

Orinda students learn a bit of local lore on history tour



Photo Kay Norman

Mrs. Leighty's third-graders from Sleepy Hollow outside the California and Nevada Railroad station. The OHS tour guides this year included: Kay Norman, Linnéa Burnette, Laurie Smith, Kathy Barrett, Reg Barrett, and Teresa Long.

Submitted by Kathy Barrett

While driving along Orinda Way last month, people wondered about the gatherings of children outside Susan Leech's Orinda Village Antiques. Many locals don't know that this was the site of Orinda's first firehouse. Across from where the white bridge now stands, the White Swan, built in 1921, was the first building in what is now called the Orinda Village.

Every spring the Orinda Historical Society leads groups of third-grade students on walking history tours of the Village and Theater districts as part of their school curriculum. Before school finished up for the summer, children from Wagner Ranch and Sleepy Hollow elementary schools explored the history of Orinda.

The tour began in the Orinda Historical Society Museum, below the library. Stu-

dents viewed clay models of early structures such as the Moraga Adobe, and held a Spanish cannonball unearthed in the backyard of a local family. They visited the Eagle Scout display in the park documenting the site of the narrow gauge railroad trestle that carried the trains to the Bryant station, where Highway 24 now runs.

Standing on the 1920 white bridge, the youngsters were surprised to learn that

the post office and first library were housed in the little building attached to the firehouse – there were two shelves of books for locals to borrow. A siren on top of the building summoned the volunteer firemen.

Nearby, the first Orinda store was built in 1924 by Edward de Laveaga as part of a planned town site. This country store sold everything from bread and buckets, to candy and pharmacy supplies. Mr. Phair renovated the store in 1941 and sold high-end china and glassware and clothing until the store closed in the 1990s. A Native American village existed across the street where the Orinda Country Club's golf course is now located.

This step back in time allowed the children to ponder the transformation of a small way station on the California and Nevada Railroad to the city of today. Standing in front of Orinda Motors, the students looked at photographs of Miss Graham's Riding Academy, and learned that the Safeway parking lot was once a field with corrals and rodeos. The hills all around were mostly covered with grass, because the Native Americans periodically burned the area to promote the bunch grasses which they collected for food, and which attracted game and Tule Elk.

After a snack break, the third graders walked to the crossroads to visit the commemorative boulder near the site where Pony Express riders occasionally came through

Orinda. From 1860 to 1861, relays of brave horsemen rode 70-mile stretches from St. Louis to San Francisco, through wild country to deliver the mail and money (see story Page B5). Many riders were killed by robbers and hostile tribes, therefore orphans who were expert riders and handy with a gun were the preferred job applicants.

The Orinda Theatre, built in 1941, was a welcomed next stop, as students learned about the "crying room" and the community's efforts to save the beautiful old theatre from the wrecking ball. The tour ends at the California and Nevada Railroad station adjacent to the freeway entrance at Bryant Road. The de Laveaga family donated the historic structure, originally located at Miner Road, to the city. Students observed the antique furnishings, train schedules, and historic photographs of a bygone era.

If you are interested in Orinda's historical sites, visit the beautiful mural along the wall of the restrooms near the entrance to the Community Park. The OHS Museum is open to the public Wednesdays from 2 to 4 p.m. and by appointment at (925) 254-1353. The Orinda Historical Society, located at 26 Orinda Way underneath the Orinda Library, meets on the fourth Tuesday of the month at 4 p.m. and is recruiting board members. Students are invited to use the museum for their history projects.

Lafayette Rotary helps New Day for Children



Photo provided

From left: Mary Lou Till, Diane De Lany, Sharon Wood, Matt Pease, Nancy Hopps and Peg Jackson.

Submitted by Matt Pease

The Rotary Club of Lafayette announced it has donated over \$114,300 to New Day for Children (www.newdayforchildren.com/) as a result of fundraising by the club throughout the fiscal year. "We are delighted to have partnered with New Day for Children and enable this important organization to assist young girls in escaping from sexual slavery," said Matt Pease, president of The Rotary Club of Lafayette. The club raised money through a golf tournament that was held in October and its Swing to Freedom Gala that was held on March 23 at the Oakwood Athletic Club.

New Day for Children is a faith based nonprofit that helps young girls escape from sexual slavery. They raise funds to provide educational, emotional, and physical support for girls in Northern California and from throughout the United States. "The Rotary Club of Lafayette, and the Lamorinda Community (have) been very generous and sup-

portive of making a difference in the lives of these girls who have been abused and we are very grateful for this generous support," said Sharon Wood, director of New Day for Children. The gala itself raised over \$100,00 for New Day and was made possible by the support of not only the Rotary Club of Lafayette, but generous support from Oakwood Athletic Club, Republic Services Corporation, AB Construction, Davidon Homes, and J. Rockcliff Relators.

"We had great support from individuals, families and companies in the Lamorinda area and we are delighted with their support," said Nancy Hobbs and Diane DeLany, co-chairs of the Rotary Gala Committee.

The Rotary Club of Lafayette is part of Rotary International and is made up of community leaders who meet weekly, each Thursday, at 12:15 p.m. at Oakwood Athletic Club at 4000 Mt. Diablo Blvd. in Lafayette and guests are welcome to join the club for lunch. Questions about The Rotary Club of Lafayette can be addressed to info@rotarylafayette.org.

CAPA dance performance nets sizable donation to Children's Health Guild



Photo Vera Kochan

CAPA dancers surround Children's Health Guild past president Michelle Berolzheimer (left), CHG Beneficiary Chair Andrea Brown (middle) and CAPA's General Manager A.J. Brown (right).

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Representatives for CHG, past president Michelle Berolzheimer and Beneficiary Chair Andrea Brown (no relation), were on hand to accept the check. Andrea Brown stated, "One hundred percent of proceeds go to GMCH and UBCHO to support all expenses that every child will receive at every level of care that they need."

This year's CAPA June Showcase had dance performances worthy of a Broadway musical. The two-hour show demonstrated spectacular choreography using ballet, contemporary, tap and folk styles ("Fiddler on the Roof"), to exhibit the students' amazing skills. Beautiful costumes for each dance number elicited expressions of approval from the audience as the dancers stepped onto the stage for each number.

Beginning with a roster of 110 students, CAPA has grown to count over 400 dancers, between the ages of 3 and 18 years, currently under their guidance. With a philosophy whose main goals include: "Teaching our art; teaching life skills through our art; and creating a safe

and nurturing environment for our students" they stress that "[t]he product is important, but the emphasis is on the process."

There are five boys enrolled at CAPA. Philip, who is 12 and a half, likes all forms of dance: "I've been dancing since I was 1." AJ Brown's son Cooper, age 7, is also a student. When asked how long he's been dancing, Cooper replied, "I think since 3."

While Brown is so proud of all of the students, she feels that the June shows are bittersweet. For several 18-year-old dancers this was their final performance. She explained, "It's emotional to see the 18-year-olds leave, because they've been with us since they were little."

Graduate Katie Clare has been with the program since she was 4 years old. "I just like to dance. I do it as a hobby and want to join a dance club in college." Clare heads to Boston's Northeastern University in the fall. Another graduate, Hillary Weaver, who has been dancing since she was 6, said, "I want to keep dance in my life." She will attend University of Colorado, Boulder.

Info: For more information about California Academy of Performing Arts visit www.capadance.net or call (925) 376-2454.

For more information about Children's Health Guild visit www.childrenshealthguild.org