

LAMORINDA WEEKLY

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Santa Claus stops by the Hacienda de las Flores

Photo Vera Kochan

Santa makes home visits ahead of holiday

By Vera Kochan

It is a rare occasion indeed when one gets a glimpse of Santa Claus in the middle of his rounds. Thanks to Moraga's Department of Parks and Recreation, Santa made a few early home visits Dec. 16-20 to surprise some children in the town.

With a smile on his rosy-cheeked face and a "Ho-Ho-Ho" ever present in his conversation, the

jolly bearded gift-giver in his stylish red outfit granted a quick interview before heading out from the Hacienda de las Flores.

"Most of the children are receptive to my visit," Santa stated. "Although, one or two of the younger ones start to cry. If one starts to cry, the rest start to cry. They're not really certain of who this person is in the red suit. Ho-ho-ho! Some of the older children have cried, too!"

Santa mused, "When I ask them what they'd

like for Christmas about 25% really don't know what they want. They usually ask me for one thing. The bolder ones produce their list and start to read from it. Ho-ho-ho!" He added, "So many of them just want Mommy and Daddy to be happy and healthy. They ask for me to help relatives that are sick. A few have asked for their loved ones in the military to be safe. Their sincerity is very touching."

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Orinda detective recognized for work with FBI, and nabbing 'the shaggy bank robber'

By Sora O'Doherty

It wasn't like television when Orinda detective Denny Cai teamed up with the Federal Bureau of Investigation to track down and arrest a bank robber who had robbed two banks in Orinda and 17 others in the Bay Area. There wasn't any interagency resentment; all the officers worked together toward a common goal that was achieved when Cai entered a hospital room in Oakland where Duane Makela had just become a father and Cai arrested him on 19 counts of

bank robbery. Makela allegedly robbed the Bank of the West in Orinda on April 17, 2018, of \$13,000. In November of that year he allegedly robbed the Orinda branch of Wells Fargo of \$800. No one was hurt during either robbery, but at Wells Fargo Cai says that the suspect pretended to have a gun and pointed it at the teller.

During this period, the San Ramon police department was investigating a similar robbery. The FBI was also looking into a series of Bay Area robberies. The robber

had been dubbed "the shaggy bank robber" owing to his modus operandus of wearing a disguise with fake facial hair, a wig, and glasses or sunglasses.

After the first Orinda robbery, Cai watched footage from a city camera mounted near the roof on a Bryant Way building that points toward CVS. During the hour-long footage, Cai saw the suspect walking up Moraga Way. It could be seen that he was driving a black Mercedes van. When the suspect drove off, Cai could see he was wearing an orange sweater. Cai

looked at footage from the camera mounted at the east-bound Highway 24 entrance and caught the license plate. It turned out that the vehicle had been stolen earlier the same day in Walnut Creek.

This did not lead to an arrest, however, and the matter became a cold case. But then there was another robbery in November at the Orinda Wells Fargo. Police knew it was the same guy: wig, glasses, fake facial hair. This guy was committing robberies all over the Bay Area, Lake Tahoe, Mountain View. The break in the case came

when the robber dropped his demand note and the police were able to find a fingerprint on the note, which led to Makela.

An FBI agent who was the liaison on the robberies called Cai, who was able to find Makela's phone number on a public database. He wrote a search warrant and asked a judge to ask the carrier to release all call information for a day or two before and after the robberies in Orinda. About two weeks after the warrant was served, Cai received the information.

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Saint Mary's men's basketball bests Cal - Page C1



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Mindful decorating for the holidays - Page D1





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Former city manager makes a statement at the LLLC



"Red Letter" displayed in the LLLC permanent collection

Photo, and artwork, by Steve Falk

By Nick Marnell

Few artists want to explain the meaning of their work, or what it represents, leaving those answers for the public to determine. On that note, "Red Letter," the exhibit submitted by Steve Falk for dis-

play in the permanent collection of the Lafayette Library and Learning Center, will challenge the public for years to come.

Falk served as Lafayette city manager for 22 years before he departed in 2018. "We wanted to recognize his

contributions to the city," said Erling Horn, chair of the city Public Art Committee which, together with the Lafayette Chamber of Commerce, offered Falk an intriguing parting gift: the opportunity to display a piece of his artwork on the mezza-

nine wall at the LLLC.

"At first I was intimidated by the scale – 13 feet high by 9 feet wide," Falk said. "But then I thought about what I wanted to accomplish. My main goal was to stimulate conversation."

From that goal arose "Red Letter." Falk prepared sketches for the art committee, the committee made suggestions and the city council greenlighted the project this past summer.

Falk, whose garage doubles as the art studio in his Lafayette home, had been working on the series of red objects for several years, and so the car, ice machine and phone were ready to go before the project started. He built the rest of the exhibit around those items. That powerful shade of red – cadmium red, medium hue – a color that Falk has favored for years, works especially well on a neutral background, he said.

But there is not much else neutral about the acrylic-on-canvas exhibit. Falk imagines a parent and a 7-year-old walking up the mezzanine stairs and the child asking if the bottom right-hand "Red Letter" element is a Stop sign or a Go sign. "In my mind, people

will react to this in different ways, and develop their own sense of what the message is. Art can be decorative, provocative or both," Falk said. "That's what I was going for."

Of the six elements of his exhibit piece, Falk provided an explanation for only one of them: the white Red Letter painted on a red square, which he said alludes to Nathaniel Hawthorne's "The Scarlet Letter," a book featuring characters who lived out of the mainstream. "And libraries are collections of books," Falk said.

Is that what "Red Letter" itself symbolizes – elements out of the mainstream? What about the three items pictured – obsolete by today's standards. Does Falk's piece presage the obsolescence of today's technology? And the Maximum segment? Why is there a red line above the word? Why would Maximum be impeded by a hovering ceiling?

Falk prefers that the public come to the LLLC, check out his exhibit and question his work themselves. "If people are asking questions, it might change their perspective on the world," Falk said. "And that's what libraries do."

Lafayette in good financial shape as the city rolls into the next decade

By Nick Marnell

Shortly before Steve Falk departed as Lafayette city manager, he urged the city council to increase its reserve balance target from

60% to 100% of general fund expenditures, with the intent to reach that target in five years. "The likelihood of a recession in the next several years is increased because this very long period of eco-

nom expansion cannot persist. A recession that reduces sales and property tax revenue could result in deficits," Falk advised the city finance subcommittee in 2018.

For the last fiscal year, recently memorialized with the release of the 2019 Comprehensive Annual Financial Report, the city made a significant jump in the direction that Falk recommended.

Lafayette finished 2019 with \$17.8 million in general fund revenue against \$14.2 million in operating expenses. The city closed with \$10.8 million in its general fund balance, an operating surplus that the city can use for nearly any reason, like stabilizing tax rates, addressing revenue shortfalls or funding emergencies. That \$10.8 million equaled 77% of general fund expenditures, an increase over the 68% of the previous year and on its way toward the professed goal of 100% by 2023.

With a net position of \$135 million, only \$3.6 million in long-term debt and enough cash to cover more than nine months of operating expenditures in its general fund balance, Lafayette

appears to be in a good position to fend off areas of financial concern. According to the CAFR, those concerns include a deficit in the Stormwater Pollution Fund, maintenance of public roads to an acceptable pavement condition index and increased legal fees, mostly due to the defense of land use lawsuits brought by residents and developers.

Of note in the just-concluded fiscal year is the internal report from the city auditor, Maze and Associates of Pleasant Hill. It was not so much what was in the report, but what was not, according to Jennifer Wakeman, assistant administrative services director. "The auditor could find no significant deficiencies or material weaknesses in our internal controls," Wakeman said. "It was the first time in five years there was no schedule of recommendations in the audit report, and we are very proud of that."



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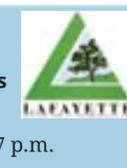
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<p>Lafayette Public Meetings City Council Monday, Jan. 13, 7 p.m.</p>		<p>Planning Commission Monday, Jan. 6, 7 p.m. Lafayette Library & Learning Center, Community Hall, 3491 Mt. Diablo Blvd.</p> <p>Design Review Monday, Jan. 13, 7 p.m. Lafayette Library & Learning Center, Arts & Science Discovery Center, 3491 Mt. Diablo Blvd.</p>
<p>School Board Meetings Acalanes Union High School District Wednesday, Jan. 15, 7 p.m. AUHSD Board Room 1212 Pleasant Hill Road, Lafayette www.acalanes.k12.ca.us</p>		<p>Lafayette School District Wednesday, Jan. 15, 7 p.m. Regular Board Meeting Stanley M.S. Library 3477 School St., Lafayette www.lafsd.k12.ca.us</p>

Protests in downtown Lafayette



Horns honked in support of demonstrators as commuters and shoppers drove by giant lit balloons of a peach emblazoned with an "IM" as well as a chicken with Donald Trump-like hair the evening of Dec. 17 at Plaza Park in Lafayette. - W. Scheck

Jennifer Perlmutter awarded 2020 Marquis Business Person of the Year



Photo Andy Scheck

The Lafayette Chamber of Commerce announced Jennifer Perlmutter, who filled the empty bank location on the corner of Mt. Diablo Blvd. and Moraga Road with a "pop-up" gallery last summer, as the 2020 business person of the year.

The award of the successful owner of The Jennifer Perlmutter Gallery across from Diablo Foods will be celebrated on Jan. 31 at the annual dinner held at the Lafayette Park Hotel & Spa.

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 Chief of Police, Ben Alldritt 925-299-3221
 Police Department Tip Line 94549Tip@gmail.com
 Police Department Traffic Issues 94549Traffic@gmail.com

Lafayette Police Department Incident Summary Report



Dec. 1 - Dec. 14
 Alarms 63
 911 Calls (includes hang-ups) 19
 Traffic 99
 Suspicious Circumstances 17
 Suspicious Subject 35
 Suspicious Vehicle 31
 Service to Citizen 56
 Patrol Req./Security Check 35
 Public/School Assembly Check 14
 Supplemental Report 36
 Vacation House Check 1
 Welfare Check 25
Vehicle violations
 Auto Burglary
 3500 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd. (9)
 3600 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd. (4)
 3300 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd. (2)
 Hit And Run Misdemeanor
 3500 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd. Police Department
 Mt. Diablo Blvd./1st St 800 Block Reliez Station Rd.
 3600 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd.
 3200 Block Marlene Dr.
 Reckless Driving
 3500 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd. Reliez Valley Rd./Silver Dell Rd.
 Lafayette Cr./Mt. Diablo Blvd.
 3600 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd.
 Mt. Diablo Blvd./Carol Ln.
 Mt. Diablo Blvd./Almanor Ln.
 Mt. Diablo Blvd./Moraga Rd.
 Pleasant Hill Rd./Reliez Valley Rd.
 Reliez Valley Rd./Withers Ave.

Deer Hill Rd./Miller Dr.
Other criminal activity
 Commercial Burglary
 900 Block Hough Ave.
 Disturbance-domestic
 1100 Block Monticello Rd.
 Forgery
 3300 Block Kincheloe Ct.
 Fraud False Pretenses
 3600 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd.
 Identity Theft
 3400 Block Golden Gate Way
 20 Block Sanford Ln.
 Petty Theft
 3300 Block Victoria Ave.
 1000 Block Oak Hill Rd.
 3200 Block Marlene Dr.
 3300 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd.
 1200 Block Cambridge Dr.
 3600 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd.
 Petty Theft Bicycle
 3400 Block School St.
 1000 Block Carol Ln.
 Residential Burglary
 1000 Block Sierra Vista Way
 3500 Block Via Los Colorados
 3300 Block Betty Ln.
 600 Block Lucas Dr.
 Shoplift
 3500 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd. (2)
 3600 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd. (2)
 Threats
 3200 Block Walnut Ln.
 1700 Block Reliez Valley Rd.
Nuisance to the Community
 Loud Party
 3600 Block Boyer Cr.
 Public Nuisance
 60 Block Carolyn Ct.
 Summit Rd./Quandt Rd.
 3600 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd. (4)
 3800 Block Los Arabis Dr.
 Vandalism
 3600 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd.
 3500 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd. (2)
 3400 Block School St.
 Golden Gate Way/Mt. Diablo Blvd.
Other
 Harassment
 Meher Elementary School (2)
 Ordinance Violation
 1000 Block Dewing Ave.
 Trespass
 900 Block Leland Dr.
 3500 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd.
 Trespass W/ Vehicle
 3300 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd.
 Unwanted Guest
 3600 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd.
 1100 Block Monticello Rd.
 3500 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd. (3)
 Violation Custody Order
 Police Department

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We are very grateful for the amazing Lamorinda community that makes us feel safe, connected and inspired. Have a wonderful Holiday Season and joyful 2020!



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Mayor's 2019 Year in Review precedes an unprecedented town council reorganization



Photo Vera Kochan

From left, Contra Costa County Supervisor Candace Andersen awards proclamation to outgoing mayor Roger Wykle.

By Vera Kochan

Exiting Moraga Mayor Roger Wykle gave the customary Year in Review presentation during the Dec. 11 town council meeting, noting that while 2019 began as an uphill battle the town bounced back at an amazingly productive pace.

"As we close 2019, I am especially proud of all of the hard work our dedicated staff

successfully completed," Wykle said. "Specifically and under the exceptional leadership of our town manager, Cynthia Battenberg, we completed several studies to fully understand all of the financial needs of the town. This accomplishment is also a positive endorsement of past and the present town councils who had the courage to identify these needs while currently no funding sources exist."

Wykle added, "I'm sure 2020 will also be an interesting year as well, as we work on these financial challenges and strive to make Moraga even better than it already is."

Among the many highlights of Wykle's presentation were the following achievements: implementation of the Moraga Mobile app; continued progress to lease a restaurant at the Hacienda; Moraga recognized as the fourth safest city in California; the town's emergency preparedness response was phenomenal; six new businesses have opened in the shopping centers; updated community and limited commercial zoning to allow outright permitted uses; Rheem Theatre reopened with new additions to the rear of the building coming; Moraga Center Specific Plan implementation meetings; more new housing; Climate Action Plan implementations; vast improvement to the town's road conditions thanks to Measure K; major crosswalk improvements; storm drain operations and maintenance programs; construction of new Canyon Bridge on the horizon; council adopted protocols to establish policies and procedures; and according to the state auditor's office, Moraga's financial situation has improved to become better than 87% of 471 California cities.

Vice Mayor Kimberleigh Korpus acknowledged Wykle's tenure as mayor by stating, "The past year has been a very productive one, and I want to express my deepest appreciation to you for your leadership and your

partnership during a time that has been so critical in making 2019 a success for everybody."

While the 2019 Year in Review portion of the meeting went smoothly and with an occasional injection of humor, the town council reorganization process contained moments of stunned silence.

It began uneventfully enough with Council Member Renata Sos' nomination of Korpus for mayor. The nomination passed 4-1 with the lone opposition being Council Member Steve Woehleke.

Wykle handed the gavel to Korpus who, as new mayor, opened the nominations for vice mayor. Korpus nominated Sos, and Woehleke nominated Council Member Mike McCluer.

Woehleke commented, "Renata is a non-elected official, so if we go ahead and elect Renata here she will be on the path and potentially mayor of the town - it's never been done."

Korpus asked Assistant Town Attorney Denise Bazzano if there was a known issue with this type of nomination. Bazzano replied, "There's no distinction. Once a council member has been appointed, they are a council member for all purposes. I'm not aware of any significant legal issues - there's no distinction. They act in every capacity as an elected official."

McCluer stated, "I want to say that I think Renata is a very talented council member, and I think everybody up here is very talented. For me, the idea of an appointment for council members not being elected versus other elected council members of

thousands of residents is a big difference to me."

Woehleke responded that 5,000 people voted for McCluer, to which Wykle, citing the newly adopted protocols, replied, "Based on seniority, Renata was appointed by duly elected town council members who received in excess of 5,000 votes."

Sos calmly said, "I respectfully take issue with any suggestion that someone who's appointed is somehow less worthy or of lesser stature than someone who's elected." She added, "I think I could do the vice mayor job well, and I would do it proudly, but I think I'm going to withdraw my nomination." Sos explained that she felt it would be difficult to perform the vice mayoral duties given the comments that were made.

Korpus stressed that an appointed council member is not a second tier council member and urged Sos to reconsider the nomination by renominating her.

Sos acknowledged that she didn't take the comments as a criticism of her abilities and allowed the renomination to stand, because at this point it fell to second in line after McCluer's nomination.

Wykle expressed his impression that given the circumstances, Sos seemed hesitant to accept the renomination and shouldn't be forced to accept it if she didn't want it.

When given the opportunity, Sos withdrew a second time, to which a vote was taken, and McCluer was unanimously elected vice mayor.

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Stylishly remodeled Rheem Theatre is open for business



Updated lobby with the new concession stand on Thursday night.

Photo Andy Scheck

By Vera Kochan

In keeping with the décor of the circa 1957 era when The Rheem Theatre was born, the new owners have maintained the ambiance with a multitude of upgrades. The Dec. 19 grand reopening was a huge success.

The reopening was a joyful scene, according to Lamorinda Weekly publisher Wendy Scheck, who attended the festivities with husband, Andy. "Michelle Heckle, who

was one of the local residents who volunteered selling tickets at the theater for a year when the Moraga Community Foundation was leasing the venue, was there with her mother and friend as well as many other Rheem Theatre supporters and MCF board members." The main theater was sold out and a second showing of "Star Wars" played upstairs as well. "The remodeled bathrooms were a particular hit with many people commenting on them – even Dave Trotter," said Scheck

with a chuckle, adding, "The seats were super comfortable. The trays and cup holders accommodating and lots of room between the rows for people to walk in or out if needed even if you are in full recline, and the sound system and vibrations were intense."

Much activity has taken place at the 350 Park Street location in Moraga to spruce up the theatre since the April 2019 purchase by Cinema West partners Dave Corkill and Kyle Conner. Yet to come is the addition of two more screens at the back of the building.

From the marquee to the box office itself, the welcoming gleam of new life to the old gem in Rheem's Shopping Center is evident.

Once inside, the lobby boasts brand new carpeting with the polished, original chandeliers and tile-work be-

hind the concession stand. Self-serve kiosks allow patrons to purchase reserved seats if they are not inclined to do so with theater personnel. Corkill boasted, "We've already sold 1,500 advance tickets for 'Star Wars' alone."

Rheem Theatre General Manager Cameron Sullivan was enthusiastic about the many additions to concession stand offerings. "Besides beer and wine, in a month we'll be serving cocktails such as Jack & Coke, Strawberry Daiquiris and Margaritas. All I.D.s will be checked."

As well as the typical menu of popcorn, soda and assorted candies additional items include iced tea, juice, flavored Icees, large pretzels, pizza slices, hot dogs, fries and nachos.

Each patron purchases a reserved seat from a seating map, thus avoiding the hunt for a perfect seat while juggling refreshments once inside the screening room. All

that's left is to settle into a plush, faux-leather reclining chair, place the refreshments on a swiveling tray, put the drink in the provided cup holder and adjust the seat to the desired reclining position for maximum viewing enjoyment and comfort. USB ports are available for recharging phones, but patrons must bring their own cable.

Cinema West gives a nod to Hollywood's Golden Age with poster-sized headshots of movie stars in the hallways. Fans of the historic theater murals will not be disappointed. They have been restored and are joined by the newest technology in theater-going experience with Dolby Atmos Sound Speakers.

The Rheem Theatre now offers a Rewards Card whereby patrons can earn points toward free items. For additional information or to purchase a reserved seat visit www.CinemaWest.com.



Reclining seats with tray tables

Photo Vera Kochan



Hallway décor

Photo Vera Kochan



Town Council
Wednesday, Jan. 8, 7 p.m.
Council Chambers and Community Meeting Room, 335 Rheem Blvd.
Planning Commission: TBA
Council Chambers and Community Meeting Room, 335 Rheem Blvd.
Park and Recreation Commission: TBA
Council Chambers and Community Meeting Room, 335 Rheem Blvd.
Moraga School District Board Meetings: Thursday, Jan. 14, 7 p.m.
Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School Auditorium, 1010 Camino Pablo, Moraga
www.moraga.k12.ca.us. See also AUHSD meeting page A2

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Chief of Police, Jon King ext. 7049

Moraga Police Department Incident Summary Report Dec. 3 - Dec. 16

Alarms	15
911 Calls (includes hang-ups)	9
Traffic	39
Suspicious Circumstances	14
Suspicious Subject	2
Suspicious Vehicle	9
Service to Citizen	46
Patrol Req./Security Check	20
Supplemental Report	16
Welfare Check	4

Vehicle violations

DUI Misdemeanor	
Moraga Country Club Excessive Speed	
Moraga Rd./St. Marys	
Moraga Rd./Buckingham Dr.	
Hit And Run Misdemeanor	
100 Block Paseo Del Rio	
Reckless Driving	
Moraga Way/St Andrews Dr.	
Moraga Rd./Rheem Blvd.	

300 Block Rheem Blvd.
Tamper With Vehicle
1000 Block Wickham Dr.
Vehicle Theft
Larch Ave./Canyon Rd.
Other criminal activity
Extortion
St. Marys College
Fraud False Pretenses
Police Department
Identity Theft
300 Block Glen Alpine
1800 Block Ascot Dr.
Panhandling
Safeway
Petty Theft
Safeway
Petty Theft Purse Snatch
400 Block Center St
Warrant Arrest
Starbucks
Nuisance to the Community
Disturbance-domestic
10 Block Carnoustie
Disturbing The Peace
70 Block Miramonte Dr.
Moraga Commons Park
Drunk In Public
St. Marys College
Public Nuisance
Moraga Commons Park
Vandalism
Paseo Bernau/Alta Mesa Dr.
Other
Accident Property
Moraga Way/Moraga Rd.
Moraga Rd./Draeger Dr.
Mentally Ill Commit
Campolindo High School
Public Assembly Check
Rheem Valley Shopping Center
1500 Block Canyon Rd.
Trespass
20 Block Broadmoor

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See public meetings schedule on this pages and check online for agendas, meeting notes and announcements

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www.cityoforinda.org
Phone (925) 253-4200

Chamber of Commerce:

www.orindachamber.org

The Orinda Association:

www.orindaassociation.org

Memory care center: Wilder objects, but planning commission and others satisfied



Rendering provided

By Sora O'Doherty

Although the planning commission agreed with staff that some further study is required for the memory care facility proposed for 1 Wilder Road, the commissioners expressed their approval of the proposal, despite concerns expressed by a number of residents of Wilder at a hearing on Dec. 10. Other Wilder residents, as well as a number of Orinda residents, including former mayors and former members of the planning commission, expressed support for the planned memory care facility that would house 38 residents.

The commission agreed to continue the application to a future date in order to receive further information. When the matter comes back to the commission, the commissioners want to see a 3D representation that will allow them to judge the visibility of the building from Highway 24. The project would require an exception to the 27-foot maximum height requirement. At its tallest point, the building

would reach 30 feet. None of the planning commissioners saw this as a difficulty. The commissioners also seek a further study, to be financed by the applicant, of the impact of the facility on the potential evacuation in an emergency of all the residents of Wilder when it is fully built out and occupied, at which time it will contain 245 homes. The study should also factor in activity at the Art & Garden Center and the ball fields.

Wilder residents who oppose the facility expressed concern that it would impede the evacuation of all Wilder residents in the event of an emergency. The commission agreed that this should be studied, even if only to allay the fears of those residents expressing concern. In general, the commission wondered if the problem with evacuation, if any existed, was a preexisting condition that would not be impacted by the addition of 38 residents of the memory care facility.

Among the other complaints about the facility, Gary Rafferty said he was "dismayed" by the project, which he called a blight. The highly visible project, he said, was incongruent with Orinda's semirural character. Eric Egan said that the environmental impact review was biased, flawed and disingenuous. He said that the building would be similar to a brightly lit hotel. Kathy Finch was concerned that some would accuse Wilder residents of NIMBYism. She objects to the particular location, she said, but would not be opposed to another location within Wilder. This particular location would, she said, change the nature of Wilder, and added that safety is her primary concern. Attorney Shona Armstrong also spoke, representing the Wilder Homeowners Association. Seventy percent of Wilder residents, she said, consider the project not to be a benefit to Orinda residents.

Other Orinda residents spoke about the benefits they see for themselves and their families. Dick Burkholter

spoke about his wife, Betty, who suffers from dementia. "It would be wonderful," he said, to be able to visit her in three minutes from his home. Sue Severson, former mayor and president of the Orinda Community Foundation, noted that one-third of Orinda residents are over 65, and said that the facility is a "much needed amenity." Ted Urban, who served eight years on the planning commission, expressed surprise at the resistance by Wilder residents. He said that concern over evacuation is a red herring and shouldn't carry any weight at all. Another former mayor, Thomas McCormick, said that the city needs to look after everyone, not just Wilder residents. He approves of the project.

The Countryhouse Memory Care facility is being proposed by the applicant, 101 Upton Partners. The project would include a one- to two-story, 32,084-square-foot building with 38 assisted-living units, a parking area with 16 parking spaces and a vehicle turnaround adjacent to the front and delivery entrances, and landscaping. Residents would be those suffering from Alzheimer's disease and memory loss.

TJ Damato, the president of the Orinda Chamber of Commerce, spoke in support of the project. He said that the applicant, Richard Westin, is a longtime Orinda resident, and that the Westin family are suitable stewards. "There is no one more suited," he said, "to deliver this type of service. We are fortunate to have one of our own" proposing the project.

Westin addressed many of the concerns that were raised at the meeting, or in emails sent to the planning commission in advance of the meeting. He said that the applicant is willing to comply with Wilder night sky standards, and in fact has already incorporated them. He also suggested landscaping changes to address resident concerns. The lighting would not be a concern to the residents of the facility, he said, who would be long asleep by 10 p.m. In addition, he noted that residents will not be driving. "Memory care," he explained, "is a polite term for folks with dementia, including Alzheimer's disease." The facility will need to contain the residents, without them feeling contained. They will be taken on bus trips every day, and if ever a complete

evacuation of the facility were required, it would not be by ambulances but by bus. The facility will be completely occupied by memory care clients.

As far as parking goes, he explained that residents don't drive. Of the 16 parking spaces provided, a maximum of 10 will be used by staff. Visits are typically short, he said, lasting minutes rather than hours. In response to commissioner David Parnigani, he explained that there are perhaps four to five visits on any particular day. From his 35 years of experience in the field, he said, visitors are not frequent.

Chair Brandon Iverson said that she was impressed to see Wilder come together and speak with one voice. But she said that she considered that the project is appropriately located, and that the impact of 38 residents would be no more than the residents of 10 or fewer single-family homes. "There is no perfect in this," she said, adding that she did not believe that anything similar would ever get permitted in downtown Orinda. The Wilder Road site is zoned for this use, she said.

Further information is available at:

<https://www.cityoforinda.org/418/1-Wilder-Road--Countryhouse-Memory-Care>



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<p>Orinda Public Meetings</p> <p>City Council Tuesday, Jan. 7, 7 p.m. Regular Meeting Library Auditorium, Orinda Library, 26 Orinda Way</p>	<p>Planning Commission Tuesday, Jan. 14, 7 p.m. Library Auditorium, Orinda Library, 26 Orinda Way</p>	<p>Citizens' Infrastructure Oversight Commission Wednesday, Jan. 8, 6:30 p.m. Sarge Littlehale Community Room, 22 Orinda Way, Orinda, CA 94563</p>	<p>Orinda Union High School District Board Meetings TBA Regular Board Meeting 8 Altarinda Rd., Orinda www.orindaschools.org See also AUHSD meeting page A2</p>
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ORINDA POLICE

Orinda Police Department Incident Summary Report Dec. 1 - Dec. 14

Alarms	32
911 Calls (includes hang-ups)	7
Traffic	105
Suspicious Circumstances	7
Suspicious Subject	12
Suspicious Vehicle	16

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Orinda detective recognized for work with FBI, and nabbing 'the shaggy bank robber'



Detective Denny Cai recognized Photo Sora O'Doherty

... continued from Page A1

On April 17 Makela was in the city of Orinda when his mother called him around the time of the robbery. The call was captured by a cell phone tower near the bank. A couple of hours earlier, Makela's cell phone pinged off in Walnut Creek, where the vehicle was stolen. Cai now had probable cause to believe that Makela was the suspect. He obtained a Ramie warrant – a pre-complaint warrant that bypasses the district attorney who is looking for something proven beyond a reasonable doubt to file charges. The FBI wrote a search warrant for the suspect's house in Oakland. At the time, the Ramie warrant was still active. Orinda PD was the only agency that had a warrant out for Makela's arrest.

The FBI planned to do a search to find anything related to the robberies. On April 23, 19 search warrants were executed. Cai – the only police department detective involved in the search – met the FBI at a parking lot where 30 to 40 FBI agents gathered. Oakland police helped by closing off the road. When the group executed the warrants, the agents found disguises, fake facial hair, and a BB gun. A vehicle search revealed a pipe bomb, which the Alameda County bomb squad determined was a hoax bomb.

According to Makela's father, who was at the house being searched, Makela's wife had just given birth and his son was at Kaiser Oakland. Ramie warrant in hand, Cai and another Orinda police officer asked an Oakland sergeant for a couple of Oakland officers to join them.

In plain clothes, Cai knocked on the door, walked in and identified himself, he recalls, "then I took control of him, put him in handcuffs," adding, "Unfortunately the wife had to see all this." Cai told Makela he was under arrest for bank robbery and took his property – a laptop suitcase that contained a BB gun, methamphetamine, lottery tickets, and more than six cell phones.

Makela eventually confessed to the robberies and was charged with 19 counts, to which he pleaded guilty. Makela remains in jail pending sentencing in January. The 19 bank robberies netted him about \$70,000.

The Orinda City Council recognized Cai's accomplishment at its Dec. 3 meeting. Cai was also recognized as the Officer of the Year in 2016.

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ConFire captain honored for 40 years of service with the district

By Nick Marnell

The Contra Costa County Fire Protection District, its board of directors and the ConFire Advisory Fire Commission recognized Capt. Gil Caravantes in December for an almost unheard of 40 years of active service with the district. "There is no 40-year pin. We had to special order one," Fire Chief Lewis Broschard said.

Caravantes signed on with ConFire in November 1979, and he worked his way through the system becoming

one of the district's first paramedics in 2002, an engineer in 2003 and captain in 2010. He has also worked in various district special programs, like the Hazmat unit and the Critical Incident Stress Management team. Caravantes also served as vice president of Local 1230 of the firefighters union. "There hasn't been a station, except the new Station 16, that Gil hasn't worked at," Broschard said. "But there's still time, and I'm sure he'll end up there soon."

A few notable incidents over the years sum up the

essence of Caravantes.

"I was his captain on a house call around the holidays," fire commissioner Tom Chapman said. "An elderly woman lived at the house, which had flooded, and her water heater was seriously damaged. The next day, on his own time and out of his own pocket, Gil brought a new water heater to the woman's home and installed it."

When 9/11 hit, Caravantes, who had friends in the New York fire service, took vacation time and flew back to the city the next day. He spent two weeks assisting New York in recovery efforts, mainly at the center of the destruction. "I would dig and find a picture of a family, maybe from someone's desk, and I'd realize that I wasn't going to find anything that looked like what was in that picture," Caravantes said at the time. He attended more funerals of first responders than he could count. "It took me about five years to get through the national anthem," he said.

A decision the captain made in 2013 as he ran an engine company out of Lafayette Fire Station 17 illustrates his concern for people over bureaucracy. Caravantes' crew responded to an emergency medical call in the city, and based on his analysis at the scene, Caravantes requested mutual aid from the Moraga-Orinda Fire District to transport a young, choking patient to the hospital. The captain's action was in violation of the ConFire contract with its ambulance provider, which relayed that its ambulance was 20 minutes away. "I wasn't comfortable with that," Caravantes said. "We're



Photo courtesy Steve Hill, ConFire

Capt. Gil Caravantes, center, with Fire Chief Lewis Broschard, left, and fire commissioner Tom Chapman

all about care and safety first." MOFD arrived in 10 minutes and rushed the boy to the hospital. Despite having not followed district protocol, Caravantes said at the time he would do the same thing again "in a heartbeat."

Even with so many years of service, Caravantes shows no signs of slowing down, as

he continues to run calls out of one of the busiest stations in the district, Fire Station 5 in Pleasant Hill.

"Thank you very much for employing me for the past 40 years," Caravantes told the board. "It's the greatest job in the world."

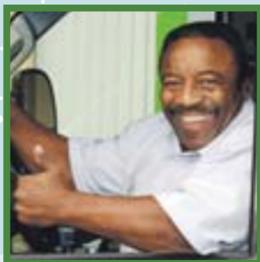
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Fire District Public Meetings

Moraga-Orinda Fire District
Board of Directors
Wednesday, Jan. 8, 7 p.m.
Go to the website for meeting location, times and agendas.
Visit www.mofd.org



ConFire

Board of Directors
Tuesday, Jan. 21, 1:00 p.m.
Board Chamber Room 107,
Administration Building
651 Pine St., Martinez.
For meeting times and agendas, visit www.cccfpd.org



Designs 2 Consign – a fashion consignment store opens in Rheem



Photo Vera Kochan

Designs 2 Consign comes to Rheem Shopping Center

By Vera Kochan

Looking for the perfect outfit for the holiday season? Try Rheem Shopping Center's newest store Designs 2 Consign located at 522 Center Street, Moraga.

Owner Lisa Karp's consignment store occupies the space previously held by the Moraga Art Gallery, which moved to the north end of the center.

The grand opening on Nov. 21 was a bustling success with a business model aimed at offering women's clothing and accessories, along with a nod to boys and girls between 12-18 years looking for semi-formal/formal wear.

Karp's business skills come from managing a cousin's store, outside of Moraga, for two years. She decided to try her hand as an owner and moved to Moraga. "We have a need for more stores, and there's no store like this in town," Karp said. "I bring a focus on high-end, offering a carryover from T.J. Maxx type of clothes. I ultimately want to cater to the middle section and Saint Mary's College women." At this point in time, her boyswear offers blazers,

jackets and belts.

Business ownership is in Karp's DNA. Her great-grandfather came from Germany and opened Koster Grocery in San Francisco. Sadly, it burned to the ground during the 1906 earthquake. She's also shared ownership duties at two eateries in Orinda – Table 24 and Fourth Bore, saying, "Brick and mortar is in my blood."

Karp fell in love with the Moraga location in September and was able to begin moving in during October. Not much has changed to the space except that the back room was turned into dressing rooms. While she was touring the art gallery, she admired artist Pamela Murray's paintings. Karp contacted the Orinda artist and struck a deal with Murray by offering to continue selling her art at the store.

Karp plans to also sell items on her website. The focus will be on handbags, jewelry and high-end clothes.

"Commission percentages will be based on the value of the items. It's a partnership between me and the consignee. It's about what we can make together," Karp said, adding, "At the end of the consignment period, which is two months, you would let me know if you want the item back, if you want to donate it to the store, or to Hospice of the East Bay, at which point you'll get a donation receipt from Hospice."

Designs 2 Consign store hours are Tuesday through Sunday, 11 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Consignment transactions are by appointment Tuesday through Friday. Website: designs2consign.com or phone (925) 247-5623.

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- Bundle your clean and dry plastic bags.
- Empty food containers as much as possible. Scrape with a spoon, or wipe with a paper towel and put the paper towel in the green cart for composting.
- Toss food-soiled paper (like napkins, paper food boxes and more) into your green cart for composting.
- And most of all...no garbage in the blue and green carts!

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Empty. Remove any food or liquid contents from a recyclable item before placing it in the recycling cart.



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Santa makes home visits ahead of holiday

... continued from Page A1

With a smile Santa said, "The children are quick to offer me hot chocolate and cookies. Some would like to give carrots and grass for my reindeer. Ho-ho-ho!"

Recalling some of the most asked questions Santa

responded, "They always ask me where I parked my sleigh and if I would give them a ride to the North Pole. They want to know if I keep the reindeer in special places. Besides asking how many elves I employ, they want to know what Mrs. Claus is doing."

"The most popular ques-

tion asked is how old am I," Santa added with a chuckle.

Before leaving each home Santa gives everyone a special candy cane. As he rides off into the night his parting wish can be heard like a distant whisper on the wind, "Merry Christmas to all, and to all a good night!"

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MCE commits \$3 million to support local resiliency projects in the wake of PG&E power shutoffs

MCE's Board voted late November to commit \$3 million to support resiliency projects for its customers. This major new investment is focused on funding local resiliency efforts in MCE's four-county service area, specifically for critical facilities and sites serving vulnerable customers. MCE has already begun extensive outreach with Offices of Emergency Services, Public Health officials, and other community partners to identify the most critical sites and vulnerable communities to target for initial investments.

This \$3 million commitment is in addition to MCE's current \$2+ million Local Renewable Energy & Program Development

Fund, which has supported creation of 12 local renewable projects in MCE's service area. These projects are now delivering approximately 25 megawatts of energy capacity—enough energy to power 12,000 homes annually.

Since the first Public Safety Power Shutoff (PSPS) in June, 2019, MCE has been developing a comprehensive approach to supporting resiliency for communities and vulnerable customers. There have been six PSPS events this year that have impacted approximately 240,000 MCE customer accounts including residences and businesses in Lafayette and Moraga.

—Kalicja Pivrotto, MCE

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~ Life in LAMORINDA ~

Lafayette couple's passion: saving wild animals



Photo provided

WildAid CEO Peter Knights, left, and his family, Charlotte (10), Julia (15) and wife, Corie, in Africa with one of their favorite animals.

By Diane Claytor

Ask Corie Knights about her kids and the Lafayette mom pulls out her phone and proudly shows photos of her two beautiful daughters. She then scrolls through pictures and pulls up another one – only this one is of an elephant. (The screen saver on her phone, “one of my favorite pictures,” she says, is an elephant kissing her younger daughter.) As she reveals the elephant necklace she wears everyday, it’s obvious that, next to her family, Knights’ passion is for those large, majestic animals.

As senior director of major gifts and events for WildAid, the global conservation organization that is leading the fight to end illegal wildlife trade, Knights has the extraordinary opportunity to live her passion everyday. While elephants may be one of the more important animals in the wild for Knights – “I just love them so much and am at peace and humbled when I am in their company,” she says – her love for all wild animals is apparent. “For me,” she stated in a recent interview, “being in the wild is my church. Many of the greatest moments of my life have been spent in the company of elephants, rhinos, whale sharks, giant manta rays, and beautiful cats.”

Knights’ love for animals started when she was a little girl growing up in Connecticut. Moving to Sausalito as a young woman, she would go to the Marine Mammal Center and, she remembers fondly, feed herring milkshakes to baby harbor seals in the middle of the night. But her real passion developed later – after she studied theater at the California Institute of the Arts and spent several successful years acting.

A trip to an African reserve and a ride in the back of a safari vehicle changed Knights’ life. As she tells it, the matriarch of a pack of elephants walking in the bush moved out of the line, “came over to the car and just stood next to me. She was majestic. I was looking into her eyes, which were amazing. I had tears streaming down my face. We very peacefully stared at each other for a minute, maybe two, maybe three ... then she walked away, I felt this overwhelming sadness. I promised myself in that minute that I was going to do whatever I could to protect these magnificent animals.” She has kept that promise.

The illegal wildlife trade is a multibillion-dollar global

industry, driven predominantly by consumer demand. WildAid was founded by Knights’ husband (and current WildAid CEO), Peter Knights, 20 years ago, with the sole purpose of protecting wildlife by reducing demand. The organization has 45 employees (20 in San Francisco) in 20 countries and a budget of more than \$10 million; monies come primarily from grants and donations, large and small. For the past four years, WildAid has received a perfect 100-point score from Charity Navigator (a major charity assessment organization) for financial transparency and efficiency, a number received by less than 1% of rated charities. Additionally, the Knights recently received “The Environmental Award of Excellence” for WildAid by the Lafayette City Council.

“We are the only organization in the world that focuses on ending the demand for endangered wildlife products,” Knights explains. “We do this by producing massive public awareness campaigns, attracting A-list celebrity spokespeople, sporting icons and religious leaders to spread our messages: ‘These are our animals. This is our heritage. Poaching steals from us all,’ and ‘When the buying stops, the killing can too.’”

WildAid achieves its mission to end illegal wildlife trade by leveraging more than \$230 million per year in pro bono media support to broadcast their ads to more than 300 million people primarily in Africa and Asia; celebrities that have spoken on WildAid’s behalf include HRH Prince William, David Beckham, Yao Ming, Jackie Chan and Lupita Nyong’o. While, admittedly, they have a long way to go to remove demand and thus eliminate illegal poaching of wild animals, WildAid’s campaigns are succeeding: shark fin imports are down 82%, the price of selling ivory is down by 80% and the price of selling rhino horns is down by 65%. “It’s all about reducing the demand and bringing down the price,” Knights states.

At a recent WildAid event, Academy Award winner Nyong’o spoke on the importance of WildAid. “What they’re doing is making a huge difference in raising awareness on behalf of elephants, on behalf of wildlife, on behalf of human beings, as well. It’s for our own good.”

Knights has an unwavering commitment to making the world a better place and

saving some of the most endangered species in the world. She repeatedly tells her children that “you never know where you’re going to end up in life but if you have a passion, it will drive you where you should be.”

For more information on WildAid or to donate to help save these wild animals, go to wildaid.org

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Week of Jan 6-10	Customers in the cities and unincorporated areas of Danville and Walnut Creek, plus Alamo, Diablo, and Blackhawk.
Week of Jan 13-17	Customers in the cities and unincorporated areas of Lafayette, Moraga, and Orinda.
Week of Jan 20-24	Customers who missed prior tree collections.
AFTER Jan 24	Cut and place in organics cart; or call (925) 685-4711 for an on-call, organics-only cleanup.

Do

- Remove lights, ornaments, tinsel, and trimmings from branches before placing at curbside.
- Leave trees at curbside on the same day as your regular garbage collection day during your city's tree collection week.
- Cut in half all trees that are 8 feet or over in height.

Don't

- Flocked trees can be collected curbside for a fee or be included in your once-a-year on-call garbage cleanup, but must be scheduled in advance. Call (925) 685-4711. If cut to fit inside with the lid closed, flocked trees may be placed in your black landfill cart.
- Do not leave stands (whether plastic, metal, or wood) on the tree. Trees with these items still attached cannot be picked up.
- Do not leave lights, ornaments, tinsel, or other trimmings on the tree.

* Collected trees will be composted.

Call customer service with any questions (925-685-4711).



Leave trees at curbside on the same day as your regular garbage collection day, of your assigned week. *

Not to be missed

ART

Valley Art Gallery presents its 54th Annual Holiday Collection for Artful Giving through Dec. 28. Their holiday collection includes a wide variety of jewelry, ceramics, glass, textiles, holiday decorations, small paintings, and many other one-of-a-kind gifts crafted by greater Bay Area artists. In addition, unique sliding walls feature over 300 works in a variety of styles, media and prices by the best Bay Area artists. 1661 Botelho Drive, Suite 110, Walnut Creek. Website and telephone: www.valleyart-gallery.org; (925) 935-4311.

Moraga Art Gallery's new show "Serendipities," runs through Feb. 1 and includes artwork by a score of guest and member artists, including Graig Crossley of Moraga, an abstract painter who uses a full palette of blazing primary colors, and Rick Nelson, a wood-turner of the first rank whose forte is museum-quality wooden bowls. An oversized metal sculpture by popular Joe Bologna serves as the show's centerpiece along with jewelry by K. de Groot and walls lined with photographs of landscapes by Wenda Pyman, florals by Lucy Beck, watercolors by George Ehrenhaft and various mediums by new members. The Gallery's new location in the Rheem Shopping Center is 432 Center Street (between Na-

tion's and the Dover Saddlery). For more information call (925) 376-5407 or visit www.moragaartgallery.com.

Art Show "Radiance Captured," Oakland Art Association, Painted Bottles & National Parks, Where Nature Runs Free," Art Gallery at the Orinda Library, 26 Orinda Way, Orinda. The Lamorinda Arts Council presents the oil paintings by Judith Feins, 2D and 3D artwork from members of the Oakland Art Association, painted wine bottles by Kath Balamuth and nature-rich photography by Farzeen Taban during the month of December. Visit lamorindaarts.org for more information.

Lamorinda Arts Council presents "It's Kind of Eclectic" from Linda Huffman through December at the Art Gallery at the Art & Garden Center at Wilder at 20 Orinda Fields Road in Orinda. <https://lamorindaarts.org>

Lamorinda Arts Alliance presents an exhibit, Strictly Abstract, though Feb. 28 at the Lafayette Bank of America at 3530 Mt. Diablo Blvd. in Lafayette. The new exhibit features abstract paintings by Susan Erickson, Carla W. Gelbaum, Irenka Kudlicki, Pam McCauley, Geoff Meredith and Judy Bolef Miller. <https://laa4art.org>

Not to be missed

MUSIC

Gold Coast Chamber Players concert, "Czech Marks" at 7:30 p.m. on Jan. 25 in the Don Tatzin Community Hall, Lafayette Library and at 4 p.m. on Jan. 26 at Piedmont Center for the Arts, 801 Magnolia Ave., Piedmont. There will be a pre-concert talk 30 minutes prior to each concert. Tickets: \$45 General, \$40 Senior (65+), \$15 Student. Purchase online: GCCPmusic.com or by phone: (925) 283-3728.

THEATER

Plotline Theater Company presents "The Glass Menagerie" at 7:30 p.m. on Thursdays, 8 p.m. on Fridays and Saturdays, and at 2:30 p.m. on Sundays from Jan. 17 to Feb. 2. at the Martinez Campbell Theatre, 636 Ward St, Martinez. Ticket Price(s): \$22 for adults and \$19 for seniors and students. Online ticket purchase at brownpapertickets.com or call (925) 350-9770. <https://www.campbelltheater.com> for more info.

LECTURE & LITERATURE

First Friday Forum's lecture "About Air Traffic Control" by Mark Sherry, at 1:30 p.m. on Jan. 3 in the Sanctuary of Lafayette-Orinda Presbyterian Church, 49 Knox Drive, Lafayette. With more than 1,000 aircraft flying in and out of San

Francisco's Airport (SFO) daily how are the airways kept safe? Sherry, who was the staff specialist at the SFO Air Traffic Control Tower for 32 years, can give us answers. Refreshments will be served at 1 p.m. Daniel Levitin introduces his new book, "Successful Aging: A Neuroscientist Explores the Power and Potential of Our Lives" at 2 p.m. on Jan. 19 at Orinda Books, 276 Village Square, Orinda.

KIDS, PARENTS & TEENS

Packets for TK-5 Registration for the next school year, 2020-21 are now available at your neighborhood elementary school. Registration for Lafayette students entering TK and Kindergarten for the 2020-21 school year begins Jan. 13. Additional information can be found at www.lafsd.org. In addition, an informational presentation, "A Roadmap to Kindergarten" will be held from 6 to 7 p.m. on Jan. 9 at Lafayette Elementary, Multi-purpose Room at 950 Moraga Road for all interested parents. This presentation is for parents only.

OTHER

Orinda Books presents an ARF Fundraiser at 11 a.m. on Jan. 11 at 276 Village Square, Orinda. Photographer Barbara Brady-Smith introduces Hug Tails, sto-

ries about the Pet Therapy Team from Tony La Russa's Animal Rescue Foundation. Animal lovers, photographers, veterinary professionals, and anyone interested in pet therapy will find in Hug Tails an array of stories to delight the eyes and lift the spirit. A portion of the proceeds from sales of this book will benefit ARF.

Understanding Your Breast Cancer Risk Factors from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. on Jan. 28 at the Lafayette Library, Community Room. Come and experience an event focusing on the most common breast cancer risk factors. Our panel of medical experts will give an overview of genetic counseling, MRI breast screening guidelines, extremely dense breast tissue findings, recommendations for chemoprevention therapy and lifestyle changes. Reservations recommended. Call (925) 677-5041 x272 or email to sjung@dvothmg.com.

POLITICAL GATHERINGS

Lamorinda Democratic Club - Organizing for Victory 2020 at 7 p.m. on Jan. 9 at the Lafayette Library and Learning Center. Join us to kick off the new year, celebrate our organizers, and support our Democratic representatives and candidates. Complimentary food and wine will be served! Members: free; non-members: \$15 suggested donation. Please RSVP by Jan. 2: MEMBERSHIP@LDclub.org. Please bring new gloves, hats, scarves, blankets to donate for the homeless in Contra Costa County.

SENIORS

Anne Randolph Physical Therapy presentation on Arthritis from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. on Jan. 22 at the Sequoia Room, Lafayette Community Center. Live the best life you can with arthritis! Understand the challenges and changes arthritis brings on and find practical solutions to make daily activities easier. Members: free; non-members: \$10.

GARDEN

The Lafayette Garden Club will meet at 10 a.m. (speaker at 11) on Jan. 9 in Lafayette Veteran's Building, 3780 Mt. Diablo Blvd. Lafayette. Our Guest speaker this month is Judy Thomas who will educate us on Trees and Mediterranean Plants. Judy formed her own consulting company, Bay Area Plant Consultants, in 1996, and serves as a consulting arborist and landscape adviser for attorneys, insurance companies and homeowners in tree-related cases. Free. For more information, contact twalklet@comcast.net

The Walnut Creek Garden Club will hold its monthly meeting beginning at 10 a.m. (program at 11) on Jan. 13 at the Gardens at Heather Farm, 1540 Marchbanks Drive, in Walnut Creek. The topic of the January presentation will be "The three cans..." Kerry Rivers from Republic Services presents the company's sustainability goals and initiatives for a cleaner, safer and healthier world for generations to come. Bring your questions about recycling, landfill technologies, and use of renewable energy.

The Montelindo Garden Club's January meeting will be at 9:30 a.m. on Jan. 17 at the Lafayette Library and Learning Center's Community Hall. Presentation: Camelia Sinensis, A Plant That Changed the World by speaker Susan Leech. Susan is expert in the growing history and enjoyment of tea. One of Montelindo's own, she is the owner of the charming Orinda Village Antiques shop, where she presents teas during which she regales people with the history of the British tea experience. www.montelindogarden.com

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Events:
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www.christianscienceorinda.org

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Sunday - Masses at 7:30, 9:00 and 11:00 am

Andy's jam thumbprint cookies a perfect holiday treat



Photo Wendy Scheck

By Susie Iventosch

I received this beautiful photo of Andy Scheck's jam thumbprint cookies the other day. That got me thinking ... I can always use a great new cookie recipe! Not only are these visually pleasing cookies, but they are delicious too. I asked Andy if he had a good background story to these cookies, thinking perhaps his mom used to make them for him back in Germany, or they were a European tradition that he likes to make for the holidays. But his answer surprised me! I had given the Schecks some homemade huckleberry jam and he says that inspired Wendy to encourage him to make cookies with the jam. Well, that is very nice, but I am all out of huckleberry jam, so I used raspberry jam

in half the batch and melted dark chocolate for the other half and the cookies themselves are delicious. It took Andy a couple of attempts to get a dough that worked well for these cookies. The first recipe he tried came out too flat. So, he went back to the drawing board, did some research, and came up with this recipe. They have a perfect texture and are fun to make. I also learned something new, which is the use of pure vanilla powder, which Andy uses for the powdered sugar dusting on top of the cookies. I'd never bought it before, but he says vanilla powder is widely used in baking in Germany and they often sell it in small paper bags. Here he uses Cook's Pure Vanilla Powder, which is a product manufactured right here in California, in Paso Robles.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 stick butter, softened to room temp (approximately 3.8 ounces)
- 1/4 cup granulated sugar
- 1/4 cup powdered sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 egg
- 1 2/3 cup all-purpose flour
- Pinch of salt
- Lemon zest from 1 Meyer lemon
- 1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1/4 cup of your favorite jam (I also made these with melted dark chocolate in the middle)
- For Sugar Dusting:
 - 1 tablespoon pure vanilla powder
 - 1 tablespoon powdered sugar

DIRECTIONS

Soften butter to room temperature. In a mixing bowl, beat together butter, granulated sugar and powdered sugar. Add vanilla and egg and beat until thoroughly incorporated. Add flour, salt and lemon zest and mix until integrated. Gather dough into a ball, wrap in plastic wrap and refrigerate for 30 minutes. Form dough into small balls about 3/4 to 1-inch in diameter. (If dough is refrigerated longer, that is fine, but it will need to be taken out to soften a bit before rolling into the small balls.) Place balls on cookie sheet lined with parchment paper and push a dent in the middle with your thumb to form a flattened cookie with an indentation in the middle.

Bake at 390 F for about 15-18 minutes until edges become light brown. Allow to cool for 10-15 minutes. When completely cooled, sift vanilla powder-powdered sugar mixture over entire cookie. Then spoon a bit of jam, or melted chocolate into the indentation of the cookies. Enjoy!

I have changed Andy's method for making the cookies, because I usually cream the butter and sugar together before adding the dries, and he is used to mixing all of the dries first and then adding the butter and egg. Other than that, this is his imprint on jam thumbprint cookies and they are yummy!



Susie can be reached at suziventosch@gmail.com.

This recipe can be found on our website:

www.lamorindaweekly.com. If you would like to share your

favorite recipe with Susie please contact her by email or call our office at (925) 377-0977.

One year later – What do we know about grain-free food investigation?

By Mona S. Miller, DVM

It has been 16 months since the U.S. Food and Drug Administration first publicly alerted pet owners about its investigation of the potential connection between grain-free dog foods and a particular form of heart failure. I wrote about this issue in the Aug. 22, 2018 edition of the Lamorinda Weekly. The potential connection - which I believe we can now consider real - appears to be the link between some boutique pet foods that are "grain-free" and taurine deficiency in the affected dogs. Taurine is an amino acid that is often found in meat and fish. It is essential for health of heart muscle, other skeletal muscle, retina and the central nervous system. This taurine-deficient heart disease linked to grain-free foods results in a specific type of heart muscle problem, called Dilated Cardiomyopathy. With DCM, the heart muscle is too floppy to contract well, and dogs go into heart failure fairly quickly.

The FDA first received a few reports in early 2014. After its initial public alert in July 2018, the numbers spiked and the vast majority of cases have been reported since then. There have been 560 cases in dogs reported, and 14 in cats. The mortality rate appears to be 20% for dog and 35% for cats. By all accounts, this is affecting a very small number of pets eating grain-free diets. However, as I tell my clients, no one wants their own dog to be included in this count, in what might very well be a preventable problem.

So, with three reports released by the FDA, and about 560 dogs reported, what do we know now? First, there appears to be no genetic or breed predisposition. A large variety of dog breeds have been reported, with Golden

Retrievers as the number one breed, and "mixed breed" in the number two spot. There have also been a variety of ages and weights, spanning the ranges of young to senior, and small to giant breeds.

More Golden Retrievers have been reported, but this is thought to be due to increased awareness among Golden Retriever social media forums. Breed-specific groups and activities are often more successful in encouraging owners to seek and finance specific diagnostic tests and work with their veterinarians to search for a diagnosis.

With respect to the types of diets involved, FDA's latest report in June provided the names of 16 brands of food that were named 10 times or more. The most common formulation was dry food (with 452 cases), but other formulations included raw, semi-moist and "other." Of the diets reported, more than 90% are classified as "grain-free" and 93% contained peas and/or lentils. A variety of protein sources were found in the diet, and no one type was found as dominant.

Tests for mineral and heavy metal compounds in the diets did not show any abnormalities. Likewise, several amino acids were checked for, including taurine, and no abnormalities were found (thus, the diets themselves were not taurine-deficient). The FDA is still investigating if there is altered taurine metabolism in the affected dogs.

To date, the FDA investigation has not reached any conclusions, and continues to seek collaboration with veterinarians and owners. Additionally, UC Davis School of Veterinary Medicine is actively participating in related studies, including looking for biomarkers of taurine metabolism.

What can dog owners do? Discuss this issue with your

veterinarian at your dog's next wellness exam, especially if he is on a grain-free food. Some dogs are on a grain-free food because of a medical condition (skin or gut issues that seem responsive). But most dogs on grain-free foods, in my opinion, do not have a specific health problem that warrants these boutique diets. In these dogs, if there is no evidence of heart disease, then I recommend to my clients that the dog be transitioned to 25-50% grain-containing food, with minimal amount of peas/lentils, within a one-month timeframe. If a murmur is heard, then further tests are definitely indicated, including blood levels of taurine and heart muscle enzyme. Additional tests such as radiographs or ultrasound of the heart might also be indicated. This is a possibly preventable health problem in dogs, and definitely warrants further discussion with your veterinarian.



Dr. Mona Miller lives in Lafayette with her son, two cats and yellow Labrador. She attended UC Berkeley as an undergraduate, and received her DVM from UC Davis. She has been happy to call Lafayette home since 2001. She can be reached via email at MonaSDVM@aol.com. She welcomes questions from readers that may get incorporated into a column.

The following websites are useful resources:

- <http://lamorindaweekly.com/archive/issue1213/Grain-free-doesnt-mean-problem-free.html>
- <https://www.fda.gov/animal-veterinary/news-events/fda-investigation-potential-link-between-certain-diets-and-canine-dilated-cardiomyopathy>
- <https://veterinarypartner.vin.com/default.aspx?pid=19239&id=8989590>
- https://ccah.vetmed.ucdavis.edu/sites/g/files/dgvnks4586/files/inline-files/UPDATEOct2019ucd-diet-and-dcm-handout_0.pdf

Service Clubs Announcements

Lafayette Rotary Club

Step in on a Thursday and join us for our lunch meeting.
Thursday at noon Oakwood Athletic Club, 4000 Mt. Diablo Blvd., Lafayette.

Next meeting
January 9

www.rotarylafayette.org

www.facebook.com/Rotary-Club-of-Lafayette-CA

Lamorinda Sunrise Rotary

JANUARY WEEKLY MEETINGS

3: No Meeting

10: Linton Johnson, BART Chief Strategist & Spokesman

17: Michael Barrington, Your Paul Harris Dollars at Work

24: Lisa Lopez, Habits of Incredibly Happy People

31: Steve Zuk, Member Presentation

Breakfast, Friday 7:00 a.m.
The Lafayette Park Hotel & Spa, 3287 Mt. Diablo Blvd., Lafayette, CA
www.lamorindasunrise.com

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Lamorinda Village honors its volunteer members



Photo provided

Lafayette mayor Mike Anderson presents proclamation to Helen Gough with Don Jenkins.
By Jennifer Wake

More than 50 Lamorinda Village members, volunteers and donors gathered Dec. 13 to recognize the dedication of a few of its tireless volunteers who help facilitate services to members with the desire to age in place.

Founded five years ago by Ruth McCahan, Lamorinda Village now has 50 active volunteers serving 120 members, offering support in myriad ways: driving members to appointments, preparing meals, helping with computers or office tasks, making household repairs, or simply calling or visiting a member. Drivers are trained through Mobility Matters, ensuring the safe transport of members.

Lamorinda Village president Larry Toy said he and his wife joined the Village five years ago. "We were in our 60s at the time, and we thought it was a good idea to stay in the home [as we age] and support the effort not to go somewhere else." Toy began attending the monthly men's coffee

meetings, and then became involved with the board.

The "Afternoon of Gratitude" event, held in the fellowship hall at Lafayette-Orinda Presbyterian Church, underscored the sense of community. The church provides a small office and its fellowship hall for Lamorinda Village to use free of charge, but the organization has no religious affiliation. "I'm very proud of the turnout today of the members, the volunteers and the donors," McCahan said. "It works; it just takes time."

Toy explained that the most important aspect of Lamorinda Village is to alleviate social isolation, since members may have friends who are gone, or they may have worked and, once retired, need to reconnect to their community. "Holding events like this can break this social isolation," he said.

Students led by Acalanes High School Choral Music Director Bruce Langacher performed several holiday songs at the event, and Lafayette Mayor Mike Anderson presented a proclamation to Lafayette resident



Photo J. Wake

Acalanes High School carolers entertain Lamorinda Village members and volunteers at Dec. 13 event.

Helen Gough, the recipient of the Ed Stokes/Lamorinda Village Community Service Award, stating, "Today is Helen Gough Day in the city of Lafayette."

The Community Service Award is in honor of the late Ed Stokes, who was well known in the Lamorinda community for his philanthropy, and was an inspiration to founding member Don Jenkins, who presented the award. "Volunteers are the heart of this organization. Helen Gough has been with Lamorinda Village since day one and does everything in the office," Jenkins said. "She has done the job of two to three volunteers and she's the first voice you hear when you call to ask for services."

Ed Stokes' daughter, Connie, spoke about her dad and how much he loved the Lamorinda area. "Dad embraced the community over 50 years ago and has given a lot and was a part of everything," she said. "Ed never said no - he was always willing to help any organization. We're very honored that Lamorinda Village is keeping his legacy alive."

The Lamorinda Sunrise Rotary

also presented Gough with the Paul Harris Recognition Award, which is the highest honor Rotary can give. The Rotary club is also a Lamorinda Village donor and helps those who cannot afford to be members. Ed Stokes was also a Rotarian.

Other volunteers were recognized for their contributions, including Orinda resident Rick Shriner, who created the software package to run the Village and match volunteers, Treasurer Jack Sweitzer, Secretary Joyce Hawkins, Andy Amstutz, who was the membership chair from the beginning, and other founding member Skip Bradish. Jane Tiemann was also recognized for serving three years as president of Lamorinda Village.

"We have such an independent society," said Mike Kern, a retired family physician specializing in geriatric care whose sons live out of state. "People are disconnected and need more support. We have an opportunity in our community to do something about it."

For information about Lamorinda Village, visit lamorindavillage.org.

Camino Pablo cleans up



Submitted by
Cathy Chang

Over 35 volunteers helped clean up Lafayette Reservoir recreation area last month and collected over 37 pounds of trash by boat and on the trails. Campolindo High School student, Justin Wang, a Camino Pablo Elementary School alum, volunteered to help lead the volunteering experience and modeled for the young children. Camino Pablo Elementary's staff, Judy Silva, and her children joined the cleanup project as well. The event was organized by Camino Pablo Elementary School's PTA Community Services Committee to create volunteer opportunities for young children and promote Moraga School District's Presidential Volunteer Service Award programs. (www.moraga.k12.ca.us/pvsa)

Photo provided

Campo friends Gruebele and Penny achieve Eagle Rank together



Photo James Brian Studios

From left: Finlay Penney and Mason Gruebele

Submitted by
Rhonda Hughes

Campolindo High School juniors Mason Gruebele and Finlay Penney earned their Eagle Scout badges. The Moraga Troop 234 Scouts will be recognized at an Eagle Court of Honor at St. Monica Catholic Church in January.

For his Eagle project, Gruebele led the building of two gardening beds for St. Mark's nursery school in Orinda. This project helped the preschoolers learn about the plant life cycle by planting their own flowers and vegetables. Penney's Eagle Project was to organize the rebuilding of Campolindo's

Cross-country and Track record board that was in deep disrepair. He oversaw all aspects of the project, from getting his coaches' approval, designing the new record board, sourcing the materials, and, finally, building and installing it.

During his time in scouting, Gruebele became an Order of the Arrow brother and earned the World Conservation award, Religious Knot, and Arrow of Light. Penney earned the Presidential Service Award (gold level). He served as Senior Patrol Leader for the troop and participated in Order of the Arrow, High Adventure Treks, Philmont, and Seabase.

In Memory

Christopher Peter Georgeovich

Jan. 16, 1940 – Nov. 6, 2019



Chris was born on Jan. 16, 1940 in Devonshire, England to parents Costa "Gus" Georgeovich and Petra Markovich. In 1949, the Family immigrated from England to Canada aboard the Aquitania before making their homestead in Geneva, New York. Chris served in the U.S. Army from 1964-1969.

In 1970, the Family moved to Pacheco, California. After the passing of his father, Costa, Christopher took on the responsibilities of the family home. This included caring for all the family members, which were his sisters, their children, and his mother. We all were greatly appreciative for all of his sacrifice, love and caring.

Over the past 50 years, Christopher was a hair stylist/ salon owner in Contra Costa County at various locations in Orinda, Walnut Creek, and Lafayette. He loved his profession and many of his clients became lifelong friends.

Christopher lived life to the fullest and cherished every moment.

He adored the game of golf so much that he wrote and published several books about the game and how to live your life according to the game! He was an avid inventor, artist, musician, and a choir member.

Gretchen Peters, his wife and soulmate, preceded him in death. Over many years, Chris made many lifelong friends whom he shared his love of life! He discussed his many opinions regarding everything from political views, his inventions, the poems that he had written, the books he wrote, his artwork, and the computer generated pixel drawing he spent countless hours creating. Chris was an incredible person who will be remembered for his kindness, enthusiasm, caring and joyous presence!

Christopher passed away unexpectedly on Nov. 6, 2019 following complications from a stroke. Services were held on Dec. 16 at Christ the King Catholic Church located in Pleasant Hill, California.

Community Service: We are pleased to make space available whenever possible for some of Lamorinda's dedicated community service organizations to submit news and information about their activities. Submissions may be sent to storydesk@lamorindaweekly.com with the subject header In Service to the Community.

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LAMORINDA SPORTS

Saint Mary's basketball continues its dominance over California under Randy Bennett



Malik Fitts

Photos Gint Federas

By Jon Kingdon

The Saint Mary's men's basketball team made the 10-mile trek to Berkeley and Haas Pavilion Dec. 14, defeating the University of California, in a game the Gaels' sports information department dubbed the Caldecott Classic, by a score of 89-77. This was the fourth time in five games that head coach Randy Bennett has defeated the Bears during his tenure at Saint Mary's.

After falling behind 10-2, the Gaels offense got into gear and went into halftime leading 45-29. Saint Mary's two leading scorers, Malik Fitts and Jordan Ford, each dominated one half of the game. Fitts had 21 points in the first half, going 5 for 6 from the 3-point line and finished the game with 28 points. Ford only had seven points in the

first half and scored 25 points in the second half to lead all scorers with 32 points.

Ford was happy to defer to Fitts in the first half because he was playing so well: "I just had to keep getting into the flow of the game. When Malik is shooting open shots for us, it opens up the floor for all of us. It's take your poison between Malik and myself."

In the second half, Saint Mary's led by as many as 19 points but Cal battled back to close the gap to eight with two minutes to go in the game; a Tanner Krebs field goal, a Ford layup and two foul shots, and two more foul shots by Tommy Kuhse closed out the game for the Gaels.

Saint Mary's leads the nation in three-point shooting percentage (44.4%) and this game further solidified their hold on that statistic, connecting on 10 of 15 shots from be-

yond the arc. The ability of the team to shoot so well is simple, according to Ford: "We have a lot of really good shooters that put in the time in the offseason and we have a lot of confident guys with people picking each other up. Everybody trusts each other to make the open or contested three."

When the play of his centers was less than stellar, Bennett was forced to call upon sophomore forward Dan Fotu to play inside: "Dan was probably the unsung hero for us. He went in there at center and he had to battle. He was very effective, the offense and the rebounding was better and he really gave us a big lift. He had a big impact on the game." Fotu scored seven points and grabbed a career-high nine rebounds.

Dating back to last season, Cal had an eight-game winning streak at home and Bennett took great satisfaction in the victory, but was disappointed in seeing the rivalry go on hiatus, since the Gaels have defeated the Bears the last three seasons: "It's big to beat Cal being 10 miles apart. They're a better team this year and it's a good win for us."

California head coach Mark Fox responded with a terse "no" when asked if he would like to continue to schedule their closest opponent, explaining how the Bears will have two additional conference games next season which would not allow them to continue to play the local schools. Besides Saint Mary's, Cal has lost to San Francisco and Santa Clara this season.

"If they're good and we're good it makes sense," said Bennett. "We've done our part. They have to do what's best for his program as we do with our program, but I'm not going to campaign in front of the media, 'Hey, let's make this happen.' I probably have before." Prior to Bennett's arrival at Saint Mary's, going back to 1910, California had dominated the series, winning 64 of their prior 80 games.



Jordan Ford



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Onward and upward for Lamorinda wrestling



Photo Gint Federas

By Jon Kingdon

After a month of practicing, the Lamorinda wrestling teams are now ready to compete against anyone besides their teammates. The growth of the sport in Lamorinda continues with each of the teams' male and female wrestlers.

Acalanes

Ken Trainer has stepped in as the head coach at Acalanes as Micah Canestero has taken a paternity leave in Brazil. Trainer has probably the top two wrestlers in Lamorinda in his co-captains, Steven Williams (160), who was first team all-league last year, and his son James (126). Both are considered favorites to make it to the state tournament at the end of the season.

"Steven and James are our best and toughest wrestlers," said Trainer. "I'm able to turn over a good portion of the practice to them to give them a chance to be leaders."

It's been a very positive

experience for Trainer so far: "I've learned that our wrestlers learn quickly. They bounce back from tough practices and they all have each other's backs. It's a family environment where the upper classmen are taking the younger wrestlers under their wings."

Sophomores Lucas Haase (132) and Matt Soto (145) have made great strides from their freshman year and Trainer is looking forward to bringing them to the local tournaments. Jakob Ross has come over from the football team and will be wrestling at 136 pounds. Anthony Mirabito, who will be wrestling at 170 pounds, has also looked impressive.

Of the 33 wrestlers on the team, only three of them are females and they are all freshmen but have impressed Trainer: "They're all very driven and each has their own agenda for being driven. Overall, it's the most physical group of freshmen I have seen for a while and should be

good for years to come."

Miramonte

In his third season as the head coach at Miramonte, Jason Rosiak is the longest tenured wrestling coach in Lamorinda. After a 4-2 record in league matches last season, which was highlighted by its defeat of Campolindo for the first time in 15 years (48-36), Rosiak is looking for the team to take the next step up: "Our team is a little smaller but we're a more focused and aggressive squad. We have a lot of freshmen that can contribute right away and some upperclassmen that should do well in the tournaments and league matches."

The three captains of the team, Ryan Edmister (152), Shannon Lipp (138) and Dylan Welch (113), have all stood up to Rosiak: "Ryan put in a great deal of work this offseason. I'm looking for Shannon to springboard closer to the state meet this year after making it to the second day of the NCS tournament and Dylan, who placed in the league tournament, should have a solid season."

Lipp, who is in her third year of wrestling, has made a big jump from her sophomore to her junior year, says Rosiak: "Shannon has always had good first moves. She has focused on putting together a Plan B, to have moves to fall back on when her initial moves are not working."

Two freshmen that have jumped to the fore are Hanna Ripper (138), who comes to wrestling with a competitive jujitsu background, and Nathan Meyer (120), a multi-sport athlete who has brought a lot of energy to the team.

The key for the success of

the team to Rosiak is simple: "We're working together as a team and are continuing to create a strong wrestling culture and work ethic."

Campolindo

In their second season as co-head coaches at Campolindo, Louis Suba and Nikko Triggas are, like the other coaches, ready for the tournaments to begin: "We're done with the weeding out process so we have the group that will be with us the rest of the season," said Suba. "It's a good group. We have a number of wrestlers that came to our open mats all summer long and most did not miss a session and we saw improvement in leaps and bounds."

With a number of young wrestlers, Triggas is looking to his veterans to provide the direction: "We're excited about this year. We have some upperclassmen that can really lead the program and help direct the younger wrestlers."

Though they won't have the wrestlers to fill in at the heavyweight slot, the Cougars should be able to fill the other 13 spots. Co-captains Adrian Bautista and Noah Hamann, who made second team all-league, will be wrestling at 120 and 126, though it is still up in the air as to who will be at either weight. It's an ongoing process, says Suba: "We go week to week to see who deserves to wrestle on the varsity or the JV team."

There are a total of 10 girls on the team. Sophomore Isabelle Lurie has shown a major commitment over the summer and has become a leader on the team, said Suba: "Isabelle made all of our open mat practices after wrestling as a freshman. She even went

to some wrestling camps on her own and has improved her speed, strength, quickness and technique."

Lurie also brings a background in jujitsu and was looking for a sport with team bonding: "I went to the open mats and found that I really like the people and enjoyed the sport. The atmosphere and environment is really good in that we are all very supportive of each other. I've gotten a lot more self-confident and more sure of myself. I wasn't very good when I began but I put a lot of effort in and hope that it will pay off this season."

Sophomore Walker Johnson has also made great strides over his freshman year, says Suba: "Walker went to some camps over the summer and has improved a lot. He will be wrestling at 160 pounds this year. He made NCS last year and I'd be surprised if he did not make it this year."

Ohia Paris has worked hard to put on the weight to be able to wrestle at 106, says Suba: "Ohia did not miss any practices and is one of the hardest workers on the team and we're looking for big things out of him this year."

Triggas says that he and Suba are taking the long view with their team: "We're hoping to have some of experienced wrestlers push through to state this year. We've got some work to do. The culture is starting to build a little bit. It will take a couple of years to get the culture where we want it to be but we're building this program up to where it can be. We want fighters that grind for every point and never give up."

LaMO soccer wins State Cup

Submitted by Alicia Keenan

LaMO boys U11 Silver took home their division State Cup (Silver 4) Dec. 14 in Modesto.

Coached by Rouzbeh Delija, the boys brought home the coveted trophy to Lamorinda after a 4-1 win against San Francisco Glens Evolution.



Photo David Keenan

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(we prefer to receive your original photo file,
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Top row, from left:
Rouzbeh Delija, Amrit Dudwal, Caiden Merschat, Ben Karpuk, Alex Park, Alec Schwarz, Conner Isleib, Jonathan Judson, Grayson Keenan; bottom row: William Parks, Eddie Leung, Ryan Williams, Christopher Hernandez, Matthew Morelli, and Jonah Imberg.

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Campolindo hazing incident lands students suspended, coach off team

By Jon Kingdon

When the Campolindo boys soccer team finished last season with a 20-4 record, it was anticipated that this was going to be another successful year for the Cougars. But that was before a Nov. 8 hazing incident directed at the five new players on the team, which led to the suspension of the soccer program for one month while the incident was being investigated, the firing of the head coach Miguel Camancho, and the expulsion or suspension from the team of nine of the players, seven of whom were expected to be starters this season.

John Nickerson, the superintendent of the Acalanes Union High School District, first heard of the incident from Campolindo's principal, John Walker, who called it "very serious."

"It was the new players to the varsity team that were hazed," Nickerson said. "They were all interviewed and it was a very thorough investigation with very clear findings of fact."

No one has been willing to go on the record as to what actually transpired with the haz-

ing incident but the soccer team and their parents appeared before the AUHSD governing board on Dec. 11 and were given the opportunity to express their opinions and reactions to the punishment on the players.

Since there has not been any official statement as to what occurred, rumors have run rampant about the suspended players. One of those players spoke at the meeting about how difficult it has been for him since the suspension: "The impact has gone far beyond not only being able to play games. It has created a darkness that we cannot pull ourselves out of. Vicious and vulgar rumors have been spread. It's critical for all of you to understand that the awful things that have been said about us and about what happened are not true."

Keith Pearce, whose son is still on the team complained about "the injustice which includes letting the gossip of high school teenagers fill the void of communication and transparency about the incident and how it was being handled."

There were admissions of wrongdoing from the parents

and the players, though the unanimous feeling from the group was that the punishment did not fit the crime and that "they're teenagers that made mistakes." John Chambers, father of one of the hazed players, said, "Everybody agrees that it was wrong and inappropriate. There has to be some sort of limit on punishment. And that's where governance comes in. You're the governing board and from my perspective, this is your opportunity to provide governance."

Brian Ahern, a father of one of the suspended players, cited a comment by Walker regarding discipline from an article in the Campolindo school paper, La Puma, from last year: "We have great students here at Campo. And sometimes they make mistakes. Our jobs as educators is to help them work through those mistakes and insure that it doesn't happen again. And we've got to use a variety of tools for that."

Three of the players that were hazed all denied they were harmed in any way: "The truth is, these boys did not hurt anybody," one player said. "All they wanted to do was to welcome us to the team the way

they had been welcomed."

Miguel Camancho, who was in his first year coaching at Campolindo and has not been accused of having any knowledge or involvement with the hazing of the players, was not at the board meeting but later spoke highly of the players: "They're all good kids that just wanted to get out on the field and play. I learned on the following Thursday (Nov. 14) that something happened (from) Principal Walker. The next thing I learned was that I was being let go on Nov. 25. He told me that they were going to move in a different direction with no other explanation than that."

According to AUHSD policy, "hazing" means committing an act against a student or coercing a student into committing an act that creates a substantial risk or harm to a person in order for the student to be initiated into or affiliated with a student organization or for any other purpose. Consequences are suspension with the possibility of expulsion. Nickerson noted the school district considers hazing activities of any type to be inconsistent with the educational goals of the school dis-

trict and are prohibited at all times. "The players should have been informed of the policy," he said.

Though the parents and students were appealing for reinstatement of the players and the coach, Nickerson said there is not an appeal process for disciplinary actions like this, and while the governing board of the district can ask that certain things be done, they don't have the authority to overrule that disciplinary action.

Nickerson endorsed the students coming before the governing board: "I thought it was important and a good thing that they advocated for themselves."

Camancho has not talked with the players since he was released from his position. "I'm more worried about the boys," he said. "It's not more important for me to coach. It's more important for the players to get their season back."

After losing their first four games of the season without scoring a goal (one game was a forfeit), Campolindo won their first game on Dec. 16 against Deer Valley 7-0.

Campolindo football plays in NCS championship game



Photo provided

Submitted by Chris Schofield

For the sixth time in nine years, the Campolindo Cougars (10-3) played in the

North Coast Section Championship game. While winning the previous five championship contests in 2011, 2014, 2015, 2016 and 2017, the Cougars came up short in 2019 to finish as the

Division 2 Runner Up.

Though a Division 3 school, due to the recent successes, the NCS competitive equity formula pushed Campo up a division to compete in the Division 2

bracket. The Cougars earned a No. 3 seed and hosted the Livermore Cowboys in the first round. Campo rushed 42 times for 263 yards and five touchdowns, including 108 yards on 13 carries from Senior Brandon Manty, and the Cougars advanced with a 41-16 victory.

In the semi-finals, Campo travelled to Napa to play the No. 2 seeded Vintage Crushers (10-1). In a back and forth thriller, the Cougars upset the Crushers, scoring a touchdown in the final 25 seconds of the game to win 28-21 and secure a spot in the NCS Championship Game. Senior Grant Harper threw for 230 yards and 3 touchdowns, including 194 yards to Senior Rex Curtiss.

The Championship game saw the Cougars square off against the No. 1 seed, and eventual State Champions, Clayton Valley Charter – a team that played

in the Division I Open semi-finals the past three years but were placed in the Division 2 bracket for this season. The Cougars held their own, matching the Ugly Eagles in the first half to a 7-7 tie going into the locker room. Senior Will Windatt had a rushing touchdown and Senior Charlie Craig forced and recovered two fumbles to lead the defense. In the second half, however, CVC controlled the contest winning by a final score of 27-7.

It was another great year for Campolindo. The 2019 campaign saw the Cougars finish with at least 10 wins for the ninth straight season.

"For this group of neighborhood kids to win ten games and make it to the NCS Division 2 Championship game was an incredible accomplishment," said Head Coach Kevin Macy.

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Digging Deep with Cynthia Brian

... read on Page D6

Feng Shui

Mindful decorating during the holidays



Photos provided

By Michele Duffy

Holiday Feng Shui ... is that even a thing?

The answer is a very merry yes! Whether you celebrate Christmas, Hanukkah or Kwanzaa, the holidays offer a fun time of year to experience Feng Shui since decorating your space creates intention and attention on your home. Home is exactly the point of the holidays, especially as we gather together with family and friends, share the year's bounty with gift giving, special foods, and celebrate the holidays with those closest to us.

We can apply the Feng Shui Bagua map and principles to almost anything. The home, office, garden, car, desk, the list is endless! How do we approach the holidays with Feng Shui? First, let's remember the entire level of lighting that factors into excellent Feng Shui in a space. The holidays are the season of light and beginning with a Christmas tree, lights energize the space and create mood, atmosphere, magic and warmth in our homes. Placing your Christmas tree, Menorah or Kwanzaa Kinara in a specific Bagua area will immediately energize that Bagua area, so where do you need an

energetic boost this time of year? Be more mindful this year when you place your tree, menorah or kinara. Overlay the Bagua and identify what Bagua area is blessed by these pieces and then create your own intention for that Bagua area to be uplifting and ignited. With a Christmas tree, the Wood Element (actual tree), Fire Element (the Christmas tree lights), and Metal Element (ornaments) are all present, and chances are with a multicolor scheme with a kinara, all Five Elements are included and that creates total balance.

A Kwanzaa kinara offers a soft glow and will energize whatever Bagua area it is placed in.

Second, Feng Shui encourages us to create a front entrance and front door that are well appointed with unique and inviting wreaths and seasonal displays. Also make sure your foyer is well lit and decorated as well!

Space clearing is always recommended in Feng Shui and involves purposely changing the energies of our environments and raising the overall vibration of the place. Consciously go through the house and kids' rooms and remove broken toys, toys that have not been played with in months, and toys that are no longer age appropriate. The end of the year is the perfect time to let go of clutter, making room for new beginnings, new energy and new opportunities.

The holidays elevate your space and letting go of some of the tougher mental and emotional stories we cling to and replay over and over again will elevate you mentally as well. Contemplatively gain clarity on what you want to release and what you want to welcome more of into your home, heart and life.

... continued on Page D4

Lamorinda home sales recorded

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MORAGA	11	\$850,000	\$2,110,000
ORINDA	8	\$1,000,000	\$1,885,000

Home sales are compiled by Cal REsource, an Oakland real estate information company. Sale prices are computed from the county transfer tax information shown on the deeds that record at close of escrow and are published five to eight weeks after such recording. This information is obtained from public county records and is provided to us by California REsource. Neither Cal REsource nor this publication are liable for errors or omissions.

LAFAYETTE

1003 Almanor Lane, \$1,010,000, 3 Bdrms, 1196 SqFt, 1953 YrBlt, 11-07-19, Previous Sale: \$760,000, 12-11-18
 1046 Brown Avenue, \$1,100,000, 4 Bdrms, 1648 SqFt, 1978 YrBlt, 11-04-19, Previous Sale: \$125,000, 08-01-92
 929 Dana Highlands Court, \$1,550,000, 4 Bdrms, 3538 SqFt, 1999 YrBlt, 11-05-19, Previous Sale: \$1,525,000, 10-09-07
 4008 Happy Valley Road, \$3,175,000, 4 Bdrms, 2327 SqFt, 1951 YrBlt, 11-08-19, Previous Sale: \$1,500,000, 05-04-18
 3384 Mildred Lane, \$1,425,000, 4 Bdrms, 2198 SqFt, 1962 YrBlt, 11-07-19
 430 Ponderosa Court, \$1,700,000, 4 Bdrms, 3891 SqFt, 1984 YrBlt, 11-04-19
 3380 Ridge Road, \$1,425,000, 4 Bdrms, 2330 SqFt, 1947 YrBlt, 11-04-19, Previous Sale: \$682,000, 09-12-08
 3333 South Lucille Lane, \$1,100,000, 3 Bdrms, 1696 SqFt, 1954 YrBlt, 11-15-19
 22 Toledo Court, \$5,525,000, 5 Bdrms, 6001 SqFt, 2016 YrBlt, 11-12-19, Previous Sale: \$6,300,000, 06-15-17
 3330 Vaughn Road, \$1,745,000, 3 Bdrms, 2736 SqFt, 2003 YrBlt, 11-08-19, Previous Sale: \$1,630,000, 04-06-17

MORAGA

742 Augusta Drive, \$914,000, 3 Bdrms, 1749 SqFt, 1974 YrBlt, 11-15-19
 26 Corte Aires, \$1,430,000, 4 Bdrms, 2399 SqFt, 1976 YrBlt, 11-12-19
 12 Corte La Rado, \$1,600,000, 6 Bdrms, 2954 SqFt, 1967 YrBlt, 11-12-19, Previous Sale: \$1,354,000, 04-20-06
 105 Devin Drive, \$1,165,000, 4 Bdrms, 2316 SqFt, 1960 YrBlt, 11-07-19
 10 Doral Drive, \$967,000, 2 Bdrms, 2238 SqFt, 1978 YrBlt, 11-06-19, Previous Sale: \$959,000, 02-05-19
 1163 Larch Avenue, \$1,425,000, 4 Bdrms, 2136 SqFt, 1963 YrBlt, 11-06-19, Previous Sale: \$825,000, 10-18-04
 1266 Larch Avenue, \$1,445,000, 4 Bdrms, 2102 SqFt, 1967 YrBlt, 11-07-19
 15 La Salle Drive, \$1,087,500, 3 Bdrms, 1492 SqFt, 1961 YrBlt, 11-13-19
 231 Los Santos Court, \$2,110,000, 3 Bdrms, 3036 SqFt, 2018 YrBlt, 11-15-19
 130 Miramonte Drive, \$850,000, 4 Bdrms, 1772 SqFt, 1965 YrBlt, 11-15-19, Previous Sale: \$665,000, 09-13-05
 100 Sandringham Drive, \$1,450,000, 5 Bdrms, 2743 SqFt, 1975 YrBlt, 11-13-19, Previous Sale: \$1,310,000, 08-10-06

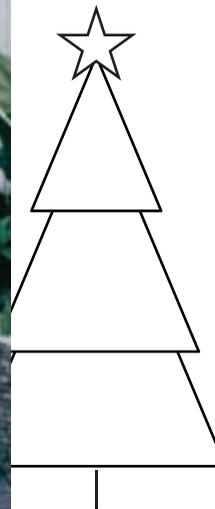
ORINDA

155 Canon Drive, \$1,322,000, 3 Bdrms, 2767 SqFt, 1941 YrBlt, 11-05-19, Previous Sale: \$642,000, 10-04-01
 43 Dos Osos, \$1,600,000, 3 Bdrms, 2253 SqFt, 1954 YrBlt, 11-07-19, Previous Sale: \$1,075,000, 04-02-12
 172 Lombardy Lane, \$1,225,000, 2 Bdrms, 1667 SqFt, 1952 YrBlt, 11-15-19
 163 Moraga Way, \$1,000,000, 3 Bdrms, 1610 SqFt, 1948 YrBlt, 11-13-19
 30 Moraga Viax, \$1,402,500, 4 Bdrms, 2486 SqFt, 1972 YrBlt, 11-15-19, Previous Sale: \$1,175,000, 12-06-17
 25 Moraga Viax, \$1,804,000, 4 Bdrms, 3369 SqFt, 1953 YrBlt, 11-13-19, Previous Sale: \$205,500, 02-01-87
 17 Overhill Road, \$1,402,000, 5 Bdrms, 3215 SqFt, 2018 YrBlt, 11-13-19, Previous Sale: \$975,000, 01-12-16
 2 Tarry Lane, \$1,885,000, 3 Bdrms, 3297 SqFt, 1951 YrBlt, 11-14-19, Previous Sale: \$1,325,000, 05-23-03



Wishing you and
your family a
Happy Holiday.

The Paddy Kehoe
Team



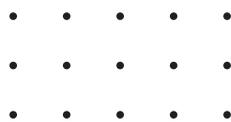
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Feng Shui

Mindful decorating during the holidays



Photo provided

... continued from Page D1

Use your favorite essential oils, citrus or cedar spray, burn palo santo or sage, or ring bells to clear your space of whatever is no

longer serving your higher purpose. Start at your front door, walk clockwise all around the house, finishing back at your front door.

The holidays are family-centric times and Feng Shui says to make sure lots of family photos are displayed, print some images out or even use a digital photo frame for a family collage. Having pictures around of family boosts our self-esteem, resilience and confidence, and kids and teenagers will especially benefit by including family images in their rooms.

Give the gift of gold in the 2019 Golden Pig year! Oranges are revered and considered natural gold with the ripening of opportunities and wealth. You can also give Hanukkah gelt, gold wrapped coins and candies, and gold jewelry.

Decorate your dining room table with accents of the season. Dining room Feng Shui includes creating an intimate gathering for family and friends and Christmas calls for

whimsy, color and warmth. Choose linens and centerpieces that borrow from natural elements like pine cones and greenery and, of course, candles, since many a memory are made in the cozy candle lit dining rooms around the world.

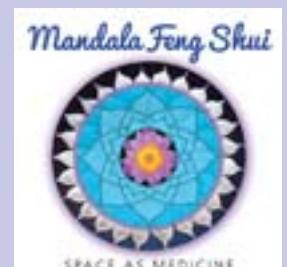
Finally, buy your home a present, or something everyone can enjoy. Make a ceremony out of gifting the home and your family with the gesture of generosity. This can be a new game everyone can play together, a new movie to watch together, a new espresso machine to enjoy, new tile in a sun porch for family enjoyment, installation of a camera for security.

Whatever your holidays symbolize to you and your family, may love remain in your hearts, words and thoughts and may all the warmth and joy of the season be yours this year and for many more to come. Happy Holidays!

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FAMILY ZHEN Wood East Green Spring	HEALTH TAI JI Earth Center Orange, Yellow Brown	JOY & COMPLETION DUI Metal West White Autumn
KNOWLEDGE & SELF-CULTIVATION GEN Earth Northeast Blue	CAREER & OPPORTUNITIES KAN Water North Black & Dark Blue Winter	HELPFUL PEOPLE & TRAVEL QIAN Metal Northeast Grey

Michele Duffy, BTB M.F.S. is an Orinda resident who, since 1999, enjoys creating "Space as Medicine" Feng Shui one space at a time, as well as hiking in nature, cooking, and spending time with her family; Canyon Ranch Feng Shui

Master, International Feng Shui Guild (IFSG) Red Ribbon Professional. To schedule a professional 2019 Feng Shui Consultation, contact Michele at (520) 647-4887 or send an email to spaceharmony@gmail.com.





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May the Spirit of the Holidays be with you throughout the New Year.

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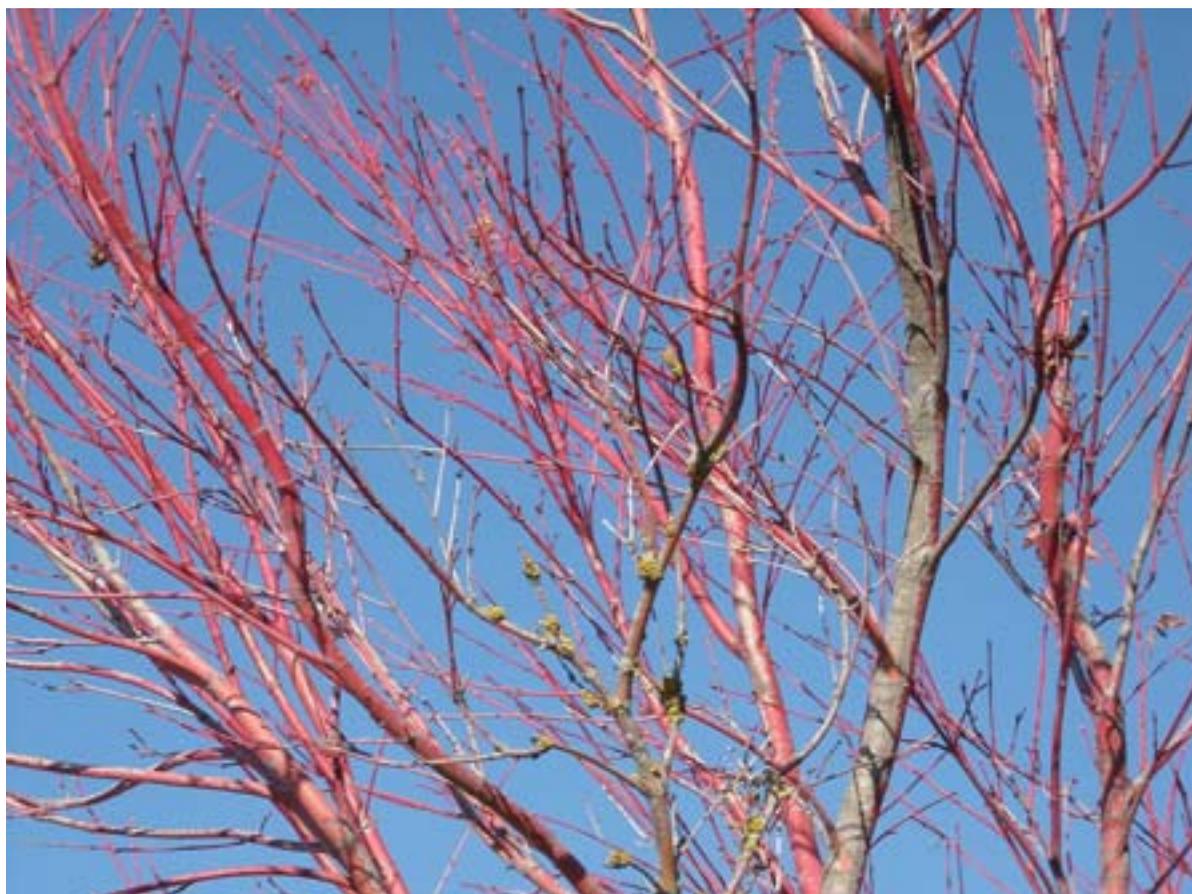
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Digging Deep with Cynthia Brian

Have yourself a very merry Christmas!



Photos Cynthia Brian

The naked branches from a red-branched Japanese maple are gorgeous in winter.

By Cynthia Brian

“Nature gives to every time and season some beauties of its own.”

– Charles Dickens

It’s the most wonderful time of the year!

Every December I utter these same words and each Christmas seems to come earlier than the previous year. Where do the seconds, minutes, hours, days and years go? When I was a child doing my best to be nice instead of naughty, Christmas took forever to arrive. Today, Rudolph and his sleigh are on fast forward.

We have officially entered the season of winter. The deciduous trees are bare, the sky

is gray, and gardens have gone to bed for a long nap. Poinsettias, cyclamen, narcissi, bottlebrush and red branches of Japanese maples offer hints of bright color amidst the dreary daylight landscapes.

Come nightfall, magic happens. Houses and fountains are illuminated with twinkling lights, cuddly teddy bears line windowsills, and treetops glisten with dangling ornaments. Oh, what fun it is to ride around to admire the festive luminosities.

Nature has a way of healing itself. With the rainfall, the formerly charred hills of Moraga and Lafayette are turning a verdant green. In the spring poppies will be flourishing as the ground revitalizes from the frightening October fires. Hurray for Mother

Nature!

Did you ever see the 1947 movie, “The Ghost and Mrs. Muir” starring Gene Tierney and Rex Harrison? It’s a classic film and imminently watchable even by today’s standards. What stood out for me in revisiting that movie recently was the mention of a Monkey Puzzle Tree. Although I had traveled to both Argentina and Chile from whence the tree originates, I had never paid it much attention until I visited Butchart Gardens in Canada. I thought it looked like a naturally decorated Christmas tree with its very unique “pine” cones, although it is not related to a pine tree. The proper name is Araucaria Araucana and what makes it so unique are its cones. The male cones look like hanging cucumbers and the female cones resemble

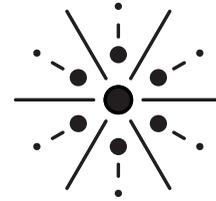


The endangered Monkey Puzzle tree looks like a Christmas tree.

Happy New Year



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Digging Deep with Cynthia Brian

Have yourself a very merry Christmas!



**This must be where
Santa and Mrs. Claus
live with their elves.**

Photos Cynthia Brian

... continued from Page D6

The male cones look like hanging cucumbers and the female cones resemble round bulbs. The seeds in the cones are edible like pine nuts and consumed by the indigenous population. This national tree of Chile can live to over 1,000 years (Is Santa Claus that old?) and is now on the endangered list. Why is it called a Monkey Puzzle Tree? Evidently, a monkey is unable to climb this tree, thereby puzzling the monkey.

At this time of year, so many delicious smells emanate from the kitchen. Making

persimmon pudding from our hachiyas with lots of cinnamon, nutmeg, cloves and other spices is one of our family traditions. I've also been drying sage, bay, oregano and rosemary to use in recipes and give as gifts. The scents of the holidays are gifts to the senses. Make sure to try some new recipes.

Deck your halls, jingle your bells, and rock around your tree. It's the season to be jolly.

Savor the blessings of being with family and friends and have yourself a very merry Christmas.

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backed by the fading roses.**



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Cynthia Brian's End of December Gardening Guide

BRING branches from your evergreen trees inside to use as inexpensive holiday décor. The fresh fragrance gives your home a cozy, festive feeling.

BAIT for snails and slugs.

ADD lights to your bird houses and fountains.

TREAT all acid loving plants with sulfur to lower the soils pH.

DECORATE for the New Year with the red cones of the magnolia tree.

REDUCE erosion by leaving a vegetative cover or stubble from perennials in the soil. The decreased water runoff keeps contaminants like fertilizer and pesticides from our streams.

GIVE a gardening book to a gardener. Gardening books in the winter reminds us that spring will be here soon, so we need to get ready! Whether a master gardener or a novice, there's always something new to learn from "Growing with the Goddess Gardener" or "Chicken Soup for the Gardener's Soul" (we have hard-to-find, rare first editions) available at www.CynthiaBrian.com/online-store.

CONTACT Contra Costa Mosquito and Vector Control at (925) 685-9301 or www.ContraCostaMosquito.com for education or if you have a problem with rats, mice, skunks, ticks, yellowjackets, and mosquitoes. The services are free as you've paid for them with your taxes.

PRUNE roses anytime you have time. Don't forget to root canes that you love in potting soil or offer them to other gardeners.

FILL a Santa hat with pinecones to give as a last-minute gift.

FEED the birds by allowing seedpods to form on perennials.

FINISH planting all spring blooming bulbs.

DONATE to your favorite charity. It is the season of giving. Mine, of course, is Be the Star You Are! (<http://www.bethestaryouare.org>)

RIDE around the town to admire all the holiday ornamentations of decorated houses and gardens.

THANKS for another great year together, gardening, laughing, inspiring and reading.

Happy Gardening. Happy Growing. Happy Christmas to all and to all a Good Night!



Cut a branch from a magnolia tree with red cones for a New Year decoration.



On a sunny wintery day, bottlebrush shines brightly.



A festive fountain is lit for Christmas.

Cynthia Brian, The Goddess Gardener, raised in the vineyards of Napa County, is a New York Times best-selling author, actor, radio personality, speaker, media and writing coach as well as the Founder and Executive Director of Be the Star You Are!® 501 c3. Tune into Cynthia's StarStyle® Radio Broadcast at



Cynthia Brian loves the glitter of the holidays.

www.StarStyleRadio.com.
Buy a copy of her books, Growing with the Goddess Gardener and Be the Star You Are! Millennials to Boomers at www.cynthiabrian.com/online-store. Hire Cynthia for writing projects, garden consults, and inspirational lectures. Cynthia@GoddessGardener.com www.GoddessGardener.com

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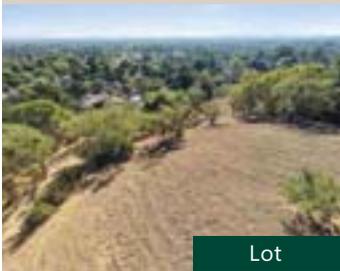
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