyright © Lamorinda Weekly, Moraga CA