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Children give Santa some drawings during the Dec. 19 Breakfast with Santa event at the Hacienda de Las Flores in Moraga.

Photo Vera Kochan

Santa makes breakfast rounds in Moraga before the big day

By Vera Kochan

How many kids can say that they've had breakfast with Santa Claus? Thanks to Moraga's Parks and Recreation Department, on Dec. 19 a few more kids – and their parents – could check this item off their Bucket List.

The Hacienda de Las Flores, decorated for the

holidays, provided a breakfast of pancakes, sausages, bacon, fruit, mini-muffins, hot cocoa and orange juice catered by Sunrise Bistro and served by the Moraga Youth Involvement Committee disguised as elves. Starbucks generously provided the coffee.

Parks and Rec Director Breyana Brandt, her daughter Layla (12), and Recreation Coordinator

Donald Scully were on hand to keep things running smoothly during the three breakfast seatings. Approximately 150 guests enjoyed the festivities in either of two dining rooms decked out with red and white tablecloths and strategically placed red poinsettias. Over 120 people remained on the waiting list of the popular event that was skipped last year due to COVID mandates. ...continued on Page A10

Advertising

LAMORINDA WEEKLY	
Letters to the Editor	A9
Not to be missed	B4
How to contact us	B4
Classified	C2
Holiday Shopping	C4
Love Lafayette	C4



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Town council's reorganization takes unexpected turns

By Vera Kochan

The annual Moraga Town Council reorganization process on Dec. 8 ran much along the same lines of discord as the Oct. 12 and 13 town council (new member) appointment meetings. The final results were achieved with head-spinning debates and comments by current council members.

While still serving as mayor, Mike McCluer didn't waste time nominating Vice Mayor Steve Woehleke to the mayoral position. A second nomination came from Council Member Teresa Onoda in favor of Council Member Renata Sos.

This action prompted McCluer to speak on behalf of the norm. "The tradition typically is that you look at the second to the last election, and you take the top two vote getters, and those people are in line to be mayor. If you don't think they're fit, appropriate or qualified, sure you don't have to follow that,

but that is the tradition." He added, "And, the tradition has served this town extremely well, I think, because it's a natural rotation based on people's votes." Following that logic, McCluer noted that Woehleke should be mayor and Sos vice mayor.

Onoda pointed out that "our protocols are different than what you consider the tradition, and the tradition is not always followed. Our protocols say: 3.1 Election of Officers – The town council is encouraged to rotate the offices of mayor and vice mayor amongst the members of the council according to their order of seniority." Explaining that Sos "was appointed in October 2018, served until 2020, when she was elected with over 26% of the votes. That tally was 6,027, which is an all time high; so with our protocols she is to be the mayor."

Sos made her pitch as to why she would be an asset as the new mayor in 2022. The next year "is going to pose in-

credibly significant challenges, but also great opportunities for us as a council, because we're going to make decisions that will affect the look and feel of the community for years to come." She cited the Housing Element; the Bollinger Zoning; completing labor negotiations with staff; working with Orinda and Lafayette on updating the Lamorinda Action Plan (which addresses traffic, congestion and transportation alternatives); and working with town staff to achieve those objectives.

Being aware that people have alluded that it's Woehleke's turn to be mayor, Sos felt that based on protocol and the factors of seniority and number of votes received that she should be mayor. "Who has the skills and the temperament required to run productive and successful council meetings?" She added that her comments don't reflect any disrespect for Woehleke.

Council Member Sona Makker felt that she needed more information be-

fore casting her vote, as it was clear that hers would be the tie-breaker. After hearing Sos' comments she asked Woehleke, "What makes you suited to be an effective mayor?"

Woehleke replied, "I bring more town volunteer experience than anyone else – over 20 years – the Design Review Board, the Planning Commission, the Hacienda Foundation Board of Directors." In each of those instances, he reminded everyone that he was either the chair or president. He also felt that he has an excellent working relationship with town staff, and a strong background in the principles of decision-making.

With Woehleke visibly upset about veering away from the traditional method of town council reorganization in favor of protocols, McCluer reminded members that by following tradition, Woehleke would serve as mayor in 2022, and Sos would get her turn in 2023. ... continued on Page A4

Civic News A1-A10

New leadership named in Lafayette and Orinda - Page A2 and Page A6

Public Safety

ConFire looks back on 2021 fire season - Page A8

Life in Lamorinda B1-B4

Local author pens adventure novel based on personal experience - Page B1



Sports C1-C3

Lamorinda boys basketball leads the way in competitive DAL - Page C1



Our Homes D1-D16

A gardener's guide to berries and the birds - Page D1





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Change of leadership at Lafayette City Council

By Lou Fancher

Prior to handing leadership and the “crown” position on the all-volunteer city council to Vice Mayor Teresa Gerringer, Mayor Susan Candell at the Dec. 13 meeting issued a heartfelt expression of appreciation.

“It has been truly such an honor to serve as your mayor this past year,” Candell said. “I’ve sincerely enjoyed it and hope that all the efforts here from myself and my fellow council members, commissioners, and staff have helped to make Lafayette a better and safer place to live.”

The annual reorganization that has Gerringer stepping into a new role and Council Member Carl Anduri becoming the vice mayor will not mean Candell departs the council. She will move “one frame over” on the all-Zoom council meeting videos available for public viewing and archived on the city’s YouTube channel, while continuing as a council

member to champion the priorities and interests of Lafayette residents and business owners.

In her remarks, Candell said she never expected to be the city’s first and hopefully only “virtual” mayor for an entire term as the council hopes to move to a hybrid format allowing people to choose between attending city meetings in person or online. Highlights of her term, she said, were having “spun up” the actions of the General Plan Advisory Committee; institution of an earlier rotation of mayor and vice mayor that leaves experienced past mayors on the council at the end of their term and provides smoother transitions; and the strength of the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion task force that held multiple events and training sessions and has become a “true force” community group in Lamorinda and in their role advising the council about actions it can take to support their mission.

Candell showed obvious joy and enthusiasm while announcing that the Park Theater is about to finalize reopening plans and sincerity in comments pertaining to transportation and circulation commissioners who she said were successful in achieving goals set for school safety programs and improvements. Areas where work is ongoing include steps related to the Zero Vision plan, vigilance around fire risk reduction and vegetation mitigation and Candell hopes the council will continue to advocate for local control of affordable housing standards and set goals that meet and even exceed the California State requirements.

Vice Mayor (now mayor) Gerringer said Candell had provided a more-than detailed summary of actions and improvements accomplished by the council.

... continued on Page A3

Lafayette’s Park Theater Trust announces purchase of historic downtown theater



Photo provided

Classic holiday films like “Miracle on 34th Street” often underscore how dreams can come true with a little luck, lots of perseverance, and strong community support. After three and a half years of countless hours and tireless effort, the all-volunteer nonprofit Park Theater Trust (TPTT) announced its own “Miracle on Golden Gate Way” in Lafayette after successfully closing escrow and now owning, on behalf of the entire Lafayette community, the iconic Park Theater.

The sale closed on Dec. 16 and now the Trust is ramping up its community-wide fundraising to bring in the \$5 million needed for the

renovation, with plans to reopen in 2023. TPTT will be teaming up with Adam Bergerson and Jaimi Holker of CinemaSF, longtime operators of the historic Balboa, Vogue and soon-to-be-reopened Four Star neighborhood cinemas in San Francisco. Lafayette’s iconic Park Theater will be CinemaSF’s first foray into the East Bay and will offer first-run art and indie films, Hollywood classics, and non-film events.

To learn more about how to donate, visit www.parktheatertrust.org. For information about CinemaSF, visit <https://www.cinemasf.com/> - J. Wake

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Lamorinda Music co-owner named the 2022 Business Person of the Year



John McCormick and Jay Lifson

Photo provided

John McCormick, 2020-21 Lafayette Chamber board president and co-owner of Lamorinda Music with wife Colleen McCormick (who was named the 2013 Business Person of the Year), has been named Lafayette's 2022 Business Person of the Year. John McCormick joins a long list of business owners who have given of their time, money or

energy to help make Lafayette a healthy community where people will want to live, work and shop, while promoting and maintaining a healthy business climate and preserving and enhancing the quality of life in Lafayette. Lamorinda Weekly will feature McCormick and Lamorinda Music in an upcoming issue. - J. Wake

Change of leadership

... continued from Page A2

While sharing comments she had received in emails or by word-of-mouth from residents expressing appreciation for Candell's interactions with members of the community, Gerringer said she now has a rapidly-filling calendar that lends shades of trepidation to her efforts to maintain Candell's highly energetic agenda and elevated standards.

Even so, Gerringer proved she is an equal match to her predecessor's ambitious goal-setting. After thanking her fellow council members for being a "cohesive team" that has "moments of fun" while also addressing the difficulties that are ahead for the council, Gerringer said she most looks forward to working with the city's 25,391 residents. As one of five members on the governing body that, with staff, work to prioritize the interests of Lafayette residents, Gerringer said she anticipates the first January meeting will be used to plan goals for her term during the 2022 calendar year.

Areas identified as of pre-

liminary importance, according to Gerringer, are transportation safety, implementing the Vision Zero policy which will be a cultural shift for the population, providing ample opportunities for residents to provide community input, updating elements of the General Plan, strengthening city-school partnerships, continuing to enhance wildfire and emergency preparedness, fuel mitigation and tree protection policies. Ongoing work with the DEI committee, partnering with community partners and groups to implement or host a Lafayette Community Volunteer Day that will bring nonprofit and service organizations together with residents to support activities aimed at improving life in Lafayette, and, of course, the annual budget will be on the agenda for January meetings.

After public comments thanking Candell for her responsive leadership, the unanimous vote approved Gerringer as mayor of Lafayette and Council Member Anduri took his position as vice mayor.

	Lafayette Public Meetings	Planning Commission Meeting TBA Teleconference Meeting via Love Lafayette YouTube http://bit.ly/LoveLafayetteYouTube
City Council	Design Review	Wednesday, Jan. 12, 7 p.m. Zoom Teleconference Meeting via Love Lafayette YouTube http://bit.ly/LoveLafayetteYouTube
Regular Meeting Monday, Jan. 10, 7 p.m. Teleconference via City of Lafayette's YouTube Channel: http://bit.ly/LoveLafayetteYouTube		

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Outgoing mayor discusses 2021 Year in Review

By Vera Kochan

While 13 is typically viewed as an unlucky number in American culture, Moraga's 13 town council and community goals and priorities for 2021 were met with favorable results.

Before he exited his position on Dec. 8, Mayor Mike McCluer gave his 2021 Year in Review presentation to the town council noting either a completion or work in progress status.

Fiscal sustainability came in the form of an adopted 5-

year Capital Improvement Budget; approved initial expenditure plan for use of the American Rescue Plan Act funds; a completed 2020-21 Year End Comprehensive Annual Financial Report; the June 30 \$5 million General Reserve Fund; receipt of \$2.25 million payment from the Palos Colorado developer; and the progress made on unfunded needs such as the storm drain infrastructure and asset replacement.

The focus on traffic safety was realized in multiple ways.

Moraga received a \$230,000 Highway Safety Improvement Program Grant to improve striping and signage pertaining to multiple crosswalks. Another HSIP Grant for \$40,000 was targeted for the development of a Local Road Safety Plan, along with other funding geared toward the Corliss Drive One-Way Safe Routes to School; a pedestrian push-button upgrade; and the Moraga Road/Canyon Road streets traffic studies and construction plans.

The improvement of diversity and inclusion in town involved an Ad Hoc Committee, made up of McCluer and Council Member Renata Sos, who met with community groups to forward the cause. Moraga also proclaimed Nov. 14-20 United Against Hate Week with information on its website, distribution of posters and banners, social media presence and a mayor's video of support.

Work on the 6th Cycle Housing Element began by identifying funding and the creation of an action plan. Multiple town council/planning commission meetings and community meetings were held in support of the process.

The town has taken steps to rezone the Bollinger Canyon Special Study Area by providing funds to retain the services of consultants.

The Moraga Police Department saw a marked decrease in major crimes from 162 in 2020 down to 125 in 2021; and in conjunction with the Moraga-Orinda Fire District, fine-tuned its Evacuation Plan with virtual drills, sent informative postcards to residents and continued to encourage residents to sign up for the Community Warning System at cwsalerts.com.

Planning review procedures have been streamlined; and Moraga's Climate Action Plan now has funding for a Town Facilities Energy Generation Study along with the implementation of Mandatory Organic Water Reduction.

Progress continues on the

Canyon Road Bridge with an expected completion for two-way traffic in January 2022. East Bay Municipal Utility District's Phase 1 to repair the damage caused by landslides has been completed.

Phase 1 of the Pavement Resurfacing Program and Annual Street Repairs have been completed with Phase 2 headed for completion in spring 2022. Design work has begun on the \$8 million 2022-23 Worst First Pavement Reconstruction Program.

The 2021-23 Annual Storm Drain Repairs Project is underway beginning with a Drainage Sedimentation and Slide Failure Study; a completed engineering design of the Moraga Road/Hacienda Storm Drain Repair Project; and work on the Moraga Road Drainage Project.

The town continues to maintain its parks, open spaces and facilities with the Wedgewood Weddings agreement; Laguna Creek Restoration Project; the Hacienda ADA Pathway; and the Commons Park irrigation improvement project.

McCluer and Vice Mayor Steve Woehleke created a Community Engagement Tour to discuss community issues by surveying civic organizations within Moraga.

While not part of the initial 13 goals, the town opposed the MOFD study of the consolidation/dissolution process and MOFD's consideration of an increase in Moraga's fire flow tax rate; the Moraga Municipal Code was updated to address resident concerns over small cell wireless facilities and accessory dwelling units; and the town council rejected the South Camino Pablo subdivision appeal.

McCluer's presentation was concluded with the acknowledgment of Council Member Sona Makker's appointment to fill the seat vacated by Council Member David Stromberg's resignation; honoring the loss of Corp. Kevin Mooney; and the tireless work of town staff.

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I love to count my blessings this time of year, and they include friends who have worked with me and/or given me referrals—thanks so much! One common question sellers ask revolves around preparing a home for sale, especially now that the market is shifting. I'm happy to share my strategies and suggestions to help you make the best decisions, whether you are renovating to stay for a while or to move next year. Feel free to reach out any time!

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Town council's reorganization takes unexpected turns

... continued from Page A1

He stressed that no matter what, the mayor doesn't get to make any decisions alone; it's up to a vote by all council members.

Continuing his response with regards to what he can bring to the table as mayor, Woehleke made six points: 1) making sure you know what you're trying to achieve; 2) keeping an open mind; 3) having reliable information; 4) understanding your values and trade-offs; 5) using logic; and 6) bringing along stakeholders.

Moments before the vote, McCluer made one last plea for "tradition." Onoda, Sos and Makker voted against Woehleke for mayor with Woehleke and McCluer voting in favor. The process was reversed for Sos, who at that moment took the gavel as new mayor of Moraga. Her first order of business was to ask for vice mayor nominations. Woehleke nominated Makker, and Sos nominated Onoda.

McCluer asked Makker, "Should someone this new be vice mayor? I don't necessarily disagree, but I just wondered from your perspective."

"I would roll up my sleeves and be up for the job," replied Makker. "But, I do think the organization can and should benefit from the tenure and experience of someone who has been here longer than me."

Woehleke questioned On-

oda's nomination by mentioning the South Camino Pablo subdivision results, and a heated discussion/debate ensued between both council members. Hearing enough, Makker decided to jump in with both feet and fully accept the nomination citing her leadership experiences outside of Moraga.

With a unanimous vote of 5-0, Makker accepted the vice mayor position. "I'm really optimistic and excited," she stated. "I have a lot of experience in leading different types of teams with different types of stakeholders, and I think at this stage where we are this coming year, we're going to be interacting with lots of different stakeholders where we all need to be ready and prepared to listen to all perspectives, and I'm excited, willing and ready to do that."

Before closing the meeting Sos hoped that all disagreements could be set aside in order to move forward in serving the town. "We have a lot to do, and I know this is a very committed and engaged council. Every single one of you is doing fantastic work and is so committed to this town and serving our constituents that it is a pleasure to serve with you, and I look forward to a productive, engaged, transparent 2022, with continual community outreach, which has already been started and accessibility to the people that we serve."

Town Council: Wednesday, Jan. 12, 7 p.m.
Planning Commission: Tuesday, Jan. 4, 7 p.m.,
Park and Recreation Commission:
 Monday, Jan. 17, 7 p.m.,
Moraga School District Board Meetings:
 Tuesday, Jan. 11, 6 p.m. www.moraga.k12.ca.us.



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Moraga Country Club general manager moves to Hawaii



Photo Vera Kochan

Moraga Country Club General Manager Ron Haas
By Vera Kochan

A fixture at the Moraga Country Club since 2017, General Manager/COO Ron Haas is moving to the Aloha State to take the reigns at Mid-Pacific Country Club on Oahu.

Under his four-year guidance MCC has seen many improvements in operations: a 28% increase in operation revenue; implementation of a new Member App (Jonas Clubhouse Online); new on-line food ordering; an HOA work order app (Upkeep); full computer system migration; and a new mobile server table-side ordering (iPad). MCC is also in the process of a \$12 million club facility ex-

pansion plan.

Haas has also boosted the social side of MCC with a spring and fall wine fair; the annual golf tournament; and the popular Thanksgiving Day Turkey Trot with a registered 800 participants this year (proceeds were donated to Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano). Not forgetting the younger MCC members, he created Summer Kids Camp; sports camps; camp-out nights and movie nights. According to Haas, "I don't sell memberships; I sell an experience."

A Moraga resident, Haas lives with his wife Lea, son Prycen, daughter-in-law Jamie (both tennis coaches at Saint Mary's College) and grandkids Shado and Legend. He also has a daughter Kiana. Living local has kept him involved in the community. He's also on the Moraga Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors and was influential in helping Moraga-Orinda Fire District's Chief Dave Winnacker create the first evacuation drill that took place on Moraga Way. Haas developed the Block Captain Program within MCC in which neighbors help each other through a fire emergency.

Haas' tenure at MCC hasn't been without its hiccups, and the month of Octo-

ber during each of his 4.5 years always brought challenges. Unfortunately for him and his wife, these always occurred while they were on vacation. In 2018 and 2021 the extreme rains caused minor flooding throughout the golf course with the occasional toppled tree. Smoke from the 2020 fires left the air unpleasant for any outdoor activities. The periodic Public Safety Power Shutoffs were a nuisance to MCC homeowners, but Haas had a generator working in the clubhouse that helped provide comfort to residences in the form of hot meals available from the restaurant (dubbed the Black-out Buffet), along with WiFi and an overall atmosphere of togetherness. The demands of operating through COVID were met with a positive attitude. "Everything we do is to minimize the risk factor," he stated. "Making this a safe haven made people more comfortable about using the club."

Making his final exit after the Dec. 11 Member Holiday Party, Haas stated, "I know it sounds very cliché, but I will miss both the MCC and Moraga communities. There are so many like-minded people here; family-oriented and ready to help those in need. I will really miss the people."

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Dennis Fay to serve as Orinda mayor for first time, Inga Miller returns as vice mayor



Dennis Fay Lamo archive

By Sora O'Doherty

At its Dec. 14 meeting, the Orinda city council, following its usual protocol, elected Vice Mayor Dennis Fay to become Orinda's next mayor. Inga Miller, as the next highest vote-getter in the 2020 election, will serve as vice mayor, a position she has held before. Miller served as mayor in 2019 and was re-elected to the city council in 2020.

As Fay steps up to his first term as mayor, he is replac-

ing Amy Worth, who has served 23 years on the Orinda city council and has held the office of mayor for an historic five terms. Worth will remain on the council. Although Fay and Miller were warmly welcomed after being sworn in by city clerk Sheri Smith, the real kudos of the evening went to Worth, as public figures expressed their respect and affection for her.

Jill Ray, representing Contra Costa County Supervisor Candance Andersen who was unable to attend, expressed the supervisor's feeling that Worth has served "with great respect and decorum, has worked collaboratively to find common good." Ray offered the supervisor's congratulations on Worth's six terms of service, having served as mayor five times, and said that she looks forward to working with mayor Fay.

Former mayor Joyce Hawkins praised Worth as "the queen of complimenting anyone and everyone with whom she has worked," and as "an epitome of graciousness and diplomacy."

Hawkins congratulated Worth on a job well done, and thanked her for her years of service. Worth spoke about how instrumental Hawkins was on getting Worth onto the council and preparing her to serve.

The council members read out a heartfelt proclamation honoring Worth's service as mayor. The proclamation crowned Worth as "the queen of Zoom," being the first mayor in Orinda's history to lead a complete year's worth of city council meetings remotely, "bringing city government to Orinda's living rooms," and having the best Zoom backgrounds of any elected official in the Bay Area. The proclamation says that Orinda has benefited from Worth's deep understanding of regional transportation and solid waste issues, adding that the city also enjoyed Worth's knowledge of and perspective on Orinda's history.

Living up to Hawkins' words, Worth took the opportunity to thank everyone on the council, city staff, the executive team, city volunteers

and partners, and her family. She said it had been an honor to serve, and that having the entire year on Zoom was a lot of fun. She praised the city for keeping government running during the pandemic, and thanked the county for its help, especially with COVID. She recognized the Orinda library, an institution close to her heart, that has been in Orinda for 100 years, and this year celebrated the 20th anniversary of the new library building. She thanked state and federal representatives, Congressman Mark DeSaulnier, state Sen. Steve Glazer and Assemblymember Rebecca Bauer-Kahan. Worth noted that it was especially poignant that in November the fourth bore of the Caldecott tunnel was named for former Congresswoman Ellen Tauscher. In thanking her family, Worth noted that she is enjoying being a grandmother in Orinda, and that her oldest grandchild is now in kindergarten at Wagner Ranch Elementary School.

Orinda's housing plan tool is ready for public use

By Sora O'Doherty

Orinda residents can now draw their own version of where they would put new housing in Orinda. The new tool, A Balancing Act, was obtained by the city of Orinda from the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG), the agency that assigns to each city, town and county the number of new housing units they are required to provide for in the next cycle of the housing element. Each is required to zone for new housing, but is not required to actually provide new housing units.

ABAG offered a number of free licenses to an online public engagement tool, known as A Balancing Act, and Orinda was awarded one of the licenses. Now available online, the tool allows the public to offer comments and suggestions on proposed housing site inventory.

According to the city, the simulation tool is a great way for residents to explore the location of potential housing sites and the number of potential housing units on those identified sites. The responses received through this tool will be shared with the city council and help inform their decision on which sites

ultimately will be counted in the 6th Cycle Housing Element sites inventory.

The simulation tool allows users to create a housing plan by selecting housing sites and adjusting the number of housing units at each site. The goal is to create a complete housing plan that would accommodate at least 1,699 housing units (the city's required RHNA, plus buffer).

Once users have created a complete housing plan, submit the plan. The results from the simulation tool will be shared with the city council and inform development of the Housing Element.

<https://orinda.abalancingact.com/housing-simulation>

Orinda takes 25-year lease on Mini-Park, allowing landscaping to proceed

By Sora O'Doherty

The city of Orinda and Pacific Gas & Electric Co. have agreed to execute a new lease for the property known as the Crossroads Mini Park, located

on the corner of Camino Pablo and Brookwood Road. The new lease, which replaces the former 20-year lease, will run for 25 years and, if not previously renewed, will continue on a month-to-month basis. Orinda will not pay rent on the property, but agrees to allow PG&E to continue its use of the land, which holds a high-voltage electricity tower.

The city had put plans to landscape the park on hold in September 2020, because of the uncertainty of the lease status. The new lease provides that Orinda will prepare and seek approval from PG&E for activities to be performed on the property, including, the landscaping plan and improvement plan. The matter was approved on the

city's consent calendar on Dec. 14.

There has been for several years a plan to improve the aspect of the park, which many consider to be Orinda's front door, so to speak, and the Orinda Foundation has agreed to contribute funding for improvements to the park. The new lease specifies certain parameters that must be met by any improvements, and must be approved by PG&E prior to implementation. The staff report prepared by Parks and Rec Director Todd Trimble states that Orinda staff have begun working with an architect and have requested updated construction costs and a schedule for the design. The matter will return to the city council.

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City Council Regular Meeting:
Tuesday, Jan. 11, 7 p.m. By Teleconference Only

Planning Commission
TBA

Supplemental Sales Tax Oversight Commission Regular Meeting
Wed., Jan. 12, 6:30 p.m. By Teleconference Only

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Worth celebrates the end of fifth term as mayor with flurry of awards



Photo Sora O'Doherty

Eagle Scout Sean Turney was recognized by outgoing mayor Amy Worth for his Eagle project at Xenophon Therapeutic Riding Center.

By Sora O'Doherty

Outgoing mayor Amy Worth finished out her fifth term as mayor of Orinda by handing out five awards, four mayor's Awards of Excellence, and a proclamation for an Eagle Scout. The five awards honored the young and the young-at-heart, going to Seniors Around Town, Lamorinda Village, Girls Crushing It, the Miramonte Environmental Solutions Club and Eagle Scout Sean Turney.

The award to Seniors Around

Town recognized the many volunteers and devoted staff for their two decades of service, providing free transportation to Orinda seniors and for their extraordinary efforts during the COVID crisis, offering companionship, transportation, shopping, home delivery of library books and materials and other essential services to Orinda seniors. Accepting the award were Kate Wiley, Cindy Powell, Cathy Goshorn and Marie Waterman.

The mayor expressed grateful appreciation to Lamorinda Village for building a community that provides support, companionship and resources to seniors, enabling community members to prosper while living in their homes as they age and for the volunteers' exceptional efforts during the COVID crisis to provide both current services and expanded resources, as well offering virtual social and educational programs. Lamorinda Village was represented at the meeting by Larry Toy, Lamorinda Village president, Joyce & Jack Hawkins, Lamorinda Village secretary and treasurer; Kathryn Ishizu, Lamorinda Village executive director; and Sharon Iverssen, Lamorinda Village board member and president-elect. Toy said that Lamorinda Village now has 201 members, 300 volunteers and in the past year handled 2,000 calls, arranged for 600 COVID vaccines to be administered, and prepared 350 go-bags for seniors.

Roxanne Christophe accepted the award for Girls Crushing It. The mayor recognized the group's exceptional programs to inspire and empower girls ages 8-18 through mentorship and entrepreneurial experiences that increase confidence and build leadership skills, providing a vital foundation for success in both their education and careers. Christophe said she was so grateful for the council's rock solid support, adding that, thanks to Nick Kosla and the city council, Girls Crushing It had one of the first events in the Art & Garden center, and she gave huge thanks to Todd Trimble and all the staff for allowing the girls to have access to such a wonderful venue.

The mayor also handed out awards to four members of the Miramonte Environmental Solutions Club: Devon Bradley, Sheng Shu, Alexis De Busschere and Joseph Manio. The award is for inspiring local sustainability by creating the Help Environmental Assistance Restaurant Takeout (HEART) Project and for playing an important role in creating Orinda's new ordinance banning the retail sales and use of polystyrene foam in restaurant take-out. The mayor was clearly happy to see high school students learning about and participating in local government to achieve their goals. Bradley said he was very honored to receive the award, and credited teacher Miss Rebecca Promessi. Shu

thanked everyone who put so much into this program, his team especially, adding, "I've learned so much about the governing process and most importantly I've learned how much Orinda embraces change." De Busschere said it was a very fun experience, thanked the city council, whom she described as "very welcoming when we were advocating for improving our community." Manio agreed that the council was "so welcoming" that he feels much more involved in the community now.

In the last award of the evening, the mayor proclaimed that Dec. 15, 2021 would be Sean Turney Day in Orinda. Turney was recognized for obtaining the rank of Eagle Scout, the highest distinction in scouting and something only four out of 100 Scouts earn. Turney's project entailed building a horse shelter at Xenophon Therapeutic Riding Center, a nonprofit organization in Orinda. Turney was interested in helping Xenophon because they incorporate interaction with horses and equestrian skill building into the therapy for people with developmental disabilities.

Turney expressed his thanks for the award and to scouting as well. Scoutmaster Kenneth Goldman said he was very proud of Turney. He said that it is nice to see the Troop giving back; the Troop is celebrating its 60th anniversary this year.

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- Part time paid dispatcher to take ride reservations, schedule the route, communicate with passengers and drivers, and prepare reports. Position requires good communication skills and knowledge of Excel.
- Volunteer drivers for a 4-hour weekly or bi-weekly morning or afternoon shift to take older adults to appointments, errands and shopping.



For more information, please contact Mary Bruns at 925-284-5546.

Planning ahead for future fire safety

By Lou Fancher

The Lafayette City Council on Dec. 13 received a fire safety presentation from Jeff Peter, assistant fire chief of the Contra Costa County Fire Protection District. As the city's new fire safety liaison coming on-board in 2022, Peter recapped the 2021 fire season and provided updates about past and ongoing county and city action plans and steps residents can take to improve and maintain fire safety.

A well-known fact is that the wildland fire season throughout California begins earlier and lasts longer than ever before. In 2021, fires in Northern California were higher in number than those in the southern regions of the state. Largely attributing it to conditions related to drought, Peter said the annual pattern during the last three years indicates mega fires that exceed millions of acres burned are on the increase. In Contra Costa County, the most dangerous fires were wind-driven. The number of fires in 2021 increased over 2020: in the state, the increase was nearly 10%, rising from 1,411 to 1,528; in Lafayette, exterior fires rose from 2020's total of 14 to 20 for November 2021. (Fire categories generally are divided into structural, exterior and vegetation classifications according to origin of the fire, although any one fire can include all three.)

"The outlook for 2022 and beyond really isn't much different," said Peters. "Many people think when we get a lot or rain that it actually helps out and that can help out if the fields don't dry up as early in a fire season. But if it isn't that fire season (that danger is imposed ironically by rain) it's the second fire season after that because we have a lot more fuel on the

ground that spreads the fire."

The report from Peters had some good news: preparedness and planning held most fires in 2021 to 10 acres or less. Residents who perform grass and vegetation mitigation reduced the risk significantly. Peters said a homeowner or property owner who clears old growth, dead trees, tall grasses and shrubs "makes a huge difference."

The Firewise USA program phased in across the county and supported by the Lafayette Emergency Preparedness Commission in partnership with the Contra Costa County Fire Protection District will continue, Peter said. Enhancing prevention, planning, resources and technological capabilities are ongoing efforts the recently passed Measure X will fund. Fuel reduction and safety enhancements that fit the \$32.3 million fire and emergency medical services measures parameters are separately covered in one-time expenditures such as equipment purchases (\$18.8 million) and ongoing expenses (\$13.5 million).

Most impactful for Lafayette is a \$2.5 million allocation for grants and funding aimed at lowering wild-fire threat through risk reduction programs. Peters said because the funds can be used to support countywide resources. This means county equipment and personnel responding to a fire will be able to assist and stay on the scene longer, thereby freeing up local trucks and firefighters to return sooner to other services

In closing comments, Peter urged residents to jump to the front of the line in their communities and "be first" to take preventative safety steps. He advocated reading and following steps outlined

in the county fire safety guide, signing up for CWS (Community Warning Service alerts), developing a clear family evacuation plan, making and updating annually a "go bag" kit, knowing neighbors' special needs, and preparing in advance for PSPS (public safety power shut offs).

Responding to questions from Council Member Wei-Tai Kwok about the forecast for fires in the next five to 10 years and actions residents and the city council can take to be prepared, Peters said taking advantage of new fire detection technologies and real time alerts will be vital. He encouraged the council to be keenly aware of the continued threat fires pose to a city and its residents, have adequate funding ready for when it is needed, and repeatedly communicate with residents the importance of preparing their properties for maximum safety.

Mayor Susan Candell asked about city development projects that will mean buildings in Lafayette increase in height. The lack of a ladder truck leaves Lafayette dependent on using equipment from neighboring cities and towns in the event of a structural fire involving a tall building with multiple floors.

Peter said he and Deputy Fire Chief Aaron McAlister plan to tour the city to look for possible places for relocating Station 15. The driveway exit at Station 15 is too steep for the largest firefighting trucks. Peter said every moment a firefighter has to spend climbing extra sets of stairs is time used up that could be spent putting out structure fires. The equipment such as a ladder truck, he said, will be important to have eventually because of Lafayette's increasing development density.

A note of thanks to the Community



Photo provided

Moraga Police Department Corp. Craig Walker with some of this year's donation.

The Moraga Police Department expressed gratitude to the community for the amazing outpouring of caring and generosity during its Toys for Tots Toy Drive. The MPD collected a record number of toys and cash donations this year. "Losing Detective Mooney was hard on us all and we miss him daily. We know the community also feels the loss of such a dedicated officer, and individual," said police services technician Cathy Ghiselli. "The fabulous response to the Detective Mooney Toy Drive warms our hearts and is a testament to the community. Kevin would be in awe of the overwhelming amounts of toys that were donated and will be given to children who are in need. Again, a huge thank to the community and beyond for helping us keep Kevin alive through his favorite charity." - J. Wake

Fire District Public Meetings

Moraga-Orinda Fire District
Board of Directors
Wednesday, Jan. 19, 6 p.m.
For meeting times and agendas, visit www.mofd.org

ConFire
Board of Directors
Regular Meeting: Tuesday, Jan. 18, 1 p.m.
For meeting times and agendas, visit www.cccfpd.org



Public Safety

Emergency response:
Emergency: 24 Hours 911
Police Dispatch: 24 Hours 925-284-5010
Nixle: Text your zip code to 888777 or go to www.nixle.com
Lafayette Police Department:
3471 Mt. Diablo Blvd. 925-283-3680
Chief of Police, Ben Alldritt 925-299-3221
Police Department Tip Line 94549Tip@gmail.com
Police Department Traffic Issues 94549Traffic@gmail.com
Moraga Police Department:
329 Rheem Blvd., 925-888-7055
Chief of Police, Jon King ext. 7049
Orinda Police Department:
22 Orinda Way 925-254-6820
Chief of Police, Ryan Sullivan 925-254-6820
Orindatip@cityoforinda.org



Lafayette Police Department Incident Summary Report Nov. 28 - Dec. 11

Alarms	29
911 Calls (includes hang-ups)	29
Traffic	15
Suspicious Circumstances	12
Suspicious Subject	24
Suspicious Vehicle	12
Service to Citizen	34
Patrol Req./Security Check	37
Public/School Assembly Check	13
Supplemental Report	15
Vacation House Check	17
Welfare Check	31
Ordinance Violation	0

Vehicle violations
Auto Burglary
3700 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd.
1200 Block Pleasant Hill Rd.
700 Block Las Trampas Rd.
800 Block Las Trampas Rd.
1100 Block Laurel Dr.
Police Department
Hit And Run Misdemeanor
Moraga Blvd./Moraga Rd.
Pleasant Hill Rd./Old Tunnel Rd.
Dewing Av/Brook St.
3600 Block Mosswood Dr.
Police Department (2)
3100 Block Somerset Dr.
Reckless Driving
3500 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd.
Mt. Diablo Blvd./Lafayette Cir.
Olympic Blvd./Pleasant Hill Rd.
St Marys Rd./Glenside Dr.
Pleasant Hill Rd./Eb Sr 24
Tc - Property Damage
1000 Block Oak Hill Rd.
Moraga Rd./Mt. Diablo Blvd.
Brook St./Dewing Ave.
4000 Block Los Arabis Dr. (2)
Other criminal activity
Forgery
1000 Block Via Baja
Fraud Credit Card
Police Department
4000 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd.
Fraud False Pretenses
Police Department
60 Block Lafayette Cir.
Grand Theft
3400 Block Golden Gate Wy
3100 Block Somerset Dr.
Grand Theft From Veh
4000 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd.
1200 Block Pleasant Hill Rd.
Pleasant Hill Rd./Springhill Rd.
Identity Theft
3600 Block West Rd.
800 Block Hope Ln
Misc Burglary
1000 Block Oak Hill Rd.
3300 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd.
Petty Theft
4000 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd.

1000 Block Oak Hill Rd. (2)
3600 Block Happy Valley Ln
50 Block Lafayette Cir.
1100 Block Hillcrest Dr.
3800 Block Happy Valley Rd.
500 Block Mcbride Dr.
Petty Theft Bicycle
3500 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd.
Petty Theft From Veh
3100 Block Somerset Dr.
Shoplift
3500 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd. (5)
3600 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd.
Mt. Diablo Blvd./S Thompson Rd.
Theft Access Card
500 Block Mcbride Dr.
Warrant Service
700 Block Moraga Rd. (2)
Nuisance to the Community
Disturbance-domestic
3500 Block Terrace Wy
Disturbing The Peace
900 Block Sunnybrook Dr.
Drunk In Public
3600 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd.
Loud Music
3500 Block Old Mountain View Dr.
Loud Party
3400 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd.
Public Nuisance
Acalanes Rd./Hidden Valley Rd.
1000 Block Glen Rd.
3400 Block School St. (2)
4000 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd.
3400 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd.
500 Block Silverado Dr.
Vandalism
3500 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd.
Oak Hill Rd./Deer Hill Rd.
3500 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd.
3300 Block Orchard Valley Ln
3600 Block Happy Valley Rd.
Other
H&S Violation
3400 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd.
K9 Outside Assist Request
1st St./Paciff Ave., Rod
Stolen Vehicle Recovery
1100 Block Oak Hill Rd.
Eb Sr 24 At Pleasant Hill Rd.

Tc - Fire And Amb Enroute
Moraga Rd Iso Tofflemire Dr.
800 Block Mountain View Dr.
Threats
1200 Block Pleasant Hill Rd.
3800 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd.
3500 Block Terrace Wy
3600 Block Boyer Cir.
50 Block Lafayette Cir.
3500 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd.
Unwanted Guest
3500 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd.
1000 Block Sunnybrook Dr.
Violation Restraining Ord
3600 Block Brook St.

Moraga Police Department Incident Summary Report Nov. 30 - Dec. 12

Alarms	10
911 Calls (includes hang-ups)	14
Traffic	43
Suspicious Circumstances	8
Suspicious Subject	6
Suspicious Vehicle	10
Service to Citizen	33
Patrol Req./Security Check	12
Supplemental Report	12
Vacation House Check	0
Welfare Check	13
Public/School Assembly Check	2
Ordinance Violation	0
Vehicle violations	
Auto Burglary	
Moraga Rd./Alta Mesa Dr. (2)	
70 Block Miramonte Dr.	
Rheem Blvd./St Marys Rd.	
Excessive Speed	
Fernwood Dr./Rheem Blvd.	
Moraga Way/Ivy Dr (2)	
Hit And Run Misdemeanor	
Moraga Rd./Rheem Blvd.	
Reckless Driving	



Moraga Commons Park
Cvs
Canyon Rd./Pinehurst Rd., Can
Other criminal activity
Commercial Burglary
1100 Block Moraga Way
1500 Block Canyon Rd.
Petty Theft
500 Block Center St.
Warrant Arrest
Moraga Rd./St Marys Rd.
Nuisance to the Community
Drunk In Public
500 Block Center St.
Loud Music
200 Block Rheem Blvd.
Loud Noise
1400 Block Camino Peral
Via Joaquin/Alta Mesa Dr.
Loud Party
2000 Block Ascot Dr.
700 Block Moraga Rd.
Public Nuisance
1000 Block Larch Ave..
School St./Country Club Dr.
Vandalism
Miramonte Dr./Moraga Way
Campolindo High School
Other
Failure To Obey
Moraga Way/St. Andrews Dr.
Violation Custody Order
2100 Block Donald Dr.
Other
Other Felony
Moraga Rd./Commons Park
Other Infraction
1400 Block Camino Pablo
Unwanted Guest
Safeway



Orinda Police Department Incident Summary Report will be back soon

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Letters to the editor

What shall Orinda become?

The Orinda city council wants to "revitalize" downtown (theater + village). Many residents have said they want to retain the village character and would like downtown to be nicer. City consultants have said that for this to occur buildings would have to have shopping and four floors of residences above. The Downtown Precise Plan anticipates 55'-75' high buildings.

The state requires "in-fill" housing at all income levels: very low, low, moderate and above moderate. It mandates that there must be no city imposed obstacles that prevent building 1359 new units in Orinda. It requires a "plan", called the Housing Element (HE) that demonstrates how Orinda could satisfy this requirement over the next decade. The HE must include an inventory of the sites and, based on zoning, what income level housing could be built. The HE must also demonstrate that there are no safety or environmental issues that would preclude this. The state has also said that no parking will be required for development within a half mile of public transit.

The city council may yet enable developers to tear down extant buildings, displacing our beloved businesses, and replace them with tall "mixed use" buildings that will turn our narrow streets into canyons. The planning department is telling the council that most of downtown must be zoned for "mixed use", high density, tall buildings, thus satisfying the council's desire for revitalization.

The unfortunate economic reality is that Orinda cannot attract retail businesses, not because of city regulations, but because of our limited foot traffic and because of intense competition in adjacent shopping areas. Even increasing our population by several thousand will not cause businesses to come here, especially with reduced parking. It is a fantasy to imagine new boutique stores or restaurants springing up in Orinda. There will inevitably be empty storefronts in any new "mixed use" buildings without sufficient parking. Yes, we need to create more affordable housing for more families and individuals. Yes, downtown needs to look better. This can be achieved by having the city create a "facade fund" and by placing good artwork in key locations.

Orinda is a residential town with an appropriate amount of retail and should not aspire to become like Lafayette or Walnut Creek. We should do what we do best. Retain a quiet friendly village character with nice views of the hills and great schools. Charles Porges Orinda

It's Time for Orinda to Abandon the DPP

It's time for Orinda to abandon the Downtown Precise Plan, and to put on hold plans to "revitalize" downtown. There really isn't anything wrong with downtown. Yes, the buildings are old, but they are functional, and there is lots of parking (especially in the Village). There are very few vacancies. The businesses are service businesses that serve the residents; just what a small town needs. There is no reasonable basis for believing that a redeveloped downtown would be better than what we now have. It is more likely to be worse: more crowded; less

parking; more traffic; more vacancies; less retail. The appearance of downtown could be spruced up with some landscaping and a façade improvement program.

The failure of any development whatsoever at 25A Orinda Way, across from the Library, despite full approvals, speaks volumes. Orinda isn't going to attract the high-end restaurants, speciality shops, and boutiques that some seem to want.

Greater retail variety, and fancier restaurants, are nearby; they don't need to be physically located in "Orinda." Many Orinda residents live closer to downtown Lafayette than to downtown Orinda.

The notion that downsizing seniors who want to stay in Orinda will be accommodated is false. Given that the market favors construction of rental units over for sale units, there will be few units that seniors can purchase in order to downsize. They will be forced to rent if they wish to remain in Orinda. A senior selling a house that has been owned for decades, who becomes a renter, will also incur a substantial capital gains tax.

Finally, we should be loyal to, and have empathy for, the local small business owners and their employees, who have served us well for decades. Destroying the buildings they occupy will destroy their livelihoods. You cannot feasibly relocate restaurants or many of the other businesses. And the owners of new buildings will charge unaffordable higher rents due to acquisition and construction costs and property taxes.

The DPP should be abandoned. Nick Waranoff Orinda

Vice Mayor Steve Woehleke denied as next Moraga mayor

In a 3-2 vote the Moraga Town Council defied a 47 year old tradition and denied Steve Woehleke as the next Mayor. This tradition was rarely violated in 47 years and has served the Town well avoiding conflict.

Renata Sos, Teresa Onoda and new Sona Makker voted against Steve, tossing aside the tradition calling for Woehleke as Mayor in 2022 and Sos as Mayor in 2023.

This was Makker's second regular Council meeting and she chose not to follow the Town's tradition. Makker was elected as Vice Mayor.

This self serving action by Sos and Onoda is an outrageous affront to Town tradition and to an eminently qualified Moraga leader and outstanding colleague. Sos/Onoda's rationale was a weak, "it's an important year, a better Presiding Officer". Steve has 18 years of town government experience to Sos' 5 years.

This isn't the first time Sos defied tradition for her own self interest. In December 2019, Sos attempted to bypass tradition by accepting the nomination of Vice Mayor and only withdrawing after negative feedback. Mike McCluer Moraga

Town Mayor election protocol

Recent criticism of the Moraga Town Council's appointment of Renata Sos as the new Mayor warrants a factual review of the relevant sentences in the Town Council's adopted protocol 3.1 (from the Town's website).

"The election or removal of the Mayor or Vice Mayor re-

quires at least three (3) affirmative votes.... The Town Council is encouraged to rotate the offices of Mayor and Vice Mayor amongst the members of the Council according to their order of seniority (considering only the Town's two most recent election cycles) as appropriate."

Thus, a majority of the members of the Council are supposed to elect whomever they believe is most suited to the job and are explicitly encouraged to consider seniority in that decision. Sos is currently the most senior member of the Council having served more than 3 years.

This time, a majority of the Council considered her to be the best choice to be Mayor for the coming year. They are obligated to act in accordance with what they believe is in the best interest of the Town. Sos has proven herself to be an effective leader who has served Moraga with intelligence, maturity, and dedication. Her appointment as Mayor is good news for Moraga. Maridel Moulton Moraga

Mayor election discussion

In a remarkable display of hubris, on Dec. 8, 2021, at the Moraga Town Council meeting, Council member Sos declared herself to be an extraordinary leader, with leadership skills superior to those of Council member Woehleke. In light of prior Council practice where the Vice-Mayor becomes the next Mayor, I found it very surprising that Council member Onoda nominated Sos to be Mayor and that the newly sworn-in Council member Makker then announced that she had questions for the two candidates.

The three elected Sos the Mayor, defying more than 40 years of practice to bypass Council Member Woehleke, who is perfectly capable to be Mayor. In my opinion, this was a serious lapse of judgment by all three, as witnessed by the firestorm of objections filed by more than 100 community members on Nextdoor Neighbor within little more than a day. Those objections reflected serious concerns about the integrity of Sos and the others, and whether the Council under their control could be trusted. While some called for a recall election, the recall process is long, expensive and inevitably divisive.

With the passage of time, I am hopeful that everyone, and especially Sos, can step back and consider a fresh start. The Town is a human enterprise. People in charge of human enterprises sometimes make mistakes. In my opinion, a series of mistakes were made resulting in a bad outcome, not just for Woehleke but for the Town.

Sos claims to be a good leader. Good leaders who make mistakes swallow their pride and try to correct their mistakes. I hope that Sos is a good leader who understands that she has made a mistake – a mistake that has harmed the trust that the community should have in the Town Council. This situation is not irretrievable. There is a simple correction: hold a new election for Mayor, appoint Woehleke as Mayor and Sos as Vice Mayor. Sos can take her turn as Mayor in 2023, under the normal practice. Some resentments may remain, but the health of the enterprise should take precedence over resentments. Hopefully, she sees that this would be true leadership – an act to be taken without feeling any embarrassment. Fred Weil Moraga

Woehleke support

I want Steve Woehleke to be the

next Mayor of Moraga. His qualifications are obvious. Having lived in Moraga since 1975, I've always tried to find at least one council member that I felt comfortable communicating with and recently Steve has been one of those. I ask questions, make suggestions, and sometimes even complain. Steve always gives me a straight forward honest answer and will do his best to solve any problems I have. Pete Williams Moraga

More Moraga mayor decision-making process

After the Moraga Town Council meeting of Dec. 8, 2021, several people posted critical comments on Next Door regarding the selection of Renata Sos as Moraga's next mayor. First, some people claimed that Steve Woehleke was entitled to be the mayor because of a tradition of choosing the person who had the most votes at the second to the last election. This is a democracy, not a monarchy. The Town's protocol "encourages" a rotation of positions according to Council members' seniority. Putting aside who is best for the job, Ms. Sos is the longest serving Councilmember, having been appointed to the Council before Mr. Woehleke was elected.

Second, some people claimed that Ms. Sos, Ms. Onoda, and Ms. Makker violated the Brown Act before the Council meeting. No one has presented any evidence to support the claim. The allegation is defamatory because violations of the Brown Act can be punished criminally. Those who made the accusation ought to withdraw it publicly.

For those who have questions about the decision-making process, I suggest you watch the last hour of the Dec. 8 council meeting online. Ms. Sos's tone, intelligence, and explanation for why she believed herself to be the best choice were impressive. On the other hand, Mr. Woehleke attacked Ms. Onoda and Ms. Sos personally, claiming they should "apologize" for their votes on a proposed project that was rejected 4-1, with Mr. Woehleke the sole dissenter.

In supporting Mr. Woehleke, Mr. McCluer did not identify qualities that made Mr. Woehleke a good choice, but instead improperly suggested Ms. Sos bore some responsibility for an embezzlement at the Moraga Community Foundation. There are no credible accusations that people other than Bob Fritzky were at fault for the embezzlement. To suggest otherwise is irresponsible.

In the end, Mr. Woehleke revealed himself as resentful and inclined to ad hominem attacks, and as someone who personalizes political decisions and carries grudges when his views are not accepted by others. He is not the best person to be mayor. David W. Shapiro Moraga

Moraga's ruling oligarchy

I communicate this view as an individual, not representing the town of Moraga.

The Moraga Town Council has a long-standing tradition and protocol of selecting Mayor for each one-year term based on a set of election criteria, not personal preference. Not only does this tradition recognize that each Town Council member is there to represent all citizens of Moraga, it helps prevent ruling "power blocks".

On December 8, 2021, three members of the Town Council ignored the tradition without cause (see video recording at Moraga web site). Not only did this vote break Moraga's tradition and create a very poor tone

for 2022, it likely formalized Moraga's ruling oligarchy, an oligarchy not necessarily representing all of Moraga's citizens without bias. The door is now open for future abuses.

I encourage Moraga citizens to practice the basic form of democracy and make your voices heard. Petition the Town Council by letters and verbally during Council meetings, run for office, and ensure you vote for candidates who will represent the best interests of all Moraga citizens. Steve Woehleke Moraga

Dysfunctional council

When Renata Sos was appointed to the Moraga Town Council in 2018 and Mike McCluer and Steve Woehleke were elected in the subsequent election, I thought Moraga had finally entered something resembling the Age of Enlightenment. I have learned in the last week that this was another illusionary dream. So now, instead of fixing roads, drains and property issues, Moraga will once again have to deal with another dysfunctional Council.

Congratulations to all the puppeteers who created this! I hope you know who you are. I wish I did! Caroline Wood Moraga

Time to move on

I'm chagrined and personally disappointed to see all the caustic vitriol arising from Renata Sos becoming Moraga's newest Mayor.

Let's put this whole matter in its proper context.

Moraga is a very small town. At last count, with just over 18,000 residents.

Unfortunately, like the rest of the country, we're also part of a very troubled world that's dealing with critical challenges from a worsening climate, domestic and international political unrest and growing crime.

In that context, it strikes me that we might be putting the "emphasis on the wrong syllable" (i.e. how can the simple ascension to Mayor of a small town generate so much anger and so many false accusations??).

I had an opportunity to work with Renata during the Town's successful campaign to install surveillance cameras. I've since grown to admire her professionalism, integrity and commitment to our Town.

She enjoyed a successful 25-year career as a practicing attorney, eventually becoming a partner with PricewaterhouseCoopers.

Now, as our Mayor, I'm confident she will apply her knowledge, significant business experience and commitment ... always to the very best interests our little community.

So ... it's time to move on. Paul Cohune Moraga

A note from the Editor

Unlike social media platforms, Letters to the Editor submissions must be accurate, cannot involve personal attacks on people or businesses, cannot be defamatory, and cannot include charges without verifiable information to be considered for publication. This includes implications of impropriety without backup documentation to support those claims. We hope Letters to the Editor can continue to be a way to facilitate a healthy dialogue within the community. Jennifer Wake Editor

Opinions in Letters to the Editor are the express views of the writer and not necessarily those of the Lamorinda Weekly. All published letters will include the writer's name and city/town of residence -- we will only accept letters from those who live in, or own a business in, the communities comprising Lamorinda (please give us your phone number for verification purposes only). Letters must be factually accurate and be 350 words or less; letters of up to 500 words will be accepted on a space-available basis. Visit www.lamorindaweekly.com for submission guidelines. Email: letters@lamorindaweekly.com; Regular mail: Lamorinda Weekly, P.O.Box 6133, Moraga, CA 94570



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Single Family Home Customers – 2022 Holiday Tree Collection Schedule

Your tree pickup will be on the same day as your regular garbage service but by a separate truck. Regular service will not be affected for Christmas and New Year's Day because they fall on a Saturday.

Week of Jan 3-7	Customers in Walnut Creek, Danville, Alamo, Diablo, and Blackhawk (including unincorporated areas).
Week of Jan 10-14	Customers in Lafayette, Orinda, and Moraga (including unincorporated areas).
Week of Jan 17-21	Customers who missed prior tree collection.
AFTER Jan 21	If possible, cut tree and place in organics cart with lid closed, or call (925) 685-4711 to schedule a pick-up for a fee.



Tree Pickup Do's & Don'ts

- Do:**
- Remove lights, ornaments, and tinsel before placing at curbside.
 - Trees over 8' must be cut in half.
- Don't:**
- Flocked trees can be collected using your annual on-call garbage cleanup at no cost, but must be scheduled in advance. Call (925) 685-4711. If cut to fit inside with lid closed, flocked trees may be placed in your black landfill cart.
 - Do not leave stands (whether plastic, metal, or wood) on the tree. Trees with these items still attached cannot be picked up.

Leave trees at curbside on the same day as your regular collection day, during your city's assigned week.

COLLECTED TREES WILL BE COMPOSTED.



Santa makes breakfast rounds in Moraga before the big day

... continued from Page A1

When Santa arrived with his sack full of candy canes to mingle with the breakfasting guests, children were either terrified, mesmerized or conversationally occupied with the man of the hour. Some even gifted Santa with handmade pictures they colored at home; expressing their love through art, from

the heart. After breakfast, Santa sat in a comfy chair next to the Christmas tree as children lined up to sit on his lap for a photo op and the traditional hint of what they'd like to see under their tree on Christmas morning. One parent asked if it was okay for the kids to take off their masks for the picture, to which Scully replied, "Sure, Santa got his booster shot from

every country possible." While a few kids were hesitant to approach Santa on an up-close-and-personal level (because meeting one's idol can be a bit daunting), the moment he asked them what they wanted of Saint Nick to deliver, the verbal floodgates opened and entire lists were rattled off without hesitation. Better add a U-Haul to that sled, Santa!



Warmest Holiday Wishes

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We want to thank the Lamorinda Weekly readership for the support it has shown during this unprecedented time. We're so grateful to be part of this amazing community, and we look forward to serving your real estate needs in the coming year.

Sincerely wishing you and those you love much joy this holiday season and a healthy and prosperous New Year.

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~ Life in LAMORINDA ~

Author pens exciting adventure based on true-life experience



Mark Clifford

Photo provided

By Diane Claytor

Many people retire after spending a lifetime of intense and dangerous work and happily walk into the sunset, content to spend their days relaxing with a fishing pole or tending to their garden. Moraga's Mark Clifford is not one of those people. A bundle of energy, it's likely Clifford, a former Marine, retired police officer and current author, rarely sits still for any length of time (except, perhaps, when he's writing his next book).

Clifford retired in 2020 after 27 years as a San Leandro police officer, noting that he was extremely proud to have served that diverse community. Referring to his career as "colorful," Clifford rose to sergeant's rank and his assignments included being a police academy recruit training officer, a stolen vehicles investigator, serving on the SWAT team, and working undercover narcotics.

Being a police officer was the second career for Clifford, a man who admits to continually reinventing himself. Prior to that, the fourth generation San Franciscan and second in a family of seven children, served in the Marines for 10 years, rising to the rank of

staff sergeant. He received special operations training with the 3rd Marine Division in Okinawa and was operating in the Philippines in 1991 during the historic Mount Pinatubo eruption. And this is when, perhaps unknowingly, Clifford began preparing for this third career: author.

"After being at Mount Pinatubo and experiencing the second largest volcanic eruption of the last century," Clifford says, "I knew I had to tell a story about it." It was June, 1991 and Clifford was stationed on Luzon, the largest of the Philippines' 7,641 islands. He was living in the jungle with his troops when he was called back to base because the volcano had erupted. "I looked up and saw a huge cloud. It was an unbelievable cataclysmic experience," he recalls, "literally putting us under ash." Clifford always wondered why this wasn't a huge story. "It was an epic disaster in every sense, like living through an apocalypse."

Fast forward 25 years and the story that had been fermenting in Clifford's mind since 1991 finally comes to fruition when he writes his first book — "Typhoon Coast" — inspired by the Mount Pinatubo eruption and a lost

treasure rumored to be near the top of the volcano. As Clifford describes it, "Typhoon Coast" is a rollicking ride through 1980s San Francisco, through the vibrant eyes of a boy who loses his mother, and then his innocence. In the jungles of the Philippines, ... that boy becomes a man ... and begins a lifelong quest for a mythical hidden treasure trove. ... Magical realism and romanticism merge with the hard, cold reality of a Marine's life to reveal a glimpse into how the imagination conspires to keep us dreaming."

Clifford is very pleased with the way the different arcs of the story eventually all fell into place. "Imagine telling someone about surviving the most cataclysmic volcanic eruption in a populated area of the last century. It's hard to really grasp the story. So I decided to tell it as a slightly fictionalized account, developing composite characters and settings," he said. "I loved the creative aspect of doing it this way."

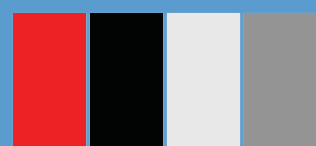
Available on amazon.com, one reader of "Typhoon Coast" called it a "fun and adventurous book," while another said, "writing is great, what an imagination."

It's been said that the best thing that happens to your first book is your second book. With that in mind, "Typhoon Coast" is the first of a trilogy: "The Barbary Coast: Fly from Evil," will be released next year and "The Devil's Sea" will be published in 2023.

Clifford, who is quite talented at marketing and firmly believes that life is a treasure hunt and the people you meet are the real treasures, coined a descriptive phrase to go along with "Typhoon Coast."

"Life is a treasure hunt; seek and you will find" is on merchandise that can be purchased at typhooncoast.com. He has also buried \$1,000 in a public location in San Francisco with clues given throughout the book. Details can be found on the website.

... continued on Page B2



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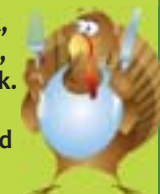
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happy HOLIDAYS

Wishing you all the best this holiday season and in the new year!

If you're thinking of making a move in 2022, now is the time to set up a game plan. Let my knowledge and experience show you the way to a smooth and successful outcome.

The perfect pastry pairing for a morning coffee pick-me-up



Dark Chocolate & Sea Salt Rugelach

Photo Susie Iventosch

By Susie Iventosch

I love it when cafes offer rugelach among their pastry selection, because they are the perfect sweet bite to pair with coffee. They've always reminded me of the cinnamon roll-ups my mom used to make with leftover pie dough, but rugelach dough is made with cream cheese in addition to butter. They usually come with cinnamon or chocolate fillings, and both are so delicious. It's hard to pick, so sometimes you just need both

— one for the first cup of coffee, and one for the second. This recipe from Jake Cohen, (published in the December 2019 issue of Fine Cooking Magazine), is especially good because it's topped with sea salt. You can add any nut or fruit fillings you want to these tasty treats, such as finely chopped walnuts or pecans, currants, or your favorite jam. I used an iridescent edible glitter on top of the chocolate drizzle for some holiday pizzazz. Santa will love these too, so be sure to save a few for his cookie plate!

Dark Chocolate & Sea Salt Rugelach

Makes 4 Dozen

Cream Cheese Dough

INGREDIENTS :

8 oz. cream cheese, softened
4 oz. (8 Tbs.) unsalted butter, softened
1/4 cup powdered sugar
11 oz. (2 1/3 cups) all-purpose flour; more as needed
1/2 teaspoon kosher salt
Nonstick cooking spray
1 large egg, at room temp
1 teaspoon whole milk

DIRECTIONS :

In a large bowl using a hand-held electric mixer or in the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, cream the cream cheese, butter and sugar on medium speed until light and fluffy, 2 minutes. Add the flour and salt, and then mix just until a smooth dough forms. Divide dough into four equal parts and shape them into a cube or square. Wrap in plastic and chill for 1 hour or up to overnight.

Position a rack in the center of the oven, and heat the oven to 375 F. Line two large rimmed baking sheets with silicone baking mats or parchment paper lightly coated with cooking spray.

Remove one dough square from the refrigerator, and place on a lightly floured work surface. (If you've refrigerated the dough overnight, let it sit out at room temperature for several minutes so it is more malleable and easier to roll out). Roll dough into an 8-inch square. Spread one-fourth of the filling on the dough, leaving a 1/2-inch edge at the top and bottom. Slice the square in half. Starting at a long end, roll each half into a cylinder from the outside in, and then cut each rolled half into six evenly sized pieces.

In a small bowl, whisk the egg and milk. Arrange 12 rugelach on one of the prepared baking sheets. Brush with the egg wash, and bake until golden-brown, 16 to 21 minutes. Repeat with the remaining dough and filing.

If desired, once out of the oven and cooled, drizzle melted chocolate over top of rugelach, or alternatively, sprinkle with sea salt or powdered sugar.

Dark Chocolate Sea Salt Filling

INGREDIENTS

8 oz. (about 1 3/4 cups) coarsely chopped dark chocolate
2 oz. (4 Tbs.) unsalted butter
2 tablespoons powdered sugar (plus some extra for garnish)
1 teaspoon kosher salt

DIRECTIONS

Combine the chocolate, butter, sugar, and salt in a heat-proof bowl over a small saucepan of simmering water. Whisk until melted and smooth. Cool completely, and chill until the consistency of peanut butter.



Susie can be reached at suziventosch@gmail.com. This recipe can be found on our website: www.lamorindaweekly.com If you would like to share your favorite recipe with Susie please contact her by email or call our office at (925) 377-0977. Or visit <https://treksandbites.com>

Holiday toxicities

By Mona Miller, DVM

'Tis the season to decorate with tinsel, to light aromatic candles and scent the air with cinnamon and pine diffusers, to strategically hang the mistletoe sprigs and to bake holiday treats. We make sure that our pet friends have new toys, sweaters and beds wrapped up to open on a cold holiday morning. However, there are some holiday traditions to avoid exposing your furry friend to — many are food products, but some are not.

We should all be aware of toxicities to dogs and cats if they eat chocolate, or grapes, raisins or currants, or any candy or gum sweetened with xylitol. I have included website links for each of these below, for more detail. But for this article, I'd like to focus more on non-edible items,

such as liquid potpourri oils, decorative plants and tinsel.

Air room diffusers have become very popular, in which you can drop some fragrance essential oils and lightly scent the room with moisture or heat. When used properly, the oils are diluted down and pose minimal to no risk. Some of these oils have detergents in the carrier solution. These oils and detergents both can be very caustic to tissue on contact. Cats especially are prone to negative effects if they lick up a spill, or enough oils get on their fur and get absorbed into the mouth when cats groom. These oils can be corrosive to the mouth tissue, as well as stomach and intestines — causing drooling, mouth ulceration, decreased appetite or vomiting. Additionally, absorption of these oils into the bloodstream (through ingestion) can cause significant

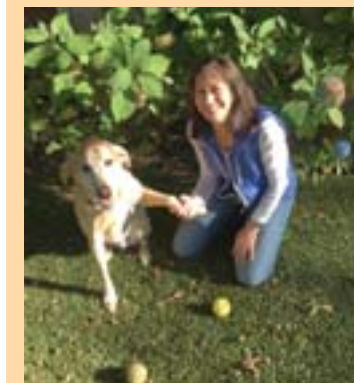
nervous system depression and low blood pressure. Any cat or dog who is prone to respiratory illness (feline asthma, canine inflammatory bronchitis) may also have a reaction when breathing in these diffused oils, even if properly prepared through the diffuser. These pets should be seen on urgent/emergency care if any of these signs are exhibited and you suspect essential oil toxicity.

Ingestion of certain decorative plants can also cause significant problems. Lily toxicity in cats causes a potentially fatal kidney failure. When caught early, this can be a reversible and curable problem, but often requires several days in the hospital on intravenous fluids and kidney support medications. Mistletoe can cause stomach upset, heart problems and erratic behavior. It contains a cellu-

lar toxin called lectin, which is more prevalent in the berries than the leaves. Holly is often very irritating to intestinal tissues, both mechanically (those little points on the leaf edges are sharp!) and through a chemical called saponin, found in the berries and leaves. Holly toxicity is usually mild to moderate and can cause drooling, vomiting, decreased appetite and lethargy. Poinsettia plant sap can be an irritant to the mouth and stomach, and can cause vomiting as well.

If a cat or dog ingests any long thin wire or string, there is significant concern that this can cause an intestinal foreign body obstruction that requires surgery. Decorations such as tinsel or electrical wires (think of the little tiny sparkly LED lights that have become popular) can be especially problematic for kittens and cats, who are attracted by the shine

and movement, and don't know to NOT eat the wires. Make sure that these wires and strings are not enticing your cat to play!



Dr. Mona Miller lives in Lafayette with her son, two cats and yellow Labrador. She attended UC Berkeley as an undergraduate, and received her DVM from UC Davis. She has been happy to call Lafayette home since 2001. She can be reached via email at MonaSDVM@aol.com. She welcomes questions from readers that may get incorporated into a column.

Here are some informative weblinks: <https://veterinarypartner.vin.com> — to read about toxicities from chocolate, grapes and xylitol
ASPCA Poison Control: www.aspcapetcare.org/pet-care/animal-poison-control
FDA Holiday Hazards: www.fda.gov/animal-veterinary/animal-health-literacy/take-oh-no-out-your-and-your-pets-holiday-ho-ho-ho#Plants

Musical serendipity brings local band to big stage



Photos provided

District band members, from left: Marco Stassi, Miles Elze and Connor O'Toole

By Jennifer Wake

Sometimes big things can happen from the smallest of actions. When 18-year-old Lafayette drummer Miles Elze, who is interning at recording studio East Bay Recorders in Oakland, saw Metallica bassist Rob Trujillo walk by, he said he “just had to call out his name and ask for a picture.”

The two musicians ended up talking about music

and Elze's band, District, as well as Trujillo's son's band, Otto. Tye Trujillo, 18, is known for playing with world famous metal band Korn when he was just 12 years old, and recently went on tour as the bassist for punk band Suicidal Tendencies.

“When he left I thought that was one of the coolest things ever to happen to me,” Elze said, “even though he's probably never going to remember me.”

About a month later Elze got a call from the producer at the studio where he works, and the producer said, “Hey Miles, I hope you're sitting down because Rob Trujillo just called and wants your band to open for his son's band.” On Dec. 16 District performed at the Starline Social Club in Oakland as part of the Metallica 40th Anniversary week.

District was formed in 2017 when guitarist and vocalist Marco Stassi (who is currently a senior at De La Salle High School) and Elze met for the first time at Ryan Lent Studios in downtown Lafayette. “It only took a couple of days for Marco and I to become best friends and it's remained that way ever since,” Elze said. “We later asked our friend Connor O'Toole (who attends Acalanes High School), who had similar music taste as us to learn the bass and play with us at the 2019 Lafayette Teen Rock Band Showcase where we came in second place.”



Elze's band, District, has played at The Phoenix Theater in Petaluma in 2021, UCSF Benioff Childrens Hospital Virtual Prom Performance in 2021, the Lafayette Art And Wine Festival in 2017, the Battle of the Bands Oakland in 2019 (first place), and has done a few high school performances at Acalanes, De La Salle, and Clayton Valley high schools. Elze said the Dec. 16 show was to be their biggest yet.

“The most exciting aspect about this opportunity for us is to make an impression on an audience that we've never played in front of before,” Elze said, “and to know that some of our musical heroes in Metallica will be watching is absolutely beyond us, so we are very lucky.”

District has two music releases: the 2019 LP “What I May Find” and the 2021 “Outdated - EP” which was recorded with Grammy-winning producer Michael Rosen. For more information about District, visit: <https://www.districtrocks.com/>; For information about Otto see: <https://www.otttoband.com/>

Author pens exciting adventure based on true-life experience

... continued from Page B1

One of the most worthwhile and humbling experiences Clifford has enjoyed recently is doing veteran outreach

through Grammy-award winning country singer Zac Brown's Camp Southern Ground. Clifford works with post 9-11 veterans during the camp's Warrior Week wellness

program, helping them adjust to the many challenges they face as they return to civilian life. As Clifford claims, “We are here to take care of each other, be our brother's keep-

ers. We are as good as the people with whom we connect. When you've been able to achieve success in life, help the next person achieve theirs.”

Clifford has done this his entire life. Perhaps this is why Moraga resident and first responder Douglas Young called Clifford “a local American hero.”

Lions annual Peace Poster Contest winners announced



Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School Submitted by Bob Murtagh

The Lamorinda Lions Foundation presented awards to the winners of the Lions Annual Peace Poster contest on Nov. 10. More than 200 students from four area schools competed in this international competition which annually attracts over 50,000 entries from



Orinda Intermediate School

around the world. This year's topic was "We are all connected."

The winners at Stanley Middle School were Clarie Drain (1st place); Emma Avnaim (2nd place); Ruby Bogan (3rd place); Principal Betsy Balmat and Art Teacher Robert Anke.

Orinda Intermediate School winners were Abigail Kim (1st place);



Stanley Middle School

Photos provided

Charlie Rivera-Gu (2nd place); Jane Luo (3rd place); Principal Stacy Wayne, Art Teacher Susan Weiss.

The winners at Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School were Drew Sidensol (1st place); Evelyn Rayner (2nd place); Zoe Banford-La Cour (3rd place); Principal Joan Danilison and Art Teacher Moose Wesler.

And St. Perpetua School winners were Caroline Fairbourn (1st place); Gianna Miller (2nd place); Claire Johnston (3rd place); Principal Karen Goodshaw and Art Teacher Heide Schwarck.

For more information about the Peace Poster Contest or other Lions events contact Lion Bob Murtagh at (925) 283-1841.

A Toys for Tots tradition resurrected

Submitted by Cassie Allen

Fourteen years ago seven 4-year-old boys from Growing Tree preschool celebrated their December birthdays by donating presents to Toys for Tots. They delivered them to the Moraga Fire Department, starting a trend of combining forces for their birthdays that would last years. This year, upon turning 18 the boys resurrected the tradition with a modern twist. Using social media to increase donations and driving themselves to the station this time, they arrived at the same Moraga Fire station on Dec. 11 with bags and bags and bags of toys. Recreating their original photograph, from left, are: Adam Harper, Connor Fritch, Max Rittmann, Xavier Esquer, Lleyton Allen, Joe Gonzalez and George Destino.



World-renowned Moraga Rotarian Cliff Dochterman is gone



Photo provided

Submitted by Gary Irwin

Prominent Moraga Rotarian Clifford L. Dochterman died a few days before his 96th birthday following a brief illness. Cliff had been past president of Rotary International (world president) in 1992-93, and had served as director and/or trustee on many boards and committees, and was recognized as a pioneer in developing the Polio Plus effort, which has almost eradicated polio from the earth. He had a lifetime association with Boy Scouts of America, and was named Citizen of the Year in Moraga in 2014. He was a skilled orator, and was invited all over the world to speak, with the consensus that he has spoken to more Rotary Clubs and Rotarians than any other person.

District 5160 Governor Kathy Suvia said: "Rotary International lost a hero and a legend yesterday. But our District lost a good friend." Moraga Rotary President Brian South said: "Cliff never showed arrogance for his international fame, he was great man for all the right reasons, a very common man."

He was also a very important member of Rotary Club of Moraga, which he joined in 1994, having previously been in the Berkeley and Stockton Rotary Clubs. Though he never held an office, he was always a Director-at-large, and could always be counted on for his knowledge of Rotary history, custom and practice, and for general common sense. He and his late wife Mary Elena (also a Moraga Rotarian) brought the "A Nite at the Races" dinner/auction/horse race fundraiser to Moraga Rotary, and

18 annual events through 2020 were held. Cliff was instrumental in building the All-Access Playground at the Moraga Commons, and urged his Club to build a bigger park than was originally envisioned.

It was a very sad Moraga Rotary lunch meeting after his death, but many Rotarians rose to offer anecdotes about Cliff and his very many contributions to his Rotary Club and to the world. Jim Campbell, a past district governor, recalls hearing lots of Cliff's speeches and noted that he spent a lot of time talking to people in the House of Friendship, the social gathering place at conventions.

Debbie Roessler recalled how Cliff would volunteer as security guard for the White Elephant Sale (benefiting the Oakland Museum), and few people could believe that a person of his accomplishments would do so. Frank May remembered how he loved to be the popcorn man at the OMPA Swim Meet, and was very proud of his record of 971 bags sold over that weekend. He said Cliff was always caring and kind with his advice, and he brought out all the best in people.

Dianne Wilson, former executive director of Moraga Royale, recalls how she showed a video of one of Cliff's hilarious speeches to her mother in the hospital, and found that several doctors and nurses were enjoying it also. Evie Michon, then a prospective member at her first Rotary lunch, sat at Cliff's table, and decided to join immediately afterwards.

Lillian Roodveldt remembers that, at an International convention, Cliff was asked by a young Indian woman if he could help her stay in the U.S. after completing her studies. Cliff declined, saying that she should return to India and apply her skills there. On a later trip, he encountered the same woman who was now the director of the hospital he was touring.

Jim Tait, president of the Tranent Rotary Club, located east of Edinburgh, Scotland, mentioned via Zoom that Cliff and Mary Elena were mentors to his daughter Eilidh when she was a Youth Exchange Student at Campolindo, sponsored by Moraga Rotary. His Club shows a video of Cliff telling the history of Rotary to all their new members. Tranent Rotary Club has participated via Zoom in many Moraga Rotary meetings, and Tait even gave a very interesting program at one meeting.

Cliff's family will hold a Celebration of Life in Moraga on Jan. 14 at 2 p.m. at the Holy Trinity Serbian Church in Moraga. Friends are invited.

New Troop 237 Eagle Scouts



Photo provided

Troop 237 Eagle Scouts, from left: Luke Franklin, Luke Lewis, Andrew Stern, Marcus Erickson, Ben Guthrie and Ryan Kaelle.

Submitted by Jodi Kaelle

Scout Troop 237 of Orinda announced that Marcus Erickson, Luke Franklin, Ben Guthrie, Ryan Kaelle, Luke Lewis and Andrew Stern have achieved Scouting's highest rank of Eagle Scout and will celebrate their Eagle Court of Honor at 2 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 8, 2022, at the Orinda Community Church. All six Eagle Scouts live in Orinda and are in the Class of 2023 attending Miramonte High School.

To become an Eagle, the candidate must earn a minimum of 21 merit badges, including 13 Eagle-required badges, demonstrate leadership and Scout spirit, and successfully complete an Eagle service project benefiting the community. Their Eagle Scout projects ranged from helping our area schools, a youth center, a church and Moraga/Orinda town AEDs.

Their Eagle Scout service projects are as follows: Erickson built a large bench for the outdoor classroom in the garden of learning at Glorietta Elementary School. A total of eight scouts and two adults participated, volunteering a total of 37 hours. Franklin's Eagle Scout project was the result of a summer spent volunteering at the Oakland Police Activities League youth center in East Oakland. In addition to collecting used books, Luke organized a book drive at Flashlight Books and Orinda Books where he placed "buy a book, donate a book" boxes which collected new books over several weeks. His project involved three Scouts who collectively completed 72.5 hours of work collecting, organizing, and delivering 370 books to the youth center serving disadvantaged youth in East Oakland.

The Orinda Community Church's

outdoor common area was in need of long overdue repairs, so Guthrie led a team of 26 volunteers who contributed a combined total of 170 volunteer hours over multiple weekends to refurbish many areas. Fixing this area has made it safer to use for the church, elderly and kids from the preschool located on site.

Kaelle partnered with the Lamorinda Community Emergency Response Team (Lamorinda CERT), Contra Costa County Emergency Medical Services (EMS) and the American Medical Response agency (AMR) to update all Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs) across the towns of Moraga and Orinda. Over 75 AEDs were logged and updated throughout Moraga and Orinda in commercial settings. The project allowed the towns of Moraga and Orinda to apply for "HeartSafe" designation status with the American Heart Association.

The Wagner Ranch Nature Area (WRNA) is a nature preserve and historic site in Orinda offering hands-on experiential, environmental education to Orinda school children. Lewis worked with naturalist, Toris Jagger, and built and installed Amphibian Boards in the WRNA which create a safe habitat for many creatures and provide students the ability to study these animals.

Stern's Eagle project was refurbishing his elementary school's garden and adding a bee and butterfly garden. The Del Rey Garden had been planted many years ago and was overgrown and run down. Andrew, his family and six Scouts from Troop 237 worked over four weekends and logged over 50 hours.

This group of newly confirmed Eagle Scouts wants to thank the Scout leaders, community, parents and fellow Scouts who have helped them along their journey to achieve this rank and honor.

CHRISTMAS
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Not to be missed

ART

Lamorinda Arts Alliance announces a new exhibit at Bank of America, Lafayette, on Mt. Diablo Boulevard across from Safeway. The exhibit will be open through January 2022, during banking hours, Monday through Friday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Featured artists are Adrienne Rogers (watercolors), Ellen Reintjes (acrylic paintings) and Carolyn WarmSun (acrylic paintings). <http://LAA4Art.org>

Art Gallery at the Orinda Library – Lamorinda Arts Alliance "Inspired by the Greats." Lamorinda Arts Council welcomes 36 members of the Lamorinda Arts Alliance to an in-person and virtual exhibit including 80 artworks from different genres in December. www.lamorindaarts.org/online-galleries. 26 Orinda Way. All COVID-19 precautions observed. (925) 359.9940 or galler@lamorindaarts.org.

Noted local artist Geoffrey Meredith will be featured as the guest artist at the Moraga Art Gallery for December and January, with 11 paintings in various sizes on display. The Gallery is normally open Wednesday through Sunday from noon to 5 p.m. From Dec. 1 to 24 the gallery is open daily, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Free, open to the public, no reservations needed. 432 Center St. Moraga moragaartgallery.com; (925) 376-5407.

56th Annual Holiday Collection at Valley Art Gallery through Dec. 31. Our new gift exhibition includes a wide variety of beautifully crafted, ceramic, wood and

glass pieces, original designer jewelry, holiday decorations, small paintings and many other unique, one-of-a-kind gift items. In addition, we will be featuring a trunk from Dec. 7 - 11 from 11 a.m. – 5 p.m. The trunk show will offer the creations of celebrated, multi-talented artisan Carolyn Russell, including her origami items, miniature Christmas trees and other decorative objects crafted from various materials. And, we will again have gift certificates available for giving. Open Tuesday through Saturday, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Valley Art Gallery, 1661 Botelho Drive, Suite 110, Walnut Creek www.valleyartgallery.org, (925) 935-4311

Art show at Orinda Books. December features the paintings of Paul Kratter – a skillful and accomplished landscape artist. Like many experienced fine-art painters, he comes from an illustration background that instills strong drawing and design skills and a robust belief in graphic shapes and storytelling. His paintings embody a sense of light, atmosphere, and emotion. To preview his work, visit the Artist of the Month section at www.orindabooks.com/events.

OTHER

Community Concern for Cats, which serves Lamorinda residents, is hosting its annual "Holiday Giving Tree" Fundraiser through Dec. 31 at its upscale thrift store, Rescued Treasures, 1270 Newell Ave. in Walnut Creek at the San Miguel Shopping Center. All the proceeds will go toward life-saving procedures for

homeless cats and kittens in local neighborhoods. Hours: Monday - Saturday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sundays noon to 4 p.m. For information call: (925) 937-3201.

SMC cancels Christmas Mass due to COVID concerns. Due to the continued threat of COVID-19, Saint Mary's College made the difficult decision to cancel the traditional public Christmas Eve Mass held annually in the Saint Mary's Chapel. SMC looks forward to welcoming the community back to campus to celebrate in 2022, and wishes everyone a Merry Christmas.

GARDEN

The Walnut Creek Garden Club welcomes the vaccinated public to visit their next meeting held Jan. 10, and to become a part of the Walnut Creek Garden Club. Shawna Anderson from Orchard Nursery shares her pruning tips for all types of roses. She will demonstrate techniques and the best tools for the job. Shawna is a garden consultant and designer and shares her passion for gardening through her business: Thrillers, Fillers and Spillers. If interested in joining the Club or for more information, please visit www.walnutcreekgardenclub.org. Meetings are held the second Monday of each month at 9:30 a.m., September through June at The Gardens at Heather Farm.

Please submit events to: calendar@lamorindaweekly.com

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Contact us:
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Publishers/Owners: Andy and Wendy Scheck; andy@lamorindaweekly.com, wendy@lamorindaweekly.com
Editor: Jennifer Wake; jennifer@lamorindaweekly.com
Sports Editor: sportsdesk@lamorindaweekly.com
Advertising: 925-377-0977, Wendy Scheck; wendy@lamorindaweekly.com
Staff Writers: Vera Kochan; vera@lamorindaweekly.com, Sora O'Doherty; Sora@lamorindaweekly.com, Jon Kingdon; sportsdesk@lamorindaweekly.com
 Digging Deep: Cynthia Brian; Cynthia@GoddessGardener.com
 Food: Susie Iventosch; suziventosch@gmail.com
Contributing Writers: Conrad Bassett, Sophie Braccini, Diane Claytor, John T. Miller, Fran Miller, Jenn Freedman, Mona Miller, Kara Navolio, Moya Stone, Margie Ryerson, Linda Fodrini-Johnson, Lou Fancher, Jeff Gomez, Chris Rauber, Sharon K. Sobotta
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Lamorinda's Religious Services

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 Dec. 24 at 11pm: a Candlelight Service of Scripture and Song
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LAMORINDA SPORTS

Submit stories to sportsdesk@lamorindaweekly.com

(we prefer to receive your original photo file, minimum size: 200 dpi and 1200 pixels wide)

Lamorinda basketball leads the way in competitive Diablo Athletic League



Jake Davis (32), Tate Nelson (5), Jack Bayless (24) Photo Ken Bayless

By Jon Kingdon

The last three seasons for Campolindo coach Steven Dyer would certainly be hard pressed to match after winning the state championship, the NorCal championship (with the state final canceled due to the coronavirus) and a 15-0 record in last springs abbreviated season. So far, the Cougars have not missed a beat, going undefeated in their first five games.

Having lost talented play-

ers like Emmanuel Callas, Chase Bennett, and Max Weaver there is still a solid core of players that returned from last year's team. "Even with a number of returners on the team, it's important to remember that every group is a new group," Dyer said.

Campolindo has never backed down from playing a top schedule and that also goes back to Dyer: "I strongly believe that a strong schedule will really prepare you for the playoffs. Being No. 1 in pre-

season doesn't matter. It's where you are at the end."

Dyer was true to his words by opening against a highly ranked Dublin team on the road, in front of a full house and coming out on top 50-42 and winning the Gridley tournament defeating Gridley, De La Salle and Archbishop Riordan in the championship game, and now have a school record of 24 straight wins over a period of 475 days.

The Cougars have a well-balanced offense with several options. It seems that every year, another shooter shows up for Campolindo. This year's new arrival is Clay Nafziger (6.2) who scored 17 points and had eight rebounds in the Gridley Championship game. With seniors Aidan Mahaney (15.4), and Cade Bennett (8.4) along with juniors Logan Robeson (4.0 - out until January with a hand injury) and Shane O'Reilly (8.6). Stating the obvious, Dyer puts it simply: "We have a lot of guys that can shoot the ball."

Senior center 6'6" Matt Radell (5.0/6.0 reb) has shown a constant growth since his freshman year. "We're looking for Matt to be a real force as a rebounder," Dyer said. "He's also the best screen setter on the team and has really improved in both areas." Justin Yasukochi (5.0) is the team's leading rebounder averaging 6.5 rebounds per game.

At the other end of the scale, 5'6" sophomore, Tyler Bergren (3.6), a point guard, should see a fair amount of time on the floor.

When Mahaney declared early his intention to attend Saint Mary's, it removed what could have been a distraction for him, Dyer and the team with so many colleges bidding for his talent. "It was a relief for Aidan and all of us to get it out of the way early," Dyer said. "We're just hopeful for a normal team."

Dyer is someone who never overlooks his defense. "We can be a fast team, but it will be contingent on us making defensive stops and then running the other way," Dyer said. "Defense is something that we always have to work on at this point and filling different spots for the players. They don't always have to be scoring roles. It's guys doing the little things which are going to be important for this team to win."

As has been the case for the last three years, the

Cougars are the team everyone will be gunning for.

"Every team is going to want to beat us because of how well we've done," Dyer said. "We can't take anything for granted. It's important that the players know that last year's success does not mean anything."

Miramonte

In his third year at Miramonte, head coach Chris Lavdiotis has a team that he has great confidence in and shows it in his offensive philosophy. "We call it freedom with structure, giving them concepts and just letting them play," Lavdiotis said. "I don't want to be the type of coach that is constantly calling the plays because that would slow us down and we're pretty good running the ball up the court."

At 6-1, the system seems to be working.

Guard Tyler Dutto (8.5) is the leader on the court and leads the team in assists with 5.8 per game. "Tyler is the starter but the nice thing about our team is that just above everyone on the team can play guard," Lavdiotis said. "Because of that, we've developed the skill set to be able to play five out basketball and have different players initiate. Even at 6'5", Caden Breznikar (15.7) is a great initiator but in the end, it will be by the group." Breznikar is also leading the team in assists with 5.0 per game.

Coming into the season, Lavdiotis was looking for someone to step up and be a force on the court the way Niyi Olabode (playing now at UC Riverside) was last season. Senior James Frye has taken on that role, so far leading the team with an average of 19.6 points per game. Ben Murphy (12.7) has developed into a valuable weapon with his outside shooting.

"We're a read and react type of offense with all of the players facing the basket or the fifth guy in the key starting things," Lavdiotis said.

Even with the team's early success, there will be more talent to call soon. Miramonte will be getting help as the year develops from transfers and players rehabbing from injuries. Guards Marcus Robinson and Koleton Fenton are waiting to become eligible to play due to transfer rules. "When Marcus gets cleared, we will go from really good to very, very good," Lavdiotis said. "He has been working and training really hard and he's become a very vocal player, particularly on the defensive side. Koleton is also going to help us a lot."

Three players have come over from the football team: Dutto and Sam Ross, who are playing through injuries, and Luke Duncan who will be out at least four weeks with a shoulder injury.

Lavdiotis sees grittiness with the team. "It starts on the defensive end," Lavdiotis said. "We want to dictate what our opponents are going to do on offense. We want them to really communicate and at times get a little crazy and ferocious on defense."

Ultimately, Lavdiotis wants the players to take the

ultimate responsibility for the play on the court: "We're trying to create a real positive situation and it's pretty organic. We've always told the players that they have to do this naturally. When it comes from the players, it's a better situation. It also helps that this team is very coachable, competitive, connected, works well together and they listen." **Acalanes (3-2)**

Acalanes' first year head coach Bill Powers' initial goal has been to establish an attitude right from the start. "Defensively is where I hope that our identity is created because that's what we can control on a nightly basis," Powers said. You can't control your shooting percentage as much as you can control your attitude and effort on defense."

On offense for Powers, it's a matter of getting the players to take things a step at a time and keeping things simple. "Basketball is not 32 minutes but a combination of every possession and at this point, we're just trying to win every possession," Powers said. "The game is about passing and shooting and being a good teammate on offense and defense. We're teaching Acalanes shots, not me shots, making sure that the right guys are shooting the ball at the right time. It's what goes into winning a possession and if they continue to be receptive, I like where this team could be in February."

Powers will be counting on point guard Theo Stoll, center Jake Davis, Noah Bloch and Jack Bayliss, all juniors. "Theo and Jake are both really good players," Powers said. "Noah is someone that is always early in the gym. He's going to be a key player for us, and Jack is a consistent player from tip to buzzer. There are a lot of players that bring heart and soul to the court, but Jack creates a heartbeat for us."

At this point though, the team is still in the process of determining who are going to be the team's consistent outside shooters.

There are also players that are bringing a physical presence from the football team, Tyler Murphy, Justin Zegarowski and Nathan Bennett, a trio that Powers readily welcomes: "They will definitely help. I've had a lot of success with multiple sport athletes and these football players bring another dimension to our team."

Powers is aware of the quality of talent that makes up the Diablo Athletic League acknowledging that "it's a heck of a league and I am honored to be coaching in the DAL."

As the players have learned Powers' philosophy and schemes, he has learned from them as well: "They want to be coached and they want to be good, and I feel fortunate to be in this position to coach them. I'm trying to create a winning team that pays attention to all the little details and keeps getting better each day. We're not competing against yesterday and that is not just a cliché. I really love this team."



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Lamorinda girls basketball a confluence of talent and youth



Karena Eberts (1)

Photo Jon Kingdon

By Jon Kingdon

For the past few years, **Acalanes (6-2)** was not without talent. What they were lacking was numbers and when coach Margaret Gartner and assistant Scott Espinosa-Brown took over last year, their first goal was to enlarge the roster. Their efforts proved successful with 11 players on the varsity and a full JV roster this year.

What was their secret? “We recruited at school with free pizza at a lunchtime meeting and used the social media to get the word out,” Gartner said. “We had camps and open gyms in the summer and played in a summer league. We had the girls ask their friends to come out and coaches from other sports were encouraging their girls to play basketball for the conditioning.”

Last spring was Gartner’s first year with the team but with the abbreviated season, no seniors, four juniors and seven

freshmen and sophomores on this year’s team, she is essentially starting from scratch this year. “This is a hard-working team that is very unselfish and is willing to make the extra pass,” Gartner said.

It’s a group that clearly wants to get better, according to Espinosa-Brown: “They’re willing to be coached and they work hard. We’re just trying to sustain that effort for longer periods of time.”

The Dons’ defense has been holding their opponents to an average of 35.5 points per game, addressing Gartner’s primary goal: “It starts with defense because we’re going to put a lot of pressure on our opponents because our first shots are not guaranteed to be going in. There will be games where shots are going to be hard to come by but when you can play defense, and you can get transition and more shots, then you can win the game.”

The Acalanes offense is one that can adjust to the situation:

“I like my team to score quickly and beat our opponents up the court,” Gartner said. “We still have to have our sets because there will be games which teams will not allow us to run. Being so young and having a new offense, we are practicing on when to screen and when to cut. Our players have the green light to shoot because we don’t want to put limitations on our girls, so they won’t be hesitant to shoot.”

Using a pressing defense and running offense, the Dons will be going deep on their bench this season. “With the pace that we want to have in our games, I’m going to try and get all of our players into the game,” Gartner said. “This is the youngest team we’ve ever had so we have to be patient. There’s a lot of unknowns and that’s exciting. As long as we remember that, the players will be able to maintain their confidence.”

The backcourt is led by three freshmen, Karyss Lacanlale, Sophie Chinn and Dulci Vail who have all stood out, and junior Emily Du has been very consistent. In their opening game against Windsor, Lacanlale had 17 points, Vail, 12 points, Chinn 9 points and 11 rebounds and Du 7 points.

“With seven freshmen and sophomores, this is the youngest team we’ve ever had,” Gartner said. “There’s a lot of unknown and that is exciting and as long as we remember that our players will be able to maintain their confidence.”

Lacking some height in the front court, the Lady Dons are compensating with more strength. “Our players have worked hard and shown that they love the weight room,” Espinosa-Brown said. “If they can play strong and not get hurt, that’s the key,” added Gartner.

“We need to stay present,” Espinosa-Brown said. “In our summer league, we played

some very stellar teams, and the girls did not stay up with them because they did not think they could stay up with them. That confidence factor and going for it is a key which is the only way to play our defense.”

Miramonte (3-6)

Having lost six players to graduation and with only two returning seniors, Miramonte is like a brand-new team that will be learning as they go along. “We don’t have a lot of experience so we’re rebuilding, and we have a ways to go,” said head coach Vince Wirthman. “We’re not what we were last year but I believe that we can get there. We have some good players.”

The backcourt starters will be junior Kendall Maurer and sophomore point guard Willa Mapaye. “Kendall is a good player and a great defender,” Wirthman said. “Willa was on the varsity last season but did not get to play much. She is a talented player that just needs some experience. It’s important for our guards to be solid with the ball and that should improve with experience.”

The Lady Matadors have a lot of talent in the frontcourt led by Chloe Breznikar and Karena Eberts. “Eberts is a top talent and is able to play power forward and center,” Wirthman said. “She averaged double doubles in the second half of last season because she is very good in the post and can shoot outside and is an aggressive rebounder (13.5/game so far). Chloe was on the varsity as a sophomore but did not play last season due to COVID, but she is a talented player and we’re expecting a big year out of her.”

Eberts (12.7 ppg/11.7 rpg) and Breznikar (9.7 ppg/7.7 rpg) are leading the team in scoring and rebounding, and Mapaye and Maurer are leading the team in assists.

Marissa DUBY, who sat out last year and Keawe Parker, a

transfer from Pinole who was a volleyball player, are being counted on as backups in the frontcourt.

Complimenting Eberts and Breznikar in the low post are a host of outside shooters. Mari-anna Lawrence, Courtney and Katherine Scheingart will be relied on to score from the outside. “They are all good shooters, Wirthman said. “We are going to look to spread it out and get the ball inside to Karena and Chloe which will then allow us to get some good open threes.”

Like so many coaches, the key for Wirthman is stopping the other team’s offense. “Our defense is going to carry us one way or the other. We are going to press a lot and try to keep pressuring our opponents. We’re really pointing for Jan. 4 when we start our league schedule.”

Campolindo (2-4)

Campolindo’s first year head coach Bill Flitter who coached the Cougar’s JV team last year is starting with a clean slate. “With only one senior and two juniors, we’re a young team but we have a lot of talent,” Flitter said. “We’ve seen some early successes and even some signs of brilliance.”

Flitter is looking to copy the success he saw at De La Salle where had once coached: “What made them successful was their program and I want to create that type of program at Campolindo that will outlive me. I want our team to live by three core values: always being coachable, compassionate, and competitive. If we can achieve those things, we’re going to be successful. I’m in it for the long haul, not looking for short-term victories.”

Flitter’s philosophy can be summed up in one word: attack: “We want to always be attacking, putting a lot of pressure on the offensive and defensive sides. It’s pretty simple: pressure.” ... continued on Page C3

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Breznikar twins talented players and leaders on the court



Chloe and Caden Breznikar Photo provided

By Jon Kingdon

As twins growing up in Lamorinda, sports were a focal point for Caden and Chloe Breznikar. Their parents, John and Nancy, were high school athletes and passed their love of sports on to their children, with both eventually playing for their respective basketball teams at Miramonte. "My mom was very athletic and the captain of her high school field hockey team," Chloe said. "Our parents encouraged us to play as much as we could, and our dad would always have us in the backyard working on our shots." Though there were

many competitive games in the backyard, Caden and Chloe only played together on the baseball teams in the OBA until they were 12 years old. Though they did not play together after that, they were always there for each other critiquing each other's play. "When I would watch Chloe, I would tell her to be more aggressive," Caden said. "I would also suggest certain moves to the basket." "Caden helps me out more than I help him," Chloe conceded. "Still, I watch his games and we both suggest to each other what more we can do to help our teams. We have similar styles, but Caden is now more of a shooter

and I'm more of a post player though we've played with the same style in the past." Along with their skills on the court, they can also compare their leadership skills as co-captains on their teams. "It all came from their mother who lost her life to cancer in 2016," John said. "She was really the driving force for them." Caden has focused exclusively on basketball, but Chloe is also committed to the Oakland Strokes crew team. There are days when she will be rowing in the afternoon from 4 to 6 p.m. and then come home and practice with the team from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. Chloe con-

cedes that time management is essential and "it is very busy." Not surprisingly, the twins' coaches have similar feelings about them. "Caden has become a tremendous leader," Chris Lavdiotis said. "He has embraced leadership and will hold his teammates accountable. He will bark at his teammates in the right way and hold himself accountable. He's a wonderful kid." "Chloe has been great as a leader," Vince Wirthman said. "She is here all the time and has been gutting it out with a bad knee and playing through it. She is having a very good year."

Lacrosse champions



Submitted by Tim Jones

Local eighth-grade boys from Lafayette and Orinda won the top regional lacrosse tournament: BlackJack Classic Adrenaline Lacrosse Tournament beginning of December in Las Vegas while playing for the Alcatraz Outlaws.

From left: Donavan Bantique, Derek Youn and Tucker Jones

Photo provided

Basketball champions



From left: coach Chris Dodge, G. Schlicht, G. Beers, C. De La Cruz, T. Jones, J. Eberts, L. McDonough, G. Dodge, I. Copen and sitting in front P. Beld. Missing was coach Brad Hillsabeck and player P. Hillsabeck.

Submitted by Tim Jones

St. Perpetua Eighth Grade American

Team won the highly competitive MVP Turkey Trot basketball tournament beginning of December. Congratulations to champions.

Ryan Nickens named outstanding defender



Photo provided

Submitted by Jon Nickens

Moraga resident, Ryan Nickens '22, helped lead The Athenian School soccer team to a NCS Division 2 Championship. The Nov. 13 hard fought 1-0 final versus Calistoga capped off a play-off of four consecutive shutouts. Nickens, the senior captain and three-year starter was also named Most Outstanding Defender in the league by the coaches for the 2021 season.

Lamorinda girls basketball

... continued from Page C2

Campolindo is not a big team and is going to be relying on movement. "We're a fast and quick team," Flitter said. "Some of the girls have surprised me at how well they can fill a gap. We want to get the ball out, fast break up the court and scoring quickly. We've also placed a big emphasis on rebounding and defense," Flitter said. "We held American scoreless for 10 minutes and have outrebounded both teams in our first two games. The girls showed who they can be which was very impressive."

There are a number of weapons that Flitter feels he is going to be able to call upon led by Maya Schwartz, Charlotte Arnsward, Camille Yabu, Catelyn Cereghino and Natalie Barkey. "Maya is a guard that is long, can also play the four and is a very accurate 3-point shooter, Charlotte just came back from an early season injury will bring the defensive pressure that we need. Camille is very fast player

on both ends of the court and Catelyn is also a force in the frontcourt."

Flitter has been very impressed in the leadership and commitment that Barkey has displayed, along with the 27 points she scored in the opening game. "Natalie has stood up and taken on the leadership role. She will scout our opponents and write up reports, sending them to the team and commenting on how we should guard them and what to look for."

Lining up next to Barkey in the backcourt has been freshman Ali Mccauley. "Ali can play both guard positions and has done really well. She is a talented young lady."

With so many young players, Flitter anticipates constant improvement from the team. "COVID hampered the amount of playing time and experience our players have had but we're going to make up for that with our athleticism. The girls have been practicing very hard every day and it's been fun. I've been pleasantly surprised by the output."

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Lamorinda OUR HOMES

Lamorinda Weekly Volume 15 Issue 22 Wednesday, December 22, 2021



Lamorinda Home Sales

... read on Page D2

Digging Deep with Goddess Gardener, Cynthia Brian

A berry, merry Christmas ... mostly for the birds



Holly is one of the most well-known holiday berries used in wreaths.

By Cynthia Brian

*"To me, the garden is a doorway to other worlds; one of them, of course, is the world of birds. The garden is their dinner table, bursting with bugs and worms and succulent berries."~ Anne Raver
Birdy, it's cold outside.*

Deciduous trees are barren of leaves, autumn perennials have finished their blooming cycle, and few flowers adorn the landscape. The glistening ornaments that embellish the foliage are a gastro delight for birds.



Cotoneaster berries provide a winter bird buffet.

Winter has arrived and with it the beautiful berries that are a vital source of food for birds as well as a traditional embellishment to Christmas wreaths and garlands. When we think of berries, we normally conjure images of blackberries, blueberries, raspberries or strawberries, all grown and harvested in the warmer months. Winter berries are different, and although they are a small fleshy fruit, they are mostly enjoyed by wildlife, with a few edible exceptions eaten by humans.

My garden boasts a plethora of winter berries that encourage my feathered friends to hang around for the holidays. Finches, mockingbirds,



Nandina, also known as heavenly bamboo, is poisonous and deadly to all wildlife and domestic animals.

Photos Cynthia Brian

robins, sparrows, jays, quail, doves, bluebirds, and orioles are attracted to the many varieties of berries that will provide their nutrition during a cold and stark winter. A few of my favorites include pyracantha, cotoneaster, viburnum, pepper, Chinese pistache, rosehips, holly, yew and barberry. Of these, only the pepper berries and rosehips are consumed by my family. Although pomegranates are not a berry, their jewel-red seeds called arils remind me of tiny berries and I grow them in my garden.

... continued on Page D10



Happy Holidays! Looking forward to 2022!!

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MORAGA	15	\$395,000	\$2,675,000
ORINDA	12	\$1,046,000	\$4,125,000

Home sales are compiled by Cal REsource, an Oakland real estate information company. Sale prices are computed from the county transfer tax information shown on the deeds that record at close of escrow and are published five to eight weeks after such recording. This information is obtained from public county records and is provided to us by California REsource. Neither Cal REsource nor this publication are liable for errors or omissions.

LAFAYETTE

- 125 Camelia Lane, \$4,420,000, 4 Bdrms, 4072 SqFt, 2020 YrBlt, 11-05-21
- 4520 Canyon Road, \$3,300,000, 5 Bdrms, 4479 SqFt, 1978 YrBlt, 11-08-21
- 4077 Coralee Lane, \$1,675,000, 3 Bdrms, 2478 SqFt, 1975 YrBlt, 11-05-21,
Previous Sale: \$920,000, 11-19-13
- 8 Corte Rinaldo, \$1,690,000, 3 Bdrms, 3759 SqFt, 1977 YrBlt, 11-08-21,
Previous Sale: \$425,000, 05-01-87
- 3239 Del Mar Drive, \$1,402,000, 3 Bdrms, 2007 SqFt, 1961 YrBlt, 11-09-21,
Previous Sale: \$855,000, 04-19-06
- 1000 Dewing Avenue #216, \$1,005,000, 2 Bdrms, 1123 SqFt,
2017 YrBlt, 11-12-21
- 3260 Gloria Terrace, \$1,525,000, 2 Bdrms, 1420 SqFt, 1973 YrBlt, 11-10-21,
Previous Sale: \$127,000, 04-01-78
- 3920 Happy Valley Road, \$2,000,000, 4 Bdrms, 3902 SqFt, 1966 YrBlt, 11-12-21
- 385 Hermosa Court, \$1,200,000, 3 Bdrms, 1276 SqFt, 1953 YrBlt, 11-08-21,
Previous Sale: \$945,000, 10-11-21
- 2749 Kinney Drive, \$1,225,000, 2 Bdrms, 1527 SqFt, 1949 YrBlt, 11-01-21,
Previous Sale: \$1,030,000, 02-05-21
- 3938 Leroy Way, \$2,385,000, 3 Bdrms, 2456 SqFt, 1949 YrBlt, 11-01-21
- 316 Lowell Lane, \$2,250,000, 4 Bdrms, 2771 SqFt, 1968 YrBlt, 11-02-21,
Previous Sale: \$1,569,000, 04-04-08
- 740 Moraga Road, \$1,695,000, 5 Bdrms, 2685 SqFt, 1974 YrBlt, 11-12-21,
Previous Sale: \$87,000, 11-01-89
- 6 Olde Creek Place, \$1,630,000, 5 Bdrms, 2290 SqFt, 1998 YrBlt, 11-12-21
- 1265 Upper Happy Valley Road, \$4,100,000, 5 Bdrms, 3343 SqFt,
1936 YrBlt, 11-03-21, Previous Sale: \$2,850,000, 09-01-15

MORAGA

- 118 Alta Mesa Court, \$1,435,000, 4 Bdrms, 3033 SqFt, 1974 YrBlt, 11-04-21,
Previous Sale: \$450,000, 09-01-89
- 2129 Ascot Drive #10, \$610,000, 2 Bdrms, 1314 SqFt, 1970 YrBlt, 11-09-21
- 943 Augusta Drive, \$1,420,000, 4 Bdrms, 3424 SqFt, 1989 YrBlt, 11-08-21,
Previous Sale: \$1,275,000, 04-12-07
- 3862 Campolindo Drive, \$1,927,000, 4 Bdrms, 1937 SqFt, 1971 YrBlt, 11-10-21
- 10 Crockett Drive, \$2,675,000, 5 Bdrms, 3831 SqFt, 1988 YrBlt, 11-10-21,
Previous Sale: \$1,975,000, 07-06-17
- 128 Danefield Place, \$2,300,000, 5 Bdrms, 2929 SqFt, 1964 YrBlt, 11-02-21
- 1615 Del Monte Way, \$2,320,000, 5 Bdrms, 2745 SqFt, 1967 YrBlt, 11-04-21,
Previous Sale: \$1,420,000, 04-19-14
- 2133 Donald Drive #4, \$585,000, 2 Bdrms, 1386 SqFt, 1963 YrBlt, 11-01-21
- 651 Moraga Road #6, \$395,000, 1 Bdrms, 669 SqFt, 1962 YrBlt, 11-10-21
- 651 Moraga Road #32, \$540,000, 2 Bdrms, 1144 SqFt, 1962 YrBlt, 11-02-21,
Previous Sale: \$475,000, 08-24-18

... continued on Page D11

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- 4819 Reno Lane, El Sobrante (S)
- 1304 Larch Avenue, Moraga (B)
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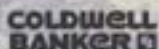
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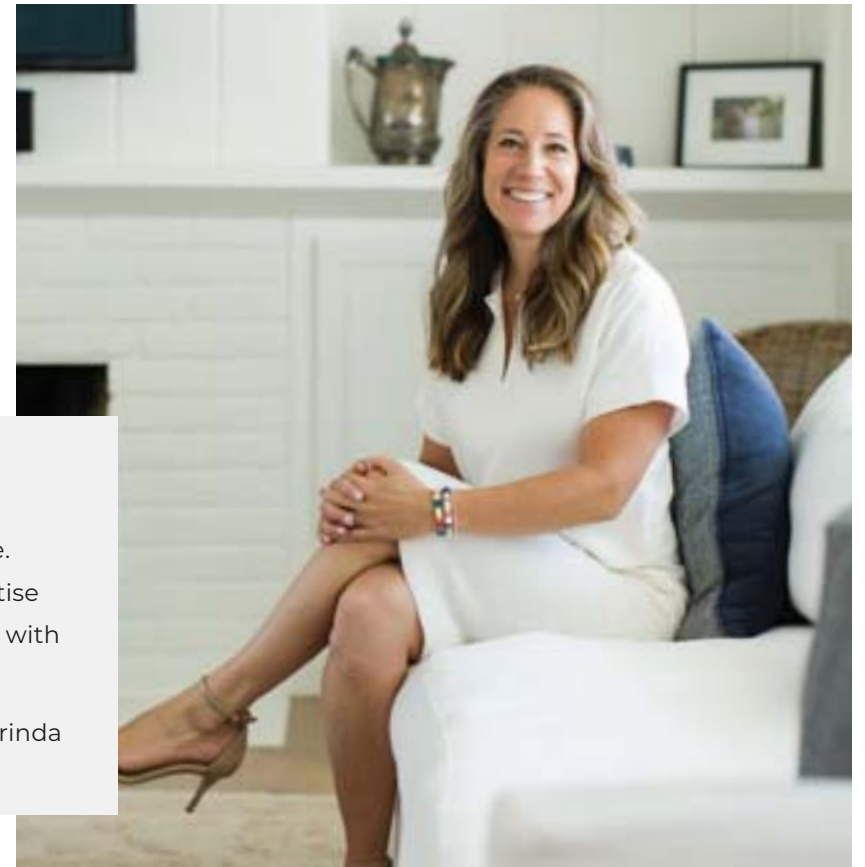
“Emily made a stressful process of selling our house feel comfortable. She was quick to respond to questions and concerns and her expertise in the Lamorinda market was really appreciated. We sold our house with multiple offers over asking and were thrilled with the outcome!”

— Seller, Orinda

“I worked with Emily on selling my home of 25 years recently and I cannot say enough about how sensitive, caring and professional she was in helping me prepare for this life changing event. Her knowledge of the business was impressive as she guided me through the maze of the entire process from making decisions on what needed to be done to make my house shine to keeping me relaxed throughout the entire process.

Emily is definitely a shining star in this profession. In addition, Emily helped me buy another home in the area and it went as smooth as silk!”

— Seller, Lafayette



“Emily was extremely proactive informing us on upcoming homes. Once we found our dream home she guided us into a competitive and fair offer. She seemed to know exactly when to step in and offer guidance and when to patiently wait for us to make a decision. Emily was supportive, honest and responsive—a true partner throughout the entire process. We are so fortunate to have met and worked with her and would strongly recommend her to our friends and family.”

— Buyer, Orinda

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Digging Deep with Goddess Gardener, Cynthia Brian

A berry, Merry Christmas ... mostly for the birds



Pyracantha berries are a favorite dinner for robins.

Photo Cynthia Brian

... continued from Page D1

Pomegranates are a staple of the Christmas fruit basket because of their festive holiday colors. The arils are filled with antioxidants, potassium, fiber, vitamins, and minerals, packing a punch to keep us healthy. Add them to salads, make a chutney, or stir a splash of juice in a glass of sparkling wine for a festive, flavorful indulgence.

The pretty pink peppercorns from a California pepper tree are a gourmet's desire. Since these trees are grown as ornamentals many people don't realize that their berries are edible, with a fruity, spice profile that complements numerous recipes. They can be dried or used fresh. I have found the best way to grind them is with my mortar and pestle because their paper-thin husks get caught in my twist grinder. When making stews or soups, I toss the whole berry, called a drupe because it is a single seed, in the pot. If you buy pink peppercorns, be prepared to pay \$10-15 per ounce. Consider planting a California pepper tree which will grow to 30 feet tall and wide if you have the room.

Although it is mid-December, my roses continue to bloom. This month I am no longer dead-heading my bushes as I want the rosehips to form. Since roses are in the same family as apples and crab apples, the taste of rosehips mimics the tartness of crab apples. The seeds/berries of rosehips have powerful disease-fighting capabilities and are packed with vitamin C. After washing the hips, use them to make jellies, teas, syrups, soups, and desserts.

... continued on Page D12

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Digging Deep with Goddess Gardener, Cynthia Brian

A berry, Merry Christmas ... mostly for the birds



Viburnum berries are a satisfying food for feathered friends and some species are edible by humans.

... continued from Page D10

For the birds...

Peeking through leaves and decorating trees and shrubs, winter berries are nature's Christmas décor. As beautiful as they are, the most critical element of growing these botanicals in your garden is the nutritional fare they provide for the birds and other wildlife during the coldest season of the year when food sources are limited. There are several other autumn ripened



Photos Cynthia Brian

Yew berries are poisonous except for the red flesh arils.

berry-bearing bushes or vines that still have shriveled fruit hanging, such as grape and elderberry, that can be left for the birds. Here's a sampling of vibrant holiday berry dinners fit for the birds.

Cotoneaster emerged as a volunteer in my garden, most likely from seeds brought in by birds. It is an evergreen shrub that grows into a tree if not properly pruned sporting white flowers in spring that are a magnet for bees and rich red berries in winter that are a delicacy for birds. Deer munch on the branches which doesn't bother the bush. Cotoneaster is fire-resistant and can be propagated from cuttings, although I have found that once one cotoneaster is in a landscape, others seem to sprout like weeds.

Holly has glossy leaves that are either serrated or have spiny teeth. Because most hollies are dioecious, you'll need to plant both a male and female for cross-pollination if you want those glorious red berries to decorate garlands, wreaths, and Christmas trees. English holly and American holly are the two species most used during the holidays. Although holly berries tend to start ripening in fall, most birds, including blackbirds and song thrushes don't start feeding on them until late winter when other food is scarce.

Chinese pistache is one of my favorite trees for its exuberant fall color of yellows and oranges with attractive berries that metamorphose from green to aqua, to pink, and finally magenta. Birds, turkeys, quail, and squirrels go crazy for the bunches of berries that hang from the branches. I add a few sprays to my Christmas tree whenever the fowl and squirrels are kind enough to leave me a few bunches.

... continued on Page D14

Lamorinda home sales recorded

... continued from Page D2

Moraga ... continued

3962 Paseo Grande, \$1,860,000, 3 Bdrms, 1946 SqFt, 1969 YrBlt, 11-05-21, Previous Sale: \$760,000, 06-23-03
 304 Rheem Boulevard, \$1,600,000, 3 Bdrms, 1710 SqFt, 1955 YrBlt, 11-01-21, Previous Sale: \$750,000, 05-04-04
 1903 Saint Andrews Drive, \$2,300,000, 5 Bdrms, 3424 SqFt, 1983 YrBlt, 11-03-21, Previous Sale: \$1,150,000, 11-12-13
 3 Via Barcelona, \$955,000, 3 Bdrms, 2417 SqFt, 1987 YrBlt, 11-12-21, Previous Sale: \$615,000, 09-23-11
 454 Woodminster Drive, \$715,000, 2 Bdrms, 1474 SqFt, 1974 YrBlt, 11-08-21

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14 Aspinwall Court, \$1,430,000, 4 Bdrms, 1925 SqFt, 1958 YrBlt, 11-12-21
 14 Bobolink Road, \$2,850,000, 6 Bdrms, 3597 SqFt, 1949 YrBlt, 11-09-21
 32 Calvin Drive, \$1,600,000, 3 Bdrms, 2184 SqFt, 1964 YrBlt, 11-10-21
 211 Crestview Drive, \$1,046,000, 2 Bdrms, 970 SqFt, 1971 YrBlt, 11-01-21
 492 Dalewood Drive, \$4,125,000, 4 Bdrms, 3438 SqFt, 1969 YrBlt, 11-01-21, Previous Sale: \$1,400,000, 08-15-00
 2 Keith Drive, \$1,800,000, 3 Bdrms, 2126 SqFt, 1958 YrBlt, 11-12-21
 23 Longridge Road, \$1,520,000, 3 Bdrms, 2025 SqFt, 1982 YrBlt, 11-04-21, Previous Sale: \$1,100,000, 07-03-18
 30 Meadow Park Court, \$1,980,000, 4 Bdrms, 1772 SqFt, 1950 YrBlt, 11-01-21, Previous Sale: \$679,000, 09-18-01
 5 North Lane, \$1,680,000, 4 Bdrms, 1831 SqFt, 1956 YrBlt, 11-09-21, Previous Sale: \$875,000, 01-23-19
 22 South Trail, \$1,310,000, 3 Bdrms, 2709 SqFt, 1946 YrBlt, 11-05-21, Previous Sale: \$1,350,000, 11-04-16
 3 Valley View Lane, \$3,100,000, 6 Bdrms, 5409 SqFt, 1989 YrBlt, 11-03-21, Previous Sale: \$2,715,000, 07-12-07
 30 Whitehall Drive, \$1,710,000, 3 Bdrms, 1857 SqFt, 1959 YrBlt, 11-12-21

\$20M+
17
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114 Merion Terrace, Moraga
 466 Woodminster, Moraga
 73 Brookwood Rd #43, Orinda
 29 Crescent Dr, Orinda
 4290 El Nido Ranch Rd, Orinda
 25 Los Cerros, Orinda
 9 Via Corte, Orinda
 35 Underhill Rd, Orinda
 859 Grayson Rd, Pleasant Hill
 1767 Ruth Dr, Pleasant Hill
 257 Kingston Way, Walnut Creek
 1673 Poplar Dr, Walnut Creek
 2009 Stewart Ave, Walnut Creek
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 1411 Ridgewood Dr, Martinez
 5325 Stonehurst Dr, Martinez
 4337 Clarinbridge, Dublin

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Digging Deep with Goddess Gardener, Cynthia Brian

A berry, Merry Christmas ... mostly for the birds



Pink peppercorns from the California pepper tree add tasty, mild flavors to food.



Photos Cynthia Brian

Pistache berries are great for decorating Christmas trees if they aren't devoured by birds and squirrels first.

... continued from Page D12

Pyracantha may be the preferred winter staple of robins. Birds flock to the orange-red berries called pomes, eating so many that they seem intoxicated. Known as firethorns, pyracantha is a fast-growing plant with sharp thorns. Volunteers sprout in unusual locations thanks to the birds spreading their seeds. Keep pyracantha pruned and use branches with berries in holiday arrangements.

Viburnum shrubs and hedges add beauty to any garden. They produce pinkish-white flowers that bloom from spring until late fall, depending on the species. Birds love munching on berries ripening in winter with colors that are black, blue, purple, bright red, neon pink, and even yellow. Some species are edible by humans, but other species can be toxic. Unless you know that the viburnum you planted is edible, leave the berries to the birds.

Yew berries red flesh called arils are sweet and safe for birds. The arils provide nutrients needed by the flyers. The seed inside is deadly, and birds know to discard it. Often called the Tree of Death, all parts of the yew tree are poisonous except the arils. The highly poisonous taxane alkaloids of the yew have been developed as anti-cancer drugs.

Not for the birds...or any animal

Nandina adds multi-season interest to any garden with its nectar-rich white flowers that attract pollinators followed by clusters of green berries

that ripen to shiny bright red in late fall. The lacy foliage emerges as purple, then turns green, then changes to red and purple throughout the year. As much as I love this ornamental bush, it is important to know the berries are deadly to birds, wildlife, and domestic animals. Most birds innately avoid this plant, but the voracious eaters, cedar waxwings, are susceptible to imbibing until intoxicated. The berries contain cyanogenic glycosides that convert to hydrogen cyanide when ingested.

WARNING: *When planting berry-bearing bushes, please be cognizant that most provide wildlife forage but may be toxic, poisonous, or even deadly when consumed by humans. Never put any plant substance in your mouth unless you are certain that it is edible.*

There is still time to give the gifts that keep on giving by purchasing any of my award-winning books from www.CynthiaBrian.com/online-store. Proceeds benefit the literacy charity empower women, families, and youth, Be the Star You Are!® 501 c3 (www.BetheStarYouAre.org)

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Birdscape your garden by growing a bird-friendly sanctuary with berry-producing florals that birds will love. Wander in a winter wonderland of wildlife and have a berry, merry Christmas ... with the birds!

Blessings to all and a ho, ho, ho!

Happy Gardening. Happy Growing. Happy Holidays!



Cynthia Brian wishes you a very berry, merry Christmas

Cynthia Brian, The Goddess Gardener, is available for hire to help you prepare for your winter garden. Raised in the vineyards of Napa County, Cynthia is a New York Times best-selling author, actor, radio personality, speaker, media and writing coach as well as the Founder and Executive Director of Be the Star You Are!® 501 c3. Tune into Cynthia's StarStyle® Radio Broadcast at www.StarStyleRadio.com.

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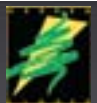
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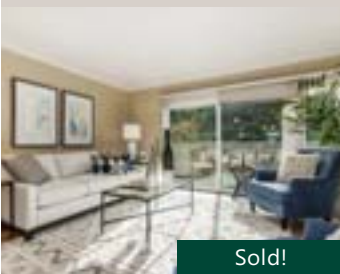
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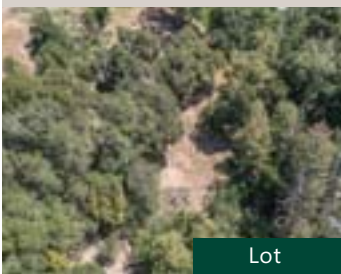
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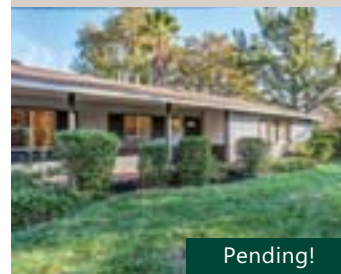
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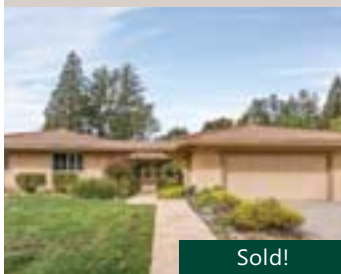
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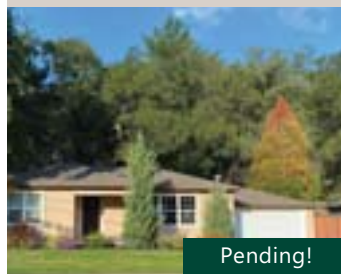
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