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OUSD joins Sandy Hook Promise

By Sora O'Doherty

Orinda Intermediate School students will benefit from three new programs under a Memorandum of Understanding with Sandy Hook Promise entered into by the Orinda Union School District in December. Sandy Hook Promise is a national nonprofit organization founded and led by several family members whose loved ones were killed at Sandy Hook Elementary School on Dec. 14, 2012. Based in Newtown, Connecticut, the organization's goal is to honor all victims of gun violence by turning their tragedy into a moment of transformation by providing programs and practices that protect children and prevent the senseless, tragic loss of life.

There are three programs that are covered by the MOU: "Say Something," which teaches students how to look for warning signs, signals and threats, especially in social media, from individuals who may want to hurt themselves or others and to say something to a trusted adult to get them help; "Start with Hello," which teaches youth how to be more inclusive and connected to one another. This program works to create connectedness and sustain an inclusive school culture by minimizing social isolation, marginalization and rejection before an individual chooses to hurt themselves or others; and "Signs of Suicide," which trains youth and adults how to identify, intervene and get help

for students who may be depressed or suicidal.

Jen Woodman, dean of student services, says that suicide among students can be contagious, and all school districts were required last year to adopt preventative programs. She said that there have been clusters of student suicides in some districts in the state. "Say Something" will be the first program to be rolled out, intended to align with the federal program in February.

The program will be funded by Sandy Hook Promise and will run for three years, concluding in December 2021.

Behind closed doors, Orinda considers fate of 53 Rheem easement

By Sora O'Doherty

The problem of the easement located at 53 Rheem was considered by the city council in closed session Dec. 18. New Mayor Inga Miller reported that the council remains committed to having the trail reopened and had given directions to staff. She added that the matter would return to the city council, but was unable to give further details of the council's closed door session.

Prior to the council adjourning to the closed session, several residents appealed to the council to take action to reopen the trail across the property, which is said to have for decades allowed local residents to walk their children to Glorietta Elementary School, or just to meet friends. Property owners Kent and Dawnell DeSpain installed a locked gate, closing the trail earlier this year.

Allison and John Banisadr, who used to live on Parkway Court, both attended the meeting to speak and submitted written comments. The Banisadrs said that they had attend-

ed the 2016 planning commission meeting to voice concern about the trail remaining open, and did not object to the DeSpains' plans because they relied upon their public promise to keep the trail open. Having built their home, the DeSpains placed a locked gate connecting to their neighbors' fence, effectively preventing any access across their land to Parkway Court. The Banisadrs and other commenters said that the current situation is not fair and urged the council to take immediate action.

Before the meeting, Associate Planner Adam Foster had alerted interested residents that the matter would be considered in closed session and invited them to speak before the session began. He has been keeping interested residents apprised of developments regarding the trail, including copies of correspondence from the DeSpains' attorney, Nathan Scheg of the Ironhorse Law Group.

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Orinda church promotes stopping gun violence and suicide

By Sora O'Doherty

An unrelated Say Something program is run by the Reverend Michelle Robbins at St. Mark's United Methodist Church in Orinda on Moraga Way. They will be holding two Say Something workshops. The first, facilitated by Yvonne Murray, at 1:30 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 13 will focus on stopping gun violence and suicide before it occurs. Murray has over 20 years of leadership working to solve critical social problems and has personal experience of losing a family member to gun suicide. She is the Faith Outreach Lead for the Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense Peninsula Group. Brian Walley, an Orinda police officer, will be there to explain the process of calling in a 5150 and what happens when they respond. California Welfare and Institution Code section 5150 provides a process for taking people into custody when they are a threat to themselves or someone else.



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