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Moraga Commons Park takes delivery of new restroom facility.

Photo Vera Kochan

# It's a bird, it's a plane ... it's a restroom!

By Vera Kochan

The old restroom at Moraga Commons Park was about to celebrate its 50th Anniversary along with the town when it was demolished in mid-December to make way for a brand new, pre-fabricated facility with four Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) all-gender restrooms and two drinking fountains along with water bottle filling stations.

In 2018, the Moraga Community Foundation (MCF) proposed orchestrating a fundraising project with the purpose of replacing the old restrooms and worked with the town toward the installation of a new one. Also that year, the Park and Recreation Commission recommended the ADA design be incorporated into any future facility.

The Town Council's 2022 authorization of \$324,320 for the purchase of the restroom structure from Public Restroom Company, whose motto is "Building Better Places To Go," included shipping, crane service, and onsite construction coordination from the manufacturer that would work with the town's hired contractor, McNabb Construction. McNabb's fees came to \$165,319 which included demolition and installation.

MCF's contribution toward the project came to \$304,320. The Parks and Recreation

Department also wishes to acknowledge the Moraga Park Foundation, Joan Bruzzone, Pacific Gas and Electric Company and other substantial donors. Additional thanks extend to former Parks and Recreation Director Breyana Brandt and former Town Manager Cynthia Battenberg.

The initial installation was scheduled for Dec. 19, but inclement weather delayed the truck convoy from Nevada by a day. Causing a minor traffic jam at the intersection of St. Mary's Road and Moraga Road on the afternoon of Dec. 20, the restroom was delivered in two parts for placement via a massive crane.

"We're really excited about how this process has quickly moved once all of the permits were received," stated Parks and Recreation Director Mackenzie Brady. She also praised the teamwork involving the finance department, Central San, PG&E, the town staff, Public Restroom Company and McNabb Construction.

"MCF is ecstatic that we have been able to complete this project for the benefit of the community," stated past-president Dave Trotter.

According to Brady, before the restrooms become fully functional, the sewer lines and electrical components need to be completed. "We thank the town's residents for their patience."

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## Free community service for older adults, a Lamorinda Sunrise Rotary tradition

Submitted by Perrin Kliot

Research consistently shows that 90% of adults over 65 prefer to remain in their current homes as they grow older. The need for innovative solutions to support our older adults has become more apparent than ever.

Enter the Rotary HOME Team program, a heartwarming initiative developed and provided by Lamorinda Sunrise Rotary that goes beyond mere home maintenance – it's about fostering a sense of community and ensuring our seniors can age gracefully in the homes they cherish.

Every other month, the HOME Team volunteers receive lists of maintenance requests and venture

out in pairs to address minor repair issues. From fixing leaking toilets to adjusting cabinet drawer pulls, the team is equipped to handle a spectrum of household hiccups. When a request is beyond the HOME Team's capability, alternative solutions are discussed.

Gary Satterfield, director of Rotary HOME Team, quips, "We might not be professional plumbers or electricians, but we sure can change a light bulb or replace a smoke detector battery. ... continued on Page 3

Photo courtesy Lamorinda Sunrise Rotary

**Ernie Furtado replaces light bulbs for a Lafayette senior.**



### Civic News

Longtime Orinda planning director retires; new mayor, vice mayor named – Page 6

### Public Safety

MOFD offers free gutter covering through grant – Page 8

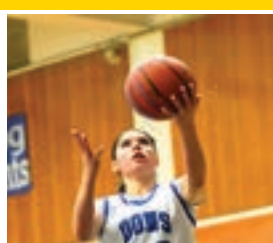
### Life in Lamorinda

#### ◆ Not to be missed ◆

Start the new year with something fun and check out our community event section on Page 10

### Sports

High hopes for Lamorinda girls basketball – Page 12



### Our Homes

Garden Trends for the new year – Page OH4

### OH1-OH8



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see a list of our advertisers on page 8





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**Lafayette Public Meetings**

**City Council**

Regular Meeting: Monday, Jan. 8, 7 p.m.  
 Lafayette Library & Learning Center-Don Tatzin Community Hall

**Planning Commission Meeting**

Tuesday, Jan. 16, 7 p.m.  
 Lafayette Library & Learning Center-Don Tatzin Community Hall

**Design Review**

Monday, Jan. 8, 7 p.m.  
 Lafayette Library & Learning Center-Arts & Science Discovery Room



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# Lafayette welcomes new mayor, Gina Dawson

By Lou Fancher



Photo courtesy City of Lafayette

**Incoming Mayor Gina Dawson receives a bouquet of flowers from outgoing Mayor Carl Anduri at the Dec. 11 Lafayette City Council meeting.**

Addressed as "Mayor Dawson" at the start of a phone conversation two weeks after the Dec. 11 city council meeting during which the annual reorganization to ap-

prove a new mayor was enacted, her reply expresses excitement, confidence – and a tinge of amazement. "Oh yes, I guess I am the mayor now. Thank you."

The tone is not due to false modesty, but instead, rises from Dawson's respect for the privilege of leading the council and assuming a prominent role as she and her fellow council members serve the Lafayette community. Born on the Peninsula and raised primarily in Los Altos, Dawson's father is Filipino; her mother Irish and Welsh. She has five brothers and describes the family home as "idyllic," and her parents as "lovely, generous, and great listeners who gave us independence to be who we wanted to be."

Service and caring for others, education, and respect for culture and history were central themes in the family's lives. Her father came from the Philippines to Philadelphia to complete a surgical residency and at the hospital met her mother, a nurse who lived "just a block from the Liberty Bell," Dawson said. "They guided us to be educated, without being directive."

After Dawson graduated from California State University, Chico, with a double major in organizational communications and psychology, she worked in management positions at tech companies before moving with her husband and two children to Lafayette. Becoming an active volunteer in the community, Dawson and her husband formed the nonprofit group Save Lafayette Trees. The organization has worked closely with Lafayette Gas Safety Alliance in matters related to utility safety that often involves interactions with PG&E and the California Public Utilities Commission.

"I recently went back to look at the priorities I ran on when campaigning to join the council and saw I still have the same priorities: utility safety, housing, and the schools. At least I'm consistent. It was fun to see that core is the same as when I moved here to raise my kids. I want to make this city a place everyone can call

home."

During the Dec. 11 council meeting, Dawson outlined what have been the council's 2023 priorities and her goals for 2024, interweaving safe connections and community coalition building, along with a commitment to service and working hard to find inclusive, innovative solutions. "Our priority is to do what the community wants and to make sure the staff has the resources to do those things. We try to figure that out with the lean budget we have. Each of us brings experience and values. This group of council members are good at listening to each other and negotiating with that practice."

The council priorities until the new fiscal year starts in July are wildfire prevention, safe mobility in the city's downtown and near schools, supporting steps leading to new film and events at the Park Theater, and fiscal responsibility short- and long-term. The council will set new priorities in early 2024 for the July transition.

Moving forward, Dawson highlighted plans to leverage the investment already made in areas such as plans for affordable housing. "We just spent the past three years working on [The 6th Cycle Housing Element] and getting information out publicly. There's been work to listen to the community

and then to hone that down. That's an investment and we need to use it as our map to build the 2,114 houses required by the state in the next eight-year cycle. We have to use it and work with the people we've identified who are interested in making it happen." Dawson said key stakeholders will be property holders, developers, financiers, non-profit homebuilders, for-profit organizations and companies like utility companies.

The challenges – to incentivize developers without compromising the city's fiscal security or residents' safety – have multiple moving parts. Managing more people circulating in the downtown core requires looking not only at vehicle traffic, but paying close attention to pedestrian and bicycle safety. Dawson says making Lafayette both safe and an enjoyable place to live, work and visit must come with tremendous collaboration and considerable community input.

"There's a survey out now and we're going to send out more questions to ask what people envision, what their roles might be. Do they want to see more parks? What are their central concerns? We can show our reserves and revenue stream and create options for them to respond to. Our Physical Sustainability Committee, I imagine, will have town halls and meetings. I'm not privy to their plans until they put it out, but I do know the first steps are underway."

Asked to summarize the overall approach she will bring to her term as mayor, Dawson says, "For me, personally, the phrase 'united against hate' means leading with love and kindness. It's how I see the world and it starts with an individual, but as we stand together, we can have that as a value; to stand against hateful language, violence. There's no gray area there. The public will come with their comments and opinions they are entitled to, but for the council, we can say we stand united against hate. When I said that at the meeting, I prefaced it with what is out there in the world now and how that means that here, at home in Lafayette, each word – 'united,' 'against,' and 'hate' – has meaning. The words combined in one phrase, that's where we are, unequivocally."

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# Senior Services touts successes at recent council meeting

By Lou Fancher



Photo courtesy City of Lafayette

Vice Chair of Lafayette's Senior Services Commission Conrad Brace, in presenting to city council an update on Dec. 11, highlighted Lamorinda Village's and the city's achievements. Working on eight "domains of livability" to create an age-friendly community, the focus has included areas such as outdoor spaces and buildings, transportation, housing, social engagement, community and health services, and related matters.

Among the documented Senior Services' accomplishments are a \$20,000 contribution for the Lamorinda Spirit Van from the town of Moraga, pickle ball co-sponsorship at the Lafayette Community Center, and city council involvement in supported Lamorinda Village memberships.

Kathryn Ishizu, the organization's Executive Director, and Suzy Pak, Community Outreach Coordinator, emphasized multiple aspects of the "seamless" partnership with the city of Lafayette. The Village has 338 members, including 67 supported memberships.

Pak, in her role as

the part-time coordinator, said the nonprofit's key theme is "connection." Noting that seniors may experience reduced opportunities to make social connections, Pak said programs and resources expand beyond members to benefit the community 55-years-and-older at large. Adding value to existing programs is a part of the Village's goals and process that include constantly adjusting to best meet new demands and interests of target members.

Feedback from schools, medical professionals, businesses and community volunteers has been helpful and will continue to be sought. Events such as "Golden Happy Hours," Senior SWELL events at the Lafayette Library, vaccination clinics, and monthly singalongs, among others, have raised awareness of the Lamorinda Village.

Three community members who have participated in Village activities spoke during public comments. Beth Brown, a volunteer at the vaccination clinic who now assists with Senior SWELL, said meeting the people at the library

events possibly means more to her than it does to the seniors who drop in. A second speaker emphasized witnessing the remarkable "bounce back" seniors have made following the pandemic. The movie matinees, he said, were greatly successful and a clear sign seniors are responding and re-entering community life. The final speaker said the best time of her life, when asked by Pak, was living at Belle Terre/Eden Housing and finding a sense of family through working as a volunteer and member of Lamorinda Village. "The best time of my life is right now, at 82. I finally have a really, really nice life," she said.

The presentation closed with thanks from outgoing Mayor Carl Anduri to the Senior Services Commission, Lamorinda Village, and its volunteers and board members. Anduri read the city's proclamation to Ruth McCahan, founding member and first president of Lamorinda Village, and the winner of the 2023 Don Jenkins Lamorinda Village Service Award.

# Community invited for input on design concepts for two Lafayette parks

The city of Lafayette will be holding a Community Workshop at 9 a.m. Saturday, Jan. 20 to discuss design concepts for the Two Parks Collaborative Concept, providing improvements to Leigh Creekside Park and creating a new active play area at the Gazebo site downtown. The city has been actively working on the Two Parks Collaborative Concept with community stakeholders, the nonprofit All Ages Recreation

Downtown (<https://allagesplay.org/>) which is fundraising to help in the city's efforts, and the city's playground design consultant, Scientific Art Studio. The Jan. 20 meeting will be held in Leigh Creekside Park (corner of 4th Street and Moraga Boulevard in Lafayette), with a second workshop to take place at the Gazebo site on a future date to be determined. - J. Wake

For more information, visit: [www.lovelafayette.org/city-hall/commissions-committees/parks-trails-rec-commission/two-parks-collaborative-concept](http://www.lovelafayette.org/city-hall/commissions-committees/parks-trails-rec-commission/two-parks-collaborative-concept)

# Free community service for older adults, a Lamorinda Sunrise Rotary tradition

... continued from Page 1

"We're here for the little things, the tasks that might cost a pretty penny if you had to call in the professionals. We're the friendly neighbors everyone wishes they had."

Beyond the traditional notion of maintenance, the HOME Team volunteers bring warmth and companionship into the lives of older residents. "We're not just fixing leaky faucets; we're building relationships. In addition, everyone on our team is trained to be vigilant for potential issues like hoarding, food insecurities, or falling hazards. It's about looking out for one another," says Satterfield.

"The best part? There are no eligibility criteria other than being an older adult. If a senior can't safely climb a ladder to change a light bulb,

we're more than happy to lend a hand."

Lamorinda Sunrise Rotary president Scott Parsons adds, "Rotary HOME Team is one of several impactful community services Lamorinda Sunrise Rotary offers. Our service projects touch the lives of all age groups, primarily families living in Lamorinda and Contra Costa. But our impact also spreads to other parts of the world, notably Guatemala, where our projects save lives and aim to end the cycle of poverty."

Those with an interest in giving back are invited to visit the Lamorinda Sunrise Rotary website at <https://lamorindasunrise.org/>. For more information on the HOME team or to request services, call (888) 204-5573 or visit <https://rotaryhometeam.com/>

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**MORAGA**

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**Chamber of Commerce:**  
www.moragachamber.org  
**Moraga Citizens' Network:**  
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**Town Council**

Wed., Jan. 10, 6:30 p.m.  
Wed., Jan. 24, 6:30 p.m.  
**Planning Commission:**  
Tuesday, Jan. 16, 6:30 p.m.  
**Park and Recreation Commission:**  
TBA

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# Town switches gears with traffic engineering consultants for Moraga Road Traffic Safety Study

By Vera Kochan

Drivers trying to enter onto Moraga Road from Corte Santa Clara or Via Granada during rush hour, and additionally when Saint Mary's College personnel head toward Lafayette to reach Highway 24 or Campolindo High School empties out for the day, have voiced their complaints to the town about the danger and near impossibility of the effort.

The Town Council, in an ongoing effort to address those complaints, has awarded a professional services agreement to Parametrix, Inc. for traffic engineering consultant work with regards to the Moraga Road Traffic Safety Study. The amount for their services is not to exceed \$38,190, with \$3,819 for contingency and \$7,638 for administrative services.

According to a Dec. 13 staff report by Public Works Director/Town Engineer Shawn Knapp and Assistant Engineer Yao Miao, "Residents

who live in the Court feel trapped at times by vehicle backup on Moraga Road from Campolindo High School and other school congestion, along with commuter traffic, as there is no Moraga Road 'KEEP CLEAR' zone in front of the Court. The existing Moraga Road pavement width is not sufficient to add a dedicated center turn lane for the Court ingress and egress. Additionally, the Court has sight distance obstructions from trees and a sloping hillside on Moraga Road, raising more concerns for residents."

Another issue that adds to the congestion is the high-visibility, push-button activated flashing beacon crosswalk at Woodford Drive that is not coordinated with nearby traffic signals.

In order to cut costs, the town has decided to contract directly with Parametrix, Inc. and eliminate Harris & Associates (who uses them as a sub-contractor) from their capacity of study services.

The staff report also discussed Livable Moraga Road (LMR), "a transportation planning project to provide the future multimodal, complete street vision for a two-mile-long portion of Moraga Road between Campolindo Drive and St. Mary's Road. This project will provide a 'road map' for the future locations of continuous bicycle and pedestrian facilities, safe routes to school, transit, and vehicle safety improvements, along with the desired streetscape improvements, based on community input and Council direction."

Not included in the LMR Study is the planned 123-unit residential Palos Colorados development on the eastern side of Moraga Road between Via Granada and Corte Santa Clara. The land developer is required to complete a traffic study as part of their construction process. However, staff recommends that the potential vehi-



Moraga Road Traffic Safety Study map

Image courtesy Moraga Public Works Dept.

cle count from this development also be taken into consideration for future Moraga Road Traffic Safety studies.

# Moraga Library bird event garners "rapt" interest from attendees

By Vera Kochan

More often than not, when one hears mention of a raptor, a first inclination is to think "dinosaurs." However, a raptor refers to any bird of prey, and in this case the Moraga Library's Dec. 21 guest speakers, Native Bird Connections, brought along a live falcon, a hawk, and two owls.

Based in the East Bay, NBC Executive Director Jenny Papka, and assistants Linda Knight

and Kathy Siegel gave an informative and educational presentation to young and old alike, while producing the live raptors out of covered cages almost like magicians pulling rabbits out of hats. The audience reaction was quite enthusiastic.

The raptors in the NBC facility are all non-releasable, having suffered injuries in the wild which haven't healed properly and making it unsafe for them to return to their natural habitat. Papka informed the audience that it's important to treat these types of animals with respect, especially since they can no longer live in their own environment, but are now in ours.

The first raptor presented was a Peregrine Falcon which can reach speeds over 200 miles per hour when chasing its prey. They are typically born in the spring, and their parents kick them out of the nest after a few flights. This male bird most likely was not fully ready for flight and injured both of his wrists (which look like shoulders) in a fall.

During the 1960s, California could only count four of these raptors in existence. Scientists discovered that when farmers were spraying fields with Dichlorodiphenyl-trichloroethane (DDT), the poisonous chemical leached into the falcons, causing females to lay eggs with fragile shells. While the mothers sat

on the eggs, the shells cracked. California's falcons are making a substantial comeback and have even been spotted nesting locally.

The next raptor was a Swainson's Hawk. This particular female came from Utah with broken bones in her wings. Again, the assumption is that they were broken in her early attempts to fly. Unfortunately, she will never fly again. Her favorite food is mice - especially the tail. Papka explained that birds typically have an 80% mortality rate in their first year of life, but those in captivity could live well into their 20s.

Another raptor produced was a Eurasian Eagle-Owl, which compared to the other two birds looked massive. This raptor eats just about any creature it wants to from other birds to mice, rats, gophers, squirrels, snakes, and has even been known to attack deer and cows. They usually digest their prey whole then cough up compacted and rather large pellets that contain the bones and fur of their victims. Their predators are Golden Eagles and humans. This type of bird does not build its own nest, but prefers to steal another's, and since owls have 14 neck bones compared to the seven that humans have, they are able to turn their heads nearly 270 degrees in order to subtly house hunt or stealthily look for their next meal.



Photos Vera Kochan

Native Bird Connections' Jenny Papka (left) and Linda Knight discuss the Eurasian Eagle-Owl.



Native Bird Connections' Linda Knight holds a Peregrine Falcon.

The last raptor to make an appearance was a 20-year-old Northern Pygmy-Owl that was substantially smaller than the Eurasian Eagle-Owl, and elicited a bevy of "how cute" comments from the crowd. This particular female bird was hit by a car, but was lucky enough to survive. She also likes to dine on mice, other small birds, and gophers. An interesting feature to her species is the appear-

ance of two false eyes on the back of her head which helps to deter predators.

NBC also displayed taxidermy (examples of American Kestrels) and other raptor-related artifacts for the curious to see; and there were many thoughtful questions from the children in the audience.

For more information about Native Bird Connections visit: [www.nativebirds.org](http://www.nativebirds.org).

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**Moraga Police Department Incident Summary Report**



**Dec. 12 - Dec. 24**

Alarms	6
911 Calls (includes hang-ups)	3
Traffic	43
Suspicious Circumstances	1
Suspicious Subject	2
Suspicious Vehicle	1
Service to Citizen	24
Patrol Req./Security Check	28
Public/School Assembly Check	8
Supplemental Report	13
Vacation House Check	0
Welfare Check	1
Ordinance Violation	0

**Vehicle violations**

Accident Property	3400 Block Hamlin Rd., Laf
Auto Burglary	1400 Block Camino Peral
Dui Misd	

St Marys Rd./Bollinger Canyon Rd.	10 Block Kendall Cir.
Excessive Speed	Public Nuisance
Lafayette Elementary	60 Block Baitx Dr.
Campolindo Dr./Moraga Rd.	Camino Ricardo/Corliss Dr.
Rheem Blvd./Zander Dr., Ori	<b>Other</b>
Rheem Blvd./Moraga Rd. (2)	Barking Dog
Hit And Run Misdemeanor	1200 Block Larch Ave.
Campolindo High School	Battery
Reckless Driving	Banfield Pl.
Moraga Way/School St.	100 Block Danefield Pl.
Camino Ricardo/Corliss Dr.	Fireworks
Canyon Rd./Moraga Rd.	1100 Block Rimer Dr.
Greenfield Dr./Camino Ricardo	100 Block Quintas Ln.
Moraga Rd./Ascot Dr.	Violation Custody Order
Moraga Way/Ivy Dr.	700 Block Augusta Dr.
Tc - Property Damage	
1100 Block Moraga Way	
1900 Block Ascot Dr.	
<b>Nuisance to the Community</b>	
Loud Music	
2100 Block Ascot Dr.	
Canyon Rd./Country Club Dr.	
Kendall Cir./Moraga Rd.	
Loud Noise	
10 Block Kendall Cir.	
Loud Party	



# Rheem Valley Shopping Center on track for new grocery store

By Vera Kochan

It appears that Moraga Shopping Center's Safeway is going to have some competition in the not-so-distant future. The Planning Commission approved a partial redevelopment of the Rheem Valley Shopping Center during its Dec. 12 meeting, and basically gave a green light for the proposed 17,404-square-foot grocery store. Additional development involves two new free-standing pad buildings (a pad is a commercial space that is next to or adjacent to an already existing building), parking lot changes, and new landscaping.

President and CEO Jay Kerner of U.S. Realty Partners, Inc., the property owner/applicant, told the commission, "We do have an overall big vision for what we hope the Rheem Valley Shopping Center will become, and we're looking at this as basically a catalyst in order to get the ball rolling and get the momentum."

While there has been much speculation as to which grocery store will move into Moraga, and key figures did not mention the store by name during the presentation, the mystery was subliminally revealed during a quick slide presentation by Senior Entitlement Manager Veronica Vargas of Grocery Outlet. Several bullet points disclosed facts that were verified online (including Vargas' affiliation), and the name Grocery Outlet appeared once during Vargas' discussion of franchises.

In addition to reconstructing the existing building north of CVS, the applicant requests the construction of two new pad buildings (Building A adjacent to Moraga Motors and Building B, adjacent to Starbucks), the removal of 75 parking spaces, new landscaping in front of the grocery store and elsewhere, removal of 20 trees to replant 31 new trees, and a grading permit for approximately 2,346 cubic yards.

According to the Dec. 12 staff report by Moraga Principal Planner/Project Planner Brian Horn, the



Images courtesy Moraga Planning Dept

Architect's rendering of new Rheem Valley Shopping Center grocery store.

applicant had submitted partial redevelopment plans to the town in July. After review, the Planning Commission feedback was as follows: "Update the new shopping center elevations so they complement the existing shopping center or interpret it in an updated way, for example, through materials. If the existing shopping center colors change, they should match/compliment the new buildings; avoid grey cinderblocks; new architecture should stand out more, and the designs should push boundaries, not be generic, and the new design should set the tone for future development and/or remodeling of the remaining shopping center; add visual appeal, especially for the pad buildings and create more differentiation between the different tenant spaces in the pad buildings. Pad building B could set a new architectural tone for a Gateway building."

Additional feedback included: "Provide gathering places and/or spaces for public art; activate the spaces, create some unique outdoor spaces. Have covered indoor/outdoor spaces. Break up the architecture to create these spaces. Marin Country Mart was cited as an example; avoid trees that drop fruits or berries; incorporate the history of Moraga - but with a modern take; appreciated the proposed public gathering area adjacent to the grocery store and requested more en-

hancements; and keep some parking areas open for public events."

While the applicant owns a majority of the property in Rheem's shopping center, any storefronts south of CVS, such as Luna Gymnastics, HomeGoods and smaller tenants, along with those west of the Park Gallery Building, such as the Rheem Theatre, Amoroma, and Sushi Fighter are not theirs. Stand alone buildings F45 and Rheem Valley Automotive are also independent of the applicant.

Town staff recommended that the Planning Commission approve a few additional design proposals by adding gro-

cery cart corrals (minimum of two); adding a paving pattern at the grocery store plaza; making certain the bike racks, bollards and all outdoor furniture are complementary to the design language; and upgrade landscaping to key existing areas of the primary shopping center access from Moraga Road and within other parking lot areas.

The Commission still had some issues with the façade of the grocery store building and the landscaping between the pad buildings, but agreed to discuss this at a future date in order to allow the applicant to proceed with approved plans.



Aerial view of potential changes to Rheem Valley Shopping Center.

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## MOFD announces annual reorganization of board and committees

The Moraga-Orinda Fire District recently announced the annual reorganization of members of its board of directors, as well as members of its standing committees and district liaisons, effective Jan. 1, as follows:

### Board of Directors

President: Mike Roemer (District 4)  
Vice President: Greg Hasler (District 1)  
Secretary: Craig Jorgens (District 5)  
Treasurer: Steven Danziger (District 3)  
Director: John Jex (District 2)

### Standing Committees

Audit Committee: Director Hasler and Director Jex

### Ad Hoc Committees

Joint Fire Prevention with the City of Orinda: Director Jorgens and Director Roemer

### District Liaisons

Local Agency Formation Committee (LAFCO): Director Danziger  
Orinda City Council: Director Jorgens  
Moraga Town Council: Director Hasler

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See public meetings schedule on these pages and check online for agendas, meeting notes and announcements  
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 Phone (925) 253-4200  
**Chamber of Commerce:**  
 www.orindachamber.org  
**The Orinda Association:**  
 www.orindaassociation.org

**Orinda Public Meetings**  
**City Council Regular Meeting:**  
 Tuesday, Jan. 9, 7 p.m.  
 Orinda Library Auditorium, 26 Orinda Way  
**Planning Commission**  
 Tuesday, Jan. 16, 7 p.m.  
 Orinda Library Auditorium, 26 Orinda Way  
**Supplemental Sales Tax Oversight Commission**  
 Wednesday, Jan. 11, 6:30 p.m.  
 Sarge Littlehale Community Room, 22 Orinda Way



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# Orinda ushers in new mayor and vice mayor; planning director to retire

By Sora O'Doherty



Photos Sora O'Doherty

**Orinda City Council honors Mayor Inga Miller as she steps down from her year as mayor. Darlene Gee (second from left) will serve her second term as mayor and Latika Malkani, far right, will serve as vice mayor.**

Acting in accordance with the city's tradition, the Orinda City Council reorganized on Dec. 19. Outgoing Mayor Inga Miller will return to the council as a member, while Vice Mayor Darlene Gee steps up to be mayor for a second term. Top vote-getter Latika Malkani was chosen as the new vice mayor, serving her first term as such.

Miller was honored by the council with a proclamation, and a gift of flowers and a gavel. The proclamation was read out loud by the rest of the city council.

Miller chose to grant her Mayoral Award of Excellence to outgoing Planning Director Drummond Buckley, who joined the Orinda staff in 1996, and his staff for their work on the Plan Orinda Project. She noted that Plan Orinda marks a positive point in the history and trajectory of Orinda, and that the award was earned by a team of members, led by Buckley, that included a number of people over the past seven years, some of whom no longer work for the city.

Specifically, Buckley called to the podium to be recognized former Senior Planner Mayank Patel and current Assistant Planners Winnie Mui and Darin Hughes. Buckley also announced his own retirement, effective Jan. 17.

Miller said of Buckley, "He's done a lot of work and been under, I would say, a lot of duress." She explained that the mayor's award of excellence is an award that's given out each year by the outgoing mayor for an achievement that the mayor sees as remarkable in the community. "This is a team of people that continue to work extraordinarily hard to see the dream that so many of us share in Orinda, to see our downtown revitalized, and return to what we remember from a long time ago, and to grow and to be a new place."

"They have also spent a lot of late nights and a lot of commuting from really distant parts of the East Bay to listen to all of our residents, and to hear about how to make our downtown, how to make all parts of our community fit within our housing here in Orinda and because of their hard work over the last seven years planning our downtown, they were able to then use that as a keystone in our larger state required housing element for planning, for housing all over our city," Miller said.

Buckley, accepting the award, said that he first wanted to thank the Orinda community, the city council, the planning commission, the downtown housing sub-

committee of the city council, and all the community groups that participated along the way. He added that he also thanked the city managers, noting that during his career at the city he worked for three city managers, and particularly the current one.

He also acknowledged the substantial contributions of the team of consultants, Placeworks, Opticos Design, Rincon Consultants, who provided support and guidance throughout the process, and the city attorney's office, which, together with the consultant team, helped the planning department navigate through a highly complex legal landscape.

At one point or another, Buckley said, every staff member pitched in to help, but the core team was present to accept the award, including special guest, Mayank Patel, who served as senior planner until early 2020, and Assistant Planner Darin Hughes, "who started as an intern in the pre-Plan Orinda days when we were beginning to explore options for downtown planning, and later took on the completion of the downtown precise plan."

Buckley also praised associate Planner, Winnie Mui, who took on overall management of all components of Plan Orinda after Patel departed. "Mayank, Darin and Winnie are all very, very different people, but

they have one important quality in common: to a person, they all deeply enjoy their craft and as a result they really like their work. They like to learn new skills and they are extremely dependable and competent. It's a cliché for managers to say that they are only as good as their staff. But in my case, it's also the truth," he said.

Upon the conclusion of Buckley's remarks, the council gave a presentation, honoring him upon his retirement. Mayor Miller acknowledged that he had agreed to stay on to complete the relevant projects. "I know that you put off a lot of plans and have people waiting on other continents for you so very patiently, and that you have stayed with us long beyond what you intended to do. So we are so grateful to you, Drummond," she added.

Accepting the proclamation in his honor, Buckley said, "This is a little bit much," but he noted that it was also his father's 90th birthday, and it was a great gift for him. Former Mayor Amy Worth, who served on the city council for over 20 years, praised Buckley and noted that one of the main reasons why the city of Orinda chose to incorporate was to deal with land issues. Planning Commissioner Robert Hubner was among those in the audience at the meeting in honor of Buckley.



Photo Sora O'Doherty

**Planning Director Drummond Buckley was honored by outgoing Mayor Inga Miller with her Mayoral Award of Excellence, from left, front: Janet Riley, Winnie Mai, Drummond Buckley and Latika Malkani; middle row: Mayor Inga Miller, Darlene Gee, and Brandyn Iverson; back row: Assistant Planner Darin Hughes and former member of the planning department, Myank Patel.**

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Service to Citizen	18	<b>Other criminal activity</b>		Moraga Way	1
Patrol Req./Security Check	10	Commercial Burglary	1	<b>Nuisance to the Community</b>	1
Public/School Assembly Check	1	20 Block Bryant Way	9	Disturbance-domestic	1
Supplemental Report	9	10 Block Orinda Way	0	30 Block Wilder Rd.	1
Vacation House Check	0	Computer Fraud	2	Disturbing The Peace	1
Welfare Check	2	10 Block Scenic Ct.	0	10 Block Mira Monte Rd.	1
Ordinance Violation	0	Grand Theft	1	Loud Noise	1
<b>Vehicle violations</b>		Camino Sobrante/Orinda Way	1	60 Block La Cresta Rd.	1
Accident Injury	1	Identity Theft	1	Miner Rd./Ranch Rd.	1
Moraga Way	1	50 Block Camino Lenada	1	Loud Party	1
Accident Property	1	Police Department	1	El Gavilan Ct./Mira Flores	1
Martha Rd./Glorietta Blvd.	1	10 Block Orchard Rd.	1	<b>Other</b>	1
Claremont Ave./Camino Pablo	1	Petty Theft	1	Revocation Of Probation	1
Camino Sobrante	1	Del Mar Pl.	1	Camino Sobrante	1
Camino Pablo/Eb Sr 24	1	100 Block Alice Ln.	1	Transient Contact	1
Reckless Driving	1	Shoplift	1	Moraga Way	1
Miner Rd./Camino Pablo	1				
400 Block Dalewood Dr.	1				

## 2024 Holiday Tree Collection Schedule

Christmas and New Year's Day are on Mondays this year; therefore everyone's regular service day will be pushed one day later both weeks to accommodate the holiday for drivers. **Monday customers will be serviced Tuesday, etc. Friday customers will be serviced Saturday Dec 30 and Jan 6.**

Your tree pickup will be on the same day as your regular garbage service but by a separate truck.

Week	Customers
Week of Jan 2-6	Customers in Walnut Creek, Danville, Alamo, Diablo, and Blackhawk (including unincorporated areas).
Week of Jan 8-12	Customers in Lafayette, Orinda, and Moraga (including unincorporated areas).
Week of Jan 15-19	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.

**Tree Pickup Reminders**

- Remove lights, ornaments, tinsel, and stands (whether plastic, metal, or wood) before placing tree curbside.
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- Flocked trees should be cut to place inside your black landfill cart, or call (925) 685-4711 to schedule a curbside pick-up in advance.

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## Happy New Year!

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## August and Ivy Salon is thriving in Theatre Square

By Sora O'Doherty



Photo Matt Valenzuela

Lily Fortson (front) and Chelsea Salezo work with clients.

August and Ivy Salon Co-owners Lily Fortson and Chelsea Salezo moved to

Orinda Theatre Square last January, charmed by the location, which felt

quaint and perfect to them. They relied on sweat equity to remodel the space, calling in family members to help with everything from paint to lighting, making the remodel a whole family project. And the long narrow space seems perfect for the stations in the salon.

Previously Fortson and Salezo had worked together for eight years in a salon in Martinez before deciding that a new salon was something that Orinda really needed. Fortson lives in

Walnut Creek and Salezo in Brentwood, which is their hometown.

The co-owners have recently hired an additional three stylists, making five in all. Fortson notes that the salon is unique because the stylists are educated and well versed in every type of hair style. They don't aim to serve a single audience, they're not just for hip young girls, but can do little pixie cuts, men's haircuts.

However, those hip young girls will probably realize that the salon is

named for two songs by Taylor Swift, who swept the country with her Eras Tour this year. "We're both big Swifties," Fortson confessed. They wanted a name that was nice and natural. Also, they thought that they would open in August of 2022 but the permitting process took longer. We had a vision, and it took a lot of hope and trust.

Fortson reported that the salon gets amazing foot traffic, and is grateful for how supportive the community of Orinda has been. As the salon is

developing a roster of regulars, Fortson says, "the community wants it. The people of Orinda are really loving having a salon just down the street. I didn't expect it to be such a big deal, but they are really happy." She added that some customers can even walk to the salon.

In the coming year, the co-owners will be focusing on being more in the community. They recently joined the chamber of commerce, and hosted a mixer at the salon on Dec. 14.

## New owners at Serika, Theatre Square

By Sora O'Doherty



Photo Sora O'Doherty

Chef Max Purevdorj and his wife Tuya Oyuntuya at their restaurant, Serika, in Theatre Square.

Chef Max Purevdorj and his wife Tuya Oyuntuya have taken over the Japanese restaurant Serika in Theatre Square. Although the name remains the same, Purevdorj has completely changed the menu and brought in a whole new crew since taking over last August. Purevdorj, a chef for some 20 years, last worked for 16 years at the highly rated Ozumo Japanese restaurant in San Francisco, while his wife spent 15 years

working at Domo Sushi, also in San Francisco.

Serika is the first restaurant that Purevdorj and Oyuntuya have owned, and Oyuntuya reports that things are going great for them in Theatre Square. Under Purevdorj, Serika spe-

cializes in fresh fish. Their fish is hand-picked from their vendors for top quality.

Serika is open seven days a week for lunch and dinner. Diners may eat at the restaurant or order online and pick up food to go.

## Free gutter covering available to residents of Orinda and Moraga



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The Moraga-Orinda Fire District board of directors on Nov. 15 approved a continuation of the home hardening grant program. MOFD received a new shipment of "Gutterglove-Leafblaster Pro" gutter covering just in time for the rainy season. These stainless-steel guards are designed to minimize the accumulation of leaves and debris

that will become combustible material in the dry months. Having gutter coverings can protect your home from damage due to flying embers in the fire season. They will also help prevent your gutters from clogging with leaves and reduce the need for maintenance during the rainy season.

The material will be

distributed from the MOFD Fire Station 41, 1284 Moraga Road on Fridays, Jan. 12 and 26 from 3 to 6 p.m. and Saturdays, Jan. 13 and 27 from 10 a.m. to noon.

Please do not apply if you cannot pick up the material on one of these days. Unfortunately, MOFD staff and volunteers are only available to distribute the materials on the days and times listed.

Information and an online tool to determine the quantity of material you will need, installation instructions, material specifications, and how to contact a contractor to complete your installation are available online at [www.leafblaster.com/moraga-orinda/](http://www.leafblaster.com/moraga-orinda/). District residents can receive this material at no charge by completing the

request available online at <https://forms.gle/qzJ4hsQ29sfxQhFr8>.

- S. O'Doherty

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2024 January calendar showing a red '1' on the 1st.

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# Letters to the editor

## A Better Rezoning Plan for Orinda

The recent mailing of notices to some Orinda residents, advising of the first phase of proposed rezoning consistent with its adopted Housing Element, has renewed interest in how Orinda can best

comply with the state mandate that the city rezone to allow 1,359 new housing units. The first phase of the current rezoning plan, presented to the Planning Commission and a large audience of concerned residents on Dec. 12, 2023, calls for adding 286 housing units at the three churches

south of downtown, and at Miramonte High School. Additional rezoning, not yet announced, would allow an additional 421 to 1,618 units to be added downtown. Concerns expressed at the meeting, and online, concerned traffic, schools, and emergency response and evacuation.

would also minimize the adverse impacts on traffic, and on emergency response and evacuation.

My plan would balance the requirements of the state mandate with a goal of minimizing adverse impacts on traffic, schools, and emergency response and evacuation.

Nick Waranoff  
Orinda

## Orinda Bans Public Comments on Zoom

Thank you Lamorinda Weekly for reporting on the public participation travesty occurring in Orinda ("Orinda U-turn", Dec. 20). "Reacting" to an imagined inundation of hate speech by communists, Islamic terrorists, and Hells Angels, Orinda's City Manager banned public comment via Zoom from public meetings. And after two sessions of discussions, the City Council endorsed the prohibition.

For two and a half years, all City meetings were conducted on Zoom with no incidence of hate speech. In March, in-person meetings resumed but the City Manager "advised" the Council that it would be too difficult or expensive to provide Zoom access to any meeting other than Council and Planning Commission meetings. (An internet search of Zoom Rooms and technology like Meeting Owl suggests otherwise.)

Did this misuse of technology have any impact on public participation? Prior to the shutting down of Zoom, the SStOC (which is the watchdog managing \$4 million a year of Measure R sales tax revenue) conducted 23 monthly meetings on Zoom with 70 comments from 13 residents. In the ten months since Zoom was ended, one resident attended and commented at one meeting. Mission accomplished. Keep those pesky citizens away.

What is the City manager afraid of? That residents might voice objections to his policies? Like spending almost 90% of essential service funding, including Measure R's \$4 million, on roads and storm drains while spending less than 10% on wildfire fuel mitigation, which Measure R was supposed to address? Or that after three years the City's wildfire prevention "plan" still has no way to measure the impact of measures taken because the City Manager told the Council that the City has "other" priorities?

Steve Cohn  
Orinda

Preliminary important note: that fact that the city designates a site as for "affordable housing" is not binding on the owner or developer; they are free to decide whether to reduce rents/prices and restrict tenants/buyers for some or all of the units to "affordable" levels.

Here is a better plan: (1) Miramonte High School: no housing. (2) Churches south of downtown: Take into account new SB 4, that provides that, notwithstanding current single family zoning, affordable housing can be built at churches as a matter of right, regardless of zoning, at a density of 20 units/acre. Given this reality, a density of 20 units/acre might as well be included in the state-mandate Housing Element and zoning.

(3) Downtown: add at most 240 units per the recommendation of the 2017 report Orinda received from the Urban Law Institute's Technical Assistance Panel. Adding more housing than that downtown will jam traffic on Moraga Way and on Camino Pablo, both of which lead only to downtown, and will, as the EIR found, have a "significant" adverse impact on emergency response and evacuation.

(4) CalTrans parcel near CalShakes and across Highway 24 from Wilder: add the balance of the required housing excluding market rate (approx 700 units) here, in a high density, mixed income (50% affordable), mixed use small village development, based on N. Berkeley BART plans (buildings three to eight stories with parking and open space), plus a shuttle to downtown and BART, and amenities such as a casual restaurant or brew pub, convenience store. Although HCD rejected the city's plan for the CalTrans parcel, the most likely reason was that the city proposed only a low income isolated project without amenities, which housing advocacy groups opposed. HCD didn't totally reject use of the CalTrans parcel, as some believe. In fact, to the contrary, HCD directed the city "to rezone the CalTrans Gateway site and decertify the site to allow for affordable housing development by January 2026." Focusing on the CalTrans parcel would reduce the impact on schools south of Orinda, and the increased school population on the north side could be at least partially absorbed if the School District exercises its option to build a new elementary school at Wilder. Doing so

Opinions in Letters to the Editor are the express views of the writer and not necessarily those of the Lamorinda Weekly. All published letters will include the writer's name and city/town of residence — we will only accept letters from those who live in, or own a business in, the communities comprising Lamorinda (please give us your phone number for verification purposes only). Letters must be factually accurate. Lamorinda Weekly reserves the right to refuse publishing a letter submission. Visit [www.lamorindaweekly.com](http://www.lamorindaweekly.com) for submission guidelines. Email: [letters@lamorindaweekly.com](mailto:letters@lamorindaweekly.com); Regular mail: Lamorinda Weekly, 1480 Moraga Road STE C #202, Moraga, CA 94556

## In Memory

### Awais Saeed Mughal

June 15, 1970 – Dec. 15, 2023



Awais Saeed Mughal was born in Lahore, Pakistan on June 15, 1970. He passed away on Dec. 15, 2023 in Walnut Creek, California after a brief battle with an aggressive illness. He was only 53 years old.

Awais is survived by his loving wife, Sonya Mughal, his two children, Emma Sabene Mughal and Dylan Scott Mughal; their mother, Caitlin Doran; his beloved mother, Shakeela, and his older brother Salman and his family. Awais was predeceased by his father Saeed Mughal, who passed away in 2008.

Awais' parents immigrated from Pakistan to the United States in 1972, when Awais was just two years old and his brother was three. They initially moved to Newton, MA, and in 1979 relocated to Chicago. The family settled in Country Club Hills, a suburb south of Chicago, until 1986, before moving to Williamstown, MA. Awais attended Williams College in 1988 and graduated with a degree in Political Economy.

Upon graduation, he moved to Washington D.C. and started his career in commercial real estate investing at La Salle Partners. Awais lived in Washington until 2000, when he moved to Lafayette, CA, a suburb of San Francisco.

Awais dedicated the entirety of his career to commercial real estate investing. It was his passion. He made his mark on the broader San Francisco real estate community, not only professionally but also personally. He retired at the end of June this year, but his involvement in the broader community continued with his involvement in The Park Theatre Trust in Lafayette. He also contributed to NAIOP, served as Past President of the San Francisco chapter, and was involved in the formation and development of the Young Professionals Group, and the NAIOP Executive Development program.

Awais lived life to its fullest, making friends wherever he went. His smile lit up every room he walked into. He was humble. He was kind. He had a big heart, sharp mind, strong will, quick wit, and dry sense of humor. He loved to travel and he loved the outdoors. He loved to entertain and was known for his culinary (grilling) skills. He was a genius at Wordle and the NYT Crosswords. His love for sports was unrivaled. Listening to music was a favorite passion, and his taste in music ranged from heavy metal to country and everything in between. Watching him sing Bette Midler's "The Rose" a few times at karaoke was always priceless. Awais' generosity knew no bounds. He strongly believed in giving to those who were less privileged and was a massive supporter of the Contra Costa Food Bank.

Maintaining his close relationships and friendships was always a top priority. He was so proud of his children and was an incredibly loving and supportive partner to his wife, Sonya. He remained close, till the very end, with several Williams College classmates, middle school friends in Chicago, and many friends and business associates within the broader San Francisco real estate community.

Awais' philosophy on life was simple: treasure your family and friends, give to those less fortunate, and enjoy life to the fullest without delay.

The loss of Awais leaves a profound void. He was laid to rest in a private burial at the Oakmont Cemetery in Lafayette on Dec. 19, and a Celebration of Life will be held in his honor this Spring.

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# Acorn squash and polenta combine to create a delicious vegetarian dish

By Susie Iventosch



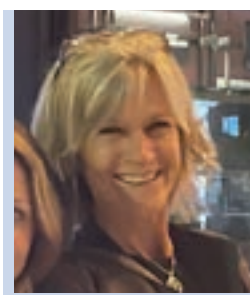
Acorn squash and polenta

Photos Susie Iventosch

This week's recipe is a seasonal and delicious combination of acorn squash and polenta. Polenta is such great comfort food, and this time of year is its best season. It makes a wonderful base for short ribs because it soaks up the braising liquid, but it's also delicious with sausage, or even roasted mushrooms for a hearty and delicious vegetarian dish. We especially love it made with puréed squash in this recipe. We use roasted acorn squash, but any of your favorite varieties of squash would be great,

including butternut, Delicata, or Carnival. The squash gives the polenta a little more depth and adds a different flavor element to the polenta. Make your polenta as you normally would on the stove, and once it has thickened to your satisfaction stir in the

puréed squash, roasted shallots, and the cheese. We've included a link to a delicious short rib recipe from The Lafayette Park Bistro & Bar we ran several years ago in the Lamorinda Weekly, in case you'd like to serve your polenta with short ribs!



Susie can be reached at [suziventosch@gmail.com](mailto:suziventosch@gmail.com). This recipe can be found on our website: [www.lamorindaweekly.com](http://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>

## Acorn Squash Polenta with Caramelized Onions and Gruyere Cheese

### INGREDIENTS

- 1 acorn squash
- 1 tbsp. olive oil
- 1/2 tsp. ground black pepper
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 2 shallots or 1 yellow onion, coarsely chopped and tossed with olive oil
- 1 cup polenta or coarse cornmeal
- 2 cups of water (or broth)
- 1 cup milk
- 1/4 cup cream (or half and half)
- 1 cup grated Gruyere (can also use aged gouda or sharp white cheddar)
- Salt and pepper to taste

### DIRECTIONS

#### Prepare the squash

Preheat oven to 400 F. Slice the top off the acorn squash and cut the squash in half, lengthwise. Scoop out the stringy pulp and seeds. Drizzle the hollow of the squash halves with olive oil and season with salt and pepper, or lemon pepper. Place the squash halves upside down in a greased baking dish along with the shallots or onions, and roast for about 30 minutes, or until the squash is knife tender and the onions are caramelized. Remove from oven and cool to room temp. With a large spoon, scoop the pulp from the skin and smash with a fork. Mix with the caramelized onions. Set aside or refrigerate until you're ready to make the polenta. This step can be done a day or two ahead of time.

#### Make the Polenta

Heat water, milk, cream, and salt in a heavy pot over medium-low heat. (I use a larger pot than necessary so that when the polenta bubbles up, it doesn't splatter onto the stove.)

When the liquid is hot, slowly pour the polenta (cornmeal) into the liquids and using a wire whisk, stir until integrated. Slowly bring the mixture to a boil and keep at a low boil as the polenta thickens. This can take up to 30 minutes, depending upon the heat. Stir occasionally with the whisk.

When the polenta is thickened, stir in the puréed squash mixture until well blended. Add cheese and stir. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

Serve hot as a side dish, or as a main vegetarian dish. If you plan to use it with short ribs, spoon the polenta onto the plates, then lay the short ribs on top and spoon the braising liquid over the top of everything. I like to reduce the braising liquid so it thickens up before plating the meal.

Here is a link to a delicious short rib recipe we ran in October 2017 from The Lafayette Park Bistro & Bar. <https://lamorindaweekly.com/archive/issue1117/Braised-Short-Rib-Crushed-Okinawan-Yam-Tokyo-Turnip-Dandelion-Greens.html>



# Lamorinda Village holds ninth annual Afternoon of Gratitude

Submitted by Jim Scala



Photo provided

## Don Jenkins Community Service Award recipient Ruth McCahan (center)

Lamorinda Village, a Lafayette, community-based organization dedicated to supporting older adults and fostering a strong sense of connection, hosted its 9th annual Afternoon of Gratitude event on Dec. 8, in celebration of its

members, dedicated volunteers, and outstanding community supporters. The event, held at the Jennifer Russell Building in the Lafayette Community Center, brought together more than 150 attendees, including the distin-

guished presence of six incoming, current, and former mayors representing all three towns. Attendees enjoyed wine and appetizers from Town Bakery and were treated to a captivating performance by the Stay at Home Moms.

A highlight of the afternoon was the presentation of the Don Jenkins Service Award. Don was a prominent figure in the community known for his efforts in helping numerous nonprofits establish and sustain themselves, including Lamorinda Village. Lamorinda Village Executive Director, Kathryn Ishizu, said, "The foundations of Lamorinda Village stand strong today, thanks in large part to Don's tireless dedication and enthusiasm. That's why we have chosen to associate his name with our Service Award. It's a way of honoring his contributions and keeping his legacy alive."

This year, the award was presented to Ruth McCahan, the organization's longest-serving volunteer, champion, and founder. Ruth's journey began in 2006 when she stumbled upon an article in The New York Times about a grassroots organization called

Beacon Hill Village. Inspired by the concept, Ruth channeled her determination and vision into establishing a similar village for the Lamorinda community. Lamorinda Village has thrived under her leadership, becoming the vibrant community it is today.

The ceremony was further honored by then Lafayette Mayor Carl Anduri, who presented Ruth with a City Proclamation, acknowledging her outstanding contributions to the community. Lamorinda Sunrise Rotary, Conrad Breece,

and Becky Jenkins also bestowed Ruth with the prestigious Paul Harris Fellow recognition, adding to the accolades she received for her exemplary service.

As Lamorinda Village continues to thrive and expand its impact on the community, the Afternoon of Gratitude serves as a poignant reminder of the power of unity, volunteerism, and the enduring spirit of those who work tirelessly to create a stronger, more connected community.

## Lamorinda Weekly

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**Contact us:**  
Letters to the editor (max 350 words): [letters@lamorindaweekly.com](mailto:letters@lamorindaweekly.com)  
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**Publishers/Owners:** Andy and Wendy Scheck; [andy@lamorindaweekly.com](mailto:andy@lamorindaweekly.com), [wendy@lamorindaweekly.com](mailto:wendy@lamorindaweekly.com)  
**Editor:** Jennifer Wake; [jennifer@lamorindaweekly.com](mailto:jennifer@lamorindaweekly.com)  
**Associate Editor:** Jaya Griggs; [jaya@lamorindaweekly.com](mailto:jaya@lamorindaweekly.com)  
**Advertising:** 925-377-0977, Wendy Scheck; [wendy@lamorindaweekly.com](mailto:wendy@lamorindaweekly.com)

**Staff Writers:**  
Vera Kochan; [vera@lamorindaweekly.com](mailto:vera@lamorindaweekly.com),  
Sora O'Doherty; [sora@lamorindaweekly.com](mailto:sora@lamorindaweekly.com),  
Jon Kingdon; [sportsdesk@lamorindaweekly.com](mailto:sportsdesk@lamorindaweekly.com),  
Digging Deep: Cynthia Brian; [Cynthia@GoddessGardener.com](mailto:Cynthia@GoddessGardener.com),  
Food: Susie Iventosch; [suziventosch@gmail.com](mailto:suziventosch@gmail.com)  
**Contributing Writers:** Conrad Bassett, Sophie Braccini, Diane Claytor, Jenn Freedman, Moya Stone, Alison Burns, Linda Fodrini-Johnson, Elizabeth LaScala, Lou Fancher, Sharon K. Sobotta, Ashley Dong, Jim Hurley, Casey Scheiner, Toris Jaeger  
**Photos:** Tod Fierner, Jeff Heyman  
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[www.christianscienceorinda.org](http://www.christianscienceorinda.org)

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 at **5pm** for a family friendly afternoon service  
 at **11pm** for a candlelight service of scripture and song  
 955 Moraga Road 925.284.4765 [thelumc.org](http://thelumc.org)

### Holy Shepherd Lutheran Church

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[www.holyshepherd.org](http://www.holyshepherd.org)

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## Not to be missed

### Art

"Stories on Canvas," an exhibit of evocative acrylic paintings, opens the Moraga Art Gallery's 2024 season on Jan. 3. Acrylic painter Kath Balamuth endows everyday objects. Jill Landau uses oil paint to capture everyday moments in time. Finally, guest artist Karen Mason offers works that stretch the definition of "paintings." The gallery invites the public to a free reception on Saturday afternoon, Jan. 27 from 3 to 5 p.m. (note new time). All are invited to view the art, meet the gallery's eighteen members and several guest artists, enjoy a selection of light snacks and wine, all accompanied by tasteful music suited to the gallery's congenial ambiance. 432 Center Street in the Moraga Shopping Center, open from noon to 5 p.m., Wednesday to Sunday, [www.moragaart-gallery.com](http://www.moragaart-gallery.com) or call (925) 376-5407.

**Art Gallery at the Orinda Library:** Beneath the Bark. The Lamorinda Arts Council features creations from 17 members of the Bay Area Woodturning Association, painter Attila Cziglenyi, 3D collage from Kimiko Kogure and sculptures from Michael Rizza. Meet the artists at a reception in their honor while enjoying light refreshments on Saturday, Jan. 6 from 2:30 to 4:30 p.m. To learn more call (925) 359-9940 or visit <https://lamorindaarts.org/gallery-2/>.

**Mocktails & Cocktails** Returns on Sunday, Jan. 28 from 4 to 6 p.m. at 32 Lafayette Circle, Lafayette, in the remodeled Hideout Kitchen & Café. Art lovers are looking forward to hearing about your creative life. Hosted by the Lamorinda Arts Council. Look for their Picassoesque poster of surrealist Dora Maar. Questions? Call (925) 359-9940 or email [info@lamorindaarts.org](mailto:info@lamorindaarts.org).

**Main Street Arts Gallery** will be bringing in the New Year with beautiful watercolor paintings! The California Watercolor Association will display their pieces from Jan. 5 - Feb. 25. A reception will be held on Jan. 13 from 4 to 7 p.m. Main Street Arts, 613 Main Street Martinez. [www.mainstreetarts.net](http://www.mainstreetarts.net)

### Music

**California Symphony** presents California Symphony: Gershwin In New York on Saturday, Jan. 27, from 7:30 to 9 p.m., and Sunday, Jan 28 from 4 to 5:30 p.m. at Leshner Center for the Arts, 1601 Civic Drive, Walnut Creek. California Symphony explores the American Dream with music of Barber, William Dawson, and Gershwin on the 100th anniversary of Rhapsody in Blue. Cost: \$20-\$90. For more info see [www.californiasymphony.org/](http://www.californiasymphony.org/) or call (925) 280-2490 or email [info@californiasymphony.org](mailto:info@californiasymphony.org).

**Multi-platinum selling** singer/songwriter, Tony nominee and jazz legend Ann Hampton Callaway returns to the Orinda Theatre for the Bay Area debut of her brand new show and to celebrate the release of her new album, Finding Beauty. Sunday, Jan. 21 at 5 p.m. at Orinda Theatre Square.

**Barefoot Chamber Concerts** presents The Consort Music Wars: Jenkins vs. Lawes on Friday, Jan. 5, from 6:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m., at Saint Mary Magdalen Church, 2005 Berryman Street, Berkeley. The Barefoot All-Stars' annual mid-winter viol consort show: a battle between the two Titans of the viol consort: William Lawes and John Jenkins. Cost: \$25. For more info see <https://barefootchamberconcerts.com/2023-2024-season/Jan.-5-2024-the-barefoot-all-stars-with-wendy-gillespie-play-consort-music-jenkins-v-lawes> or call (510) 220-1195 or email [info@barefootchamberconcerts.com](mailto:info@barefootchamberconcerts.com).

**St. Paul's Concert Series** is excited to host Pianist Temirzhan Yerzhanov with Baritone Daniel Cilli as their featured performers in January. This power-packed duo are renowned throughout the Bay Area, with Cilli's leading roles with the San Francisco Opera and other opera houses across the nation, and Yerzhanov's spectacular piano mastery in performances around the globe. The concert will be held on Saturday, Jan. 27 at 7 p.m., 1924 Trinity Avenue, Walnut Creek, or online broadcast: visit [stpaulswc.org/concert-series](http://stpaulswc.org/concert-series) for the concert link and program. Donations graciously accepted at the door (avg. \$20/\$10 Students) and in our online registration. All are welcome regardless of donation. Tel.: (925) 934-2324

**Berkeley Chamber Performances** presents Black Oak Ensemble on Saturday, Jan. 27, from 7:30 p.m. to 10 p.m., at the Lafayette Library, 3491 Mt Diablo Blvd, Lafayette. Berkeley Chamber Performances is excited to welcome the Black Oak Ensemble to their series at the Lafayette Library. Cost: \$22.50 - \$45. For more info see [www.tickettailor.com/events/berkeley-chamberperformances/992925](http://www.tickettailor.com/events/berkeley-chamberperformances/992925) or call (510) 525-5211 or email [info@bcp1.org](mailto:info@bcp1.org).

**Young People's Symphony** Orchestra presents: Winter Concert 2024. Supermaximum by K. Bunch (2013); Violin Concerto No. 3 in B Minor Op. 61, Mvt. 1 by C.Saint-Saëns (1880); Gloria by F. Poulenc (1959). Saturday Jan. 27 at 7:30 p.m. at Walnut Creek Presbyterian Church, 1801 Lacassie Ave, Walnut Creek. Tickets: \$20 General | Students Free (must register at ticket site) Box Office: <http://data.ypsomusic.org/tickets>. (510) 849-9776, Concert info: [www.ypsomusic.org/events](http://www.ypsomusic.org/events), Venue Info: <https://wcpc.church/>

### Theatre

**Adventure Cabaret** presents Adventure Cabaret on Tuesday, Jan. 30, from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m., at Freight & Salvage, 2020 Addison st., Berkeley. Adventure Cabaret is a unique, unprecedented live theater experience that includes massive use of multimedia to bring you into the Empire of Ideas. Cost: \$35. For more info see <https://adventurecabaret.com> or call (415) 579-2586 or email [contact@adventurecabaret.com](mailto:contact@adventurecabaret.com).

## Not to be missed

### Literature

**Join the Sweet Thursday Author Series** on Thursday, Jan. 18 at 7 p.m. in the Don Tatzin CH at the Lafayette Library to hear author and former Lafayette City Manager Steven Falk discuss his book, California Story. This is a free event, but registration is required at [www.tinyurl.com/sweet-Jan2024](http://www.tinyurl.com/sweet-Jan2024). The doors will be open at 6:30 p.m. for coffee and treats. This program is sponsored by the Friends of the Lafayette Library.

**Pat's Book Club** will discuss "All the Lonely People" by Mike Gayle on Thursday, Jan. 4 at 11 a.m. Jamaican immigrant Hubert Bird rediscovers the world he'd once turned his back on as he learns to find happiness after staying in isolation for so long. All are welcome. 276 Village Square. Orinda, [www.orindabooks.com](http://www.orindabooks.com), (925) 254-7606

**Saturday, Jan. 13, 2 p.m.** Dachner Keltner will introduce and discuss her new title, Awe, a radical investigation and deeply personal inquiry into this elusive emotion. Dachner Kalten is a professor of psychology at the University of California, Berkeley, and the faculty director of UC Berkeley's Greater Good Science Center. To Register: go to [www.eventbrite.com/event/dacher-keltner-author-of-awe-tickets-773860887747?aff=oddtcreator](http://www.eventbrite.com/event/dacher-keltner-author-of-awe-tickets-773860887747?aff=oddtcreator) Orinda Books 276 Village Square. Orinda, [www.orindabooks.com](http://www.orindabooks.com), (925) 254-7606

**On Saturday, Jan. 20** at 5 p.m. Adam Plantinga will introduce and discuss his debut novel, The Ascent, a thriller in which a down-on-his-luck cop and the governor's daughter team up to solve a high security prison failure. Plantinga began his career in law enforcement in 2001 as a Milwaukee police officer. He currently is a sergeant with the San Francisco Police Department assigned to street patrol. To Register: go to [www.eventbrite.com/event/adam-plantinga-author-of-the-ascent-tickets-773869764297?aff=oddtcreator](http://www.eventbrite.com/event/adam-plantinga-author-of-the-ascent-tickets-773869764297?aff=oddtcreator) Orinda Books 276 Village Square. Orinda, [www.orindabooks.com](http://www.orindabooks.com), (925) 254-7606

**The Cozy Mystery Club** will discuss Murder on a Girls' Night Out by Anne George Thursday, Jan. 25 at 10:30 a.m. Cozy Mystery Club meets at Orinda Books on the 4th Thursday of the month at 10:30 a.m. and welcomes new members. Phone the store at (925) 254-7606 for more information. 276 Village Square. Orinda, [www.orindabooks.com](http://www.orindabooks.com), (925) 254-7606

### Other

**On Jan. 27, from 10 a.m. to noon** some of Bay Area's top dermatologists and skincare leaders, including Dr. Tomi Lee Wall, Rebecca Walker, Dr. Jerome Potzkin and Dr. Paige Radell will discuss what really works, from Botox, Kybella, Microneedling, Cryofacials, Lasers to Retinoids and everything in between. Additionally, Cindy Deily, VP of Sephora Skincare will give her tips of favorite anti-aging products. Town Hall Theater, 3535 School Street, Lafayette.

**Free income tax preparation** for the 2023 tax season will again be offered by the AARP Foundation Tax-Aide Program, providing IRS certified tax counselors for local Contra Costa County residents. Service is offered to people of all ages with limited to moderate income with special attention given to those age 50 and older. Beginning in early January, call one of the site-specific appointment phone numbers listed below to make an appointment, or call (925) 726-3199 for general information about the Tax-Aide program. The tax preparation service locations: Concord Library (925) 471-5686; Concord Senior Center (925) 671-3320; Danville Veterans Memorial Bldg. of SRV (925) 272-0902; Martinez Senior Center (925) 370-8770; Pacheco Community Center (925) 709-4525; Pleasant Hill Hillcrest Congregational Church (925) 289-9790; San Ramon Senior Center (925) 973-3250; Walnut Creek - Rossmoor, Hillside Clubhouse, Vista Room Appointments made on-site.

**American Assoc. University Women - Orinda** Moraga Lafayette Branch will hold their Jan. 16 meeting at 9:30 a.m. at The Orinda Community Church, 10 Irwin Way. The meeting is open to the public and the topic will be Food Insecurity in Contra Costa County. A panel of speakers will drill down on this topic and examine and discuss ways our branch can support families with Food Insecurity in both Lamorinda and Contra Costa County. The speakers are: Daniel McCarthy -Gael Pantry Coordinator St. Mary's College. Janette Kennedy -Loaves & Fishes CC and a representative from the Contra Costa Food Bank.

### Garden

**The Walnut Creek Garden Club** will hold its free monthly meeting on Monday Jan. 8 at the Elks Lodge, in Walnut Creek. Join for a special program: Let's give some winter interest to our pots! Registration begins at 9:30 a.m., followed by a brief meeting, social time and an educational program, Complimentary tea and coffee are available. Address: Elks Lodge, 1475 Creekside Drive, Walnut Creek. For more information, please visit: [www.WalnutCreekGardenClub.com](http://www.WalnutCreekGardenClub.com)

**Lafayette Garden Club** monthly meeting begins on Jan. 11 at 9:30 a.m. for social time and nibbles before a short business meeting at 10 a.m. Member Wendy Shively will then give a short discussion on the care of orchids. At 11 a.m., 2 other talented members, Laurie Callaway, a landscape designer, and Valerie Ov, a floral designer, will share their knowledge of landscape design and cutting plants for optimum floral arranging. The meeting will be at Lafayette Veterans Hall, 3780 Mt. Diablo Blvd., Lafayette. It is free to attend and guests are welcomed. Please visit [www.lafayettegardenclub.com](http://www.lafayettegardenclub.com) for more information..

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# MOLLYSLIST





# LAMORINDA SPORTS

Submit sports stories and story ideas to [sportsdesk@lamorindaweekly.com](mailto:sportsdesk@lamorindaweekly.com)

## High hopes for Lamorinda basketball

By Jon Kingdon



Ariana Hallstrom

Photos Cimon Yiannikos



Natalie Frechman

Acalanes girls basketball (11-3) is a team without a senior on the roster, but they can claim to be as experienced as any opponent they will face this year. With a starting lineup of five juniors, (K.K. Lacanlale, Sophie Chinn, Dulci Vail, Ariana Hallstrom, and Natalie Frechman), all who have been on the team since their freshman year, it's essentially a team where everything's the same, only more so.

"They're playing better together, they don't get rattled and they're a lot more mature on the court," head coach Margaret Gartner said.

"They've seen it all and they know when the screens are coming. It's nice to have veterans on the court because they can make some reads themselves and I don't have to do it all."

There are only three new additions to the team, juniors Addi Ames and Emma Seelenbacher, who have added size in the front court, and transfer guard Sofia Fernandez who soon will be eligible to play. "Sofia will definitely help," Gartner said. "She is fast and can shoot it and will be another guard in the rotation without any drop off. She

will make a big difference because in one game we ran out of gas in the fourth quarter. Addie can rebound and defend, and her offense is improving, and Emma is coming along."

Lacanlale (DAL co-MVP) and Chinn (1st team all-league) are co-captains and Gartner puts it simply: "They're playing great."

Hallstrom, who missed much of last season with a knee injury and still was honorable mention all-league, has made a complete recovery. "Ariana is turning people's heads this year," Gartner said. "She can defend shoot and just finds a way to score. Natalie is stronger, playing better defense and is a 3-point shooter."

Dulci Vail is the sole front court starter and is equally effective from the outside along with four guards. "We're like five out, not really putting anyone inside," Gartner said.

Gartner compensates for the team's lack of size with a strategy relying on the team's athleticism. "We use our ability to beat people up and down the court. We're passing better and you'll see the ball flying everywhere," Gart-

ner said. "We know that we're going to see some big players but if we can make it a transition game, we can take their big players out of the game. We will man cover primarily but we will zone as well. We are throwing different looks at our opponents to keep them guessing."

The key for the team's success for Gartner is simple: "Stay healthy. We do a lot of weight work with our strength coach, Joe Escobar, to help avoid injuries and make our girls stronger than they were last year."

### Campolindo

In the last two seasons for the Campolindo girls, they amassed a combined record of 15-35 and 2-22 in league play and lost their leading two scorers. New head coach Doug Cardoni didn't want to start with any preconceived notions about the team. "I did not watch the team play because I did not want to have an opinion before I showed up," Cardoni said. "Quite frankly, I was pleasantly surprised because I got a better team than I thought I was going to get."

Cardoni does not use set plays for his team. "I believe in skill develop-

ment, so we don't have any plays in practice," Cardoni said. "My perfect game would be where I don't say anything for the entire game, and we just play basketball." At this point it appears to be working as Campolindo has a 9-6 record, despite two re-turners out with injuries: Becca Tanner (wrist) and Avery Yasukochi (knee), who has recently returned to action.

Cardoni gives the players a lot of liberty on the court. "I had to really convince them that if they try something aggressive and it doesn't work, I will still cheer for them and not pull them out of the game," Cardoni said. "We do all kinds of spacing drills, and we will pick and roll over and over again until we get a matchup that we love and then try to exploit that mismatch."

Cardoni has had to find a way to compensate for the team's lack of size. "I like to play defense the same way I like to play offense - very aggressively, taking risks going for steals, in your face man-to-man defense," Cardoni said. "At the end of the day, basketball is more of a mindset which has to be, 'I'm not only going to stop you and I'm going to stop the person next to you' and if the whole team has that mentality, we're going to be a good defensive team. (Campolindo's boy's coach) Steven Dyer has been so helpful to me coming here and been just absolutely great."

Co-captain Julia Erickson-King has epitomized the attitude he is looking for on defense. "Julia is our center at a whopping 5'5"," Cardoni said. "She is super strong, does jujitsu so she knows leverage and is not scared

of anything."

Junior guards Ali McCauley and Raegan Shum, also co-captains, have set the example for the rest of the team. "They're both playing great on both ends of the court and because they play so hard, and they're so unselfish, it's easy for everyone to follow them," Cardoni said.

The Cougars are well represented from seniors to freshmen and Cardoni is willing to use whoever deserves to play. Senior Sophie Lederle and freshman Jenna Chan have been pleasant surprises for Cardoni. "Sophie hadn't played basketball since eighth grade," Cardoni said. "She showed up at one of our open gyms and has earned a spot in the rotation. She is a great athlete with a motor like you haven't seen. Jenna has started every game and she's earned it making clutch shots and has made a number of steals on defense."

Still, there are things more important than winning for Cardoni: "My goals are for the players to get better at basketball, have fun and be free to learn life lessons along the way. We're a young team but the energy and enthusiasm they're bringing every day to me is remarkable."

### Miramonte

With the graduation of the Scheingarts, Katherine and Courtney, Miramonte head coach Vince Wirthman was anxiously waiting the return to the team of co-captain Willa Mapaye, who was coming off a knee injury suffered last season. Mapaye has just finished her rehabilitation and has only recently returned to play this season. She scored 23 points in her first two games back.

Miramonte is still a team looking for its identity. "We've had moments where we look great and others when we've played poorly," Wirthman said. "We just need to string a few good quarters together and we'll be fine."

Maegan Eichenberger, Julia Quinn Ferguson, and Marianna Lawrence are seeing the majority of the time in the backcourt and have all improved their scoring from last season. "Julia has been our leader in assists, steals and has a lot of rebounds and Maegan is very tough and aggressive on offense and defense," Wirthman said. "Marianna has gotten better every year and is super tough."

Robin Parmelee, a transfer this year, has also been a force in the backcourt. "Robin's a solid player and we're lucky to get her," Wirthman said. "She's a good shooter that plays defense and is just a good all-round player."

Karena Eberts, a co-MVP in the DAL last season, remains a force in the frontcourt leading the team in scoring (16.6) and rebounding (11.0). "We're basically four guards and Karena in the frontcourt. She is really talented on both ends of the court, a great leader, and a straight A student and is really the heart of the team," Wirthman said.

Wirthman sees the team's offense as the key to the team's improvement. "We're not shooting the ball that well right now but I think we will," Wirthman said. "We need to get a little tougher on defense but we're getting there for sure. We just have to clean up a few mistakes here and there and we'll just keep getting better."

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# Lamorinda

# OUR HOMES

Lamorinda Weekly

Volume 17

Issue 23

Wednesday, January 3, 2024



Expert's advice on decluttering sentimental items read on Page D4

*Digging Deep with Goddess Gardener, Cynthia Brian*

## It's Eco-Optimism for the 2024 Garden Trends Report!

By Cynthia Brian



Photos Cynthia Brian

**Clip baby arugula to add to salads as it grows.**

*"With gratitude, optimism is sustainable." ~ Michael J. Fox*

Welcome to 2024. New cheer for a new year! Here we go again. Every year the Garden Media Group scouts global consumer trends, including fashion and home design, plus everything in between via global experts to bring resources, new products, and ideas to help companies and gardeners become trendsetters, gatekeepers, and influencers.

I have never considered myself a trendsetter, gatekeeper, or influencer because I believe in creating a style that reflects one's individual



**Roses are still performing and blooming. (Tournament of Roses)**

tastes and aesthetics. My company is StarStyle® Productions, LLC because I believe that we each can design a life that allows us to live in a style as the stars of our own lives. Yet, every year, I look forward to the Garden Trends Report because it is filled with information that anyone can utilize to craft their horticultural year in a positive, affirmative manner.

As an ultra-optimistic person, I find their 2024 trends theme of Eco-Optimism especially critical and thought-provoking. This column is based on their findings, and I hope you find it as fascinating and noteworthy as I do.

First the bad news.

Did you know that 67% of Americans 18-23 years of age experience eco-anxiety, which is a chronic fear of environmental cataclysm? With 2023 ranking as the hottest year on record with record-high temperatures since record-keeping began 150 years ago, it is no wonder that eco-anxiety is rising. From January through September, Earth's average temperature was 2 degrees Fahrenheit higher than the 20th-century average of 57.7 degrees Fahrenheit; 200 million people could be displaced by 2050 and 25,000 species are in danger of extinction due to climate change (and we better do something so that humans are not among those listed). Since 2000, climate-related disasters including fires, floods, hurricanes, tornadoes, volcanoes, storms, droughts, landslides, melting glaciers, and extreme temperatures have increased by 50%.

Where's the optimism in these statistics?

The good news is that 68% of people ages 18-24, more than 1.2 billion individuals, are acting to make positive climate impacts. Hurray for our young people! Wind and solar power broke energy use records this past year. If we eliminated greenhouse gases (carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxide), within three years, global temperatures would begin to lessen. In March of 2023, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced over \$1.6 billion in apportionments to support states, commonwealths, and territories in their efforts to connect people with nature and conserve fish, wildlife, and their habitats. When we support wildlife and their habitats, we support ourselves.

As gardeners, scientists, horticulturists, and communicators, we have a responsibility to understand the environmental roadblocks and ease the very real eco-anxiety that permeates our global population.

... continued on Page OH6



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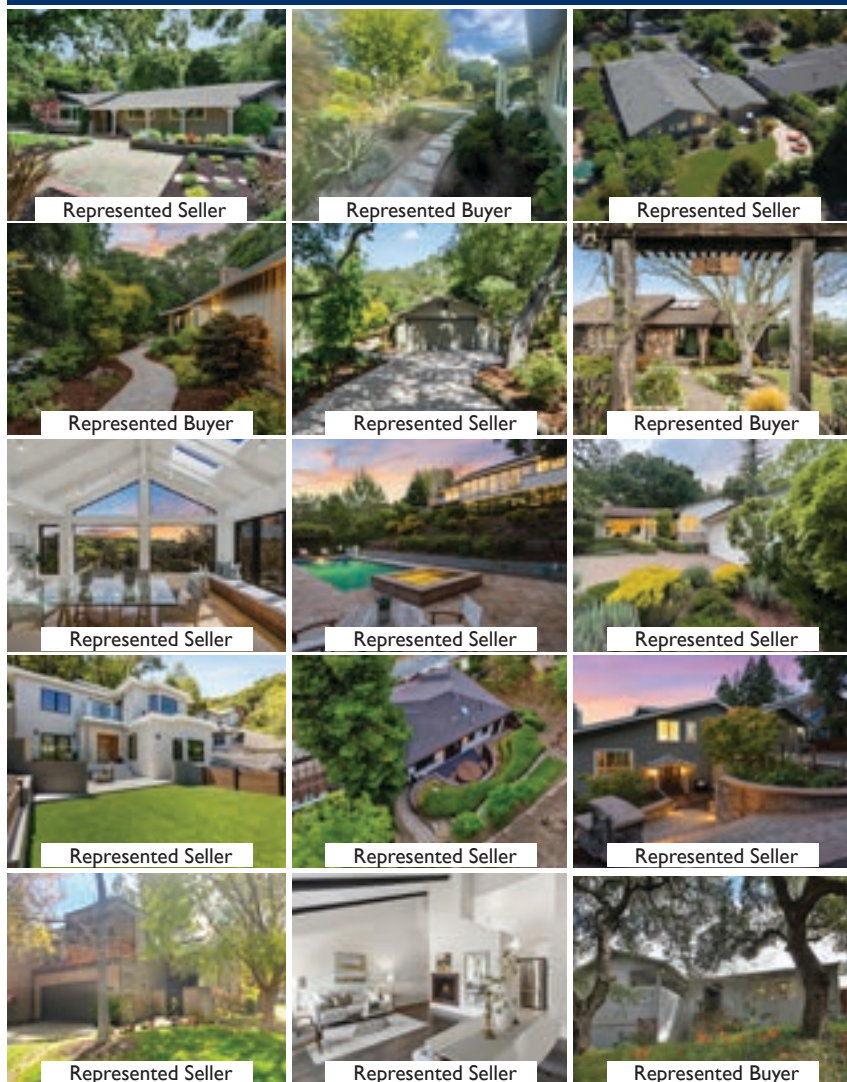


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# The sentimental person's guide for letting go of belongings

By Jennifer Raftis, CPO



Photo Shutterstock

When it's time to start reducing your belongings for whatever reason – downsizing, decluttering or there's a move in your future – it's often very difficult for the sentimental person to let go of their possessions.

Sentimental people see the memory value in their belongings and have a hard time letting go of them, which can create trouble when their possessions start to take over their space. This often leads to large amounts of clutter everywhere and can cause overwhelming feelings and even depression.

The sentimental person often keeps items because they represent or remind them of someone that they have lost or of fond memories from the past. They keep items from their kid's childhood, things that reflect their accomplishments, things that remind them of who they used to be and the things they used to do. This is why it can be so hard to let go of these items. Rather than letting go of all of these things, the goal is to keep a small amount of the most precious items. Items stuffed in a box in a garage cannot be easily enjoyed. Culling a special few items out of hundreds or thousands of items that have been stored can reduce the volume of

belongings and do a better job of honoring the memories of the people and events in your life.

"I inherited my family's belongings and I can't seem to let them go" is something I hear from many of my clients. The items that you have inherited from your family may not fit into your life, but you're afraid it will upset other family members if you decide to get rid of them. They might take up space in your garage and they might even have been there for years and years. Because you feel so guilty getting rid of anything, you decide not to decide because decisions are just too hard. One of the reasons the decisions are so hard is that we are afraid if we give up the item, we will lose the memory. One of the most effective ways to keep the memory for you and for your family going forward is to create memory books with photos of the items. This is a great way to honor the legacy of the person it belonged to. The photo memory books are also a super way for you to start your own legacy memories for your family – these books can include photographs of your accomplishments and experiences.

... continued on Page OH4



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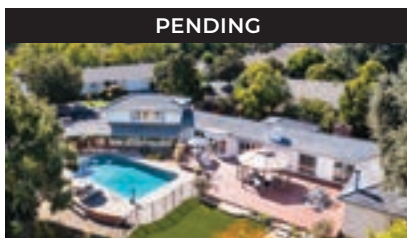


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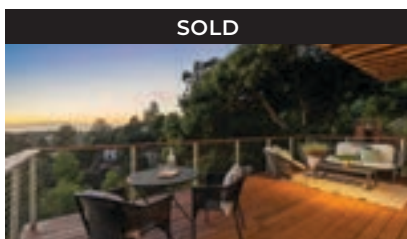
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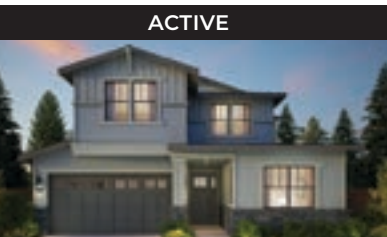


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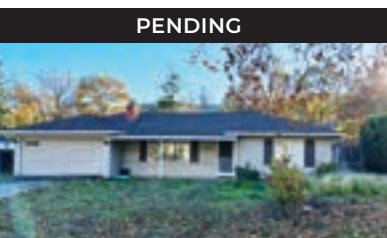


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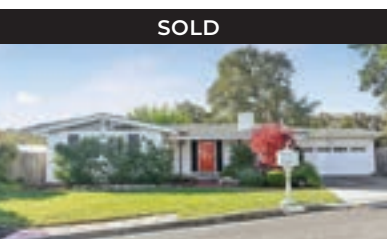
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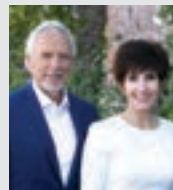
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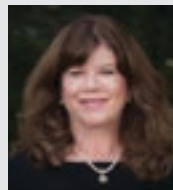
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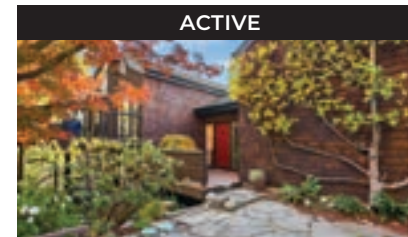


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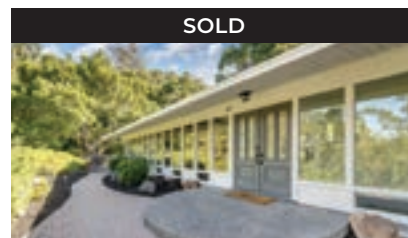


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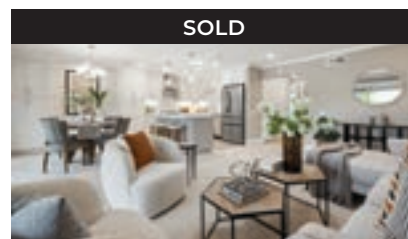
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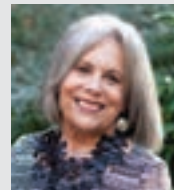
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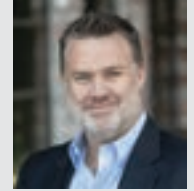
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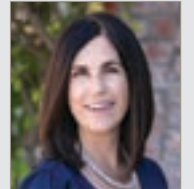
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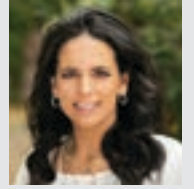
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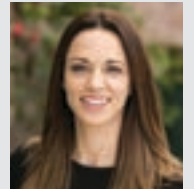
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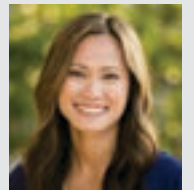
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## The sentimental person's guide for letting go of belongings

By Jennifer Raftis, CPO

... continued from Page OH4

Another hurdle to getting rid of things is the feeling that we want to make sure they go to a good home. If we know somebody will appreciate them and the items are not being trashed, it can help us let them go. I would recommend spending some time doing the research as to where you want your items to go. What charities are close to your heart? Have you already asked your family and friends if they would like any of the items?

Once you have decided to let items go, I recommend taking them out of your house as soon as possible. The sooner you let things go the sooner you will see progress. I do not recommend leaving those boxes in your car or your house as you might be tempted to go back through them. It's kind of like ripping off a Band-Aid – if you go slowly, you prolong the pain; if you do it fast, you'll get it over with.

Kids' memorabilia can be a very difficult category for many people. I recommend only keeping a few items from grade

school, junior high, high school and college for each child. You could create a memory book or box for each child with photographs of all of their accomplishments.

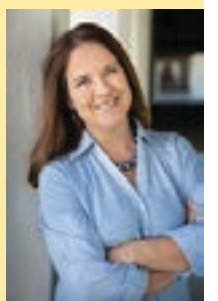
If your kids are grown and they do not have interest in keeping their old toys, are you hanging on to them for the day you may have grandkids? Even if you do have ample space to store these items, will they last over time to be safe enough, clean enough, and interesting enough for your grandkids? I know some people like the nostalgic value of old toys, but again these nostalgic items can be shown in a picture album to your grandkids instead of holding on to all of the actual toys.

For many people, giving up items that have sentimental value is always going to be challenging. Sadly, we can't hold on to everything. The more we hold on to from the past, the less meaningful items from our present can come into our lives.

I hope everyone has a very happy New Year and that you enjoyed spending time with your loved ones over the holidays.

Professional Organizer, Jennifer Raftis, CPO® founded Efficiency Matters, LLC to help you with all of your organizing needs for your home and business. She is a Certified Professional Organizer and an active board member with NAPO, National Association of Productivity and Organizing Professionals.

She is also an independent representative for The Container Store and has expertise in designing closets, garages, pantries, playrooms and more. In addition, she is a Corporate Organizing and Productivity Consultant and has worked with Fortune 500 companies across the U.S. Another large part of her business is move management especially working with seniors who are downsizing. She and her husband have lived in Moraga for 30 years, raising 3 kids and working countless volunteer hours with many local non-profit organizations and schools. Jennifer@efficiencymattersllc.com, 925-698-3756  
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Photos Cynthia Brian

## Digging Deep with Goddess Gardener, Cynthia Brian

# It's Eco-Optimism for the 2024 Garden Trends Report!



**Yellow cherry tomatoes continue to set blossoms and fruit.**

... continued from Page OH1

We all need to be worried and stressed about climate change yet know that we can create solutions. As the trends study says, “stubborn optimism needs to motivate us daily because the future IS worth fighting for.” We can make a meaningful change.

Twenty-five years ago I founded the 501 c3 charity, Be the Star You Are!® (www.BetheStarYouAre.org) with a mission to empower women, families, and youth through increased literacy and positive media messages. Throughout this quarter of a century, I've had the honored opportunity of working with several generations. Gen Z is without a doubt the most climate-aware and the most willing to speak up and out. Because they will inherit the world that older generations have created, they want to make a difference now. And 52% of the world believes that Gen Z will find the answers.

How do you see the future and what are you



**When it rains, RainChains is a pretty and practical choice.**

going to do about it? Are you willing to pay more for sustainable products? Garden trends for 2024 will include terrariums and night gardens that shine in the starlight. Plants to pick will be more alien-looking, bright, variegated, and/or neon-hued. We will be encouraged to illuminate our gardens with glowing orbs. If weather permits, cosmic cocktails will be the new trendy concoction.

Will you delight in the darkness? Interestingly, cemeteries are becoming the hip hangouts, some across the United States offering movies, yoga, and horticultural therapy. In modern cemeteries, gravestones are also planters. Not a style that I embrace, this new trend is called Goth Gardening. Planting eerie, dark-hued plants are the norm as well as leaving gardens a bit untidy where withered and dying plants add to this dark, ghostly theme.

I fancy curating garden experiences with up-lit trees and plants. My statuary reflects a preference for angels rather than devils. When I create

memorial gardens for my loved ones who have gone to the great gardens beyond, I plant trees, shrubs, and flowers that remind me of them. My gregarious gardener mom's memorial garden area is called “Alice in Wonderland” and my farmer dad's is “Daddy's Outstanding in His Field.” Planting memorial gardens filled with plants that they grew and were fond of is a wonderful way to honor and remember their contribution to my life.

Bugging out is another trend. The National Gardening Survey saw a 10% increase in gardener's planting for bees, butterflies, and birds. More people are planting natives. How can you do your part? Plant early and late-blooming flowers. Bees need all the food they can get. Queens are the only bumblebees that survive winter. Without them, future generations will not exist.

Many weeds provide bees with important food sources. Piles of brush or other “messy” piles of rocks or shrubs add valuable backyard nesting habitat. Let the dandelions flourish in winter.

Don't disturb any nests that you may stumble upon.

### **A few winter notices from my garden:**

My yellow cherry tomato plants are still putting out flowers and creating delicious tomatoes so I'm letting them grow.

Roses are also still blooming and flourishing. I will do a hard pruning either at the end of the month or the beginning of February.

Potatoes are sprouting.

Every day I cut shoots of my baby arugula to add to salads. Yummy!

Bergenia (elephant ears) is my trusty pink-blooming plant in winter.

Apple trees are feeding humans, birds, and other animals. The most delicious apples ever!

When it rains, my rain chains have been a wonderful addition to my rooftop.

We will investigate more trends and data in the next Digging Deep column. Until then, I wish you, your family, friends, and colleagues, a simply wonderful 2024 with gratitude for your readership and optimism for the future from my immediate family to yours!

Happy Gardening. Happy Growing. Happy New Year!





Photos Cynthia Brian

Sign at the garden entrance, Angels Gather Here, with primrose plantings in the rear.



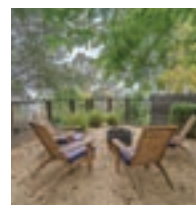
From Cynthia Brian and her family, wishing you a very happy, healthy, optimistic 2024.

For more gardening advice for all seasons, check out Growing with the Goddess Gardener at <https://www.CynthiaBrian.com/books>. 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](http://www.StarStyleRadio.com). Her newest children's picture book, Family Forever, from the series, Stella Bella's Barnyard Adventures is available now at <https://www.CynthiaBrian.com/online-store>. Hire Cynthia for writing projects, garden consults, and inspirational lectures. [Cynthia@GoddessGardener.com](mailto:Cynthia@GoddessGardener.com) <https://www.CynthiaBrian.com>



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