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This Moraga home lights up with a spooky landscape to scare even the most hardened trick-or-treaters. Photo Sora O'Doherty

Halloween spirit alive and well in Lamorinda

The holiday season is upon us with creative, spooky Halloween decorations dotting front yards along sleepy Lamorinda streets. Whether cute or downright scary, the festive message of this fun, fall celebration will not go unnoticed by costume clad trick-or-treaters come Halloween night: Boo!

Lafayette has several pre-Halloween events planned for those who can't get enough Halloween. This year, the Lafayette Community Center's Haunted House, renamed the "Spooky Walk," will be held outdoors on the Bellenger Trail. It will feature a quarter-mile stretch of "bone-chilling encounters" – with offerings of "Not too Scary" versions from 5 to 6:30 p.m.

on Oct. 28 and 29, and "Very Scary" versions from 7 to 9:30 p.m. Oct. 28 and 7 to 9 p.m. Oct. 29. Pre-registration required, get your tickets now! <https://tinyurl.com/3jwwhj6x>

For the younger set, ages 9 and under, a stroll with parents/caregivers in Lafayette's downtown offers access to free candy at more than 50 participating businesses as part of the annual Trick-or-Treat Street event, sponsored by the Lafayette Chamber of Commerce. Costumed trick-or-treaters can visit businesses displaying participation posters to fill bags from home with candy on Mt. Diablo Boulevard from Plaza Way to Dewing Avenue, Lafayette Circle and in

La Fiesta Square from 4 to 6 p.m. on Friday, Oct. 27. For a list of participants, visit <https://lafayettechamber.org/trick-or-treat>. And the Lafayette United Methodist Church (955 Moraga Road, Lafayette) will be hosting a Halloween Festival in the Fellowship Hall with food, games, face painting, free pumpkin patch, crafts and more from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Oct. 29.

Whatever you decide to do to get your scare on, Lamorinda Weekly wishes you all a happy Halloween! – J. Wake

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Mental health crisis affects Lamorinda schools

By Sora O'Doherty

At the last Orinda Mayor's Liaison Meeting, a report on a new mental health initiative by Contra County sparked an unexpectedly intense discussion. Although the introduction of a new program to help schools access mental health care for students will largely not affect Lamorinda schools, because the program is aimed at the uninsured, representatives of schools in Orinda wished that it would.

According to Jill Ray, Community Liaison for Canyon, Moraga, and Orinda for Supervisor Candace Andersen, the goal of the Student Behavioral Health Incentive Program (SBHIP) is to bring mental health services into the school districts and, secondly, to enable the school districts to bill private and public insurance for services that they deliver to their students. SBHIP moves mental health therapy into the schools by providing therapy at school

sites and billing insurers directly for the therapy.

SBHIP is funded by a \$400 million, 3-year grant running through December 2024. It is distributed across the state, with Contra Costa County receiving a budget of \$9 million and is being rolled out as a pilot program in the school districts Antioch, Pittsburg, John Swett and West County.

Orinda Union School District Superintendent Aida Glimme said, "We have become the mental health hub and it is like playing Whack-A-Mole." She explained that the need is so big, but appointments with mental health providers are hard to find. OUSD schools do provide some group therapy, but it is not appropriate for all situations.

OUSD board member and former Orinda mayor Eve Phillips spoke about the Healthy Kids survey, which she reported underscores persistent sadness

at alarming levels. "Things have really changed since COVID," she said, citing incidents of suicidal ideation, bullying and cyber bullying.

Miramonte High School Principal Ben Campopiano spoke of the challenges faced at the high school level. He spoke of the stressors and pressures experienced by the area's super high achieving students. Miramonte is constantly dealing with the "very real mental health problems," he said, adding that the school had recently received an anonymous report of a student self-harming by cutting.

Moraga School District Superintendent Julie Parks, who did not attend the Orinda meeting, echoed the wishes of the Orinda educators that the county would provide more help to schools dealing with mental health issues. ... continued on Page 7

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