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## Slow reopening of outdoor spaces begins

By Sophie Braccini



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

The tennis courts in the Orinda Community Park reopened on May 4, but are subject to closure if health guidelines are not adhered to, as noted by Parks and Recreation Director Todd Trimble. The tennis courts in the high schools remain closed.

If adults on golf courses and tennis courts took the rules seriously and abided by them, it was a bit more difficult for the fully energized teens to do the same. On Wednesday, May 6, groups of very happy skaters who weren't paying much attention to rules of social distancing were spotted in the Moraga Commons' skate park, which had just reopened in compliance with the county's ordinance.

All the park's playgrounds remain closed for now, nets on basketball and volleyball courts are still missing, but of course people continue to use sand areas to play, hopefully members of the same family/unit when sharing a ball. Moraga's frisbee golf course is open. Gyms and pools are still closed for now.

In Lafayette, the Rim trail that circles high in the hills above the Reservoir was reopened by the East Bay Municipal Utility District, but its website notes that the Reservoir itself remains closed and that the Rim will be monitored for responsible public health protecting behaviors. EBMUD maintains the closure of the parking lots, restrooms, drinking fountains, picnic areas, and the playgrounds of the many trails the public utility manages, though walking the trails is permitted.

The ordinance allows for some summer camp plans to get under way. Moraga Parks and Recreation Director Breyanna Brandt explained that her team had opened registration for Moraga day camp programs for different age groups for children whose parents are considered essential workers, as required by the current order. She described the Hacienda de las Flores' multiple rooms that will allow to separate different 12-children cohorts as the current order mandates. Brandt hopes that by June restrictions will relax further and more activities can be allowed for all ages.

"Parks and open space support healthy minds, bodies, and spirits and we want to provide residents those opportunities," she affirmed.



Some residents play volleyball - although without a net - at the Moraga Commons Park. Photo Sophie Braccini

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