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Orinda Named the Second Friendliest Town in America by Forbes

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According to the announcement by Morgan Brennan on Forbes.com, Forbes looked at "500 small metro areas with populations between 5,500 and 150,000." Towns were ranked based on their charitable giving, low crime rates, number of college graduates and percentage of owner-occupied homes. Orindans donate roughly five percent of their annual revenues to charity – a fairly significant source of support for non-profit organizations when you consider the community's median income level. The city also just happens to be the fifth safest in California (first for its size category, according to the FBI).

Education levels were assessed, said Brennan, because "research has found that college-educated folks typically display more civic engagement, with higher rates of voting and volunteering." Communities with higher percentages of owner-occupied homes were ranked higher because "studies have shown a direct correlation between homeownership and neighborhood stability."

Forbes partnered with Nextdoor.com to create its final list. "Since Nextdoor is connected to thousands of neighborhoods across the U.S. that use our service to create happier and friendlier places to call home," said Kelsey Grady, the company's Senior Communications Manager, "it made sense to help Forbes analyze the available data."

The San Francisco-based social media company describes its



mission as "[bringing] back a sense of community to the neighborhood." Nextdoor offers its users a variety of tools to create private social networks, customized to suit the unique character and needs of their respective neighborhoods. Sleepy Hollow residents are active on their site, said Grady, as are 19 other Orinda neighborhoods. "In Lafayette we have 18 neighborhoods on Nextdoor and in Moraga we have 10."

Chris Maher and his Campolindo neighbors use their site to send alerts regarding burglaries and other safety issues in Moraga, post minutes of board meetings and other documents, and also reach out about upcoming garage sales and for help with missing pets. "We've found lots of dogs,"

he said. Using the site is also proving to be an environmentally friendly alternative to the event flyers and lost puppy posters that often end up littering streets and fouling waterways in other areas. Now roughly half of Campo neighbors connect via email blasts and text messages through their private Nextdoor site.

While there were a few naysayers when Forbes named its friendliest towns, most comments in the Twitterverse were upbeat. Ryan, also known as @steezysee, wrote that it was a "Great day to be an Orindan."

And @Orindaproblems happily Tweeted the social media equivalent of a fist bump with the hashtag "#GoodForUs"? It really was a beautiful day in the neighborhood.

Resources to Make It an Even More Beautiful Day in Your Neighborhood

- Compassionate Cities Campaign:**
compassionateaction.org/cities
- Conversations on Compassion – Stanford University's Center for Compassion and Altruism Research and Education:**
ccare.stanford.edu/events/upcoming
- Fetzer Institute for Love and Forgiveness:**
www.fetzer.org/
- TED – Ideas Worth Spreading:**
www.ted.com

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