

Fall family festival focuses on children with special needs

Submitted by Cathy Kauder



Last year's fall family festival

Photo provided

For most children, Halloween is an exciting event that they look forward to with eager anticipation. But for children with special needs, the chaos and unpredictability of the holiday can be intimidating. Because of their differences, which can include anything from sensory processing difficulties, motor skill delays, anxiety or other social/emotional issues, it can be very challenging for children with special needs to take part in activities during the Halloween season.

That's why Lafayette's special education development foundation, known as SEED, will host an inclusive fall family festival from noon to 4 p.m. Sunday, Oct. 22 at Sienna Ranch. This will be the second year that SEED is hosting this event, which will include a fun family barbecue, pumpkin crafts, hikes, pony rides and much more. The cost is \$10 per family, which will include lunch and all of the activities.

SEED was developed by a small group

of parents in 2006 after recognizing the need for a foundation to augment special educational services for children and families in Lafayette. With the collaborative efforts of its diverse parent population – stemming from Early Intervention, Lafayette's four elementary schools, Stanley Middle School and members of the Lafayette community – SEED quickly grew, raising money through grant writing, annual fundraising, community partnerships, and individual donations.

The organization provides a wide range of support and resources to families of children with special and diverse learning needs, as well as training programs for educators who work with these children. The programs funded include recess facilitation, after school social skills play groups, educational seminars, support groups and socials for parents and teacher training. For more information and to register for the event, go to www.seedlafayette.org.

Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School takes on global water crisis

Submitted by Robin Anderson



Students carry a water jug containing five gallons of water, weighing over 40 pounds, at a Sept. 25 assembly at Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School in Moraga. Children and women in Africa carry one of these for miles daily to get water for their families. Photo provided

Over the years, Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School has had many classroom competition fundraisers, typically raising up to \$1,900, involving a few classes per grade. This year, however, every single class participated (on their own), raising \$8,000 for Thirst Project, a nonprofit organization that educates students about the global water crisis and challenges them to fundraise to build wells in developing nations and impoverished communities to provide people with safe, clean water.

"Thirst Project is a great example of an organization started by youth wanting to make a difference in the world," said JM science teacher Kim Lockett. "The world can feel very overwhelming at times and it is great to show students that youth can work together to truly make a difference."

Lockett had seen a Thirst Project assembly at a YMCA Model United Nations Conference, and she brought the topic up to the ECO club at JM. "Everyone was on board with bringing it to the school," she said.

At a special assembly on Sept. 25 a Thirst Project representative spoke to students about community, building community, and working to help communities. During the assembly, to teach how hard life is in some countries, students carried five-gallon jugs of water weighing 40 pounds across the auditorium. "Children and women in Africa carry one of these for miles daily to get water for their families, often for water that is brown and not clean," Lockett said.

After the assembly, JM teacher Kristin

Anderson and the leadership class were so moved by the presentation that they set a school goal to raise the \$8,000 and fully fund a well providing access to clean water for an entire community.

"While listening to it I couldn't help but compare these children in Africa that we're hearing about and how their days are spent just trying to survive," said Anderson. "The idea of community is emphasized in Leadership, so I was grateful for an opportunity for Leadership students to assist in something so meaningful."

"We had our advisory lesson that morning focused on the assembly," said Lockett. "Classes watched a short video, answered some questions about fresh water, and came up with a class goal." Every \$25 raised sponsored one person for life with access to clean water, Lockett explained.

"Initially we did not think we could raise the amount for a well so we were focusing on how many lives could we save," Lockett said. The fundraiser ran through Tuesday, Oct 2, but some additional money came in the rest of that second week to get them over the top.

"I had told the presenter that in the past we raised between \$1,500-\$2,000 for an ECO-sponsored turtle fundraiser, and that in my experience people often are more willing to donate to help baby turtles than people," she said. "Yet this year proved me wrong. JM really came together to help."

For information about Thirst Project, visit www.thirstproject.org.

Fun in the vineyard

Submitted by Linda U. Foley



Sal Captain at Captain Vineyards in Moraga
Photos Linda Foley

On a recent gorgeous fall morning, a large group of chattering volunteers plucked succulent grape baubles on the hills of the Captain Vineyards. They filled "lugs," each weighing from 25 to 40 pounds and carried them up countless stairs to be weighed and dumped into the de-stemming machine.

Sal Captain's many overseeing chores included stomping down the stems of some very deep blue Petit Verdot grapes to be recycled in the vineyards' composter – after all, it's an organic vineyard and nothing is ever wasted. By lunchtime, there was a healthy tally of 4,000 pounds of Cab Franc and Petit Verdot grapes.



Petite Verdot grapes

Soccer team holds bake sale to raise funds in honor of Coach Coco

Submitted by Tara Harju



From left: Ella Erdem, Nikki McCarthy, Kelsey Severson, Caitlin Jenkins and Sophia Harju

Photo provided

Members of the Eclipse U14 Solar girl's soccer team raised \$120 for the Breast Cancer Awareness Foundation Oct. 7 at their bake sale at the little community park opposite Sideboard in Lafayette, in honor of their amazing coach Colette Bowler, who passed

away in August from cancer.

Coco, as she was fondly known, was a great mentor to these Lamorinda girls. She was a wonderful, loving, upbeat, fun and extraordinary person.

Celebrations

Longtime director of Bay Area Psychotherapy Institute honored for work

Submitted by Nes Pinar, LMFT

Dr. Robert Marino, co-founder and longtime director of the Bay Area Psychotherapy Institute in Lafayette will be honored Nov. 3 for his many years working in the field of addiction and mental health. Marino, an Orinda resident of 30 years, left a legacy with his retirement earlier this summer.

From 1993 to his retirement in June of 2017, Marino maintained a private practice of psychotherapy in Lafayette and Orinda with a particular focus on the treatment of addicts and their family members. He regularly consulted with therapists throughout the Bay Area on issues of addiction, and made it a priority to reach out to numerous attorney, teacher, and parent groups to help inform them about mental health issues and addiction and how these affect their clients, their students, and their families. He believed each person must be understood and

approached in an existential, psychological, and spiritual context.

Each year Constellation Behavioral Health hosts the Miracles Breakfast, an opportunity to gather to celebrate the miracle of recovery and honor the Northern California professionals whose dedication to the fields of addiction and mental health disorders is an inspiration to us all.

Dr. Marino will receive the Courage Tribute Award, which honors a professional who has empowered the addiction and mental health communities through advocacy, leadership, and courage. The event will be held from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. at The Olympic Club, 524 Post St. in San Francisco.

Tickets are now available for individuals. For information about the Bay Area Psychotherapy Institute in Lafayette, visit www.bapti.org.

Community Service: We are pleased to make space available whenever possible for some of Lamorinda's dedicated community service organizations to submit news and information about their activities. Submissions may be sent to storydesk@lamorindaweekly.com with the subject header In Service to the Community.

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