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Letters to the editor

Is Lamorinda courageous enough to reboot Yankee Pier?

On Jan. 1, the Moana Restaurant Group informed the employees of Lafayette Yankee Pier that the restaurant would be closed in a week and they all would lose their jobs. While the straw that broke the camel's back was mostly likely a greedy landlord, we all should think twice about patronizing restaurants owned by a company with such brazen disregard for the welfare of employees and customers alike.

The Bradley Ogden concept of a comfort food restaurant specializing in seafood was unique. The health benefits of seafood offered some counterbalance to the indulgences of comfort food. At the same time, a nautically themed restaurant can tap into the seafaring and fishing traditions world-wide, providing many culinary and cultural possibilities. Unfortunately, the management of Yankee Pier never embraced the flexibility of this concept. Parking at the Lafayette location was anything but obvious and the menu wasn't varied and diverse enough to keep customers coming back. Even with these limitations, Yankee Pier had a very loyal following. The staff of Yankee Pier was deeply touched by the outpouring of public support. A new restaurant with a more inspired embrace of the nautical theme should be able to please even the fickle palettes of Lamorindans.

There is a recent example of a restaurant literally coming back from the ashes: La Finestra. In that case, owner Jeff Assadi kept his staff together until they could relocate. The Yankee Pier faithful clearly want a new restaurant to replace what they have lost. I'm sure that many more Lamorindans would patronize a seafood restaurant than breaks stereotypes instead of being stifled by them. What we need is a visionary group of people who can breathe new life into Bradley Ogden's concept. Local culinary entrepreneurs can avoid corporate miscues of Moana Restaurant Group in order to create a restaurant that is as profitable as it is popular. I sincerely hope that our pleas won't go unanswered.

Sincerely,
douard Lagache
Orinda

A simple solution to improve our early morning commute

The Orinda Bart parking fills up at about 7:30 a.m. Too many people are unable to park, or have to go to work really early just to get BART parking. There is a lot of congestion getting to the BART parking in the morning. Is there a simple way to solve this problem?

es, there is. Bus number 6 runs down Moraga Way to BART at a 40-minute frequency in the mornings and evenings. What if that frequency is changed to 15 minutes? As the frequency of this bus increases, a lot more folks will forgo driving and take the bus to BART and back. Right now, many people (like me) prefer to drive because on the way back from work, I cannot plan for exactly when I get back. Sometimes I miss the bus by a few minutes and have to wait more than half an hour for the next one. So I prefer to drive to the BART station in the morning. There are many like me who do the same.

his simple solution of increasing the bus frequency to once in 15 minutes will alleviate the BART parking congestion situation, reduce morning and evening traffic on Moraga Way, reduce pollution and make Orinda and Moraga greener cities. Once people realize the bus is a better option, more people will take the bus and thus it will pay for itself.

urge the lawmakers in Orinda and Moraga to consider this solution seriously.

Thank you,
rinivas Alai
Moraga

Opinions in Letters to the Editor are the express views of the writer and not necessarily those of the Lamorinda Weekly. All published letters will include the writer's name and city/town of residence -- we will only accept letters from those who live in, or own a business in, the communities comprising Lamorinda (please give us your phone number for verification purposes only). Letters must be factually accurate and be 350 words or less; letters of up to 500 words will be accepted on a space-available basis. Visit www.lamorindaweekly.com for submission guidelines. Email: letters@lamorindaweekly.com; Regular mail: Lamorinda Weekly, P.O.Box 6133, Moraga, CA 94570

JM 10,000 Lunches program



10,000 Lunches volunteers and the finished lunches.

Photo Vera Kochan

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With additional adult help from Matt Vattuone, Kim Anderson and the JM community, the 10,000 Lunches program has blossomed into today's well-oiled, sandwich-making army of volunteers.

The name "10,000 Lunches" was born from Lorie's optimistic dream to one day provide said number of lunches to feed the homeless. The volunteers strive to put together 100 bagged lunches each week in the space of their own 45-minute lunch period. His dream, at this point, is fast approaching the halfway mark.

"It wasn't hard to get kids to participate," Lorie said. "We have an amazing community. A call went out during one of our school's daily video bulletins describing what we were planning on doing and how the students could help." He proudly added, "We had to put up a sign-up sheet (as we still do to this day) because we had too many volunteers. What a wonderful problem to have."

Sixth-grade volunteer Grace said, "Helping out people that don't have much takes only half an hour of my day, and they appreciate it." Seventh-grader Cole stated, "I started doing this last year. I like helping out people, and I'm president of all the kids here. I'm also in the Scouts and this counts as a service badge. I also get to do this with my cousins Cale and Declan." Sixth-grader Avery said, "I think that spending a lunch here is nothing to us compared to what we're doing for people." Another sixth-grader, Isabella, added, "We don't get too many opportunities to do community service. When you do it with other people, it's an added bonus." Declan first heard about 10,000 Lunches when he was in the fifth grade. "My brother did it last year. It's so sad that people have to live on the streets and don't have much to eat. I feel like I'm making their lives better." Hannah, who is also in sixth grade, felt that, "I just like

helping out people who aren't as fortunate and in need."

Most of the supplies are purchased at Costco and JM has a SignUpGenius page where members of the community can donate specific items such as bread, bananas, socks and dog food for pets directly to the school.

The bagged lunches are prepared with lightning speed and efficiency by about 15 students and two to three adults in an assembly-line fashion. Lorie, in the midst of expertly orchestrating the flurry of activity, modestly stated, "I walk around and do nothing, and if everyone does their part it all comes together."

One table makes turkey and cheese sandwiches, while another table generates peanut butter sandwiches (two flavors of jelly packets are later included in each lunch bag). The sandwiches make their way to the end of each table where they are put into plastic sandwich bags. The bagged sandwiches are collected and placed (one of each) into brown paper lunch bags that have been expertly stocked, by another group of students, with a banana, two granola bars, mustard/mayo packets, the afore mentioned jelly, and an instant oatmeal packet. Each recipient of a lunch also receives two bottles of water during the distribution process. Lorie makes sure that each lunch contains food with nutritional value, saying, "Our budget allows me to try and get two dollars worth of food into each lunch bag."

This is parent volunteer

Liz Ludwig's fourth time helping out. "I do a run for bread and bananas and make the kids in the carpool help carry everything into the school." Her sixth-grade son, Owen, said, "I heard about (the program) and got my mom to come." Sixth-grader Cooper, finishing his own lunch before running to his next class, added, "If there are any butts left over (a term the kids use for the ends of each loaf of bread), we get to put peanut butter on them and eat them!"

Anna Seaman, another parent volunteer, said her seventh-grade daughter, Zoe, was in Lorie's class last year and loved it. "When he asked for volunteers, I thought I'd do it. I get to see all of these kids, too. I love it! They choose to do this -- it's awesome!"

Due to time constraints for the students, not all of the volunteers had a chance to be interviewed; however, JM students Charles, Jack, Vincent, Arnav and Kye all gave their time selflessly to help the less fortunate.

The lunches are distributed by three adults to homeless camps in the Oakland area the following day. Accompanying Lorie are Vattuone and Anderson. "They know we are coming," said Anderson. "I can't tell you the light of hope this organization gives to people."

To donate food, supplies or to make a cash contribution visit www.10000lunches.org or call (925) 377-4233.

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