

Starry Night Parachute Prom helps toddlers celebrate Valentine's Day

Submitted by Emily Best

Gymboree Play and Music of Lafayette organized its first ever Starry Night Parachute Prom Feb. 9 to celebrate Valentine's Day. Cuteness overload was the order of the night as little prom babies and toddlers had the chance to have a whole lot of fun with special Valentine-inspired activities and play. On arrival the tots could walk, crawl or run on a special 'red carpet' to receive their prom crowns. Gymboree Play and Music of Lafayette is a new family community and indoor playspace that provides a wide range of early childhood classes for ages up to 5. The selection of classes are designed to help develop cognitive, physical, and social skills.



Photos provided

Five local students win Good Citizen awards



Photo provided

Submitted by Louise Diracles

The Acalanes Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution treated students to high tea Feb. 1 in the Fellow-

ship Hall of Moraga Valley Presbyterian Church. These five students were selected by their schools as outstanding citizens and leaders deserving of the DAR Good Citizens Award and Scholarship Program. Their essay submissions were optional and impromptu, and the students were asked to describe how they would energize the youth of America. The students read their essays to an audience of DAR members, parents, counselors, and friends at the tea. Chairperson, Susan Bourne, then presented each student with a monetary award, a recognition certificate, and a U.S. flag that had been flown in their honor over our nation's Capitol.

Acalanes DAR Chapter essay contest winner and Good Citizen was Isabelle Restrepo

from Campolindo High School. Isabelle is active in sports, coaching, tutoring, club activities, and she speaks three languages. Isabelle wants to pursue a career in international business.

Georgia Carpenter was the Good Citizen winner from Acalanes High School. She is on the board of the Lindsay Wildlife Experience and will attend the College of William and Mary in the fall. Georgia hopes to become a politician and lawyer.

Sophie Foster won the Bentley School's Good Citizen Award. She has extensive volunteer experience and is a teacher's aide, a student ambassador, a peer counselor, and a member of the student body government. Sophie hopes to become an attorney

and run for U.S. president in 2040.

Alexis Im was the Good Citizen winner from Contra Costa Christian School. Alexis is captain of the school's varsity volleyball and basketball teams, a member of her student body government, and a band and choir member. Alexis hopes to become a doctor and serve overseas.

Naomi Desalegne won the Las Lomas High School Good Citizen Award. She led her school's Pineapple Club welcoming English Language Learners into the school. Naomi was awarded the Silver Presidential Award recognizing her 2019 volunteer hours, and she hopes to become a surgeon and join Doctors Without Borders.

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.

In Memory

Steve Gentry

Nov. 2, 1946 – Jan. 20, 2020 Resident of Orinda



Our beloved local beekeeper and founding member of the Wagner Ranch Nature Area, Steve Gentry of Orinda, California, passed away on January 20, 2020 of natural causes. Steve was born on November 2, 1946 and except for travel, lived his entire life in

Orinda. Growing up, he played high school football and enjoyed exploring Orinda's open spaces. He loved history, especially the survival stories of America's original explorers. After excursions in Europe and the US, Steve returned to Orinda where he established his business, "Steve's Bees," a line of honey, beeswax, candles, soap and more; selling them at several of the local farmers' markets often in his bee-print shirt. He was known for his warmth and wisdom and for telling a great story. He was committed to his community answering any question a customer might have about his craft. And there was always a "honey stick" for the kids! He was a founding member of the Mt. Diablo Beekeepers Association, one of the largest in the state.

Steve had a lifelong respect for nature, and was especially proud to have received Orinda's William Penn Mott Environmental Award in 2008 for his contributions to conservation. His passion beyond beekeeping and the environment was the Wagner Ranch Nature Area, an outdoor education facility in Orinda. He was a founding member and served as president of the Board of Directors for a decade until 2019 when he stepped down for health reasons. The Nature Area embraced his mission to helping local youth develop a respect and passion for the environment. During his tenure, the Friends preserved the unique Nature Area programs for Orinda's school children.

Steve is survived by his brother, Mark Gentry, Mark's wife, Martha Gentry; his niece, Chris Grill, Chris's husband Darren; his nephew, Sean Gentry; grand-niece, Shannon Grill; and his grand-nephew, Brandon Grill.

Donations can be made to Friends of the Wagner Ranch Nature Area/FWRNA. Steve will be honored at our Wildlife and Olive Festival on April 19 at around 12:15 p.m.

Rest in peace, Steve. You made an immeasurable impact on everyone you met, and you will be missed.

Burton Valley students support Kincade Fire victims



Photo provided

Submitted by Lila Morrison

It's official: Burton Valley Elementary's AIM class annual fundraiser, "the Book Bonanza," was a success once again! Every year, Cathy Martinsen's AIM class raises

money from the Book Bonanza and donates it to a local cause. This year, the students of Martinsen's AIM class decided that the proceeds made from the Book Bonanza would be donated to the Kincade Fire victims, in the hope to help them after all they had

been through. After weeks of collecting gently used books from Burton Valley families, they priced the books and sold them to other classes and teachers. Books were priced from 10 cents to \$3. The AIM students also sold bookmarks, origami, Rainbow Looms, and raffle tickets. When sales began, all the students worked hard, and it paid off. The sales went on for three days before students counted their money for the final total. In the end, they were left with \$1,716.50! The students were proud to send in the check for the Kincade Fire victims, knowing that the money they raised would help the lives affected by the fires. Martinsen's class is very thankful for all the support from the BVE community. Their book donations and purchases really helped the class succeed in their goal. Thank you to everyone who supported the Burton Valley Book Bonanza!

Children's Health Guild raises over \$182K for kids



Photo Mugsy Clicks

Trisha Renno, Patricia Balch, Martina Sola Heneghan, Sarah Franti, Charlie Gaulke, Gina Witucki

Submitted by Sharon Koh

Children's Health Guild hosted its annual winter fundraiser, BELIEVE, Dec 12 at the Ritz-Carlton San Francisco. More than 300 guests came together for the annual function that benefits George Mark Children's House in San Leandro and UCSF Benioff Children's Hospital in Oak-

land in continuing to provide the full spectrum of medical care for children and their families, including emergency and ongoing treatment, as well as transitional, respite, and palliative care. The event raised over \$182,000 thanks to the generous sponsors and attendees of this year's event.

Guest Speaker Martina Sola Heneghan, a Bay Area native, tech industry executive, and mother shared the

story of her first child who was diagnosed with a rare life-limiting neurological condition. Her family's journey led them to GMCH where they were able to find refuge as they have navigated an extraordinary path of caring for their child.

Patricia Balch, a former high school biology teacher, swim coach, and mother to four boys, also spoke and shared the story of her oldest son, who was diagnosed with brain cancer. After his passing, she set on a journey to go back to school to become a nurse; she currently works in the Pediatric Intensive Care Unit at CHO. Alongside her work as a nurse, Balch has put efforts into fundraising for brain cancer research.

The wonderful day of community, shopping, speakers, and fundraising was chaired by the efforts of our very own Lamorinda Women, Gina Witucki of Orinda and Trisha Renno and President of CHG Charlie Gaulke of Lafayette. The day's success was a result of their hard work and dedication.

Share Your Celebrations and Remembrances

If you would like to share an announcement about a special event or achievement, such as a wedding, engagement, scholarship or graduation of a local resident, or about a special person from Lamorinda who has passed, send a photo along with your text (up to 250 words) to storydesk@lamorindaweekly.com, and include "Celebrations and Remembrances" in the subject line.