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Larry and Betty Sydora and Patrick Lowry respect social distancing at the Moraga Country Club.

Photo Sophie Braccini

# Slow reopening of outdoor spaces begins

By Sophie Braccini

On a beautiful afternoon during the first week of May, Larry and Betty Sydora and their friend Patrick Lowry took their first swings in weeks at the Moraga Country Club. The happy golfers were part of those tennis players, golfers, skaters, and frisbee throwers who were allowed once again to play, provided they did it safely. Little-by-little, outside recreation facilities in Lamorinda are reopening and residents are loving it.

The manager of the Orinda Country Club, Brian Thomas, explained that club members registered to play have to arrive wearing a mask, that carts are single-person use only, and that players are encouraged to walk; no guests are allowed at this time. Members of the same family can play together and when friends join in, social distancing must be happening from teeing grounds to putting greens. The Sydoras in Moraga, subjected to similar

rules, drove a "family" cart together while Lowry walked the 18 holes, something he found a bit challenging after the long weeks of confinement. Tennis courts that reopened May 4 also saw instant bookings caused by six weeks of pent-up demand, despite the strict rules such as only single play allowed, and no sharing of tennis balls. Brent De Groot who teaches tennis at OCC, was booked for lessons from day one until 8 p.m. every day.

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# Volunteers spearhead collaborative push to test seniors at all Lamorinda residential facilities



Photo Pippa Fisher

From left: De'Janae Gideon, Dr. Armando Samaniego, Dr. Brian Candell, Vice Mayor Susan Candell, Dr. Yenjean Hwang, Crystal Mendes, Anna Callanta before heading into Merrill Gardens to test residents and staff May 1.

By Pippa Fisher

Under the leadership of Lafayette Vice Mayor Susan Candell, acting as a private citizen, volunteers are expediting

COVID-19 testing for some of the most vulnerable across Lamorinda in all residential senior living facilities. What started as a Lafayette initiative, as Candell worked with her husband, Dr. Brian Candell of the Orinda Medical Group, his partner Infectious Disease Specialist Dr. Yenjean Hwang, and Dr. Armando Samaniego of Lafayette StatMed, in conjunction with County Health Director Chris Farnitano to test all residents and staff at the three facilities in Lafayette, has now expanded to Orinda and Moraga. Candell is working with the Lafayette Community Foundation to raise the \$17,000 needed for the initiative in the city and is excited to report that the Orinda and Moraga Community Foundations are also fundraising for the testing in Orinda and Moraga. "Many of our senior residents in

Lafayette are low and very-low income, so we need to make sure they have access to this testing too," says Candell. Contra Costa County has begun offering free testing to all residents but, in order to expedite testing to seniors for whom attending a drive-through site or clinic is not feasible, the testing initiative is hugely appreciated. The first facility tested was Merrill Gardens in Lafayette on May 1. General Manager Aubrey Goo expressed his deep appreciation for Dr. Hwang and Dr. Candell for performing the tests so quickly: "The support of these physicians means the world to us." And in Merrill Gardens the news was good, with all but three tests that needed redoing completed.

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