

## Five Moraga Odyssey of the Mind teams advance to state championships

Submitted by Rich Render



Moraga Rotary's Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School eighth-grade Odyssey of the Mind team advances to the state championship. From left: Madison Lee, Amrita Malhotra, Jacqui Huebner, Caroline Botsford, Olivia House, Daniel Granicher, and Marshall Franklin. Photo provided

Five Moraga Rotary Odyssey of the Mind teams will advance to the state championship competition at UC Riverside after placing first or second in their group at the March 3 San Francisco regional competitions. These teams, out of the 14 teams sponsored by Moraga Rotary Club, were part of the 102 teams competing overall. Moraga Rotary had two teams in grades K-2, three teams in grades 3-5, seven teams in grades 6-8, plus two Campolindo High School teams. The two Campolindo teams advanced to the state championship.

Odyssey of the Mind is an international creative problem-solving program that engages students in their learning by allowing their knowledge and ideas to come to life in an exciting, productive environment. Participants build self-confidence, develop life skills, create new friendships, and are able to recognize and explore their true potential in this creative and competitive program.

Moraga Rotary began sponsoring the Moraga Odyssey of the Mind teams in 2005, and have continued the tradition for 12 years. Every year, many Moraga teams go on to the state championships, and at least one team goes to the world championships held in the Mid-West in June.

First-time coach Irene Jai of a new grade 3-5 team said, "None of us knew what to expect on competition day at Concord High School. Walking through the school hallways, it was thrilling and impressive to see all the unique backdrops, props, costumes and makeup. We watched an entertaining classmates' performance on the Mockumentary Problem, where they recapped at the end with an original rap song. Our problem was the Structure Performance Problem, where you construct a flimsy balsa wood structure that weighs no more than 15 grams, and compete to hold the most weight before collapsing. We were amazed by the Moraga team A whose structure held 755 pounds,

winning first place. Our team did not advance to state, but success was defined by surpassing all our expectations, improving by leaps and bounds, and working out team conflicts respectfully."

"What I found to be most successful was the community bonding in our Moraga Rotary teams. The anchors are Reena Malhotra and her son Aman who is the Student Leader for Rotary. They supported each team by sharing valuable information from the get go and stopping by each performance to cheer for the Moraga teams. Whether your child likes to perform, build, design, draw, write, laugh, or entertain, Odyssey of the Mind is a boundless platform for solving problems using their own ideas."

Coach Cynthia Granicher of an eighth-grade team said, "The competition day was filled with nervousness and excitement and literal thunderstorms with rain and hail, but nothing could deter our team. They were all positive and supportive and continued to think of ideas to improve their performance. Two of the favorite comments from the judges were on ideas that the team came up with in the car on the way to the tournament. When their team name was called for the first place spot, the team went wild and the parents were happily shocked. It was an excellent day with all parents in attendance to lend their support and the team leaving with an immense feeling of satisfaction and accomplishment for the work and time they put into their performance. This is our second time in the past three years advancing to the state competition, and we are hoping we can make it to the world competition this time."

Several other Lamorinda teams from Orinda Rotary, Orinda Intermediate School, Burton Valley, Lafayette and Glorietta elementary schools also advanced to the state competition.

## CCI dogs visit Miramonte students

By Cathy Dausman



Photos Cathy Dausman

Miramonte High School seniors Sophie Bubrick and Emilie Carrington recently introduced three beautiful girls – and their human partners – to Anthony Ohlson's special needs class.

Bubrick and Carrington oversee a therapy dog program at Miramonte, which now includes bringing Canine Companions for Independence volunteers and their dogs into Ohlson's class. They receive community credit for the program and are working to ensure it continues after they graduate.

Fundraising efforts last month on campus raised \$330 for the nonprofit CCI.

Two hearing assistance "girls" – a golden/Lab mix named Isabelle, and her kennelmate and dog friend Banni, a yellow Labrador – were escorted by owners Penny Hansen and Janet Levey. The third was a black Labrador and new mama dog named Maisy. Maisy is a breeder dog for CCI; she

whelped her first litter in January, said owner Kenny Tuckerman.

Hansen and Levey are hearing impaired; Hansen explained their type of assistance dog tends to be more lively. That much was quickly apparent, as Isabelle befriended everyone eating lunch and puzzled over tennis balls seemingly stuck under table legs.

Banni was happy being asked to greet students by visiting, paws up onto their laps, or doling out wet, sloppy kisses.

Carrington assured her visitors the students are super excited when the dogs visit.

"It's good to see them smile and interact," Ohlson agreed. Student reaction ranged from "hello doggy!" to body language proclaiming "get her out of my space!"

Hansen and Levey demonstrated how the dogs alert their owners to ringing doorbells, and explained the dogs are also trained to wake their humans up when a smoke alarm triggers. "They give you a sense of security," Levey says.

Professional Canine Companions instructors teach dogs to master over 40 commands during the six to nine months the dogs spend at CCI's Santa Rosa headquarters. Dog graduates become either service dogs, hearing dogs, facility dogs or skilled companion dogs and are matched with adults or children with special needs.

The resulting CCI dog graduate is said to be valued at approximately \$50,000, Hansen says, although some students in Ohlson's class might simply call each dog's presence priceless.

Canine Companions for Independence is a nonprofit organization founded in 1975 which enhances the lives of people with disabilities by providing highly trained assistance dogs and ongoing support to ensure quality partnerships. For details, visit [www.cci.org](http://www.cci.org).



## Teen Opinion

### The perfect li(f)e

By Lauren Kim

We sit in our homes, our charming little castles and look down onto the problems of our community. Most of the time, we choose to look away and ignore the victims on the ground. This is the colossal flaw in our world. We sit in our perfect little homes, with our perfect family, and our perfect life with our heads buried in the sand. We hope, and we pray that something will happen, but never take action. We shut our eyes and close our ears and hope that this situation will blow over. It's a beautiful lie that everyone's living.

The lie that things will magically get better, that world peace will just happen, and bullying will somehow stop.

This superficial statement that hangs over our heads and blinds us from the real truth. And what created this shiny, beautiful lie? Society. Our society creates a world in which we are forced to keep our heads in the sand, and blindly ignore the problems that lie at our feet.

The fine print in our society dictates grotesque rules to be accepted, or deemed normal. Anyone who doesn't follow these rules is cast out, like defective toys. I used to follow these rules too. I would keep my head down in fear of being like the people that were being bullied everyday. I somewhat still do. I look at the people ridiculed at my school and I turn my head away sometimes in fear of standing out, and fearing what seemed different.

Our fellow human beings that we assume abnormal are persecuted every day because of their skin color, race, sexuality, gender, disability or religion. They go out into the world and are ridiculed by the "ordinary" people who fear anything different. They abhor it because it contrasts and challenges their own standards. The anomalous people are the victims of society, laid out for the per-

secutors to snicker and point at. The only solution to this crude knockoff we call society is the involvement of bystanders.

The bystanders who ignore the spiteful remarks, the horrifying incidents and think "at least it's not me" are the ones who can do the most. But the bystanders can choose to help those victims, to try and aid them. The spectators who ignore the tormented could at least step up and speak for the ones who have no voice. They can rebel against the tormentors that rule with their superficial power, reconstructing this prison that we call society. But the simplest thing they could do, is to say plain, comforting words to heal the wounds that have been ripped open by the tormentors.

The smallest act of humanity could save someone's life. It would only take some empathy, or decent manners, or even a small smile to help the victims that have been brutalized by our artificial society. The famed writer George Orwell (Eric Blair) said "Being in a minority, even in a minority of one, did not make you mad. There was truth, and there was untruth, and if you clung to the truth even against the whole world, you were not mad."

We shut the doors and leave the radio blaring to keep ourselves in this beautiful, nurturing lie. We do this because we cannot handle the ugly truth of the flawed world we live in. The vile, frightful truth that our fellow human beings are being tormented daily because we look the other way.

Will you keep believing in the deception of our daily lives?

Lauren Kim is a freshman at Acalan High School. She loves Batman and her dog, and enjoys reading and writing. Her favorite book is "Murder on the Orient Express" and her favorite movie is "Dunkirk."

## In Memory

### Kitty Ann Tate-Lipscomb-Miller



Kitty Ann Tate-Lipscomb-Miller passed away peacefully at 40 years of age on Feb. 20, 2018. Survived by her beloved husband, Alex Miller, a longtime resident of Orinda who brought his bride here only three years ago from Sacramento. Kitty leaves behind her mother Sharron Lineberry, father Timothy Lipscomb and her brother Kenneth Lipscomb. She will be missed by her family and many friends.

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](mailto:storydesk@lamorindaweekly.com) with the subject header In Service to the Community.

## Share Your Celebrations and Remembrances

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