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## Lamorinda Living podcast launches



Photo Jennifer Freedman

Jennifer LaForce interviews Eric Fok about CERT.

By Jennifer Freedman

Lamorinda is now more accessible than ever ... with Lamorinda Living, a podcast that facilitates personal and professional connections for locals in Moraga, Orinda and Lafayette, as well as prospective residents. "Cool People Doing Cool Things" is the tagline, and the podcast features community members (or those working in Lamorinda) who are passionate about their work and open to sharing it to become a resource for others.

Founder and host Jennifer LaForce launched Lamorinda Living in July. Her goal for the podcast is to create a platform that builds a community network. As she explains, "I really appreciate Lamorinda and feel incredibly lucky to have landed here: such a unique place of well-educated people with a wide range of skills, especially because so many of us work in the city. But it is not a 'company town.' I can go years of knowing people and not ever ask what they do for a living." Compared to a previous home in Washington, D.C.—"where that was often the first question, because many were angling for 'How can you help me?'"—Lamorinda is refreshingly the opposite.

"But life here can still be stressful and expensive, and we do need each other ... not just to pinch hit for carpooling and childcare, but we may need to pick each other's

brains about references for counseling, services, legal advice, construction, insurance, and more. My vision is that over time there will be enough pictures on the website to look like a yearbook—you will see somebody you recognize and click on their picture linked to a podcast page to find out more about them. And if you are looking for something in particular, you can find someone in your friend group or school community to ask some initial questions."

A Moraga resident, wife, and mother of two elementary school children, Jenn also works full-time in San Francisco as a community relations officer for U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. A curious and inquisitive person by nature, she developed her interview skills during her years interviewing immigrants. "I learned how to interview people and discover their stories, how to ask open-ended and close-ended questions, how to lead them down a pathway, how to listen intently and hold my thoughts, and build off an answer to create a logical flow for the interviewee," she explains.

In addition to the community at large, LaForce has two more specific audiences for her podcast. First, she was inspired to start Lamorinda Living for moms thinking about going back into the workforce after a hiatus with their young children. "Especially today, things change so

fast that your skill set may not be as relevant when you want to re-enter. Psychological fear and actual barriers exist for women wanting to go back to work, so I wanted to give them the ability to start exploring professions and contacts for re-entry when they're ready," she says. Second, she envisions an audience with adolescents, especially high schoolers and precocious middle schoolers already exploring their areas of interest.

The podcast is live and already has almost a dozen interviews available. The featured guests have a wide variety of skills and focuses, from public servants and nonprofit leaders to corporate executives and passionate moms looking to create a safer and healthier future for our children. Examples include David Winnacker, Moraga-Orinda Fire District chief, who discusses wildfire management; Brett Lorie, middle school teacher and founder of 10,000 Lunches, which enables students to make lunches for East Bay homeless; Brian T. Nowac, co-founder of SF creative strategy firm Atomic D; and Allison Anderman, local mom who led the charge to pass Moraga's gun safety storage ordinance.

So far, LaForce is loving her new side gig. "I can't tell you how rewarding it is to sit down and have quality time with all these incredibly interesting people. I am learning all these different paths and peeking into people's lives and able to amplify a lot of important information and messages." Her passion and drive to make Lamorinda more accessible is sure to enrich our community as well.

You can find the podcast at [lamorindalivingpodcast.com](http://lamorindalivingpodcast.com) or by subscribing to Lamorinda Living through your podcast app on your personal device.



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## 14-year-old piano prodigy advances in International Piano Competition



Photo provided

Andrew Navruzyan

Submitted by Joseph Irrera

Moraga native and 14-year-old piano prodigy Andrew Navruzyan was chosen from an intense field of pianists from across the globe to advance to the International Keyboard Odyssey and Festi-

val semifinal round. Preliminaries were held in early June where Andrew gave a riveting performance of Gershwin's Rhapsody in Blue. He competed in the semifinals for a chance to perform the piece as guest soloist with the Boulder Symphony on their 2019-20 Education Series.

The International Keyboard Odyssey and Festival, U.S.A., is a five-day summer piano competition and festival featuring over a dozen guest artists and pianists in daily master classes and presentations, mini-recitals, the live semifinal and final rounds of the Olympic-styled competition, and five nights of world-class concerts by internationally renowned pianists. The festival and competition took place July 29 through Aug. 3 in Fort Collins, Colorado at the foothills of the majestic Rocky Mountains and featured performances by the Anderson & Roe Piano

Duo and Van Cliburn gold medalist Vadym Kholodenko.

Andrew has been playing piano since a very young age and is also a gifted violinist. He studies piano with international performing Steinway Artist Joseph Irrera and violin with Jeremy Cohen, founding violinist of Grammy-nominated Quartet San Francisco. In addition to his classical music studies, Andrew also plays piano in his high school's jazz band and performs throughout the community at nursing homes, school fundraising events, and museums. Andrew, with a perfect 4.0 GPA, also manages to find time for rowing, baseball, advocating for the environment through prize-winning essays, and exploring aerospace engineering.

Additional information can be found at: <http://odyssiad.com/>