

As Lafayette School District works to amplify inclusion efforts, outside community members stage weekly protests

By Sharon K. Sobotta

When Lafayette Elementary School joined schools and entities across the country with displaying a flag in honor of Transgender Day of Visibility on March 31 after a resolution was unanimously passed for the Lafayette School District, many people celebrated the victory in making schools more inclusive. A small group of people have been demonstrating across the street from the school on Friday afternoons ever since.

In a letter to parents Lafayette School District Superintendent Brent Stephens called the acknowledgment of Transgender Day of Visibility an important marker to recognize and celebrate the pres-

ence, accomplishments and contributions of transgender people to the community and informed them about the display of the Transgender Pride Flag (in March).

“For many, (this acknowledgement) also represents the diversity and vibrancy of the larger LGBTQ+ Community. Last week, the Lafayette School District Governing Board unanimously passed this resolution to affirm our school district’s support for transgender students and families. It is another in a long line of policy decisions in our District meant to protect all our students, families, and staff; and uphold the legal obligations of the District to provide a safe learning environment that is free from all

forms of bias.

“The unanimously passed resolution,” he said, “was both a celebration of the presence of transgender people among our students and families, and, sadly, a sobering reminder of the intensifying political and legal challenges faced by trans people everywhere.”

Lisa Disbrow, a 2022 candidate for Contra Costa County Board of Education, and a few others began showing up across the street most Friday afternoons to greet students, parents and passers-by with signs emblazoned with slogans like “biology is not bigotry,” “DEI—Deliberate Extinction of Innocence” and messages about what should be kept out of the library.

“(Biology is not bigotry) means there are two sexes – male and female. And to say that isn’t to be a bigoted statement, it’s a scientific statement,” Disbrow said, while explaining her signs. “This sign says ‘sexual exposure is abusive.’ That’s based on a drag queen event that Burton Valley sponsored and the Lafayette School District endorsed.”

It’s unclear if the event Disbrow was referring to was the one sponsored by the Lafayette Learning Center in which a drag queen named Bella read stories to children and sang songs to them and their parents as a group of protesters and another group of supporters held signs outside of the event.

When asked about the specifics of her concern with the school district’s sentiment that all students regardless of gender identity should be accepted or that using someone’s preferred pronouns might be a small way to make someone else feel seen, Disbrow described an unnecessary imposition. “Why should you change? Why should a group be able to control the English language because of their feelings? In America, you can be anything you want, right? As an adult, what I’m concerned about is indoctrinating children into ideas that are not proven,” Disbrow said.

Disbrow also expressed concerns that by recognizing nonbinary and trans-identifying folks, it somehow detracts from those identifying in the traditional binary. “How do children who are raised to believe in just the male and



Photo Sharon K. Sobotta

Protesters across from Lafayette Elementary May 5.

the female sex feel recognized? Where are they included? Because they’re not.”

Gina Schwartz, a passerby, who stopped to engage with Disbrow on May 5 after noticing her signs, couldn’t disagree more with that statement. “Our media is saturated with that. We are surrounded by examples of boys and girls being boys and girls, and men and women being men and women. It wasn’t until recently that same sex couples were able to legally marry,” Schwartz said. “And interracial marriage in the United States has (only been fully legal since 1967). Little by little, gains are being made. But it’s not enough. We need more. Everybody deserves to see themselves, to be seen and to be heard, acknowledged, honored and loved.

“This kind of rhetoric continues to contribute to disparaging mental health situations where, not only children, but also adults are in crisis and it contributes to suicide rates,” Schwartz added. “It’s (based on) such a lack of understanding. People can live their own lives and deserve to.”

Schwartz said she wants all kids to know that they are

loved. “I want (queer and trans people) to know that there are adults that support them. It’s a sad truth, that they’re going to encounter people that don’t,” Schwartz said. “But there are people who love them and care for them and want to support them.”

Sev is a college student who uses he/they pronouns and identifies as black, queer and religious. For Sev, being a part of communities with LGBTQ+ affirming messaging is heartening and tells him that there is a place for them. “Growing up, we were taught that we should love everyone,” Sev said. “I’ve never thought that you couldn’t be queer and be a Christian. When I hear people say that if you’re queer or trans, God will hate you; it’s heartbreaking, because that’s not supposed to be.”

Sev said more can be accomplished when we set aside judgment and show up as our authentic selves. “As long as we’re able to be honest with ourselves and also honest with the different components of the things that make up who we are, then that’s where we’re able to have deeper conversations.”

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Bush Poppy Flower Farm thrives in Orinda



Photo Sora O'Doherty

Owner Heather Marano at Bush Poppy Farm. Here she is tending ranunculus, one of the many flower varieties she raises for her bouquets and events.

By Sora O'Doherty

A new endeavor in Moraga is highlighting Heather Marano and her Bush Poppy Flower Farm in Orinda. Across the Way, an adjunct of Moraga Hardware and Lumber, is now selling fresh flower bouquets provided by Marano on Fridays. Each bouquet retails for \$25. She will also be selling seedlings to Moraga Hardware.

Marano is an Orinda resident who has grown her own vegetables for almost 20 years. From 2010 to 2019 she designed knitting patterns, dying yarn with plants. Although she has degrees in archeology, a BA and MA from University of Southern

Florida, and all but the thesis for a Ph.D. from the University of Southern Illinois, Marano has been fascinated by traditional plant medicine.

In 2019 she started Bush Poppy Farm. She does flowers for big events, such as weddings. Most of the weddings she provides flowers for are “a la carte,” but she also does full-service wedding flowers, which entails getting to the venue very early to set up the flowers, which sometimes includes a flower arch that can’t be assembled before the day of the wedding. Generally all the flowers come from her farm, but sometimes, if necessary, she gathers more blooms from other organic farmers through Gather Flora

at the San Francisco flower mart, which operates like a co-op for flower farmers.

Marano is full of energy and the joys of flowers, and arranges several types of fun events, such as workshops and bouquet bars for parties. She also provides dried flowers to Orchard Nursery in Lafayette.

The main channel for Marano to sell her flowers is her CSA, which stands for community supported agriculture. People purchase memberships for either weekly or bi-weekly bouquet delivery for roughly \$20 a bouquet. She started delivering her flowers during the pandemic and now delivers on Tuesdays and Wednesdays. She drives for five hours on delivery days. An avid reader, Marano listens to audio-books as she drives.

Before moving to Orinda in 2019, Marano was a master gardener in San Mateo. She and her husband are avid hikers, and moved to California from back east. They have two children at Miramonte High School.

Marano leases the land for her flower farm, located on Fish Ranch Road. You can find out much more about what Marano offers on her website, where you’ll find merchandise, gift certificates, events, and even garden consultations available.

www.bushpoppyfarm.com/