

Local Rotary Clubs celebrated and honored for COVID relief donations to Nagpur, India



Photo provided

Lighting the lamp ceremony, from left, outgoing District Governor Shabbir Shaikh (District 3030 in India), Ex. Union Minister Vilas Muttemwar, Rotary Club President Pritesh Chanda, and, lighting the lamp, incoming District Governor Ramesh Meher.

Submitted by
Alka Mulakaluri

A dedication and recognition ceremony was held recently in Nagpur, in central India, for installing newly acquired equipment for treating “black fungus,” a rare COVID-related eye disease. This hour-long ceremony of thanks and recognition was based on Indian customs by lamp lighting, a symbol of purity and auspiciousness for blessing and recognizing accomplishment, and was recorded on online video. Rotary Clubs in the district, which includes Lamorinda, raised \$35,000 to fund the devices and the effort was spearheaded by leaders in Moraga, Lamorinda Sunrise, and Rotary District leaders.

Moraga Rotarian Alka Mulakaluri made an emergency flight to Nagpur, her home town, to visit a sister who had been in an automobile accident. She quickly found that COVID was surging there, the hospitals were not equipped to treat so many people, and local service clubs were making huge efforts to help. After contacting Nagpur Rotary, her first home club, she called Moraga Rotary President Brian South to see if her Club could raise donations for

COVID relief. South quickly enlisted outgoing and incoming District Governors Mark Roberts and Kathy Suvia, and District International Chair Sheila Hurst, to solicit donations from the 70 Rotary Clubs in the district, and to coordinate the funds transfer according to India government regulations. This effort was done at lightning speed – just three weeks from Alka’s initial call to funds arrival in Nagpur.

The ceremony included participation by Ex. Minister Vilas Muttemwar, Rotary District Governors Shabbir Shaikh and Ramesh Meher, and Rotarian Promod Acharya and the devoted team of doctors from Indira Gandhi Government Medical College where the medical devices will be used.

Moraga Rotary is a 54-year-old service club within Rotary International, one of the four Clubs in Lamorinda, and one of about 33,000 Rotary Clubs in about 200 countries. Regular meetings are held at noon on Tuesdays at La Finestra restaurant. If you are interested in information about Rotary, or would like to donate to their worthy causes, please visit the website at moragarotary.org, or call Brian South, president, at (925) 888-7052.

Troop 219 names four new Eagle Scouts

Submitted by Scott Finegold

Lafayette Boy Scout Troop 219 honored four young men who have achieved the Eagle Scout award, the highest rank in the Boy Scouts of America, at 6 p.m. on July 26 in Lafayette.

Troop 219 is led by Co-Scoutmasters Chris Hunter and Kevin Bates. “We are incredibly grateful to have these dedicated volunteer leaders supporting Troop 219 which has developed a solid curriculum of activities to teach boys outdoor skills and leadership. Our leadership allows the Scouts to actively lead all the events, and this supplements what they learn through academics and sports,” said Scott Finegold, a Troop 219 Boy Scout community volunteer.

To attain the rank of Eagle Scout, a Scout must earn the scouting ranks from Tenderfoot to Life Scout. As a Life Scout, he must be active in the troop for at least six months, earn at least 21 merit badges, serve in a Leadership position, show Scout Spirit, and plan, develop and offer leadership to others in an approved Eagle service project helpful to any religious institution,

school, nonprofit organization or the community.

As part of earning their Eagle rank, the following service projects were completed by each Scout: Kade Finegold designed and constructed a garden at Burton Valley Elementary School. This new garden will give children the opportunity to learn about growing organic fruit and vegetables and healthy eating within the school’s new garden. Derek Kotarba constructed and installed four planter boxes around the buildings of Shelter Inc. in Fairfield, and planted plants to give the residents a place to de-stress and garden. Luke Watson made two large LEGO walls made of two pieces of plywood, eight planks of wood and 32 LEGO brand base plates that were hung at Burton Valley Elementary School. Children will be able to build and create on the LEGO walls during recess if they choose. Garrett Siegel built and installed owl nesting boxes at Lafayette’s Buckeye Fields. The owl boxes will eliminate the rodent problem, keep the fields in pristine condition and prevent the use of rodenticides, which are harmful to our owl population.

AAUW honors 2020-21 Distinguished Woman



Dr. Jan Cushman

Photo provided

Submitted by Alison Mackenzie

Every May, the Orinda-Moraga-Lafayette Branch of the American Association of University Women (AAUW-OML) honors one of its members as the Distinguished Woman of the Year, for services to the community and the branch.

In April 2020, Dr. Jan Cushman of Orinda was named AAUW-OML Distinguished Woman for 2020. Due to COVID restrictions, the May 2020 luncheon in her honor was postponed to September 2020, then postponed to May 2021. Dr. Cushman was finally honored at an in-person, outdoor, masked and vaxed brunch in September 2021. She thus became the first honoree to hold the title for two years, 2020 and 2021.

Cushman got a BS in biology from Cornell, an MS in zoology and physiological ecology from Colorado State and a PhD from Utah State in toxicology. She was employed by Chevron for over 30 years working in Toxicology. She has been married to husband, Bruce, since 1978 and they have two children.

After she retired in 2011, she joined AAUW. Her primary focus as an AAUW member has been the Tech Trek program.

The AAUW Tech Trek program sends middle school girls to a week-long science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) camp. The OML branch traditionally has sent six or seven girls from the three local middle schools (Orinda, Stanley and Joaquin Moraga) to a camp that has been held at Stanford. The purpose of the Tech Trek program is to show young girls how exciting STEM can be and connect them with other girls interested in science, before they get to high school and think STEM is only for boys. Tech Trek was canceled in 2020 and held virtually in the summer of 2021.

Cushman has headed the OML Tech Trek committee and has been responsible for accepting applications, interviewing applicants, providing a social orientation both before and after camp, as well as acting as a dorm mom at Stanford for four years.

Cushman is also the president of the OML branch for 2021-22. In addition to her work with AAUW, Cushman is also the local Girl Scout Gold Award Coordinator, responsible for helping over 100 girls attain the Girl Scouts highest honor.

MVPC organizes backpack drive for Afghan children coming to Bay Area



Image provided

Submitted by
Rosalind Bassett

Moraga Valley Presbyterian Church is holding a backpack drive to help the Afghan children who are being resettled in the Bay Area.

MVPC is assisting the IRC (International Rescue Committee), which is one of the two authorized agencies tasked in resettling the refugees in the Bay Area, to put together 50 backpacks with school supplies for the Afghan children who will be starting school. The backpack drive will be held

through Oct. 22.

Only newly purchased backpacks and supplies will be accepted, with two types of backpacks needed: for elementary school age; and for middle/high school aged children.

Elementary school age backpacks should have packed inside them: pack of markers, pack of colored pencils, pack of pencils, erasers, small pencil sharpener, lined notebook paper, notebook, ruler, yellow highlighter, pens, child scissors, construction paper, index cards, (optional: lunch bag, water bottle, stickers or small toy). Donors should also include a note of welcome and support to the recipient.

Middle/high school aged backpacks should have packed into them: pack of pencils, erasers, pens, yellow highlighter, sharpie, ruler, index cards, 1-3 paper notebooks, paper folders to store papers, scissors, tape (optional: lunch bag, water bottle, small toy) as well as a note of welcome and support to the recipient.

Backpacks will be collected in the MVPC office through Oct. 22 (10 Moraga Valley Lane, Moraga). The Lafayette Chamber of Commerce is also accepting the backpacks at 251 Lafayette Circle, Suite 150 Lafayette.

For more information, email: rbassett@mvpctoday.org

Community Service: We are pleased to make space available whenever possible for some of Lamorinda’s dedicated community service organizations to submit news and information about their activities. Submissions may be sent to storydesk@lamorindaweekly.com with the subject header In Service to the Community.

In Memory

Fred Herkenhoff



Fred Herkenhoff, internationally renowned geophysicist and beloved father and spouse, passed away on Sept. 8, 2021 while surrounded by his family. Fred is survived by his wife Linda, five sons, four grandchildren and one sister.

Fred and his family called Orinda home for 30+ years. He took full advantage of the trails in Lamorinda for hiking and running. Fred was always proud of winning his age group medal in the Lafayette Reservoir 5K each year. Through the years he coached Orinda T-ball, soccer and

basketball youth teams. Neighbors loved to consult with him about soil movement and geologic concerns on their property. No matter where in the world Fred traveled he would always say how lucky we were to come home to a lovely place like Orinda.

Over his 40+ year career, Fred held the role of Chief Geophysicist for Chevron USA, Chevron Australia, Chevron Overseas Petroleum and CALTEX. Fred’s technical leadership led to major oil and gas discoveries that affected the course of nations including the United States, Canada, Australia, West Africa, Indonesia, the Middle East, and China. In recognition of his outstanding contributions Fred was appointed as a Chevron Fellow in geophysics and his impact is still evidenced by numerous influential mentees, publications, patents, and awards throughout his extensive career.

Fred was born in Stamford, Conn., and grew up in Hibbing, Minn., and Mountain View, Calif. He graduated from Stanford with a master’s in geophysics and was the Valedictorian for his class.

Fred was an extremely active, fit guy who had a passion for sports of all kinds. He was an avid golfer, daredevil skier, very competitive runner, and (of course) a big Warriors fan.

Fred loved adventure travel which he was able to share with his family on many occasions. He lived and/or worked in 51+ countries, and visited all the continents. His adventures took him from base camp at Mt. Everest to the summit of Mt. Kilimanjaro. He dipped into the Antarctic Ocean and ran races through the jungles of Thailand. He survived a cyclone in Tonga, riots in Columbia, flooding in Myanmar, a stampede of wildebeests in Zimbabwe and being held at knife point while on a field crew by a local chieftain in Sumatra.

Upon retirement in 2014 he accepted several roles: Docent at Mt. Diablo State Park, Visiting Scientist at Lawrence Berkeley Labs, Lecturer at UC Berkeley in Engineering / Geophysics, and Vice President of the Bay Area Geophysical Society.

Fred was a legend whose legacy will live on. Heaven became richer and we became poorer with the loss of a true servant leader, one whose excellence and enthusiasm encouraged many others to join him in his pursuits. We were better with him and his mark on our lives will remain with us always.

We will miss you...