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Letters to the Editor

Poor response to smoke conditions

Our region was recently choked by heavy wildfire smoke for nearly two weeks. During this period, the level of fine particulate air pollution ranged from unhealthy to hazardous. At the beginning as the smoke pushed in, there was little alert in the media or through government agencies. Through the ensuing days there was inadequate and sometimes misleading advice about how we should protect ourselves. The most common and sometimes only advice was to stay inside, as if that alone would protect us. As the days past there were some stories in the news about wearing N95 masks and avoiding physical activity but little else. Conditions this hazardous should have triggered serious public alerts to the eight million people exposed. Each day the media should have emphasized both the short and long term adverse health effects from breathing high levels of fine and ultrafine particulates. Advice about protecting ourselves should have explained that without adequate filtering, inside air quality will soon become as bad as outside condition. Proper use of HVAC system filtering, air purifiers, and auto cabin filtering should have been prominent topics in the media. Advice about respirators should have emphasized their use wherever harmful air quality existed, including not just outside spaces but also in most inside areas. And because engaging in vigorous physical activity dramatically increases the volume of particulates taken into our lungs and bloodstream, we should have been advised to halt all athletic and other strenuous outside and indoor activities. According to the EPA the San Francisco Bay Region is one of the worst regions in the US for annual average fine particulate matter (PM2.5) air pollution. Wildfires are making what is already an unhealthy situation even more serious. Not only should the news media be more proactive about informing all of us of how to protect ourselves from fine particulates, we also need local, State, and Federal action to both alert us when hazardous conditions exist and to adopt policies that will reduce our exposure.

James Leach
Lafayette

Bauer-Kahan headline

I'm a mom (among other things), and I was dismayed by the Dec. 12th headline announcing Rebecca Bauer-Kahan's Assembly win, which read, "Orinda mom takes over District 16 California Assembly seat." I will acknowledge that headline writing is tougher than it looks. In this case, the editor had to define Rebecca Bauer Kahan using two (maybe three) words. "Orinda [something]" was an obvious choice, but why, Orinda Mom? Why not, Orinda Attorney? Or, Orinda Environmentalist? Or, Orinda Community Leader? All of these phrases are used by RBK in describing herself on her website. She lists mother... last. It comes down to this: Is "Mom" the one word that most accurately and fully describes who RBK is, in the context of winning a major (and extremely close) political race at the state level? I don't think so. Being a mom is important and noteworthy, and it probably accounts for some of RBK's appeal, especially to other moms. But it's not what got her elected. I would venture to say that to most voters, her childbearing status was rather secondary to her experience as an accomplished attorney, respected educator, and inspiring community leader and activist. It's important to note, also, that I don't think Steve Glazer was ever referred to as an "Orinda Dad" when he won the Senate Race. There's certainly nothing wrong with being a parent, but we have to ask ourselves: Why are women so frequently described by their domestic roles, and not by their other accomplishments?

Miriam Storch
Orinda

Thank you Dave Trotter

I want to thank Dave Trotter for his many years of service to the Town of Moraga. I moved here 10 years ago and needed to work with the Council on an issue and Dave returned my call immediately and most importantly listened to me. In the preceding years when issues came up such as the sink hole and Canyon Bridge Dave worked tirelessly along with the rest of the Council and Town staff to come up with solutions. They found optional funding such as Grants to offset the Town out of pocket expenses. I have observed individuals criticize Dave and the Council but have offered no solutions. Dave has always demonstrated the ability to listen and build consensus to develop the right solution. This has benefited all of us in Moraga. It doesn't matter if you agree with an elected official or not, they should to be recognized for their commitment to serve. It should not be forgotten that when they make this commitment it also means they will spend a great deal of time away from their family. Dave and his family have made that commitment to the Town of Moraga for the past eighteen years. Thank You Dave Trotter.

Barry Behr
Moraga

Veterans appreciate support of Lamorinda citizens and businesses

On behalf of all of the members of Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 8063, I would like to express our deep gratitude to the people of Lamorinda for their generosity in supporting our recent Buddy Poppy fundraising effort leading up to Veterans Day. Every penny of the more than four thousand dollars raised will go directly to local veterans in need. It was an outstanding effort by the members of Post 8063 who volunteered to man the poppy distribution sites and collect the donations. In addition, we are grateful to Diablo Foods of Lafayette for allowing us to use their location as a collection point. We mourn the passing of Ed Stokes, their founder and a member of our post. He was an outstanding person and an example to us all. Thanks also to Bank of America of Orinda for providing a very productive site for our efforts. Without the generosity of our local citizens and the support of all participants, we could not have accomplished our mission. We salute you!

Bill Charles
Buddy Poppy Chairperson

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