



MORAGA

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Chamber of Commerce:
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Community Wildlife Watch comes to Moraga

By Vera Kochan

Following a spate of coyote attacks within Moraga and Lafayette that took place for eight months, between July 2020 and March 2021, citizens had become increasingly vigilant in their attempts to help authorities capture the lone animal responsible for terrorizing the area. Although tests revealed that the captured coyote was not rabid, the entire experience was unnerving to residents.

In a March 17 Lamorinda Weekly article confirming the coyote's capture, Moraga Police Department Lt. Brian South stated, "We plan to continue working with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife to bring a wildlife awareness program to the community moving forward."

That time is now. Wildlife

Watch began in Southern California, and according to South, Moraga is the first community slated to undertake the program in Northern California. Launched in 2015, its purpose is to reduce potential conflict regarding human-wildlife interactions that are increasingly on the rise in suburban areas.

Much like the Neighborhood Watch program, which it strives to emulate, Wildlife Watch was created to help communities cope with their issues involving wild animals encroaching into neighborhoods and wreaking havoc or harm, by providing training and support.

Most of the problem lies with human behavior. By providing a source of food in the form of outright feeding a wild animal with hand-outs, or inadvertently providing sustenance with unsecured garbage cans, pet food or by leaving pets outdoors as easy

prey, coyotes and other wild animals remember where the last source of food was and return to the same general area for their next meal.

The Wildlife Watch website explains how the training works: "Empower people to respect wildlife through the understanding of ecology and conservation principles; increase awareness of local wildlife, and reduce complacency while promoting education at all levels; teach conservation and ecological principles based on facts not feelings, seeking first to understand and then be understood; encourage empathy and compassion for those affected by human-wildlife conflict (e.g., pet or livestock loss); value and respect each other's diverse views about how to manage human-wildlife conflicts; reduce public safety incidents, property damage, pet or livestock loss, and general nuisance

reports involving wildlife; and develop effective partnerships through collaboration, coordination, and communication between the agencies entrusted to manage and protect our wildlife resources – and the communities they serve."

This type of "conservation coaching" will be provided to local agencies and community groups (whose volunteers are expected to choose "block captains" for their respective neighborhoods). Initially members of CDFW will conduct the training/coaching efforts with the expectation that eventually members of Lamorinda CERT will take over the role.

For more information visit: <https://wildlife.ca.gov/Wildlife-Watch> or contact MPD Lt. Brian South at: south@moraga.ca.us or call (925) 888-7052.

Flag pole dedication, tree planting at Pear & Wine Festival

After nearly 40 years, a new flagpole was dedicated at Moraga Commons Park Sept. 25, in addition to the planting of a new maple tree, thanks to a donation from the Moraga Community Foundation, with major funding coming from Pacific Gas and Electric Co. and the Eagle Foundation. The ceremony kicked off the return of the annual Pear and Wine Festival, which had taken a yearlong hiatus due to the pandemic. Moraga resident Bob Moore, who was a member of Boy Scout Troop 212 when the original flagpole was dedicated in 1982 commented on how much has changed since then. "The picture from the paper back then had no trees (in the park); now look at it. This is such a beautiful, gorgeous park and it's neat to see the Boy Scouts carry on the tradition, as well as have the Girl Scouts involved," he said, adding that none of this would have been possible without the extreme hard work of Tom "Mac" McIntosh, who recently passed away. "He was 'Mr. 212.'" Moraga Mayor Mike McCluer gave special thanks to members of Boy Scout Troop 212, Girl Scout Troop 33780, Cub Scout Troop 351, and Mina Lim, the multiple Lamorinda Idol winner and Campolindo High School sophomore who sang "The Star Spangled Banner." – J. Wake

Photos J. Wake



Scouts surround newly planted maple tree.

Proclamation for Moraga Garden Center's Kenny Murakami

By Vera Kochan

The Moraga Garden Center and owner Kenny Murakami have been fixtures in the Moraga Shopping Center for nearly

50 years. Located in an almost hidden corner at 1400 Moraga Rd., Murakami sold plants and freely gave away gardening advice to his loyal customers.

Forced to retire by an ADA

compliance lawsuit from a serial plaintiff, Murakami decided that the cost of making his garden center (which was constructed prior to the passage of the Americans With Disabilities Act) up to code was too cost prohibitive. Also citing his wife's health, he felt that the writing was on the "garden wall." However, on the brighter side of things, Murakami is looking forward to spending all of his extra time with his wife as they "stop and smell the roses."

Mayor Mike McCluer, at the Sept. 22 council meeting, gave a proclamation noting all of the selfless gestures that Murakami had done for the town and its citizens such as providing daffodil bulbs for the annual plantings on Moraga's hillsides and roads; giving valuable advice on many projects along with providing locally-sourced plants for the



Photo Andy Scheck

Kenny Murakami prunes a Japanese Maple in a Moraga yard

Hacienda de las Flores gardens; offering instruction in pruning techniques and the prevention of fire-blight (a pear tree killer) for the 100-plus-year-old pear trees on the Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School property; free consul-

tation to the Moraga Gardens Farm that provides produce to local schools and nonprofits; and his partnering with the Moraga Garden Club in helping to design the Moraga for Monarchs habitat at the Rancho Laguna Park.

A photography professor at Santa Clara University, Takeshi Moro, was so taken by the community's reliance on Murakami's advice and quality vegetation that he decided to create a photo book based on plants purchased at the Moraga Garden Center and how they are thriving in people's yards. He plans on printing a limited number, and once the costs are cleared, all proceeds from sales will go to Murakami. The book will be available at Lafayette's Orchard Nursery, Lazy K, Orinda Books, McDonnell Nursery, Ace Hardware Moraga, and Across the Way.

The Moraga Garden Center will close its doors for good on Oct. 31. The website's mission statement can also serve as its epitaph: "Our goal is to introduce our customers to the wonderful diversity of the plant world, from the edible to the ornamental, to the curiosity. Our goal is also to help our customers become more successful and knowledgeable gardeners with sound science-based advice. A more knowledgeable gardener is a better gardener."

Mission accomplished, Kenny!

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