

# Local arts contest celebrates its 6th year

By Kristi Conner



The LYAS team, from left: Charlie Keohane, Stella Bobrowsky, Isabel Rurka, and John Kalil. Photo Jenn Keohane

Know any middle school students looking for a fun winter break activity? The Lafayette Youth Arts Society has opened its sixth annual middle school competition, open to middle schoolers living or attending school in Lafayette who can enter photographs or writing pieces to a panel of professional judges. The lucky winners will take home fabulous prizes worth hundreds of dollars.

The goal of LYAS is to help bring enjoyment into the arts, and to let middle schoolers explore their creative side. The contest gives students an incentive and a goal while leaving the path to the contest entirely up to the middle schooler to navigate.

Students can choose from a variety of prompts including Vibrancy and Early Morning for photography to “You discover you have a superpower!” and “You found a

time machine. Where do you go first?” for the writing category.

“The contest gave me the confidence to keep writing and faith in my abilities,” past writing winner and current LYAS President Charlie Keohane said. “LYAS has really inspired me to keep writing!”

The LYAS is completely non-profit and was founded in 2012 by high school students Uma Unni and Linnae Johansson. It is fully run by passionate teens who want to help others embrace their creative juices. They rely solely on donations from generous Lafayette individuals and businesses like The Rotary Club, Realtor Lori Legler, and Diablo Rapid Print.

The contest opened Nov. 12 and will accept entries through Jan. 31. If you know a middle schooler who enjoys creative writing or photography, encourage them to enter at [www.lyas.org](http://www.lyas.org).

## Social visits to the vet for dogs

*Fears and anxieties in pets – part 2*

By Mona Miller, DVM

For some dogs, a trip to the veterinary hospital can be a scary experience, and this makes it more challenging to accomplish the goals for the veterinary visit, as I discussed in my previous article (<http://www.lamorindaweekly.com/archive/issue1218/pdf/Fears-and-anxieties-in-pets.pdf>). All vet staff prefer that all dogs enjoy their trip to the hospital, with lots of petting and treats to provide comfort and trust that we are just trying to help them.

Some dogs are innately wired to be more wary, anxious or fearful, just like some humans. For these dogs, exposing them to a veterinary hospital more, rather than less, is an effective strategy to take the “sting” out of the experience. I consider this to be similar to pediatric dentistry visits – those first few years provide a positive experience to the child, so that he or she learns to trust the dentist and allows more involved procedures at a later age with a minimum of fear.

I recommend “social visits” as a way to expose the dog to the vet hospital without a lot of focused attention on the dog. Basically, this is a trip to the vet during which nothing, and certainly nothing scary, happens to the dog – other than the sensory stimulation and some attention from the vet staff that is quiet and positive. I discuss this with clients as soon as I see signs of anxiety or fear, and sometimes that’s as young as a puppy. Think about it – if you’re anxious in general, and you don’t know what is happening around you – that someone is getting close to you (for an exam), and injecting you (with a vaccine), or drawing blood (which also involves close contact and restraint), and these things happen every time you go to a certain place

(vet hospital), you will be afraid every time. And it escalates. Often, my clients tell me that they don’t want to subject their dog any more often than necessary to a vet trip because the dog is so afraid. However, I believe that’s exactly what should happen – increase the number of visits, and to ensure that the “poking and prodding and close contact” occur only a fraction of the time. If trust has been established that these are friendly people who talk quietly and give out treats, then the sensory overload and fear is diminished. If the close contact and injections happen every 10th time, for instance, then the pet is more likely to tolerate it for that particular visit.

Social visits are meant to take the sting out of the vet experience, and desensitize to the overwhelming sights, sounds and smells that a dog experiences when he goes to the vet. Usually, these don’t need to be scheduled, and ideally are best done during the “quiet period” of the vet workday, which for most hospitals is during the lunch break. If your dog has a favorite food, it’s a great idea to bring this with you, to reward your dog for being brave and confident during the social visit. If a dog is particularly nervous about getting on the scale to get weighed, or walking through the doorway into an exam room or into a back hallway, this is a great time for him to practice. When you get to the vet, you simply tell the receptionist that you’re here for a social visit for Freddy. The vet staff will spend a few minutes and approach Freddy, give him a treat, practice with him getting on the scale, etc. Sometimes, when you approach the vet hospital, you’ll be able to tell that this might not be a good day – perhaps there are

too many dogs in the waiting area. Even so, getting Freddy out of the car and walking him by the hospital is still very beneficial – in that he’s experiencing the sights, smells and sounds without the close contact.

Anxiety and fear can be a lifetime problem, and modifying the body’s reaction to perceived fear can take quite a long time. Repetition and habituation are key components for success. From my perspective, doing social visits once weekly for six months is not too much. Having said that, empathizing with other full-time parents and working professionals, I recommend that you pick a frequency that is reasonable and still makes sense for positive conditioning. Perhaps you can commit to twice monthly for six months, or even once monthly for 10 months. Talk to your veterinarian about social visits, and remember to put on the dog’s Thundershirt before going out on a vet hospital social visit!



Dr. Mona Miller lives in Lafayette with her son, two cats and yellow Labrador. She attended UC Berkeley as an undergraduate, and received her DVM from UC Davis. She has been happy to call Lafayette home since 2001. She can be reached via email at [MonaSDVM@aol.com](mailto:MonaSDVM@aol.com). She welcomes questions from readers that may get incorporated into a column.

## Art and coffee



Photo J. Wake

Seven of Lafayette artist Dwight Yassany’s original pen and ink drawings of raptors are on display at Papillon Café in La Fiesta Square through December. Yassany’s work, which features a combination of soft and dark strokes to achieve the realistic renderings of birds and other animals using a very fine-tip radiograph pen and making thousands of small marks on cotton paper, was exhibited at the Haggin Museum in Stockton for two months last spring (see story, <http://www.lamorindaweekly.com/archive/issue1207/Combining-nature-and-spiritual-messages-to-create-award-winning-art.html>). - J. Wake

## Arts shine on in Lamorinda

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While an expanded branding effort launched four years ago increased visible connection of the LAC to events like Mixology and Orinda Idol that she says “just took off as if on a life of their own,” Staelin said there’s room—and need—for more awareness. “We want the community to see us as that hub, but also to know we need their financial support to produce or sponsor these popular community events.”

Perhaps community awareness of the LAC would crescendo by allowing people to hear 12-year-old OIS student June Lim belt out a show-stopping phrase from a musi-

cal or speak in quieter tones about the importance of art in her life. After creating a buzz with a compelling performance during dessert at the luncheon, June said, “My day would be a lot less fun without art. I love performing. I like to belt a lot. I feel strong.” Claiming never to be nervous, confident in her capabilities and eager to master the next song, tap step or portrayal of a character, the young artist imagines infinite possibilities. It’s nearly impossible to think of a greater gift to have given a child than this gift provided in part by the LAC and local community support.

Submit stories and story ideas to [storydesk@lamorindaweekly.com](mailto:storydesk@lamorindaweekly.com)

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