

Orinda Troop 237 helps Santa Rosa rise from the ashes

Submitted by Lisa Hoskins



Max Coons, Jackson Painter, Campbell Hoskins, and Marcus O'Neill

Photo provided

In the wake of the devastating North Bay fires, Orinda Troop 237 Boy Scouts, Max Coons, Campbell Hoskins, Marcus O'Neill, and Jackson Painter, wondered how they could help. A call to the Santa Rosa Boy Scouts of America councils revealed a Santa Rosa Troop that had lost all its scouting supplies – supplies needed to continue on with meetings, advancement, campouts and its own community service projects. Santa Rosa Troop 707 stored its supplies in the homes of its scoutmaster, assistant scoutmaster and Troop committee chairman. Sadly, all three homes – plus 20 percent of their troop families' homes – were lost in the fires.

"Because the supplies were held in private homes, insurance is only covering a small portion. So we decided to help replace the Scouting supplies they lost," explains Coons. The Orinda boys organized a donation drive within Troop 237 and the outer community. The troop ended up delivering a large truck full of camping gear to Santa Rosa that will first be offered to the individual families who lost their homes, then everything left will be used for troop supplies.

O'Neill expressed, "It was a shock to see the debris of the trailers, supplies, and houses that were completely wiped out."

Plus, over a 10-day period, current and former Troop 237 Scouts and families contributed \$4,200 in cash and gift cards for the Santa Rosa Troop. "One of the things they lost was their big trailer and storage unit, which they had just restored and repainted. With our money, Troop 707 plans to purchase a new trailer," said Hoskins. Painter said, "In Scouting, we focus on helping the community, and this time, we were able to do that and also help fellow Scouts and families who needed us."

Troop 237 is thankful to Orinda Troop 303 and Lafayette Troop 200 who immediately pitched in with generous support after hearing about the fundraising efforts. In all, nearly \$7,000 plus supplies were donated to Troop 707 and its families. Troop 707 expressed their gratitude, "These Scouts made it their mission to reach out and help us soon after the fires struck. We are proud to be part of an organization that is so ready to help their fellow Scouts in need."

One Eagle Scout's reflection on helping others

Submitted by Ana Ramirez



Julian Ramirez delivers backpacks to UCSF Benioff Children's Hospital Oakland. Photo provided

Julian Emmanuel Ramirez joined Cub Scouts Pack 54 in Moraga when he was 6 years old. "In fifth grade I earned my Arrow of Light rank and was promoted to become a Boy Scout, joining Troop 234," he said.

The way he has grown in scouting from being a 6-year-old to now a 17-year-old junior at Campolindo High School, he says, has been a fantastic experience. "I have a giving a spirit; I strongly believe I got that from my parents who are always volunteering their time and helping others." Ramirez says teachers, family and friends would describe him as an introvert "because I am pretty quiet guy and keep to myself," he says. But he also enjoys politics and debate and is currently in Youth and Government. He's also been a member of a Dragon Boat Rowing Team since eighth grade.

For his Eagle Project, Ramirez wanted to "do a project that would directly benefit children in need and help make someone's day a little brighter." He contacted UCSF Benioff Children's Hospital Oakland and made a proposal: to put together backpacks with school supplies for the children who are hospitalized long-term.

The idea was born from personal experience. When he was 13 years old, Ramirez developed a disorder called ITP in which his immune system destroyed a large amount of his platelets and he was hospitalized.

"I know being cooped up in a hospital

room for too many days can be boring. I also know that being in the hospital is not cheap because parents often have to pay high co-payments," he says. "I wanted my Eagle project to lessen the burden of buying school supplies for kids whose parents were already in distress over their ill child. After getting the OK from Children's Hospital I began to draft a plan and a budget on how I would accomplish my goal."

Ramirez's initial goal was to donate 40 backpacks. With the help of Minuteman Press in Lafayette, which donated 400 flyers for his project, Ramirez, along with some of his fellow Scouts, distributed all 400 flyers in his neighborhood asking for donations using the model of scouting for food.

"I also spread the word through social media and through word of mouth. I surpassed my goal of 40 backpacks and was able to assemble 103 backpacks with school supplies," he says.

The backpacks were delivered to Children's Hospital Oakland on Oct. 19. "My Eagle Project was a total success exceeding my expectations."

While in scouting Ramirez earned over 57 merit badges which, he says, taught him many skills such as CPR, wilderness survivorship, finances and he served in many leadership positions. "I was also selected to 'Order of the Arrow,' which is the Honor Society of Scouting.

"Scouting has taught me a lot about responsibility, respect, compassion, and kindness. I want to express my deepest gratitude to Troop 234 and the volunteers who have mentored me throughout the years, to my community, family and friends for supporting me through the many fundraisers and to my parents Ana and Jose Ramirez for being my No. 1 mentors and for your unconditional love and support in this great life scouting adventure."

Ramirez wanted to give a special thank you to Patricia Hernandez of Lulu's Printing for the embroidery on the backpacks and to Minuteman Press in Lafayette for printing the flyers for his project.

What's next for Ramirez? "Getting ready for my SATs, attending college in fall of 2019 and pursuing a career in law with an emphasis in civil rights work."

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.

Dining for Women: changing the world one woman, one girl, one dinner at a time

By Sora O'Doherty



Members of the Lamorinda chapter of Dining for Women enjoy an Indian pot luck meal while donating for an Asian Initiatives project to benefit women and children in Northern India.

Photo Sora O'Doherty

What if, just by going out for dinner with friends, you could benefit women and girls around the world? That is the premise of Dining For Women, a group that raised more than \$5 million between 2003 and 2015 for projects that promote gender equality and empower women living in the developing world to become economically self-sufficient.

Dining for Women, founded by Marsha Wallace, a former nurse and mother of four from Greenville, South Carolina, has hundreds of chapters around the county; the Lamorinda chapter meets in Orinda. At the January dinner, funds were raised for a project in northern India to help women start small businesses raising and selling chickens. Asia Initiatives' poultry farming project in Shohratgarh, India, reaches the most disadvantaged women and girls in some of the poorest communities.

The way it works is that instead of going out to a restaurant for a meal with friends, members have a pot luck dinner and then contribute what they would have spent on dinner to a project to help women and girls around the world. Participants can choose a typical regional recipe suggested by the organization or bring one of their own choosing. The projects are selected by the national organization, and diners watch a video about the project at the dinner.

The selected projects are designed to

educate girls, teach women a skill, help develop markets for their products, and fight the prevalent gender inequality in the world. According to its website, Dining for Women aims to give a hand up, not a hand out. The grant selection committee vets scores of organizations every six months, ultimately choosing 12 a year as recipients of grants of up to \$50,000.

The local chapter meets the second Wednesday each month, although in February this year they will meet on the third Wednesday. At the January meeting, participants said that they enjoyed the fabulous program, calling it so much fun, and citing the powerful relationship of women to food.

Over dinner, the women discussed some favorite past projects, such as one that manufactured eco-friendly sanitary pads out of banana leaves to combat the problems of girls in Africa who cannot afford commercial pads and consequently may miss school on days that they have their periods. Another popular project taught women to build stoves. The women agreed that they liked the fact that the organization is very transparent, has few paid employees and keeps administrative costs low, and noted that the subtext is, how do you create change from within?

More information about Dining for Women is available <https://diningforwomen.org/>.

Assistance League Way Side Inn Thrift Shop expands designer event

Submitted by Betty Miller



Photo provided

Appropriately located on Golden Gate Way, under the watchful eye of Marquise Lafayette, the well-known landmark of the Assistance League's Way Side Inn Thrift Shop will become a purveyor of high-end handbags and garments at its "Handbags, Lingerie and Designer Dresses" event beginning on Tuesday, Feb. 6, which will feature the creative geniuses of Dooney & Bourke and Coach, American designers who were inspired by modern world nuances.

Engineered with the highest regard for materials and craftsmanship during the 1940s through the 1990s, such features as expertly structured, timelessly chic, elegant but functional, and glamorously on-the-go define these American signature pieces. Whether you purchase a shoulder bag, satchel or grip, you will enjoy years of durability and luxury. This event will include other brand name handbags, as well.

Thanks to a timely donation of designer dresses and lingerie, more than 200 items have been added to this event. While the blue smocked volunteers are averse to dropping names, such labels as Gucci, Galiano, Valentino, Prada, Dior, YSL, La Perla, Lejaby and Fellini, they will attest that the walls do have ears. These treasures will give new meaning to Valentine's Day 2018. Treat yourself to such well-deserved high-end niceties as dresses, skirts, lace tops, slacks, camisoles, pajamas, shapewear and peignoir sets at patron-friendly prices.

Support for the Assistance League Way Side Inn Thrift Shop improves the lives of children and adults in our community who are vulnerable. To learn about the hands-on philanthropic programs primarily funded by the Assistance League Way Side Inn Thrift Shop, visit diablovalley.assistanceleague.org.