

Published April 14th, 2021

Some pandemic perks have staying power

By Diane Claytor



A group of Moraga residents at their weekly cul-de-sac cocktails gathering. Photo Katherine Choi

Every Friday at 5 p.m., neighbors - now friends - grab their outdoor chair, beverage and glass, snack, mask and sweater, and head up the hill to the end of their Moraga street. Chairs are placed in a socially distanced circle and, as more people arrive, the circle expands. It's cul-de-sac cocktails, a neighborhood get-together that has been taking place for the last year.

There are families with kids, empty nesters and singles; they range in age from almost 2 to 80-plus. Several households are regulars, showing up just about every Friday; others join in occasionally. All agree that it's a great way to spend several hours on a Friday evening. Birthdays are celebrated with cupcakes and singing, accomplishments are touted and toasted. Binge-worthy shows and takeout restaurant meals are suggested, jokes are told, children are bragged about, wine recommendations are shared and investment strategies discussed. Many of these party-goers previously only knew each other in passing - perhaps giving a smile or a quick wave; now friendships have been formed and support given during these challenging times.

Several weeks after the pandemic forced everyone to shelter in place, this reporter, tired of staring at the same walls of her house and frustrated at being unable to socialize with friends and family, had a conversation from across the street with a neighbor. The question: Would she and her husband be interested in a socially distanced glass of wine? From that initial discussion, an email asking the same question was sent to approximately 12 neighboring households.

The weather was warming up, the days were growing longer and the time forced to stay home was continuing. Everyone agreed the weekly get-together was a great idea and many began showing up every week. "Fridays have suddenly become a whole lot better," one neighbor proclaimed.

Dogs are invited and they seem to enjoy the gathering almost as much as their humans, going from chair to chair performing tricks and collecting treats. Cathy Tyson, who brings Louis, her King Charles spaniel-mini golden retriever mix every week, states that Friday is definitely his favorite day. "As soon as I pick up my chair to take out to the cul- de-sac, Louis can barely contain himself," she says.

Neighbors out for a walk come by. Delivery drivers smile and wave. In November, a local candidate canvassing the neighborhood stopped by, handing out his pamphlet and answering questions. Other friends, family and neighbors have occasionally joined in, always bringing their own chairs and refreshments.

Recently, an uninvited guest meandered by. One of Moraga's renowned coyotes slowly approached the circle. He wasn't the slightest bit interested in joining the gathering and left when some in the group chased him back down the hill.

As the winter days shortened and the weather got colder, cul-de-sac cocktails continued. Jackets, scarves and hats were donned, blankets were brought out to cover legs and a small propane fire-pit lit to provide some warmth. The days are once again getting longer and the group pledges to continue getting together.

What started out as a simple diversion to staying at home has evolved into a group of good friends meeting up on a weekly basis. As Jim Kurkjian, one of the regular participants, noted, "I so appreciate how dear we have become to one another in this pandemic."



One of the renowned Moraga coyotes thinks about crashing a recent cul-de-sac cocktails gathering. Photo Katherine Choi

Reach the reporter at: info@lamorindaweekly.com

[back](#)

Copyright © Lamorinda Weekly, Moraga CA