

~ Life in LAMORINDA ~

Local café's Goodness Tree brings joy to isolated seniors this holiday season



Photo Pippa Fisher

Genuine Goodness Co-owner Donna Pickthall directs a group of young volunteers as they decorate the Goodness Tree outside her cafe in Orinda Dec. 3.

By Pippa Fisher

For the owners of Orinda's Genuine Goodness, helping others in time of need is just what they do. And this holiday season they have come up with a way to involve the community in brightening the lives of seniors during the pandemic that has many feeling completely isolated.

It was an idea that came to Genuine Goodness Co-owner Donna Pickthall, inspired by her sister-in-law in England.

Recognizing that many older folks may not be able to see their families this year, Pickthall and her business partner Diane Eames have put up a Christmas tree outside their café with names of local seniors so that people in the community can take a name, and return with a small gift to be distributed to Lamorinda Village members as a reminder that they are not forgotten.

It is truly a community affair. Pickthall's daughter and her friends, masked up and

ready to work, came along to the shop Dec. 3 to decorate the tree and make the tags. Orinda Boy Scout Troop 237 will be distributing the gifts.

"These gifts are reminders from the wonderful people in our community that the older adults in our lives are loved and missed," says Lamorinda Village Operations Manager Kathryn Ishizu.

Ishizu has been working with Genuine Goodness since the summer. "Through this pandemic, Genuine Goodness has been a huge supporter of

seniors, donating meals to seniors on Fridays and also supporting our hardworking Lamorinda Village volunteers with a meal."

"We started helping seniors at the beginning of COVID," explains Pickthall. "Our cafe had become quiet and we had surplus food every week so we decided to use it to make into meals to give away. I realized our seniors were particularly isolated, so getting a meal a week was not only a treat, but a connection with a neighbor and a reminder that they are not forgotten."

They make soup, salad and fresh bread once a week for 25-30 seniors in the community at the Orinda Senior Village and throughout Lamorinda in a partnership with Lamorinda Village.

As with many other small businesses, COVID has hit Genuine Goodness hard. Pickthall says although they had to close the café, they keep going with "Take and Bake" meals which can be ordered online

through their website. Additionally Pickthall says she is launching pop-ups for delivery and collection of British foods, with the next event on Dec. 13 at Genuine Goodness in Orinda.

Lafayette residents Eleanor and Larry Bishop are grateful for Genuine Goodness' generosity.

"Sometimes when you are older," says Eleanor Bishop, "your appetite is not as it was but when you open the beautifully presented and delicately prepared food from Genuine Goodness, it just makes your eyes sparkle."

Ishizu is equally grateful and notes that Genuine Goodness has been there to help those suffering from unexpected catastrophes.

"They've collected donations for fire victims and closer to home, they have been wonderful supporters of the older adults in our community," says Ishizu. "Lamorinda Village is grateful for their thoughtful inclusion of seniors during this difficult time."

More information on ordering Genuine Goodness' Take and Bakes can be found at <https://www.gengoodness.com/> Information on the British pop-up shop can be found at <https://www.greatbritishpopupshop.com/>

One local man's road to prosperity through 'Jeopardy'



Henry Baer Photo provided

By Jon Kingdon

Millions of Americans across the country on Nov. 23 watched that evening's episode of the game show "Jeopardy," and heard the introduction of "Henry Baer, a software engineer from Lafayette, California." The next two episodes for Baer began with "Our returning champion ...".

Baer graduated from Acalanes High School in 2014 and from Caltech with a degree in computer science. While at Caltech, Baer applied for the "Jeopardy College Tournament" but he was turned down. He applied

again and was then chosen as the first alternate for the tournament. Since no one dropped out, all he could do was watch the tournament along with the studio audience.

Two years later, he received a call from the show. "They called me last January and said I should apply again, which I did," said Baer, who now lives and works in San Francisco for a small company named Merge, which is building a platform to facilitate the movement of data between enterprise software.

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