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Del Rey teacher of the year up for county award



Del Rey fourth-grade teacher Katie Sahm

By Sora O'Doherty

For the first time ever, according to Orinda Union School District

Superintendent Carolyn Seaton, an Orinda teacher has been selected to compete for the Contra Costa County Teacher of the Year award and a chance to compete at the state level. Katie Sahm is a fourth-grade teacher at Del Rey Elementary School, and an Orinda Teacher of the Year.

As principal of Del Rey Elementary School, Kirsten Theurer says she has worked with many amazingly talented educators, and Sahm rises to the top. "Her passion for students, dedication to best practices, and her vision for building strong learning communities for students and colleagues have touched the lives of hundreds of individuals over her nine years in Orinda," according to Theurer.

Nominating Sahm, Theurer

said, "From the moment Katie began teaching it was clear that she connected with students, families, and colleagues in a very special way. It wasn't an easy beginning. Stepping into her fourth-grade classroom to meet students three days after the school year started amidst angry letters from parents and unsettled students was challenging, to say the least. Katie handled it with poise and grace and quickly won over the community with her warmth and well thought out communications. From the gifted student who fell in love with Genius Hour to the struggling student who benefited from her carefully designed curriculum and personal support, to the divergent student who grabbed on to

the variety of products allowed to demonstrate mastery of standards, she is loved. She has a masterful way of knowing what students need and just how to give it to them."

Theurer went on to recount the story of a young man, a former student of Sahm's, who while at Del Rey was removed from home and placed in foster care. "It was an abrupt and sad departure," Theurer said. On a recent visit, the student let Theurer know that Sahm was his favorite teacher of all time. "She made him feel loved and safe and he would never forget her. If you were to talk to students who have had the privilege of being in Katie's class you would hear many such declarations. She builds a caring com-

munity one person at a time."

Sahm was called upon by OUSD to lead a district-wide grade level planning group. She planned professional development and worked alongside other fourth-grade teachers to ensure an aligned quality curriculum for students across the district. This strong professional learning community continues to shine.

In recommending Sahm for Teacher of the Year, Theurer concluded, "Katie embraces life. She listens fully. She thinks positively. She responds thoughtfully. When you are with her you have all of her attention, and it makes you feel valued. That is a gift she gives from her heart."

Orinda is open for business, cautiously



Photo provided

By Sora O'Doherty

Gradually, businesses in Orinda are reopening, but not in a rush. Owners are happy to welcome customers back, but only in ways that are safe for customers and for owners and their employees. Government services are also slowly reopening. Parks and Rec ran its first camps for small groups, and a few community youth sports groups have been given authorization to use city and school district fields. The library, which has been offering online services, is now open for book pickups and drop-offs.

Theatre Square isn't exactly bustling, but it isn't completely deserted either. On a recent afternoon, people were enjoying eating outdoors or having coffee. Many of the restaurants in the Theatre District offer some sort of outdoor dining. The Fourth Bore has a large outdoor patio with heaters, and there is seating by other restaurants, including Shelby's and Saffron.

Some shops are open, such as Sanvitalia Home and Garden. Others have reopened with limited hours, such as Orinda Travel, which is open from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Sweet Dreams Toy

Store is open, requiring face coverings for all customers. Others, such as Anytime Fitness and Bamboo Spa remain closed. Anytime Fitness will be one of the last businesses that will be able to open, according to general manager Jami Edgell, but it has been offering the entire community, not just to members, numerous free virtual classes each day and are planning to organize some outdoor classes.

For other businesses, the COVID-19 pandemic has brought a surprising increase in business. Square Baby founder Katie Thomson said their online, direct-to-consumer business has skyrocketed as parents look for healthy, fresh, convenient options that save them time in the kitchen and save them a trip to the grocery store. Square Baby meals are delivered frozen with dry ice in an eco-friendly shipping box with compostable insulation. "Recently, we have started meeting parents at our Theatre Square store to pick up the meals if that's more convenient for them. However, we imagine we'll be switching back to no-contact doorstep delivery with the new spike in cases."

Derek Zemrak, owner of the Orinda Theatre, Cine Cuvee,

and Republic of Cake, has been organizing some entertainment under the theatre marquee on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays. Cine Cuvee has moved all the interior tables and chairs to underneath the marquee and arranged them to enable social distancing. They encourage the wearing of masks and welcome food from other restaurants as long as customers purchase drinks from Cine Cuvee. On Sunday from 2 to 5 p.m. there is an open mic for singers from the Bay Area.

Zemrak says that Republic of Cake is doing really well, expanding the wholesale side and selling to Diablo Foods, as well as doing more deliveries and expanding offerings. The the-

atre, he added, is ready to go, but the studios are not distributing any films until July 24.

Sutter Health Orinda Urgent Care has been open since June 8 and Orinda Optometry Group reopened on May 4. During the time that the office was closed, according to optometrist Kristine Eng, their team spent the time reviewing new guidelines, implementing procedures, and acquiring protective equipment. "We installed Plexiglass guards throughout the office, don PPE including face shields, and have a sanitizing process for all surfaces and eyewear to keep our patients and employees safe." The parking lot has become the waiting area, and temperature checks are re-

quired before entering the building. The schedule has been rearranged in order to ensure social distancing.

Also on the Village Side, Orinda Books is slowly trying to make its way back to some semblance of normalcy, continuing with virtual author events. Although the store cannot yet host book club meetings, it is open for customers to come in and browse the shelves.

Mash Gas, which has remained open as an essential service, initially experienced a 70% drop in business. Owner Mo Mashhoon dropped prices to help the community, and business recovered to about 85% of pre-pandemic levels.

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Orinda Public Meetings

City Council
Tuesday, July 21, 7:15 p.m. Regular Meeting
By Teleconference Only

Planning Commission
Tuesday, July 14, 7 p.m.
By Teleconference Only

**Wildner Council Subcommittee
Special Meeting**
Thursday, July 16, 5:00 p.m.
By Teleconference Only