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Lamorinda teachers compete for County Teacher of the Year



Cindy Fisher Photos Sora O'Doherty



Jennifer Dodd



Jennifer Strohmeyer

By Sora O'Doherty

Three Teachers of the Year from Lamorinda elementary schools are in the running for Contra Costa County's 2019-20 Teacher of the Year award:

Cindy Fisher of Happy Valley Elementary School (Lafayette School District), Jennifer Strohmeyer of Donald L. Rheem Elementary School (Moraga School District) and Jennifer Dodd of Del Rey Elementary School (Orinda Union School District).

Although Moraga just selects one Teacher of the Year for the entire district, both Lafayette and Orinda select a TOY for each of the schools in their districts. For Lafayette, in addition to Fisher, the following were deemed Teachers of the Year: Katie Pitts, Stanley Middle School; Deborah Hungerford, Springhill Elementary School; Gwen Rikeman, Lafayette Elementary School, and Kim Isaacs of Burton Valley Elementary School. For Orinda, in addition to Dodd, the Teachers of the Year are Terry Schrittwieser, Glorieta Elementary; Beth Hoogerhuis, Sleepy Hollow Elementary; and Liz Headley of Wagner Ranch Elementary. In addition, OUSD also named Ashley Appel as Teacher of the Year at more than one site, and Eric Page as Teacher of the Year at Orinda Intermediate School.

"We are extremely proud of the Teachers of the Year, Class of 2019-2020," reports Contra Costa County Superintendent of Schools Lynn Mackey. "When you review their TOY applications, it is quite evident that the latest candidates were thoughtfully selected to represent their schools and districts, while at the same time truly embody what is best about public education."

The county's TOY program uses a three-stage selection process, with a point and percentage system to determine the final candidates. A committee of 13 judges, representing the county's education, business, and public-sector partners carefully reviewed the TOY representative applications submitted by the school districts. This committee independently read and rated each application. After the application screening and scoring are completed, four teachers will be selected to advance to the next two phases as finalists. Then from April 22 to May 17, a small committee of education specialists and business partners will observe the finalists interacting with their students. Immediately following, the committee will interview the candidates, discussing topics such as their teaching philosophy and techniques.

On July 24, the TOY finalists will each give a three- to five-minute speech to another panel of a dozen educators, business, and public-sector representatives who will judge the finalists on their speech and presentation skills.

On the evening of Sept. 26, all 22 Contra Costa County TOYs, accompanied by their families, friends, and co-workers (an audience of close to 500) will be honored at the annual Contra Costa County Teacher of the Year Dinner Celebration, held at the Hilton Concord. The night will conclude with the announcement of the two 2019-20 Contra Costa County Teachers of the Year.

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Moraga's small businesses

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The "speed consulting" event was considered a win-win for everybody involved. Participating businesses received free and invaluable consultations from individuals who are familiar with Moraga, and students gained insight into the workings and day-to-day issues that arise for a small business owner.

Moraga Chamber President Bob Fritzky said, "We feel really excited about this. SMC's provost wants to do more tangible programs with the town."

Another organizer and business participant, Chamber Board Member Mark Hoogs, recently brought his franchise of State Farm Insurance to Moraga. "The Chamber does a lot of this type of thing for its members and folks don't know about it." Hoogs wanted to give additional credit to SMC's Interim Dean in the School of Economics and Business Administration Yung Jae Lee for his help and support of the project.

Mixify Polish Owner and Chief Artisan Amy Schofield stated, "This opportunity is amazing! It's great to see the group so on-the-money with me. They're helping me to re-brand while clearing out my current inventory and maintaining brand integrity." Her company helps clients create their own signature nail polish color.

Bay Area Ballplayers owner Steve Hammond recently opened his facility geared toward providing athletes with professional technique and guidance. His business challenges included advice in expansion within the company's operations, process improvement and resource allocation decisions. Hammond's consultation was awesome, he

said. "It was great to have this experience one-on-one to address my specific problems."

Grateful Gatherings co-founder Chris Flitter, along with co-founder Donna Somerville, whose nonprofit provides furniture and home accessories for people transitioning from homelessness, needed a growth plan business strategy. "This has been amazing! We have a lot of great ideas, and we'll need to implement them. We're walking away with incredible ideas that don't feel overwhelming and a task list that can be broken into quarters."

Keith Katzman, owner of Keith Katzman Real Estate, was instructed to revamp previously inherited information from former owners of the firm he purchased. Said Katzman, "They pointed out a lot of key places where there was incorrect information. I need to start from scratch."

Student undergrad Aly Henry, majoring in business analytics and economics, was thrilled about the experience she received. "I had a lot of fun applying what we learned in accounting classes. I'm excited to work with and help these businesses. That's the field I want to get into."

Carly Turner, besides being a shooting guard on the SMC women's basketball team, is a grad student earning her MBA. "This is one of the first things I've been exposed to from a small business standpoint. This experience has got me thinking about maybe getting into consulting."

All participants were asked to fill out an assessment survey following the four-hour consultation program. There was no requirement to stay in touch, however; if any owner needed follow-up support, team members could continue to remain accessible.



LAFAYETTE ROTARY'S CONCERT AT THE RES

SATURDAY • MAY 11TH • 11AM - 3PM

FREE LIVE MUSIC

This year's event includes Acalanes High School, Stanley Middle School, Roosevelt Middle School from Oakland, and the Rossmoor Big Band; and the program has been expanded in the last few years to include young dancers and singers from the Lafayette Town Hall Education and the Performing Academy.

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