

'Swim Team' documentary profiles young athletes on the autism spectrum

By Catherine Kauder



Photo provided

SEED, Lafayette's Special Education Enrichment Development Foundation, is hosting a free screening of "Swim Team," an award-winning feature documentary about a New Jersey YMCA-based community swim team made up of teens on the autism spectrum.

The film will be shown at 6 p.m. Friday, Jan. 26 at the Lafayette-Orinda Presbyterian Church, 49 Knox Dr. in Lafayette. A moderated discussion will follow the screening.

The moving 90-minute documentary chronicles the Jersey Hammerheads, a competitive swim team formed by the parents of a teenage boy on the autism spectrum.

The film follows three of the team's star swimmers over the course of year, giving a glimpse of the overwhelming struggles they face and the triumphs they achieve as they strive for independence, inclusion and a life that feels like winning.

The athletes profiled are Mikey, the team's standout swimmer whose parents Mike and Maria lead the swim team with equal measures of patience and high expectations, Robbie, the team's leader and captain of his high school swim team whose mother is helping him come to terms with what it means to have autism, and Kelvin, a young adult who struggles with Tourette's and violent outbursts.

As we follow these young men's journeys, we also see a portrait of diverse families as they help their children transition into adulthood in a society where services and support for adults on the autism spectrum

can be scarce, and many with this disability fall through the cracks.

Young adults with autism had lower employment rates and higher rates of complete social isolation than people with other disabilities, according to a 2015 report by the A.J. Drexel Autism Institute. New Jersey has the highest rate of autism in the United States — as of 2016, one out of every 41 children in the state was diagnosed with an autism spectrum disorder, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Filmmaker Lara Stolman said she was inspired to make the documentary after discovering the Jersey Hammerheads when she was looking for swim lessons for her own children.

"I was immediately struck by the energy and optimism of the families who were coming together to form the team. Some of the kids were teenagers and had never been on a sports team before. And some couldn't yet swim. But this team was determined to dominate the competition," she says.

The documentary has won many awards at film festivals across the country and premiered on PBS in October of last year. For more information about "Swim Team," visit: www.swimteamthefilm.com.

To register for the free screening of the documentary, go to: <https://events.r20.constantcontact.com/register/eventReg?oeidk=a07eeyashnz08330b00&oseq=&c=&ch=>

A limited number of spots for children's respite care are also available from 6-9 p.m. at LOPC. To register, please e-mail dave@lopc.org.

SEED 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. SEED funds programs such as recess facilitation, afterschool social skills play groups, educational seminars, teacher training and support groups and socials for parents and families. More information about SEED can be found at www.seedlafayette.org.

GCCP offers a musical journey to Romania Feb. 2-3

Submitted by Pamela Freund-Striplen



Gold Coast Chamber Players on tour.

Photo provided

The third of the Gold Coast Chamber Players season's five concerts, titled "Fantezie" will be performed twice, the first at 8 p.m. Friday, Feb. 2 at the Piedmont Center for the Arts, 801 Magnolia Ave in Piedmont with the second performance at 7:30 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 3 at the Lafayette Library Community Hall, 3491 Mt. Diablo Blvd. in Lafayette.

The award-winning GCCP bring the finest in chamber music to Lafayette and the surrounding areas. Founded in 1987, GCCP distinguishes itself by its eclectic programming and by providing community access to leading musicians from throughout the world.

From folk music to the epic String Octet, by Georges Enescu, 'Fantezie' offers a musical journey to Romania. This appealing program includes Enescu's string trio, Aubade, Eugene Ysaÿe's Solo Violin Sonata "Georges Enescu," an arrangement of Bela Bartok's Romanian Dances for violin and string quartet and finally, the Enescu String Octet.

Three Romanian violinists are featured: Gil Sharon from the Amati Ensemble in Holland; Florin Parvulescu from the San Francisco Symphony; and Corina Stoian. Violinist Dan Flanagan joins violists Ron Ephrat from the Amati Ensemble and Pamela Freund-Striplen. Cellist from the SF Piano Trio and a

member of SF Conservatory of Music faculty, Jean-Michel Fonteneau and Jennifer Klotzel, formerly of the Cypress String Quartet, round out this all-star ensemble.

"Fantezie" brings out the passion and complexity of the Romanian spirit. The centerpiece of the program, Enescu's String Octet, Op. 7, was written when Enescu was only 19 years old and is rarely performed. These performances represent its East Bay debut, offering audiences an extraordinary opportunity. There are between nine and as many as 12 melodic themes used in the work, depending on the analysis (Hoffman and Rațiu 1971, 259; Bentoiu 2010, 13). The greatest number of them (six or seven) are presented in the exposition of the first part. The second part is a kind of demonic scherzo, tumultuous and whirling, while the third is a lyrical, slow movement; in both of them new themes are added (Hoffman and Rațiu 1971, 259).

The Gold Coast Chamber Players offer a pre-concert talk with musicologist Kai Christiansen 30 minutes prior to each performance. Single tickets for the Lafayette performance are \$45 general admission, \$40 senior (65+), and \$15 for students. Introductory ticket price for the Piedmont performance is \$25 in advance, \$30 at the door. All tickets may be purchased online at www.gccplayers.org or by calling (925) 283-3728.

Sumptuous and simply delicious Super Bowl nibbles

By Susie Iventosch



Pan-fried olives with gorgonzola sauce and onion puff pastries.

Photo Susie Iventosch

With Super Bowl right around the corner on Sunday, Feb. 4, here are some fancy finger foods to pass around your football gathering this year. These pan-fried olives and caramelized onion puff pastry treats are sure to be crowd pleasers. A friend sent me the onion puff pastry recipe, which he found in the instruction manual of his KitchenAid food processor! I've made the tarts a few times now, but the very best were those made with the Old Amsterdam premium aged Gouda from Trader Joe's. That cheese is amazing, and combined with puff pastry and caramelized onions, it's hard to go wrong.

For the fried olives, I used pitted Mt. Athos olives from the deli department and they were perfect for this recipe. These are halkidiki (or chalkidiki) olives — large, flavorful, green Greek olives. However, if you cannot find them, I would think any large, pitted green Greek olive would work well. Just don't use ripe green olives. They don't have the right flavor characteristics for this recipe. If you have the patience, it would be fun to stuff these olives with blue cheese before breading them. The olives I bought were stuffed with red peppers, but I removed those before breading them.

Fried Olives with Gorgonzola Sauce

(Makes approximately 2 dozen)

INGREDIENTS

- 1 pint pitted green Greek olives
- ¼ cup all-purpose flour
- 2 egg whites, beaten with a fork
- ¾ cup plain bread crumbs (I used panko, but regular plain bread crumbs are okay)
- 2-3 Tbsp. olive oil

Sauce:

- 4 ounces crumbled Gorgonzola cheese
- ¾ cup cream or half & half
- ½ tsp. ground white pepper

DIRECTIONS

Remove any stuffing from the olives and rinse olives in cold water to remove some of the brine. Pat dry with paper towels. If you decide to stuff them with blue cheese or Gorgonzola, do it after rinsing and drying.

Stir egg whites and place in a small bowl. Place flour and panko in two other separate bowls. Working in batches, dredge olives in flour, then dip in egg white and roll in bread crumbs. Set olives on a plate until ready to fry.

Heat oil over medium-high heat and place olives in pan in batches. Cook until browned and crispy, turning as needed to brown both sides.

Meanwhile, heat cream in a sauce pan and bring just to a boil. Reduce heat and stir in gorgonzola until melted. Add white pepper. Serve hot as dipping sauce, or drizzle over olives before serving.

Caramelized onion puff pastry with aged Gouda cheese

(Makes approximately 16)

INGREDIENTS

- 1 sheet frozen puff pastry
- 1 large yellow or red onion, cut into thin slices
- 2-3 Tbsp. olive oil
- 2 Tbsp. brown sugar
- 2 Tbsp. balsamic vinegar
- 1 teaspoon sea salt
- 6 ounces aged Gouda, grated

DIRECTIONS

Heat olive oil in a large frying pan. Add onions and cook over medium-high heat until translucent. Stir in brown sugar and balsamic vinegar and continue to cook over low heat until caramelized, approximately 20 to 30 minutes.

Place squares on a cutting board and cut into roughly 2-inch square pieces. Place squares on a baking sheet and pierce each with a fork. Bake at 400 F for about eight minutes. Remove from oven and make an indentation in the center of each with the back of a spoon.

Spoon onion mixture into each cavity and sprinkle generously with grated Gouda. Bake for an additional 8-10 minutes at 400 F until cheese is bubbly and beginning to brown. Serve warm.

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This recipe can be found on our website: www.lamorindaweekly.com. If you would like to share your favorite recipe with Susie please contact her by email or call our office at (925) 377-0977.



Cooking Term of the Week

Whey

Whey is one of two primary proteins found in milk. It is also the liquid that is expelled from the curds during the cheese-making process. Whey is rich in protein but is often discarded in the process of making cheese. However, it can be used in place of milk or water in some recipes.