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Don't miss these festive Lamorinda holiday events

By Sora O'Doherty

Lamorinda organizations will once again be hosting a wide variety of festive events and activities during the month of December, starting off at the end of November with an open house at Orinda's History Museum from 5 to 7 p.m. Nov. 30, featuring home-baked cookies, soft drinks, wine and lilted guitar music. Pick up a unique woven throw showing Orinda's old landmarks or a signed copy of Arcadia's "Images of America: Orinda."

The free annual Tree Lighting Ceremony will also be held Nov. 30 at Moraga Commons Park, starting at 6:30 p.m. with cookies, cocoa and carols, followed by the lighting at 7 p.m. and a very special appearance by Santa. The Second Annual Orinda Tree Lighting event will begin at 6 p.m. Dec. 2 at the Orinda Community Center, held in conjunction with the annual Gingerbread House Making Contest, sponsored by the Orinda/Tabor Sister City Foundation, and Winterfest, which will include a performance by the Orinda Intermediate School Choir, led by Choir Director Christina Holling, the Orinda PD "Stuff a Cruiser" Toy Drive, a craft for children led by the Orinda Teen Advisory Council, as well as a seasonal-themed photo opportunity - families will need to bring their own camera/phone. Light refreshments will also be provided.?

The Hospice East Bay Tree of Lights, which offers members a way to honor the lives of friends and loved ones, will be held in Lafayette at 4:30 p.m. Dec. 2 at 21 Lafayette Circle (by the big tree at the Roundup parking lot), in Moraga at 4:30 p.m. Dec. 2 at the Moraga Country Club (1600 St. Andrew's Dr.), and in Orinda on Dec. 2 at 4:30 p.m. in Village Square by McCaulou's. All events will be livestreamed on Zoom. Donations directly support end-of-life patient care. www.hospiceeastbay.org/community-event/tree-of-lights/

"A Christmas Story" at Town Hall Theatre in Lafayette opens Dec. 2 and runs through Dec. 17. The classic story of Ralphie Parker's mission to own a "Red Ryder 220-Shot Carbine Action Range Model Air Rifle, with a compass and a thing which tells the time built right into the stock!" Audiences will delight in both the familiar and unexpected in this stage adaptation of the beloved movie. A romping tale of the joys and woes of childhood (and adulthood!) around the holidays, "A Christmas Story" is a play for the whole family. Info at www.townhalltheatre.com/christmas-story

"It's a Wonderful Life in Lafayette" returns to Plaza Park on Dec. 3, presented by the Lafayette Chamber, and sponsored by The Dana Green Team, Branagh Development and the city of Lafayette, and includes Santa sightings, free train rides on the Lafayette Express, official holiday tree lighting ceremony, one-of-a-kind photo ops, live musical entertainment, kid's activities, holiday treats and more. The free festivities begin at 4:30 p.m. when Santa is scheduled to parade along Golden Gate Way starting at the Lafayette Historical Society and arriving at Lafayette Plaza (corner of Mt. Diablo Blvd. and Moraga Road) at 5 p.m. Santa will also be headed to the Rheem Shopping Center, right outside the Moraga Art Gallery at 432 Center Street in Moraga, for "Mingle and Jingle" on Sunday, Dec. 3 from 1 to 3 p.m. The local branch of AAUW-OML (American Association of University Women - Orinda, Moraga, Lafayette) is offering an opportunity for families to bring their children to meet Santa. "Mingle and Jingle" will benefit many community outreach projects, including scholarships for local graduating high school young women and a day-long STEM Conference for middle school girls at Saint Mary's College.

Want to hear directly from Santa? The town of Moraga has made arrangements with the elves at the North Pole to accept mail for delivery to Santa. Drop a note to Santa and receive a letter in return! Letters can be dropped off from Dec. 1 to Dec. 15 in the North Pole Mailbox located at Moraga Commons Park near the Holiday Tree. Letters must be in an envelope and have a name and return address.

And there's another opportunity to connect with "the big guy" at the Breakfast with Santa in Moraga on Dec. 16 and Dec. 17. Seatings where a hot breakfast will be served are at 9 a.m. and 11 a.m. for approximately one hour at the Hacienda de las Flores. Tickets are \$40/adult; \$15/child over 2 years old; and free for ages 0-2. (Pre-registration is required, no tickets will be sold at the door.) Bring your own camera for individual photo opportunities with Santa.

Finally, are you looking for more unique holiday gifts? The Orinda Village Holiday Market is bringing together a lot of local boutiques and vendors from Orinda and the surrounding area from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Dec. 2 at the Paymun building, including ReChic, Garden Nest, GCD Provisions, Camino Brands, Bush Poppy Farm, Biinu Studios, and St. Anthony's. Additional vendors from the surrounding areas will be offering up original art, vintage home decor and decorations, handmade soaps, candles, ceramics, leather goods, holiday goodies and more. A local Orinda DJ (and Orinda dad) will be spinning some quirky holiday music, and there will be complimentary treats and cocktails, entertainment for the kiddos and a food truck.

We hope you have a happy and healthy holiday season!

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