

# THT offers special event with flavorful food - and a fun behind-the-scenes tour

By Sophie Braccini



Suzie Shepard, left, and Lauren McCabe Herpich get ready for a food adventure at Town Hall Theatre.

Town Hall Theatre in Lafayette will become the conduit between Jane Austen and food this month when curious patrons explore how Jane Austen's "Sense and Sensibility" is brought to life by the local theater's team, while

tasting local delicious food along the way. The unique two-hour event will also take participants back to the early 20th century, 100 years after "Sense and Sensibility" was written, when Town Hall was first built, becoming the first meet-

ing place in the budding enclave.

The idea to bring Local Food Adventures to Town Hall Theatre was sparked from a conversation between Lafayette entrepreneur Lauren McCabe Herpich and THT's Suzie Shepard. Herpich, a

Lafayette resident, started leading food tours four years ago, first in Rockridge, then in different Oakland and Berkeley neighborhoods, and now in Lafayette. Her desire is to enhance people's curiosity about their communities by indulging in their sense of taste. Shepard saw an opportunity to celebrate the creativity of women, focusing on writer Jane Austen, theater director Susan Evans, restaurant manager Laura Magu of Rêve Bistro, entrepreneurs Linda Hofmeister and Susan Rossi of Hofssi chocolate, and more.

The result is an eclectic, entertaining, educational and delicious evening that will take participants through the history of THT, from its erection in 1914 as a town hall for community gatherings to becoming a theater in 1947, and its importance today. After indulging in different foods by Rêve Bistro and drinks by the Lamorinda Wine Growers Association, that evening's explorers will go backstage to see some of the secret ingredients behind THT's next main stage production, "Sense and Sensibility."

Shepard says that Managing Director Dennis Markam was

somewhat apprehensive at first about letting prospective future audience members in on some of the secrets of a coming production. Creating a show, and fabricating the illusion of reality on stage for a few hours, requires a lot of technique and know-how. People will be able to access the mechanical room and explore some of the machinery, talk to the costume designer and learn the tricks used to create realistic costumes that sometimes have to come off and on very quickly. They will also engage in a conversation with Susan Evans, THT's artistic director who will direct this last show of the season, and learn about the vision of the novel she is bringing to the stage.

Other goodies will be offered along the way such as learning the proper way to taste authentic extra virgin olive oils and balsamic vinegar flavors inspired by Jane Austen's literary work.

The April 14 tour is unique and limited to 24 guests. Tickets are \$40 for subscribers and \$45 for non-subscribers, and are available through the Box Office at (925) 283-1557 or online at [www.townhalltheatre.com/com-engagement/](http://www.townhalltheatre.com/com-engagement/).

# 'Impressionism Times 2' at the Moraga Art Gallery

By Sophie Braccini



Jacqueline Proulx with her son and one of her grandsons on the exhibition's opening day

Photos Sophie Braccini

The Moraga Art Gallery always showcases interesting local artists, and once in a while, offers the unexpected pleasure of an international discovery. This is the case with the current exhibition, "Impressionism Times 2," which

showcases local artist of French-Canadian origin Jacqueline Proulx, along with a friend from her past, internationally recognized Canadian artist Rita Rodrigue, for their first Bay Area exhibition.

When Proulx and Rodrigue

were in college in Ottawa together, one of their most influential professors introduced them to impressionism. Both young women were touched at a deep level with how impressionism represents reality by focusing more on transmitting the feeling a specific scene is evoking than on its actual physical form. Proulx with her ceramics and Rodrigue with her paintings embarked on that road during the first steps of their artistic development.

Today, years later, the two friends are in what Proulx call the "Times 2" of their artistic expression, and what they are presenting at the Moraga gallery is the different products that started to grow in close proximity.

Proulx lived most of her life in Québec, and did not become a full-time artist until she took early retirement. She built her first ceramist studio in her Montréal condo, before purchasing a home on the beach on the Ile d'Orléans where the artistic community flourishes. When her son moved to California, Proulx started spending six months of the year here, until she became a grandmother and decided to settle in the East Bay for good. She says she found at the Moraga Art Gallery an open, friendly and supportive community of artists where she feels at home.

She is now delighted to practice her art at the Red Ox Clay Studio in Concord where she can work with a gas kiln that allows

for experimentation at very high temperatures. What she presents at the Moraga Gallery are delicately decorated and evocative ceramic pieces that are true to her love of impressionism. She recalls a recent trip to Monet's house in Giverny. The extraordinary feeling of evanescent yet eternal beauty coming from nature that she felt there is what she impresses on the clay, and shares with others.

That path down Giverny's alleys is not exactly that of Rodrigue. Earlier year's work of the renowned artist where still imbued with impressionism, but her later work as presented at the gallery has evolved toward abstraction.

Rodrigue is one of those few artists who have been able to live off their art from the start. She has a solid group of followers-collectors all over the world who appreciate and invest in her creations. The pieces presented at the gallery are striking and evocative mixed media conceptions. Each piece evokes a 3D totem, presenting different layers of photography, drawings, and plastic material. The visual effect plays with reflections, drawing the eye of spectators from a general vision of the piece to exploring the details of the intricate creation. Rodrigue says of her works that the image is transformed from the second to the third dimension - from the temporal to the atemporal.

Rodrigue has been featured



Painting by Rita Rodrigue

in solo and collective exhibitions numerous times in Canada, and abroad at the Museum of Modern Art in Seoul, South Korea, at the Fremantle Museum Arts Centre in Australia, and at the Galerie Art-Tournelle in Paris, France, as well as the Gallery La Aduana in Baranquilla, Colombia.

The show, which also includes the gallery's 13 member artists and several guest artists, runs until June 2. The gallery is located in the Rheem Shopping Center, at 522 Center Street, Moraga. Its hours are Wednesday through Sunday from noon to 5 p.m. For more information, visit [www.moragaartgallery.com](http://www.moragaartgallery.com).

# Local moms run for a good cause

Submitted by Laura Liu and Jamiel Liu



Front, from left: Jennifer Xu, Hanbin Liu, Mengzhi Hu, Peiyong Lo, Jin Yang, and Lan Yu; back: Juan Chen-Olsen, Liyan Hou, Ye Liu, Alice Zhang, Helen Li, Yan Heim, and Ada Ling. Photo provided

A group of 13 Lamorinda moms participated in the March 25 Oakland Running Festival. This time, however, it was for good reason.

It began when Yan Heim proposed the idea to two friends, Helen Li and Ye Liu, about fundraising for CALICO, the non-profit Child Abuse, Listening,

Interviewing, and Coordination center dealing with victims of child abuse, located in San Leandro (of which Heim is a board member). Li and Liu were

touched by Heim's passion for the abused children and decided that they wanted to do something to help.

Since all three women belonged to a local fitness group, they decided to form a running team and participate in the festival. Their goal? Raise \$5,000 for CALICO. They made an announcement through social media and the responses the trio received were overwhelming. Two weeks from the day of the race, they had already reached their initial goal of \$5,000. People from the local community, their friends and colleagues in both the States and China, poured out their support through pledges and donations. As the captain of the team, Liu decided to raise the goal to \$8,000, an amount surpassed soon after. The goal was then raised again to \$10,000. Just before day of the race, they reached their goal. However, it didn't stop there: on the day of the race, just

over \$12,500 had been raised.

During the endeavor, seven other women joined the team. Soon after, three more women joined the team. Collectively, they reached out to about 4,000 people. They participated in all the events: a few of them ran the 5K, others a half marathon, and four in the full marathon relay. One of the moms, Alice Zhang, even got her teenage son to volunteer for CALICO on the day of event.

According to Liu, "All of us were determined to run with the best of our abilities because we believe people will respond better when you put forth your best effort." Running with a cause is such a rewarding experience for us, like what another team member, who is the Champion of this fund raising effort, Juan Chen-Olsen said, "You are not just running to challenge yourself, but you are running to shed light into another's life! We are all together."