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Tree of Lights offers comfort for those who have lost loved ones

By Jennifer Wake



Friends and family members hold candles in the Roundup Saloon parking lot Nov. 16 prior to the lighting of the Hospice East Bay Tree of Lights. Photo J. Wake

For the past 35 years, Hospice East Bay has offered loved ones a way to honor family members who have passed away and "find solace in the symbolism of light" during its annual Tree of Lights ceremonies. Held in cities throughout the East Bay, on Nov. 16 community members gathered for the Lafayette Tree of Lights ceremony, which included soothing music provided by harpist and Hospice volunteer Betsy Littell, as well as comments from Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Jay Lifson, a poem reading and the reading of memorial names prior to the tree lighting.

Lifson expressed his gratitude for Hospice, explaining how his mother benefited from its services before her passing. "They became part of the family," Lifson said, "but more importantly, she was never alone." Lifson expressed his gratitude for Hospice's ability to provide comfort, reduce suffering and help his mother make her final transition with dignity. "What did families do without the gift of hospice in their communities?" he asked. Hospice East Bay, which is a not-for-profit

organization, serves 1,500 families a year with end-of-life care, according to Hospice East Bay VP of Fund Development Mats Wallin.

Two additional Tree of Lights ceremonies are planned in Lamorinda: the Orinda Tree of Lights at 4:30 p.m. on Dec. 4 in Orinda Village by Bank of America and the Moraga Tree of Lights at 5:30 p.m. on Dec. 12 at the Moraga Country Club. The funds raised by these ceremonies make it possible for Hospice East Bay to provide care to patients who are not covered by insurance. For information, visit hospiceeastbay.org.

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