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Photos Jeff Heyman

Season filled with small town charm

Whether enjoying live entertainment from talented youth in the community at the annual "It's a Wonderful Life" event in Lafayette's Plaza Park, watching a group of Scouts hang wreaths created by the Orinda Garden Club along the library's exterior and throughout downtown, or simply appreciating the intricate decorations adorned in the shop windows at McCaulou's in Lafayette, the holiday spirit is alive and well in Lamorinda, evoking a small town feel.

Much like Santa and his sleigh, outgoing mayors Teresa Gerring (Lafayette), Steve Whoeleke (Moraga) and Dennis Fay (Orinda) have been making multiple stops at festive events dotting the three communities. Tracey Farrell of the Park Theater Trust doled out popcorn at the Wonderful Life event, and many other volunteers manned booths offering

drinks and treats, as well as crafts for the kids. Moraga Parks and Rec cobbled together a group of young builders who gathered to create gingerbread houses (see story Page B2), families from Campolindo High School baked approximately 4,000 cookies that were wrapped and given to teachers and staff as a thank you (see story Page B1) and Miramonte cheerleaders shook pom-poms in an effort to drum up donations for Toys for Tots (see story on Page B3).

Whether folks receive ugly sweaters, winter hats, or warm coats and mittens for the holidays, the best gifts of all continue to be the smiles on children's faces.

Ever grateful for the small part we play in this community, Lamorinda Weekly wishes you all a very happy and healthy holiday season! — J. Wake



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Staff shortages, timing issue affect fiscal year-end budget

By Lou Fancher

The city staff report on the final municipal budget for fiscal year 2022-23 (FY22-23) stated that looming inflation and a potential recession during the current and projected economic environments have the city continuing to practice “a conservative approach to budgeting as always.” Included in the updated report were the final audited budget figures, corrections, and changes adopted by the council since their previous review of the proposed budget in June. New recommendations from department directors that take into consideration the current economic conditions were added in the updated budget draft.

Administrative Services Director Tracy Robinson said the budget item would return to the council on Jan. 9 at which time the final review will occur. Staff will then implement any changes requested by council and adoption of the final draft is scheduled for the city council meeting on Jan. 23.

Highlights in what Robinson said was a “sneak preview” of the final budget included the city in the prior fiscal year (FY21-22) spending \$2.4 million less than budgeted, largely due to timing issues, staff vacancies, police budget savings attributed to the use of overtime, and deferred maintenance and projects. Revenue was \$1.6 million more than expected, a data point Robinson said was

because the city’s recovery from the pandemic was faster than had been projected. The General Fund balance at the end of the 2022 fiscal year on June 30 was \$16.3 million. Robinson reiterated that those savings came largely from deferred projects that will be reimplemented or be evident in the coming fiscal year’s budget.

As a result, for FY22-23 the fund is projected to spend \$3.6 million more than expected revenue. The fiscal fund reserves at the end of the FY22-23 year is therefore projected to be \$13 million, representing 69% of the expenses and well over (by \$1.7 million) the reserve target set by the city. Projections for sales tax revenue over the next five years have been adjusted down

from previous levels in the final budget. The purchase by the city of two properties resulted in borrowing \$5.2 million from the City Offices Fund as a loan, and \$1.7 million from the General Fund towards the purchase. The council will be discussing the uses of those properties over the next few months. As a part of those conversations, repayment of the borrowed funds will be determined.

The American Rescue Plan (ARPA) money from the first tranche, roughly \$180,000 that was put into a sinking fund is beginning to be used for downtown core maintenance. Separately, a six-month extension of the economic development manager position will add \$80,000 to the budget and was a correction from a previ-

ous figure cited for the staffing (\$180,000). Finally, a new work plan to establish downtown objective design standards – an item Council Member Susan Candell inquired about – will be amended at a future meeting and will incorporate the planning commission and council’s updated standards after adoption of the Housing Element is completed.

There were no public comments on the budget. The additional \$80,000 and plan to apply ARPA money out of the second tranche to fund the economic development manager position was approved. A motion to move the budget item to the next phase for final review on Jan. 9 was voted upon and approved by all council members.

Lafayette welcomes new mayor and vice mayor



By Lou Fancher

Lafayette City Clerk Joanne Robbins at the Dec. 12 city council meeting administered the oath of office to the three re-elected council members – Susan Candell (four-year term), Teresa Gerringer (four-year term), and Wei-Tai Kwok (two-year term) – while acknowledging their prior ser-

vice. The council went on to nominate the new mayor (Carl Anduri) and vice mayor (Gina Dawson) for their one-year terms.

Prior to the nomination, Gerringer provided remarks about her term in office, thanking the residents of Lafayette for the privilege of serving as mayor during 2022. Gerringer spoke with special



respect and humility about specific activities undertaken by the council such as working with the Dias family to dedicate a plaque to commemorate the life of Ashley Dias who in early September 2022 was struck and killed by a driver while working as a crossing guard at Stanley Middle School. Other notable milestones included opening Brook Street Park, implementing traffic safety improvements around local schools – with more planned for 2023 – and construction of the Rain Garden Project on First Street and Golden Gate Way that will open in early 2023. She said that declaring Lafayette an “idle free city” and continued work with the Chamber and local businesses to bolster the local economy forecast good things for the city. Gerringer received a plaque with a gavel

mounted above a statement of appreciation.

The council’s work on the Housing Element and the General Plan will continue and the purchase by the city of two key plots of land in the downtown core collectively offer opportunities for future involvement by residents. She gave a verbal salute to city staff, fellow council members, committee and commission volunteers and others who have worked hard to support the community. As she continues for another four-year term, she thanked her family for their generosity.

Council member and new mayor Carl Anduri expressed appreciation for Gerringer’s leadership style, which he said had been inclusive. Her focus on building a sense of community was helpful and inspiring, Anduri said. Vincent

Salimi (former mayor of the City of Pinole) thanked Gerringer, Anduri and Dawson for their service. A second speaker, Pat Horn, noted Gerringer’s brevity in her comments and honored her work to lead the staff during a year filled with challenges.

The council completed the election with all members voting in favor of the nominations and a “passing of the virtual gavel,” as referenced by Gerringer, to Anduri and Dawson.

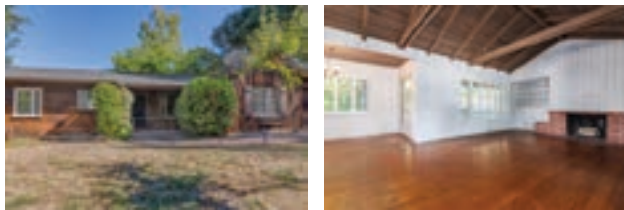
Anduri in his comments outlined five challenges for the city in 2023: The continued impact of COVID-19 on public health safety and on local businesses; the reality of the climate crisis, especially related to greenhouse gas emission and wildfires; the housing crisis that in particular requires building more affordable housing in the city; upholding national and local values and calls for equal rights, freedoms and liberties for all citizens and residents of Lafayette, and establishing – and meeting – the all-age appropriate and friendly goals and criteria of Lafayette, a city in which the number of older residents is increasing, widening the generational span of the demographics.

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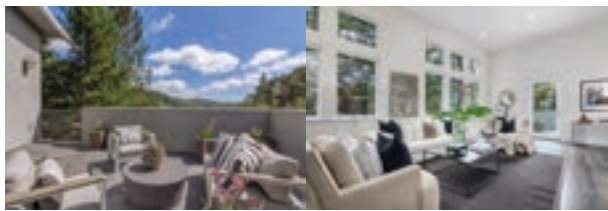
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Planning Commission reapproves development project for single-family home

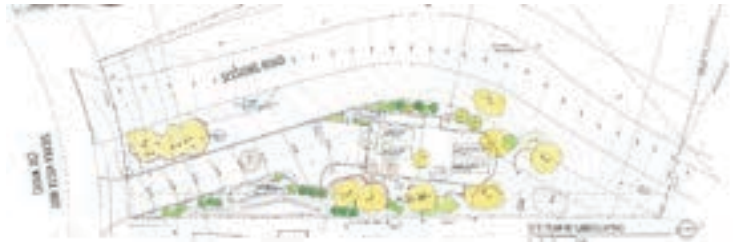


Image courtesy City of Lafayette

By Jennifer Wake

The approval for the construction of a 2,265 sq. ft. single-family residence on an undeveloped parcel in the Hillside Overlay District, located at the intersection of Sierra Vista Way and Sessions Road in Lafayette, returned to the Planning Commission Dec. 5, after nine hearings had already been held regarding the property, with the last approval vote taken in 2021.

According to a staff report by Senior Planner Renata Robles, approvals for the Phase I and Phase II Hillside Development Permits for the project expired on Jan. 27, 2022. "Section 6-250 of the Lafayette Municipal Code allows the Planning Director to extend the approval period for up to one additional year at the request of an applicant," Robles noted in the report. "However, the applicant was unable to submit a request for an extension prior to the approvals expiring."

Owner Robin Holt explained in a letter that they were not able to move forward with the project within the timeframe of the original approval since her son, in mid-2020, was diagnosed with a deadly brain tumor and after

treatments and surgeries, had passed away at the end of 2021. Not long after, her husband Dick was diagnosed with a recurrence of cancer and passed away on Aug. 12. "Needless to say, it has been very difficult to lose both my son and husband in less than a year," she wrote. "I now am able to revisit this project and am requesting a re-approval with no change of conditions."

The city received multiple letters from neighbors who continue to object to the development, with a number of them citing that it violates several easements, creates unsafe ingress and egress, is too large for the development, and would be built on a natural drainage swale. During the commission's discussion, several commissioners objected to the insinuation in several letters that there was any conflict of interest, noting they never knew Mr. Holt and never had any interaction with him.

After an extended discussion regarding whether this was a valid legal lot and whether there had been any changes since the original approval, the Planning Commission voted 4-2 (with Sturm and Mason voting no) to reapprove the project. There is a 14-day window to appeal.

Lafayette welcomes new mayor and vice mayor

... continued from Page A2

Anduri said the council from these challenges had adopted four priorities: Wildfire prevention and utility safety; improved traffic and pedestrian safety; creating a downtown core and Mount Diablo Boulevard Specific Plan; and developing short- and long-term fiscal stability plans. He asked for public input as those priorities are reviewed and updated in January 2023.

Offering "only a few of his individual goals as mayor," Anduri emphasized strengthening city-school partnerships, working closely with the recently formed DEI committee, expanding collaborations with the Chamber of Commerce, supporting the Park Theater Trust in its efforts to renovate the Park Theater, continuing to support the library and other city entities, obtaining approval of the final Housing Element, implementing Vision Zero, and seeking to add more green space and downtown parks.

He proposed reviving an initiative in partnership with Chamber of Commerce leadership to visit local businesses to gather ideas to best support the business community as it recovers from the pandemic and deals with a struggling economy. He said a celebration of the city's 175-year history would include "plus" years by acknowledging the history of indigenous people on whose land the city was established

and the Spaniards and Rancheros who were here before founder Elam Brown arrived.

Additionally, ordinances for EV charging and other initiatives to address climate change will be pursued and reinvigorated through a collaborative relationship between the city and Sustainable Contra Costa. He issued a challenge to Moraga and Orinda to see which Lamorinda community will conserve the most water and avoid more carbon emissions during 2023. In light of the competition and for safety reasons, Anduri encouraged all residents to drive at or below the speed limit. New technology used for targeting speed violators through monitoring will be discussed by the council in January.

Vice Mayor Dawson kept her comments brief, thanking staff, commissioners, volunteers, contractors and partners, fellow council members and her family. She encouraged residents to stay engaged.

In a public comment from former mayor Don Tatzin, who said he was representing Sen. Steve Glazer, he congratulated the council for the peaceful transition of leadership: "We've learned in various countries and in communities that's not always the way it works." He reminded the council to reach out to the state in the next year because it "can do things for you and not just do things to you."

Share your thoughts, insights and opinions with your community. Send a letter to the editor: letters@lamorindaweekly.com



Lafayette Public Meetings

City Council

Regular Meeting
Monday, Jan. 9, 7 p.m.
Teleconference via City of Lafayette's YouTube Channel:
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Planning Commission Meeting

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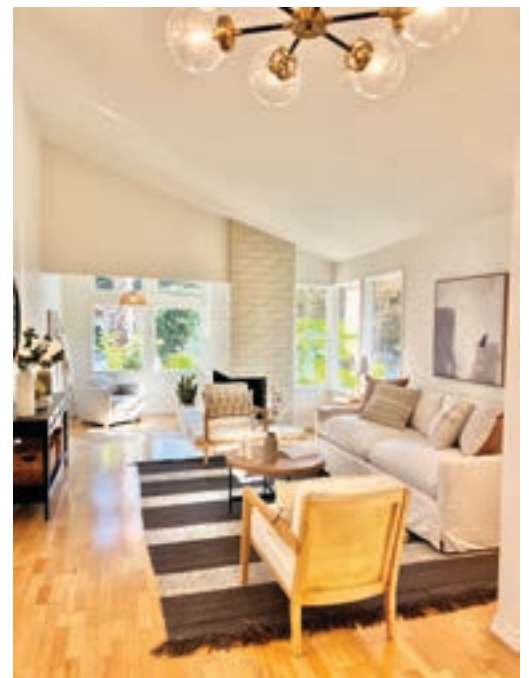
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Corliss Drive Safe Routes to School gets underway



Photo courtesy Public Works Department

Corliss Drive/Wakefield Drive intersection near Los Perales Elementary School

By Vera Kochan

Parents of children attending Los Perales Elementary School will be glad to hear that the town of Moraga continues to take proactive steps to ensure the safety of the school's students. The Safe Routes to School engineering design project includes the development of design options for a safer route along Corliss Drive where a lack of sidewalks and dangerous roadway curves have become part of the problem.

Corliss Drive is not the only street to have safety issues for young pedestrians and bicyclists. Sullivan Drive curves and turns into Corliss which then intersects at Wakefield Drive just northwest of Los Perales. Arroyo Drive is also included within the problematic corridor.

According to a Dec. 7 staff report to the town council by

Public Works Director/Town Engineer Shawn Knapp and Senior Civil Engineer Bret Swain, there's a lot to take into consideration for this project. "On Corliss Drive, there are existing below and above ground utility structures, driveways, landscaping and tree, and accessibility (ADA) requirements that limit cost effective opportunities to install a sidewalk. The existing conditions may require the acquisition of additional Right-of-Way (ROW), relocation of utilities (in particular, power poles), and construction of retaining walls, to add a pedestrian sidewalk."

The report continues, "One option to add a sidewalk, assumes the removal of portions of the curbside parking along the street which would impact the adjacent property owner's capacity to park vehicles near their property. Another option is to remove a travel lane to provide space for pedestrian

walkways or multi-use pathway."

An additional possibility is to remove one of the travel lanes along Corliss and Sullivan and convert it into a one-way street. This is not a popular option since it would increase the distance parents would need to drive in order to drop off or pick up their children. Stakeholder and public feedback will be sought in order to meet everyone's expectations. This input will help to shape the final design process.

Staff requested approval from the town council to award a Professional Services Agreement for Engineering Services to Sandis Civil Engineers, Surveyors and Planners (Oakland, Calif.) after four prospective engineering firms bid on the project. Staff's decision was based on: completeness of response; project understanding and approach; proposed scope of services; qualification and specific experience of key team members; experience with similar types of projects; schedule and capacity to provide qualified personnel; and references/satisfaction of previous clients.

The council unanimously approved a resolution awarding an agreement to Sandis for an amount up to \$183,795 (design) and \$27,615 (15% contingency) for a total amount not to exceed \$211,410 for the Corliss Drive Safe Routes to School (CIP 21-404). An amount of \$11,410 will be appropriated from Fund 210 - Measure J.

Reorganization of new Town Council sees Sos as mayor, Onoda as vice mayor

By Vera Kochan

Moraga's Dec. 14 reorganization of the town council was a cordial experience with much goodwill expressed through various speeches and comments by all involved.

Although outgoing Council Member Sona Makker's appointed term was short, her heartfelt exiting comments were that of a seasoned veteran. "While many of my views shifted because of working with all of you through gaining practical experience sitting on the other side and hearing how difficult and challenging it can be to make decisions, I think that my perspective evolved and shifted by my approach."

"I have tried to maintain the same, which is that I hope that I could bring a leadership style of focusing and an eye towards kindness, listening, and progress; and I think all of you allowed me to continue to do that and be myself, while also continuing to learn." Makker also hinted that she is not done serving the community and hopes to do so in the future.

Outgoing Council Member Mike McCluer began his comments with a lot of advice to incoming council members Kerry Hillis and David Shapiro. He also thanked Moraga's many organizations for their wealth of information during his tenure. Also, "Thank you most of all fellow colleagues, town council

members and staff. I want to thank the most important group being Moraga residents. The favorite part of my job is talking to the residents on issues, concerns, complaints, and opportunities."

McCluer added, "I came to this job with my principal character and values, and I'm pleased to leave with them intact. I've done my best to be a servant-leader. Someone who leads to serve residents - not their own personal agendas, interests, or politics. Thank you, Moraga. Goodnight and God Bless."

After the administration of the Oath of Office to Hillis and Shapiro, the new council members were seated at the dais.

Before the formality of stepping down as mayor, Steve Woehleke wanted to express a few words to the assembled. "This year has been a bit unusual. We split the year. It wasn't necessarily a very smooth operation that we did, but I think that the year has worked out very well (my perspective). I have very much enjoyed working in our split year - Renata [Vice Mayor Sos] and I. I've found that both of us, especially at least her, practiced professionalism, are respectful of each other, good at communication, and we, to a great extent, operate based upon intent. Not only just the letter of whatever we're dealing with, but what's the intent. I found that historically that's equally important as what the letter says."

Woehleke proceeded to nominate Sos as the next mayor of Moraga. With a unanimous vote Sos, as the new mayor, made a few comments. "This year has been just a shining example of how collaboration, collegiality, professionalism, mutual respect, and the shared commitment to doing what's best for the residents of this town really can serve us well. It's been absolutely delightful working with you [Woehleke]."

Sos then nominated Council Member Teresa Onoda as vice mayor which was another unanimous decision. Onoda's comments regarding her new position were short and to the point, "Thank you."

As a newly elected council member Hillis stated, "I want to thank the residents of Moraga. I really appreciate the responsibility and the trust that you have given me, and I commit that I am going to do my best to live up to that over the next four years."

Shapiro likewise thanked those who voted for him. "I look forward to working with everybody. I promise to be a good listener. I promise to be sensitive to all points of view, not to do too much talking, and I hope that at the end of my term, that all of the nice things that you all said to the people who were leaving, you'll say about me: that I was diligent, and that I thought things through, and that I came to good decisions. Thank you."

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Council expresses gratitude to Cynthia Battenberg for her efforts on the town's behalf



Photo provided

Exiting town manager, Cynthia Battenberg By Vera Kochan

After nearly five years as the town's manager, Cynthia Battenberg will leave Moraga with a long list of achievements under her belt. On Oct. 4 she officially submitted a written notice to the town council advising them of her impending resignation at the end of this month.

"Moraga is losing a highly competent leader who will be very difficult to replace," stated Mayor Steve Woehleke. "Cynthia and her team have made enhancements across the full range of local government responsibilities. They are very successfully keeping all the balls bouncing along. We all owe Cynthia a big thank you for her impactful accomplishments and for creating a very competent staff who will continue to support Moraga."

Battenberg began her career as the town manager on March 12, 2018, having to deal with two major infrastructure issues: the Canyon Road Bridge and Rheem's sinkholes. Little did she know that almost two years later what COVID's ramifications would have on Moraga's economy.

"Cynthia's contributions to the betterment of this town are significant, enduring, and lasting," said Vice Mayor Renata Sos. "She was an efficient and empathic manager and mentor to her staff. Her strategic thinking and operational skill put the town on solid footing for the future. She led by example and fostered a culture of excellence. I so enjoyed working with her for the past four years, and I know that she will excel at whatever she does next."

Under Battenberg's guidance, the town has climbed its way back to financial solvency and identified unfunded infrastructural needs in order to invest in Moraga's storm drain system and other public assets. The town has followed through on improving the condition of its streets; and finishing legacy development

applications and implementing the 2010 Moraga Center Specific Plan.

Council Member Teresa Onoda indicated that "Cynthia has been a smart, organized, powerhouse who knows everything about the budget, engineering, parks and rec, and things that make Moraga work. We have been so very lucky to have her as our town manager and friend. I will miss her very much."

Additional achievements for Battenberg include the completion of the Comprehensive Advanced Planning Initiative toward future town development; creating recreation and after school programs; and activating the Hacienda de las Flores for expanded community usage.

"Cynthia has been helpful overall to the town of Moraga over the years and is addressing additional opportunities for our town as well. I thank her for her service," said Council Member Mike McCluer.

"Cynthia is a creative and bold thinker," Council Member Sona Makker noted. "This is what I came to appreciate and admire about her the most. I think leadership can take many forms, but when it comes to local government, we rely on our town leaders to work within the frameworks set out by law and code and make thoughtful, forward-thinking decisions. Cynthia excels in this, and I learned a great deal from her during my time on council. I can't wait to see where she brings her skills and talents next! Moraga was lucky to have her."

Battenberg's immediate plans after leaving Moraga have already been thought out. "I'm planning to take a six-month work hiatus to travel, focus on my family and recharge my batteries."

As for what the future holds for her career-wise, Battenberg stated, "I'm evaluating what I want to do next. I've always followed my passion to make the world a better place focusing on local government. I spent years working in the recycling industry, and addressing climate change challenges interests me." She added, "I also truly enjoyed the years I spent working in economic development. Women's issues and creating a more equitable environment for women is also an interest. Regardless of what I do next, I will continue to pursue right livelihood."

As she closes the chapter on her tenure as town manager Battenberg concluded, "Thank you to the town of

Moraga – the community, leadership, and staff – for your partnership these last five years. I'm pleased to leave the town in a strong position and wish everyone the best."

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Tania DeGroot
925.259.1380



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Town Council: Wednesday, Jan. 11, 6:30 p.m.
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Moraga School District Board Meetings: Tuesday, Jan. 17, 6 p.m. www.moraga.k12.ca.us.




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Duff joins Orinda as Outreach and Education Coordinator

By Sora O'Doherty

What brought James Duff, Orinda's new Outreach and Education Coordinator, from Texas to California? Well, actually, it was his wife. They had been living in Texas, where James was working with the Austin Fire Department, but his wife was seeking a change and was recruited by the African Wildlife Foundation to run western fundraising, working from home in the Bay Area. They arrived in Oakland mid-August and thought they would quickly purchase a home, but soon realized that the Bay Area is very diverse and it would be worthwhile to get to know it better. They are currently living in Moraga.

Duff attended Indiana University of Pennsylvania, where he earned a B.A. in Art History and Latin American Studies. He also worked for the Student Conservation Association (SCA). Later he moved to Austin, where he worked with Texas Conservation before going to work for the Austin Fire Department. Duff thinks that "the city of Orinda was interested in me because at SCA my position had a large educational element. In addition, I was a substitute teacher in the Austin Independent School District public schools at the high school level."

Orinda's new hire comes to them from Austin, Texas, although he hails originally from Pittsburgh, Penn. Duff had been working in land management for about eight years. He's spent a lot of time in Bureau of Land Management locations in New Mexico and the El Dorado National Forest. He says that he moved to Austin because he

was tired of living in tents.

Duff also has a family background in fire. He has family in New Mexico, where his aunt was a state forester for a while and now runs a water garden business. There have been a couple of fires in Lincoln, New Mexico. "My uncle found Smoky the Bear," he claims. Duff explained, "The Fire Service was fighting a fire in Lincoln when they found a bear cub who had climbed a tree to escape the fire. His mother was gone and his back was scorched. The Fire Service flew the bear cub to the veterinary hospital in Albuquerque. The cub recovered and ended up in Washington, D.C.'s National Zoo as Smoky the Bear. Smoky was buried in New Mexico when he died in the 1970s, and there was another one." Duff notes that originally Smoky the Bear was a very, very successful cartoon, but that officially there have been two live smoky bears.

Duff says that he has worked with several fire chiefs and his impression of Moraga-Orinda Fire District Chief Dave Winnacker is that he is "very reasonable." He looks forward to working together with MOFD on the complex issues facing Lamorinda. He takes a balanced view of things, noting, for example, that while dead trees may be a fire hazard, they also provide habitat for animals. As for standing dead pine trees, he agrees that the majority of them need to be mitigated, but adds that he pauses when it is a blanket rule, because there may be many unforeseen consequences. He believes that it is better to work in concert with the landscape, and expects that it will be necessary to manage expectations.

Regarding fire code enforcement in Orinda and Moraga, Duff notes that he is coming from working in "regulatory resistant Texas," where almost everything required voluntary compliance. "We only had carrots," he remembers, no sticks. Regarding some recent MOFD enforcement efforts, he acknowledges that "people don't appreciate it when you move the goalposts." But he points



Photo Sora O'Doherty

James Duff, Outreach and Education Coordinator

out that with climate change it's like the fire fighting community is "trying to build the plane when flying it."

Duff believes that "you have to change things as things develop, and change is needed in the face of so much emerging science on wildfire risks and landscaping. He thinks that a lot of people have viewed wildfire as the easiest hazard for us to control, unlike hurricanes, tornadoes, and other natural disasters. This lulls people into thinking we can eliminate it from the landscape, he thinks, but adds that he now sees a lot of people recognizing the sea change that is happening. Fire safety is Huff's "hope and my desire," he says, "but I don't know if I would set 100 percent fire-proof as a rea-

sonable goal."

One thing he believes to be true is that "for every single fire tragedy, the thing that is found to be a critical point of breakdown is communication." For example, he continued, "during the fires at Storm King in Washington or Yarnell Hill in Arizona, information existed and could have been shared to save lives." He added, "If a firefighter is killed while fighting a fire, there almost always is a lengthy investigation to figure out where things went wrong, and this usually points to communication."

Duff emphasized that studies have found that families who have an emergency plan suffer less from post-traumatic shock disorder.

In addition to James Duff, in 2022 Orinda added the following new personnel:
 Farah Khorashadi, Senior Engineer was rehired (January 2022)
 Celina Palmer, Associate Planner (August 2022)
 Donna Baarsch, Planning Technician (August 2022)

Orinda City Council glides through reorganization, mayor gives awards of excellence



Photo Sora O'Doherty

Council members Latika Malkani, Brandyn Iverson, Vice Mayor Darlene Gee, Mayor Inga Miller, and Council Member Janet Riley.

By Sora O'Doherty

The reorganization of the Orinda City Council was smooth and easy, as new city council members Latika Malkani, Brandyn Iverson and Janet Riley were sworn into office and took their virtual seats at the council meeting on Dec. 13. Shortly thereafter, without deviating from custom, Vice Mayor Inga Miller was elected by the Council as the new Mayor and Darlene Gee stepped up to Vice Mayor. The new city

council is the first to include only women council members in Orinda's history.

Malkani was the top vote getter, with 5,679 votes (23.56%), followed by Bran-

dyn Iverson at 4,718 (19.58%) and Janet Riley at 4,561 (18.92%) according to official Contra Costa County results.

... continued on Page A7

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Brookwood Road will be mitigated, not necessarily how residents prefer



Image City of Orinda

By Sora O'Doherty

The Orinda City Council decided on Dec. 6 to focus on improved landscaping for Brookwood Road, but not to install any fencing, which may have been the outcome preferred by residents. Back in May of 2021, a large amount of vegetation was removed from the area between Brookwood residences and the side of Highway 24. The vegetation, which included bushes as well as trees, was cleared in the interest of promoting fire safety. However, the new look of the area left residents feeling exposed to and perhaps in dan-

ger from cars traveling on the highway.

Residents appealed to the Orinda City Council to do something to make them feel more comfortable again. The council responded sympathetically, and the 2021 Capital Improvement Program budget allocated \$110,000 for Measure R sales tax for mitigation. The matter came back to the council in mid-November, and staff was requested to present renderings of the three options being considered and bring it back to the council. All three options included a fence, either a six-foot or a 12-foot redwood fence, with or

without landscaping.

Residents had expressed a preference for the 12-foot fence option, seeking greater safety as well as possible noise reduction along the busy highway. The staff report was presented by Chief City Engineer Sivakumar Natarajan. Written comments had been received from some Brookwood Road residents, who also spoke at the meeting.

As the city council discussed the options, several points arose. First of all, since the trimming of the vegetation that had resulted in Highway 24 becoming very visible along Brookwood Road, some vegetation had regrown, which softened the view of the highway but also raised questions about repeated clearances in the future. Second, the council considered the two fence proposals in terms of cost, effectiveness, maintenance and coordination with existing and possible future vegetation.

In terms of future vegetation, the city will undertake the management of the landscaping, which should reduce the potential for a repeat of the extreme clearing that occurred last year. Although the city council members started the conversation favoring the six-foot fence option, consid-

ering the 12-foot fence to be excessively costly and unusual, gradually it became apparent that the council members actually preferred to rely on landscaping alone, with neither the shorter nor the taller fence.

Council Member Amy Worth suggested that native plants such as Scrub Oaks, Sugar Bush, and Coffeeberry really prosper in the location. She suggested selective planting and maintenance to keep the trees clear of undergrowth. Council Member Nick Kosla expressed surprise at how quickly vegetation had grown back, and suggested that larger specimens could be planted for quicker coverage. Council Member Darlene Gee agreed with Worth and Kosla,

suggesting that the primary focus should be on landscaping to improve the situation.

Vice Mayor Inga Miller suggested that she heard consensus among the council on doing as much as possible through landscaping, and Mayor Dennis Fay said he had been astounded to see how quickly nature was recovering in the area. At the conclusion of the discussion, Natarajan said that he understood that the council wishes to look at a solution using landscaping alone in a strategic manner to fill in gaps, looking for larger plants to start with. "We can get an arborist involved," he said, "and we'll bring it back with a cost estimate and a specific plan."

Orinda City Council glides through reorganization

... continued from Page A6

The ranking is significant because, according to Orinda custom, it determines the order in which the rotating mayor and vice mayor serve.

Also at the meeting outgoing mayor Dennis Fay bestowed his Awards of Excellence to Jud Hammon for his work as chair of the Supplemental Sales Tax Oversight Commission; to Derek Zemrak and Michael Williams for putting on Live at the Orinda Theatre, a program that brings live performances to Orinda; and to Maggie Boscoe for her work on Artify Orinda, a project that brings art to public spaces and utility boxes.

Praises and proclamations were also heaped upon the outgoing council members, Fay, Amy Worth and Nick Kosla. Katie Keeshen, speaking on behalf of Assemblymember Rebecca Bauer-Kahan, quoted the assembly member as saying, "I feel incredibly lucky to live in and represent Orinda. Orinda is special because of the people who serve," she added, concluding, "You are giants in this community and will continue to have Orinda in your hearts." Supervisor Candace Andersen presented proclamations from the Contra Costa County Board

of Supervisors to Fay and Kosla, saying that Kosla's "experience in development let the council see things from the other side." Andersen had already presented a county proclamation to Worth at a reception honoring her earlier in the month.

Worth, with 24 years of experience on the Orinda City Council, including a record-breaking five terms as mayor, had words of the highest praise for outgoing mayor Dennis Fay. She expressed her delight working with him on the city council, noting that he has so much knowledge of local government, following a career for the city of Oakland. Worth said that she had recruited him to work on the original Citizens Infrastructure Oversight Committee (CIOC). She credited him with helping Orinda go from a city with the worst roads in the Bay Area to the best. Miller said that Fay had accomplished his goals on the city council, including the development of a downtown plan and increased wildfire safety and environmental consciousness measures that, she added, will be his legacy. Gee, who worked with Fay on the CIOC, said that he had done a great job as mayor, despite some trepidation before taking the

office.

Following the Zoom meeting, the city council members, new and old, were honored at an in-person reception at the Orinda Community Center.

Reception honors Amy Worth



Photo Sora O'Doherty

"Bittersweet" was the theme of a very well-attended reception held on Dec. 4 to honor outgoing city council member and former five-time mayor of Orinda, Amy Worth. From local representatives to city, county, regional, state and beyond, there was a river of praise for Worth's long and dedicated service and everyone who spoke of her called her "friend." To honor her, the Library Rotunda has been renamed the Amy Worth Rotunda, and, high on the wall across from those words is the simple but true phrase, "Amy's Place." – S. O'Doherty



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Holiday safety tips from fire and police departments

By Vera Kochan

Winter holidays are a time for family gatherings, colorful decorations, warm fireplaces, gift-giving, ski vacations and cocktails. It's also the time of year when local fire districts and police departments want residents to be especially mindful of safety risks and seasonal hazards that could

turn an otherwise celebratory time of year into a tragedy.

According to the Moraga-Orinda Fire District website, folks should be wary when using candles during the holidays as more than half of home decoration fires in December are started by candles with Christmas Day, New Year's Eve and New Year's Day being the three top days

for usage. Never place candles near anything that will burn, extinguish candles before leaving a room, and never leave children alone with lit candles. A safe alternative is to use flameless candles.

Christmas trees are a major part of the holidays, but MOFD warns against placing them in areas that block hallways, exit ways or doors. Also, make sure not to place them near heating ducts, fireplaces, candles, lanterns or heaters. Christmas trees are attributed in causing 1 in every 4 winter fires. The tree's water level should be checked daily to avoid over-drying, and once the tree has dried, remove it from the home.

A glowing fireplace is a cozy feature of the holidays, but always make certain that any decorations and flammable materials are nowhere near it. Once the presents are opened, the house is littered with wrapping paper, boxes and other trash. MOFD advises residents not to burn these in a fireplace. Ink from the paper can give off toxic fumes, and when burning papers float up the chimney they can ignite creosote deposits in the flue.

Colored lights are a popular part of the holiday season. Keep yourself safe while climbing a ladder by making sure it is centered and you are able to reach your goal without falling off. Before even hanging the lights, look for frayed wires, damaged bulb sockets and worn insulation. It's equally important not to overload an outlet with too many lights. Make certain to use outdoor rated extension cords outside. Plug them into a Ground Fault Circuit Interrupting (GFCI) outlet.

An Advisory Message from local police departments includes tips for a safe season by warning holiday shoppers



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to be mindful of their surroundings. Criminals may hang around ATMs and banks to spot folks who have withdrawn large amounts of cash. If you suspect that you are being targeted, lock your doors and windows, call 9-1-1, flag down an officer, or drive to the nearest police department.

Also, never leave a purse or bag on the seat of your car in plain sight. You are just making a thief's Christmas shopping easier and less expensive for him/her. Lock your car when you leave it, and stash valuables in the trunk (this includes unvaluables such as gym bags – they don't know it's just your smelly workout clothes until they've broken your car's window).

If you go away for the holidays, either for an extended vacation or just the weekend, make sure to lock your house (doors and windows), set an alarm, hide valuables (jewelry), and use timers on your lights set to various hours for the appearance of someone being home. Ask a neighbor to keep an eye on your house, and never "broadcast" in public or on social media when and how long you will be gone. Just as-

sume that the walls have ears.

Local police warn people to be aware of scams either through phone calls or emails. Reputable institutions such as Pacific Gas & Electric will never call to say a bill is past due. No legitimate company or agency accepts payment over the phone via gift card or Green Dot card. When receiving an email from someone you don't know, or even a company that you have done legitimate business with, asking for a payment that you are suspicious of, never open any attachments or click onto any links. Instead, find a phone number to these businesses that was not included in the email, and call to verify the problem (if there was one).

The area has been experiencing some much needed rainfall, and the Moraga Police Department reminds drivers to slow down, don't get distracted, and drive defensively. Holiday celebrating often involves alcohol. If you are going to revel with spirits other than those of Christmas Past, Present, and Future, make sure to have a designated driver in your group or call a ride service. "Do not drive under the influence ...even if you're just feeling buzzed."



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Letters to the editor

Chevron mini mart

We do not need a 24-hour mini mart at a gas station that is located on a critical watershed area and also an easy freeway on-ramp for quick getaways for robberies. Already, the Wilder off and on ramp has been a scene of several nefarious and unwanted crime scenes tying up the freeway lanes for hours in either direction due to police activity.

Chevron, with its billions of dollars in profit should be providing electric car charging stations anyway, without any additional building or need for a 'picnic area' with a convenient dumping site into the creek area.

This is not a new business that would benefit existing Orinda residents. This is not 'enhanced Creek access' that would benefit a walkable downtown' either.

Nobody attending a class or event in the Orinda Community center is going to stop by the Chevron mini mart for an overheated hot dog or a syrupy soft drink in a non-sustainable

plastic cup for refreshment.

This is a recipe for disaster to further pollute the creek shed with unwanted garbage and food refuse. The 'observation deck' overlooks the creek and is an easy target for windswept or otherwise unattended refuse to make its way into the environment. Approval from California Fish and Wildlife should not be approved and may not have even been notified at this point.

There are plenty of places to get better food within minutes of walking.

I am firmly opposed to this project. This is a superfluous and unnecessary project created by the same gas company that has been price gouging you as a consumer for the last year at least in a more obvious way. Do you really want to give Chevron more money to sell overpriced snacks and pollute the environment with more 'to go' waste?

I think not.

Cathleen Daffer
Orinda

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 Chief of Police, Ryan Sullivan
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Lafayette Police Department Incident Summary Report
 Nov. 27 - Dec. 10



Alarms 43
 911 Calls (includes hang-ups) 23
 Traffic 64
 Suspicious Circumstances 8
 Suspicious Subject 14
 Suspicious Vehicle 18
 Service to Citizen 27
 Patrol Req./Security Check 22
 Public/School Assembly Check 5
 Supplemental Report 24
 Vacation House Check 24
 Welfare Check 19
 Ordinance Violation 0

Vehicle violations
 Auto Burglary 3500 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd.
 Hit And Run Misdemeanor 3500 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd.
 Deer Hill Rd./Laurel Dr. 3400 Block Moraga Blvd.
 4000 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd.
 900 Block Village Center 3500 Block Brook St.
 Reckless Driving Reliez Station Rd./Glenside Dr.
 Reliez Valley Rd./Withers Ave.
 Pleasant Hill Rd./Springhill Rd.
 St Marys Rd./Moraga Rd.
 Moraga Rd./Nephi Ct.
 Pleasant Hill Rd./Springhill Rd.
 Acalanes Rd./Hidden Valley Rd.
 Happy Valley Rd./Crestmont Dr.
 3600 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd.
 3500 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd.
 Stolen Vehicle Recovery Deer Hill Rd./Oak Hill Rd.

Mt. Diablo Blvd./1st St.
 Tc - Fire And Amb Enroute Pleasant Hill Rd./Wb Sr 24
 Tc - Minor Injuries 10 Block Crest Rd.
 Tc - Property Damage Moraga Rd./Oliver Ct.
 Mt. Diablo Blvd./Golden Gate Way Deer Hill Rd./1st St.
 3400 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd.
 Pleasant Hill Rd./Rancho View Dr.
 Vehicle Theft 900 Block Dewing Ave.
 4000 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd.
 4100 Block Hidden Valley Rd. (2)
 900 Block Acalanes Rd.

Other criminal activity
 Embezzlement 3600 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd.
 Grand Theft From Veh 1100 Block Glen Rd.
 Grand Theft Veh Parts 900 Block Hawthorn Dr.
 1200 Block Quandt Rd.
 1100 Block Perales St.
 Panhandling 3600 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd. (2)
 3500 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd.
 Petty Theft Police Department 1000 Block Oak Hill Rd.
 3400 Block Silver Springs Ct.
 800 Block Solana Dr.
 3200 Block Park Ln.
 Petty Theft From Veh 900 Block S Thompson Rd.

3100 Block Old Tunnel Rd.
 Petty Theft Veh Parts Oak Hill Rd./Deer Hill Rd.
 Robbery 3300 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd.
 Shoplift 3600 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd. (2)
 3500 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd.
 Warrant Service 800 Block Ava Ct.
Nuisance to the Community
 Disturbance-domestic 4000 Block Marianne Dr.
 900 Block East St.
 1100 Block Sunset Lp.
 Disturbing The Peace 3500 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd.
 Loud Noise Crestmont Dr./Happy Valley Rd.
 1st St./Golden Gate Way
 Loud Party 3100 Block Camino Colorados
 Public Nuisance 3600 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd. (2)
 3500 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd. (2)
 Meek Pl./Sunset Lp.
 Vandalism 3200 Block Stanley Blvd.
 3300 Block Victoria Ave.
 3600 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd.
 Golden Gate Way/2Nd St.

In Custody Theft 3500 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd.
 Loitering 3200 Block Mt. Diablo Ct.
 Threats 3400 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd.
 3500 Block Brook St.
 3500 Block Plaza Way
 Trespass 3600 Block Deerhill Rd.
 Unwanted Guest 3400 Block Mt. Diablo Blvd.
 Violation Custody Order 1000 Block 2Nd St. (2)

Orinda Police Department Incident Summary Report will be back

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Week of Jan 9-13	Customers in Lafayette, Orinda, and Moraga (including unincorporated areas).
Week of Jan 16-20	Any customers who missed prior tree collection.
AFTER Jan 20	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.

Reminders:

- Remove lights, ornaments, stands, and tinsel before placing at curbside.
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Popular Berkeley/Oakland eatery – Sliver Pizzeria – comes to Lafayette



Newly opened Sliver Pizzeria's sleek interior Photo Vera Kochan

By Vera Kochan

With five locations (two in Berkeley, two in Oakland, and one in Danville), Sliver Pizzeria has just opened their latest restaurant in Lafayette's La Fiesta Square at 975 Moraga Road. Taking over the spot previously held by Mangia, Sliver has done a complete interior remodel giving the place a modern look with more seating outside.

The family owned and operated chain's website says, "Sliver offers a healthier alternative to the mainstream pizzeria by focusing on fresh produce as our primary source of ingredients, instead of meat products. In fact, Sliver offers no meat products in our restaurants at all. We are committed to bringing a fresh and healthy alternative to all of our communities at a reasonable price!"

Sliver's concept is simple. There is always a rotation of one of the four mainstay pizzas offered on a daily basis: 1) corn with chile pasilla, yellow onions, mozzarella, feta, cilantro, garlic-infused olive oil, and lime; 2) tomato with red onions, mozzarella, goat cheese, fresh herbs and garlic-infused olive oil; 3) potato (roasted Yukon Gold) with baby spinach, caramelized onions, mozzarella, sharp cheddar, fresh herbs/thyme and garlic-infused olive oil; or 4) mushroom (shiitake, chanterelle, Portobello, and cremini) with mozzarella, asiago, scallions, fresh herbs and garlic-infused olive oil. All are prepared on a sourdough or Gluten-free crust and can be purchased whole, half or two slices. If ordering multiple pizzas, Sliver recommends calling in advance; and they do deliver through Door Dash, Postmate, Uber Eats, and Grubhub.

By keeping the selections uncomplicated the ingredients are "ultra fresh," and the wait time is minimal. The

weekly menu is posted online and is constantly updated. There's also a salad of the day and "shareables" such as veggie nachos; waffle fries; seasonal baked veggies; corn on the cob; and a cheese plate.

Sliver also offers desserts like chocolate chip cookies, brownies and various flavors of their house-made gelato. Beverages include sodas, waters, various beers, wine and margaritas. Customers can even order a twice-the-normal-size margarita called "What's up, Baby?" that appears guaranteed to bring out a pickup line from even the most stoic of drinkers.

There are plans in the works to have live music on weekends, and as a rule, Sliver likes to showcase local talent (email: Info@SLIVERPizzeria.com).

The eatery chain is also involved in the fight against human trafficking. "Sliver has sincere compassion for human trafficking victims and zero tolerance for traffickers," states their website. "We stay updated in the fight against modern day slavery and promote all efficient forms of abolitionism. We are dedicated to helping support local organizations that are on the ground rescuing and rehabilitating victims, as well as preventative work. We are involved in the community discussions on how to end slavery in this lifetime."

The restaurant is open Sunday to Thursday from 10 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. and Friday to Saturday from 10 a.m. to 9:30 p.m. For additional information visit: www.sliverpizzeria.com or call: (925) 298-5207.

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- Third Row:** Bill Finnegan, Kaaren Brickman, Denise Walker, Lisa Tichenor, Lucy Casella, Sabrina Kyhn, Julie Del Santo, Teresa Ramirez, Trish Heaney, Lauren Deal, Sherry Hutchens.
- Front Row:** Rachel Dreyer, Joanne Weil Heald, Tina Frechman, Elena Tyson, Billy Finnegan, Carolyn Way, Cheryl Hata, Jill Balazs, Pamela Colombana, Don Colombana.



~ Life in LAMORINDA ~

Moraga Library holds a winter craft workshop for kids



Photos Vera Kochan

Amateur ornithologists make Pinecone Snowy Owls

By Vera Kochan

Now that COVID mandates have been lifted by Contra Costa County, the Moraga Library is once again holding programs for kids. The Dec. 8

craft workshop was the first since in-person events were curtailed in March 2020. Youth Services Librarian Nirit Schnitzer said that the library is hoping to offer a free program for kids once a month. Assisted by Library Aide

Stacey (last name withheld) and Library Assistant Emily Ferne, kids aged 2-8 spent an hour making Pinecone Snowy Owls using pinecones, pampas grass, cotton/batting, pipe cleaners, and wiggly eyes. Schnitzer explained that the idea was to emulate many of

the natural ornaments on the library's Critter Tree that was made by members of the Moraga Garden Club (who sponsored this event).

Parents pitched in to help their younger kids, but the older ones did just fine without any guidance. Assembling an owl was much more difficult than it appeared, as this reporter's owl looked like it was hit by a semi-truck in mid-flight.

However, Sonya (8), was one of the "expert" crafters whose Pinecone Snowy Owl was a very good facsimile of the real thing. When asked if she'd given her owl a name yet she replied, "I will when I think of one."

Campolindo parents donate a tsunami of cookies to teachers and staff



Photo Sora O'Doherty

A volunteer assembles a sample plate of cookies to show the volunteers how to arrange the gifts for teachers and staff.

By Sora O'Doherty

A call went out to parents of students at Campolindo: "We need 160 parents to each donate two dozen cookies as gifts for teachers and staff at the school." And the call was answered as thousands of cookies poured into the school on the morning of Dec. 8, where parent volunteers gathered to assemble gift packages for each teacher and staff member and others. This year the cookie committee was chaired by Sabine Antonios-McCrea with the help of Susette Johnson.

If everybody who was called upon had donated the requested number of cookies, it would have totaled nearly 4,000 cookies, and organizers believe that they did receive roughly that number. No one had time to actually count, however, as volunteers gathered to assemble holiday plates with a selection of

about 30 cookies each, to be wrapped in cellophane and tied up with festive bows.

There was a special table dedicated to gluten-free treats, and about 10 gluten-free plates were prepared. In addition to the cookies some parents also donated chocolates or other candies. A special treat this year was items from Holly's Home Grown in Lafayette, as Holly is the parent of a senior at Campolindo.

In addition to the teachers and staff, 24 plates of cookies were distributed to the Annex, which houses some Acalanes High School District employees, and also to the Wellness Center and the Counseling Center on campus.

Stephanie Sliwinski, Attendance and Health Technician, reported that the cookies went over very well with the 114 teachers and staff. "We look forward to it every year," she added.



Two volunteers show off a finished gift plate of cookies, made and donated by parents, to be given to the high school teachers and staff for the holidays.

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What's better than a Bundt with a perfect toffee crunch?



Photo Susie Iventosch

Chocolate Bundt Cake with Brown Butter Icing and Toffee Bits

By Susie Iventosch

This dark chocolate Bundt cake is the perfect holiday dessert, complete with brown butter icing and bits of English toffee scattered over the top. Whenever I think of toffee, I think of holiday cookie baking and candy making, and English toffee is one of my favorites. I am not so good at making it, but I sure do love eating it. So, whenever a friend brings me a batch, I am always so thankful and overjoyed.

As you know, we also love to bake with brown butter. It makes everything taste special

with the rich nutty flavor and the delicious aroma. It's nice to have on hand to use for baking, on potatoes, veggies or pasta and especially in cakes and frosting. If possible, make the brown butter ahead of time and chill it until you're ready to use it. This will save a lot of time when making the icing. We like to brown a few sticks of butter whenever we have time and keep it in the refrigerator until we want to make something with it.

Please note that butter loses much of its water content when you brown it, so be sure to weigh or measure the butter for the recipe after browning

it. For this recipe, 4 ounces of butter turned into 2 ounces after it was browned. The amount of water in the butter you use will determine how much volume is lost, and every brand of butter differs slightly.

Since we have not received any gifts of toffee yet this year, I used Trader Joe's holiday English Toffee with Nuts for this cake, which comes in a gigantic 30-ounce tin, and is deliciously crunchy.

But if you make toffee, by all means use your own, and if you're lucky enough to have a friend that remembers you at the holiday season with a gift of toffee, then you're all set!

INGREDIENTS

Chocolate Bundt Cake

8 oz. unsalted butter (1 cup or 2 sticks)
1/3 cup cocoa powder Dutch processed
1 cup water
2 oz. dark chocolate, chopped (weuse 62% cacao)
2 cups all-purpose flour
1 3/4 cup granulated sugar
1 1/2 tsp. baking soda
1 tsp. salt
2 large eggs
1/2 cup plain nonfat Greek yogurt
1 tsp. cider vinegar
1 tsp. pure vanilla extract

Brown Butter Icing

4 oz. unsalted butter
2 cups powdered sugar, sifted
5 tbsp. milk +/-
Toffee Bits
1 1/2 cups English toffee, chopped

DIRECTIONS

Chocolate Bundt Cake

Spray or grease a 12-cup Bundt pan and dust with flour. Set aside. Preheat oven to 350 F. Combine butter, cocoa powder, chopped dark chocolate, and water in a saucepan and cook over medium-low heat, stirring often, just until melted. Remove from heat and set aside.

In a large mixing bowl, combine flour, sugar, salt and baking soda and whisk together to combine. Add half of the chocolate mixture to the dries and stir well. Add remaining chocolate mixture to the batter and stir until completely blended.

Add eggs, one at a time, stir well after each. Whisk in yogurt, cider vinegar and vanilla, and blend well.

Pour batter into prepared pan and bake in the center of the oven for 30-35 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean. Remove from oven and cool for 15 minutes before inverting onto a cooling rack. When the cake is completely cooled, move it to the cake serving plate.

While the cake is cooling, prepare the icing and chop the toffee.

Brown Butter Icing

I like to brown the butter ahead of time, so when I'm ready to make the icing it's ready to go quickly. But, to brown the butter, place it in a pan with a light-colored bottom. (This way you can see when the butter is brown.) Cook over low heat for 10-15 minutes, or until the butter takes on a nutty aroma and begins to form bubbles and brown crystals along the edge and on the bottom of the pan. Remove from heat and cool. This can take a longer or shorter amount of time, depending upon the water content of the butter you use, as well as the temperature of your burner. Allow the butter to cool completely.

Beat or whisk the brown butter with the powdered sugar and milk until smooth and the icing is the consistency where you can drizzle the icing, but it will hold as it falls down the cake. This should be somewhere between frosting and glaze consistency. Drizzle the icing over the entire top of the cake. The icing will drip down into the center and along the sides of the cake.

Evenly sprinkle toffee bits over the icing while it is still soft and a bit moist, so that the toffee will hold in place. Serve cake at room temp.



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>



Family Gingerbread House Building event brings out the architect in everyone



The Enfield family architects hard at work Photos Vera Kochan

By Vera Kochan

The Moraga Parks and Recreation Department initiated Family Gingerbread House Building three years ago, but COVID mandates made group

gatherings an impossibility for the first two years. Instead, the all-in-one kits were sold for families to assemble in the safety of their own homes. This year the Dec. 4 "construction site" was held at the Hacienda de las Flores' Casita building.



The Stewart family builds their gingerbread houses

Recreation Supervisor Jasmine Bateson said that the sold-out event expected to see 45 families in three time slots, build gingerbread houses decorated with pretzels, gum drops, mini-marshmallows, peppermint candy, M&Ms,

licorice, green or red frosting, and more for a price of \$35 per family and \$20 for each additional house.

As can be expected, the younger participants ate more of the decorations than they put on their houses. One father

was heard saying to his daughter, "We're not here to eat; we're here to build."

Any parents who brought toddlers ended up creating the dream houses by themselves as their youngsters happily watched while munching on the candy (er, the building supplies). No one seemed put out by the turn of events. If anything, the adults appeared to be enjoying their own creativity even as the stock seemed to noticeably dwindle in record time – a clear case of supply and demand.

One builder, Layla (5), had constructed gingerbread houses at home before. She planned on using all of her will-power by not eating the day's masterpiece, but rather putting her latest endeavor near the fireplace by the Christmas tree, at least for one day. Her sister, Sofia (2), alas, fell victim to the munchies.

New cookbook offers a wealth of delicious holiday side dishes



Hericots verts with roasted fennel and shallots

Photo provided

By Jennifer Wake

The holidays are the one time of year that brings all of Moraga resident Craig McMullen's family and friends together, and for these festive occasions, as an amateur chef, McMullen has taken the opportunity to create a considerable number of side dishes. "Over the years I have experimented and swapped new ideas into our rotation and made adjustments to other recipes, year after year keeping notes and using my family's feedback to perfect the holiday meal."

During the pandemic, McMullen – a retired biotechnology CEO who has been tinkering around the kitchen "for as long as I can remember" and cooks almost every night – sat down and selected some of the more popular side dishes from the past 30 years and wrote his own cookbook, "Sides for Holiday Entertaining."

"My side dishes range from a single vegetable dish to make ahead gratins, and

purees, impressive and delectable souffles, terrines, and delicious and surprising combinations of vegetables," McMullen said, adding that each recipe has a handy make-ahead note which offers convenient stopping places that may be the day ahead, prepped in the morning, or finished just before the meal is served.

One of his most complicated dishes is a broccoli soufflé, which McMullen says many amateur cooks think is too complicated to try at home. "I have developed several helpful preparation steps and hints along the way to take the mystery out of making a soufflé and incorporated them into my cookbook," he said. "Additionally, there are two pages of step-by-step illustrations to guide you through its preparation." He said he has found it very gratifying when he's met a reader who has successfully made their first soufflé. "One of my friends who was an

early editor [of my cookbook] tried my soufflé recipe to check out the book and was surprised by his success and has become a true supporter."

Finishing his manuscript was a significant accomplishment only to learn that this was just the beginning if McMullen wanted to publish a cookbook. "Photography became a real adventure and I had over 30 photoshoots," he said. "I was very lucky to learn that a close friend was a talented amateur photographer with the correct equipment and knowledge of lighting. Together we set out to learn food photography and it was fun and a real learning experience."

"Sides for Holiday Entertaining" is available at Amazon as well as being sold locally at Across the Way in Moraga, Diablo Foods, and at the Lazy K at Orchard Nursery in Lafayette. For info, visit sidesforholidayentertaining.com

Miramonte cheerleaders team up with Marines' Toys for Tots program



Photo Monica Symonds

Submitted by **Mary Arnerich-King**

The Miramonte Cheerleaders were in downtown Orinda on the Corner of

Moraga Way in front of "Share Tea" with pom-poms shaking, collecting toys on Dec. 4 from 1 to 3 p.m., filling two bins of toys and cash donations for Toys for Tots from local community members.

Gold Award project revitalizes Springhill garden walkway



Photo provided

Parisa Shapoorian on the trail

Submitted by **Lisa Schreiber**

Girl Scout Troop 30577 is proud to announce that Parisa Shapoorian recently achieved her Gold Award – the highest achievement within the Girl Scouts of the USA. Only 5% of eligible Girl Scouts successfully earn the Gold Award. To earn this prestigious award a candidate must plan and implement an individual "Take Action" project that reaches beyond the Girl Scout organization and provides a sustainable, lasting benefit to the local community.

Shapoorian selected as her project the creation of a new 30-foot walkway in area of the garden at Springhill Elementary School. Her ultimate goal was to stop the harmful erosion while creating a new learning environment for the young students. She accomplished this by creating a safe walkway with native plants for the students to study. The project area was not frequently

used by students especially during rainy weather as it quickly became flooded and then eroded. Now the students can use the walkway year-round and, during the nice weather sit on it as they study the native habitat around them.

This project was not easy as most of it was done during COVID and, in the early phases, had to be replanned when there was a change in what Springhill Elementary needed. Set-backs like these are an important part of the learning and development in achieving this award.

In addition to this project Shapoorian has volunteered for six years in a row as a junior counselor at Diablo Day Camp in Lafayette and last summer she worked as a staff member at the Wolfeboro Boy Scout Camp, near Arnold, Calif. Shapoorian is currently a freshman at UC Santa Cruz, majoring in Computer Science.

In addition to her friends and family, who were the work crew, Shapoorian would like to thank the following people who were critical to the project: Nicole Carberry – Leader, Troop 30577 for her passionate leadership and encouragement; Terry Camp, Landscape Architect at Camp and Camp Associates for his donation of the walkway design; Laura Spain, third-grade teacher at Springhill Elementary who was the sponsor of the project; and Shahzad Arani of Arani Construction for donating the materials, equipment and training.

Shapoorian will be recognized at the Annual Gold Award Recipient Luncheon on Jan. 7, 2023 in San Ramon. The Girl Scouts of Lafayette have a strong history and invite girls to find out more by contacting www.gsnorcal.org

Lions and Leos provide eyeglasses for the visually impaired



Leos - Thomas Colpo, Ava Jacuzzi, Grant Roesch, Max Sheehan Photo provided

Submitted by **Robert Murtagh**

Moraga Lions and Campolindo Leo Club members on Nov. 13 conducted an eye-glass sorting event to prepare used eyeglasses for the final step before the eyeglasses will be shipped to Africa. A total of 8,000 eyeglasses were sorted and packed for delivery to a California State Prison where inmates will clean, determine the prescription and pack for overseas delivery.

A total of 25 people, including Lions, Leos and volunteers were able to complete the sorting event in just over 3 hours at the Moraga Fire House in Rheem.

These eyeglasses will be added to a total shipment of 75,000 eyeglasses destined for Kenya, Africa, in March 2023.

In the past 12 months, Lions and Leos in Northern California have collected, processed and shipped over 500,000 to third world countries.

Lamorinda Village celebrates Afternoon of Gratitude

Submitted by **Laura-Kate Rurka**

Over 100 community members gathered at the Lafayette Community Center on Dec. 9 for the 8th Annual Lamorinda Village Afternoon of Gratitude. Before the awards presentation, guests mingled and enjoyed wine, finger food, and a beautiful performance by the Orinda Intermediate School Choir.

Lamorinda Village Executive Director Kathryn Ishizu thanked volunteers, members, donors, and sponsors for their part in helping the Village continue to thrive. Over the last two years, Lamorinda Village has doubled the number of senior members who receive services and participate in the many programs offered by the Village and its partners, none of which would be possible without the time and contributions of all its supporters.

Lamorinda Village presented member and volunteer Andy Amstutz with the first annual Don Jenkins Volunteer Service Award for his wide-ranging work for the organization. Don, who passed away this year, was an integral part of both Lamorinda Village and the wider community, giving his time and boundless energy to improve the lives of many in Lamorinda. Lamorinda Village created the award in Don's honor to acknowledge his contribution and pay tribute to his legacy of volunteerism and dedication to service. Additionally, Amstutz was honored by Lafayette Mayor Teresa Geringer with a City Proclamation and received the Paul Harris Fellows award from the Lamorinda Sunrise Rotary.


Judy Hatz, who recently joined Lamorinda Village as a member, emailed later to say, "The Volunteer of the Year party was wonderful. Thank you for enriching our lives and giving us things to look forward to."

After the ceremony, attendees enjoyed a chance to reconnect and socialize and the opportunity to express their gratitude for Lamorinda Village during the busy holiday season. For information about Lamorinda Village, visit <https://lamorindavillage.org/>



Photos provided





Season of Giving

Support local nonprofits during this Season of Giving

One of the best things about Lamorinda is its strong volunteer base within local nonprofit organizations that raise much needed funds to benefit the community. Each year, Lamorinda Weekly offers an opportunity for these nonprofits to promote their charitable giving opportunities. Here are a few ongoing campaigns this holiday season:

Lamorinda Village Season of Sharing

Lamorinda Village, a virtual village that allows seniors to live independently in their own homes for as long as possible, is raising funds to continue its mission. Volunteers provide rides, grocery shopping, companionship, handyman and check-in call services as well as fun and educational events to its members. Help keep our elder neighbors engaged with love. Donate at www.lamorindavillage.org/donate or mail a check to P.O. Box 57, Lafayette. If you are a senior interested making new friends or needing help, or if you are thinking of volunteering, email us at info@lamorindavillage.org.

Lamorinda Spirit Van

The Lamorinda Spirit Van has reopened and is providing rides to Lamorinda older adults age 60+ to destinations in Lafayette, Moraga, Orinda, Concord, Martinez, Pleasant Hill and Walnut Creek. We are currently seeking a part-time dispatcher who will take ride reservations, schedule route, communicate with Passengers/drivers, prepare reports. Position requires good communication skills and knowledge of Excel. We are also looking for volunteer drivers for 4-hour weekly or bi-weekly morning or afternoon shift – taking older adults to appointments, errands and shopping. Help us help others!

Donate to Lamorinda Spirit this holiday season by mailing a check payable to: City of Lafayette (note "Lamorinda Spirit" on memo line) 500 Saint Mary's Road, Lafayette 94549. Learn more at www.lovelafayette.org/residents/transportation/lamorinda-spirit-van Or email Riki at rjuster@lovelafayette.org or call (925) 284-5546.

Moraga Community Foundation

The Moraga Community Foundation is excited to be just over \$50,000 shy of our goal to raise \$450,000 for needed enhancements to the Moraga Commons Park. A new drinking fountain/ water bottle station and new flagpole have already been installed. Planned for 2023 are ADA/accessibility improvements including brand new, gender neutral bathrooms, an updated accessible picnic area near the All-Access Playground, and beautiful trees with improved irrigation (also completed with MCF's financial support). Do you love and enjoy the park? Show your appreciation by donating to the Commons Enhancement Project at www.MoragaCommunityFoundation.org. Help us raise the last \$54,000 to make this happen.

Orinda Starlight Village Players

Dear Orinda Starlight Village Players Members, Patrons and Participants, I want to take this time to thank each and everyone of you for your contributions to our community theater. It takes a village to present shows. As a community theater of volunteers we count on your support throughout the year. Whether it is by donating money, coming to a performance as an audience member, or giving of your time as an actor, set builder/painter or volunteer in other capacities, we at OrSVP could not do it without you. Orinda Starlight Village Players, 28 Orinda Way, Orinda, info@orsvp.org

Not to be missed Not to be missed Not to be missed Not to be missed

Art

Annual 57th Artful Giving exhibition at Valley Art Gallery, which continues to Dec. 31, includes a wide variety of beautifully crafted ceramics, wood and glass pieces, original designer jewelry, fiber arts, small paintings, and many other unique, one-of-a-kind gift items all handcrafted by our talented East Bay artisans. Valley Art Gallery: 1661 Botelho Drive, Suite 110, Walnut Creek, www.valleyartgallery.org; (925) 935-4311.

Music

Diablo Ballet's 29th season continues with a mixed bill ti-

led Swan Lake Suite, featuring selections from the classic ballet staged by Sean Kelly performed to Pyotr Tchaikovsky's majestic score. Swan Lake Suite performs Feb. 10 - 11 at the Leshar Center for the Arts, 1601, Civic Drive in Walnut Creek. Get your tickets now and take advantage of early bird pricing through Jan. 18. For tickets, call (925) 943-SHOW (7469) or visit www.lesherarts-center.org or www.diabloballet.org.

Gold Coast Chamber Players concert: Connections in Time with the Horszowski Trio. Saturday, Jan. 14 at 7:30 p.m. Don Tatzin Community Hall, Lafayette Library 3491 Mt. Dia-

blo Blvd., Lafayette. Tickets www.gccpmusic.com

Theatre

Synergy Theater returns to the Leshar Center for the Arts, at 1601 Civic Drive, Walnut Creek, with the world-debut of Spontaneous Myth and Magic: An Improvised Ancient Mythology! This completely improvised two-act comedy will keep the audience in laughter from the dawn of time until the end of days! It plays Thursday, Jan. 12, through Sunday, Jan. 22, at 8:15 p.m., Thursdays - Saturdays, and 3:15 p.m. on Sundays.

Literature

January 2023 events at Orinda Books: Thursday, Jan. 12 at 7 p.m. Stuart Florsheim will read and discuss his new book of poetry, "Amusing the Angels," a collection focusing on grief and loss that was recently awarded the Blue Light Book Award. Saturday, Jan. 28 at 2 p.m. Andrea Mein DeWitt, will discuss her new book, "Name Claim & Reframe: Your Path to a Well-Lived Life." DeWitt is a life coach and lives in Orinda. Her new book encourages readers to step into their power, their potential, and their truth. 276 Village Square, Orinda, (925) 254-7606, www.orinda-books.com,

info@orindabooks.com

Sweet Thursday Author Series presents Camper English, author of "Doctors and Distillers" on Thursday, Jan. 12, at 7 p.m. at the Lafayette Library and Learning Center in the Don Tatzin Community Hall. We will learn how the Gimlet, Gin & Tonic, and Old-Fashioned were born as remedies for diseases and discomforts. The talk will be presented in-person with a Zoom Livestream option. The talk is free, but registration is required at Tinyurl.com/sweet-Jan23.

Please submit events to: calendar@lamorindaweekly.com

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LAMORINDA SPORTS

Strong start for Campo and Acalanes boys' basketball, as Mats build momentum



Logan Robeson, #24 Photo J. Kingdon

By Jon Kingdon

Each of the Lamorinda boys' basketball teams have been facing various challenges coming into the season. Whether it's been replacing key players lost to graduation or waiting for players to return from injuries and illnesses, there has been no time for self-pity, receiving little sympathy from their opponents. Campolindo and Acalanes have started strong and Miramonte after a slow start is now pointed in the right direction.

Campolindo

Despite losing three starters from last year, Campolindo has simply picked up where they left off, having made it to the state semifinals. The Cougars are now 5-2 with two of the wins coming against highly ranked Branson and Archbishop Riordan at the Gridley tournament.

"We made a lot of progress in the off-season and have played a really hard schedule so far," head coach Steven Dyer said. "Our guys have bought in and played hard and have already made a lot of progress."

With last year's starting guards Aidan Mahaney and

Cade Bennett now playing for Saint Mary's, seniors Logan Robeson (20.7), back after missing the last two seasons due to injuries, Shane O'Reilly (13.0) and Clay Naffziger (9.1) are all scoring well. Junior Tyler Bergren (5.1 and 3.9 assists) has been running the offense as the team's point guard.

"Logan, Shane and Clay can put the ball in the basket and that helps alleviate a lot of problems on offense," Dyer said. "When all three are on the court, it makes our offense hard to stop. It was a rough two years for Logan with his injuries and he has worked really hard. No one in our program is surprised by what he is doing now. He's just in a good place mentally and injury free and those are the biggest things. Tyler is tough and confident and has done a good job in taking care of the basketball and getting our shooters the ball for good shots."

Sophomore guard Gavin Rendle is another good shooter that is new to the team. "We're looking for Gavin to keep developing and we think he is going to be a really good player and he can get some good minutes this year."

With the graduation of four-year starter Matt Rendell, 6'4" junior Dominick Sanguinetti has been asked to fill that role. "Dominick has been getting better with his defense, rebounding and screen setting," Dyer said. "We're asking him to do the dirty work and he is doing well. We are playing a lot of four and five out on offense and when we go smaller, we use Dylan 'Diggy' Mansour who has been rebounding well and playing with toughness."

Without a true big man, rebounding requires a team effort for the Cougars. "We don't have an inside player that will get 10 rebounds a game, so we have to address it as a group and have multiple guys get four to five rebounds a game," Dyer said. "We will double the post if we have to, and our base defense takes away a lot of that stuff. We had success in our three games at the Gridley tournament, all of whom were all taller than us."

Besides shooting well, the key for the offense is avoiding turnovers. "We haven't been turning the ball over a lot," Dyer said. "It's a big statistic we look for and over the last four years, we've averaged less than 10 turnovers a game. On defense, our goal has to always hold our opponents to just one shot."

The attitude and confidence the players have brought is a real strength, according to Dyer:

"Know that there were opportunities to play more, all of our players worked hard in the off season to maintain the standards we have set. Our expectations are high and we're still looking to continue to improve our depth and to stay healthy, which is always critical."

Acalanes

Last year, it took the Acalanes basketball team 10 games before they had their fifth win, on their way to an 8-15 final record. This year it only took five games and optimism reigns supreme for the Dons with a 6-2 record.

Head coach Bill Powers made it clear that things were going to be different this year. "We've had a good start to the season," Powers said. "We simply had not won enough so that was something we had been working towards since last March. We have put so much energy into the process that the players now get it and winning is just a byproduct."

Powers attributes much of the early success to their work in the weight room. "Mike Ivankovich has been running our strength program since March and he has made a real difference in our program," Powers said. "With what Mike created for us, we knew that we would be improved this year. Initially, the players were uncomfortable, but they fought through that discomfort, and this has impacted their play on the court and their confidence."

With eight seniors leading the way, there is no shortage of leadership. "We are a mature team beyond the fact that we have so many seniors," Powers said. "It's just a group of old souls. They have the maturity to understand that self-awareness and sacrifice are important to being successful, understanding the human characteristics that makes them better teammates."

Four-year lettermen, 6'9" center Jake Davis and 5'6" point guard Theo Stoll have been the long and short of the team. Davis is averaging 18 points and 11.2 rebounds per game and Stoll is second averaging 14.2 points and leading the team with 6.8 assists per game.

"Jake has been dominant on the boards," Powers said. "We're getting him the ball in good areas to operate, moving him around and making him harder to guard. He is playing with a lot more toughness and confidence. Theo has been like a coach on the court and a leader off it. He understands that he doesn't have to be perfect; he just has to be Theo."

There is good depth in the back court with seniors Zubin Acuna and Jack Bayless and junior Jordan Brown all of whom have been playing well. "Justin has quickly made his influence felt," Powers said. "He's been a major spark as an athlete and a winner. We're just a better-looking team on the court with our ball movement and our players have become harder to guard. We've taken very few bad shots so far this season and this is a testament to the players and how they care about each other. With sophomore Joe Reidenbach's return from an injury, and the anticipated return of Matt Bacon from his injury, the front court will be that much stronger."

Coming into the Chris Huber Tournament with a 4-0 record, Acalanes was hit with a flu bug and four starters and others out with the flu. Powers told the team that 'adversity creates opportunity' and the players took that to heart in their opening game against Ygnacio Valley, finding a way to score four points in the last 0.2 seconds of the game.

At that point with the score tied 60-60, YV sank a foul shot and their bench ran onto the court in celebration, drawing a technical foul. After they sank their second shot, Acuna calmly sank his two foul shots to tie the score. Powers then set up a play where Trevor Powers inbounded the ball from half court, throwing it right at the basket with Bayless tipping the ball in to win the game, a victory that the team can build on.

"What we're working towards is a celebratory locker room," Powers said. "Coming into this season, we had not had any wins that would create an exciting locker room, but after experiencing that by winning the Piedmont Championship earlier in the season and the Ygnacio Valley game, we've been winning the locker room."

Miramonte

Miramonte was hit particularly hard with the loss to graduation of their top four leaders in scoring, rebounding and assists.

Compound that with injuries and illnesses, the Matadors began the season with three losses. The team's only senior, guard Ethan Conley, is currently wearing a harness, rehabbing a dislocated shoulder he suffered playing football, junior Chase Miller is coming off a concussion and Damian Wyszinski recently had appendix surgery.

"I don't use the term re-

building, but we do have a new and inexperienced team and we're missing a number of key players," head coach Chris Lavdiotis said. "We're doing a lot of teaching with so many new players and I've had to scale back what we can do offensively and defensively, and we decided as a staff and a team that we had to go back a couple of steps before we can move forward. We're still steering in the same direction and teaching basic fundamental stuff on both sides of the ball."

Junior Marcus Robinson has been the team's leading scorer and is the leader on the court, but Lavdiotis is looking for production around him with the return of the injured and sick players. "With Ethan and Chase coming back soon and Thomas Zwahlen, a football player who is just getting into basketball shape, we'll be a much better and deeper team," Lavdiotis said. "We're looking to be hitting our stride in the Marin County tournament at the end of December. We just haven't had enough time together because in most of our practices, we've only been able to dress eight or nine players due to the flu."

With the team down to eight players, Lavdiotis brought two freshmen up from the JV, forward Blake Bastani and guard Preston Rguem, for the Casa Grande game where Bastani led the team with 19 points, nine rebounds, three assists and four steals, and was named the player of the game by the coaching staff and Rguem ran the offense well and was a top defender.

There is depth in the back-court with Charlie Haas, Matt Bakonyvari and Owen Brady. "Owen has shown a good ability to move without the ball and he really understands how to use screens," Lavdiotis said. "I've told the players that nobody has anything set and they have to earn time and things will be fluid until things settle down and figure out who are going to be our five starters."

Things have already improved with the team winning two of their three games at their home tournament. "We've gone back to some of our older stuff and it's going to work," Lavdiotis said. "We're changing things on the fly to give our players the best chance to succeed. The kids are earnest and want to do well. We're together which is good and it's up to them now to understand what we're giving them."

Girls' basketball gears up for exciting season built on last year's successes



Sophie Chinn

By Jon Kingdon

It's been a productive off-season for the Lamorinda girls' basketball teams with each team creating its own chemistry and team unity over the pre-season. Acalanes is looking to build on their success from last season, Miramonte is counting on improving on their .500 season and Campolindo, with a full off-season for the first time with their head coach, is anticipating a more unified



Mary Lacanlale

Photos Nicolas O'Rourke

team on the court.

Acalanes

Having lost no players to graduation, Acalanes is essentially putting the same team on the floor this season though one with a solid year of experience under their belts. As with last year's team, the Dons are a team that will constantly play pressure defense and push the fast break whenever they can. With a 5-1 record, an offense that is scoring 70.8 points a game and only giving up 42.2 points a game,

the Dons are hitting on all cylinders.

"This is the same team with two new freshmen, Cameron Thornton and Alexis Le," head coach Margaret Gartner said. "Our players are bigger and stronger and making fewer mistakes. We're pressing and fast breaking better this year because we were short-handed last year due to the COVID virus. With the players doing weight work and doing everything full court in practice, this is how we get in condition to play this way. We will be using all of our players to keep the pressure on the other team."

There is no lack of familiarity with the players. "Our chemistry has improved," Gartner said. "They are a very tight knit group that loves playing together and enjoys each other off the court. They're all trying to grow their games and do better."

Gartner is not one to hold back her players. "The players have the green light to shoot and they're always looking for a teammate to take the better shot," Gartner said. "We're not forcing it as much as last year and we're being a lot more patient."

There are many options for the Acalanes offense led by sophomores Dulci Vail who had a season high 30 points against San Marin and is the team's leading rebounder, Sophie Chinn, co-captain Karyss (K.K.) Lacanlale, Natalie Frechman, juniors Natalie Lyons, co-

captain Jenna Steele and senior co-captain Emily Du. Freshmen Thorn and Le have both shown offensive skills and will be seeing playing time as well.

"K.K. will be running the offense," Gartner said. "She is a beast at 5'4" and is a great passer. Everybody works off of her. We are a fairly balanced offense."

Outside of Vail, there is not a lot of height in the front court. Compensating for that lack, Acalanes has a very aggressive defense as evidenced by Lacanlale and Chinn getting nine and eight steals respectively in different games.

"We can get a little lost on defense and rebounding is always going to be our nemesis," Gartner said. "On defense, we want to make our opponents take outside shots and prevent them from getting layups and second and third shots."

The success of the team relies on its cohesion as a team, according to Gartner: "We have to play as a team on both ends of the court. On defense, our main concerns are playing team defense and rebounding because we know that we can shoot. On offense, it's moving the ball and making the extra pass."

Currently ranked ninth by the Bay Area News Group, the Dons will be tested this week at the Nike Tournament of Champions in Phoenix and the week after at the West Coast Jamboree.

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Acalanes' soccer player named boys high school athlete of the week

By Jon Kingdon

Eli Roth, a senior co-captain soccer player for Acalanes High School was named the Bay Area News Group boys high school athlete of the week for Dec. 5-10 after receiving 39.24% of the vote by the public.

In Acalanes' last three games

against Newark Memorial, Foothill and Granada, all victories, Ross scored five goals and had three assists

Head coach Paul Curtis had no argument with the choice of Roth. "He's really positive with his teammates," Curtis said. "He shows excellent leadership and is a great representative of the community."

With the team's 6-1 record, Roth

acknowledged the overall play of the team. "We've been working hard and it's all come together," Roth said. "I just happen to be the one that's been scoring the goals. I give my thanks to the team and the people who voted for me."

Roth is the second athlete from Lamorinda to have won this award. Campolindo quarterback Dashiell Weaver won the award in November.

Eli Roth #8 vs St. Marys Photo Jon Kingdon

Girls' basketball gears up for exciting season built on last year's successes

... continued from Page C1

Campolindo

In his second year as the head coach for Campolindo, Bill Flitter was far more comfortable heading into this season. "When I started last year in September, we did not have a summer of preparation," Flitter said. "This year, we worked over the summer in getting the processes in place, establishing a culture and having a program on offense and defense so we're much deeper and further ahead than where we were last year."

What hasn't changed for the Cougars is Flitter's philosophy of being aggressive on offense and defense. "We want to put a lot of pressure on the rim which creates a lot of opportunities on offense, driving and cutting hard to the basket," Flitter said. "On defense, we play a half-court man pressure on defense."

There is good depth at the guard position for the Cougars with seniors Camille Yabu, Mina Wang, and sophomore Ali McCauley. "Camille has a lot of speed in going to the basket and

at 5'8" was our leading rebounder last year," Flitter said. "Mina missed almost the entire season last year and will be our other starter. She runs the floor well and is a great commander. Ali will be valuable in that she is able to play both guard positions."

The front court brings both experience and youth with senior Charlotte Arnsward, sophomore Aislinn Comerford and freshman Avery Yasukochi (whose brother played for Campolindo last year). "Charlotte is a great defensive player that has gotten stronger and runs very well and is a sprinter on the track team," Flitter said. "Aislinn worked really hard over the summer and earned a place on the roster and gives us good size and she has learned to play around the rim better and Avery is very athletic and shows great potential."

It's the team having the right attitude and using its strength that Flitter is looking toward as the season develops. "We're a really quick team that can move," Flitter said. "It's getting

the players to get them to believe in our strength and in themselves which our keys to our being successful."

Miramonte

Coming into the season with a solid core of players, Miramonte coach Vince Wirthman was anticipating an improvement over last year's 14-14 record and so far, he has been proven correct, starting off with a 5-2 record.

With a roster of only eight players, the last thing that the Matadors could afford to do was to lose any player to an injury and unfortunately that's just what happened when junior guard Willa Mapaye went down with a season ending knee injury. Wirthman spoke of how valuable Mapaye was to the team. "Willa was running our offense as our point guard," Wirthman said. "She is a good all-round player who is smart, a good shooter, ball handler and played good defense and will really be missed this season."

In her one game, Mapaye scored 11 points, three assists, seven rebounds and four steals.

Sophomore Julia Quinn-Ferguson (5.2 ppg) and freshman Maegan Eichenberger (4.4 ppg) will be counted on to replace Mapaye.

Wirthman was already high on Quinn-Ferguson and Eichenberger. "Julia is a good athlete and plays with a lot of speed," Wirthman said. "Maegan has been showing a lot of potential. She is a hard worker and a good defender who is very aggressive."

Senior guards and sisters, Courtney and Katherine Scheingart, have shown great improvement on offense from last season with Courtney improving her scoring average from 7.7 to 14.1 and Katherine going from 3.3 to 10.6.

"Courtney is our best shooter, but all of our players can shoot and I'm encouraging them all to shoot their three pointers," Wirthman said. "We're going to try and run and keep an up tempo. From our starters to the bench players, they're all players we have confidence in."

Junior Karena Eberts (14.7

ppg and 10.0 rebounds) was all-league last season and is the only player with size in the front court. "We're not going to rely as much on the inside game as we did last year when we had more size," Wirth said. "Karena is a strong inside player, but she can also shoot from the outside. We are also anticipating the return of Eva Patrick, who suffered a knee injury last season once she finishes her rehab."

Miramonte scheduled three tournaments prior to the league season - Miramonte (2-1), with the Windsor and West Coast Jubilee tournaments coming up.

Wirthman is counting on the team's chemistry to be a key factor in the team's performance. "We had a good off-season and played in the summer leagues," Wirthman said. "We play a pressure defense more than normal due to our size, speed and shooting ability and we'll be able to take advantage of teams that don't handle the ball well. We're going to get better as the year goes on with our trapping and pressing style though we're not there yet."

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Lamorinda

OUR HOMES

Lamorinda Weekly Volume 16 Issue 21 Wednesday, December 21, 2022



Handyman touch-up paint tips

... read on Page D4

Digging Deep with Goddess Gardener, Cynthia Brian

Night lights



Cynthia's Fire Chief nephew's illuminated house.

Photo Cynthia Brian Cynthia's farmer brother lit up his ranch home.



By Cynthia Brian

"The best Christmas trees come very close to exceeding nature." ~Andy Rooney

Everyone who knows me understands that I am a nature girl. I spend as much time outdoors as possible in all weather conditions. As I meander around my property, I am always investigating the trees, pondering the possibilities for Christmas décor. When December rolls around, there is nothing that gives me more joy than admiring the twinkling lights that illuminate landscapes, glow on houses, and glimmer on Christmas trees.

My family tradition has always been to decorate every inch of the inside and outside with holiday fervor. Growing up, my dad used to joke that for extra excitement, we could watch the electric meter spinning wildly. Our ranch house and surrounding gardens were adorned with thousands of lights, Nativity scenes, sleighs, Santa, elves, reindeer, snowmen, candles, and whatever else was over-the-top festive. Because we lived on a farm in the boondocks, as kids we believed we had to light the night so that Santa would be able to find our house in the deep darkness.

Because my children have flown the coop and have their own homes, I'm not as crazy as earlier in my life with my holiday embellishments, although my extended family still goes all out. My brother's

and nephew's houses could win awards for creativity and innovative illumination.

Trimming a Christmas tree is an active sport. Whether we cut a tree, buy a living tree, erect a fake tree, or bedeck a houseplant, festooning our holiday bushes is as varied as our personalities. It doesn't matter if a tree is perfect or off-kilter. What matters is the meaning of the moment and the joy it delivers during the season. Every year I adorn my aging fiddleleaf fig tree at the base of my stairwell with lights and ornaments as it has grown too large to move. In another room, the Christmas cheer is enhanced with a glistening, garlanded tree as well as freshly cut greenery with flowers from my yard. What makes all trees sparkle and shine are the twinkling lights, clear or colored.

Fresh greenery indoors creates the feeling of Christmas, especially with aromatic boughs of fir, pine, redwood, spruce and cedar. If you have any conifers in your yard, this is a great time to trim the limbs to use to decorate your porch and patio. Holly is a traditional plant to use in garlands, wreaths, and centerpieces, however, any berry-bearing bush adds color and whimsy to arrangements. All evergreens are welcome to create long-lived wreaths and centerpieces including clippings from boxwood, bay, magnolia, and pepper trees.

... continued on Page D10

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LAFAYETTE	13	\$1,120,000	\$2,800,000
MORAGA	2	\$1,650,000	\$1,665,000
ORINDA	6	\$1,150,000	\$2,250,000

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

- 935 Carol Lane, \$2,800,000, 5 Bdrms, 2166 SqFt, 1951 YrBlt, 11-04-22,
Previous Sale: \$1,268,500, 05-15-20
- 526 Florence Drive, \$1,250,000, 3 Bdrms, 1481 SqFt, 1951 YrBlt, 11-07-22
- 3423 Goyak Drive, \$1,120,000, 3 Bdrms, 2590 SqFt, 1973 YrBlt, 11-09-22
- 210 Lafayette Circle #301, \$2,213,500, 2 Bdrms, 1823 SqFt,
2021 YrBlt, 11-10-22
- 210 Lafayette Circle #304, \$2,402,000, 3 Bdrms, 1872 SqFt,
2021 YrBlt, 11-10-22
- 918 Moon Court, \$1,400,000, 3 Bdrms, 1386 SqFt, 1956 YrBlt, 11-10-22
- 3410 Mt Diablo Boulevard, \$1,450,000, 19912 SqFt, 2021 YrBlt, 10-31-22,
Previous Sale: \$1,250,000, 09-03-19
- 1845 Reliez Valley Road, \$1,696,000, 4 Bdrms, 1887 SqFt,
1926 YrBlt, 11-04-22
- 749 Silver Crest Court, \$2,176,500, 3 Bdrms, 2734 SqFt, 1985 YrBlt, 11-03-22
- 15 Southampton Place, \$1,974,000, 4 Bdrms, 2465 SqFt, 1973 YrBlt, 11-10-22,
Previous Sale: \$1,585,000, 04-13-20
- 1221 Upper Happy Valley Road, \$2,250,000, 4 Bdrms, 2321 SqFt,
1961 YrBlt, 10-31-22, Previous Sale: \$750,000, 04-28-00
- 3600 Walnut Street, \$1,150,000, 2 Bdrms, 854 SqFt, 1939 YrBlt, 11-10-22,
Previous Sale: \$598,000, 06-21-10
- 3963 Woodside Court, \$1,550,000, 4 Bdrms, 2181 SqFt, 1964 YrBlt, 11-09-22

MORAGA

- 12 Carnoustie, \$1,665,000, 3 Bdrms, 2828 SqFt, 1988 YrBlt, 11-10-22,
Previous Sale: \$1,050,000, 05-25-16
- 10 Woodside Drive, \$1,650,000, 3 Bdrms, 1679 SqFt, 1961 YrBlt, 11-04-22

ORINDA

- 151 Canon Drive, \$2,250,000, 5 Bdrms, 3552 SqFt, 1936 YrBlt, 11-07-22,
Previous Sale: \$1,805,000, 10-31-17
- 205 Crestview Drive, \$1,150,000, 3 Bdrms, 2027 SqFt, 1955 YrBlt, 11-02-22
- 35 Eastwood Drive, \$1,650,000, 3 Bdrms, 2307 SqFt, 1958 YrBlt, 11-01-22
- 208 La Espiral, \$1,535,000, 4 Bdrms, 2456 SqFt, 1959 YrBlt, 10-31-22
- 18 Lavenida Drive, \$1,985,000, 4 Bdrms, 1924 SqFt, 1954 YrBlt, 11-01-22,
Previous Sale: \$726,000, 04-28-11
- 233 Village Gate Road, \$2,200,000, 4 Bdrms, 2313 SqFt, 1979 YrBlt, 11-07-22,
Previous Sale: \$745,000, 09-30-11

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Touch-up painting tips and travails



Photo J. Wake

Paint cans often hide in garage back corners for years before a need arises.

By Jim Hurley

“I have some touch-up paint for that.” That sentence lives in infamy recalling the day my client handed me an old paint can. First, the lid was stuck to the can with gobs of hardened paint all over it. I set the can on the ceiling in the garage and pried the top off, bending it into a misshapen mess in the process.

The can felt pretty light, certainly not full, and as I mangled the lid, I figured I could save what paint was left after the touch-up task in a smaller jar or can. Lid finally off, I bravely grabbed a stir stick and began to mix the paint as a large chunk of

rust broke off the bottom of the can and all the remaining liquid streamed out onto the garage floor. With no top or bottom on the container, all I could do was clean up the mess and tell the client that we would need to paint the entire wall, because the touch-up paint was gone.

Actually, that is now my standard recommendation to clients, “We should plan to paint the whole wall,” (ceiling, room, surface). So let me tell you why.

Touch-up paint seldom matches the original color unless the room has recently been painted. There will be a slight color difference where you touch up. Several factors can influence this: Oxidation takes place. The new paint has a fresh clean surface and over time it fades and becomes porous. If the room was painted 10 years ago, the surface of old paint is not the same as it was when it was new. Sunlight will cause the color to fade over time. The fresh paint from the can will be the original color, but that no longer matches the wall.

If the reason for touch-up painting is to cover patching to the wall, the patching compound will absorb more of the new paint than the old paint unless it is sealed with a primer first. (Some cans of spackle claim they are “paint ready” and don’t need primer; I’m not sure about that.)

Anyway, unless the area being touched up is in a closet or going to be behind furniture or covered by artwork, touch-up painting may not hide the patches. At the very least, be prepared to repaint if the touch-up doesn’t meet your expectations.

By the way, new paint cans have a plastic bottom. If the can of touch-up-paint you’re holding has a metal bottom, you know it’s old. Check for small rust spots too. You may want to put the paint can in an old dishpan or pie pan before you stir it. It might be better to just dispose of that old paint by taking it to a paint disposal recycling place. Empty cans and dried paint can safely go in the trash. There is a product you can buy at the

paint sales counter which absorbs paint in the can and dries it up, so you can simply chuck it.

One additional tip: paint color matching technology is excellent these days. If you want to match the color on the wall and don’t have the original can, a sample of the color can be matched by a photo-spectrometer at the paint store. You may be able to collect a color sample from debris while doing demolition. If a large enough sample (at least one inch square) is not available, you might carve a sample of the paint with a razor knife from an inconspicuous corner (or behind a door) and then patch that spot along with the wall.

The paint store will want to know what type of paint you are matching. Be prepared to answer questions about the sheen: Flat/Matte, Eggshell, Semi-Gloss/Satin, or Gloss. Hopefully you get a kindly salesclerk who will help you decide. Occasionally you see a clerk with the attitude, “If you don’t know; you don’t belong here and I can’t help you.”

There is no harm in trying to touch up some small spots, however, you may end up repainting a larger area. It may be more work, but just think how pleased you will feel in a clean and freshly painted room.

Bottom line: beware of old and rusty paint cans.

Jim Hurley is an independent handyman with over 25 years of experience in residential repairs. Hopefully this free advice is helpful to someone attempting Do-It-Yourself home repairs. The information presented is intended for informational purposes and for use by persons having appropriate technical skill, at their own discretion and risk.





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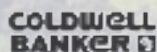
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Housing Inventory in Central Contra Costa is Shrinking

This article covers both October and November's sales in central Contra Costa of detached homes. November sales (258) were down slightly from October (290). Days on market were virtually the same at 27 days. Pending sales dropped from October (232) to November (161). The interesting number when comparing the 2 months was Active Listings; 490 in October and 391 in November. This makes 5 consecutive months that the active inventory continues to shrink. This is higher than Oct/Nov 2021 when active inventory shrunk from 305 in October to 168 in November. That was a flaming hot seller's market.

Shrinking inventory is an encouraging factor for homeowners who need to sell. In my opinion, there are only 5 reasons why a homeowner needs to sell; 1. Life (babies), 2. Death, 3. Marriage, 4. Divorce and 5. Job change. There are, of course, subcategories that fall into each of these reasons. Suffice it to say, there are homeowners who will need to sell in the upcoming months. And there are still homes selling in a short number of days and with multiple offers. However, your house really needs to shine as compared with 2021. Sellers should listen to their agents regarding recommended inspections, making necessary repairs, putting a fresh coat of paint inside (and possibly outside) using colors your agent recommends, replacing tired appliances and professionally cleaning and staging your home. Many agents will pay for the staging (just ask me).

Many economists and Fanny Mae forecast Interest rates to drop in 3rd or 4th quarter, 2023, possibly below 5%. If you can wait until then, start getting your home ready now. It may take 2 to 3 months (or more) to make your home shine. Then, be prepared to offer incentives to buyers. Ask me about 2/1 buydowns. See more of my blogs at www.YourContraCostaRealtor.com.



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869 Las Trampas Rd, Lafayette
169 Miramonte Drive, Moraga
1 Ross Drive, Moraga
61 Hardie Dr, Moraga

869 43rd St Oakland, CA
5 Evans Place, Orinda
309 Sunset Rd, Pleasant Hill
439 Verbena Ct, Pleasant Hill
862 Bonde Ct, Pleasanton
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Digging Deep with Goddess Gardener, Cynthia Brian

Night lights



Santa Day at 5A boasted a pretty artificial tree.



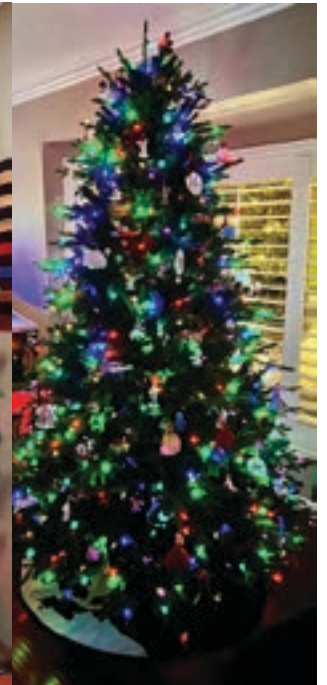
Elegant tree.



Angels and stars glow on this tiny tree.



A freshly cut fir tree adorns the corner.



Glorious green is the color of Christmas.

... continued from Page D1

In "The Art of Living," Wilfred Peterson wrote that "Christmas is not in tinsel, lights, and outward show. The secret lies in an inner glow." My feeling about the tinsel, lights, ornaments, and outward show is that these accoutrements provide the inner glow of joy to my world.

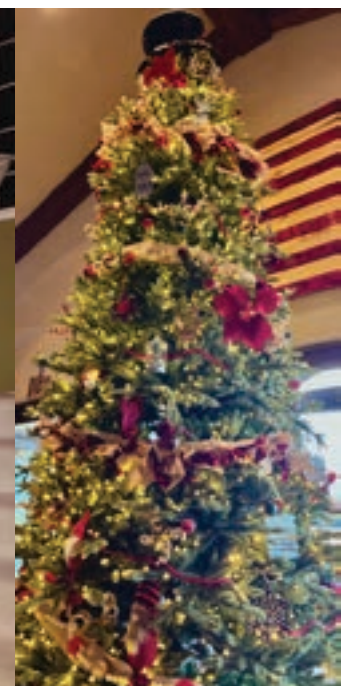
Delight in my photos of these beloved, bejeweled Christmas trees and bright night lights. Whatever you celebrate, I wish you seasonal sparkle, and happy health. Glow forth to savor being home for the holidays.



Nutcrackers stand guard.



The aging and tall fiddleleaf fig is lit and trimmed for the holidays.



A 12-foot garlanded tree is the focal point of the great room.

Photos Cynthia Brian

Cynthia Brian's December Garden Guide

DECK the halls with boughs of holly, pyracantha, cotoneaster, magnolia cones, rose hips, or any other merry berry!

FEED the soil, not the plants. Continue adding organic materials including hay, leaves, and compost to enrich your soil over winter.

SAVE birds by going organic. Provide seeds, berries, and safe nesting areas. Add a few native plants to your landscape that native birds already enjoy or stop pruning roses to allow the rosehips to form and feed our flying friends.

TRIM low-hanging branches of redwoods, pines, firs, and other evergreens to use in wreaths, garlands, and holiday ornamentation.

CREATE a stunning DIY holiday table arrangement using a combination of evergreen branches, narcissi, pinecones, or other greenery from your garden.

PICK carrots to leave for Rudolph and bake a different kind of fruitcake with organic fruits from your garden. Apples and persimmons are fresh now, and you may have frozen or canned peaches, apricots, cherries, figs, or pears.

REST in winter. The holidays are a time to celebrate with family and friends. No more hoe, hoe, hoe. Take a break from garden chores. You deserve it.

IGNITE the night with your glimmering lights.

Happy Gardening. Happy Growing. Happy Hannukah. Merry Christmas!



Christmas for Cynthia Brian with her daughter, daughter-in-law, and mom.

Raised in the vineyards of Napa County, Cynthia Brian 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. Her newest children's picture book, No Barnyard Bullies, from the series, Stella Bella's Barnyard Adventures is available now at www.cynthiabrian.com/online-store For an invitation to hang out with Cynthia for fun virtual events, activities, conversations, and exclusive experiences, buy StarStyle® NFTs at <https://StarStyleCommunity.com> Hire Cynthia for writing projects, garden consults, and inspirational lectures. Cynthia@GoddessGardener.com <https://www.GoddessGardener.com>

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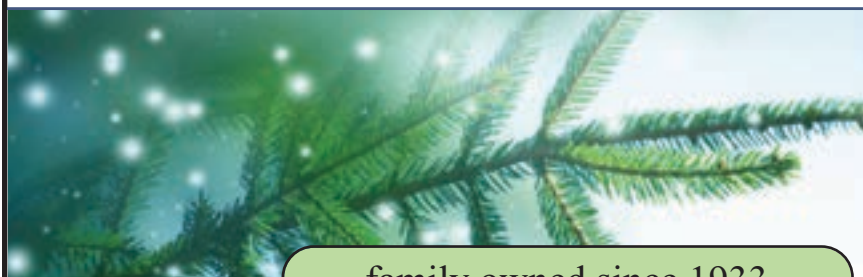
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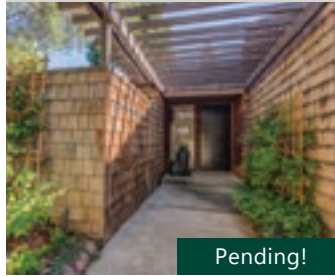
ORINDA



5 De Soto Court
Mid Century Contemporary 4 bd/ 2.5 ba offers peaceful private setting on quaint court just minutes from downtown!

\$2,395,000

ORINDA



Pending!

120 Ravenhill Road
Completely renovated 3 bd/ 3 ba Orindawoods home offers an ideal setting w/ natural light, privacy & views!

\$1,749,000

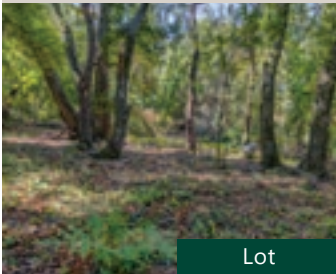
ORINDA



2 Orchard Court
Home sweet home! 3 bd/ 2 ba home needs lots of TLC now & is awaiting the next generation!

\$1,025,000

ORINDA

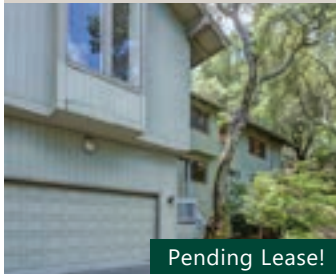


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0 Camino Del Monte
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\$225,000

ORINDA



Pending Lease!

19 Woodcrest Road
Fabulous Glorietta location! Spacious, light & bright 4 bd/ 2.5 ba home with high ceilings and beautiful views!

\$5,800/mo.

LAFAYETTE



Pending!

1336 San Reliez Court
Rare opportunity on .75 acre lot with 5 bd/ 3.5 ba 4098 sq.ft. in the heart of Springhill!

\$2,195,000

LAFAYETTE

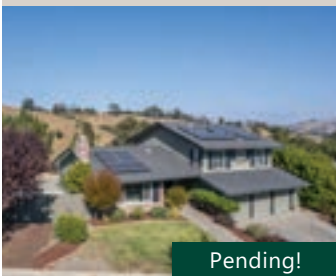


Leased!

4010 Woodside Court
Spacious 4 bd/ 3 ba home w/ sparkling pool, formal living room & hardwood floors. Private location w/ big views!

\$5,900/mo.

MORAGA



Pending!

92 Warfield Drive
Classic two story 5 bd/ 3 ba home sits on a private .39 acre parcel w/ 2527 sq.ft of a fully functional floor plan!

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BERKELEY



7164 Buckingham Blvd
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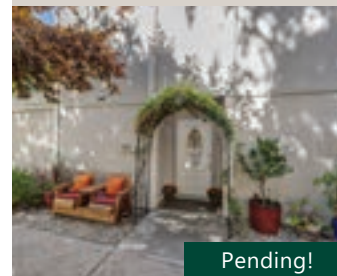


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2114 Buena Vista
Permitted duplex on 4,500 sq. ft. lot in Central Alameda! Unit A - 2bd/ 1 ba, w/ formal dining room. Unit B - 1 bd/ 1 ba, w/ lg living space!

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