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This private road is one of many in Orinda in need of repair, but the miles of private roads in Orinda are currently not maintained by the city.

Photo Tod Fierner

Orinda road plans deferred due to private roads issue

By Sora O'Doherty

A controversial issue that has been appearing before the city council frequently in the past months was again brought up on Feb. 6 and led the council to defer a decision on the most recent plan for road and drainage repairs. The issue concerns Orinda's private roads. The council had asked the Citizen Infrastructure Oversight Commission to provide past history or ratings of the public roads at the time of incorporation in 1985,

but the CIOC says that such data is not available. Several speakers urged the council not to approve the current CIOC Road and Drainage Repairs Plan, and Council Member Darlene Gee suggested, in light of the continuing issue of private roads that staff is currently working on, that the council not move ahead with approval of the plan. Orinda resident Steve Cohn sent an email to the council members urging that they defer action on the plan.

Residents Charles Porges and Melissa Roeder spoke at the meeting, continuing to urge the council to find a way to deal with private roads. According to the commenters, there are 29 miles of private roads in Orinda. Although residents of private roads pay all the same taxes as residents on public roads, public roads are maintained by the city and private roads are not.

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LAMORINDA WEEKLY

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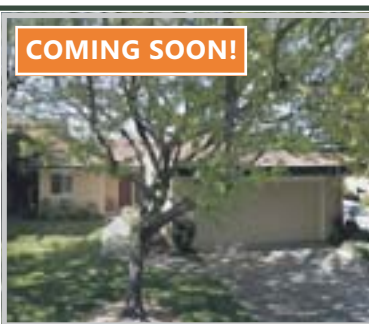
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 Warfield Drive, Moraga

State must do more for Lamorinda schools, say elected officials

By Nick Marnell



Assemblywoman Catharine Baker presents her views on school funding, as state Sen. Steve Glazer awaits his turn. Photo Nick Marnell

California schools receive more money from the state than ever before, but it is still not enough, explained a panel of analysts and public officials Feb. 8 at the Lamorinda Education Forum hosted by the Lafayette School District.

In the 2017-18 fiscal year, California schools will receive \$93 billion in total fund-

ing, mostly derived from state personal income taxes and local property tax revenue. State funding provided K-12 schools with \$11,628 per student, a 49 percent increase over the level provided seven years ago, according to Ryan Anderson of the Legislative Analyst Office.

... continued on page A8

Budget midyear revision: Moraga on the mend

By Sophie Braccini

Despite a midyear forecast of an additional \$940,000 in the town's general fund balance, the Moraga Town Council and the audit and finance committee agreed that it was still too early to rescind the fiscal emergency that was declared in July.

The better than expected financial results came from increased property tax revenue, interest, dividends, development-related revenue and fees, which more than made up for less than expected sales tax revenue and increased legal expenses. According to the staff report, at the time of the 2017-18 fiscal year budget adoption, "the year-end unassigned fund balance could only be projected based on estimated year-end results compiled in the months prior. Such projections are generally conservative, and in the case of the June 30 ending unassigned fund balance, the actual results (based on the audit report issued on Oct. 25) were better than expected by \$765,603."

The midyear budget presentation made to council on Feb. 14 highlighted that the town's revised fund balance is projected to reach \$2.5 million by June 30, more than 30 percent of 2018 operating expenditures, but still short of the 50 percent objective set years ago.

Meanwhile, as the town asks residents for a fee to fund its storm drain system maintenance, it is setting in place systematic ways to save its surplus for infrastructure maintenance.

The adequacy of the town's reserves still hinges on federal reimbursement. The depletion of the reserves in response to the Rheem sinkhole and Canyon Bridge failure spurred the declaration of fiscal emergency. Staff is still managing the federal reimbursement system to get back as close to 100 percent as possible of the over \$6 million spent on these projects.

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The South Pacific influence in SMC women's basketball – page C1.



Our Homes D1-D16

Hurdles faced when plumbing is a problem – page D1.





Public Meetings

City Council

Monday, Feb. 26, 7:30 p.m. Lafayette Library & Learning Center, Community Hall, 3491 Mt. Diablo Blvd.

Planning Commission

Monday, March 5, 7 p.m. Lafayette Library & Learning Center, Community Hall, 3491 Mt. Diablo Blvd.

Design Review

Monday, Feb. 26, 7 p.m. Lafayette Library & Learning Center, Arts & Science Discovery Center, 3491 Mt. Diablo Blvd.

School Board Meetings

Acalanes Union High School District Wednesday, Feb. 21, 7 p.m. AUHSD Board Room 1212 Pleasant Hill Road, Lafayette www.acalanes.k12.ca.us

Lafayette School District

Wednesday, Feb. 21, 7 p.m. Regular Board Meeting District Office Board Room 3477 School St., Lafayette www.lafsd.k12.ca.us

Check online for agendas, meeting notes and announcements

City of Lafayette:

www.ci.lafayette.ca.us Phone: (925) 284-1968

Chamber of Commerce:

www.lafayettechamber.org

Due to a change in reporting by the Lafayette Police Department, we were unable to get complete information before press time.

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City council to appeal planning commission decision on crosses property

By Pippa Fisher



Carol Reef, left, and Lynn MacMichael, right, brought poster boards to the Feb. 12 council meeting to illustrate the many people who value the crosses memorial. Photo Pippa Fisher

The fate of the land that is home to the Lafayette crosses is once again on the table as the result of a request for appeal brought by a city council mem-

ber. The roughly 5-acre land in question lies opposite the BART station on Deerhill Road and includes two parcels – one vacant

and one with two houses. On Jan. 16 the Planning Commission granted the landowner, Charles Clark, permission to reconfigure the property lines to result in one residence on each parcel. Clark, whose now-deceased mother Louise Clark started the crosses memorial as an anti-war protest with Jeff Heaton in 2006, wants the adjustment in order to make the properties easier to sell.

But now, as a result of a request for appeal brought by City Council Member Ivor Samson the matter will have to go before the city council in March.

Members of the city council were prohibited from discussing the merits of the case at the Feb. 12 city council meeting in order to preserve the applicant's due process rights. The city's appeal process under municipal code allows a city council member to re-

quest an appeal "if the decision is of such importance that it should be reviewed by the council."

Samson, while constrained within limited parameters, explained his view of that importance by saying that the property is located in the heart of the city and contains the crosses which are seen by thousands of people every day, both from the freeway and from BART. He said that it has been a site of public interest for more than 10 years and that as such any decision regarding use of land is by definition a decision of importance that should be decided by the city council.

Public speakers did not shy away from more detailed discussions of their concerns, however, pointing to damage to the environment and wildlife, loss of access for the public and potential for development. ... continued on page A9

Safety measures to stay in place on Reliez Valley Road

By Pippa Fisher



The new stop sign at Fairholm Road is one of five measures that will become permanent, in an attempt to deter speeders. Photo Pippa Fisher

Lafayette is making permanent the safety improvements along Reliez Valley Road.

And it does seem that wheels are spinning a little more freely there these days, but is that as a result of a seasonal reduction, as many of the corridor's residents suggest, or has it been helped by safety precautions implemented in November?

The problems along Reliez Valley Road are twofold: severe congestion during the morning commute hours and drivers traveling at unsafe speeds at other times.

To address the issue of speeding, the city implemented five temporary measures: the painting of "30" on the road at locations where a speed limit sign has been posted, a "No right turn" sign at the island at the intersection of Pleasant Hill Road and Reliez Valley Road, two additional stop signs – one at Fairholm Road and the other at My Road – and a marked crosswalk at Green Valley Road.

Police Chief Eric Christensen gave his report at the city council's Feb. 12 meeting and recommended making all measures permanent.

Christensen said that the four-week speed enforcement campaign by his officers that accompanied these measures had proved successful in helping to change driver behaviors and he noted that another such campaign would start again soon.

In response to questions about the possibility of speed bumps,

Christensen said he was not keen to use them on an arterial, 30 mile per hour road, saying that cars hitting the bumps at such speeds can be dangerous. He is however, supportive of installing a speed feedback sign capable of recording speeds to help with their surveys.

Members of the public who spoke were generally in favor of the new measures but several urged the council not to forget the matter of congestion. Several speakers made the point that there are always less cars on the road at this time of year and that traffic will build up again, so data is needed for the whole year.

As the council voted unanimously to make the safety measures permanent and add a speed feedback sign on a temporary basis, Mayor Don Tatzin stressed the importance of continuing to work at the county level to be supportive of Reliez Valley Residents for Reduced Traffic's requests for turn restriction signs on Taylor Boulevard. A meeting is scheduled this week between city staff, RVRRT and Supervisor Federal Glover to discuss turn restriction signs in the area that lies beyond Lafayette's jurisdiction, which residents say are needed at peak commute hours to prevent apps such as Waze from directing traffic through their neighborhood.

Reliez Valley Road resident Kristen Altbaum pointed out that neighbors have received a letter from the Contra Costa County Fire

Protection District stating that during a high wind event, the combination of high traffic congestion from commuters and potential evacuee traffic could make response to the area very difficult for fire resources.

The letter continues, "The Contra Costa County Fire Protection District is supportive of all solutions that would improve the quality of life for the residents along Reliez Valley Road. We do not feel that doing nothing is a viable solution."

Given that, Altbaum says that RVRRT looks forward to immediate action being taken by Glover

"to protect this high fire danger corridor, as it is listed on Cal Fire's Hazard Severity Zone Map, from the onslaught of out-of-area commuters and approve limited access signs from 7-8:30 (a.m.) Monday through Friday, as is already standard in many neighborhoods within the county who have protected themselves against significant Waze traffic," she says.

"We also hope and expect Lafayette city would advocate for this outcome on our behalf," adds Altbaum.

Reliez Valley Road resident Roger Chelemedos says it is unconscionable that Waze, Google and

other traffic mapping apps would continue to direct traffic down a narrow and windy road, "which could result in first responders being unable to provide urgent medical care to residents along the Reliez Valley Road corridor, resulting in a loss of life, or cause a situation where residents would not be able to evacuate their homes in the event of a firestorm, as recently occurred in Santa Rosa, Napa and Sonoma."

Christensen says he is happy with the changes he has seen regarding safety and reduced speeding. Now residents say it is time to focus on traffic mitigation.



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In addition to supporting Lafayette Partners In Education, Kurt has given back to the community through his golf tournament - Day on The Green which donated proceeds to Las Trampas Inc., Xenophon therapeutic horseback riding and the construction of the Lafayette Reservoir Playground. Kurt has served as a Board member at the Lafayette Chamber of Commerce. He currently volunteers as an assistant football coach at Acalanes High School where he coaches the varsity wide receivers.

Growing up in Orinda and

residing in Lafayette for over 20 years, Kurt credits our great schools for his life successes which include graduating from CAL and earning the rank of Eagle Scout. Kurt's daughter Chloe is a 5th grader at Lafayette Elementary School and his son Nick attended Acalanes High School. Kurt and his family are members of Moraga County Club. Visit his website at www.kurtpipergroup.com

Supporting The Lafayette Public Schools



Parking relief for Safeway shoppers at last



Photo Pippa Fisher

The end is in sight for construction to provide 185 parking stalls on the vacant lot near Mt. Diablo Boulevard and Oak Hill Road in front of the Lafayette Safeway. According to Safeway spokesperson Wendy Gutshall from the Northern California corporate headquarters, the company anticipates finishing the parking lot expansion sometime in March, weather permitting. – P. Fisher

Lafayette's police station officially opens

By Pippa Fisher



Photos provided



If residents noticed SWAT vehicles on the streets of Lafayette recently, fear not – the scary-looking vehicles were probably on their way to the grand opening of Lafayette's new, state-of-the-art police station.

The new police headquarters next to Boswell's on Mt. Diablo Boulevard was officially declared open after a ribbon cutting ceremony Feb. 11. Wielding the giant scissors was Mayor Don Tatzin, aided by Police Chief Eric Christensen, Assemblywoman Catharine Baker, Police Records Supervisor Cathy Surges-Moscato, Vice Mayor Cam Burks, state Sen. Steve Glazer's District Director Teresa Gerringer and City Council Member Mark Mitchell.

Christensen's hard work over the last six years within the Lafayette police department was recognized as Baker dedicated the new flagpole at the front of the building to the chief and presented him with a flag. Illuminations on the flagpole will allow the flag to be flown 24 hours a day. A plaque at the base serves as a reminder of Christensen's service.

Once the new offices officially opened, a steady crowd jostled through and got an up-close look at many of the police gadgets and toys. The drone was flying overhead in a demonstration. Police vehicles, including the SWAT vehicle, were available to explore. Refreshments were served and enjoyed at tables set up in the back.

As children ran from room to

room and then clambered in the police cars and motorcycles parked outside, police officers and volunteers answered questions about the new facility.

The police currently continue to operate from their old location until everything is set for their communications to switch over. Christensen says that is due to happen on Feb. 26. For now though the building is still unfurnished. The only addition thus far is a painting in the lobby, provided by Lafayette's multitalented city manager, Steve Falk.

This was a rare chance for residents to go behind the scenes in the police station without an escort and "heavy wrist jewelry."



Photo Pippa Fisher

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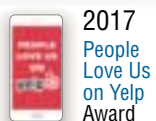


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Moraga

Public Meetings

City Council

Wednesday, Feb. 28, 7 p.m.
 Wednesday, March 14, 7 p.m.
 Council Chambers and Community Meeting Room, 335 Rheem Blvd.

Planning Commission

Monday, March 5, 7 p.m.
 Council Chambers and Community Meeting Room, 335 Rheem Blvd.

Design Review

Monday, March 12, 7 p.m.
 Council Chambers and Community Meeting Room, 335 Rheem Blvd.

School Board Meetings

Moraga School District
 Tuesday, March 13, 7 p.m.
 Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School Auditorium
 1010 Camino Pablo, Moraga
 www.moraga.k12.ca.us
 See also AUHSD meeting page A2

Check online for agendas, meeting notes and announcements

Town of Moraga:

www.moraga.ca.us
 Phone: (925) 888-7022

Chamber of Commerce:

www.moragachamber.org

Moraga Citizens' Network:

www.moragacitizensnetwork.org

Moraga

Police

Department

Incident

Summary

Report

Jan. 30 to Feb. 12

Alarms	16
911 Calls (includes hang-ups)	7
Traffic	87
Suspicious Circumstances	13
Suspicious Subject	0
Suspicious Vehicle	6
Service To Citizen	31
Patrol Request/ Security Check	67
Noise Complaint	4
Supplemental Report	15
Welfare Check	7

Abandoned Vehicle

Country Club Dr./S. Sandringham

Accident Property

Moraga Way/Orchard Rd.

Battery

Not Available

Civil

Rheem Blvd./Moraga Rd.
 300 Block Rheem Blvd.
 100 Block Brookline
 2000 Block Donald Dr.
 1300 Block Camino Pablo
 3900 Block Campolindo Dr.
 Not Available
 Campolindo High School

Court

Walnut Creek Superior Court
 Walnut Creek Traffic Court

Death Non Criminal

30 Block Kinston Ct.

Dependent Child

Shuey Dr./Rimer Dr.

Disturbing the Peace

300 Block Rheem Blvd.

Excessive Speed

Rheem Center
 Moraga Way/Hardie Dr.
 Moraga Way/Eastwood Dr.

Fire/Ems Response Info

700 Block Crossbrook Dr.

Found Property

Subway

Grand Theft

Canyon Bridge

Grand Theft From Building

St. Marys College

H&S Violation

Greenfield Dr./Camino Ricardo

Identity Theft

60 Block Lynwood Pl.
 600 Block Rheem Blvd. (2)
 10 Block Magee Ct.

Juvenile Disturbance

20 Block Idlewood Ct.

Lost Property

Moraga Country Club
 Police Department

Mentally Ill Commit

Campolindo High School

Ordinance Violation

1000 Block Alta Mesa Dr.

Other Felony

Police Department



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Cynthia Battenberg tapped as Moraga's next town manager

By Sophie Braccini



Cynthia Battenberg Photo provided

Mayor Dave Trotter said at the Feb. 14 town council meeting that as the council members searched for a new town manager,

they were looking for the next Jill Keimach, and that he believed they found her in Cynthia Battenberg.

The council members unanimously approved the employment contract of the woman who will direct the town staff.

Like Keimach, who came to Moraga in November of 2010 from Fremont where she was the community development director, Battenberg comes from the city of San Leandro where she served in different positions for 16 years, her last title being community development director. Her department included planning services, economic development, housing services, and code

enforcement. She was previously the business development manager for that city, as well as deputy finance director for San Leandro.

A graduate from UC Berkeley with an MBA from UCLA, she also worked for the private sector in marketing and management before transitioning to the public sector.

Vice Mayor Teresa Onoda noted that Battenberg had been interested in the Moraga position for a while, as soon as she heard of Keimach's departure two years ago, and that she has attended numerous council meetings since.

During the Feb. 15 council meeting, Battenberg expressed

her eagerness to start working for Moraga, a town she considers full of charm and opportunities, while not ignoring the challenges.

The employment agreement includes a salary slightly below the \$200,000 threshold, less than previous town manager Bob Priebe's compensation. The town attorney also noted that Battenberg declined the medical coverage proposed by the town, which will also reduce the impact on the town's budget.

Battenberg promised the city of San Leandro that she would finish some work there before she comes to Moraga; she will start her employment with the town on March 12.

MCF announces ADA bathroom funding initiative

By Sophie Braccini



Rendering of the proposed bathroom building

Moraga Community Foundation, the volunteer-led group that raised funds for the surveillance camera police network in Moraga, recently announced its intent to fund a campaign to update the bathrooms located at the Moraga Commons Park next to the recently inaugurated all-access playground to the highest ADA standards. The town council will have to approve the project before the service group starts its campaign.

Tom Schnurr, current president of the foundation, came to the town council on Feb. 14 to present the idea. Schnurr explains that when the foundation board saw the great work Moraga Rotary had done raising funds for the all-access playground, it was inspired to contribute to the improvement of the park.

Dianne Wilson for the Moraga Rotary said the club has worked for the past year and a half to create and finance the finest all-access playground for children in the whole Bay Area. "Therefore, we are pleased to see the effort being made to make the restroom facilities conform to ADA standards to complement the beautiful play area," she added.

The group of volunteers started exploring possibilities and best

practices, and is proposing a new facility that would not exceed the existing bathroom footprint. It would include four unisex fully ADA-compliant bathrooms, one with an adult changing table, a feature that is now often provided in California, explained Schnurr.

The exterior existing water fountain would also be upgraded for cyclists, pedestrians and their four-legged companions.

Schnurr said at the council

meeting that the project's cost would be between \$225,000 and \$275,000. The project was to be reviewed by the parks and recreation commission on Feb. 20. MCF will also present it to the Parks Foundation, the Moraga Rotary Club, Moraga Lions Club and Moraga Valley Kiwanis for advice and support.

If approved, the project will be conducted by the town staff. The pricing presented by MCF takes into account a turnkey solution that would include the installation of the new bathrooms.

The MCF was created at the beginning of 2016 to build a vibrant future for Moraga. It is common knowledge that this philanthropic group has a watchful eye on the Rheem Theatre and would want to support efforts to turn it into a public asset, should the property owner cooperate. Schnurr says that the foundation can handle several projects at a time, and MCF recently raised enough money to install a network of security cameras in town.

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Residents seek answers about new storm drain fee

By Sophie Braccini



A broken pipe eight feet upstream at Rheem Boulevard and Center Street
Photo provided

The \$120 fee for most residents that the town of Moraga plans to include on a mail-in ballot this spring is triggering questions from residents. Either at public sessions or online, Moragans are asking how the money will be used, why a fee is needed and if there are not better sources of funding, or if schools and churches will be contributing as well.

At the first two community meetings on Feb. 12, between 12 and 25 residents came to the

council chambers to ask questions of town officials, staff and consultants, who are preparing for the March 14 public hearing. Edric Kwan, the public works director, was there to defend a mechanism that will give him the resources to implement the storm drain master plan he developed in 2015. It took the sinkhole on Rheem Boulevard and the scare of having funding withheld by the Federal Emergency Management Agency because of Moraga's lack of maintenance, for the

council to make the political decision to finally address the issue.

Some residents who attended the community meetings asked staff and the elected officials present, such as Mayor Dave Trotter, why the issue had not been addressed any sooner. Jim Holgersson, interim town manager who has managed nine cities in five different states, said that Moraga faces the issue of lack of infrastructure maintenance as many other jurisdictions do and is willing to address it as best it can. He confirmed that Moraga is indeed very thriftilly managed and has been for years, with the lowest per capita expense in the region.

The statement did not stop resident Seth Freeman from noting that the money that the new fee will generate corresponds to about 10 percent of the town's total payroll. He also criticized the fact that councils over the last 12 years never saved money for infrastructure maintenance and capital replacement.

Freeman and other residents asked to see a detailed expenditure plan with what public works would do with the fee if it passes.

... continued on page A12

Moraga Center Homes breaks ground

By Sophie Braccini



KB Homes grades the future site for the Moraga Center Homes.
Photo Sophie Braccini

The very contentious Moraga Center Homes project has broken ground in Moraga, as any passersby on Moraga Way may have noticed. Starting to grade in the middle of the rainy season, even if it is quite dry right now, is heavily regulated and some residents have asked why this was permitted without much information given to the public.

The old pear trees that once grew on the site located between Moraga Way and Country Club Drive, next to the fire station at 1280 Moraga Way are gone and the developer of the 36 attached homes that will be built on the site, KB Homes, has started grading the 3.06-acre lot.

A single bulldozer was seen on site, uprooting the trees and moving dirt. It was enough to unsettle longtime resident Richard Olsen. He says that during the 43 years since Moraga's incorporation, he is not aware of any major grading or dirt hauling operations that have occurred within the town's limits during the winter rainy season. "In the case of the two most recent major subdivisions in Moraga – SummerHill Homes on Camino Ricardo (now Harvest Court) and Rancho Laguna II projects – both did not undertake any grading or dirt hauling activities during the winter," Olsen added.

... continued on page A10



MCE Contra Costa

In April 2018, residents and businesses in Moraga, along with Concord, Danville, Martinez, Oakley, Pinole, Pittsburg, San Ramon, and unincorporated Contra Costa County, will start their more renewable and locally controlled energy service with MCE at competitive rates compared to PG&E, or they can choose another service option.

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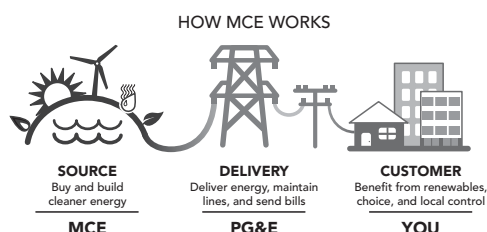
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*Please have your PG&E account number on hand.

How does MCE affect electricity services for Moraga residents and businesses?

Aside from having access to more renewable energy, not much will change. Residents and businesses can choose 50–100% renewable energy from a local public agency. MCE customers continue to enjoy the same reliable electricity service, with PG&E delivering power, maintaining the wires, and providing billing and gas services.



How do MCE rates compare to PG&E's?

Typical customers currently pay slightly less for MCE's 50% renewable electricity compared to PG&E's 33% renewable electricity, with costs nearly identical. Part

of MCE's mission is to provide stable and competitive rates, and has, in fact, reduced rates the past two years in a row (by an average of 9% and 3.7%, respectively). MCE has limited rate changes to once annually and, as a local public agency, all changes are always discussed and reviewed at public meetings by MCE's Board of Directors, made up of locally elected officials representing each of the communities we serve. PG&E will implement new rates beginning March 1. MCE will review promptly and, if needed to continue providing competitive rates, will adjust its own rates. For rates and cost comparisons visit: mceCleanEnergy.org/rates

Do CARE, Medical Baseline, and other low-income assistance programs continue with MCE service?

Yes. Low-income assistance programs like CARE, FERA, and Medical Baseline are unaffected by enrollment; these customers receive the same discount with MCE as they would with PG&E. Customers in these programs do not need to re-enroll nor take any further action.

Will my billing change?

No. PG&E will continue to send one monthly bill. Instead of one fee that combines charges for the delivery and generation of your electricity, the bill will show separate charges — one for electric delivery (PG&E) and one for electric generation (MCE). MCE's generation rates simply replace the generation charges you currently pay to PG&E; they are not an additional charge.

Is MCE's power supply more renewable than PG&E's?

Yes, considerably! MCE's power supply contains a higher portion of renewable resources like solar, wind, bioenergy, and geothermal. According to the

most recent California Energy Commission Power Content Labels, MCE's Light Green service is 55% renewable and PG&E's service is 33% renewable.

Which communities does MCE serve?

MCE has been serving Bay Area electric customers since 2010. Today, about 255,000 customers in Marin and Napa Counties, and the cities of Benicia, El Cerrito, Lafayette, Richmond, San Pablo, and Walnut Creek are buying more renewable energy from MCE. Concord, Danville, Martinez, Moraga, Oakley, Pinole, Pittsburg, San Ramon, and unincorporated Contra Costa County will enroll with MCE in April.

What kind of organization is MCE and who controls it?

MCE is a local, not-for-profit, public agency directly controlled by its member communities — like Moraga. Formed by the public to buy cleaner power and re-invest ratepayer dollars locally, MCE always prioritizes the interests of its customers. MCE's Board of Directors are democratically elected leaders from each community MCE serves and are not paid for their role with MCE. In consultation with MCE's staff, the Board determines MCE's rates, policies and programs in meetings that are open to the public.

How is MCE funded?

Like PG&E, MCE is funded by electricity ratepayers through their monthly energy purchases. MCE is not funded by taxpayers. A cornerstone to MCE's mission is to redirect ratepayer dollars back to local economies, and reinvest in its communities by providing low, stable rates, supporting local workforce development, and partnering with community-based organizations.



Orinda

Public Meetings

City Council

Tuesday, Feb. 26, 7 p.m.
Library Auditorium, Orinda Library
26 Orinda Way, Orinda, CA 94563

Planning Commission

Tuesday, Feb. 27, 7 p.m.
Library Auditorium, Orinda Library
26 Orinda Way, Orinda, CA 94563

Citizens' Infrastructure Oversight Commission

Wednesday, March 14, 6:30 p.m.
Sarge Littlehale Community Room,
22 Orinda Way, Orinda, CA 94563

School Board Meetings

Orinda Union School District
Monday, March 12, 6 p.m.
Regular Board Meeting
8 Altarinda Rd., Orinda
www.orindaschools.org
See also AUHSD meeting page A2

Check online for agendas, meeting notes and announcements

City of Orinda:

www.cityoforinda.org
Phone (925) 253-4200

Chamber of Commerce:

www.orindachamber.org

The Orinda Association:

www.orindaassociation.org



Orinda Police Department Incident Summary Report

Jan. 28 to Feb. 10

Alarms	58
911 Calls (includes hang-ups)	4
Traffic	132
Noise Complaint	3
Suspicious Circumstances	9
Suspicious Subjects	19
Suspicious Vehicles	11
Patrol Request	15
Security Check	33
Service to Citizen	60
Vacation House Check	20
Welfare Check	10
Accident Injury	
Orinda Way/Camino Pablo	
Accident Property	
Moraga Way/Hall Dr.	
Moraga Way/Ivy Dr.	
Bates Blvd./Davis Rd.	
Barking Dog	
10 Block El Caminito	
200 Block El Toyonal	
10 Block Kittiwake Rd.	
40 Block La Cresta Rd.	
Beat Info	
Wb Sr 24 At Wilder Blvd.	
San Pablo Dam Rd./Wildcat Canyon	
Civil	
100 Block Hall Dr.	
20 Block Irwin Way	
Civil Problem	
30 Block Barbara Rd.	
Dependent Child	
Wanda Ln./Tahos Rd.	
Disturbing The Peace	
20 Block Wilder Rd.	
Orinda Convalescent	
Drunk In Public	
CVS	
Fraud Credit Card	
100 Block Overhill Rd.	
Grand Theft	
60 Block Moraga Way	
Harassment	
Camino Pablo/Miner Rd.	
Hit And Run Misdemeanor	
100 Block Moraga Way	
Juvenile Disturbance	
500 Block Moraga Way	
Sundown Terrace/Happy Valley Hall Dr./Donald Dr.	
Sleepy Hollow Swim And Tennis	
Lost Property	
10 Block Fallen Leaf Terrace	
Medical Hospital	
10 Block Altarinda Rd.	
20 Block E Altarinda Dr.	
30 Block Las Vegas Rd.	
Moraga Way/Altamount Dr.	
Ordinance Violation	
10 Block Crown Ct.	
Moraga Way/Hall Dr.	
10 Block La Cintilla	
Scenic Dr./Estates Dr.	
80 Block Claremont Ave.	
Other Infraction	
St Stephens Dr./Tahos Rd.	
Other Misdemeanor	
Safeway	

Orinda creeps forward with streetscape plan

By Sora O'Doherty



Downtown Orinda: the Village, Crossroads, BART and surrounding neighborhoods within walking distance to BART that would benefit from expansion of the Streetscape Master Plan. Image provided

Downtown planning has always been a controversial subject in Orinda, but, despite objections from some members of the public, the city council on Feb. 6 generally approved a plan to issue a request for proposals for a new Orinda streetscape. Following on from the work undertaken by the Urban Land Institute and Mainstreet America, the city council applied for a grant to update the city's streetscape master plan. The streetscape project will be funded by a Contra Costa Transportation Authority grant, which is derived from two different CCTA programs (\$200,000-Livable Communities; and \$50,000-BART Access program) and the city's \$50,000 contribution in matching funds.

Staff sought direction from the council on the contents of the draft streetscape RFP and whether to pursue other downtown planning at the same time as the streetscape project. The council was positive about the RFP, but cautious about including other downtown planning. Next steps suggested by staff included consideration of amending current use permit requirements for downtown, allowing the sharing of parking lots, an in lieu fee for parking requirement waivers, and consideration of amending the existing setback requirements of 10 feet for downtown commercial and 20 feet for downtown office sites. The most contro-

versial proposal is the possible amendment of downtown density requirements. In the downtown commercial area current density is limited to 10 units per acre.

Two areas that were not considered by ULI and Mainstreet America, but which staff believes could be addressed are parking issues and planning for BART property, which could potentially be used for new commercial, office, residential, or hotel uses, as well as additional parking.

Commenters held very different opinions on almost all the issues, although the most popular idea for downtown Orinda continues to be the revitalization of San Pablo Creek, and a large part of the streetscape will probably be devoted to developing standards for bringing the creek into the downtown for pedestrians, bicyclists, and businesses. Nick Waranoff felt that the streetscape project is putting the cart before the horse and is premature. His main concern is density and urged that increased density not be considered. "Our zoning is our bulwark against SB-35," he suggested, and prevents state government from overriding local zoning decisions. (Senate Bill 35 amended the government code to require local entities to streamline the approval of certain housing projects.) "Don't let developers sneak into Orinda in this Trojan horse that is being proposed by

your planning department," he warned, adding, Orinda is crowded enough.

Offering opposing points of view were Andrew Van Wye, Kirsten Larsen, Allie Draisin, and Bruce Burrows. Van Wye, who is on the board of East Bay for Everyone, an East Bay advocacy group which he said was born out of the housing shortage and the displacement and lack of opportunity it is causing for the most vulnerable, urged the city to increase its density requirements as soon as possible. It needs to be done before the state steps in and makes the city's efforts irrelevant, he said. In his opinion, it does not make sense to have a billion dollar piece of infrastructure like the BART station surrounded by low density single story commercial properties, which he believes is not the best use of the very valuable land and valuable infrastructure that we have.

Bruce Burrows, who was on the revitalization committee that came up with Orinda's design guidelines, urged the city to continue to consider use permit variances on a case by case basis. He pointed out that right now there are only four properties in downtown that could qualify for revised density requirements: Village Square, Country Club Plaza, 23 Orinda Way and the Breed-Parker block in the theater square district (the block containing CVS and Bev Mo.)

In his view, it's not feasible that Village Square would ever change and 23 Orinda Way is encumbered by PG&E power lines. Also the Rite Aide and the Post Office are basically un-touchable now for the next 25 years, he said. This leaves Country Club Plaza and the Breed-Parker properties as the only ones with residential building potential.

He suggested focusing on these two properties with development potential and, on the subject of the height requirements, that the council be flexible. For example, he pointed out that while ULI recommended keeping the 35-foot limit for Orinda Way, they also suggested building down slope so that taller buildings, up to 50 feet, would still be 35 feet at the street level.

Kirsten Larsen and Allie Draisin of the What's Up Downtown Orinda steering committee thanked planning staff for keeping downtown renewal a priority.

... continued on page A8

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File under improvements: Orinda Library closes for carpet upgrade

By Sora O'Doherty

The Orinda Community Library will close for 13 days starting Friday, March 2 due to the installation of new carpet. The library will reopen on March 15.

The carpet has not been replaced since the library first opened in its current location in 2001. The project is being funded by the city of Orinda.

"We want to give our patrons the best possible experience, and replacing the carpet is going to

improve an already beautiful facility," said County Librarian Melinda Cervantes.

The downstairs book drop will be open during the closure, but holds will not be available for pickup. Regular library services during the closure will be available at the Lafayette or Moraga libraries or any other Contra Costa County Library.

Meetings and programs scheduled in the Library Auditorium and Garden Room will not be affected.

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Citizens invited to learn more about wastewater treatment

By Sora O'Doherty

During the Feb. 6 Orinda City Council meeting public forum, Charles Waltmire invited citizens to learn what happens to water when it goes down the drain at the upcoming annual Central Contra Costa County Sanitary District's Citizens Academy (Central San Academy). The award-winning program (California Special Districts Association 2016 Exceptional Public Outreach and Advocacy Award) provides a behind-the-scenes look at wastewater treatment.

Participants in Central San Academy learn how Central San uses engineering, chemistry and technology to turn waste into worth by cleaning wastewater and returning it to customers as recycled water. Participants also learn about critical projects, how rates and fees are set, and what is being done to develop our region's water supply. The curriculum is taught by expert staff and board members, and aims to be interactive, informative and engaging. The program includes a tour of Central San's treatment plant, laboratory, recycled water

fill station, and household hazardous waste collection facility.

The free classes will be held every Tuesday evening from 6 to 8:30 p.m., March 27 to May 1, except for the 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. facilities tour on April 17 (no evening class) and one alternate date for those who cannot make the April 17 tour. Classes are held in the Multi Purpose Room at Central San's headquarters at 5019 Imhoff Place in Martinez.

Central San recommends the program for those who take an interest in the activities of local government agencies, have considered employment in the wastewater industry, are curious to meet active members of your community, or just want to expand your general knowledge.

Due to limited class size, interested parties should file an online application at centralsan.org before 5 p.m. Friday, March 16. Applicants will be added to the mailing list and receive updates via email.

For information, contact Central San at <mailto:academy@centralsan.org> or call (925) 229-7390.

No pool stop for school bus on El Toyonal

By Sora O'Doherty

There was some hope that the serious situation that arose after the cancellation of the school bus route on El Toyonal might have been somewhat alleviated by a stop at the Orinda Park Pool, which is located some distance up El Toyonal. However, the Orinda Park Pool board of directors found that it could not approve of this use of the property.

OPP board President Jack Kelly stated that, while the board stands in sympathy with the neighbors on El Toyonal who were impacted by the cancellation of school bus service to a community that has relied on it for decades, they were, unfortunately, unable to approve the use of their parking lot as a bus stop, owing to insurance liability issues.

Kelly said, "We were unwillingly thrust into the middle of an issue that negatively impacted the lives of our friends and fellow members, so we did not take the decision lightly." He added that it is the sincere hope on the

OPP board that the various entities involved can figure out how to restore this essential service, but that the first obligation of the board is to protect the interests of the pool and its members.

ingly thrust into the middle of an issue that negatively impacted the lives of our friends and fellow members, so we did not take the decision lightly." He added that it is the sincere hope on the

Seeking Applicants to Serve on Parcel Tax Independent Citizens' Oversight Committee

The Orinda Union School District seeks applicants to serve on its Parcel Tax Independent Citizens' Oversight Committee. Currently there is a two-year term vacancy. The committee meets twice annually during normal business hours. The primary objective and purpose of this committee is to ensure that the parcel tax proceeds are spent for their authorized purpose and to report annually to the Board of Trustees and the public regarding the expenditure of such funds.

If interested, please submit an application to:
 Orinda Union School District
 Attn: Debbie Jamieson
 8 Altarinda Road
 Orinda, CA 94563
 or via email to djamieson@orinda.k12.ca.us
 or by fax to (925) 254-5261.

Applications are available at:
<https://goo.gl/rtwjPm>
 or by email from djamieson@orinda.k12.ca.us

Application Deadline:
 Friday, March 23, 2018, by Noon



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Fire Districts

Public Meetings

Moraga-Orinda Fire District

Board of Directors
Wednesday, Feb. 21, 7 p.m.
Go to the website for meeting location, times and agendas. Visit www.mofd.org

ConFire Board of Directors

Tuesday, March 13, 1:30 p.m.
Board Chamber room 107,
Administration Building,
651 Pine St., Martinez
For meeting times and agendas,
visit <http://alturl.com/5p9pu>.

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MOFD denies monetary claim from former fire chief

By Nick Marnell

The Moraga-Orinda Fire District board voted to reject damage claims of former Fire Chief Pete Nowicki, who had his \$20,076 monthly pension lowered by the district retirement plan manager because it claimed that Nowicki's retirement benefits had been improperly calculated.

Nowicki retired on Feb. 1, 2009, and in September 2015, the chief learned that the Contra Costa County Employees' Retirement Association demanded that

he repay \$586,000, plus interest, in pension overpayments and began deducting \$9,227 monthly from his retirement benefit. CCCERA plans to continue the adjustment until May 2022, when Nowicki's monthly benefit will be permanently reduced to \$14,296.

In his filing against the district, Nowicki stated that "the reduction of my monthly retirement benefits has been and continues to be a breach (of) my employment agreement with the Fire District." He

requested that the district repay all past and future pension deductions, plus other charges including legal expenses.

A federal court dismissed Nowicki's cause of action in June, and the Contra Costa Superior Court ruled against his claim in October, citing that the case had not been filed on time. The court also failed to determine how MOFD caused CCCERA to deprive Nowicki of his due process rights by reducing his pension, nor did the court

find any breach of employment agreement between Nowicki and MOFD.

The district rejected Nowicki's complaint in January on similar grounds. "It wasn't the district that reduced Nowicki's pension, it was CCCERA," said district counsel Jonathan Holtzman.

Neither Nowicki nor his lawyer, Peter Janiak, would comment on the decision, nor would they discuss any future course of action.

MOFD widens pool for chief officer candidates

By Nick Marnell

In order to increase the number of candidates to fill expected vacancies, the Moraga-Orinda Fire District has temporarily lowered academic requirements for its battalion chiefs. The district's requirement that only those with an associate degree or higher may apply for or hold a battalion chief position was waived by the board at its Feb. 7 meeting.

Fire Chief Dave Winnacker said that in 2016, the district held a battalion chief exam with two internal candidates, but both failed the test. As a result, the district has no internal candidates on its current battalion chief list, and the chief would have to fill vacancies from outside the district. The one-time

educational requirement adjustment he presented for 2018 would open up the chief officer positions to more internal candidates.

Approval of the proposal was not a slam dunk for Winnacker.

"I'm horrified by this," said director Kathleen Famulener, who suggested that MOFD go outside to find qualified chief officer candidates if none reside in the district. "But I think they do. We're not pushing the people who could be battalion chiefs," Famulener said.

Local 1230 President Vince Wells supported the chief's proposal. "It's difficult to seek additional education once you become a firefighter," Wells said. "Often, those who have the qualifications to do

the job lose out because they don't have the minimum academic qualifications."

Winnacker added that it was not realistic for an internal candidate who does not have an associate degree to get one by the time the district holds its battalion chief test in May.

"Anything we can do to tap into the internal pool is beneficial," the chief said. "The bottom line is the experience. We feel that experience outweighs having an AA degree."

Wells said that across the districts that he represents, some require only experience as a captain, and no associate degree, in order to qualify for promotion to battalion chief. According to its February

internal promotional announcement, the Contra Costa County Fire Protection District requires, among other qualifications, three years of experience as a ConFire captain and a high school diploma, G.E.D. equivalency or a high school proficiency certificate for eligibility to become a battalion chief.

The union, the Moraga-Orinda Fire Chief Officers Association and the board – including Famulener – agreed to the revised MOFD academic requirements for the 2018 examination process only. Other requirements, including two years experience as a captain, remain unchanged.

A lousy way to start the week



The Moraga-Orinda Fire District responded to a rollover accident shortly before 9 o'clock Monday morning Feb. 5. The incident occurred on Camino Pablo in Orinda, near the BART station. No one was injured. According to the MOFD incident report, the vehicle had only one occupant who denied treatment or transport. The primary task performed at the scene by responding personnel was to control traffic. – Nick Marnell

Photo courtesy MOFD

LAFSD parcel tax discussion leads only to more questions

By Nick Marnell

Feb. 12 discussion by school board members on the feasibility of a parcel tax to help fund operations of the Lafayette School District led to questions about not only the amount of the proposed tax but whether to even place a parcel tax on the ballot in 2018.

Financial projections presented by Chief Business Official Diane Deshler showed that, thanks to a proposed funding boost from Gov. Jerry Brown, LAFSD will eliminate deficit spending in 2018-19, but without a parcel tax the district would fall back in the hole from the next year forward. Should the district decide to place a parcel tax on

the ballot, consultant Bonnie Moss recommended that the district keep the proposed tax under \$150, have it run from five to eight years and include a full senior exemption.

Not satisfied with the financial projections because they failed to include any salary increases for teachers, who have received no raises since 2016, board member David Gerson pushed for a \$199 parcel tax. "We need to maintain our edge with teachers," he said, noting the expense of salary competition due to teacher shortages. Gerson said that his \$199 recommendation would also be insurance against the full senior exemption.

Newly appointed board member Rob Sturm suggested pushing the parcel tax measure into 2019. He cited the uncertainties of the new federal tax law, the election of a new governor, appointment of a new school district superintendent and the bungled administration of the Measure B parcel tax as reasons for a delay. "We only have one shot with the voters," Sturm said. "Maybe a third option is to wait."

Others noted that a recession looms ahead, possibly as soon as 2019. Could a recession be the right time to ask for a parcel tax, because then the district would

have a more compelling story to tell? asked Clerk of the Board Suzy Pak.

"After all of the cuts we've made, is this the best for our students?" countered Meredith Meade, the only board member whose term does not expire this year. "Having no parcel tax scares me," she said.

"We're all going around in circles," said board President Teresa Gerringer, who advocated for the \$148 parcel tax over both \$199 and waiting until next year, based upon testing results of what dollar figure two-thirds of voters would likely approve. "I respect the concept of

trying to squeeze a little more out, but we think it's prudent to stay at \$148," Gerringer said. A \$148 tax on 8,320 Lafayette parcels would produce \$1.23 million in revenue for the district.

Polling results gave no assurance that the tax measure will score an easy victory at any dollar level, and that fact, combined with the mixed feelings of the board members over not only the amount of tax but whether to proceed at all, left an air of uncertainty as the board prepares for its next parcel tax discussion, agendized for the Feb. 21 district meeting at Stanley Middle School.

State must do more for Lamorinda schools

Assemblywoman Catharine Baker and state Sen. Steve Glazer outlined areas where the funding increase still falls short of relieving the pressure on local schools.

Pension costs are huge, said Glazer, who called for using some of the governor's \$19 billion budget reserve to pay down the state's growing pension debt. Baker pointed to the teacher shortage, which forces local school districts to compete for the best teachers. She noted that many facilities costs have been pushed from the state to the local school district level.

Both Glazer and Baker said that

rising costs of special education have strained school district budgets. "If your school district can't provide special education services for a student, and if one service that a child needs is in Idaho, your school district pays for that child to be educated in Idaho," Baker said.

While the senator and assemblywoman focused on redistribution of state revenue and more accountability over double-digit spending increases, the analysts said that tax increases may be necessary to fund local schools.

Gerry Shelton of Capitol Advisors cautioned that because of

Proposition 13, which limits increases on property taxes, California depends too heavily on personal income tax, which accounts for 69 percent of the state's general fund revenue. Shelton stunned the crowd at Stanley Middle School by revealing that 40 percent of the state's \$93 billion personal income tax revenue is paid by 70,000 taxpayers, mostly through capital gains taxes, a far more volatile revenue source than property taxes.

Shelton blamed Proposition 13 for cutting the legs out of school funding, and he advocated for a split roll, whereby commercial

properties are taxed at market value rather than only at change of ownership.

"How often does Disneyland change hands? That is an opening that is available," Shelton told an appreciative audience.

Baker quickly wrecked that narrative. "I do not support split roll," she said, explaining that a small business would have a very difficult time surviving under that taxation arrangement. "And Disneyland pays a lot in taxes," Baker said.

Though LAFSD receives only \$8,000 per student from the state,

... continued from page A1

far less than the average, Shelton said that Lafayette will never get as much money as a low-income school district. The state school funding system is equitable, but not equal, Shelton said, because it costs more to educate in needier districts.

"We're always on the short end of the stick," Glazer said. "Revenues have come back but we're still struggling in Lamorinda."

"These issues are debated every week in the Capitol," Baker said, as she and Glazer agreed that the most important thing that they do in Sacramento is to try to increase funding to schools.

Orinda creeps forward with streetscape plan

They would particularly welcome an updated architectural guideline process, design guidelines for San Pablo Creek that will address development between the creek and adjacent developments, and improved pedestrian and bicycle solutions to connect both sides of town. WUDO believes that improved aesthetics can encourage businesses to come to Orinda. They also support additional parking on the Crossroads side, and envision a "park once" solution to allow for more residential/commercial devel-

opment for the Village side.

Jennifer Harper spoke to the council of the frustration that Brookwood Road residents have been experiencing for the past four years. Harper suggested that Brookwood Road is unique in having a mix of high density housing, single family homes, businesses and now a bus stop that floods the street with parents and children because there are no sidewalks. Brookwood residents have been seeking walkability enhancements,

traffic calming and parking restrictions for their road. This led to a discussion about whether to include in the scope of the streetscape master plan roads feeding into downtown. Planning Director Drummond Buckley said it might be possible to include residential roads feeding into downtown, but it would add greatly to the cost.

Council Member Darlene Gee said that it was essential to prioritize the project, and that topography and accuracy of maps have to come

first. Council Member Dean Orr said that the streetscape plan should include the interface with BART on both sides, and Council Member Eve Phillips said that she thought there were a number of things that could really improve the quality of life for Orinda residents. Mayor Amy Worth promised that the city is working on a parking solution for Brookwood Road and said that design guidelines are very important, including the topics of massing, setbacks and height limits.

... continued from page A6

The council decided that staff should prepare the RFP and put it on a future consent calendar for a meeting in March. As for the issue of additional downtown planning, Phillips thought that the items are controversial and a source of conflict, while Orr thought the city should continue to research zoning laws and should earmark some staff time to look at some of the additional items. Worth felt that, although the conversations are really challenging, Orinda needs to have them.

Retired teacher group assists local teachers with planning for future

By John T. Miller

A group of teachers and staff from the Acalanes Union High School District attended a pre-retirement workshop sponsored by the California Retired Teachers Association Division 52 at Diablo Valley College last month.

Close to 80 teachers came from Acalanes, Antioch, Martinez, Walnut Creek and Contra Costa County district schools to learn about re-

tirement options and demystify the retirement process.

Division 52 President Lorrie Osborn welcomed the teachers, who had braved the only true rainstorm of the season to attend the event, saying, "After many years of taking care of others, it's now time to ask, 'Who will take care of me?'"

Vickie Holden, a benefits coun-

selor for the California State Teachers' Retirement System, reviewed benefit options and packages, eligibility, and went over sample calculations for figuring out one's final compensation.

Although still many years away from retirement, Donia Gousios, an English and journalism teacher at

Miramonte High School, found the meeting very helpful. "It was good to get my feet wet about retirement. I especially wanted to learn about Social Security issues."

Like many teachers, Gousios was disappointed that the Windfall Elimination Provision severely limits Social Security benefits to

retired teachers, including qualifying for a spouse's benefits should they die.

Financial workshops and small, personalized retirement workshops are available through CalSTRS, either through their website or by calling 1-800-228-5453.

Crosses property... continued from page A2

Lafayette resident Mike Munnely spoke of an old adobe building on the land, which he said might possibly be the oldest house in Lafayette.

Happy Valley Improvement Association President Peter Clark said that the crosses are such a highly visible and widely recognized, distinct feature of the Lafayette landscape that they must be addressed in any discussion of what happens to this land. Clark also pointed to the current municipal code under which the signs are now illegal – since the memorial was created the city code has been changed to prevent future such installations.

Many spoke of their love for the crosses and what it has come to mean for so many, not just within Lafayette. Military veteran Fred Norman said although he lives in Pleasanton he volunteers with the crosses. "Here is a chance for Lafayette to do something on a world-wide scale; something to make it known as an area of peace," said Norman, warning, "Don't pass this up."

Council Member Mike Anderson asked several of the speakers how these concerns were linked to the plot line adjustment, making the point that the adjustment by itself has not allowed development or determined any next

steps on the land.

While Council Member Mark Mitchell, and Vice Mayor Cam Burks supported Samson's request for appeal, Anderson said that he was very concerned.

Anderson said that redrawing the lot line has no connection to either the environment or the crosses themselves. He made it clear that he respects the crosses memorial but added, "I have a real problem with us taking this on with just the information that it's about the lot line."

The motion to grant the request for appeal and to bring the matter to be heard by the full city council was approved with three in favor and Anderson against. Mayor Don Tatzin had recused himself because he lives close to the land in question.

Charles Clark said after the meeting that he still didn't know what the basis was for this appeal.

"The planning commission decided in my favor unanimously, based on the fact that I am simply remedying the situation of these two houses being non-conforming with the city zoning (these two houses are currently on the same parcel) to the situation where each of the two houses is on its own parcel as is required for this R-10 zoning," commented Clark in an email.

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Lafayette Volunteer Opportunities

There are currently openings on the following Commissions and Committees

- Bicycle Pedestrian Advisory Committee
- Capital Projects Assessment Committee (CPAC)
- Circulation Commission
- Creeks Committee
- Community Center Foundation
- Downtown Street Improvement Master Plan Implementation Committee (DSIMPIC)
- Environmental Task Force
- Senior Services Commission
- Youth Commission

For additional information visit the city's website: www.lovelafayette.org Hot Topics
Or e-mail City Clerk Joanne Robbins, jrobbins@lovelafayette.org
Application deadline March 31, 2018. Positions open until filled.

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9 Parklane Drive | 4bd/3ba
Lori Legler | 925.286.1244
License # 00805132



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Mt. Diablo Nursery & Garden closes

By Cathy Dausman



Owner Garth Jacober thinks he will miss the painted mural running the length of his nursery the most. Photo Cathy Dausman

The hurt comes through loud and clear in Garth Jacober's voice. "We opened for business March 1, 2007; we're closing Feb. 28, 2018 – one day short of our 11th anniversary."

Retirement, sickness or health has not forced Jacober to close his nursery, although you might argue that someone else's health, or lack of health, precipitated this decision.

A lot has happened since Jacober received a lawsuit in November accusing his business of denying access last August to someone with physical disabilities; he is still troubled by his decision to close, but says it was purely a matter of finances.

"I do the best I can," Jacober insists, explaining his nursery has accommodated those in wheelchairs and walkers over time. "My brother was in a wheelchair for 22 years," he says.

Jacober labeled the lawsuit a shakedown, saying it is not about advocating for people with disabilities as much as it is "abuse by attorney" – an abuse that disrupts communities and small businesses alike. "If there is something good to come of this (closure)," he says, it is raising awareness that something similar could happen to another business.

Jacober, a Lamorinda local, has been in the "green biz" since he first

mowed lawns as a boy. He worked at what was then called Harry's Nursery from 1976 to 1978, coming full circle to own the business in 2007.

His loyal customer base is evident even online, and for that Jacober is very grateful. "Charming and inviting," says one review; "enthusiastic customer service," another. "For a small place, a gem."

The nursery closes Feb. 28, but Jacober is honoring outstanding gift certificates and taking special orders. He says he will continue to serve the Lamorinda area as a landscape consultant.

While the nursery may be closing, the nurseryman plans to grow his business.

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Orinda road plans

Porges urged the city to commission a survey of the condition of the private roads, which, he said, could be done by the city quite inexpensively while surveys of each private road by the residents would be prohibitively expensive.

Council Member Inga Miller asked Public Works Director Larry Theis to confirm that no funding was contingent upon approval of the plan, and when he did, the council agreed unanimously to defer the matter to a future agenda. Mayor Amy Worth also noted that staff is currently working on the private roads question, which is due to come back to the council

in March. The staff report, which contains the list of roads that will be repaired in 2019, is available on the city's website.

Wayfinding moves forward

Another project that raised some public objection was the approval of the proposed Crossroads area and Bart wayfinding signs. The project, which has been some years in development, was undertaken in conjunction with Bart and was partially funded by a grant shared by the city and Bart. Nick Waranoff objected to the project, stating that it will cost the city \$76,000 out of its own pocket. Waranoff also believes that, given the current wide-

... continued from page A1

spread use of cellphones for navigation, the signs are unnecessary to help pedestrians and bicyclists find their way around Orinda.

Theis, responding to questions from the council, explained that the additional funding is proposed to come from the Transportation Impact Fee Fund, which can be used for projects that help pedestrians and bicyclists and by encouraging the use of these alternative modes of transportation, reduce vehicular traffic. The council, after considering the comments, passed the matter unanimously, authorizing staff to immediately commence with bidding for the project.

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Moraga's budget revision

At the Feb. 14 council meeting public works director Edric Kwan explained that about \$1 million is slated for reimbursement this fiscal year. The reimbursement will replenish the developer fee fund (Palos Colorado fund) that was used along with the town's reserves to repair the unexpected infrastructure damages.

Resident Brent Meyers discussed with council and staff the possibility to include in the town's financial statements the future reimbursements since they will certainly happen. The technical discussion hinges on the fact that these funds have not been appropriated at the federal level and the date they will trickle down to Moraga is not certain. The council decided to add the future amounts as footnotes in the town's financial statements.

That uncertainty of when the remaining reimbursement will come prevented the audit and fi-

nance committee from rescinding the fiscal emergency declaration. The committee is made of the town volunteer treasurer Bradley Ward, residents Robert Kennedy and Tim Freeman, Mayor David Trotter, Council Member Roger Wykle, the town manager and technical support from the town's accountant, Yuliya Elbo, the town's only current financial employee. The committee decided at its February meeting that it would discuss the lift of the fiscal emergency in April.

The committee recommended that the town council open two funds. The reopening of the Infrastructure Preservation and Improvement Fund will provide funding for maintaining the town's streets, storm drains, buildings and facilities. Over the past years, the town was able to collect a much larger than expected amount of property tax, and none of it was set aside to fund infrastructure maintenance or

... continued from page A1

asset replacement. During the audit and finance committee meeting, Trotter asked that 25 percent of future surplus be set aside in the infrastructure fund. The rest would be used to replenish the town's reserve and be dedicated to other town asset replacement funds.

The council questioned the percentages recommended and it decided that the audit and finance committee would refine and finalize its recommendation on that topic at its April 24 meeting.

The council also approved the creation of a new Holidays fund. It will collect residents' donations for the Fourth of July fireworks and Holiday tree lights. The mayor wants additional money collected year-to-year to be left in the fund to support subsequent years' festivities. Previously, if more than needed amounts were raised for these events, the surplus was shifted to the general fund.

Moraga Center Homes

He believes that granting permission to perform the grading and dirt hauling is unprecedented. He was very disappointed that no effort was made to inform the public before the process started.

The acting planning director Derek Farmer explains that the applicant has received a grading permit for the development, and that the grading ordinance allows for grading activities within the rainy season provided all erosion control measures are in place and the work does not pose a potentially significant geotechnical risk. He added that the town hosted a preconstruction meeting with the applicant's construction team on Feb. 5 to dis-

cuss the project schedule and all the requirements of the grading permit checklist prior to site grading.

The town updated its website on Feb. 7 to provide more information about the project and the construction schedule, including contact information for both the applicant and the town's engineering staff. Further updates can be found on the town's website at moraga.ca.us.

The approval of this development as part of the Moraga Center Specific Plan gave rise to protests from a large group of residents that collected the required number of signatures to subject the project to a referendum during the summer of 2015. The election never happened

... continued from page A5

because the local court denied the validity of the legal challenge. Olsen was part of the group of residents opposing the project.

City Ventures went through the years of planning process to secure a permit to build the 36 attached family homes called Moraga Center Homes. KB Homes is now developing the site, according to the plans approved by the town. That company is a 60-year-old publicly traded corporation headquartered in Los Angeles. At this time KB Homes is building detached homes and condominiums in over 12 different locations in the Bay Area, including in Hayward, Fremont, Dublin and Brentwood.

POETRY

**SPACE EXPLORATION:
SEEKING A PLANNED
SOLUTION**
by resident Leon Volan

If we find another planet
we can live on I must say
We should move a million people
to it every single day.
My reason is quite logical
here is what I think -
The planet we are stuck on
is surely on the blink.
It trembles with earthquakes -
it's drowning with its floods.
It's parched and dry with deserts -
sticky too with muds.
Tornadoes often visit -
hurricanes as well -
Tsunamis doing damage
might be described as hell.
And most of all some leaders
are nothing else but kooks -
Absolute fanatics with
world destroying nukes.
And if they launch a couple
the known world disappears
Polluted and unlivable
for a thousand years.
So I say let's get outta here
as quickly as we can.
We should be seeking a solution
and hope someone has a plan.

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Letters to the Editor

Storm drain fee and schools

I read with great concern recent articles that Moraga’s proposed storm drain fee will be levied – significantly – on our public schools to the tune of \$30,000-\$35,000 per year.

A town extracting money from the public schools is objectionable standalone. It’s an order-of-magnitude more unpalatable and outrageous in the context of the town’s lack of progress on any plan to address the declaration of fiscal emergency, in particular its spending priorities and unsustainable operating model as your front page article on Dec. 13, 2017 (and robust citizen discussion on Next-Door and SMARTMoraga) noted.

The Town needs to sharpen its pencil rather than seek relief on the backs of our kids.

Brent Meyers
Moraga

Storm drain fee discussion

Over the next few months Moraga residents will be hearing about the proposal to provide funding for the restoration of our storm drains. Few of us gave any thought to this unseen part of our infrastructure until the Rheem sinkhole got our attention. Working with engineering firms, the Town inspected the storm drains and concluded that the work required to fix the problem would cost more than our limited municipal finances could bear.

All parcels of property in Moraga will have one vote in May to approve or disapprove a new fee that would cost most homeowners \$120 a year. The cost to larger parcels would depend on how much of the land is covered by impermeable surfaces that cause runoff to the storm drains. The fee would appear on our property tax bills every year and would not “sunset.” A possible inflation adjustment of no more than three percent would be considered every year.

Most of our storm drains were built more than half a century ago — before the Town was incorporated — and are coming to the end of their lives. They need work, and in some cases replacement, because corrugated metal culverts were installed at locations, such as at the Rheem sinkhole, where concrete should have been used.

So this is a long-term project that simply must be done. If the measure fails, another one will have to be put before the voters, although the law requires that a year must pass.

I am a member of a committee of citizens who will be communicating about the fee, including on a website: www.sosmoraga.com. We are prepared to answer all of your questions on this urgent matter.

Dale Walwark
Moraga

Orinda Private Roads

The residents of private roads are frustrated. We have attended many city meetings for almost a year. We

have made no progress in getting private streets adopted for public maintenance at a reasonable cost. This can be done by changing City policy. This is about being fair to all tax paying residents who receive no support for their private road maintenance. The 20% of residents on private roads are part of the public that the City should serve and represent.

The City has no data on the private roads. It’s as if we don’t exist. The City doesn’t know how many miles of private roads there are in Orinda and has no idea of their condition. A survey of all private roads would cost under \$10,000. These private roads clearly are part of the infrastructure. While performing this survey storm drain and fire hazard data can be obtained. Consider the possibility that during a wildfire, a 40-ton fire truck causes a private road to fail catastrophically or finds it impassable. This survey is justified for fire and flood safety and is clearly for the public good. Yet to date the City has said that public funds cannot be spent even to survey private roads.

We have informed the Council that the California Supreme Court stated in *City of Oakland v. Garrison* (1924) 194 Cal. 298, 302: [W]here the question arises as to whether or not a proposed application of public funds is to be deemed a gift [...] the primary and fundamental subject of inquiry is as to whether the money is to be used for a public or private purpose. If it is for a public purpose within the jurisdiction for the appropriating board or body, it is not, generally speaking, to be regarded as a gift.

And that the guidance from the Office of the City Attorney of LA states that:

Courts defer to the legislative body’s determination of what constitutes a “public purpose.” *County of Alameda v. Carleson* (1971) 5 Cal. 3d 730, 746. A city council’s determination of public purpose will be upheld “so long as that determination has a reasonable basis.” *Ibid*.

Thus we have asked the City Council to pass a resolution that states that it is in the public interest to survey and maintain all Orinda roads (and culverts), both public and private.

We maintain our effort and welcome all comments at <http://www.orindaroadfacts.info/>

Charles Porges
Orinda

Salaries for Lafayette teachers

Did you know that Lafayette teachers have been working without a contract since the 2015-16 school year? Since that 2% raise we received, the district has offered us zero on the salary schedule. Some will argue that the district is in danger of operating in the red in 3 years, so it is not fiscally responsible to give teachers a raise in light of this projection. In order to address this concern, I would ask that people look back to 2008-09 when the economy went into recession. The district asked teachers to take

furlough days, not ask for a raise, and increase our insurance co-pay in order to help out, with the promise that when the economy improved, we would be made whole again. That’s what was asked of us and we happily did our part. Well, the economy got better. One could argue it has even boomed at times in the last 10 years, yet we are still waiting for the district to make good on that promise. Over the years since, we’ve agreed to small raises and one time “bonuses” that were not added to the salary schedule. Our contract for the 2015-16 school year gave us a 2% raise on the salary schedule. Since that time, we have been offered 0.

Again, the district argues that there isn’t any money to pay us, although they value us and all that we do. We so appreciate the support of the school board. A good working relationship is important for us and for the students. However, the Lafayette School District can no longer balance their budget on the backs of teachers. We deserve a fair living wage and we are currently not earning that. Some would say, “You have good benefits, a good pension, you only work until 3:00, and you get summers off! What is there to complain about?” Many of us have master’s degrees, some have doctorates, ALL of us have over a year of post-graduate training. We are highly qualified professionals that make considerably less than those in the private sector with the same level of education and years of service.

Should we leave for the private sector? No! We love working with the children. This is why we teach. However, those who teach should not be treated as less than any other professional. We are parents here in Lafayette too. We should be able to afford to live where we work. A beginning teacher salary in Lafayette is \$45,862. In San Ramon, it’s \$50,911, Mt. Diablo \$53,339, Dublin \$60,245 (taken from online salary schedules on each district’s website). Lafayette is not going to attract the best and brightest new teachers if they continue to have a salary schedule that is markedly lower than surrounding districts.

As parents and residents of the Lafayette Community, we need to stand up and say, “This is not okay.” Please attend the Lafayette School District Board Meeting on Wednesday, Feb. 21 at 7 p.m. in the Stanley Middle School library. Better yet, e-mail your board members to share your thoughts at lsd-board@lafsd.org.

Christina Churchill
Lafayette

Theatre Square parking

As a resident of the Lamorinda community and an employee in Orinda Theatre Square, I have found the parking options available to employees in the area appalling. In Orinda Theatre Square, parking is a commodity and there is rarely enough for visitors or workers. The availability of parking in the downtown area includes street parking limited from 15 min to 2 hours

maximum, not enough for someone working a shift, and the pay to park garage. The garage is free on weekends and holidays, but charges hefty rates during weekdays. The longest period of time one can get validation for is 4 hours, which leaves most employees picking up the tab for an additional 4 to 8 hours of parking fees. Additionally, if you stay past your validation time they charge you for the whole time, including the validated time and their “free first hour.”

In my opinion, no one should be forced to pay for parking just to be able to get to their job, especially when those employees are making minimum wage at \$10 per hour. I live in Moraga so I am forced to drive and work at the theater anywhere from 7 to 8 hours at a time. I cannot park for free anywhere on the street, where the time limits and heavy ticketing keep me from using the parking. I cannot even park in front of the building where I work. So, I am forced to park below in the pay for the parking garage. The rates run me hours of my pay as a minimum wage employee and makes my employment at the Orinda Theater almost redundant.

As a result, I and many other employees in my situation, end up using our breaks and lunchtime to move our cars around, hoping to avoid spending half our paychecks just to get to work. I would like to see some free options for employees who work in Orinda Theater Square and perhaps even some spots reserved for employees. It should not cost money to go to work.

Julia Anderson
Moraga

In support of teacher salary increases

You may have noticed signs around town in support of a raise for our District’s teachers. I’m a parent of elementary school-age kids, am a past PFC President and currently serve on the LPIE Board. Like many Lafayette parents, I am involved in our school and District and see first-hand how hard our teachers work.

Many residents, however, don’t currently have children in the District, or have children that are already grown. Why should you support a cost-of-living increase for our teachers?

1. Ask anyone with school-age children why they moved to Lafayette. They will tell you it’s because we are one of the top districts in the State. Our schools can boast caring, expert teachers, high levels of parental involvement and many supplementary programs like art, counseling and music - programs most other districts have cut. Our high rankings directly correlate to your high housing values.

2. My children have been in school almost 7 years - and every year I am impressed with the level of commitment and professionalism of their teachers. They email me at night and on weekends. They spend countless hours outside of paid contract time planning enriching field trips and collaborating on the most effective teaching practices. Lafayette teachers truly care about their students.

3. Sadly, if these dedicated professionals can’t make a fair wage, we will lose them to other districts. Our children lose out and ultimately our entire town suffers.

Our teachers spend more time with our kids than we as parents do some days. We want to continue to attract and retain talented professionals - and keep our property values high. Please join me in supporting our Lafayette teachers.

Amy Zawadski
Lafayette

Pride about MCE

According to the American Lung Association, 9,200 Californians die prematurely each year due to polluted air. Rising rates of asthma, heart disease and cancer are also linked to air pollution. And, the Lung Association reports, 75% of this pollution comes from burning fossil fuels. As I learn more about the connection between health and burning fossil fuels, I want ways I can behave to support clean energy and healthier air. That is why I am so happy that my town, Moraga, joined Marin Clean Energy. With this program, that starts this April, all residents in Moraga – as well as Danville, Martinez, Oakley, Pinole, Pittsburg, San Ramon and unincorporated Contra Costa—are enrolled in getting their electricity with 50% renewables content. Rates will be the same or lower than PG&E rates.

I have decided to upgrade to their deep green program. By paying about \$5.00 more each month, I will be using 100% renewable electrical energy in my home. Since I took advantage of tax credits and rebates to get a plug-in electric hybrid car last year, this means I can drive most of the time emitting no fossil fuels. Next step? Getting bids on solar panels. MCE has informed me that I can save more money by putting solar on my roof.

We Moragans and other Contra Costa residents have reason to be proud that we brought a program like MCE to our town. We are helping to create a healthier world. And, because MCE is a non-profit with community representation, we have a resident on the governing board. Right now, it is our Mayor, Dave Trotter.

Marti Roach
Moraga

Opinions in Letters to the Editor are the express views of the writer and not necessarily those of the Lamorinda Weekly. All published letters will include the writer’s name and city/town of residence – we will only accept letters from those who live in, or own a business in, the communities comprising Lamorinda (please give us your phone number for verification purposes only). Letters should be 350 words or less; letters of up to 500 words will be accepted on a space-available basis. Visit www.lamorindaweekly.com for submission guidelines. Email: letters@lamorindaweekly.com; Regular mail: Lamorinda Weekly, P.O.Box 6133, Moraga, CA 94570



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Storm drain fee

Kwan explained that the money will be used for three categories of expenses: a first and biggest portion of the revenue will be used to service the debt of a loan the town will contract to address the high-priority storm drain areas that were identified three years ago with televised exploration and ground inspection – the director noted that the Rheem sinkhole was on that list of high-priority areas – a second portion will be used to maintain the rest of the network; the third will allow the town to meet its state unfunded mandate to eliminate all pollution in the storm drain system.

Kwan presented the maintenance as very critical to the plan. Besides the \$9 million of capital improvement work needed to tackle the high-priority risk areas, the town has identified over \$20 million of medium- and low-priority issues that will also need to be addressed. Kwan said that having a maintenance budget of about \$250,000 a year will enable his team to conduct inspections, remove sediments and debris, and make spot repairs that he believes will significantly increase the life of the system. Some residents were

not completely convinced by the director's explanations and asked why the town was not asking for more money in order to deal with the totality of the issue.

The long-term need to maintain the system, to comply with state clean water requirements, and later on, to focus on medium-priority areas explain why there is no sunset to the storm drain fee. Trotter compared the new fee to the light assessment district that has been in place in Moraga for over 40 years. Every year an engineering report is presented and the fee is adjusted to cover the needs. The mayor believes that the same process will be applied to the storm drain fee and that if, in the future, needs decrease, so would the fee. The increase is capped at 3 percent by law.

Schools, churches, and commercial areas do not pay a fee per parcel, like the vast majority of the property owners in Moraga. The fee is a per acre amount, more for commercial properties than for schools, depending on the quantity of impermeable surfaces each contain. A resident asked how much the Moraga School District would pay and the mayor indicated an

... continued from page A5

amount in the area of \$21,000 a year. That resident noted that this amount should be added to what residents will have to pay, since the school district is funded by them.

Saint Mary's College, which is exempt of property tax payments, will pay the storm drain fee if passed, and so will homes located in open space areas. The highest rate will affect commercial properties since they are mostly covered with structures and parking lots, all impervious surfaces that do not absorb any rain.

For the measure not to go to the ballot, a majority of the residents would need to protest the fee by sending a letter to the town clerk identifying their property before the March 14 meeting. Otherwise, residents will receive one ballot per property at the end of March and will have until May 15 to return it to the town clerk. Town Clerk Marty McInturf will count the ballots during a public session. Fifty percent plus one supporting ballots have to be received in order for the new fee to be applied. At the time this article went to press, approximately 50 letters of protest had been received by the town.

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Next Generation Science Standards extend to Orinda elementary schools

By Audrey Spindler



Wagner teacher Erin Crowe's third-graders make salad and herb butter Dec. 15 at the school garden.

Photos Lilana Spindler

Next Generation Science Standards, guidelines implemented across the United States as of April 2013, have been adopted in 19 states as of November, and have continued to develop as schools work toward replacing old science curriculum with NGSS. The Wagner Ranch Elementary School garden in Orinda has made considerable changes regarding NGSS in its most recent form of garden education.

The school's teachers apply these principles in grades K-5 in ways like developing and using models of the rock cycle in fourth grade classes. The NGSS emphasize three areas: Crosscutting Concepts, Science and Engineering Practices, and Disciplinary Core Ideas. Within these notions, ideas of cause and effect, inquiry-based learning, and application of key objectives across multiple areas of science are stressed.

"[The teachers'] rich lessons and activities are aligned with Common Core Standards and enhance each student's understanding and appreciation for this outdoor environmental classroom," Wagner Ranch first-grade teacher Linnea Burnette said.

Through outdoor, participatory instruction, kids are influenced by these standards. "Students are responsible for taking notes, answering focus questions, and drawing conclusions. Their notebook entries are used to sup-

port discourse, view patterns and systems over the seasons and within the garden," fourth/fifth-grade teacher Annalisa Brucker explained. When given free time, such as recess, some students visit the garden, which is adjacent to the school, to help work around the area or to continue studies from their classes. In class, students get a glimpse of a number of different things under microscopes, such as chia seeds, soil samples, moss and organisms.

At an outdoor lesson on Jan. 24, students of Chelsea Rustigan's class used microscopes to study plant health and calculated soil volume. "I could look into these microscopes all day!" one fifth-grader exclaimed.

Team effort is encouraged through activities like the recreation of Native American ways, such as those of the Miwok tribe; third grade children work on building miniature tule canoes in small groups, or tribelets, to experience the community of the tribe. "Students were unfamiliar with the tule fibers, the available natural resource for Miwok building, but came to appreciate its buoyancy and flexibility as they fashioned the tule into boats," third-grade teacher Susan Chase said.

In the second grade, children practice discussion and observation through the studying of rocks by sifting in creeks, sorting rocks, using microscopes, and build-

ing and utilizing structures such as adobe bricks. Sometimes students benefit from the more practical purpose of a garden, making salad.

While the wave of NGSS has not transcended all areas of already strong science curricula, it has changed past patterns of science education in Orinda elementary schools.



Wagner Elementary School teacher Megan Natal's fourth-graders make weatherization models Jan. 31 at the Wagner Ranch School garden.

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Local students perform at Carnegie Hall

By Pippa Fisher



From left, Campolindo High School students Aman Malhotra, Kevin Deng, Brigitte Jia and Andrew Torres find some time for sight-seeing in New York.

Four talented Lamorinda students were among the finalists chosen from all over the world to perform in February on New York's most famous stage. And all four musicians attend Campolindo High School.

This year those selected included CHS students Junior Andrew Torres (clarinet), Junior Aman Malhotra (viola), Senior Brigitte Jia (violin) and Senior Kevin Deng (trumpet).

The High School Honors Performance Series annually invites music directors from high schools to nominate outstanding students, who must then submit an audition tape and resume of their musical achievements, along with an application explaining why they would like to be in the HPS.

The finalists travel to New York to rehearse and perform with other elite musicians under master

conductors at Carnegie Hall. This year there were students from 45 U.S. states as well as from Canada, China, Hong Kong, Australia, New Zealand, Mexico, Guam and Qatar.

Lafayette resident Jorge Torres, who is a parent of one of the finalists, says it is no coincidence that four of those selected are Campolindo High School students, which he says was one of the largest numbers from any one school. He credits the inspirational teaching of CHS music teacher Johnny Johnson.

"Even though the kids weren't officially representing Campolindo, I think their selection reflects the high caliber of musicianship being taught at the school," says Torres. "Johnny Johnson is doing great things with instrumental music at Campo."

Torres points out that Johnson's students are consistently selected

for several extracurricular groups, including the Diablo Wind Symphony. "Given that instrumental music is an elective, it's a testament to Johnny's talent as an instructor that year after year, his students continue to take music."

Torres' son Andrew agrees. "Mr. Johnson has made a huge difference in my love for music. He has a great demeanor and is very positive and encouraging. I have gained great knowledge and skills from Mr. Johnson and from the Diablo Wind Symphony conductors, Diane and John Maltester."

The four CHS finalists all agree that performing at Carnegie Hall was awe-inspiring.

Aman Malhotra said that meeting new musicians from around the world and preparing for a performance a few days later was quite an experience. "Having to learn to understand each other and work together as an ensemble in two days required a lot of rehearsing and focus, but our work paid off."

The students raised the money for the five-day trip themselves through sponsorship and donations from family and friends. Torres said his son financed his trip in part through his wages as a lifeguard.

While the trip was focused on the music, performance and meeting other like-minded students, there was some time set aside for sight-seeing, including a nighttime cruise on the Hudson River, a visit to Central Park and a Broadway show.

All four students say they intend to pursue music in some form after high school.



Elite young musicians are brought together from all over the world to perform at Carnegie Hall with the High School Honors Performance Series.

Teen Opinion

Upon further reflection: Junior year and the path to college

By Alexandra Gold

As the first semester of junior year comes to an end, competitive spirit runs wild through our veins, sparking 2 a.m. cram sessions and strenuous breaks spent refreshing School Loop for the updated grade report.

Despite popular belief, this overwhelming competition is not essential to pushing hard work; what was once a lighthearted journey to societal standards of success has turned into a crippling battle to reach the top of the class, or at minimum the highest of the colleges one is aiming for.

Competition has become the fuel that spurs envy, self-loathing, and a defeated sense of self. Rather than an excerpt from a charming '80s movie filled with laughter and preoccupied teenagers, high school has become

a warzone, with our peers as the enemy and college as the prize.

It feels like we're always telling adults that learning simply is not how it used to be, or tallying the reasons why the pressure of a competitive school district eliminates the effort for genuine progress, (frequently misinterpreted as childish complaining of sleepless nights and pointless exams) but all to no avail. The pressure to be accepted into a name-brand college and head off to a successful, money-generating career overpowers the search for a life suited to the individual, in a location designed for one's own tastes, and a job path that will ensure not only security but joy.

Don't get me wrong, the prospect of a financial safety net and college degree are goals in

my own life, and I work just as hard in school as the next suburban teenager, but it often feels as though even someone else's failures are more impressive than my own successes.

How will I get into college if I'm not nearly as intelligent as them? This is our root issue: if we define ourselves by others' triumphs, we will never find pride in our own, because comparison is eternally the thief of joy.

Thus, upon further reflection, we must learn to weed out the envious glares shot at the ideal student, the copious amounts of self-hatred, and the desperate glances at one another's exam scores, and do this wearying work for ourselves, because in the end, that's all we have: ourselves.

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Climbing the Aconcagua: a tale of resilience and friendship

By Sophie Braccini



From left, Ethan Mark and Mylan Jarett recently reach the top of the Aconcagua. Photo provided

The story of the Aconcagua climb by Mylan Jarett and Ethan Mark is one of adventure, extreme mountaineering and courage, but it is also the tale of a friendship that has endured since these two first met over 10 years ago at Stanley Middle School, punctuated by multiple challenges the two have faced together or with the other's support.

The Aconcagua, with its 22,000 feet, is the highest mountain outside of Asia. The normal route is not known for its difficult technicality – some people use crampons, others do not – but every year the mountain claims the lives of several climbers due to the extreme weather conditions or exhaustion caused by oxygen depletion. The success rate is said to be about 30 percent.

Jarett and Mark, now in their mid 20s, live very busy lives, often far away from their hometown of Lafayette. A few days after returning from their climb in December, they were beaming with pride, but the signs of exhaustion still marked their faces.

It took Jarett and Mark 15 days to climb the giant of the Americas. The two climbers were joined by a guide and one Indian policewoman, Radhika, who had previously climbed Mount Everest. Radhika said that the Aconcagua climb was more physically challenging: no oxygen was provided and there is no rope to help. The oxygen level at the top of the Aconcagua is 9 percent versus 21 percent at sea level.

"You can't eat, you can't sleep, you are exhausted and you are sick all the time," remembered Jarett.

"Everything is so grueling," added Mark.

As the climb progressed, the weather worsened, with extreme

cold and winds, while oxygen levels diminished. "But there was no way I was going to get down this mountain with a helicopter," said Jarett, who most suffered from oxygen depletion sickness.

The two adventurers say that the climb had been planned carefully with Argentinian guide Lucas Dauria, with days of rest interspersed to acclimate to the change in air composition. Despite the hardship, the two men's good humor never left. "We would burst into laughter as one would stop exhausted after trying to put on one sleeve of his jacket," Mark remembered.

One day as Jarett was fighting oxygen depletion sickness in the camp, his partners dragged him out of his tent and explained that the weather had worsened and that they had to forfeit the day of rest and needed to immediately leave camp if they were to ever complete the adventure. When Jarett realized it was a joke, he laughed in spite of the nausea.

On the last day of the climb they had to leave camp very early to reach the summit because they only had 10 hours for the ascent and needed enough time to return to the last camp before dark. Mark and Jarett left alone; Radhika planned to leave later with the guide. "We thought she would not make it down and would have to be airlifted," said Mark, adding that most of the deadly accidents happen on the way down, since people are exhausted and the last miles are extremely steep. But they said that the feeling of being in heaven when you reach the top makes all the pain worth it.

Jarett remembered how tough his friend was during this final part of the climb. "He would throw up because of the altitude sickness but immediately pick up his pack

and start climbing again," he said. Mark added that they supported each other every step of the way, drawing on their specific strengths. Mark is a long distance runner with extremely strong legs, who paces himself and remains calm, while Jarett is a swimmer and water polo player with excellent lung capacity who often goes all-out.

The Aconcagua is just a step in the life adventures of the two young men. It all started on the tracks at Stanley Middle School where one day they met and started sharing their life dreams. They have been friends ever since.

Their first climb was in their junior year when they climbed Mount Whitney together; the same week Jarett swam across the Bay from Alcatraz. Together they climbed Mount Shasta, Mount Kilimanjaro, rafted the Grand Canyon, completed multiple hikes at Yosemite, and went to less well-known remote, inaccessible spots, sometimes with girlfriends who more or less appreciated the challenges offered by the adventure.

The current quest is to climb the seven highest summits of the five continents, the next possibly Puncak Jaya in Papua New Guinea. Jarett talked with sparking eyes of the less often climbed mountain located deep in the jungle; getting to its base is an adventure in itself. Mount Elbrus in Russia is also a possibility.

The two friends also challenge themselves intellectually. Next year, Jarett expects to be getting his full captaincy for any size commercial ships - he has been a professional sailor on all the oceans of the world for years already, while Mark expects to complete his doctorate in statistics and organ transplant survival, also within a year.

"I definitely think he does crazy things," Mark said of Jarett with a warm smile. He also testified that his friend is very good at making important decisions, taking into account all parameters, and that he loves life.

Jarett thinks that his friend will leave the world a better place with his research and that there is no better partner for any adventure.

Both know that they will always be able to count on each other.

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Call for entries for Lamorinda Arts Council High School Visual Arts Competition

Submitted by Denise Nomura

Lamorinda Arts Council will host its 15th Annual High School Visual Arts Competition from March 1-26 at the Orinda Library Art Gallery. This annual exhibition provides the community a wonderful opportunity to view a wide range of creative, original work by local students and recognizes the region's dedicated high school art teachers.

Entries for the High School Visual Arts Competition are currently being accepted through Feb. 23. The competition is open to ninth through 12th grade students living in or attending public or private high schools in Orinda, Lafayette and Moraga. The competition is also open to all students who attend Acalanes, Campolindo, Las Lo-

mas, and Miramonte high schools, regardless of residence.

Students may submit entries for 2D and 3D artwork as well as for Photography and Digital Design. LAC offers community service hours for the project with school or district approval. The online registration form for entry is available through Feb. 23, closing at midnight that day. The registration form as well as the full details of the competition can be found at www.lamorindaarts.org/vac.

Competition award winners will be announced during a free, public reception from 7 to 8:30 p.m. Wednesday, March 7 at the Orinda Library Art Gallery. A panel of arts professionals and educators will judge and award winners.

East Bay Children's Theatre family musical in Orinda March 11

Submitted by Ron Lytle



Corinna Rezzelle (as Blue Fairy), Kris Williams (as Pinocchio), and Ken Woolfe (as Geppetto) in the East Bay Children's Theatre production of Ron Lytle's "It Must Be Pinocchio!" Photo EBCT

To celebrate 85 historic years of bringing free musical theatre to under-served elementary school children, East Bay Children's Theatre is raising the curtain on the musical adventure "It Must Be Pinocchio!" – a beloved tale of the little wooden puppet brought to magical life.

Travel to a tiny Italian village and meet Geppetto, the kindly woodcarver whose only wish is to have a family of his own. With a wave of her magical wooden spoon, Geppetto's BF (Blue Fairy) brings the puppet to life, and Pinocchio begins his journey down the road to becoming a real live boy.

But that road is paved with many trials and temptations – including a ragtag pair of commen (a Fox and a Cat), a band of high-

kicking razzle-dazzle actors, a wicked theatrical producer (Strombaloney), and even a giant whale!

As with all East Bay Children's Theatre productions, the fast-paced action and broad comedy pleases children, while the generous portion of knowing humor is aimed point-blank at adults. That recipe makes "It Must Be Pinocchio!" wonderful entertainment for the entire family ... with no strings attached!

The cast is comprised of talent gathered from throughout the entire Bay Area and beyond, including: Terry Pink Alexander, Mary Bishop, Karen Fox, Riley Hyde, Benjamin Latham, Corinna Rezzelle, Howard Rosenberg, Kenny Silberberg, Kris Williams and Ken Woolfe.

The musical score is chock

full of the hummable tunes including "The Wonderful-Funderful Workshop of Geppetto," "Believe," "Little Boy," "Be An Actor On The Stage," "Why Settle For A Little (When You Can Have A Little More)" and "It Must Be Pinocchio!"

Performances of "It Must Be Pinocchio!" will be presented at 1 and 3 p.m. March 4 at the Firehouse Arts Center in Pleasanton; at 1 and 3 p.m. March 11 at the Orinda Library Auditorium in Orinda; and at 2 p.m. March 31 at the Del Valle Theatre in Walnut Creek. Tickets are \$12-\$17, and may be purchased online at www.ebctonline.org. Advance purchase is strongly recommended, as performances will sell out. For more information, contact ebctheatre@gmail.com.

Orinda launches 2018 Poul Anderson writing contest

By Sora O'Doherty

The Poul Anderson Creative Writing Contest is now open to all students who reside and/or attend high school in Orinda. The contest is run by the Friends of the Orinda Library and is named in honor of the late Poul Anderson,

a popular science-fiction writer and Orinda resident, who was a friend to the community for 40 years.

There are four categories: Science Fiction/Fantasy, Essay/Memoir/Biography, Poetry and

Short Story. Students may submit one entry in any of the four categories for a total of not more than three entries. The deadline for submission is Friday, April 20 at noon.

Entries will be evaluated by a

panel of local judges who are involved professionally in reading, writing or publishing. Up to four winners will each be awarded \$500 prizes at the close of this school year, underwritten by the Friends of the Orinda Library.

Entries should be submitted to individual school representatives or at the Orinda Library. For additional information go to: www.friendsoftheorindalibrary.org or email contest@friendsoftheorindalibrary.org.

Troop 204 to honor new Eagle Scouts

Submitted by Stephanie Reilly



Front row, from left: Arlo Evans, Alek Treplicki, and Jackson Reilly; back row: James Edwards, Tristin Tzortzis, Ethan Johnston, and Nick Rynne. Photo provided

Lafayette Boy Scout Troop 204 will honor seven young men who have achieved the Eagle Scout Award, the highest rank in the Boy Scouts of America, at 1 p.m. March 17 at Walnut Creek Presbyterian Church, 1801 Lacassie Avenue. This will be Troop 204's 65th Eagle Court of Honor.

To attain Eagle Scout, a Scout must earn his way up the scouting ranks from Tenderfoot to Life Scout. As a Life Scout, he must be active in the troop for at least six months, earn at least 21 required merit badges, serve in a Leadership position, show Scout Spirit, and plan, develop and give leadership to others in an approved Eagle service project helpful to any religious institution, school, nonprofit organization or the community. In addition to the requirements listed above, each of the Troop 204 Eagle Scouts has attended the annual 50-mile backpacking trips including planning and leading a trek on the nine-day trip, hiked over 500 miles, and ac-

tively participated in annual Camporees.

James Edwards built four benches for Youth Homes, which houses children with disabilities. Arlo Evans organized and ran a robotics summer camp for middle schoolers at Monument Crisis Center. Ethan Johnston designed and built a 6 by 8 foot outdoor whiteboard workstation for the Springhill Elementary Science Lab and Garden. Jackson Reilly built a 10 by 10 foot storage shed for Shelter, Inc. at their Family Emergency Shelter in Martinez. Nick Rynne built a Plexiglas root viewing station and a Plexiglas earthworm farm for the new Lafayette Elementary School garden. For the Lafayette Elementary School garden, Alek Teplicki built an 8 by 4 by 2 foot redwood storage bench with self-closing hinges; it is used to hold garden tools/equipment and is big enough for kids to sit on. Tristin Tzortzis built an 8 by 8 by 2 foot U-shaped teaching garden box for the Burton Valley Elementary School Garden.

Miramonte student wins Lions' Speech Contest

Submitted by Fred George



Zahra Hasanain and Moraga Student Speech Contest Chair Fred George of the Moraga Lions Club. Photo provided

The Moraga Lions Club held its annual Student Speakers Contest Feb. 6 at the Moraga Library. The subject for the contest was "Integrity and Civility Play What Role in Today's Society?" The winning speaker was Zahra Hasanain from Miramonte High School, who will now go on to compete in the Zone finals to be held at 7 p.m. on March 6 at the Pleasant Hill Council Chambers in Pleasant Hill. Zahra could potentially win up to \$23,000 in scholarship money if she wins all six levels of the contest. She has been coached by her speech teacher at Miramonte High School, Kristen Plant, who has been a wonderful supporter of the Lions' Speech Contest.

Local students honored as DAR Good Citizens

Submitted by Louise Diracles



Daughters of the American Revolution Acalanes Chapter salutes six local high school citizens for their outstanding citizenship. Pictured from left: State Assemblywoman Catharine Baker, winners Janet Seung Won Lee (Miramonte), Christina Loftis (Contra Costa Christian), Leah Bahramipour (Campolindo), Trinity Gabato (Bentley), Sienna Terry (Las Lomas), Katerina Gardner (Acalanes), Acalanes DAR Regent Nancy Boren and Good Citizen Chairperson Susan McGill. Photo provided

Six local high school students were honored Feb. 3 by the Daughters of the American Revolution Acalanes Chapter after being selected from their high schools for their citizenship by their high school counselors and named their school's DAR Good Citizen. The students selected had the following qualities: dependability (which includes truthfulness, loyalty, and punctuality); service (which includes cooperation, courtesy, and consideration of others); leadership (which includes personality, self-control, and ability to assume responsibility); and patriotism (which includes unselfish interest in family, school, community and nation) to an outstanding degree.

The students wrote essays titled "How

has America Advanced the Cause of Freedom in the Rest of the World?" and recited to the audience of parents and family members, as well as to Acalanes DAR members and some their counselors Feb. 3 at the Lafayette Veterans Building. Everyone was impressed with the students' public speaking skills. Each young woman was awarded a flag that was flown over the Capitol in her honor, a certificate and a scholarship check. Janet Seung Won Lee from Miramonte was selected as the chapter essay winner.

Assemblywoman Catharine Baker congratulated the young women and gave them an award certificate. A luncheon followed in the students' honor.

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.

Share Your Celebrations and Remembrances

If you would like to share an announcement about a special event or achievement, such as a wedding, engagement, scholarship or graduation of a local resident, or about a special person from Lamorinda who has passed, send a photo along with your text (up to 250 words) to storydesk@lamorindaweekly.com, and include "Celebrations and Remembrances" in the subject line.

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East Bay Jewish International Film Festival opens in Orinda March 1

By Sophie Braccini

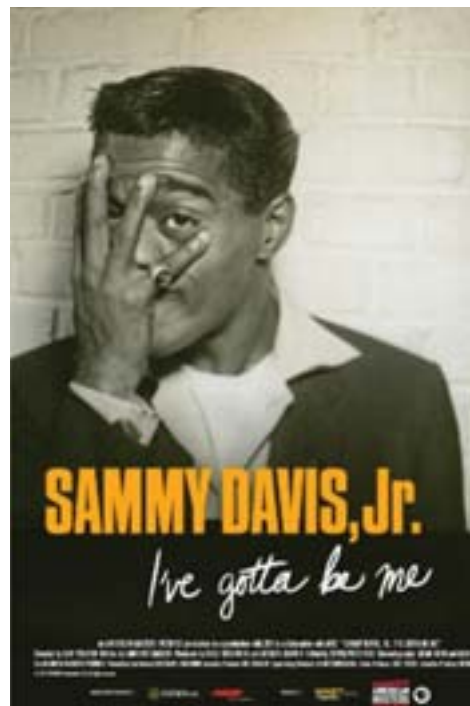


Photo provided

For 23 years the East Bay Jewish International Film Festival has brought American and international movies of higher and higher quality to the East Bay, all with ties to either Jewish culture or to the fight against intolerance. The EBIJFF's films are moving, funny, educational or inspirational – a cultural treat not to be missed from March 1-12.

This year, opening night will be held at the Orinda Theatre with the presentation of the documentary "Sammy Davis, Jr: I've Gotta Be Me" at 7:30 p.m. March 1. The film paints a portrait of the multi-faceted life of this American 20th century iconic entertainer who started life on stage at age 3, never went to school, climbed all ladders of the social hierarchy, transcended the

racial prejudices of the time, and walked with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., but also supported Richard Nixon and the Vietnam War. Davis was an extraordinary showman with unique talents who craved recognition and authenticity at the same time.

The film, directed by Sam Pollard, is the first movie centered on Davis. It showcases a large number of stars who share their memories of Davis, including actress Kim Novak, who was Davis' lover at a time when relationships between people with different skin color was not allowed in some states.

The movie is also a testimony to this troubled time in American history, with the civil rights movement, still tremendous racist backlash, and the birth of the hippie generation. The film will take older folks down memory lane, and teach younger ones some history, especially the mistreatment faced by so many because of variable melanin content in the skin.

The other Jewish film festival movies will be shown at the Century 16 Theatres in Pleasant Hill.

Orinda resident Efi Lubliner, who created the International Film Showcase in Orinda, and Jo Alice Canterbury are both on the board of EBIJFF. Canterbury, who is part of the selection committee for the festival, says that she reviews about 100 films each year and she is delighted with this year's lineup, with great movies from Australia, Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Hungary, Israel, Italy, Netherlands, Poland, Russia, South Africa, the UK, and the United States. Tickets for the Orinda showing are \$13 and are available online at eastbayjewishfilm.org.

College Advisor

Tell Me More about UC Davis!

By Elizabeth LaScala, PhD

The University of California at Davis offers a small town alternative to the dense, urban locations of UC Berkeley and UCLA. Located in the Golden State's fertile agricultural region in California's Central Valley, UC Davis is a 90-minute drive from San Francisco, and about a half-hour's drive from Sacramento, the state's capital. With 265 days of sunshine, Davis is everything you might want a college town to be, minus the traffic congestion. The downtown is lined with dozens of student-oriented dining options, retail stores and two multiplex movie theaters. One-hundred miles of bike paths in town and on campus give testimony to its bike friendly environment.

While Davis is a smaller town, there is nothing smaller about the undergraduate population. UC Davis is home to over 29,000 undergraduates, second only to UCLA within the University of California system. Although it is easier to get into UC Davis than it is to get into UCLA or UC Berkeley, that differential is fading over the years and the competitiveness of the university is increasing. Of the nearly 71,000 students who applied to join this year's freshman class, the 44 percent that were accepted presented very strong credentials. Most of the students come from California, though the university has scholarships targeted at students who come from Oregon as well as Washington state. Like the other UCs, UC Davis is more achievable as a transfer destination from the state's community college system; nearly 60 percent of the students who applied to transfer last cycle were offered admission.

As the Fiske Guide to Colleges states "If the subject is living things, you can study it here." The university has a challenging curriculum, especially strong in the sciences and approximately one-third of bachelor's degrees are granted in science, technology, engineering and mathematics subjects. The school is great for premeds and the first choice for any prevet student. Although UC Davis does not have an undergraduate business school, managerial economics, offered in the College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences, is one of the most popular majors, as is the economics major offered in the College of Letters and Sciences.

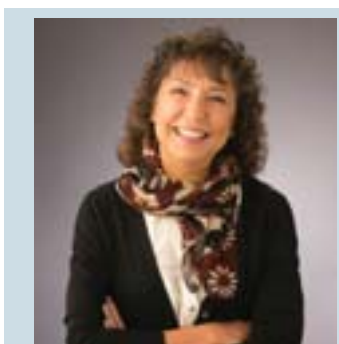
There are also some unique options within the College of Letters and Sciences including a major in Chicana/Chicano Studies, a public service option within the political science major, as well as an organizational studies option within the sociology major. Given the university's location near Sacramento, students interested in public policy and politics have many opportunities

to gain work experience in these areas. A program that matches students with internships in Washington D.C. is also available.

The closest approximation to a cow college in the UC system, Davis features agricultural programs that are rated second in the world in U.S. News Global Universities Rankings. UC Davis is the Land Grant University for California, the Golden State's primary center for agricultural education by the federal government. The depth of the offerings in the Department of Agriculture is tremendous. There are choices, for example, between animal biology and animal science and management, as well as between environmental horticulture and urban forestry. A new addition is a major in viticulture for students interested in wine making.

Agriculture has also been a major theme of the campus design. The Memorial Union, the signature building, originated from a farm silo that was one of the first buildings on campus. The main quad was once the parade ground for livestock shows. And the well-landscaped campus has a 100-acre arboretum for research and recreation; students can be found helping to harvest olives for olive oil.

If someone tells you that UC Davis is one of the best state universities in one of the nicest college towns in the U.S., believe them. The academic breadth of the school, success of the students and the quality of life in the surrounding community easily support this contention.



Elizabeth LaScala, PhD, brings decades of admissions expertise to personally guide each student through applying to well-matched colleges, making each step more manageable and less stressful. She has placed hundreds of students in the most prestigious colleges and universities in the U.S. Reach her at (925) 385-0562 (office) or (925) 330-8801 (mobile), or online at www.doingcollege.com or Elizabeth@doingcollege.com.

Local artist captures Frida Kahlo's courageous spirit



An unveiling of "Frida Kahlo's Courageous Transformational Life," a vibrant portrait of Mexico's most famous 20th Century woman artist by present-day artist Trina Swerdlow, will be held at the Jennifer Perlmutter Gallery in Lafayette at 6:30 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 22. Swerdlow will give a talk about the portrait of Frida Kahlo and the inspiration behind her painting.

Like Kahlo, Swerdlow understands how creating expressive art serves as a lifeline during times of personal darkness. "It is vitally important to honor people who have inspired us. For this reason, I am releasing my first painting in the Fine Art Series called Legacy of Light Portraits," said Swerdlow.

Swerdlow is an international bestselling author – "Stress Reduction Journal" (iUniverse, 2005) and "The Grandmother Legacies" (WOM Enterprises, 2017) – a thought leader, and artist with a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from Art Center College of Design. In addition to her art, Swerdlow has a private practice in Danville where she offers transformational tools to empower people to create their own "legacies of light" through healthy behavior, creativity, and assertive/compassionate communication.

"Frida Kahlo's Courageous Transformational Life" painting and an exhibition quality Giclée print on canvas will be displayed during the 6:30 p.m. gallery celebration at 3620 Mt. Diablo Blvd, Lafayette.

To attend, RSVP by email: jp@jenniferperlmutter.com with your name and "Yes Frida" in the email subject line. For information, visit jenniferperlmuttergallery.com.

– J. Wake

A warm side for cold winter nights

By Susie Iventosch



Tomato-stuffed bell peppers

Photo Susie Iventosch

Over the holidays, my nephew Brian gave me a beautiful kitchen towel along with a fun little tapas cookbook, "200 Tapas & Spanish Dishes," by Emma Lewis. This was the perfect gift for an auntie who loves to be in the kitchen, stirring up new recipes! In the book I found a fun idea for stuffing red bell peppers with tomato halves and decided to give it a try. I liked the idea of using orange bell peppers to set off the red tomatoes and adding panko-Parmesan on top to give it a nice crunchy topping. Snipped pieces of fresh basil added the perfect Mediterranean touch.

This made for a colorful vegetable to go alongside the steak we were serving that night, but it would also be a great vegetar-

ian entree. You can use any color bell pepper except green. The red, yellow or orange peppers have a better flavor for this recipe. Although I haven't tried this yet, it would also be delicious to top the stuffed pepper with feta, gorgonzola or blue cheese and bake until bubbly and golden brown.

One half pepper per person is perfect as a side dish, but I'd suggest a whole stuffed pepper per person for a main dish. Also, if you would prefer to use these as pass around appetizers, try using the miniature tri-colored bell peppers stuffed with cherry tomatoes. The pear-shaped cherry tomatoes would fit in the bell pepper cavity just perfectly. If using the small peppers, reduce cooking time appropriately.

Cooking Term of the Week

Za'atar

Za'atar is a middle eastern spice mixture usually made from a combination of herbs and spices that can include: sumac, toasted sesame seeds, thyme, summer savory, marjoram, oregano and salt. Various regions have their own special blend of za'atar, and in fact, may add additional or different ingredients such as cumin or coriander. Za'atar can be used to season meats or vegetables before baking or grilling, or sprinkled into olive oil for dipping bread.



Susie can be reached at suziventosch@gmail.com. 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.

Tomato-stuffed Bell Peppers

(Serves 6 as a side, or 3 as a main)

INGREDIENTS

- 3 orange, red or yellow bell peppers, cut in half lengthwise, seeds and ribs removed
- 3 medium sized tomatoes, cut in half (can use plum or Campari)
- ¼ cup extra virgin olive oil
- 1 clove garlic, crushed or ½ tsp. garlic powder
- 6 basil leaves, cut in thin strips (chiffonade)
- 1 tsp. each salt and pepper
- 3 Tbsp. balsamic vinegar
- 1/3 cup panko
- 1/3 cup grated Parmesan, or 1/3 cup crumbled feta, gorgonzola or blue cheese

DIRECTIONS

Cut peppers in half lengthwise, leaving stem intact on one half, if possible. Remove seeds and the white ribs. Remove stems from tomatoes and cut in half. Place a tomato half, cut side up, in the hollow of each pepper and place on baking tray, tomato side up. Drizzle olive oil over tomatoes and sprinkle with garlic, basil strips, salt and pepper. Drizzle balsamic evenly over each tomato. Mix grated Parmesan with panko and divide evenly over tomatoes. Bake at 400 F for approximately 20 to 25 minutes, until peppers are al dente and cheese is bubbly and browned. Serve hot.



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◆ Not to be missed ◆ Not to be missed ◆

ART

"Darker Shades of Red" provides a rare opportunity to revisit the Cold War Era through the exploration of the Soviet Union's official imagery Feb. 7 - May 20 at the Saint Mary's College Museum of Art. The collection of 55 posters reveals the economic, social and political ideology of the Soviet Union during the Cold War. There will be an opening reception from 4 to 6 p.m. on Feb. 8. The Museum is open Wednesday through Sunday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Free. www.stmarys-ca.edu/museum (See story page B7)

Jennifer Perlmutter Gallery presents "Bio-Genesis" - Jill Taffet and Judith White Marcellini from March 8 to April 7. New work by Taffet and White Marcellini explores the intersection of art and science. Their curiosity extends to the moment of creation and consciousness, and results in work that asks questions, and entertains. Immerse yourself in the projections and moving imagery of Taffet's hand-drawn cel animation. View with wonder the detailed paper sculptures of White Marcellini's creatures inspired by the Cambrian Explosion. There will be an opening reception from 6 to 8 p.m. on March 8, with an artist talk at 5 p.m.

"Garden Abstraction" continues at the Moraga Art Gallery through March 17. Its title derives from the panorama of fleeting colors, shapes, shadows and light found in the course of a day in artist Lisa Gunn's Orinda garden. Along with paintings, photographs, ceramics, and jewelry by the gallery's other artists, the exhibit features a collection of functional and sculptural stainless steel baskets created by Alejandro Santamarina of Petaluma, as well as a unique collection of photographs by the late Wayne F. Miller chronicling post-war Lamorinda through the eyes of then school-age baby boomers. www.moragaartgallery.com

An unveiling of "Frida Kahlo's Courageous Transformational Life," a vibrant portrait of Mexico's most famous 20th century woman artist by present-day artist Trina Swerdlow, will be held at the Jennifer Perlmutter Gallery in Lafayette at 6:30 p.m. on Thursday, Feb. 22 where the artist will give a talk about the portrait and the inspiration behind her painting. To attend this free event, RSVP by email: jp@jenniferperlmutter.com with your name and "Yes Frida" in the email subject line. For more information go to <https://tinyurl.com/Frida-Kahlo-Painting>.

MUSIC

Live at the Orinda Theatre Concert Series at 7:30 p.m. Thursday, March 1 with Amanda King (A Salute to Ella Fitzgerald: The Early Years). The stunning venue will be a place where audiences will experience exceptional performers at close range in an exceedingly elegant setting. Tickets start at \$50 and are available at the Orinda Theatre box-office and online at www.lamorindatheatres.com.

Campolindo High School's Concert and Symphonic Bands will present their Winter Band Concert at 7:30 p.m. on Thursday, Feb. 22 in the Campolindo Performing Arts Center in Moraga. They will be joined by trumpeter Mike Vax, of Stan Kenton fame. A \$10 donation is requested and appreciated! Students and children are free. For more information visit www.campomusic.org.

West Coast Performing Arts Presenters presents "Come Together: The Beatles Concert Experience" from 7:30 to 9:30 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 24 at Lesh Center for the Arts, 1601 Civic Drive, Walnut Creek. "Come Together" recreates the look, sound and history of the Beatles, taking you back into time to witness their phenomenal rise to pop stardom. Cost: \$40-\$45. For more info see <http://www.concertacts.com> or call (310) 941-0948.

Gold Coast Chamber Players concert, "Czech Mate" at 7:30 p.m. (pre-

concert talk at 7 p.m.) on March 10 in the Lafayette Library Community Hall. Musicians: Boston Trio; Irina Muresanu, violin; Jonah Ellsworth, cello; Heng-Jin Park, piano; Pamela Freund-Striplen, viola. Tickets: \$45 general; \$40 senior; \$15 student. Purchase online at www.gplayers.org or by phone at (925) 283-3728.

THEATER

East Bay Children's Theatre (EBCT) is raising the curtain on the musical adventure "It Must Be Pinocchio!" The beloved tale of the little wooden puppet is brought to magical life in EBCT's production of Ron Lytle's exuberant musical. Audiences will be dazzled by the high-energy singing and dancing, cutup comedy, and imaginative special effects that they've come to expect from EBCT productions. Showtimes are 1 and 3 p.m. on March 11 in the Orinda Library Auditorium. Tickets are \$12-\$17, and may be purchased online at: www.EBCTonline.org.

LECTURE & LITERATURE

Looted Art of World War II at 4 p.m. on Wednesday, Feb. 28 in the Orinda Library Garden Room. Learn about the process of art confiscation under the Nazi regime before and during World War II. Explore examples of recovered art and the role of provenance researchers in restitution cases. Presented by Dr. Shir Gal Kochavi, assistant curator of the Magnes Collection of Jewish Art and Life at the University of California, Berkeley. A Lamorinda Teens Read event.

KIDS, PARENTS & TEENS

The 2018 Friends of the Lafayette Library Bookmark Contest will be beginning Feb. 16. The contest is open to all Lafayette students, grade K-8. Entry forms will be available at school libraries in the Lafayette School District and St. Perpetua School, the Lafayette Library and Learning Center and the Friends Corner Book Shop. The entry deadline is Friday, March 9. Winners will receive a gift certificate for a local book shop, the Friends Corner Book Shop and complimentary framing of their winning bookmark at Fast-frame of Lafayette. The award ceremony is planned for April 24. For more information please contact Kay Pekrul: kae865@hotmail.com.

The City of Orinda will host its annual Summer Camp Fair from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 24, at the Orinda Community Center located at 28 Orinda Way in Orinda. Find out about summer programs offered through the City of Orinda, meet summer day camp staff plus a variety of specialty camp instructors.

Contra Costa Camp and School Fair - the sixth annual free event with booths for camps, schools, preschool, S.T.E.M. and S.T.E.A.M. programs, sports, cooking, enrichment, performing arts, scouts and YMCA. Free coding workshop plus bow and arrow, abacus and tennis exhibitions - will be held from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 25 at Acalanes High School, 1200 Pleasant Hill Rd., Lafayette. Free admission and parking. www.ContraCostaCampFair.com

Seak the Treasure at Orinda Library through the month of February. Solve the clues inspired by the Lamorinda Teens Read book selection, "Salt to the Sea," by Ruta Sepytys, to find the treasure. A Lamorinda Teens Read event.

Critter Compassion: Shelter Workshop with Animal Rescue Foundation (ARF) from 4 to 5:45 p.m. Friday, March 9 at 2890 Mitchell Dr., Walnut Creek. The Critter Compassion series teaches our littles about kindness to animals. At the end of the workshop, you will receive some heartfulness resources and tips to take home. Cost: \$15 Register at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/critter-compassion-shelter-workshop-with-animal-rescue-foundation-tickets-42542235973>.

OTHER

Free Legal Workshops available through the Contra Costa Bar Association. Immigration Law workshop from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. Monday, Feb. 26, at the Pleasant Hill Library, 1750 Oak Park Blvd., Pleasant Hill. Signups begin at 5:30 p.m. on a first come, first served basis. For more info and other additional clinics and dates go to [/www.cccba.org/flyer/Legal_Workshops.pdf](http://www.cccba.org/flyer/Legal_Workshops.pdf).

Contra Costa Tale Spinners at 7 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 22 in the Orinda Library Garden Room - includes a story swap with featured teller, Lois Kincy. Her story, an adaptation of "Little Match Girl" is dedicated to the grandmothers who have stepped up to raise their grandchildren. Share, listen, expand your universe.

Volunteers are needed to prune Fire Blight from the Moraga 104-year-old pear orchard from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 24 from at 1000 Camino Pablo (cross street Canyon). Instructions, gloves/tools provided. Wear sturdy shoes/bring water; bring loppers, gloves, hand/pole pruners, and orchard ladders if you have them. For info, contact Bobbie Preston at (925) 376-8474 or barbarampreston@comcast.net.

In honor of Martin Luther King and his vision, Orinda Community Church is offering a free showing of "Martin Luther King in Palestine" to the public at 5:30 p.m. on Sunday, Feb. 25 in Fellowship Hall, 10 Irwin Way, Orinda. To accommodate young families, the celebration will begin with a Potluck Supper: A to H Entrée; I to P Salad, Appetizer or Fruit; Q to Z Dessert. The film will be started about 6 p.m. Invite your friends to join you for an entertaining and learning experience! R.S.V.P. Call Orinda Community Church (925) 254-4907 or J. Elkin-ton-Walker at (925) 254-8754.

Managing Headaches without the Pharmacy with Tim Appleford, PT, MSPT, OCS, ATC. The Feb. 27 lecture will touch on migraines, tension headaches and bad habits that may contribute to headaches. He will also give an in-depth look at how physical therapy could be beneficial for this ailment through postural correction and tension release with exercise and stretching. Free. Seating is limited; call (925) 284-6150 to register today.

"Me Too" Founder Tarana Burke to speak at Saint Mary's College of California at 7 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 27 in the Soda Center. Burke is senior director for the nonprofit Girls for Gender Equity and director and founder of Just Be Inc., a youth organization focused on the well-being of young women of color. Burke's appearance at Saint Mary's College is part of the ongoing 44 Days Honoring Black History celebration series. Cost: \$15 general public; free for SMC students, staff, faculty and alumni. For more information, visit stmarys-ca.edu/inclusive-excellence/44-days-celebration.

Make-A-Wish Club of Campolindo is having a Dine and Donate from 5 to 9 p.m. on Feb. 27 at the Chipotle in Lafayette, with 100% of the profits going to the Make-A-Wish Foundation.

Breast Cancer Update: Highlights from the 40th San Antonio Breast Cancer Symposium from 6 to 8 p.m. on Feb. 27 in the Community Hall at Lafayette Library and Learning Center. The San Antonio Breast Cancer Symposium is the premier international breast cancer conference designed to provide information on major advances in research, prevention, diagnosis and treatment of breast cancer. Our speakers will include: Christine, Chung, M.D., radiation oncologist; Natalie Marshall, M.D., medical oncologist; and Rita Kwan-Feinberg, M.D., surgeon. Register online at <https://feedback.sutterhealth.org/f/142953/6aa8/> or call (510) 204-5656.

... continued on next page

An insider's perspective into life under Communist Russia at SMC Museum of Art

By Kara Navolio



Leninism: Our Banner, V. Ivanov, The Hollingsworth Collection

The current exhibit at Saint Mary's College Museum of Art offers an insider's perspective into life under Soviet totalitarian rule.

"Darker Shades of Red: Soviet Propaganda Posters from the Cold War Era" is a collection of 55 posters compiled by Gary Hollingsworth during trips to Russia after the fall of communism. Hollingsworth, an art restorer who was in Russia to restore religious paintings, came across the posters at Flea Markets as most Russians were trying to purge all things related to communism. He saw them as an opportunity to preserve a piece of Russian history. Over a 20-year period he returned to Russian many times, bringing back a few posters at a time.

The collection shows the official government-sanctioned communication to the masses with images

and text that convey strength, progress and abundance under communism. Communism was not compatible with religious images, so, in many ways, the images created during this period are an attempt to replace the religious iconography of Christianity with Communist Party ideas. "Images of Saints were being replaced by cosmonauts and the farm worker," explains Museum Director Lauren MacDonald. "What the people should venerate was being changed by the imagery." Other common heroic figures were the border guards, soldiers, and strong women workers. One poster depicting Lenin states, "Live by Lenin's ideas and grow up as a Communist, to bring new glory to the country."

Among the collection are some posters created by a group called the Fighting Pencil. They used satire to focus on social problems of the '60s and '70s, like alcohol-

ism, violence, laziness and corruption. Other posters show messages directed at bringing children up as good communists or comparing the prosperity of socialism to the oppression of capitalism and the west.

The exhibit is a very visual and powerful lesson on Russian history from 1945 to 1991, with English translations for each piece and helpful background information posted throughout. The museum is open from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Wednesday through Sunday with free admission for all. Public tours are offered on Thursdays from 10 to 11 a.m., and can also be arranged at other times for school groups by calling John Schneider at (925) 631-4379. Saint Mary's professors will offer informative art chats at 1 p.m. on February 28, March 21 and May 1. The show closes on May 20. For more information, visit www.stmarys-ca.edu/museum.



Increasing the Field is the Main Goal..., Solovjev, The Hollingsworth Collection

Service Clubs Announcements

February 23

Where? Who?
Steve Ware from whence he came to be.

BREAKFAST MEETING:
Friday mornings, 7:00 am.
The Lafayette Park Hotel & Spa,
Mt. Diablo Blvd, Lafayette. More info.
at www.lamorindasunrise.com

March 2

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<p>February 22: Racheal Zinn Lafayette School District Superintendent re: district's budget and a plan to go for another parcel tax.</p>	<p>March 1: Sharon W. A New Day Human Trafficking</p>
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www.facebook.com/Rotary-Club-of-Lafayette-Ca-197392963631366

Lamorinda Weekly

is an independent publication, produced by and for the residents of Lafayette, Moraga and Orinda, CA
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Contact us:
Letters to the editor (max 350 words): letters@lamorindaweekly.com
Delivery issues: homedelivery@lamorindaweekly.com
Event listings: calendar@lamorindaweekly.com
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Sport events/stories/pictures: sportsdesk@lamorindaweekly.com
Publishers/Owners: Andy and Wendy Scheck; andy@lamorindaweekly.com, wendy@lamorindaweekly.com
Editor: Jennifer Wake; jennifer@lamorindaweekly.com
Copy Editor: Nick Marnell; nick@lamorindaweekly.com
Sports Editor: sportsdesk@lamorindaweekly.com
Advertising: 925-377-0977, Wendy Scheck; wendy@lamorindaweekly.com
Staff Writers:
Sophie Braccini; sophie@lamorindaweekly.com,
Cathy Dausman; cathy.d@lamorindaweekly.com
Pippa Fisher; pippa@lamorindaweekly.com,
Nick Marnell; nick@lamorindaweekly.com
John T. Miller; john@lamorindaweekly.com,
Sora O'Doherty; Sora@lamorindaweekly.com
Digging Deep: Cynthia Brian; cynthia@lamorindaweekly.com
Thoughtful Food: Susie Iventosch; suziventosch@gmail.com
Contributing Writers:
Conrad Bassett, Diane Claytor, Michele Duffy, Amanda Eck, B.B. Kaye, Michael Lupacchino, Mona Miller, Kara Navolio, Alexandra Reineke, Victor Ryerson, Moya Stone, Jon Kingdon, Derek Zemrak
Calendar Editor: Jaya Griggs; calendar@lamorindaweekly.com
Photos: Tod Fierner, Gint Federas
Layout/Graphics: Andy Scheck. Printed in CA.
Mailing address:
Lamorinda Weekly, P.O. Box 6133, Moraga, CA 94570-6133
Phone: 925-377-0977; Fax: 925-263-9223; email: info@lamorindaweekly.com
website: www.lamorindaweekly.com

Please submit:

Events: calendar@lamorindaweekly.com
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◆ Not to be missed ◆ Not to be missed ◆ Not to be missed ◆

OTHER ... continued

The Elfenworks Center for Responsible Business invites you to its fourth annual conference from 12:30 to 7:30 p.m. Thursday, March 1 in the Soda Activity Center to explore how businesses have defined and honored human rights. Learn what actions businesses have taken to comply with standards and prevent violations of human rights. Explore models and practices that can inspire other businesses. The conference check-in will begin at 12:30 p.m., followed by panels exploring the interdependence of business and human rights, a keynote address, and ending with a networking reception. The event is \$20 (free for current SMC students, staff and faculty) and open to all, but registration is required.

Summer camp job fair with the town of Moraga and cities of Lafayette and Orinda 1 to 4 p.m. on Saturday, March 3 at the Lafayette Community Center, Live Oak Room, 500 St. Mary's Road, Lafayette. There will be many summer camp providers ready to hire local talent for the summer months.

In addition to meeting with employers and finding out which jobs are available, there will also be a resumé building workshop to get your resumé updated and ready to stand out. For more information visit moragarec.com.

All are invited to celebrate with Saint Mary's College Guild St. Patrick's Day Dinner/ Auction Fundraiser from 5:30 to 9:30 p.m. on Saturday, March 10. Featuring a delicious, traditional, Irish corned beef dinner with all the trimmings. Guinness, Harp, wine, Irish coffee available. Cost: \$50 per person. Make checks payable to: SMC Guild, Send to: Shirley Bohuslav, 782 Augusta Drive, Moraga, CA 94556. For more info: (925) 284-7750.

Persian New Year Chaharshanbeh Souri: Festival of Fire - Persian Center will be hosting its 19th Annual Chaharshanbeh Souri from 6 to 10 p.m. on March 13 at the 2000 block of Durant Avenue in Berkeley. Jump over bonfires to celebrate the change of seasons and welcome spring. Enjoy Persian food, music, dancing, and

children's activities. Rain or shine. Free. <https://www.facebook.com/PersianCenterOrg/>

Lamorinda Arts Council (LAC) will now host its Third Annual ShortDocs Film Fest at the Lafayette Library and Learning Center at 3 p.m. on April 15. Originally scheduled for Feb. 11 this year, this documentary film festival provides local filmmakers an opportunity to create new work as well as showcase it at a community screening. The extended deadline for Entries for the Lamorinda ShortDocs Film Fest is now March 18. To learn more about the Lamorinda ShortDocs Film Fest competition and to enter go to <http://www.lamorindaarts.org/shortdocs>.

17th Annual Women's Film Festival LunaFest at 7 p.m. on Thursday, March 22 at the Orinda Theatre. This unique film festival highlights women as leaders in society, illustrated through nine short films by women filmmakers. The films range from animation to fictional drama, and cover topics such as women's health, body image, relationships, cultural diversity and breaking barriers. There will be a

VIP reception starting at 6 p.m. in the Fourth Bore Tap Room. Tickets are \$25. Advance tickets only, purchase at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/lunafest-film-festival-tickets-43121612905?aff=es2>.

Come break all the rules at the "Night at the Library" - includes cocktails, vino, silent Disco (!?!!) and fun around every corner beginning at 6:30 p.m. Saturday, June 2 in the stacks of the Lafayette Library. Immerse yourself in merriment, while supporting the library and its programs. www.LLLCF.org/Night2018

Join LOPC for Men's Breakfast at 7 a.m. Wednesday, Feb. 28. Andy Amstutz from Lamorinda Village will speak on the topic of "Over 55? What can Lamorinda Village do for you?" Bring friends and family. \$5 donation at the door for breakfast. RSVP by noon on Feb. 27 to janet@LOPC.org. Lafayette-Orinda Presbyterian Church, 49 Knox Drive, Lafayette. (925) 283-8722. LOPC.org.

GARDEN

Volunteers are needed to prune Fire Blight from the Moraga 104-year-old pear orchard from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 24 from at 1000 Camino Pablo (cross street Canyon). Instructions, gloves/tools provided. Wear sturdy shoes/bring water; bring loppers, gloves, hand/pole pruners, and orchard ladders if you have them. For info, contact Bobbie Preston at (925) 376-8474 or barbarampreston@comcast.net.

Montelindo Garden Club March Meeting (third Friday of every month, September through May) will be at 9 a.m. on Friday, March 16 at Stephen's Episcopal Church, 66 St. Stephens Drive, Orinda. Presentation: Big Ideas for Designing Your Small Back Yard; speaker Susan Morrison. Susan is a nationally-recognized landscape designer and authority on small-space garden design. Her most recent book, "Less Is More in the Garden," was released early in February. Ms. Morrison's presentation will focus on how to create unique small-space gardens that are lovely, family friendly, and low maintenance.

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LAMORINDA SPORTS

Saint Mary's women's basketball's South Pacific influence

By Jon Kingdon



From left: Milly Yates, Megan McKay, Carly Turner and Jasmine Forcadilla

Photos Tod Fierner

There have been numerous articles written about the influx of Australian players on the Saint Mary's College men's basketball team. Overlooked has been how Paul Thomas, the Saint Mary's women's head coach, has utilized the talents of the women from the South Pacific with great success over his 11 seasons at Saint Mary's.

With four Australians on the roster – Jasmine Forcadilla, Carly Turner, Megan McKay, Milly Yates – and one New Zealander (Stella Beck), the South Pacific is well represented on the Saint Mary's roster this season.

Assistant coach Tracy Sanders, a Campolindo High School and Saint Mary's graduate, has made several recruiting visits to Australia. "I have to prepare a great deal by watching a lot of video tapes and setting up my visits," Sanders says. "It's a long trip and I am over there for three days doing a lot of recruiting."

After flying for 14 hours to get to Australia, Sanders flew an additional five hours to meet with McKay, convincing her to enroll at SMC. McKay says she had several offers but when Sanders made an extra five-hour flight to visit her, she was impressed with how committed she was to her "and that convinced me to make that commitment to Tracy and Saint Mary's."

The Australians at Saint Mary's have worked well together, according to Sanders. "There is a family network and the girls look

out for each other. We are so well connected over there, it gives us an advantage in recruiting with a number of players reaching out to us."

The Americans on the team have had no problems bonding with their overseas teammates. "They have done a great job in fitting in," Sanders says. "We are a very close team. Their teammates have fun with the language."

Playing on a club team is a way of life in Australia and New Zealand. The experience is something that all the players felt they benefited from. Says Beck: "I really benefited from playing on a national scale. All the girls were good at teaching me the game as I grew up. It's responsible for about 70 percent of where I am today as a player." Forcadilla agrees. "It prepared me for the physicality and athleticism that I am playing against over here," she says. "I also got used to playing in front of big crowds." McKay felt it helped her greatly. "It was the best experience I ever had. I learned so much from the players and the coaches. I appreciated how much faith they put in me and what I needed to be."

Turner, who suffered a serious knee injury playing for the Australian National team and is taking a redshirt year, also sings the praises of the club system. "I loved it. The trips lasted up to a month long and we would go to different countries. You had to grow up very quickly."

Such experiences for these women facilitated the transition

from traveling over 8,000 miles to attend college and play basketball. Turner, a senior, says it is like a family situation at Saint Mary's. "Once they come over, we Aussies all look out for each other. I moved out of home when I was 16 to go to the Australian Institute of Sport so I was quite used to being away."

With a climate similar to Australia, it makes Moraga that much more appealing to the Australians. "The Australian connection is huge," McKay says. "There are people here to celebrate Australian Day and Christmas with. I get a number of calls from Australians and I have been happy to recommend the school to them." Forcadilla considered one other school besides Saint Mary's: "I looked at the University of Maine which was very different and very cold."

Though basketball is basketball, there was some adjustment to the American game for the women. According to Beck: "The U.S. players are a lot more individual skill focused. In New Zealand there is a lot more moving the ball and pass focus." Forcadilla did not see as much structure as she was used to: "We had a lot of set plays. Plus the shot clock is 30 seconds over here and 24 seconds in Australia." For McKay it was off the ball contact: "Position was not as important as it is in America. It's more physical off the ball than it is in Australia." Turner found the American players quicker and more athletic with more passing and ball movement back home.

Adjustment to the American culture was not a major issue. According to Beck, whose father is from Bethesda, Maryland, "Everyone was very nice and welcoming to me though a lot of people did not know where New Zealand was." Forcadilla's issue was with checks at restaurants: "The whole concept of tipping is strange and how the taxes are included." McKay and Turner discovered a great love for Mexican food.

"Mexican food is huge over here and I love it," McKay says. "I'm still learning how to pronounce their dishes. I just order what everyone else has ordered." Turner has developed a real taste for Chipotle. Most miss the meat pies that are a staple in Australia and "Mum's home cooking."

Turner, who has another year of eligibility and will be entering the MBA program next year, really appreciates the effort made by the staff and the community to ease the

transition for the players. "They make it very easy for us to adjust and be away from our family," she says. "The coaches made sure we were well taken care of. Having watched a lot of American TV and movies, the small differences in our languages were not a problem."

Though there was some initial homesickness upon arrival at Saint Mary's, community involvement proved to be a great distraction for those feelings. "We do a bunch of stuff in the community. We all babysit and get to know the kids," Turner says. "We are involved with Special Olympics and we will

go to the local schools and read to the students. We will also do practice sessions with the local schools and find they are always amused by our accent."

Beck will be graduating this year and the other women want to continue to play basketball on the next level, whether it be in the United States, Australia, Europe or Asia. "I'm looking for a good league," Beck says, "and I'm not closing any doors."

Will there continue to be a pipeline to Saint Mary's from the South Pacific? With such positive ambassadors for the school, no worries mate!

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Gonzaga handles Saint Mary's easily, 78-65

By Jon Kingdon



Cullen Neal



Jock Landale (34)

Photos Tod Fierner

The 11th-ranked Saint Mary's basketball team seemed to have everything pointed in their favor Feb. 10 as they faced off against their biggest rival. They defeated Gonzaga on their home court earlier in the season, they had won 19 straight games, and they were playing Gonzaga in front of a sold-out, raucous home crowd and a national television audience.

Then the game began. Gonzaga hit their first three shots, all three pointers, and they jumped out to a 9-0 lead, Gonzaga never trailed and they posted a final score of 78-65 in a game that was not that close. Down 24-8 midway through the first half, Saint Mary's went on a 13-4 run to close the deficit to 7

with 5 minutes left in the first half, bringing the crowd back into the game. Gonzaga, which has now won 22 consecutive conference road games, maintained their composure every time Saint Mary's made a run, leading at the half 42-30. In the second half, Gonzaga maxed out their lead to 72-50, removing any doubt as to the final result. Utilizing a balanced attack, Gonzaga had four players scoring in double figures, led by Rui Hachimura with 21 points and Zach Norvell's 17 points.

In their first game at Gonzaga, 6-foot-11-inch Jock Landale led the Gaels to a 74-71 victory, scoring 26 points on 12 of 15 shooting. Gonzaga was not going to allow that to happen again. Double-

teaming Landale every time the ball was thrown into the pivot, the Bulldogs limited him to four shots, hitting two, and he finished with just four points, despite coming into the game averaging 22.7 points per game. Under these conditions, Landale was forced to constantly pass the ball out to his teammates. "As soon as it touched my hands, I had two guys on top of me," Landale said. "This team's not about me. I don't have to score every possession."

Gonzaga head coach Mark Few explained his strategy: "We wanted to give a different look with the double teams and where they were coming from. The doubles are actually the easy part of it. It's rotating out of it that's difficult,

especially when they put four other guys on the floor who can shoot threes." Or not.

Saint Mary's head coach Randy Bennett did not put the blame on Landale. "I thought Jock competed. He did his job. With Jock double teamed, he had to pass the ball. He took what they gave him. We just did not hit our threes. Other guys have to make plays."

Or any other shots for that matter. Saint Mary's came into the game connecting on 52.8 percent of their field goals and 42.1 percent of their three pointers. Against Gonzaga, the Gaels connected on only 41 percent of their field goals, sinking only five of their 20 three point attempts. The starting team was a combined 1

for 12 from the three-point range. Coming off the bench, Cullen Neal did provide some offense, making three 3-pointers and scoring 16 points.

If there was a bright spot for the Gaels in addition to Neal, it was Jordan Ford who drove aggressively to the basket and scored 17 points, even though he missed all five of his 3-point attempts, shooting 5 for 15 overall. Ford did not soft-soap his comments: "They hit us in the mouth. We had a tough time handling the double team and they took us off our threes."

Bennett summed it up succinctly: "They played very well. We did not have our A-game. We did not have enough guys who played well."

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Lamorinda female wrestling participation on the rise

By Jon Kingdon

Since 2004, what high school sport, percentage wise, can claim to have the fastest growing group of participants? In all likelihood, you've guessed incorrectly. It's wrestling. No, it's not the boys

but in fact the participation of girls in high school wrestling programs both nationally and locally has increased sharply. Why 2004? That was the first year that women wrestling became an Olympic sport.

In a major surprise, American Helen Maroulis defeated Japan's Saori Yoshida, the three-time defending champion, at the 2016 Rio Olympics to become the first U.S. gold medalist in women's freestyle wrestling to the acclaim of coaches all over the United States, which may have spurred this growth. There are now more than 14,500 high school girls who wrestle across the country and seven states sponsor girls' state championships. California has 4,505 girl wrestlers.

This past weekend, the North Coast Section tournament was held for the girls at Albany High School with each of the Lamorinda schools having at least one participant in this event. In a double elimination competition, the winners went on to the state finals. Though none of the local girls made it to the finals, they set a precedent for themselves and other wrestlers to aspire to in the future.

Shannon Lipp, a sophomore who is a first-year wrestler was the first girl to compete at this level for Miramonte. Head coach Jason Rosiak was impressed with how far Lipp has come: "For a first-year wrestler going up against more experienced wrestlers, Shannon did a solid job. She competed really

well. With her focus and effort, she will be vying for a spot in next year's state tournament."

Lipp, who also plays ice hockey on a club team, was drawn to wrestling when she saw a demonstration at school: "It looked like a fun sport and I wanted to try it. The workouts were really intense with so much emphasis on the cardio. It was hard at the start but it did get easier as it went along."

Campolindo head coach Sam Sotelo had three girls in the tournament: sophomores Arine Kim (106 pounds) in her second year of wrestling, Cecelia Chang (111) in her first year of wrestling and junior Captain Remy Benner (121).

"I am so proud of all three girls," Sotelo said. "They gave it their all and left it on the mat."

Kim, in her second year of wrestling, lost in the last second of an overtime match to the eventual tournament winner. She and Chang were also first drawn to the sport when she saw a demonstration at her school. "I did not care for MME or UFC," said Kim. "I wanted to compete in a sport with rules and regulations. It's not just a male sport. It's something where girls can excel."

Chang was drawn to wrestling for many reasons. "I liked the idea of a team concept and the individual aspect of the sport as well. It was very hard at the beginning. I like the one-on-one physical contact. It's more real than volleyball."

Benner made it to the second day of the tournament, much to the satisfaction of Sotelo: "I loved watching her wrestle and putting forth such a tremendous effort. She did a great job as a captain this year. She's been the leader of the entire team."

Sotelo cites how gender equality has encouraged the girls to participate in high school wrestling and in the youth programs. He sees how the girls have a physical advantage in one area over the boys: "The girls have more flexibility and this enables them to avoid some holds."

Alex Hasse, in her second year of wrestling, represented Acalanes at the tournament. Head coach Dave Ridge says, "Though Alex didn't place, she wrestled extraordinarily well."

Hasse, who has experience in martial arts, opted to try wrestling. "I like that it's an individual sport. It's all on you. You are accountable to yourself while also helping your team. It was intense at the start but it's a great way to stay in shape. My parents were hesitant when I started wrestling but they got over it."

There were some T-shirts being worn at the tournament that said "Wrestling: Boys Invented. Girls Perfecting," which speaks to the confidence the female wrestlers are exuding today.

Ridge treats all his wrestlers equally. "Regardless of their size, I coach them the same as the boys - they are biomechanically the same."

Rosiak sees some difference with the girls. "Girls are more flexible with better balance and they seem to do better technically. They undergo the same regimen as the boys and they wrestle with the boys as well. The attitude now is that girls can do anything."

The growth of girls wrestling was evident in the number of participants in the NCS this year compared to 2017. Ridge cited these numbers: "Last year there were 210 girls competing on three mats. This year there were 250 girls competing on four mats."

There are now 38 colleges that have women's wrestling programs. A number of colleges have started wrestling club teams for women as well. Though not offering scholarships, the clubs are facilitating the acceptance of females who wrestled in high school which may be another factor attracting these young women to this sport.



Shannon Lipp with Coach Jadon Rosiak (Miramonte)



Alex Hasse (Acalanes)



Cecelia Chang (Campolindo)

Photos provided

JOIN LMYA Swim Team!



LMYA swim

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www.lmyaswim.com

St Monica's 5th Grade boys win championship

Submitted by Jessica Van Olst



Back row, from left: coach Mark Roebeson, Luke Devine, Anthony Sanguinetti, Jack Quinild, coach Eric Van Olst, Kai Van Olst, and coach Sean Clancy; front row: Gaetan Avicoll, Gian Maguire, Luke Bonardi, Blaise Clancy, Joe Revelos, and Max Roebeson. Photo provided

St Monica's fifth grade American league team defeated Christ The King parish Sunday, Feb. 11 in the finals for the West

Diablo CYO Basketball league.

Head coach Eric Van Olst led the team to the fourth year in a row championship win.

St. Perpetua girls basketball team undefeated

Submitted by Ben Tschann



Photo provided

The St. Perpetua third grade girls basketball team won the West Diablo CYO playoff championship at Tice Valley to cap an undefeated season. The team had two hard fought wins in the playoffs against Santa Maria and the other St. Perpetua team in the championship game. The girls finished the season a perfect 12-0.

Team Members include: Stella Hamilton, Grace Eppinger, Madden McSorley, Reese Dankworth, Charlotte Tschann, Ava Sandberg, Erin Lerch, and Megan Ingham. Not pictured: Ella Culbertson and Lucy Delaplane. Coaches: Chad Culbertson, Andy Eppinger and Ben Tschann.

Team Harmeyer wins CYO championship

Submitted by P.J. Gould



Back row, from left: head coach Joe Harmeyer, Bryan Lurie, Brady Beeman, Noah Blackhart, Patrick Gould Jr., Luca Fazio, asst. coach Nat Beeman, and asst. coach Patrick Gould; bottom row: Ben Mickelson, Paul Bacon, Matthew McCallister, and Karsten Harmeyer. Photo provided

The Third Grade Boys CYO basketball championship weekend took place at Tice Valley Gymnasium in Walnut Creek over the weekend of Feb. 10-11. The top four teams in the 18-team division were invited to the "Final Four" to compete for the top trophy. The championship game pitted two undefeated teams against one another, and in a nail biter of a game, St. Perpetua Team

Harmeyer emerged victorious by one point, 17-16. It was a low scoring game that showcased lots of good defense and sportsmanship from both teams. All members of St. Perpetua Team Harmeyer are from Lafayette and attend various schools including St. Perpetua, Burton Valley Elementary, Lafayette Elementary and Springhill Elementary schools.

Submit stories to sportsdesk@lamorindaweekly.com
(We prefer to receive your original photo file, minimum size: 200 dpi and 1200 pixels wide.)

4th grade boys win CYO championship

Submitted by Tom Jones



Photo provided

The St. Perpetua fourth grade boys American League basketball team won the West Diablo CYO League Championship held at the Tice Community Center this month.

10U girls Diablo Alliance Water Polo Frozen Cup Tournament Champions

Submitted by Rhodora Del Rosario



Photo Dale Kang

The 10U Diablo Alliance Water Polo club won the Co-Ed 2018 Frozen Cup Tournament in February. The team fought hard and defeated the competitive Royal 559 Water Polo Academy for first place.

Diablo Alliance water polo team wins gold

Submitted by Jeff Holman



Back row, from left: coach Jamie Collie, Audrey Cox (Lafayette), Sofia Holman (Orinda); middle row: Katie Austen (Walnut Creek), Maile Turner (Alamo), Ally Larsen (Lafayette), Olivia Williams (Lafayette); front row: Quinn Arroyo (Orinda), Julianne Stark (Danville), Ella Del Rosario (Lafayette) and Rosalie Hassett (Orinda). Not Pictured: Zoe Jimenez (Martinez). Photo provided

This past weekend Diablo Alliance water polo won Gold in the 12 and under platinum division of the Kap7 International tournament in Huntington Beach. The event featured 21 of the top teams in the country (12 in platinum and 9 in gold) and is the na-

tion's premier tournament for the winter water polo season.

In 2017, Diablo Alliance ranked second in the nation with 27 USA Water Polo Academic All-Americans.

Lamorinda women take part in national collegiate signing day

Submitted by Keven Guillory



Photo courtesy of the Lamorinda Girls Development Academy

Earlier this month, seven young women, members of Lamorinda's US Soccer Development Academy, signed National Letters of Intent to play soccer at Universities around the nation.

The players, who achieved high academic honors as well as proficiency on the soccer pitch include Ashley Holbrook, who will join the University of the Redlands team, Cate Combi, who joins Chapman University's roster, Charlotte Guillory, who will play for California State University at Long Beach, Elise Ziem, who will play for Sonoma State Univer-

sity's newest recruits, Lauren McCulloch, who joins her teammate Elise at UC Santa Barbara, and Maddy Chavez who will play for UC Irvine. The Lamorinda Soccer Club held the signing event at their indoor arena near the Rheem Theater in Moraga. Coach and club Technical Director Mohamed Mohamed praised the young athletes for their hard work and dedication to their club and sport. All the players compete in the U.S. Development Academy League, which is the highest competition for Youth Soccer in the nation.

Lamorinda OUR HOMES

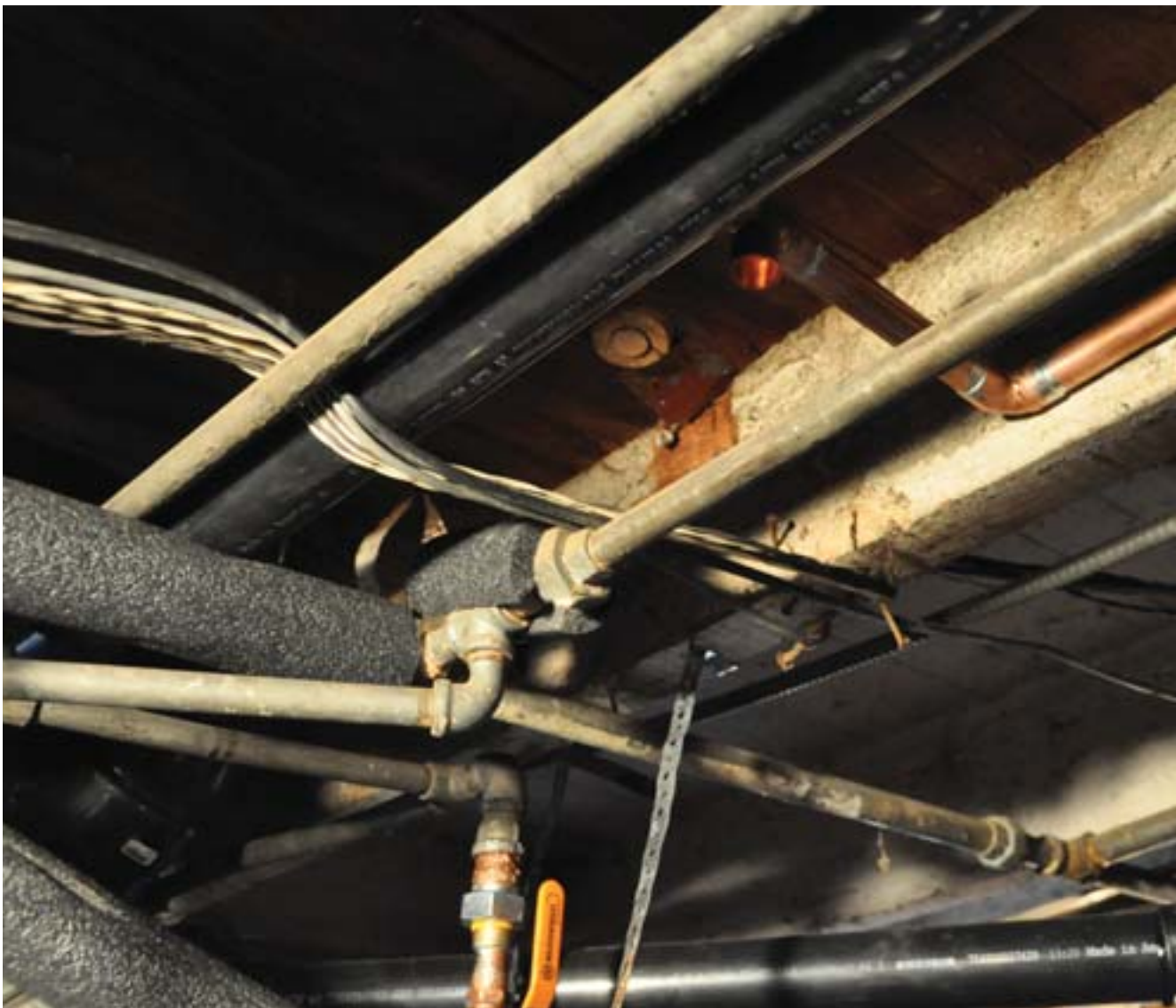
Lamorinda Weekly Volume 11 Issue 26 Wednesday, Feb. 21, 2018



Digging Deep with Cynthia Brian
...read on page D13

Piping problems

By B. B. Kaye



Top right, a new copper pipe is installed to replace the aged pipes.

Photo Andy Scheck

Plumbing runs largely unseen through our homes, serving to bring us comfort and cleanliness. “Plumb” is from the Latin “plumbum” for lead, because in the early days of plumbing that’s the material that was used for piping. Lead was cheap, easy to form, easy to solder, long-lasting – and extremely poisonous.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, “low levels of exposure have been linked to damage to the central and peripheral nervous system, learning disabilities, shorter stature, impaired hearing, and impaired formation and function of blood cells.” As the dangers of using lead – severe brain and nervous system damage, especially but not only in children – reared their ugly heads into public awareness, better materials were developed to safely carry the precious water we use.

Brass, copper, stainless steel, galvanized steel, “black” steel, iron, baked clay, cementitious compounds and, more recently, different types of plastic can all be found within many, and often the same, houses.

... continued on page D4



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MORAGA

Enjoy sweeping views of the surrounding hillsides from this single level three-bedroom, two-bathroom duet home in the exclusive Ascot Highlands neighborhood. The charming and spacious approximately 1,380-square-foot floor plan features light-filled, stylishly updated and freshly painted rooms that connect with inviting outdoor entertaining spaces including a backyard patio with hillside views and a front, gated courtyard. Additional features include: hardwood floors, recessed lighting, indoor laundry area (washer and dryer included), central air conditioning, two-car, new interior and exterior paint, quiet and private location, and a community swimming pool. Minutes to shopping, restaurants, parks, schools and more.

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Lamorinda Home Sales recorded

City	Last reported:	LOWEST AMOUNT:	HIGHEST AMOUNT:
LAFAYETTE	1	\$1,350,000	\$1,350,000
MORAGA	2	\$682,500	\$1,400,000
ORINDA	4	\$900,000	\$1,890,000

Home sales are compiled by Cal REsource, an Oakland real estate information company. Sale prices are computed from the county transfer tax information shown on the deeds that record at close of escrow and are published five to eight weeks after such recording. This information is obtained from public county records and is provided to us by California REsource. Neither Cal REsource nor this publication are liable for errors or omissions.

LAFAYETTE

1693 Pleasant Hill Road, \$1,350,000, 3 Bdrms, 2192 SqFt, 1959 YrBl, 1-25-18

MORAGA

2 Baltusrol Street, \$682,500, 2 Bdrms, 1552 SqFt, 1979 YrBl, 1-17-18

1157 Larch Avenue, \$1,400,000, 4 Bdrms, 1829 SqFt, 1963 YrBl, 1-17-18;

Previous Sale: \$975,000, 09-27-17

25 Mayfield Place, \$1,200,000, 4 Bdrms, 2462 SqFt, 1965 YrBl, 1-25-18;

Previous Sale: \$710,000, 02-03-03

ORINDA

21 Bigleaf Road, \$1,890,000, 4 Bdrms, 3912 SqFt, 2015 YrBl, 1-26-18;

Previous Sale: \$619,000, 11-22-13

128 Glorietta Boulevard, \$950,000, 3 Bdrms, 2076 SqFt, 1946 YrBl, 1-23-18

170 Glorietta Boulevard, \$900,000, 3 Bdrms, 2451 SqFt, 1953 YrBl, 1-22-18

108 Lucille Way, \$1,229,000, 4 Bdrms, 2758 SqFt, 1985 YrBl, 1-19-18;

Previous Sale: \$431,000, 09-06-96

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Piping problems

... continued from page D1



Leapfrog Plumbing technician Austin Barber inspects the newly installed copper pipes under a house.

Photos Andy Scheck

All of these materials have different lifespans, different strengths and weaknesses, different handling rules, different health questions, different uses, and different costs.

Knowing whether or not a pipe repair or replacement is needed, and how much is a reasonable cost, is not always easy, especially for a young family with the stresses of a house purchase and a new baby all at the same time.

Lafayette residents Steven and Becky Barnstetter had to replace their home's sewer line four years ago. As with many loans, the bank required repairs to protect their investment, but there was an unpleasant surprise on top of that expectation: "In order to get the loan we had to spend about \$56,000 to lift the house, but a city

inspector said the sewer also needed to be replaced," Steven Barnstetter said. "We had it inspected, but it didn't have separations or holes." The pipe had been checked with a borescope (a camera that is sent through the interior of a pipe).

The inspector had come to check on legitimate repairs that the Barnstetters had permits for, and that's when he spotted a waste pipe extension that the original homeowner had jerry-rigged for an additional bathroom without permits. Both Barnstetters recall the man saying he was a city of Lafayette inspector. "He told us that the city of Lafayette would come and pour concrete down it if we didn't get it fixed, so we'd never be able to use it!" said Becky. Alarmed, she ran to apply for permits.

... continued on page D6





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REAL ESTATE



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36 LAS VEGAS, ORINDA

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40 ACACIA DRIVE, ORINDA

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COMING SOON IN ORINDAWOODS

533 THE GLADE, ORINDA

Approx 2,175 sq ft, 3 bed/2 bath

Wonderful one-level Orindawoods home with vaulted ceilings, hardwood floors, open floor plan and great proximity to BART and town.



Piping problems

... continued from page D4



New copper piping on top and old pipes below.

Photos Andy Scheck

Aziz Aineb, construction inspector in the Engineering Department for the city of Lafayette, knew of no inspector by the name written on the document left with the Barnstetters. "I've been here 14 years, and I don't recall anyone by that name," he said. "We usually don't tell people anything about the sewer. There is only one inspector for the city, and that is me. We don't get involved with Sanitary District decisions."

Chris Carpenter of Central Contra Costa Sanitary District said it's unusual for them to mandate replacement. "The very few times we take that opportunity is if it's an old clay pipe, and it's usually because we've inspected it with a borescope and there is obvious damage, like roots intruding. Within foundational areas, Contra Costa County may take jurisdiction over plumbing. That's a third agency. Regional maps appear to show that property within the city of Lafayette, but it's near the border and sometimes it's hard to know who holds jurisdiction."

Conrad Fromm of the Contra Costa County Building Inspections Department said, "That's not our jurisdiction, more than two feet outside the house. It belongs to the Contra Costa Sanitary District. We do contract inspectors out to Lafayette and other towns. The only thing I can think of for an inspector saying that, is that it was undersized for the extra usage that was added. I hate to say it, I can't speak to this particular case because it was so long ago, but inspectors are supposed to have customer service skills. Sometimes, they don't give very good explanations because they assume the service that will do the work will understand. If this were today, I could refer it to a supervisor to question the inspector about it."

The replacement cost an additional \$16,000. It extended around the house and under the driveway, but stopped short of going beneath the street to connect with



The new copper pipe is connected to the water main outside the house.

the main line. "The workers who did it said they could see little wrong with it aside from a small portion close to the house, so it was hard for us to know if it really was needed, or if we were being forced into it for someone else's profit," said Steven Barnstetter.

Regardless of the reasons for replacement, there may have been improprieties in the way the Barnstetters were treated, and the experience left them shaken.

Steven wishes that explanations had been more forthcoming. "Courtesy should not be hard to come by. Someone should answer the phone and make it easy for people with the right information. How hard can it be? The one person who came out to check for the city was quite rude. Horrible. 'You have to do this,' he said. He didn't smile, he wasn't on time, and he was very peremptory and dismissive."

Maurice Williams of LeapFrog Plumbing said, "The rules change from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. Often we don't know what changes are made to rules until we pull a permit. Even though homeowners are responsible for maintenance, about three feet outside the house the district owns the line, and they can dictate replacement before we even start a job. Before a home is finalized, they have the authority to mandate replacement. It could be a preemptive decision."

For people faced with a similar situation, "At first, get two other opinions. Get someone who is on your side at the beginning to explain pros and cons," said Steven Barnstetter.

Make sure to take careful notes as situations evolve. If interactions are less than professional, the agencies involved have people who are concerned about your experience with the agents representing them.



MELANIE SNOW PRESENTS: HOMES IN ORINDA



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Feng Shui

Restful and romantic Feng Shui

By Michele Duffy



The headboard and luxurious bedding with little red accents amps up the romance and a carpet softens the luxury and compliments the de rigueur pairs of bedside tables and reading lights in this newly redesigned Orinda master bedroom.

Photos provided

While love should fill every day and every moment of our lives – not just on the annual special occasions – these times can pointedly serve as a useful reminder to refresh and recharge certain areas of our lives and homes for the better. The feng shui of the master bedroom is a logical and fun place to get focused after Valentine's Day, so here are several key tips to make the spot where we spend restful and romantic time a cozy place you will love every day.

First, whether you are in a relationship or not, loving yourself is the first relationship of importance and allowing yourself to have a master bedroom of your dreams creates a good starting point. So if you are tired of the bedding, want to freshen up the space with new color, or if the art doesn't promote a restful or romantic vibe, then consider how much time you spend there, and give yourself the gift of an upgrade. Remember, if you are interested in attracting someone into your life, you must make room for them energetically as well, so no single nightstands or lonely art work. Instead, try to balance out the setting by flanking the master bed with a pair of bedside tables with 100-watt lighting that allows for reading in bed,

and add uplifting romantic art images. Remember to discard your old mattress you shared with your ex if you are serious about meeting someone new.

If you are already in a relationship, all of the above still applies and the remaking of your bedroom with your partner can be another way to collaborate intimately, to stoke the fires of passion and deepen your connection from within your own home.

Second, stand back and stop for a minute and contemplate whether you love the color on your master bedroom walls and in the master bedroom bath. Is your bedding bland and boring or do the colors inspire rest and romance? Are the color of the drapes or window blinds neutral, allowing for as much natural light to pour in while still allowing the privacy that window treatments are designed to offer? Master bedrooms should not have active yang or active wall colors like red, bright yellow or orange. The master bedroom walls should encourage relaxation and rest and so the colors you choose should be zen-like, yin and on the lighter side with respect to the hue. If you want a darker wall for drama try painting the wall behind the bed that you don't actually see while you are in bed.

Third, from a feng shui perspective, the master bed is the single most important piece of furniture in the entire house. Why? Think about how much time we all spend in our beds, sleeping there eight or nine hours a night at least. Does your bed have a proper bed frame with a soft upholstered or wooden headboard? Feng Shui frowns on metal beds especially the ones with metal bars or slats which are uncomfortable to lean against and where your head can get stuck. They energetically resemble being behind bars while you are in your bed, which is not what you are going for in the sacred spot that crowns romance and rest. Is your mattress begging for retirement? If you are budget minded and need both a new sofa and a new bed, guess which comes first?

... continued on page D10



Surround yourself with Romantic art, which can be photos of you and your partner or whatever feels juicy to you, like this print.

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Feng Shui

Restful and romantic Feng Shui

... continued from page D8

The bed! Getting a solid night's sleep is a gift you can give one another that will keep giving for years to come. There's really no reason to sleep on an uncomfortable mattress. Do you love your bedding and comforter or quilt, or have you just been putting up with it? Fresh new options and ideas bound, so focus on the bed for excellent returns. Placing your intention first on the bed will deliver long lasting positive results and getting it right is not a luxury, it is a necessity. The same is true of the bed frame. If you don't have one, it should be a priority to lift the bed off the floor into a frame with a headboard at least. You will feel more secure and get a more restful sleep. Try not to store anything under your bed either.

Energetically place your bed securely in the "commanding position" which is diagonal from the



Surround yourself with nature inspired art which can also resemble romance like photos or prints of flowers that represent love.



Candles create a romantic atmosphere perfect for the master bedroom.

bedroom door and facing the door but not directly in line with the door. Place your bed against a solid wall as well, and not in front of windows.

If your master bedroom layout doesn't allow for bed placement in the commanding position due to a bath door, closets or windows, don't fret, simply place the bed in the best available spot and apply other Feng Shui tips to create a restful retreat.

Finally, surround yourself with the personalized luxury that your budget allows including sumptuous bedding, inspirational images that inspire romance or remind you of the bond with your partner, like photos of you together and also peaceful nature inspired images.

Add lavender essential oil diffusers or soy candles so fragrance wafts in the air, and add carpets, rugs and pillows so softness and rejuvenation are paramount. Any clutter should automatically find a home elsewhere or be donated or discarded, and as you settle into your fresh new re-dux space are you feeling more connected to nourishing yourself and the second most important relationship you have with your partner?

Please let me know how my tips inspired you to create a zen-like master bedroom that soundly harmonizes our very basic human need need for love, sleep, and romance.

WEALTH & PROSPERITY XUN Wood Southeast Purple	FAME & REPUTATION Li Fire South Red Summer	RELATIONSHIPS Kun Earth Southwest Pink
FAMILY ZHEN Wood East Green Spring	HEALTH TAI JI Earth Center Orange, Yellow Brown	JOY & COMPLETION DUI Metal West White Autumn
KNOWLEDGE & SELF-CULTIVATION GEN Earth Northeast Blue	CAREER & OPPORTUNITIES KAN Water North Black & Dark Blue Winter	HELPFUL PEOPLE & TRAVEL QIAN Metal Northeast Grey

The Bagua Map: Front Door



Michele Duffy, BTB M.F.S. is an Orinda resident who, since 1999, enjoys creating "Space as Medicine" Feng Shui one space at a time, as well as hiking in nature, cooking, and spending time with her family; Canyon Ranch Feng Shui Master, International Feng Shui Guild (IFSG) Red Ribbon Professional. To schedule a professional 2018 Feng Shui Consultation, contact Michele at (520) 647-4887 or send an email to spaceharmony@gmail.com.

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Just listed

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Springtime is swarm season for honeybees

Help the honeybee by reporting swarms to the Mt. Diablo Beekeepers Association

Submitted by Janet Kaidantzis

Swarming is when thousands of honeybees fly together in search of a new home. Swarming is a natural part of the honeybee lifecycle in spring and summer. Swarms fill the sky with a buzzing, swirling cloud of honeybees. Look up! A swarm is an amazing sight.

The swarm of bees will find a place to land—in a tree or on a fence or some other temporary gathering place. They form a cluster that looks like a big ball of bees. They will stay there for a few hours or a few days until they find a permanent home. Swarms are not dangerous if left alone. If you see a swarm that has landed near the ground, call a beekeeper. A beekeeper will rescue the swarm and find it a good home.

Report swarms to the Mount Diablo Beekeepers Association. MDBA volunteers remove swarms, which are prized by beekeepers for their healthy genetics. Help save a swarm, and you will help the honeybee and the environment.

How to find a swarm collector:

Go to www.diablobees.org
Click on “Report a Swarm” at the top of the page.

Click on the map or download the “Swarm Removal List” to find a volunteer in your area.

Call the volunteer and be ready to answer some questions about what you see.

The MDBA requests a \$50 donation for collecting a swarm. These funds support programs to educate the public about honeybees and the vital role they play in our environment.



A honeybee swarm lands temporary on a branch until a new home is found.

Digging Deep with Cynthia Brian

And the winner is...

By Cynthia Brian

"People are always in good company when they are doing what they really enjoy." ~Samuel Butler



Award winners in the garden world, Black-Eyed Susan and 2018 Coreopsis and Daisies.

Photos Cynthia Brian



The bright fluorescent pink of Chinese Fringe.



Cut a branch from a gorgeous magnolia to highlight the end of winter.

In the first three months of the year, we get to be bystanders at numerous red carpet events. Hello awards season! The Golden Globes, People's Choice, Screen Actors Guild Awards, the Grammy's, and the Oscars are all highlights. Add the Olympics to this year's lineup and we have a full roster of gold, silver and bronze. Over the years I've been privileged to enjoy my share of walking the red carpet in the entertainment industry, and in the plant world, we have our winners, too.

The Perennial Plant Association awarded *Allium Milenium* the plant of the year. It boasts glossy green leaves with a profusion of large, rosy-purple clusters of flowers that bloom in mid-summer. As butterfly magnets, alliums are beautiful as well as being deer and rabbit resistant. The Perennial Plant of the Year program showcases outstanding perennials that grow in a variety of climates, are disease free, and are low maintenance. A few of the past winners over the years have included lavender, which deer and rabbits won't eat as well as dianthus, phlox, black-eyed Susan (*rudbeckia*), *echinacea*, *salvia*, *catmint*, *sage* and *coreopsis*.

The National Garden Bureau also designates award winners annually. For 2018, the winning bulb is the tulip,

the vegetable is the beet, the perennial is the coreopsis, and the star of containers and hanging baskets is the *Calibrachoa*.

With the unusually warm weather we've experienced this February, gardens have exploded into blooms more than a month earlier than in previous years. With the slightest breeze, the sky rains white petals from pear and plum trees while hillsides and paths are lined with dancing daffodils.

The vivid, paint-box colors of tulips are filling our souls with joy. Part of the lily family and relatives of alliums, tulips comprises 150 species with over 3,000 varieties. Although we plant them in fall after four to six weeks of cooling for spring sprouting, they can be forced to bloom in winter. People often ask me why tulip bulbs need to be refrigerated before planting. The answer is that in their native habitats where winters are colder, they would go dormant allowing for the bulbs to sprout roots while the development of the embryonic leaves and flowers inside the bulb occur. I lived in Holland for 18 months where "tulpen" were the pride of every household, even tough tulips originated in Asia. Did you know that the Netherlands

produce most of the world's annual tulip crop exceeding four billion bulbs annually? Tulip mania (*tulpenmanie*) reached its crescendo in 1637 when the bubble collapsed, and overnight, many rich traders became paupers. One bulb could buy a house on the Amsterdam canal. Folly! According to the Netherlands Flower Bulb Information Center, the United States is the biggest importer of Dutch bulbs to the tune of \$1.3 million in wholesale prices annually. The colors of the tulip have significant meaning: red equals love, purple represents loyalty, and white whispers, "I'm sorry!"

The winning edible of the year is the beet and I am so thrilled as this is probably my favorite of all of the root vegetables. I planted my seeds directly in the soil last spring and am still harvesting. When I thin, I eat the seedlings. Beets like acidic soil and they withstand cooler temperatures before harvest. Colors are typically red, purple, yellow, or red with white ring stripes. They are consumed in salads, soups, and pickled. Rich in fiber, potassium, calcium, folic acid, and phosphorus, high in fiber, vitamin A and C, beets have more iron than most other vegetables.

... continued on page D14

Digging Deep with Cynthia Brian

And the winner is...

... continued from page D13

The red color comes from the antioxidant betalain, an excellent source of color pigment for natural dyes and coloring agents.

The beauty, resilience, and popularity of coreopsis was a natural fit for the National Garden Bureau to add this glorious flower to its red carpet lineup. In the language of flowers, coreopsis means “always cheerful,” and these delightful natives of the Americas live up to this designation. Equally, at home in naturalized prairie settings or manicured landscapes, coreopsis provides a lovely sunny presence wherever they make their home. Although typically seen in colors of yellow and gold, many species also contain red, bronze and burgundy colors and have been commonly used as dyes in native fabrics. Before the introduction of coffee to America, Native Americans boiled the flowers into a warming tea.

The newest star in the garden lineup is calibrachoa, with its 28 different varieties. A relative of the petunia, (although now recognized as it's own genus) calibrachoa hit the marketplace arriving from Brazil via Japan via Europe in the 1980s but were considered difficult to cultivate. They are beautiful plants that do well in containers and hanging baskets and this specialized treatment has turned out to be their niche market. They aren't really mini petunias, yet they are drought tolerant. Plant in well-drained acidic soil and provide six hours of direct sunlight per day. You will be rewarded with brilliant colors, fascinating streaks and stripes, eye-catching stars, and patterns that resemble the strokes of a brush. Your patio will be a floral artwork with calibrachoa in the honored lineup.

With all of these award winners, my supreme favorite still lies with the exquisite lotus flowers that I enjoyed in Southeast Asia. The deep, rich colors, their versatile expressions, I am deeply, madly in love with lotus. Alas, I can't grow it here in my backyard pond.

Speaking of winners, gigantic congratulations to Sal and Susan Captain of Captain Vineyards for being honored as the Moraga Business Persons of the Year! I am personally thrilled to see two stewards of the earth, farmers, gardeners, wine makers, and all around great individuals inducted into this hall of fame. Bravo!

Savor a respite in your landscape for the next few weeks before I offer you a plethora of chores that need attention. Enjoy your own company.

Keep doing what you love and you'll be a winner too. Roll out the red carpet for your favorite plants and get ready for a rowdy and rousing spring.

Happy Gardening and Happy Growing!



The National Garden Bureau's Award Winner calibrachoa callie burgundy in a hanging basket.



Oranges in the forefront and flowering quince in the back of the garden.



Congratulations to Sal and Susan Captain honored as Moraga's Business Persons of the Year.



Cynthia Brian walks the Red Carpet as one of the stars of the film "Tapping the Source."

Cynthia Brian, The Goddess Gardener, raised in the vineyards of Napa County, is a New York Times best selling author, actor, radio personality, speaker, media and writing coach as well as the Founder and Executive Director of Be the Star You Are!® 501 c3. Tune into Cynthia's Radio show and order her books at www.StarStyleRadio.com.

Her new book, Growing with the Goddess Gardener, is available at www.cynthiabrian.com/online-store.

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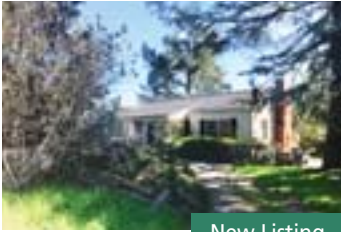
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ORINDA



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ORINDA



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99 Tiger Tail Court

Elegant Orinda Hills 4715 sqft home with beautiful valley views from all rooms. An open design concept with great separation of space.

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ORINDA

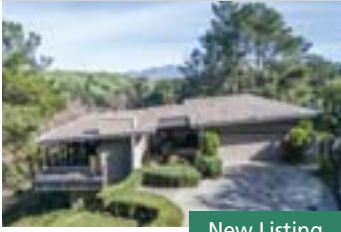


10 Winding Lane

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MORAGA



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MORAGA



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MORAGA

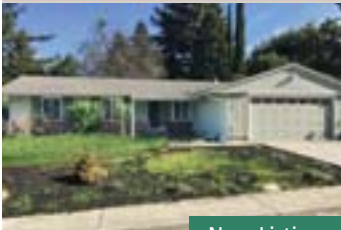


23 Indian Wells Street

Moraga Country Club Bruzzone built Wimbledon Expanded. 4 Bedrooms/ 3 Bathrooms/ 3122 SqFt. Top-Rated Schools!

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LAFAYETTE



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ALBANY



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ROSSMOOR



1840 Tice Creek Drive, #2432

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