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 Kiwanis Fundraiser



**Moraga**



**Orinda**



**Lafayette**

## Lamorinda Community Comes Together to Celebrate the Holidays

By Sophie Braccini

Excitement is building around local towns and cities, the air filling with the scent of pine as tree farms pop up along decorated streets and next to nearby storefronts in Lafayette, Moraga and Orinda. Whether you are looking for one-of-a-kind gifts for loved ones in a festive historic setting, seeking a visit from Santa, a sleigh ride, or the glitter

of lights on trees or menorahs, Lamorinda will deliver this December.

Santa will make his first official Lamorinda visit at the Moraga Tree Lighting ceremony at 6:30 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 3 in the Moraga Commons Park. Entertainment begins at 6:30 p.m. and the tree will be lit at 7 p.m. Then on Dec. 4-6, for the

first time Donald Rheem's historic mansion, the Hacienda de las Flores, will be decorated and open for the Hacienda Holiday Faire. The fair will give Lamorinda residents the opportunity to discover the beautiful home and grounds that Rheem developed into an estate during his residency in the 1930s for his wife, Alice Goodfellow Rheem. ... continued on page A12

**LAMORINDA WEEKLY**

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## Tenants Criticize Landlord Practices – Again

Mayor calls situation “abusive”

By Cathy Tyson



Photo Cathy Tyson

Calmly and politely, tenant representative Nick VanHole thanked the city council for stepping in to deal with spiraling rent increases earlier this year, and asked for their help once again in dealing with their landlord at the 1038 on Second apartment complex.

San Francisco-based owner, Sack Properties, purchased the older complex at the end Second Avenue, and proceeded to address long-deferred maintenance issues, while also significantly raising the rental rates. Tenants were so infuriated at the shocking increases, they brought their case to the city council to ask for help in May, 2015. Ultimately a 10 percent rental cap was promised by Sack Properties, only after the city considered a rent increase moratorium.

Now, while the rent may only have increased by 10 percent, a slew of other charges and fees have been tacked on to the rent that result in an actual 25 to 35 percent increase, according to VanHole.

He outlined the many charges and fees: water charges, marked-up garbage costs, pet rent, parking rent, mandatory renters insurance, questionable language in new leases that give the landlord the right to evict tenants for anything deemed to be an excessive mess, and a \$3,000 charge for an early break of the lease.

A parade of concerned tenants spoke to the council about all of these issues, emphasizing the serious inconsistencies in utility charges, and lack of transparency.

... continued on page A11



# Lafayette

## Public Meetings

### City Council

Monday, Dec. 14, 7 p.m.  
Lafayette Library & Learning Center,  
Community Hall, 3491 Mt. Diablo Blvd.

### Planning Commission

Monday, Dec. 7, 7 p.m.  
Lafayette Library & Learning Center,  
Community Hall, 3491 Mt. Diablo Blvd.

### Design Review

Monday, Dec. 14, 7 p.m.  
Lafayette Library & Learning Center,  
Arts & Science Discovery Center,  
3491 Mt. Diablo Blvd.

### School Board Meetings

**Acalanes Union High School District**  
Wednesday, Dec. 9, 7:30 p.m.  
AUHSD Board Room  
1212 Pleasant Hill Road, Lafayette  
www.acalanes.k12.ca.us

### Lafayette School District

Wednesday, Dec. 9, 7 p.m.  
Regular Board Meeting  
District Office Board Room  
3477 School St., Lafayette  
www.lafsd.k12.ca.us

Check online for agendas, meeting notes and announcements

### City of Lafayette:

www.ci.lafayette.ca.us  
Phone: (925) 284-1968

### Chamber of Commerce:

www.lafayettechamber.org



## Lafayette Police Department Incident Summary Report Nov. 8-14

<b>Alarms</b>	37
<b>911 Calls</b> (includes hang-ups)	11
<b>Noise Complaints</b>	3
<b>Traffic Stops</b>	58
<b>Suspicious Circumstances</b>	5
<b>Suspicious Subjects</b>	18
<b>Suspicious Vehicles</b>	10
<b>Animal Control</b>	
3300 Sweet Dr	
<b>Burglary, Auto</b>	
3200 block Mt Diablo Blvd	
<b>Burglary, Commercial</b>	
30 block Lafayette Circle	
<b>Civil Problem</b>	
3700 block Sundale Rd	
3500 block Mt Diablo Blvd	
3600 block Bickerstaff	
<b>Counterfeiting</b>	
1300 Reliez Valley Rd	
<b>Dispute, Verbal</b>	
Safeway	
<b>Fraud</b>	
3300 Victoria Ave	
3500 Deer Hill Rd	
<b>Harassment</b>	
3300 block N Lucille	
<b>Hit &amp; Run</b>	
Mt Diablo Blvd/Aileen St	
3400 Golden Gate Way	
Mt Diablo Blvd/2nd St	
3400 block Mt Diablo Blvd	
<b>Littering</b>	
3400 block Echo Springs Rd (2)	
<b>Loitering</b>	
Springhill/Pleasant Hill Rds	
<b>Missing Adult</b>	
1000 block School St	
500 block Merriewood Dr	
<b>Police/Fire/EMS Response</b>	
Stanley Middle School	
Mt Diablo Blvd/Pleasant Hill Rd	
3600 block Mt Diablo Blvd	
<b>Prowler</b>	
900 Sunnybrook Dr	
<b>Public Nuisance</b>	
Roehrer/St Marys Rd	
<b>Promiscuous Shooting</b>	
Old Jonas Hill Rd/Powell Dr	
<b>Reckless Driving</b>	
Olympic Blvd/Pleasant Hill Rd	
Mt Diablo Blvd/Oak Hill Rd	
Oak Hill Rd/Lafayette Circle	
<b>Shoplifting</b>	
Safeway	
<b>Theft, Petty</b>	
3200 block Marlene Dr (2)	
1000 block Manzana (from vehicle)	
3400 Mt Diablo Blvd	
3200 Marlene Dr	
4100 Coralee Ln	
4100 block Coralee	
4100 block Hidden Valley Rd	
<b>Theft, Grand</b>	
3000 Rohrer Dr	
4000 Happy Valley Rd	

## Preparing for Precipitation

City urges homeowners to clean up debris

By Cathy Tyson



Photo Cathy Tyson

News of a forecasted wet winter is everywhere, and city officials have spread the word to property owners, but despite encouragement to clean debris from storm drain areas, there will inevitably be some homeowners who will get an unpleasant surprise in the coming months.

In preparation for the anticipated wet new year, the city is “zealously cleaning out city-owned storm drains,” said Public Works Director Mike Moran. He explained that Lafayette has a master storm drain map, based on field reconnaissance and TV pipe inspections from about 20 years ago. “As we delete, add or replace sections of storm drain, the map is updated by our engineering department.”

Although Moran is relatively new to his position as director, he has been an engineer with the city for almost 20 years. He described how the city plans for rain events. “Following the El Nino storm of Jan. 1, 1997 staff noted the worst spots and created storm patrol lists. These lists have been edited over the years, but are still in use today. During a heavy storm engineering staff and public works crews drive specifically to the ‘hot spots’ on the patrol list to make sure everything is draining as it should. Most of the time just moving a pile of leaves can get things flowing appropriately.”

As the city gradually addressed paving and drain repair backlogs over the years, Moran reports that “most of the hot spots from 1997 have been eliminated because the problem was taken care of as part of road and drain projects.”

Privately-owned storm drains

that are common in many of the older hilly neighborhoods in Burton Valley, Happy Valley and Reliez Valley are a real problem, acknowledges Moran. They can start to fail and may be clogged with debris after years of drought. Usually the negatively impacted homeowner calls public works for a clean out, said Moran, but in that situation, it is a neighborhood issue and not the city’s problem.

Homeowners are also responsible for pipe cleanout, if their driveway has a pipe underneath where the gutter would normally go. Although the area could be considered the public right of way, the property owner is responsible to keep the pipe clear of debris so storm water won’t get

backed up.

Culverts and v-ditches under driveways and along property lines should be inspected to make sure they are open. The city website spells out a list of property owner responsibilities that focus on being debris-free to not obstruct the flow of water.

Residents who are lucky enough to live along a creek are responsible for maintaining the storm water drainage system on their property to prevent flooding. Lafayette has 13 miles of creeks bordered by more than 1,000 home sites within the Las Trampas Watershed. Called “the ultimate storm drains for our city,” the Homeowner’s Creek Guide notes they are critical to carry runoff from creek-side properties and to provide a habitat for wildlife.

It was only three years ago, on Dec. 2, 2012, that a deluge of rain caused upstream debris and a torrent

of water to create a 15-foot sinkhole on Mountain View Drive. The roadway collapsed and utility pipelines took a hit, and even sewer lines broke. At the time, city senior engineer Matt Luttrupp pointed out a major contributing factor was the amount of branches, leaves, urban artifacts and garbage that was washed down the creek, which caused the blockage that created water wearing away soil above and below the drain pipe. Residents in the area likely remember the mess and inconvenience.

In anticipation of precipitation, homeowners should take a good look around their property for potential issues. Those who may be worried about flooding can go to the FEMA website (<https://msc.fema.gov/portal>), which has a flood map service center where residents can search for a flood risk map for a particular address.

## Need Sandbags?

Not one, but two locations in Lafayette are available for those who need sandbags, complete with shovels, a couple of traffic cones with the tips cut off so they can be used as funnels, bags, and, of course, sand.

Diagonally across from the Veterans Memorial Hall at the corner of Village Center and Mt. Diablo Boulevard is station number one. The sand will have a tarp on top to keep it dry. The second spot is at 3001 Camino Diablo at the city’s public works yard, between the Lafayette Tennis Club and the El Curtola Bridge.

City officials ask that sandbags be limited to 20 bags per person. For those who need more, they should be purchased at Diamond K, Home Depot, Lowes or other home improvement stores.

An ounce of prevention is not a bad idea, given the likelihood of significant rain. Property owners should make an effort to ensure storm drains and culverts are clear of debris. In case of flooding, call the City of Lafayette Public Works Department, main number (925) 934-3908 or hotline at (925) 299-3259.

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<b>Theft, ID</b>	700 block Los Palos Dr 3300 block Moraga Blvd Reported to police (3)
<b>Theft, Vehicle</b>	3600 block Mt Diablo Blvd
<b>Threats</b>	40 block Bacon Ct
<b>Throw from Moving Vehicle</b>	Sweet/Woodview Dr
<b>Unwanted Guest</b>	3300 block N Lucille Ln
<b>Vandalism</b>	900 block Hough Ave Diablo Foods Via Gabarda/Bacon Court Moraga Rd/Tofflemire

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# More Sparkle in Downtown Lafayette

By Cathy Tyson



Photo Andy Scheck

“Twinkle, twinkle little civic median” doesn’t have quite the same ring to it as “little stars,” but Lafayette’s main drag is even more awash in festive white lights this year than last, with thousands of holiday lights bringing a magical ambiance from Dolores Drive to Brown Avenue and beyond.

It takes a village to bring this much sparkle to town. Credit the Chamber of Commerce with generous support from two members for paying for set up and take down, the Public Works team, contractor Ben Jorgenson for the installation, and the City of Lafayette to pay for the electricity.

Blocks of festive twinkle lights along Mt. Diablo Boulevard were installed and ready for a flip of several switches the weekend before Thanksgiving. New this year was an expansion all the way down to Brown Avenue which “has definitely helped to meld the east end of Mt. Diablo Boulevard with downtown,” said Public Works Director Mike Moran. He adds that recently planted baby trees require more care and less

weight from lights. “Since the median trees on the east end are younger and smaller than most of the trees to the west, they will use less strands of lights per tree,” he said. In addition to Mt. Diablo Boulevard, for the first time ever the islands on Pleasant Hill Road will also be lit at night.

All of the many strands are composed of energy-efficient LED, or light emitting diode fixtures, that use much less energy than old-school incandescent bulbs, specifically about one-fourth the electricity and boast a longer lifespan.

The annual tradition has, in years past, struggled to find funding to literally “keep the lights on.” The city used to be responsible for the entire project, but amid budget cutbacks a few years ago most of that responsibility shifted to the Chamber of Commerce. As recently as 2011, Chamber of Commerce executive director, Jay Lifson, was asking for donations to keep the twinkle lights twinkling. This year is brighter than ever, with thousands of lights that will remain up through New Year’s.

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Photo by Megan Allen

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# Moraga

## Public Meetings

### Town Council

Wednesday, Dec. 9, 7 p.m.  
Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School,  
1010 Camino Pablo

### Planning Commission

Monday, Dec. 7, 7 p.m.  
Moraga Library, 1500 St. Mary's Rd.

### Design Review

Monday, Dec. 14, 7 p.m.  
Moraga Library, 1500 St. Mary's Rd.

### School Board Meeting Moraga School District

Tuesday, Dec. 8, 7 p.m.  
Joaquin Moraga Intermediate  
School Auditorium  
1010 Camino Pablo, Moraga  
www.moraga.k12.ca.us  
See also AUHSD meeting page A2

Check online for agendas, meeting notes and announcements

### Town of Moraga:

www.moraga.ca.us

Phone: (925) 888-7022

### Chamber of Commerce:

www.moragachamber.org

### Moraga Citizens' Network:

www.moragacitizensnetwork.org



## Moraga Police Department

**Identity theft 11/19/15** A Cedarwood Drive resident stated an unknown subject attempted to use his personal information at an unknown payday loan business. The transaction was flagged as fraudulent and was declined. Good thing.

**DUI 11/22/15** Car versus a telephone pole, and the pole won. Cops came upon the scene on Sullivan Drive to find the driver out of the car and yelling, perhaps the discussion partner was the pole? After an evaluation, the driver was placed under arrest for driving under the influence.

### Alert, direct from the Moraga Police Department:

Moraga residents are currently being targeted by scammers claiming to be from the IRS or Department of Treasury. These people are crooks who are attempting to defraud you and other residents. Do not send money to them.

The call will usually begin with the scammer falsely identifying themselves as a federal officer and may provide a badge or serial number. They will tell you about a tax debt that you have and the necessity to get it cleared up immediately. During these calls, the scammer may know your name, address or personal information, which are all easily obtained through different avenues. The scammer may threaten to arrest you, deport you or have a license revoked if you fail to pay. They may alter their caller ID to make it appear the call is coming from the IRS. They may also send you an email that appears very official.

These scammers are attempting to use fear and will attempt to bully you into paying money to them through Western Union, MoneyGram or GreenDot cards. The IRS does not use these payment services. They only use payment services that are directly connected to and contracted with the IRS. Additionally, the IRS communicates via official correspondence, not through unsolicited telephone calls.

If you receive one of these scam calls, simply hang up. You should report the call to the IRS or the Fed-

# Yes to Chickens and Bees, No to Turkeys

## Moraga adopts small farm animal ordinance

By Sophie Braccini

Tarnished by the reputation of their wild counterparts to be more of a nuisance than friendly pets, farmed turkeys were not elevated to the status of small farm animals, as were Moraga chickens, rabbits, doves and honey bees by the town council at its Nov. 18 meeting. Turkeys will linger in the livestock category of Moraga's municipal code.

Vice Mayor Mike Metcalf, who challenged the need for allowing chickens and other fowl in Moraga, stated, "There may be a lot of young people in town, but there's an awful lot of older folks too, and I am one of them that tend to be pretty conservative. There are people I know that absolutely think that this is the stupidest idea around, and they have a right to feel that way, they have the right to peace and enjoyment of their property." Metcalf spoke in agreement with resident Dale Walwark who stated that the process for getting a small farm ordinance approved was skewed by proponents of the idea.

At issue was the question of smell, which was discussed at length. The ordinance declares that a coop

should not generate any odor; councilmember Dave Trotter asked if there was a quantifiable unit to measure bad smell. "We apply a reasonable person standard," responded Planning Director Ellen Clark. "It is not a quantitative criteria. That's also true for noise and glare and we manage to regulate them."

John Kiefer, a Lafayette resident who conducted pro bono research for Lafayette to draft its own ordinance and also worked with Moraga planning staff, talked about the sustainable coop design concept where chickens are raised directly on soft soil, which does not cause any odor. "The ordinance states that there will be no odor at all," he said, "and that's what the sustainable coop does."

But Metcalf was skeptical that every chicken owner would build such a coop, and that if their operations started being a nuisance to neighbors, not much was written in the text to enforce compliance. "He (Kiefer) says that if you do it correctly it won't smell; what happens if you don't do it correctly?" asked Metcalf. "How will we respond (to com-

plaints)? You can be a month with something that's in violation and you're going to pay \$174. That's not enforcement, that's a joke. There is no teeth in this regulation to make (people) comply." Metcalf added that he was concerned about unintended consequences of a text that had been rushed through the approval process.

The question of turkeys became a real roadblock. "Would you like on the other side of your fence (that) your neighbor has six turkeys?" asked Walwark. "It does not make any sense at all!" Turkeys could not find any kind of support from anyone. Councilmember Dave Trotter proposed reassigning them to the livestock category in the municipal code, which allows one animal per 20,000 square feet of property.

The question of slaughtering animals in the privacy of the property was not an issue, although councilmember Teresa Onoda said she felt that small children should not see such things. Metcalf countered that these were facts of life and that hamburgers were once on hoofs. Both councilmembers Phil Arth and Trotter agreed.

The ordinance passed with three in favor, and one abstention from Metcalf. Mayor Roger Wykle was absent. The small farm animals include chickens, doves, pigeons, quail, game birds, rabbits and honey bees. Pets are not part of the ordinance and animals that make noise such as roosters, waterfowl, peacocks and guinea hens are not allowed in Moraga.

The minimum size lot to raise small farm animals is now 6,000 square feet. Parcels of 6,000 to 10,000 square feet can have a maximum of four small animals, properties 10,001 square feet to 20,000 square feet should not have more than six, parcels 20,001 square feet to 40,000 square feet have a maximum of eight, and lots greater than 40,000 square feet can have 16 animals. Multi-family housing sharing a lot of at least 6,000 square feet can raise chickens if all the neighbors agree. Usual setback rules apply to the placement of animal structures.

The council will hear another reading of the ordinance text on Dec. 9 and it will become effective 30 days later.

# Moraga Art in Public Spaces Committee Approved

## Budget Discussion Continues

By Sophie Braccini

Moraga Councilmember Teresa Onoda, a plein air painter and active member of the Lamorinda art scene, has worked to bring more art to the town since she joined the council at the end of 2014. She attempted to convince her fellow council members at the Nov. 18 council meeting to secure enough funding for the newly adopted art in public places policy, trying to get vice mayor Mike Metcalf, and councilmembers Dave Trotter and Phil Arth to consider increasing the \$5,000 budget they approved to promote the new policy by an additional \$5,000.

While Onoda did not succeed in garnering support for the increase in the short term, the ordinance was approved and a newly formed Art in Public Spaces Committee will begin operating in 2016, seeking artists willing to display their creations in Moraga public spaces for free.

In September the council discussed mirroring Orinda's public art policy and directed staff to draft a similar ordinance. The text formalizes the process artists should follow if they want to lend a piece of art to be displayed in Moraga for up to two years.

Moraga resident Dale Walwark stated skepticism at the meeting for what he feels Orinda does in respect to art choices. "There is a lot of bad art out there," he said. "(In) Orinda, the stuff they have sitting on the street is ridiculous. Their policy is that art

(is) intended to enrich the public environment. That stuff fails to accomplish that objective." But Vice Mayor Metcalf was fast to say that beauty is in the eye of the beholder. Walwark also said that the council should not spend money thoughtlessly, a comment that was better received by the council.

Parks and Recreation Director Jay Ingram proposed using the Palos Colorado developer's fund to finance the program. There is currently over \$1 million of "Palos money" in the fund.

"We are nibbling away at the Palos money; \$5,000 is (more than) enough," said Walwark about funding. The plan presented by Ingram included \$5,000 for the marketing of the program and another \$5,000 as seed money for a fund to purchase the

pieces of art that were on loan to the town, if the public wants to buy it. "I can support \$5,000 (from the Palos money), but I don't know that I want to appropriate any further funds," said councilmember Dave Trotter.

Onoda explained the importance of having enough money in the marketing fund so artists can get some benefit from displaying their art for free in Moraga. "When I go into a gallery (where my art is displayed) one of the questions is, 'How are you going to market me?'" said Onoda. "We are going to have their work and they want to know that people are going to see it. You don't do it by being in the newspapers, you do it online and you say we are looking for artists to donate. There is a process to

do that, and it takes money, and you guys don't understand this process." While Metcalf, Trotter and Arth did agree to the \$5,000 for marketing, they proposed that another \$5,000 be allocated to an art purchasing fund at the next budget cycle, if surplus is available.

The members also approved the charter of the art committee that will approve the proposed donations. This group will include one councilmember, one park and recreation commission member, one design review board member, one Moraga park foundation member, and three Moraga community members. Onoda was appointed as the councilmember on the committee.

# Happy Holidays!

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# HOLIDAY TREE LIGHTING Thursday, December 3 6:30 pm, Moraga Commons Park



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## Kiwanis See's Candy Fundraiser Kicks Off



Opening of the Rheem Candy Shop from left: president of Kiwanis Club of Moraga Valley, Barry Behr, the Town of Moraga Vice Mayor Mike Metcalf, Moraga Education Foundation president Heather Davis, Moraga School District board member Jon Nickens, Moraga-Orinda Fire District Battalion Chief Jerry Lee, and the Town of Moraga Police Chief Bob Priebe

Photos Stan Holcenberg

The Kiwanis Club of Moraga Valley wants every resident to be able to indulge in See's Candies for the holidays and decided to open two shops this year, one in each town shopping center. The grand opening at the end of November was organized twice, once between Bianca's and CVS in the Moraga Center and one next to Starbucks at the Rheem Shopping Center. "The Moraga Valley Kiwanis Club's shops are an annual, major fundraising effort that primarily benefits children in our local region," says Kiwanis president

Barry Behr. "We enjoy meeting and greeting members of our local communities, acquainting them with the broad selection of See's Candies that we have available and assisting them with their purchases." At each shop, customers can arrange for direct shipping of their holiday candy purchases to friends and relatives across the United States. The Rheem shop's hours are from 10 a.m. until 5 p.m. and the Moraga shop from 1 to 5 p.m.; both shops will be open until Dec. 23. - S. Braccini



## On-Street Parking on Rheem Boulevard

By Sophie Braccini

The faint painted markings on Rheem Boulevard that indicate future parking stalls did not go unnoticed by some residents, who posted their feelings on Nextdoor.com and in emails, saying it would narrow the boulevard as it approaches the Moraga Road crossing and that the striping was a ministerial decision made without public consultation. Town manager Jill Keimach responded that the striping is part of a plan adopted last September by the town council, including the creation of 31 new parking spots that will be completed in the coming weeks. Since it is just paint, if traffic is impacted negatively the manager assured the striping could be undone.

"It's very clear that the Rheem Boulevard changes are being done without much thought on traffic flow and without any input from residents," one Moraga resident who did not wish to be named in the paper wrote online. "Reducing traffic lanes is the worst possible decision. Adding on-street parking is going to make this stretch of road a lot more dangerous because visibility will be greatly reduced for those turning out of the movie theater exit and the 24 Hour (Fitness) exit."

Keimach says the project has been discussed several times over the past three years at the council, starting on May 23, 2012 when the council requested staff defer its parking plan until the pavement program was underway. "It was discussed again in April 2014," said Keimach. "Further, parking has been allowed along the north side of Rheem near 24 Hour Fitness and some cars park there ... but they tend mostly to park up farther by HomeMade Kitchen all the way up and past our town offices where the road narrows to one lane."

The parking on the south side by the theater is the new section, but it still widens to two lanes at the entrance to Rheem Center and the last block before Moraga Road. "According to our traffic counts, it should still operate as it has generally in the past," said Keimach, adding that it will take getting used to, but that she hopes that drivers in Moraga will give it time to work. "As you and others have said, we are not immune to making mistakes and if this turns out to be the mistake predicted, the council of course has the option to direct staff to repaint it in the future."

... continued on page A8

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# Orinda

## Public Meetings

### City Council

Tuesday, Dec. 15, 7 p.m.  
Auditorium, Orinda Library,  
26 Orinda Way

### Planning Commission

Tuesday, Dec. 8, 7 p.m.  
Auditorium, Orinda Library,  
26 Orinda Way

### Citizens' Infrastructure Oversight Commission

Wednesday, Dec. 9, 6:30 p.m.  
Sarge Littlehale Community Room,  
22 Orinda Way

### School Board Meeting Orinda Union School District

Monday, Dec. 14, 6 p.m.  
OUSD Office, 8 Altarinda Road,  
www.orindaschools.org  
See also AUHSD meeting page A2

Check online for agendas, meeting notes and announcements

#### City of Orinda:

www.cityoforinda.org  
Phone (925) 253-4200

#### Chamber of Commerce:

www.orindachamber.org

#### The Orinda Association:

www.orindaassociation.org



## Orinda Police Department Incident Summary Report Nov. 8-14

Alarms	26
Noise Complaints	1
911 Calls (includes hang-ups)	6
Traffic Stops	57
Suspicious Circumstances	5
Suspicious Subjects	7
Suspicious Vehicles	11
Abandoned Vehicle	
10 block Great Oak Cr	
Burglary, Auto	
10 block Loma Vista	
10 block Country Club Plaza	
Credit Fraud	
60 block Orchard Rd (2)	
Custody Violation	
Glorietta Elementary	
Disturbance	
40 block Valley Dr	
20 block Bryant Way	
Fake ID	
Lavenida Dr/Moraga Way	
Hit & Run	
300 block Glorietta Blvd	
30 block Oak Rd	
Brookwood/Camino Pablo	
50 block Scenic Dr	
ID Theft	
10 block Lavina Ct	
Juvenile Disturbance	
Donald Dr/Alice Ln	
Missing Adult	
40 block Meadow View Rd	
Neighbor Dispute	
400 block Camino Sobrante	
Phone Harassment	
30 block Diablo View Dr	
Police/Fire/EMS	
10 block El Sueno	
Miramonte High School	
70 block Muth Dr	
Public Nuisance	
Post Office	
Reckless Driving	
San Pablo Dam Rd/Bear Creek	
300 block Camino Pablo	
Ivy Dr/Moraga Way	
Hwy 24/St Stephen's Dr	
Orinda Way/Camino Sobrante	
Camino Pablo/Miner Rd	
Shoplift	
Safeway	
20 block Orinda Way	
Theft, Petty	
20 block Southwaite Ct	
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10 block Stanton Ct	
200 block Sundown Ter	
Theft, Grand	
20 block Northwood Dr	
Theft, Vehicle	
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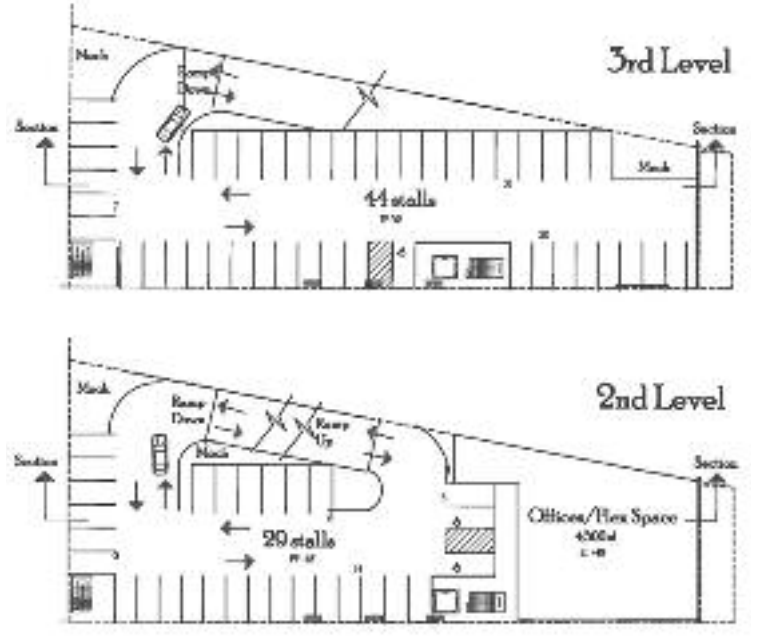
## Planners to Study Proposed Development of Former BP Service Station's Downtown Site

By Victor Ryerson



View from Orinda Way

Images courtesy City of Orinda



The Orinda Planning Commission will hold a study session of the conceptual design for a newly unveiled proposal to build a retail, restaurant and office complex for the parcel at 25A Orinda Way, across the street from the Orinda Community Center. No formal action will be taken by the commission at the session, which will be on the agenda for the commission's regular Dec. 8 meeting. The public will be able to attend and comment on the proposal at the meeting.

The site, which lies vacant behind a chain link fence, was last occupied by a BP service station that was demolished some years ago. The proposal by owner Paul F. Urgenti of Tandem Real Estate Co. seeks to develop the 19,456 square foot parcel by building a series of spaces for retail and restaurant use at the street level, and second-story office spaces above them. The street level spaces would front Orinda Way without any setback for parking, but provision is made for 73 on-site parking spaces within the development.

The proposed height of the row of office spaces is uniformly 35 feet, but a tower above the pedestrian entrance would top out at 44 feet. Visually, the design picks up certain architectural elements from its neighbor, the Vintage Building.

The full proposal will be available for viewing on Wednesday, Dec. 3, at the Orinda Planning Department Office, or online at www.cityoforinda.org.

Share your thoughts, insights and opinions with our community.  
**Send a letter to the editor:** letters@lamorindaweekly.com

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## Orinda Supports Creation of Lamorinda Community Court

By Victor Ryerson

Responding to an inquiry from the Contra Costa County Grand Jury, the Orinda City Council has voted to support the creation of a new Community Court to resolve low-level criminal matters such as petty theft, vandalism and alcohol-related offenses, as well as juvenile cases. The program, which is already in place in Walnut Creek, Concord, Pittsburg and San Ramon, is designed to relieve the burden on the Superior Court and District Attorney by reducing the number of formally filed cases. It is also a way to “bring the power of the justice system to the local level,” according to the Grand Jury’s report on the program.

Participation is voluntary, but offers a person arrested for a qualifying offense the opportunity to avoid the risk of having a criminal conviction on his or her record. The way it works, as explained to the council by Orinda Police Chief Mark Nagel, is that after the arrest, the police department determines whether to offer participation in Community Court as an alternative to sending the case to the District Attorney for possible prosecution. If the offer is made and

the arrestee accepts, no formal charges are filed with the District Attorney at that time, and the matter goes to an informal hearing before a Community Court hearing officer (one of two specially trained attorneys who work for private contractor Community Court Service Co.), who issues a directive that may include a fine, restitution, community service, and/or counseling. If the participant agrees to the terms, criminal charges are not filed. Upon completing the program, no record of conviction is placed on the participant’s criminal history, although the arrest record remains in some cases.

The participant pays a relatively modest administrative fee (\$100) for participation, but this fee might be waived in certain instances, according to Nagel. The participant may also terminate the process at any time and opt to have the case handled in court, in which event formal charges could be filed. Nagel cites as one significant benefit the fact that Community Court can “absolutely” substitute for a juvenile diversion program, which Orinda needs.

All three Lamorinda cities were

polled by the Grand Jury about creating a Community Court program. There was concern that the qualifying caseload was insufficient in each city – about 8 to 10 per month – to justify the program. As a result, the three cities decided to join forces and consider the creation of a Lamorinda Community Court, rather than a separate court for each, and the Moraga and Lafayette city councils are also considering the program. The hearings, requiring about one to two hours per month, would be rotated among the three communities. Nagel stated that the Orinda Police Department could absorb the program requirements with existing police staff, and that there would be no cost to the city, because the program is self-supporting.

“This is a fabulous idea,” said Council Member Amy Worth enthusiastically, an “opportunity to bring [the justice system] home.” Other council members agreed, one emphasizing that it would provide a better alternative than Superior Court for youthful offenders, who “do stupid things.”

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## Fire Districts

### Public Meetings

#### Moraga-Orinda Fire District Board of Directors

Wednesday, Dec. 2, 7 p.m.

Wednesday, Dec. 16, 7 p.m.

Moraga Library Community Room  
1500 St. Mary's Road, Moraga  
For meeting times and agendas,  
visit [www.mofd.org](http://www.mofd.org)

#### ConFire Board of Directors

Tuesday, Dec. 8, 1:30 p.m.

Board Chamber room 107,  
Administration Building,  
651 Pine St., Martinez  
For meeting times and agendas,  
visit <http://alturl.com/5p9pu>.

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# Fire Chief Wraps His Legacy around Ambulance Contract

By Nick Marnell

Contra Costa County Fire Protection District chief Jeff Carman reflected on a painful time in the district.

"Fourteen months ago, there were people saying we can't even run a fire department," said the chief. "So how were we going to run an ambulance service?" With the unanimous approval by the Board of Supervisors Nov. 17 for the district to provide county emergency ambulance service, most of Contra Costa County is going to find out how beginning Jan. 1.

Carman joined the struggling fire district in 2013 with a mandate from his board to uncover new revenue sources. "The ambulance contract was the low-hanging fruit," he said. The contract with American Medical Response, the current county ambulance provider, ends in December, and with the possibility of additional government funds available to a public entity for emergency transport, the chief said pitching for the ambulance contract presented an opportunity he could not pass up.

"I started thinking I could do the

whole thing myself," said Carman. "But consultants convinced me it wouldn't be worth the trouble. Buying 40 ambulances, buying 40 monitors at \$35,000 each, gurneys at \$20,000 – getting all of that assembled, training a workforce, versus buying an incumbent that knew the county and how to run everything? And do the supervisors have the stomach to tell AMR goodbye? Joining with AMR was the way to go. We benefit from their incredible buying power, plus a labor force that's knowledgeable. And they're cheaper." Citygate Associates LLC, a consulting firm, concluded that the district could net nearly \$2 million in the first year of the ambulance contract.

A potential upside to the deal is that ConFire will be able to collect government reimbursement for emergency transport payable to only public entities, though the dollar amount remains unclear and was not included in financial projections. A possible downside is the future of the Affordable Care Act. "I've gotten a peek behind the curtain at AMR," said

Carman. "The depth they have in the EMS arena is incredible. I feel comfortable that nothing emanating from Capitol Hill will surprise us."

ConFire will pay AMR \$200 million to provide ambulance service over the five years of the contract. The district will dispatch the ambulances, eliminating the duplication of resources often seen on medical calls. But the chief said that the dispatch centers will not be completely merged until Feb. 1. "Moving their computer system onto ours, the costs of new hardware. Until (February), that will be the one piece missing, where we can cut down the dispatch time," said Carman.

The regions of Contra Costa County that will not be covered by the ConFire-AMR Alliance are those served by the Moraga-Orinda Fire District and the San Ramon Valley Fire Protection District, which provide their own ambulance service. The district projects that ambulance response times will decrease an average of 30 seconds under the new system.

The chief said one of the toughest

challenges of the merger was getting the new billing contractor aligned. "The AMR system has to auto-feed into the Intermedix system. But it will be done by Jan. 1," said Carman. Advanced Data Processing, Inc, a division of Intermedix, will provide billing for district emergency transport services for an \$8.5 million fee through the life of the 5-year contract.

"What makes me nervous? That so many people are watching. I get calls from Florida, Georgia, Ohio, looking at this," said Carman. Santa Clara and Alameda counties are also eyeing the ConFire business model, which is the first of its kind in California, according to county administrator David Twa. "But I'm very comfortable with the risk we're taking. Nothing really changes for the public," said the chief.

"It's a remarkable accomplishment," said Supervisor Mary Piepho.

Carman agreed that securing the ambulance contract was a career accomplishment, but he hesitated to do a bat flip just yet. "Let me get six months under my belt and then, yeah, I'll agree that this was the way to go."

## MOFD Restores Salary Cut to Firefighters

By Nick Marnell

The Moraga-Orinda Fire District presented its 2014-15 Comprehensive Annual Financial Report Nov. 18, highlighting a general fund surplus of \$1.4 million. Contributing to the surplus was the 3.5 percent wage reduction agreed to by district employees. One percent of the reduction was restored July 1.

With this considerable improvement in district finances, the board agreed to restore the remaining 2.5 percent wage reduction effective Dec. 1, seven months earlier than outlined in the memorandums of understanding between MOFD and its labor groups. The motion passed 3-1, with Steve Anderson dissenting and Alex Evans absent.

"I'm pleased that we're doing this, and I'm happy that we were able

to do it," said director Fred Weil.

"This was very difficult," said fire chief Stephen Healy, commenting on the original labor negotiations that resulted in wages lost by the firefighters. "It's kind of a deep wound to them. I'm sorry this had to happen in the first place."

The directors should probably not expect a thank you card from the union. Representative Mark DeWeese blasted the original pay cut as unnecessary, and he said that the elimination of the cut leaves the firefighters with the same pay they were making seven years ago. "If you look at the data in tonight's board packet you'll see MOFD's total revenue over that same time period has grown over 25 percent," he said in a prepared statement. "Our stagnant wages and

lagging medical benefits have caused a growing recruitment and retention problem for our district, along with growing frustration among current employees."

"When we worked out that original contract, we needed help to keep MOFD running," Anderson said later. "We were on the edge. The financial situation was impacting our ability to serve our citizens and our employees."

"I don't believe in renegotiating contracts," continued Anderson. "There's no end to it when you do. These are unsettled times, with unsettled markets. We have to be financially conservative."

The district calculated the one-time cost to restore the salary reduction seven months early at \$187,000.

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## Supervisor Says No to Struggling Fire District

By Nick Marnell

Supervisor Candace Andersen again refused to allocate money from the county general fund to support a special district when she voted against a \$311,000 bailout of the troubled East Contra Costa Fire Protection District Nov. 17. "When I first came on the board three years ago, we refused to give our own Contra Costa fire district the money they needed so that we would not have to close fire stations," said Andersen, whose district includes Lamorinda. "I cannot justify this one-time expense."

One of those county fire stations she referred to, Contra Costa County Fire Protection District station 16 in Lafayette, remains closed.

"I don't know that I would have supported drawing from the general fund if Lafayette had offered up additional money to keep Station 16 open or reopened," Andersen said later. The county, the fire district and the cities of Brentwood and Oakley will contribute more than \$2 million to the cost of reopening the ECCFPD Knightsen station for 18 months, a stopgap measure until the district finds a way to increase funding for its fire service.

"From my perspective, Lafayette taxpayers were already significantly

contributing toward their fire service and weren't getting sufficient value for their tax dollars," continued Andersen. "Also, at the time, I had serious concerns about how we were delivering fire service, and wasn't inclined to go to taxpayers or cities and ask for more funding until we had done all that we could to become more efficient and have a plan toward sustainability in place."

Speakers pounded the sustainability of ECCFPD as a recurrent theme. The district dropped from eight fire stations in 2008 to three today, and voters twice rejected calls for additional funding to enhance fire service. "It is not sustainable for East County to draw on our resources at the rate they are using them today," said ConFire chief Jeff Carman. "We're a system. It puts pressure on everybody, including Lafayette."

The supervisors approved the bailout 4-1, but with a list of contingencies, including that ECCFPD pursue status as an independent district, elect its own governing body and change its name. "These things should have been done eight years ago," said Supervisor Mary Piepho.

"The biggest stumbling block for me is the precedent," said Andersen,

who earlier this year rejected using general fund money to keep Doctors Medical Center, a special district, open. "We have competing needs in the county. At least one other fire district is in serious financial trouble, and I'm sure there are other districts which could use money too."

"It's a further explanation of why (the supervisors) think they have to do something in Lafayette to open station 16," said Moraga-Orinda Fire District director Fred Weil at the Nov. 18 district meeting. "If they were handing money out to East County and not reopening 16, they would have smelled the tar and seen the feathers out of Lafayette. And for good reason."

The Lafayette Emergency Services Task Force declined to comment on the county's action. "In addition to investigating detachment, we have been focused on the joint station 46, and more recently on reopening station 16. I suspect that that will be our focus until it is accomplished," said co-chair Brandt Anderson.

Carman said he plans to present a proposal for the reopening of Lafayette station 16 to his board in December.

Moraga

## On-Street Parking

Traveling from Orinda to the Rheem area, Rheem Boulevard is a two-lane road, with parking stalls sometimes on one or two sides. Until recently, the street widened to create four lanes from the intersection with Moraga Road to the end of the 24 Hour Fitness and the Saint Marys' parking lot, just before 335 Rheem where the new town chamber is located. The restriping would extend the two-lane profile for

about 200 yards.

The 31 parking stalls are not the entirety of the plan. Staff was authorized to build ADA compliant curb ramps and a sidewalk, and a striped crosswalk across Rheem Boulevard. The town manager is reaching out to the Orion Academy, the school located across the street from the town chambers, to discuss the construction of pedestrian improvements on private property to continue the cross-

... continued from page A5

walk across Rheem Boulevard and Park Street that would connect 335 Rheem to the theater, the shops, restaurants and businesses across the roadway.

Keimach says the project went out to bid. After proposals are reviewed, the concrete work will begin. The project construction manager, David Latona, can be reached at (925) 817-8091 with any questions regarding the construction operations.





# Letters to the Editor

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 should be 350 words or less; letters of up to 500 words will be accepted on a space-available basis. Visit www.lamorindaweekly.com for submission guidelines.

email: [letters@lamorindaweekly.com](mailto:letters@lamorindaweekly.com);  
Regular mail: Lamorinda Weekly, P.O.Box 6133, Moraga, CA 94570

Editor:

For just \$238, the Orinda City Council could have found out how much water Orinda has used per year from 2004 to 2014.

Contrast the \$238 with the \$51,000 the city council awarded "... to hire a consultant to perform a comprehensive study of Orinda's downtown parking situation ..." (Lamorinda Weekly, Nov. 18). The council approved the \$51,000 expenditure at its Nov. 3 meeting.

Also, at the Nov. 3 city council meeting, I personally offered -- at no cost to the City of Orinda -- to obtain information on Orinda's water use between 2004 and late 2015. The East Bay Municipal Utility District (EBMUD), Orinda's water supplier, asked me to pay \$238 to obtain the information on Orinda's water use.

I even stated (in writing) to the Orinda City Council that I would examine -- at no cost to Orinda -- the city's water use over the last 10 years. I never received a reply.

On July 1, EBMUD imposed a 1,000 gallon-per-day water limit on all Orinda households. Residents exceeding that limit would be assessed a financial penalty.

If the current four-year drought continues, the daily water ration may drop from 1,000 to 500, 200, or zero gallons per day. Who would want to buy a house in Orinda if the supply of water were severely limited? A lack of running water would make Orinda's homes impossible to sell and, thus, worthless.

If the City of Orinda knows how much water it has used over the last 10 years, then the city could decide if it needs to place a moratorium on new construction. In June, the city council of Pleasanton, California, placed a moratorium on a large construction project. The Pleasanton City Council cited the current drought as the reason for imposing the moratorium.

The time has arrived for Orinda's elected officials to take bold, decisive action on water consumption and to consider prohibiting more real estate development.

If the Orinda City Council can spend \$51,000 to study parking, the council can surely take action to study Orinda's water situation.

Richard S. Colman  
Orinda

Editor:

In Victor Ryerson's article of Nov. 18, I see a petition has been turned in to the Orinda City Council, encouraging the stack and pack scheme. The reasons for this are not believable. They want amenities to better serve the people. They don't specify what they want. Ethan Elkind suggests a "zero energy" building. Various of these people want increased "Vibrancy," complaining Orinda is not "Vibrant" enough. They do not specify what they actually mean.

The above exhibits a big bundle of emotion, but no intelligent thought. It follows the UN Agenda 21 plan, but has no relation to anything that works.

1. Who will pay for it?
2. Will there be low income housing?
3. Where will people park?
4. Property taxes will go up. (This is the main motive for the bureaucrats in Orinda.)
5. Business will have to pay for new buildings.

Business in Orinda is already marginal. Orinda is a small market, not well adapted to economies-of-scale.

Higher rent and taxes will drive business out of Orinda. People are not going to live without their cars.

Lets not let the bureaucrats plan our lives. Their motives are political and will make Orinda a worse place to live.

Henry R. Pinney  
Orinda

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Business

## The Fourth Bore Tap Room & Grill Opens in Theatre Square

By Sophie Braccini



Michael Karp at the door of the new restaurant

Photo Jaya Griggs

It can be a bit puzzling when a business owner closes a seemingly successful restaurant to replace it with another one. Michael Karp, who owns Barbacoa and Table 24 in Orinda's Theatre Square, did just that. He closed Barbacoa at the beginning of November and recently reopened as The Fourth Bore Tap Room & Grill – a modern American pub with craft beer and a year-round beer garden.

The restaurant features wood-fired rib eye, house-ground burgers, crispy cheese curd, homemade soups and salads. "It's a stripped down ver-

sion of Table 24, more pub style. The anchor will be the 30 rotated craft beers, and we'll have live music from time to time," says Karp.

Come spring, or on warm winter days, the space above The Fourth Bore, which has been used for private parties, will have a portable bar, and people will gather to play Cornwell darts. "I want the place to be fun, thriving. I want it to be a blast, approachable to everyone," says Karp. "This will be about groups, softball and soccer teams." With seven big screen TVs, Karp adds that it will be

a perfect place for kids as well. "People will find here in Orinda the kind of experience they go to Berkeley or San Francisco to find."

Karp says that while Barbacoa was a really good restaurant, he wanted a place that was "over the moon."

"Table 24 or Forge (Pizza) are over the moon, and that is what I want there," says Karp, who is the owner of six other restaurants, including Forge Pizza in Oakland, Danville and soon Napa. "I had the concept of the Fourth Bore in mind for some time,

so when I had the opportunity to partner with brewer J.J. Phair of E.J. Phair Brewery and Restaurants I had to seize the opportunity; it all happened at once."

Table 24 chef, Jonathan Williams, will be taking charge of The Fourth Bore, moving some of his favorite food with him, such as lobster that he will nicely incorporate into a macaroni and cheese. "With 30 different beers on tap, a great wine and artisan cocktail menu, the restaurant will be a place of constant new happenings, a central hub where people will always see someone they know when they come in," says Karp.

Table 24 will also evolve. According to Karp it will be elevated a bit, more entrée heavy, where people will go for a sit-down dinner experience.

The restaurant will celebrate its grand opening with live music starting at 8 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 3. For information, visit [thefourthbore.com](http://thefourthbore.com).

**The Fourth Bore Tap Room & Grill**  
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*Lamorinda Weekly business articles are intended to inform the community about local business activities, not to endorse a particular company, product or service.*

## business briefs

**The Wood Knot Refurbished Furniture**  
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Tatiana Hastings in her studio with some of her refinished furniture.

Photo provided

For two years Tatiana Hastings has been developing a custom furniture refinishing business from her Lafayette home. "I get pieces, most of the time solid good structures, from consignment stores, or from friends," says Hastings. "When I get a piece, the fun part starts for me. I wait until an idea comes to my mind; each piece inspires something different." Hastings uses different decorative paint, textures and finishes. Sometimes people ask her to transform a piece they like, but want to modernize or want a different color or finish. She also does simple upholstery and distressing. "I started doing this when I was in school," Hastings says. "I was selling pieces on Craigslist when I was still in college. Then, when we moved into our new Lafayette home and looked for good quality furniture we realized that new home furniture was very expensive, so I went to consignment stores and started refinishing what I bought." She says she has redone everything in her home. "Our friends were surprised by the uniqueness of the pieces and asked about it," she adds. "My husband asked me, 'Why don't you start a business?' and he built a studio and office in the back of our house." In August, Hastings opened an online store, The Wood Knot. While most items are sold online, customers living in the area are also welcome to contact her to visit and see the pieces in her studio. "This is relaxing to me," she says. She does not plan to stop anytime soon.

**Cisneros Named November Moraga Employee of the Month**



From left: Kevin Reneau, Nicole Chenault, Jaqueline Cisneros and Roger Gregory

Photo provided

Jaqueline Cisneros, a popular and veteran checker at Safeway, has been named the Moraga Employee of the Month for November. Cisneros has been with the local grocer for 16 years and has developed a loyal group of shoppers who appreciate her friendly approach and wonderful customer service. "I receive at least two customer compliments daily on how great an employee she is and she always seems to remember their names and ask about their family," said manager Nicole Chenault. Cisneros will be awarded \$50 gift cards to Safeway and Pennini's restaurant in Moraga from the Moraga Rotary and Chamber of Commerce at an upcoming Moraga Rotary lunch in early December.

**News from the Three Chambers of Commerce**

**Lafayette**

Annual Holiday Mixer at U.S. Bank from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, Dec. 9 at 3498 Mt. Diablo Blvd, Lafayette. The party includes food, fun, beverages and a big holiday raffle. The mixer is \$10 for members; free for members who bring at least three canned items for the Food Bank.

**Moraga**

Chamber Holiday Party from 7 to 9 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 10 at Aegis of Moraga, 950 Country Club Drive, Moraga. Registration required at [MoragaChamber.org](http://MoragaChamber.org); \$15 per person.

**Orinda**

Christmas Holiday Party at 6 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 3 at the Hilton House, 21 Orinda Way, Orinda.

If you have a business brief to share, please contact **Sophie Braccini** at [sophie@lamorindaweekly.com](mailto:sophie@lamorindaweekly.com)

## Candy Kattenburg Retires

By Sophie Braccini



Candy Kattenburg Photo S. Braccini

An icon of the Orinda business community is bowing out of her position as executive director of the Orinda Chamber of Commerce. Candy Kattenburg was the anchor of the organization for 10 years, managing it, organizing events, taking care of the members, and serving as the ambassador of the business community in the city.

"It was almost by accident that I got interested in that position 10 years ago," remembers Kattenburg. She lost her flight attendant job with United Airlines after 9/11 and was looking for new opportunities when she was helping with events at the Orinda Chamber of Commerce where her husband, architect Rick Katten-

burg, was a board member. "Since I had done recruitment when I was a Revlon sales manager, the executive director at the time, Valerie Holtz, asked me to help her recruit a replacement," says Kattenburg. "I asked to shadow her to understand what the job was, and realized that it was something I would love to do myself. It's been a great 10 years!" The director is now leaving to take care of her 90-year-old mother, who lives by herself in Walnut Creek.

Kattenburg says that the most important task is to maintain and grow the base of the Chamber of Commerce, and to be available for whatever the members need. She manages everyday operations, spends a lot of time on the phone answering all types of questions, "just being available is important, (the members) need to feel that someone is listening." A lot of changes have happened during her tenure, including new events from comedy nights to restaurants tours, a

revitalization of the Chamber, a new website and newsletter, the Trivia Bee, and Shop Orinda campaigns. She has also managed the classic luncheons, Fourth of July parties, and more.

With so much happening in Orinda, one might think Kattenburg manages a large staff, but she is "it." Fortunately the chamber board members are active, and Kattenburg works cooperatively with the board and successive presidents, such as Syliva Jorgensen who has been president for the past several years. "Sylvia has been great. When she came in and gave me the list of things she wanted to do, she blew me away," remembers Kattenburg. She says that she has loved all the presidents she worked with, and particularly appreciated that Jorgensen never had one loose end. She regrets to have to leave just as her good friend Roy Hodgkinson will be taking the presidency.

The Orinda Chamber of Commerce is seeking candidates to replace Candy Kattenburg. The executive director is in charge of membership sales and service, event organization and coordination, and is asked to be in the office one day per week. Like Kattenburg, the executive director will attend monthly board meetings, and attend events as the chamber representative. Interested parties should contact [info@orindachamber.org](mailto:info@orindachamber.org).



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# Local Nonprofit's Environmental Impact in Contra Costa County

By Sophie Braccini



Lafayette senior planner Michael Cass appreciates the work done by 4CL. Photo Sophie Braccini

Lynnda Deschambault's passion for nature was cultivated at a young age – and it has never waned. Eight years ago, when Deschambault was vice mayor of the Moraga Town Council, the state started asking cities to incorporate a climate action plan into their code.

In response, Deschambault created the Contra Costa County Climate Leaders (4CL), which facilitates the sharing of best practices for greenhouse gas emission reduction policies in Contra Costa County cities and trains various young people. Her only regret is that her hometown of Moraga is not, in her opinion, leading the pack of climate leaders.

Lafayette Senior Planner Michael Cass says that 4CL acts as a facilitator, doing the legwork and bringing the experts to the table so staff can be educated on topics such as electrical charging stations, the PACE (property-assessed clean energy) program, and waste reduction efforts. “(The nonprofit) really has focused on educating city staff and city officials,” said Cass, who until recently was in charge of environmental affairs for Lafayette. “They put on some presentations on multiple topics. They touch on a variety of

issues and try to focus on what the pressing issues of the moment are. They provide the expertise and facilitate relationships with stakeholder groups.”

“The councilmembers in our small town are all volunteers, and no one has the time to do the research needed to craft new legislation,” Deschambault said, “so I started looking for what was already out there in terms of climate action plans that we could use. Then I created fact sheets about existing legislation that others could use on a website, and we started holding information sessions for local municipal staff, and it's just grown from there.”

The nonprofit facilitated setting up the California Youth Energy Services (CYES) program this past summer that trained young adults to conduct free energy audits in homes. “The 4CL pushed to have Lafayette participate, but it cost a minimum of \$20,000 to participate and we didn't have the budget,” remembers Cass. “Then 4CL helped facilitate a grant opportunity and urged Moraga to partner with Lafayette and do a joint application so we could conduct the program without having to come up with the money.” Over 250 households participated and several local youth were educated in the process.

Deschambault sees youth education as the second priority for 4CL. Over the past eight years she has hired several interns, many from Saint Mary's College. “I have political science and environmental science seniors working with us to complete their senior projects,” says Deschambault. “Others stayed with us several years and really gained valuable experience.”

Jency James started working with 4CL in 2012, during her sophomore year at Saint Mary's College where she studied environmental science. “I helped plan some of the workshops, spoke at many council meetings, and met with city staff,” says James. “I learned that the grassroots bottom-up approach really affects change. The plastic bag ban is

a good example of it; it started in one or two small towns, then the state saw that it worked and adopted it, and now it is spreading to the whole country.” James said she learned many valuable skills during her years with 4CL. “I learned how to put on an event, to create fact sheets, to do public presentations, to make our voice heard.” James graduated in 2015 and now works for Republic Services as a recycling coordinator, working with apartment complex and condominium residents, among other things.

Deschambault has a full-time job with the Environmental Protection Agency, so sometimes 4CL can be a lot of extra work, but she feels that she is part of something that is bigger than herself. “Cities like Richmond, El Cerrito or even Martinez are doing so much,” she says, noting that El Cerrito has added a full sustainability chapter to its general plan. She says the financial impact of projects is studied, but the environmental impact is also systematically analyzed. She sees these cities taking the lead in Contra Costa County.

As for Moraga, she says the progress has been in baby steps, but she congratulated the council on Nov. 18 when it passed the small farm animal ordinance. “It's all linked,” she says. “Food production, water, waste management, all have an impact on energy production and greenhouse emissions.” Upcoming topics for 4CL include open space, water, and partnerships between cities and business communities. For more information, visit <http://www.cccclimateleaders.org>.

## Tenants Criticize

... continued from page A1

“Our community has been decimated,” said resident Karen Kern who called the complex a “no play zone” and unfriendly to children.

Complaints regarding new 20-plus-page leases cite such unusual items as a “moisture control policy” regarding plants in apartments, \$70 trash fee per month, and a requirement to clean toilets once per week. Kern said she would love to talk to Sack staff, but they have gone through three property managers in the past year and are unresponsive.

One tenant with a background in forensic accounting went to the trouble of researching the inequity of water and trash charges, which are the same for a one-bedroom unit as a three-bedroom unit. She found the actual costs that the complex is paying and did the math: according to her calculations, actual garbage collection cost for each unit is \$43.33 per unit, per month, however Sack charges \$76.11.

Lafayette resident Matt Siegel, who is an attorney for the Berkeley Rent Stabilization Program, described the “lease breaking fee” as “absolutely illegal.” He describes the organization as “incredibly mismanaged” and “totally tone deaf.” He explained that all tenants want is stability, but called the 27-page lease with onerous terms “despicable.”

No one from Sack Properties attended the meeting. Theresa Karr of the California Apartment Association made it clear that she was not representing Sack Properties, but noted she is in touch with Kirby Sack. Although unable to comment on the renters' complaints, she did say, “I guarantee that you'll get something from

Sack Properties explaining all this.”

Pointing out that they are not doing themselves any favors by not being here, Mayor Brandt Anderson called the situation astonishing: “There is abuse going on here.”

“This appears to be a bad actor that we need to deal with,” said Andersson, adding, “This is not acceptable in our town.”

“The hope was we had an owner that was ethical, fair and reasonable; this is not reasonable,” said Council Member Mike Anderson. He agreed with that this is an abusive situation that needs to be looked at by the owner, acknowledging that she may be unaware of what is going on.

The Mayor wrote a blistering letter to complex owner Kirby Sack calling the new and excessive charges an “orchestrated work-around that delivers maximum revenues to the company at the expense of long-term tenants.” The letter, sent days after the Nov. 23 city council meeting, requests Sack personally attend the next meeting in January to respond to the charges.

“Without counterbalancing testimony from you, the City Council was left to conclude that many or most of these allegations have merit,” concluded Andersson.

The meeting wrapped up with the council directing the city manager to review with the city attorney what all of the legal options are, including a potential rent moratorium to be discussed at the Jan. 25 City Council meeting. Several messages were left with Sack Properties along with an in-person visit. As of press time, they had no comment.

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Giving Dreams an Address

**Celebrate the Holidays ... continued from page A1**

Organized by Hollie Lucas-Alcalay, local business owner and board member of the Hacienda Foundation, and Jackie Smith, organizer of the Tarabrook Holiday Boutique in Orinda, the fair will feature over 40 Lamorinda artisans selling their unique creations, such as woodwork, ceramics, herb-based specialties, chocolates and toffees. "We didn't want to have more than two or three people offering the same type of craft," says Lucas-Alcalay, "and the ones we chose have very different styles. They bring original pieces, all different."

Captain Vineyards of Moraga will host a complimentary wine reception to kick off the event from 6 to 8 p.m. Friday, Dec. 4. The fair is a fundraiser for the Hacienda Foundation and will be open from noon to 8 p.m. on Friday and from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday.

In Lafayette, Saint Nick will make another official visit in one of his favorite sleighs, the Old Betsy fire engine, at 4 p.m. Friday, Dec. 4 at the Lafayette Plaza Park as part of the city's annual "It's a Wonderful Life" event.

"The 1919 Model T fire truck will be driven by George Wasson himself, who restored the Lafayette historical artifact," says grand master of ceremonies and Lafayette Chamber of

Commerce executive director, Jay Lifson.

The event will include a tree lighting at 5:30 p.m. and entertainment provided by Stanley Middle School, Lafayette Nursery School, the Bradley School of Music, The Contra Costa Children's Chorus, Lamorinda Theatre Academy and Town Hall Theatre Kids from 4 to 6 p.m. Complimentary hot chocolate and treats will be provided courtesy of Whole Foods of Lafayette and food trucks will offer dinner items for purchase.

"It takes a whole business community to make this event happen," adds Lifson. Honey Bear Trees across from Acalanes High School donated the tree and Dana Green and Branagh Development are contributing two-thirds of the cost of the city's twinkle lights. "We've been able to extend them down to Brown Avenue and over on Pleasant Hill Road," says Lifson.

A public menorah lighting is also scheduled at Lafayette Plaza Park on Sunday, Dec. 6, offered by the new Chabad of Lamorinda. At 4 p.m. activities for families and children will be organized in the Hanukkah tradition with food, crafts, music and dancing. The first candle on the 10-foot menorah will be lit at 5p.m.

For more sparkle, you can head to Orinda where there will be a tree lighting ceremony and entertainment, including a visit from Santa on a fire engine, starting at 4:30 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 5 in front of the Bank of America building in the Village Square Shopping Center, and at Theatre Square enjoy horse and carriage rides from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m., a tree lighting ceremony at 7:30 p.m. and another official visit from Santa. (That big guy gets around.)

"On the first Saturday we will have free coffee and hot chocolate," says Lisa Bellew of the Marcomm group that handles the event planning for Theatre Square. "A Lamorinda Theater Academy performance is scheduled at 7 p.m. and children are also invited to an ornament workshop, all here in the square." A second Saturday of festivities is planned at Theatre Square from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 12, which will include the carriage rides, face painting and a photo booth.

Many more Lamorinda holiday events are planned this season (see the Holiday Events listing on page B8) that provide a wonderful opportunity to enjoy Lamorinda at its best, with local entertainment, unique shopping and spiritual gatherings underscoring what makes this community great.

Front page photos, top left: Beverley Alwari, Holly Lucas-Alcalay, Susan Captain and Jackie Smith show off items that will be available at the Hacienda Holiday Faire in Moraga. Bottom left: Santa visits children during last year's holiday tree lighting in Orinda. Right: Christmas carolers sing during "It's a Wonderful Life" event in Lafayette.

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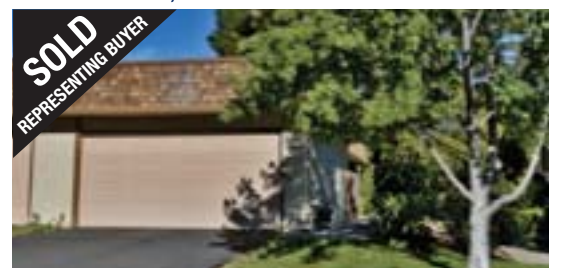


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# Fourth Generation Soldier

By Cathy Dausman



Patti Witalis holds her commission plaque, left, and diploma from Command and General Staff College. Photos provided

*"The soldier, above all other people, prays for peace, for he must suffer and bear the deepest wounds and scars of war."*—Douglas MacArthur

In the weeks between Veteran's Day and the anniversary of Pearl Harbor a more noticeable veteran presence naturally shows itself front and center. Take, for example, army veteran and Lamorinda resident Patti Witalis. When she says her family first saw action in this country's army 155 years ago she isn't just whistling "Dixie." Her great grandfather, Patrick Henry, may himself have

whistled "Dixie," however. He served as a soldier in the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia.

Patrick Henry was merely the first of four generations of soldiers Witalis can trace from the Civil War to the Gulf War.

"I didn't want to follow the standard route laid out for me when I graduated from college," Witalis explained. So after receiving her degree from San Jose State University in 1967 she was sworn in as an officer in the Army Medical Specialist Corps, training and working as an occupa-

tional therapist. The Vietnam conflict was heating up, "For What It's Worth" was playing on the radio, and Witalis' cousins, Emory and Jack, were drafted; her cousin Patrick enlisted.

Witalis said she pursued an army career "to follow my family culture and heritage."

Her mother, Lorraine, and her aunt Estelle served as army nurses in World War II; Witalis' father, Charles, was a naval aviator. Her uncles Joseph, Vincent, John and Silas, Jr. were on active duty during the Second World War. Witalis' maternal grandfather, the elder Silas (nicknamed "Chaps") was a cavalry officer during the Spanish American War and World War I.

Not surprisingly, Witalis even married in the army. Her husband, Roger Witalis, was a captain in the Medical Services Corps when they first met during officer training at Fort Sam Houston in Texas. Witalis' father-in-law served during World War II as a flight surgeon with an Italian-based B-24 squadron.

Shortly after they were married the newlyweds were transferred to Japan, where they remained until 1969. Witalis was discharged from active duty in December 1969 after giving birth to the first of her family's daughters. "I raised my children (then)," she said. In 1988, however, with her children growing up, Witalis volunteered a second time and was re-commissioned in the Army Reserves, which allowed her a bit more work flexibility. "Papa swore me in both times," she said.

... continued on page B2



Witalis, right, assists a soldier with a new prosthesis.



Witalis' maternal grandfather, Silas, nicknamed "Chaps" in World War I

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## Pulitzer Prize-Winning Poet Visits SMC

By Lou Fancher



Gregory Pardlo Photo pbs.org

It's rarely written about, but one fascinating thing about a writer's work is how the reader influences the takeaway. Read a book, essay, collection of poetry or other written words on a blustery day when the world seems thrown against you, a story or expressive phrase feels doom-laden, fatalistic. Read it early in the morning a month or a year later, when eagerness lights the pages or greater maturity has been achieved, the exact same words appear to ring with truth and freedom of thought.

Consider that the poet or author brings that same in-the-moment subjectivity to the composing of his or her work; it's easy to appreciate the fragility and vulnerability of creative expression. Which is why a conversation with 2015 Pulitzer Prize-winning poet Gregory Pardlo and his upcoming visit Dec. 2 to Saint Mary's College as part of the MFA Creative Writing Program's reading series is special.

Celebrating its 20th year, the lecture series that brings nationally recognized authors of poetry, fiction and nonfiction to the Moraga campus is free and open to the public. More than anything, the diverse roster of guests is a testimony to the cultural richness of contemporary literature – the up-close, in-person encounters make plain the humanity behind the dazzle of Pulitzers or PEN awards or best-selling labels.

Pardlo's first collection of poems, "Totem," earned the APR/ Honickman Prize in 2007. "Digest," (Four Way Books, 2014), won the 46-year-old poet a remarkable second-book Pulitzer Prize for Poetry and was nominated for the 2015 NAACP Image Award. His poems have appeared in American Poetry Review,

Boston Review and The Nation, and in anthologies including the Norton Anthology of Contemporary African American Poetry, and two editions of Best American Poetry. Pardlo is a Teaching Fellow in Undergraduate Writing at Columbia University and lives with his wife, Ginger Romero Pardlo, and two daughters in Brooklyn, New York.

"A lot of people read 'Digest' who might not have read my work before the prize," says Pardlo. "That's resulted in people saying to me things I hadn't thought about."

Recognized by reviewers – hailed or criticized, depending on viewpoint – for his astute manipulation of language and often intentionally abstruse academic references, Pardlo's poems are equally concerned with urban environment, with parenting, with everyday 21st century subjects like technology, aging, love and destruction. "I hadn't realized that one of my poems could be understood as a climate anxiety poem, as being about the impact of society on nature. That's a big discovery," he says.

Fatherhood has had a superficial impact, causing him to be more aware of generosity expressed in his poems, but also a more profound reorientation. Instead of his former preoccupation with "my culture, my wisdom," Pardlo's awareness that he is not the center of his kids' universe has caused him to realize he is not even the center of his own universe. "My concern now is for the 'I' character in my books. The speaker (in a poem) can be an (a-----) and it's OK to admit to unflattering impulses. To be accepting of them and not bury them in shame is the point."

Which leads to courage and the honesty of a lyric impulse. If Pardlo sets his task as writing a poem that celebrates his grandmother, for example, failing to write a tribute represents tremendous, personal failure. "That mystery, allowing the poem to go in whatever direction it will, is the most courageous part," he says.

Perhaps the second greatest challenge is winning a prestigious prize relatively early in his career. "Yeah, it's uncommon for someone's second book to win the award," he says. "It's intimidating. What do I do next?"

What Pardlo does next is exactly what he's been doing all along. Every day is an opportunity to find his essential voice, to tear down the poem he's built and reinvent it with added layers, a shift in pattern, less defensiveness and didactic tone, improved balance between statement and abstraction, and more conversation invited with the reader. "I trust that if I listen openly enough, there are patterns that will emerge. There are subconscious sentiments that might move the language around. I've logged hours of therapy and my approach to revision is like therapy. I write, I try to figure out what it is the poem is saying, I get around my ego as much as possible."

As an African American writer, Pardlo prefers the term "cultural identity" instead of the subject-to-interpretation "racial identity" that he calls "functional shorthand in the political realm." His history and inherited sense of belonging in American society permits access not available to majority-culture poets. "It allows me certain kinds of irony, satire. I can make fun of power and my own heritage in ways that a majority-culture poet can't as effectively. I have access to black urban dialogue, black southern dialect, standard American dialect."

Along with access, he admits there are expectations. "Our secular religion in America is race. We believe in it fundamentally. I can be very threatening. I'm telling some readers that things are not the way they think it is. That can be a disappointment to some people. To others, willing to try new ideas and aesthetics, my work can be exciting."

Perhaps the greatest gift in Pardlo's poems is their demand. Asked to step into his world and find out about ourselves, we discover our willingness to change, to engage in conversation, to admit vulnerability, to realign without judgment our relationship to a word, a thought, an experience.

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## Fourth Generation Soldier

... continued from page B1

Witalis recalls a 2003 overseas deployment to Ecuador where the stated mission was "to win the hearts and minds of the Ecuadorean people." However, since it was a Medical Specialist Corps unit deployment, medical aid was given. Witalis reached the rank of Lt. Colonel. "I may be the only person with two honorable discharges," Witalis joked.

She continues to find ways to care for soldiers; she has volunteered twice at days-long resource fairs for homeless veterans. Ironically, not one of her family's next generation – three daughters and sons-in-law, a niece and nephew – has served in the military.

"Roger and I are the end of it (family military service)," Witalis said. She finds it shocking that so few serve in the today's armed services, yet acknowledges that "times are dif-

ferent" and California is perhaps "a different part of the country."

"It's not that I like conflict," Witalis explains, "but we need to care for soldiers."

Even today, when she sees a sol-

dier, she can't help but connect. "I introduce myself, give them a 'hooah' and tell them to keep safe."

Four generations in one family – all who have served in the U.S. Army. Hooah, indeed!



Witalis' mother, Lorraine, an Army nurse in World War II



Witalis' father, Charles, a naval aviator

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

# Looking Good in Lamorinda – Holiday Style

By Moya Stone



Urban Rocks jewelry trunk show at J. Colleen Boutique

It was beginning to look a lot like Christmas back in October but now the festivities are really here and to get us in the mood, Julie Rubio from J. Colleen Boutique in Lafayette is hosting an open house. Stop by between 2 and 5 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 5 for wine tasting from the Boisset Collection and a trunk show featuring Urban Rocks jewelry. While you are there ask Rubio, who is also a film producer, about her latest project, "East Side Sushi."

"Yes my film that I produced is playing in theaters all over the country," says Rubio, "with amazing reviews. We have 100 percent on Rotten Tomatoes." Check out the trailer at <http://www.east-sidesushifilm.com/media.htm>.

With forecasters saying we just might get a wet winter, and lots of



Feather cloak exhibited at the de Young Museum.

Image courtesy the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco

Image courtesy J. Colleen Boutique

snow in the mountains, perhaps it is time to refresh our outerwear. Venture in Lafayette, voted Best in the East Bay, proudly offers gear made in the USA from popular companies such as Patagonia. For the Anglophiles among us, the shop also carries the classic waxed jacket by Barbour, perfect for all that rain we are going to get. Venture will also soon be selling the Lacoste brand, a high-end line of clothing for men and women designed in France that has been around since 1933. To celebrate, Venture is hosting a Lacoste trunk show from noon to 5 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 5. A brand representative will offer for sale men's outerwear, Oxford and Polo shirts, and other great gift-giving items. Women's apparel will arrive next spring. "With all that has gone on in Paris, it feels good to carry something from France," says Venture owner Tom Stenzel.

On these dark and chilly evenings I have been staying in and pouring over the most fabulous of books, "The Fine Art of Fashion Illustration" by Julian Robinson (Quarto Publishing). A visual feast of fashion illustrations spanning 400 years, from the Renaissance to the 1940s, "The Fine Art of Fashion Illustration" features over 350 fashion plates from the Julian Robinson Archive. We tend to forget that studio photography wasn't always around and for centuries, fashion relied on artists to communicate the looks of the day. Hand-drawn and colored illustrations are artwork within themselves and offer an op-

portunity to study the details of design. Along with the images there is discussion of the various artists as well as discussion of eras and differing artistic styles. This book makes a lovely gift for any fashion or art enthusiast.

Speaking of gifts, Lafayette resident and hatter Christine Del Monica will be among the 60 craftspeople selling their wares at Santa's Bag Boutique at the Lafayette Community Center, Friday, Dec. 4 through Sunday, Dec. 6. For more information go to their Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/santasbagboutique/>.

For those of us who feel we have enough stuff, what better gift than sharing an experience, like a day at the de Young Museum in San Francisco? One of the current exhibits, Royal Hawaiian Featherwork: Na Hulu Ali'i, is a marvel for anyone, but particularly for those interested in textiles. The exhibit features 75 cloaks, capes, and head adornments all made of feathers from native birds. Each piece was handmade for the Hawaiian royal family at the time in the late 18th century.

Whether you are a shopper, or simply an admirer of festive fashions, make it a happy holiday season and go forth in style.

Moya Stone is a fashion writer and blogger at [overdressedforlife.com](http://overdressedforlife.com).

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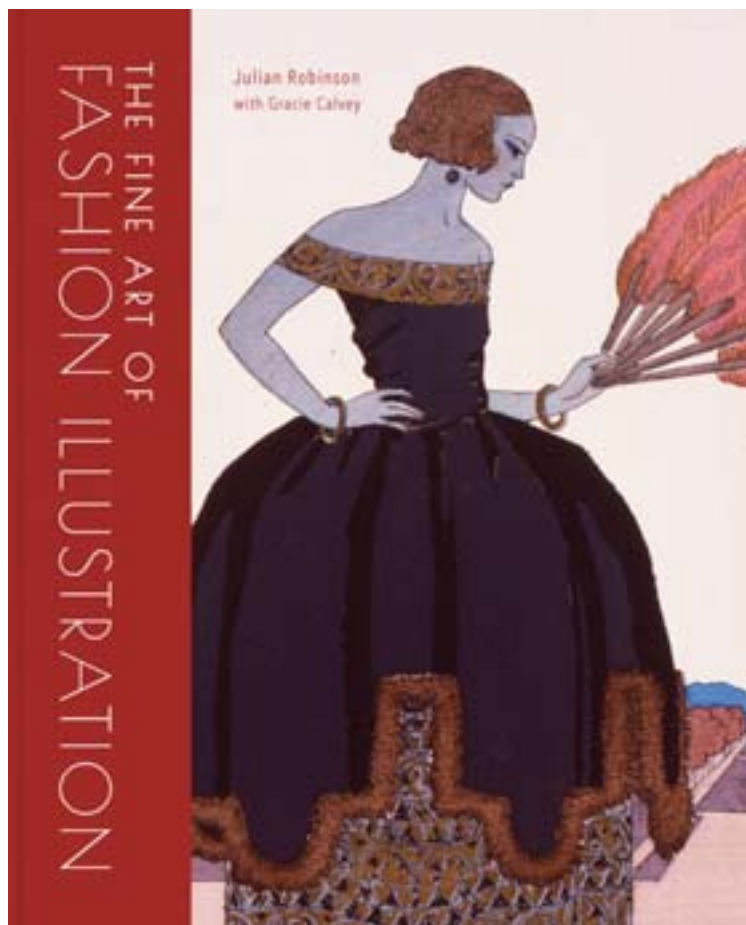
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"The Fine Art of Fashion Illustration" by Julian Robinson  
Image courtesy of Quarto Publishing

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## Disabled Runner a Victor in NYC Marathon

By Chris Lavin



Amy Morosini of Moraga, left, with her official escort, Natalie DiBlasio, at the finish line of the New York City Marathon. Photos provided

that marked her as part of the disabled group. She got out a Sharpie and wrote a big AMY. She hadn't known what to expect, and what she found blew her away.

"As we walked to the start, all the other runners gave us a standing ovation," she said. People starting yelling her name: "Go, Amy! You can do this, Amy." She said she must have heard her name called out 300 times along the route. And unlike the other four marathons she has run, she was amazed at the level of support and organization.

"As soon as you got off the Verrazano Bridge, the fans were 10 people deep," she said. Besides having rehydration and nutrition stations every mile, "the people of New York just came out and handed things out - like bananas, and it was the day after Halloween so they had candy."

Morosini and her escort, Natalie DiBlasio, had to stop at a medical tent around the halfway mark. "My right ankle was hurting really badly," Morosini said. She thought she might have a stress fracture. She had it wrapped, but from then on, there was a lot of walking.

"But when we got to Central Park, and saw the finish line, I grabbed Natalie's hand and said, 'Let's do this,'" Morosini said. They ran the rest of the way, crossed the line, and raised their arms in victory, 7 hours and 17 minutes since their standing ovation.

"I went to complete, not compete," she said. Mission accomplished.



Amy Morosini of Moraga at the New York City Marathon with Kyle Pease of Atlanta, Georgia, who has cerebral palsy, and whose wheelchair broke at Mile 16 and he ended up being carried the rest of the way by other marathoners.

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## Campolindo's Debate Team Ranked No. 2 in the Nation for Parliamentary Debate

Submitted by Monica Moore



From left (with national ranking): Peter Moore (6th), Kevin Deng, Austen Li (25th), Kaveh Boostanpour (7th), Conor Hanvey (6th), Ming Qian, Thomas Liao (7th) and Richard Gong (25th) Photo Fay Lin

Campolindo Debate was founded in 2012 by three Joaquin Moraga Middle School students who wanted to continue pursuing their passion for Parliamentary debate in high school. They were initially inspired by JM's Debate teacher Don Read, Moraga School District's 2015 Teacher of the Year. "We started the club at Campo because we really enjoyed JM's debate class but we did not know so many students felt the

same way," said Peter Moore and Thomas Liao, the co-founders of the club. "The debaters are very dedicated, attending year round practices two to four times a week."

The success of Campo Debate has been infectious; it is already the largest academic club at the high school, with over 60 members and is ranked the No. 2 high school parliamentary debate team in the nation. The ranking is based on points scored by the team's

varsity duos at invitationals held at local high schools and universities. Campolindo's junior varsity teams have also competed very well, consistently finishing with strong records and speaker points, and earning Campo the sweepstakes award at the prestigious National Parliamentary Debate Institute Invitational at Berkeley. For a full list of rankings, visit <http://www.parli.org/2015-2016-club-rankings>.

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# 'Harvey'

A holiday dose of pure goodness at Town Hall Theatre

By Sophie Braccini



Believing is seeing. From left: Veta Louise Simmons (Laurie Strawn), Elwood Dowd (Steve Rhyne) and Dr. Chumley (John Blytt) as they meet a surprising friend in "Harvey."

Photo Stu Selland

Town Hall Theatre Company's choice of Mary Chase's "Harvey" for this holiday season is as sweet and family-oriented a production as one could want.

A huge Broadway hit, "Harvey" won the Pulitzer Prize in Drama in 1945 and starred James Stewart as Elwood P. Dowd in the famous 1950 comedy of the same name. The Town Hall Theatre's charming version directed by Susan Hovey will take audiences who are familiar with the story right back to their youth, and it is a great way for parents to share a dose of genuine goodness with their children. The show opens on Dec. 5.

Elwood P. Dowd is a harmless, sweet good-natured man in his early 40s with one caveat: his best friend is a 6-foot-tall Pooka, resembling a giant white rabbit that only Dowd can see. This peculiarity normally would not be a problem, but his sister, Veta Louise Simmons (Laurie Strawn), and niece who are living with him are social climbers, and are constantly embarrassed as Elwood introduces

Harvey to their select guests. Feeling that her brother's delusion will condemn them to social isolation, Veta Louise decides to get Elwood institutionalized. But of course nothing will go according to plan, goodness will triumph, and Elwood and Harvey will be set free.

Town Hall actors under Hovey's direction fit their characters like hand in glove. Steve Rhyne who plays Elwood has an authentic sweetness and caring shown in his demeanor, his face, even the angle of his eyebrows and his gaze that says, "I am here, I am present, I am opened to you and I really see you." Elwood always has a wonderful time, wherever he is, whomever he is with. "Playing Elwood has started rubbing off into my everyday life," says Rhyne with a smile. "When Elwood asks someone, 'How are you?' he really means it, and I find myself having this kind of attitude at work with people."

The biggest challenge for director Hovey was the over 6 foot tall – and invisible – Harvey. "We have added

just a little touch of magic to the performance, but no one will really 'see' Harvey," says Hovey, who looks like the sweet and joyous spirit of the play got to her as well. To make Harvey real for the actors, Hovey impersonated the rabbit at the beginning of rehearsals. "We studied his placement, his interaction, I said the words only Elwood hears, so the actors could really play around him in a credible way."

"By the time we were in the sixth week of rehearsal I started to really 'see' Harvey," confirms Rhyne. "I see his bulk, where his eyes are when he stands and when he is sitting. I see his ears, and even if he is said to be white, I see some grey on this belly." And it works really well on stage. The presence of the pooka, a creature from Celtic mythology, is almost palpable and as other characters in the play start seeing him, audience members expect to do so themselves.

According to Hovey the message of the play is summarized by what Elwood says: "My mother told me that in this world, you must be oh so smart, or oh so pleasant. Well, for years I was smart. I recommend pleasant." Another great moment is when Elwood talks to a psychiatrist about coming to grips with reality: "Well, I've wrestled with reality for 35 years, doctor, and I'm happy to state I finally won out over it."

The play talks about the power of imagination and how genuine gentleness can transform lives. The performance is a perfect holiday treat, as sweet and comforting as a cup of rich hot cocoa with as many marshmallows as you can imagine.

"Harvey" runs Dec. 5-19, with previews on Dec. 3 and 4, at Town Hall Theatre, 3535 School Street in Lafayette. Theatre Club nights on Dec. 11 and 18 will feature free wine and a talkback session with the director and cast immediately following the performance. For tickets call (925) 283-1557 or visit www.TownHallTheatre.com.

# Have you ever thought... "I'm Not Ready Yet!"

By Linda Fodrini-Johnson, MA, MFT, CMC

What is it that makes us fiercely independent individuals say we are not ready for something? Remember when we were young and playing with friends or on the playground we heard the saying, "Get ready, get set, go?"

Once we pass age 65 or 70, we may find that managing life requires more dependence than we want to admit; our mindset is "not ready" for that. Being ready does not necessarily mean "go" – it means getting your ducks in a row. It is the "get set" part of the equation – not necessarily the need to take immediate action, but to make plans for those "what ifs."

In reality, we can't be ready for everything or all of life's challenges; if we did, our sense of adventure and exploration might be stifled. However, there are some individuals, me included, who procrastinate about

signing up for services, or finalizing legal documents or even contemplating moving because we are "not ready yet!"

I have heard over the years many adult children of aging parents say that their elderly parents (in their 80s or 90s) are not "ready" for a caregiver or even moving to a supportive senior housing community, yet the parent is calling more often with vague needs for family support or help in understanding an important document. When these calls happen more frequently, it is usually a sign that it is time to "get set" – maybe not "go" – and to start to put together a plan for eventual support, ever so gradually.

In Lamorinda, we have a wonderful grassroots program called the "Lamorinda Village" which is an inexpensive way to get support when you need just a little bit of help. The Lamorinda Village offers a way to stay engaged, which is extremely important to one's quality of life and health status and allows a place to engage in volunteerism that also extends life and has shown to reduce pain.

While the monthly fees are very affordable, many people say they are "not ready yet." My answer is this: All of us over the age of 65 should participate in the Lamorinda Village. Together, we need to build the community we want in the future. It is a small monthly expense for the "peace of mind" we each need for that time of "need." This is especially true for all of us who want to age our way, and in our own homes.

For more information go to www.LamorindaVillage.org. There are Villages all over the country, so if you have family in other areas, go to www.vtvnetwork.org and search for the location nearest them.

Being "ready" is a progressive process. We usually move between

being open to change to just a little further into willingness, when we see the possibilities of what could happen. Being prepared can free us from some anxiety or worry.

Remember we are odd mortal creatures and usually resist when others make decisions for us, even when they are good decisions and in our best interest. Making changes can be scary, but preparing for change can be a way to stay in control and have life our way.

If you want to make a suggestion for someone else, be sure to use "I messages" – saying what you are concerned about, not what they should do. Let the other respond, validate their feelings and ask if they would like some options to think about.

Preparedness is a virtue – build a support system to have life as you wish. Get ready, get set – and go.



Linda Fodrini-Johnson is the Founder of Eldercare Services, a Licensed Marriage, Family and Child Counselor, and a Certified Care Manager. Eldercare Services, a full-service care management and home care company accredited by the Joint Commission serving the Bay Area since 1989. For information, call (925) 937-2018 or visit www.EldercareAnswers.com.

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## New Bicycle Service Station Keeps Lamorinda Cyclists Rolling

Submitted by Jim Brovelli



Paul Griessel at the bike service station

Photo provided

What do Google Headquarters, Stanford University and Holy Shepherd Lutheran Church have in common? They are all home to DERO Fixit Bicycle Service Stations.

A new DERO Fixit, Air Kit Tire Pump and Swerve Racks are available on the corner of the Holy Shepherd property on Moraga Way in Orinda thanks to the Eagle Scout project of Paul Griessel, a junior at Acalanes High School and member of Troop 303. When Griessel approached Pastor John Valentine about doing an Eagle Scout Project at the church, Valentine mentioned the many bike riders who try to repair bikes in the church parking lot but have no tools. Valentine had heard of the DERO Fixit and was interested in having one available in the community. "As soon as Pastor Valentine talked about this as a potential project I knew it was the one I wanted to do as I am passionate about sports and

the environment," said Griessel.

Moraga Way is part of the Lafayette-Orinda-Moraga Loop, a 17-mile bike route that is traveled by hundreds of bike riders every week. There is a bus stop at the corner, so bike riders can even leave their bikes parked at the church and hop on the bus to BART. "The project is designed so that recreational cyclists and also commuters in the neighborhood can all take advantage of the Fixit and Swerve Racks," commented Griessel.

The Fixit includes all the tools necessary to perform basic bike repairs and maintenance, from changing a flat to adjusting brakes and derailleurs. The tools and air pump are securely attached to the stand with stainless steel cables and tamper-proof fasteners. "There is also a QR code on the Fixit so that smartphone users can look up common repair 'how-tos' when they are at the service station," explained Griessel. Hanging the bike from the hanger arms allows

the pedals and wheels to spin freely while making adjustments.

The project took over a year to plan and execute with many revisions drawn by Griessel and discussed with the city of Orinda, Pastor Valentine and Eagle Scout Adviser, Bruce McGurk, PhD. Prior to installing the equipment, concrete had to be poured and pavers put down to make a flat pad. "There has been a lot of work involved but I have been grateful for the opportunity to give back to the Lamorinda community," said Griessel. "I would like to thank members of my troop, Walker Lambert, Cole Wolf, Tommy Brovelli, Jacob Griessel, Eric Leblanc and Liam Glynn, for helping on the construction."

The Swerve Racks, which support the bicycle at two points and allows for the wheel and frame to be secured using a u-style bike lock, provide high security and easy bike parking. There is parking for a total of eight bikes at the church.

"Cyclists will be able to locate the service station using an app on their phone and a map of the stations worldwide is available on [www.dero.com](http://www.dero.com)," explained Griessel. "I hope the project has made a lasting impression and that future Eagle Scouts will be able to duplicate the service stations in other locations in Lamorinda."

For information about Orinda Boy Scout Troop 303, contact Scoutmaster Jim Brovelli at (925) 997-8437 or visit [www.bsatroop303.com](http://www.bsatroop303.com).

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## Community Service Tree Of Lights Celebration



Logan Wilson reads the poem written by his grandmother, Moraga Royal Executive Director Dianne Wilson, in honor of her lost son. Photo Sophie Braccini

It may be very cold on the December evening when the second Hospice of the East Bay Tree of Lights celebration is held in Lamorinda. While the little white candles people hold during the event will not offer much warmth, the warmth from the hearts of the men and women united by the tree of lights, and from their shared compassion will likely emanate from those in attendance as it did on Nov. 22 at the Moraga Country Club. Sharing this simple moment, remembering loved ones who have died, listening to words and songs of sorrow and hope, was profound, and people were united, reminded of both human physical frailty and the strength of love. The second Tree of Lights ceremony will be held at 4:30 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 5 in the Orinda Village by Bank of America. The events are fundraisers for Hospice of the East Bay and managed by volunteers. In Moraga, Sara Mooradian and Dianne Wilson were the co-chairs. Before the tree was lit, speakers and singers shared thoughts and poems, and then the long list of beloved departed ones was read, while each participant held a candle. The Dec. 5 event is part of Orinda's community holiday celebration, so memorial names will not be read at this ceremony. The trees lit in Moraga and Orinda will continue to shine throughout the holiday season. Eleven such ceremonies were planned throughout the East Bay. — S. Braccini

## Veterans Honored in Lafayette

Submitted by Louise Diracles



A Cub Scout serves food to veteran Kramer Klabau. Photos provided

On Veteran's Day, the Acalanes Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) attended a dinner at the Veterans Memorial Hall in Lafayette. The regent of the Acalanes DAR, Susan Skilton, and Brenna Shafizadeh, DAR District IV vice director, presented the Veterans of Foreign Wars and the American Legion with a 50th Anniversary of the Vietnam War flag. They also presented veterans from the Vietnam War a commemorative proclamation from the president of the United States recognizing their service to their country. The local Cub Scout troop served dinner to the large group of veterans, their families and the DAR group.

## Larry Beans Re-Opens His Holiday Mailing Service



Larry Beans

Photo Sophie Braccini

Moraga resident Larry Beans will once again be mailing local residents' letters and packages of all sizes using stamps from Bob Reidelberger's stamp collection, as long as the packages do not require special forms. Reidelberger owned thousands of stamps that he collected throughout his life. "You can give me the envelopes either before or after stuffing them," says Beans, adding that if people prefer a certain type of stamp, he will probably be able to accommodate them. People only pay for the cost of the stamps used; there is no fee for the service. Beans even takes the mail to the post office. "For regular mail, I will charge 45 cents for 49-cent stamps," says Beans. All proceeds will go to Reidelberger's family. Send Beans an email at [larrybeans@comcast.net](mailto:larrybeans@comcast.net) and he will give you his address to drop your mail. — S. Braccini

## Donation Requests from the Community

*'Tis the Season of Giving*

### Lafayette Rotary Club Coat Drive

Every year the Lafayette Rotary Club collects gently used coats to donate to Shelter Inc. of Contra Costa. At a recent Rotary meeting, Executive Director Timothy O'Keefe noted how important the Rotary coat drive is for many homeless community members at this time of year when the weather turns colder. This year the club is inviting the community to bring gently used coats (adult or kids sizes) to the following locations in Lafayette: Blodgett's Abbey Carpet & Flooring, 3291 Mt Diablo Ct., Lafayette, and the Lafayette Chamber of Commerce, 100 Lafayette Circle, Ste. 103, Lafayette.

### Toys for Tots Donation Locations in Lamorinda

There are several Toys for Tots donation locations in Lamorinda: The Moraga-Orinda Fire District will be collecting toys 24 hours a day through Dec. 21 at 1280 Moraga Way in Moraga; Better Homes and Gardens Mason-McDuffie Real Estate will accept toys from 8:30 to 5 p.m. at 89 Davis Road, Suite 160, in Orinda through Dec. 11; and Cub Scout Pack 225 will be gathering toys through Dec. 15 from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. at 15 Martha Road in Orinda. For information, visit [toysfortots.org](http://toysfortots.org).

### Community Concern for Cats Giving Tree

Community Concern for Cats, which serves Lamorinda residents, is hosting a Giving Tree through Dec. 24 at its upscale thrift store, Rescued&Treasures, 1270 Newell Ave., in Walnut Creek. All the proceeds will go toward life-saving procedures for homeless cats and kittens in local neighborhoods.

The donations will go toward vaccinations, micro chipping, healing antibiotics, flea protections, leukemia/FIV tests, veterinarian office visits, neutering of male cats, spaying of female cats, surgery and emergency medical procedures and special holiday treats. So far this year, CC4C has neutered 1,800 and found homes for 600 cats and kittens. Thrift store hours are Monday through Saturday, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sundays from noon to 4 p.m. For information, call (925) 937-3201.

Community Concern for Cats is the oldest cat rescue organization in Contra Costa County. CC4C has three Saturday and Sunday afternoon adoptions sites: Pet Food Express, Lafayette and Pleasant Hill, and Petco Walnut Creek. Lafayette hours are noon to 3 p.m., while the others are 1 to 4 p.m.

### Need Donations?

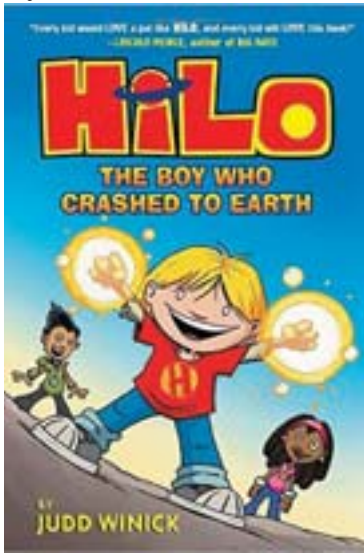
During the holiday season, Lamorinda Weekly will accept and publish opportunities for local giving. Send up to approximately 250 words describing the cause, type of donation needed, and where to bring or to send it. The organization collecting the donations, or receiving the donations, should be within our extended community. Submissions must be sent to [storydesk@lamorindaweekly.com](mailto:storydesk@lamorindaweekly.com) by Dec. 10 for inclusion in our Dec. 16 issue. Include "Season of Giving" in the subject line.



# Top 50 Books for Young Readers

'Walter the Giant Storyteller' shares his best picks at Orinda Books

By Lou Fancher



Despite his stature – at 6 feet 7.5 inches tall he is known as “Walter the Giant Storyteller” – Walter Mayes is at heart, a sprinter.

Dashing through highly opinionated, knowledgeable verbal reviews of the 50 top books for young readers on Nov. 9 at Orinda Books, Mayes set a record for economy of words and energy expended.

The longstanding tradition of wowing teachers, librarians and people dedicated to fine children’s literature with his annual 90-minute performance moved to Orinda Books this fall from The Storyteller in Lafayette after the October closing of Linda Higham’s much-loved bookstore. “He’s a treasure and there was no way I was going to allow this to end,” said Orinda Books owner Maria Roden.

Mayes is the school librarian at Girls Middle School in Palo Alto, an all-girls school. Like any giant in the industry, his love of words has expanded his job resume to include book advocate, author, publisher, actor, producer, director and more.

“I’ve been coming to hear his reviews forever,” said Robin Ludmer, the librarian for 19 years at Piedmont’s Beach Elementary School. “I learn about books I don’t know about. He’s a wealth of information and he’s funny.”

Indeed, Mayes knew how to please the crowd, gracefully fielding interjected calls to specify the targeted age range for a book, but unafraid to answer bluntly. “Age suggestions are just that. I don’t believe there’s anything like a fourth-grade book. It depends on the fourth-grade student,” he said, in reply to the question.

“He’s very honest about the fact that he doesn’t subscribe to the idea of inappropriate,” said Ludmer. “It’s my responsibility as a librarian to de-

cide what’s appropriate for my students and not rely on him to tell me.”

With filters in place, the approximately 25 people frequently asked about age brackets, eventually causing Mayes to say about one title, “If you’re asking me if it uses (“expletive” for the F-word), no, it does not.”

The questions about readership age may have been driven in part by reading initiatives enacted in schools. “There’s a big push towards guided reading levels,” Ludmer said. “It’s fine for reading instruction, but we hear about it in the library now more than in the past. There’s an expectation of providing books labeled level ‘P’ for a level ‘P’ reader. I ask what kids like to read and make a recommendation from that, not from what level ‘P’ is.”

If making book recommendations requires a high level of discernment, it is easy to understand the value of Mayes’ reviews. He is knowledgeable, and well aware of opposing viewpoints, but courageous about forming independent conclusions.

“A Fine Dessert,” by author Emily Jenkins and illustrator Sophie Blackall, tells the story of blackberry fool as it is made and served by a slave-era mother and daughter in the South Carolina home of a white family. “This is the finest crafted book of the year,” Mayes said. “It’s one of the New York Times best illustrated books of the year.” But a firestorm across the nation presents a crucial, opposing perspective. Critics say the illustrations gloss over, water down, or are even horrifyingly cheerful depictions of slavery. Mayes says readers who object haven’t read the author’s essay defending her choices.

Other titles carry less controversy. “Enchanted Air: Two Cultures, Two Wings,” by Margarita Engle, Mayes said is a memoir told in “magnificent

poetic style” about a girl with one foot in Cuba and one foot in the United States. About Katherine Applegate’s “Crenshaw,” he said, “I wept. I’ve never encountered a finer depiction about poverty. This is about being the poor kid. It’s about having an imaginary friend come back into your life when you really need it.”

The large number of graphic novels on Mayes’ top 50 list – “The Boy Who Crashed to Earth,” by Judd Winick; non-fiction “Drowned City: Hurricane Katrina and New Orleans,” by Don Brown; and others – reflect his experience as a school librarian. “Graphic novels circulate more than anything else in my library,” he said.

Nonfiction books were prominent on Mayes’ list. Especially books that read like great adventure fiction – “The Boys Who Challenge Hitler,” by Phillip Hoose – or provide fanciful, imaginative subjects – Steve Jenkin’s and Robin Page’s “How to Swallow a Pig” – or offer newfound clarity on well-traversed topics. “Finally, in one volume, a book that will explain to any seventh- to ninth-grader what the Vietnam War was about,” Mayes said about “Most Dangerous: Daniel Ellsberg and the Secret History of the Vietnam War” by Patrick J. Lewis.

For a complete list of Mayes’ top 50 books, contact Orinda Books. But the list won’t come with the inside scoop on which book had the best primary source information, the best feminist tale of the year, the creepiest characters, the most enchanting language or the most to offer both parent and child. For that, you’ll need to mark your calendar for fall of 2016 and come to Orinda Books to see a giant run a swift race through the coming year’s top 50 books for young readers.

# More Emergency Barrels on Their Way

By Chris Lavin



Everyone knows the drill: Be prepared. The local Community Emergency Response Team (CERT), however, has jump-started efforts of dozens of families to prepare for a major weather event or earthquake by ordering emergency water barrels at cost. And more good news is that they have another shipment coming in, and anyone in the Lamorinda area can order them.

“We go by the rule of threes,” said Duncan Seibert, program manager for the Lamorinda CERT program. “You can go three minutes without air, three hours without shelter in extreme conditions, three days without water, and three weeks without food.”

Lamorinda CERT is a community-based disaster response team that provides training for volunteers interested in learning about how to respond to disasters in Lafayette, Moraga, Orinda and the surrounding unincorporated areas.

Yet CERT is now concentrating especially on water. Seibert found a supplier from which he has ordered more emergency water barrels – dozens of families have already participated – and wants more people to order some. CERT estimates that each person needs one gallon of drinking water per day, and another gallon for washing and cleaning if the tap goes dry. The organization offers 15-gallon

holding barrels for \$33 and 55-gallon ones for \$61. Buyers also need a wrench, a siphon and spigots, which are also provided at cost.

Recently CERT volunteer Gordon Nathan was busy distributing barrels to families picking them up at the Moraga-Orinda Fire Station. “It’s a great idea,” he said. “It’s wonderful that this got organized.”

Anyone from the Lamorinda area is welcome to buy them by going to www.supplies.lamorindaCERT.org. Barrels ordered this month must be picked up in person, however, on Jan. 22 or 23. “The shipping is the expensive part,” Seibert said. Details are available at the website.

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[Facebook.com/santasbagboutique](https://www.facebook.com/santasbagboutique)

Holiday gift drive with the help of Boys Team Charity Lamorinda League. For a list of items to donate go to [shelterinc.org/support/volunteer/thanksgiving.html](http://shelterinc.org/support/volunteer/thanksgiving.html) and select "Teen Drive Wish List".  
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 www.willowsspringchurch.net

### Holy Shepherd Lutheran Church 433 Moraga Way, Orinda, 254-3422 www.holyshepherd.org



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 10:45 a.m. Contemporary Worship  
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### ART

**The Moraga Art Gallery's new exhibit, "Yellowstone: Beauty, Beasts, and Boneyards,"** features oil landscapes by Orinda's Lisa Gunn, whose imaginative palette captures the primitive character and timelessness of Yellowstone National Park and its environs. Also featured is a boldly-hued collection of one-of-a-kind etched tableware, handmade by guest artist Lisa Neimeth. The show will run through Jan. 9. For more info, visit [www.moragaartgallery.com](http://www.moragaartgallery.com) or call (925) 376-5407.

**"Wild" Animal Portraits and Cityscapes** by Dan San Souci at the Jennifer Perlmutter Gallery, 3620 Mt. Diablo Blvd., Lafayette. The exhibit runs through Dec. 5. "A Visual Feast," an exhibit featuring children's book illustrators from Dec. 10 to 31 will feature original art, reproductions and children's books for sale. Reception from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 10 and storytelling from noon to 3 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 12.

**The Lafayette Art Gallery presents "Artful Gifting"** and its holiday boutique, which runs through Dec. 26. For info, call (925) 284-2788 or visit [www.lafayetteartgallery.com](http://www.lafayetteartgallery.com).

**Saint Mary's College Museum of Art exhibit, "The Axis Mundi/Open Portals,"** is currently on display through Dec. 6. Also on display are oil paintings by William Keith, artwork by Luis Gutierrez, and "The Dr. Maurice Alberti Print Collection of European and American Masters." The Saint Mary's College Museum of Art is open Wednesday through Sunday, 11 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. on the Saint Mary's College of California campus, 1928 Saint Mary's Road, Moraga. For more information, visit <http://www.stmarys-ca.edu/saint-marys-college-museum-of-art>.

### MUSIC

**A sing-it-yourself Handel's Messiah will be held at 7:30 p.m. Friday, Dec. 4** at St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, 66 St. Stephens Drive, Orinda. The Messiah Sing will be directed by Minister of Music Robert Train Adams, and include the Festival Choir, soloists, chamber orchestra and audience participation. There will be music for all who wish to sing. Listeners are also welcome. Admission: \$20 in advance or at the door. For more info, visit [www.ststephensorinda.org/messiah-sing](http://www.ststephensorinda.org/messiah-sing).

**Diablo Choral Artists invites you to "Once Upon A Starry Night"** with Mark Tuning, music director, and John R.S. Walko, accompanist, at 8 p.m. Friday, Dec. 4 at St. Paul's Episcopal Church, 1924 Trinity Ave., Walnut Creek, and at 3 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 6 at St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, 66 St. Stephen's Drive, Orinda. Ticket details online at [www.dcachorus.org](http://www.dcachorus.org).

**The Diablo Women's Chorale invites you to join them for "Christmas Swings"** at 2 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 5 at Saint Matthew Lutheran Church, 399 Wiget Lane, Walnut Creek. Advance tickets: \$16 general admission; \$10 student; \$20 premium seating. Tickets at the door: \$20 adult; \$10 student. Tickets can be purchased at [www.DiabloWomensChorale.org](http://www.DiabloWomensChorale.org), or by calling (800) 838-3006.

**Emeritus at Diablo Valley College invites you to its fall fundraiser: A Conversation with Bach,** a piano concert with award-winning pianist, Dr. Lino Rivera, from 2 to 3:30 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 12. Dr. Rivera engages his audience by playing beautiful music and telling a story about how the musical pieces are tied to one another. Tickets: \$25. For info, call (925) 969-4316.

**WomenSing presents Make Good Cheer from 8 to 10 p.m. Wednesday, Dec. 16** at St. Mary's Chapel, 1928 St. Mary's Road, Moraga. WomenSing presents Make Good Cheer, the first concert of our 50th season, celebrating the gift of choral music – singer to audience and back again. Cost: \$28 general; \$10 under 18. For more info see <http://womensing.org/concerts/current-season/holiday-concert/> or call (925) 798-4875 or email [info@womensing.org](mailto:info@womensing.org).

### THEATER

**"Harvey" by Mary Chase presented by Town Hall Theatre** from Dec. 3 through Dec. 19. Gather the whole fam-

ily for the magical tale of Elwood P. Dowd and his best friend – a 6-foot, 3-and-a-half-inch tall invisible rabbit named Harvey. What better way to warm up your holiday season, than with this imaginative classic! For more details and to purchase tickets go to [www.townhalltheatre.com](http://www.townhalltheatre.com).

**A fairytale adventure of a mystical forest, two lost children,** an enticing gingerbread house, and a wicked witch, Solo Opera's "Hansel and Gretel" is a holiday "treat" for the entire family! The show runs at the Del Valle Theatre, 1963 Tice Valley Blvd, Walnut Creek at 7:30 p.m. Friday, Dec. 18 and at 2 p.m. Saturday and Sunday, Dec. 19 and 20. Seating is reserved, group discounts are available. For info, call (925) 943-7469, visit the Leshner Center box office, or go to <https://lesherartscenter.showare.com/eventperformances.asp?evt=411>. Tickets: \$25-\$40.

### HOLIDAY EVENTS

**Holiday Tree Lighting at Moraga Commons Park** starts at 6:30 p.m. with cookies and hot chocolate followed by the tree lighting at 7 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 3.

**Get ready for the holidays at the 25th annual Santa's Bag Holiday Boutique** from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. Friday, Dec. 4 and from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday and Sunday, Dec. 5 and 6 at the Lafayette Community Center, 500 St. Mary's Rd, Lafayette. Beautiful decorations, holiday gifts and the delicious smell of warm baked treats. Admission and parking are free. In celebration of the 25th anniversary, Santa's Bag will be giving back to the community by hosting a holiday gift drive with the help of Boys Team Charity Lamorinda League. Please visit the link: [shelterinc.org/support/volunteer/thanksgiving.html](http://shelterinc.org/support/volunteer/thanksgiving.html)

**Celebrate "It's a Wonderful Life in Lafayette"** and kick off the holiday season from 4 to 7 p.m. Friday, Dec. 4 in Lafayette's Plaza Park, located in downtown Lafayette. This free event will include visits with Santa, official holiday tree lighting ceremony, one-of-a-kind photo ops, live musical entertainment, crafts, holiday treats and a holiday sing-a-long. For information, visit [www.lafayettechamber.org](http://www.lafayettechamber.org).

**Hospice of the East Bay Tree Lighting ceremony** at 4:30 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 5 at the beautiful old oak tree in front of the Bank of America in the Village Square Shopping Center in Orinda. The festivities begin with school choirs performing traditional holiday music under the direction of their teachers. Following the performance, the tree will be lit to honor those we wish to remember and Santa Claus will arrive on a Moraga-Orinda Fire District engine with treats for the children. A contribution of \$25 will help support Hospice of the East Bay, which provides invaluable end-of-life care for terminally ill patients.

**See the Christmas story come to life at the 11th annual** viewing of the Live Nativity at Moraga Valley Presbyterian Church at 10 Moraga Valley Lane, Moraga. The MVPC courtyard will be transformed into a Bethlehem manger from 5:30 to 8 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 5. While the Courtyard will be a reverent scene, there will be additional activities, music and snacks in the fellowship hall. The sanctuary will be open for prayer and contemplation. Free.

**Tree lighting and Santa at Orinda Theatre Square** at 7 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 5 kicks off with a performance by Lamorinda Theater Academy and then continues with a visit from Santa, horse and carriage rides, hot chocolate, an ornament workshop and the lighting of the tree. Free movie night showing of "White Christmas" at 7 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 10 at the Orinda Theatre, 4 Orinda Theatre Square in Orinda.

**The public is cordially invited to join the Saint Mary's College Guild's Christmas Luncheon** beginning at 11 a.m. Thursday, Dec. 10 at the Soda Activity Center, at the college, 1928 St. Mary's Road. The event will begin with a social hour, which includes a delicious, creative bake sale, a money tree raffle, and festive, holiday baskets. Entertainment will be provided by pianist Sharon Lee Kim and the award-winning Saint Mary's College Chorale, conducted by Dr. Julie Ford. Lunch will be served at noon. Cost: \$45 per person. For info, call (925) 376-3306.

**Moraga Valley Presbyterian Church Christmas on the Hill Concert,** "Peace," at 4 p.m. and 7 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 12 and at 4 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 13 at 1310 Moraga Valley Ln., Moraga. Experience a heart-warming presentation of new and traditional Christmas music. Sunday childcare available for 6 months to PreK/TK with reservation: [kveitch@mvpctoday.org](mailto:kveitch@mvpctoday.org). For info, call (925) 376-4800 or visit [www.mvpctoday.org](http://www.mvpctoday.org).

**Christmas concert and variety show at 4 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 13** at the Orinda Community Church, 10 Irwin Way, Orinda. The evening will feature the UC Berkeley Gospel Choir, the Campolindo High School Chamber Singers, Orinda Community Church soloists and musicians, spoken word and storytelling, a song from Santa, and many other surprises. Think Amazing Christmas Concert meets Prairie Home Companion, followed by treats in Fellowship Hall.

**The OSLC Concert Series presents "Christmas: A Musical Fantasy,"** featuring children's choir, handbell choir, contemporary singers, and the adult choirs of Our Savior's Lutheran Church (Lafayette) and St. Stephen's Episcopal Church (Orinda) at 4 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 13. Program features a wide variety of holiday music, from Handel to Tchaikovsky to sacred and secular carols. Free. For info, visit [www.oslc.net](http://www.oslc.net).

**Patti Leidecker will be singing and playing everyone's favorite holiday songs** at 7 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 19 on the baby grand piano at the Rheem Theatre in Moraga. Leidecker has performed at Clint Eastwood's Mission Ranch Inn in Carmel on Wednesday nights for the past eight years. Come sing along with Leidecker and get into the holiday spirit. Tickets: \$15 general admission; \$12 seniors and children, includes holiday cookies and punch. This will be a great event for the youngest and the young at heart.

### KIDS, PARENTS & TEENS

**Join 5A Rent-A-Space for the 8th Annual "Free Photo with Santa"** event from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 5, at 455 Moraga Rd., Moraga. Families will receive a free photo and frame. Cookies, fruit and hot cocoa and candy canes will be served, and children will make a craft.

**Take a Photo with Santa at the Rheem Valley Shopping Center** in Moraga. Noon to 3 p.m. on Saturday, Dec. 12. Bring your camera. Free with your Rheem Valley Shopping Center receipts totaling \$25 or more or get a coupon online at [rheemvalley.net](http://rheemvalley.net).

**The Fratello Marionettes Present "The North Pole Review"** from 4 to 4:45 p.m. Tuesday, Dec. 15 at the Moraga Library. This production showcases the high kicking antics of the Russian Trepak Dancers, the graceful ice skater Crystal Chandelier, and the dazzling acrobatic penguins. Free, no registration necessary.

### OTHER

**Join RecycleSmart at the Vermicomposting (Worms!) and Bin Building Workshop** from 10 a.m. to noon Saturday, Dec. 5 at Heather Farm Community Center in Walnut Creek. This is a very hands-on workshop. You will build your bin, take it home with your worms and knowledge, and start composting right away. Cost: \$20; 20 household max capacity and registration required. Recyclesmart residents only. For info, visit <http://www.recyclesmart.org/workshops>.

**Despite its Black Friday, Black Cat sale last weekend, Community Concern For Cats** hasn't run out of cats: they still have plenty available for you to adopt – over 150 of them! If you plan to bring a cat into your home for the holidays, do it now so the noise and activity level is lower and conducive to becoming friends more easily. Adoption Site Hours: noon to 3 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 5 and noon to 4 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 6 at Lafayette Pet Food Express.

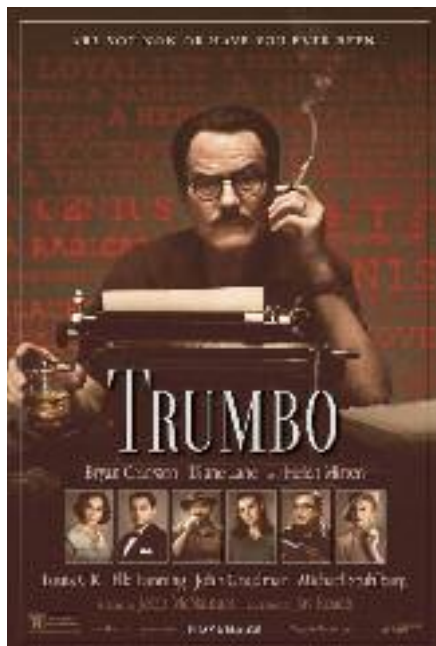
**Join the National Park Service and the Spanish Choir** of St. Catherine of Siena Church for a bilingual program of music, history, and holiday traditions at the Martinez Adobe on the grounds of John Muir National Historic Site. This free event is from 1:30 to 4 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 5. Reservations are not required. Please call the John Muir NHS visitor center at (925) 228-8860 extension 0 if you have questions. Visitors should meet at John Muir NHS.

... continued on next page

**MOVIE REVIEW**

# No Turkeys at Orinda Theatre at This Time of Year!

By Derek Zemrak



Although everyone was talking about turkeys last week, you will not find any at the Orinda Theatre. This is the season when Hollywood gives us the cream of the

crop and Oscar buzz is in the air. Let's take a look at the three films that are shoe-ins for Best Picture nominations: "Brooklyn," "Spotlight" and "Trumbo."

"Brooklyn" is an amazing movie about an Irish immigrant in 1950s New York who falls for an Italian plumber in Brooklyn but faces temptation from an-

other man when she returns home. "Spotlight" is the front-runner to win the Best Picture Oscar. It is based on the true story of Boston Globe editor, Marty Baron, who in 2001 assigns a team of journalists to investigate allegations against Roman Catholic Priest John Geoghan, who was accused of molesting grammar school boys. "Trumbo" is my favorite movie of the year for it has all my favorite elements: it is based on a true story; it is an excellent film; and the history is accurate. Dalton Trumbo was Hollywood's top screenwriter in 1947. He and nine other Hollywood executives (The Hollywood Ten) were jailed and blacklisted after refusing to answer House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) questions about their alleged involvement with the Communist Party. Amazingly Dalton won two Academy Awards for best writing using a pseudonym – "The Brave One" (1956) and "Roman Holiday" (1963). Look for an Oscar nomination for Bryan Cranston for his role as Trumbo.

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ture the largest menorah in Contra Costa, Paul Savage Fire Juggler, Live music with Any Rubin, doughnuts, dreidels, face painting, latkes and more and is open to all. Chabad of Contra Costa sponsors this popular event with assistance from with Broadway Plaza management.

**Hanukkah on Ice will be held at the Walnut Creek Civic Park Ice Rink** from 7:15 to 9:15 p.m. on the fifth night of Hanukkah, Thursday, Dec. 10. Ice skaters of all ages will enjoy a menorah lighting sponsored by Chabad of Contra Costa on the rain protected outdoor rink while skating to Jewish music. Traditional Hanukkah donuts called Sufganiot, hot dogs, latkes and drinks will be available and can be ordered online. Advanced Tickets: \$15, if ordered in advance at www.JewishContraCosta.com. Tickets: \$18 at the event based on space available.

**Daughters of the Goddess, a Bay Area women-only Goddess Temple**, will be holding its annual Winter Solstice Ritual at 7:30 p.m. Monday, Dec. 21. East Bay location given upon RSVP. Cost for newcomers: \$15. For info, contact Kahuna Leilani at (925) 787-9247 or visit www.Daughtersofthe-Goddess.com.

**5A Rent-A-Space Santa's Secret Wrapping Room open** to the public through Dec. 23, during business hours. This decorated area is set up with tables, chairs, wrapping paper, tape and ribbon – everything needed to get presents wrapped for free – especially handy if you need to wrap gifts without the watchful eyes of the recipients.

**Its first ever "Giving Tree" is being hosted** by Community Concern for Cats' volunteers at their Rescued Treasures Thrift Shop in Walnut Creek through Dec. 24. Their goal is to give the gift of life to as many homeless street cats as they can by providing needed medicines and medical procedures. Come down, buy a special ornament, and put it in the holiday window display. Rescued Treasures Thrift Shop is located at 1270 Newell Ave., Walnut Creek. For info, call (925) 937-3201.

**The Orinda Aquatics Masters, an adult swimming program**, will be offering an evening workout at the Soda Aquatic Center at Campolindo High School from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. through Feb 4. These workouts will be held Monday, Tuesday and Thursday evenings. No workouts on Dec 24 and 31. Swimmers may pay \$10 per swim, or pay a monthly fee of \$75 per month (December and January). For more info, contact Tiffany Forbes at tforbes267@gmail.com.

### SENIORS

**Health Insurance Counseling and Advocacy Programs (HICAP)** provides free and objective counseling and advocacy services to Contra Costa Medicare beneficiaries and their families who need assistance with Medicare enrollment and issues involving Medicare and associated insurance programs, including prescription drug coverage. HICAP does not endorse or sell insurance products. For appointments, call Lafayette Senior Services at (925) 284-5050. Appointments are at 10 a.m., 11 a.m., or noon on the first Wednesday and third Tuesday monthly in the Alder Room of the Lafayette Community Center.

**Mindful Aging at the Moraga Library presents "Eat Smart, Live Strong – Nutritional Education for Older Adults"** at 1 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 10. Cynthia Black will show how to keep healthy and strong by following the guidelines of the Eat Smart, Live Strong program developed by the USDA Food and Nutrition Services specifically for adults between the ages of 60-74.

**Positive Living Forum ("Happiness Club") Moderated** by Bob Nozik, MD, Prof. Emeritus UCSF, Author of "Happy 4 Life: Here's How to Do It." Brighten your day and take part in this interactive gathering which features speakers on a wide range of topics that guide participants toward a more ideal and positive life experience from 10:30 a.m. to noon the second Thursday monthly in the Elderberry Room in the Lafayette Community Center. Free for Senior Services Members; \$10 non-members. Drop-ins welcome!

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**OTHER ... continued**

**The Lamorinda Meditation Group** has been meeting from 10:30 to 11:30 a.m. on Monday and Thursday mornings since September of 2014. Come one or both days a week to settle in, meditate silently for 30 minutes with those who attend, and stay for questions and sharing or you may leave after meditation at 1036 Country Club Drive, Suite 100 (Career Wisdom Institute). Cost: \$5 donation for the use of this beautiful space. For more details, contact Gaby Mozee at gcmoozee@gmail.com.

**The annual Grand Menorah Lighting in Walnut Creek** will take place from 4 to 6 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 6 at Broadway Plaza near Macy's, the first night of Hanukkah. The event will fea-

## Lamorinda Weekly

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## Service Clubs Announcements

Explore Lamorinda Rotary clubs The heart of Rotary is our clubs- dedicated people who share a passion for both community service and friendship. Learn about Lamorinda's Rotary clubs.

We meet Friday mornings at 7:00 am at **The Lafayette Park Hotel & Spa**, 3666 Mt. Diablo Blvd, Lafayette. For more info, please email us at lamorindasunrise@gmail.com

<b>December 4:</b> Speaker: <b>Tom Guarino</b> , PG&E - Pipeline Safety Initiative	<b>December 11:</b> Speaker: <b>Stephanie Mann</b> - A Different Perspective On Gun Control
---	--

*Be sure to save Friday morning, December 18 at 7 am, for featured Pixar speaker, Josh Cooley. Find out how they produced award winning "Inside Out" from one of the original screenwriters!*

## Lafayette Rotary Club

**Step in on a Thursday and join us for our lunch meeting.**  
Thursday at noon Oakwood Athletic Club, 4000 Mt. Diablo Blvd., Lafayette.

<b>December 3:</b> Bob Gonser, attorney, will be speaking about investing for seniors.	<b>December 10:</b> Ron Bachman MD, will be speaking about the Oakland History Museum.
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www.rotarylafayette.org

# Brighten Your Holidays with this Browned Butter Cake

By Susie Iventosch



Browned Butter Cake with Toffee-Whipped Cream Filling and Cocoa Frosting  
Photo Susie Iventosch

When I was looking for a new “yellow” cake recipe, I ran across this one and it is delicious. It called for a browned butter frosting, but we loved the chocolate frosting with this cake. We added the whipped cream-toffee filling, and it is a natural with the subtle browned butter flavor of the cake.

It seems a little labor intensive, because you first brown the butter for the cake, then chill again until solid in the refrigerator. At that point, you follow the usual process of softening the browned butter at room temperature, just as you would any normal stick of butter when baking a cake or cookies.

This cake is rich and toasty

and perfect for the holidays.

To brown, heat butter in a heavy sauce pan over low heat, stirring occasionally, until melted. Continue to cook, stirring often, until butter foams and then foam subsides. Butter will begin to take on a nutty aroma and the solids will become a light golden brown. This takes anywhere from 5-10 minutes, depending upon the heat.

When butter is browned, remove to a bowl and allow to cool to room temperature. Then refrigerate until solid. This can be done a few days ahead of time. When ready to bake the cake, remove browned butter from refrigerator and bring to room temperature until soft enough to beat.

## Browned Butter Cake

(Serves 8-10)

### INGREDIENTS

3 sticks unsalted butter  
2/3 cup granulated sugar  
2/3 cup light brown sugar  
5 large eggs, at room temperature  
2 1/8 cups all-purpose flour  
1/2 teaspoon salt  
2 1/2 teaspoons baking powder  
1/2 cup milk  
1 teaspoon vanilla

### DIRECTIONS

Heat oven to 350F. Grease an 8-inch square baking pan.

In a large bowl, beat the softened browned butter with electric beaters or mixer, until soft and creamy. Add white and brown sugar and continue to beat until well incorporated and mixture looks fluffy. Add eggs, one at a time, and continue to beat after each, scraping down bowl as needed.

Combine flour, baking powder and salt, and set aside. Add to batter alternately with milk, beginning and ending with flour mixture.

Pour batter into prepared cake pan and bake for approximately 30 minutes, and then cover top loosely with foil, to keep from getting too browned. Continue to cook for another 5-10 minutes or so, until cake tester comes out clean. Check to make sure it is not getting too well done.

Remove from oven and cool completely.

When cooled, remove cake from pan and cut in half horizontally. Spread toffee-whipped cream filling evenly over bottom half. Place top half over the filling and refrigerate until cold.

Remove from refrigerator and frost tops and sides with cocoa frosting. Garnish with extra toffee bits.

Keep refrigerated and take out of refrigerator about 10 minutes before serving.

(You can also use two 8-inch round pans, but bake for a shorter time. This way you won't have to cut the cake horizontally, just spread filling in between layers before frosting.)

## Toffee-Whipped Cream Filling

1 1/2 cups whipping cream  
1/4 cup powdered sugar  
2 teaspoons vanilla  
4 Heath Bars, or your favorite toffee, broken into small bits.

Whip cream until stiff peaks form. Fold in powdered sugar, vanilla and toffee bits. Refrigerate until ready to use. Can be made a couple of hours before assembling cake.

## Cocoa Frosting

1 stick unsalted butter  
1/2 cup cocoa powder  
4 cups powdered sugar  
1/4 cup milk  
1 tablespoon vanilla extract

Beat butter until soft and creamy. Slowly beat in cocoa powder. Then add powdered sugar, alternately with milk until desired creaminess. Stir in vanilla.

Susie Iventosch is the author of Tax Bites and Tasty Morsels, which can be found at Across the Way in Moraga, www.amazon.com, and www.taxbites.net. Susie can be reached at suziventosch@gmail.com.

This recipe can be found on our website:

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.



# Lafayette's Bistro Burger a High-End Burger Haven

By A.K. Carroll



Photos A.K. Carroll



stacked and splayed atop the sheet of metal are slices of tomato, leaves of lettuce, rosette pickles, spicy sprouts, and fanned avocado wedges – all the fixings for Burger Bistro's deconstructed Lafayette Burger. Though it isn't the best burger I have ever eaten, it is certainly one of the prettiest.

They can't possibly do this in the Financial District, I think, at least not during lunchtime. The calm of the dining room is one of the many differences you will notice at Bistro Burger's most recent site in Lafayette, located in the former location of Susan Foord Catering and Café, behind Oyama Sushi and just off of Mt. Diablo Boulevard. Though plans for the eatery's opening have been in the works since early this year, Bistro Burger didn't crack its doors until early October; its grand opening was Nov. 19.

Owner Ali Kazemi grabbed the Lafayette space on a bit of a whim. When a friend of a

friend mentioned that Susan Foord was closing, he also suggested that Kazemi move in. A resident of Piedmont, Kazemi decided to have a look, and before he knew it he was making plans to overhaul the space, installing the grease trap, plumbing, and floor plan necessary to transform it into a modest, yet modern eating establishment.

In contrast to the hustle and bustle of Kazemi's FiDi Bistro Burgers, the Lafayette outpost is a breath of suburban calm. In place of bumper-to-bumper traffic and lines winding out the door, you will find clean open seating, a sunny back patio, and attentive table service. "It's an outlier," said Kazemi, who views the Lafayette Bistro as more of a "high end" endeavor. It is no white tablecloth to be sure, but it is a step up from your usual burger joint, and offers more sophisticated entrée options including a marinated tri-tip sandwich, a grilled salmon burger, and a spinach salad served with goat cheese, pumpkin seeds, and strawberry shallot dressing.

The salad is the creation of Chef Pietro Buttitta, who was hired exclusively for the Lafayette location and is crafting a customized menu that will feature pasta, brunch, and steak by the end of the year. You will find some of the same classic burgers, seasoned sides and fresh salads that feature at Bistro's other four locations to be sure, as well as exclusives like the spicy kale salad, the Lafayette burger, and truffle parmesan fries that I tried during my visit. There is also a children's menu to accommodate for the younger crowd and a spacious 10-stool bar that serves a selection of wines and beers – the only Bistro location to do so.

If you're the kind of person who prefers to "ease in" when trying new things, you might check out Bistro Burger's Happy Hour, which runs from 4 to 6 p.m. daily and features \$2 off

all beer and wine, burgers, sandwiches, salads and small plates. Or, if you're like me, you can Russian roulette the menu and dig right in.

I started with a simple kale salad, topped with crispy fried chickpeas and shredded parmesan and dressed in a flavorful spicy dressing influenced with Indian flavors. Next came a basket of the signature house truffle fries, decked with zesty herbs and generously sprinkled with parmesan. The fries were French-cut and thin, soft but not soggy and fresh from the fryer. No sauce required, though the house ketchup is a treat, more of a sweet marinara than its vinegary tomato sauce relatives. In comparison to the heavy indulgence of my dining partner's mushroom and brie-topped Paris burger, my Angus beef Lafayette burger was lush and fresh with crisp toppings, spicy sprouts, and gooey pepper jack served with a buttery yellow bun. There was some assembly required, but I have never had a problem with licking my fingers when they are dripping with delicious.

Though I didn't intend to finish a salad, fries, and an entire burger (4 and 6 oz. patties are available), before I knew it my plate was empty and my napkin was covered. A yellow-hued spear-cut pickle marinated in cumin, coriander, caraway seeds, and other "special" ingredients was the perfect way to end my meal, though Bistro does offer dessert. Maybe next time I'll go for the dark chocolate brownie or creamy banana milkshake. I'm sure to need a napkin regardless.

965 Mountain View Dr., Lafayette  
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Editor's note: In the Oct. 5 Business Briefs, Lamorinda Weekly stated Bistro Burger serves cocktails, but it only offers a selection of beers and wines.

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# LAMORINDA SPORTS

## Campolindo Returns to NCS Title Game, Miramonte Bows out in Semifinals

By Karl Buscheck



Jacob Westphal

The Campolindo football team is moving onto the NCS Division III title game, but Miramonte's playoff run came to a halt at the hands of Concord in the Division II semifinals.

The No. 1 seed Cougars advanced to the championship tilt by topping Bishop O'Dowd (No. 4 seed) 25-13 on Nov. 27 at Bob Wilson stadium in Moraga.

The Cougars got past the Dragons in the semifinals thanks to a couple of fourth-quarter touchdowns. The first came courtesy of junior tight end Joey Berzins, who hauled in a 13-yard pass from junior quarterback Jacob Westphal. Junior running back Matthew Ringquist then punched in an 11-yard rushing touchdown to seal the win.

As the reigning CIF Division III State champs, Campo has been lugging around some weighty expectations in 2015.

"Pretty much the challenge of the full year is that you can't pick up a paper and our name isn't referenced without saying 'defending state champs,'" head coach Kevin Macy said. "The defending state champs—they're all at college right now. And that's been a challenge. Just that added pressure. Because we're just not last year's team."

But they're sure doing a good impression.

The Cougars flew through the opening stages of NCS, thumping Ygnacio Valley 70-44 in the opening round on Nov. 14 before taking care

of Acalanes 42-7 in the quarterfinals on Nov. 20.

"I only go a week at a time," Macy said. "I don't look at the other bracket. I don't care who the other teams are. I don't care what North Coast is doing or what the CIF is doing."

Up next on the docket for the Cougars will be a championship showdown against the No. 2 seed Analy (Sebastopol) at 7 p.m. on Dec. 4 at Diablo Valley College. If Campo gives the 13-0 Tigers their first loss, the team will not only be crowned the NCS Division III champs, but will also return to the CIF State tournament.

"We're just doing just this one week at a time because it could be our last week," Macy said. "So, why put any energy into that next week? We just want to put all our energy into this week and then just hope for the best. If we survive, then we'll scramble and figure out what to do."

For the No. 2 seed Mats, that last week proved to be the team's semifinals meeting with Concord on Nov. 28. The game began in ominous fashion, as Miramonte fell into a 16-0 hole at home in the first quarter. The Mats cut the lead to 30-20 by the half, but ultimately couldn't find any answers for the visitor's relentless running game in the 60-32 loss.

"They're big and they're physical," head coach Jack Schram said. "They're much bigger than us and

they run the ball extremely well."

Concord ended up rushing for seven touchdowns and added an eighth on a kickoff return. Concord also dominated the turnover battle, as the No. 3 seed Minutemen recovered a fumble in the first quarter and intercepted junior quarterback Tim Tague three times. The Mats signal-caller also threw for five touchdowns in the defeat.

That was actually one fewer than the week before when Tague aired out six touchdowns to four different receivers in Miramonte's 47-29 win over Casa Grande (No. 7 seed) on Nov. 20.

"Our quarterback does a super job of reading the defense and trying to give us the best possible play. One play at a time," Schram said.

As Schram explained, the key to Miramonte's high-powered attack was its ability to strike either through the air or on the ground. In Miramonte's 41-0 beatdown of Redwood (No. 15 seed) in the first round, senior running back Clayton Stehr went for 180 yards and four scores on just 10 carries.

"Our offense is built to take advantage of whatever the other team wants to give us—whether it's the run or the pass," Schram said. "It was a total team game [and that] was where our success came from."



Tim Tague and Clayton Stehr

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Campolindo Girls' Lacrosse is looking for JV and Varsity head coaches for the spring season that begins in February 2016. Please email Jessica Hoffschneider for more information: [jhoffschneider@acalanes.k12.ca.us](mailto:jhoffschneider@acalanes.k12.ca.us)



## MAGIC



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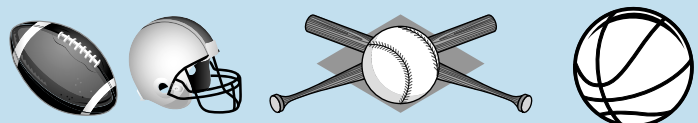
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### Youth Sports Registration



### Lamorinda Rugby Football Club



On-line Registration opens Oct 1st for the 2015 rugby season! Season runs December through March for youth, and through April for HS. Ages 6-19. Girls welcome through middle school. No prior rugby experience necessary. Practices are located at the Wilder Fields in Orinda.

Find out more about our team and how to register online at [www.lamorugby.com](http://www.lamorugby.com). For middle and elementary school ages, contact head youth Coach Adam Browne for more info: [adam.browne6@gmail.com](mailto:adam.browne6@gmail.com). For High School, contact Recruiting Director Steve Peterson at [stevepetersonhome@yahoo.com](mailto:stevepetersonhome@yahoo.com).



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## Campo Girls Volleyball Lose NCS Final, Make Strong CIF Run

By Emily Dugdale



Kristen Sibley

Photos Gint Federas

Despite a thrilling third set comeback, the Campolindo Cougars (12-0, 25-12) fell to Bishop O'Dowd (8-0, 26-12) 3-0 in the NCS championship match Saturday Nov. 21.

The Lady Cougars – who were also runners-up in last year's NCS champions – couldn't make up for a game characterized by unforced errors. Despite key players putting up big numbers – junior Jaime Brown had 16 assists and 10 digs, Kristen Sibley nailed 10 kills and 11 digs and junior Sabrina Smith had 8 kills – the team couldn't recover after two shaky sets.

The Dragons ultimately clinched the title after battling out the final few points in an intense third set (18-25, 19-25, 24-26).

The championship was the first time that Campo and Bishop O'Dowd had met this season, and the crowd loved it: parents joined the students in standing on the bleachers and cheering till the final point. In the rousing semifinals on Nov. 18, the Lady Cougars defeated rival Acalanes

in three straight sets (18-25, 22-25, 14-25).

John Vuong, Campo head coach, called the NCS championship loss "disappointing."

"O'Dowd came out to play, and they did," Vuong said as the crowd spilled onto the court after the final set point. "If we had taken out all of our unforced errors, I think the outcome of the game would have been different," he added before joining his tearful team to accept their runner-up award.

The team finished with 27 team

kills, 11 blocks, 31 digs and 27 assists.

By finishing in the top two in NCS the Lady Cougars earned a berth in the CIF State Tournament – the Cougars were the only Lamorinda team to earn a berth in this year's inaugural tournament.

When speaking of his team's preparation before their first state match, Vuong made his goal clear. "We need to refocus," he said. "We need to continue to work on our technical skills and minimize our unforced errors."

Vuong added that the teams Campo would meet at state are "all pretty good."

"We have to play our best game every night," he said.

The Lady Cougars entered the tournament as the fourth seed. They kicked off the tournament on Nov. 24 with a win against Christian Brothers in a score of 3-1 (25-18, 20-25, 25-21, 25-19).

"We knew playing CB was not going to be easy," said Vuong after their victory. The Lady Cougars barely beat the Falcons at the Super 8 tournament earlier this year. "They are fast in the back and played great defense," he said.

Despite a tough opponent, Campo cruised to victory in their first state match. "We maintained our focus throughout the matches and (were) not worried what the scores said. Our serves were tough and threw them out of systems throughout the night," said Vuong.

The Lady Cougars fell to No. 1 seed Valley Christian on Nov. 28 (25-16, 25-17, 25-20) in the NorCal semifinals.



## Saint Mary's Basketball Teams off to Promising Start

By Dean Boerner



Joe Rahon

Photos Tod Fierner

Both Saint Mary's basketball teams are projected to be top-four finishers in the WCC, but they couldn't be more different. The men are young and have a perimeter-oriented offense, while the women are replete with veterans looking to score in the paint.

Through their first three contests, the men are scoring at a torrid pace, putting up 82 points per game at a .542 field goal percentage. The composition of head coach Randy Bennet's team is almost completely different from last year, as the Gaels lost their entire starting lineup to graduation.

Consequently, younger players, like sophomore Emmett Naar have had to step up. "My role has increased leadership-wise and I've had to take on a bigger role scoring," Naar said. The sophomore guard is scoring a team-high 19 points per game.

Naar has shared the great majority of ball-handling duties early on with Joe Rahon, a junior transfer from Boston College. Naar and Rahon have been the Gaels' offensive spark-plugs, yielding 18 and 21 assists respectively, while no other player on the team has more than three.

With the entirety of Saint Mary's starting lineup last season graduated, other players are taking on more responsibility. This has led to the emergence of a young core of post players consisting of Evan Fitzner, Jock Landale, and Jordan Hunter.

"Guys who didn't have as big of a role last year have stepped up," Naar explained. "It's definitely very different going from one of the oldest starting lineups in college basketball to now one of the youngest ones."

Evan Fitzner, one of the upstart Gaels, credits past players like Brad Waldow and Desmond Simmons for his transition into the starting lineup as a redshirt freshman. "I think it really helped just learning from those guys last year, says Fitzner, who's averaging 10.7 points per game thus far.

With three wins already under their belt, including a convincing 78-61 victory over Stanford Nov. 22, in Moraga, the Gaels will look to push perennial WCC frontrunner Gonzaga later in the season.

... continued on page C3



Evan Fitzner

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## Former Campo Star Earns First-Team All Big West Honors

Submitted by Larry Margerum



Photo Marlin Agoub

The Big West Conference named former Campolindo High and Lamorinda Soccer Club player Val Margerum to the All-Big West first team. The center defender guided Long Beach State to a league-leading 11 shutouts and 0.65 goals against average and first-place tie for the conference title. As co-captain, she helped her team reach the Big West tournament title

game two years in a row and the NCAA playoffs this fall – they lost to Santa Clara 1-0 in the first round. In her two-year career at LBSU, she ranked second on the team in minutes played. The College Sports Information Directors of America also voted Margerum, a Design major, to the CoSIDA Academic West District second team.

## LMSC U10 Navy Girls State Cup Champions

Submitted by Rika Appl



From left: Kyla Douglas, Natalie Aiken, Mollie Appl, Gracie Carberry, Zoe Rossiter, Julia O'Connor, Coach Alex Sanchez, Ava Garcia, Claire O'Connor, Indira Naylor, Ashton Laczkowski, Laurynn Mancheno, Shawn Woodward, Chayse Yu  
Photo provided

Lamorinda Soccer Club U10 Navy Girls won the NorCal State Cup Championships in the Diamond Division on Sunday, Nov. 15, in Manteca, Calif. The team was dominant in the six-game seeding round, outscoring their opponents 37-5. The girls defeated Castro Valley

United in the quarterfinal 5-3, followed by a 3-1 victory against North Coast Futbol Club in the semifinal. The U10 girls' speed, passing and foot skills clinched the championship with a 2-1 win against Tecos Hayward.

## LMYA Girls' Team USA Wins Soccer Championship

Submitted by Linda Murphy



Back row, from left: coaches Joe Dougherty and Mark Poole; middle row: Rylan, Lila, Charlotte, Sadie; front row: Julia, Kaitlyn, Sarah G., Sara A., Krista, Cate, Kylie, Georgia, Gianna, Emily, Sarah Bryn, Riley, Katie  
Photo Matt Owens

LMYA's Team USA won the fifth-sixth grade Girls Soccer Championship on Saturday, Nov. 21. Team USA played an exciting and even-matched game against Team England, winning by a score of 1-0. Both teams prevailed in the playoff games held Nov. 14, earning a trip

to the Nov. 21 Championship. This was the first year LMYA hosted a Commissioner's Cup -- a full day of Championship games at the Lafayette Community Park featuring all LMYA girls and boys: fourth grade, fifth and sixth, and seventh and eighth grade soccer teams.

## Lamorinda Runners Bring Home Hardware from State Meet

Submitted by Eric Yabu and Spencer Silva



Miramonte freshman Cassidy Haskell ran a season-best to 17:37.3 to secure second place in the Division III state meet.

Campolindo runners junior Jared Yabu and senior Hana Sun celebrate top-10 finishes at CIF meet.

Photos provided

All three Lamorinda high schools sent representatives Nov. 28 to the CIF State Cross Country Meet (Fresno, Calif.). An estimated 2,000 runners, spanning five divisions, made the trek to Central California.

In the Division III girls' race, Miramonte freshman Cassidy Haskell put the finishing touches on a tremendous fall, finishing second overall with a season-best 17:37.3 – twelfth overall across all divisions. Haskell was the first Lady Mat runner to qualify for State since 2005, the last time the team itself qualified. This fall, the girls finished fifth in NCS, just one spot away from its first CIF berth in 10 years.

"Six of the seven girls ran season-best races (at NCS)," head coach Brian Henderson said. "It's not disappointing, but definitely bitter-sweet."

In order to qualify for the state meet, the boys' team ran a thrilling NCS race, besting rival Acalanes for the fourth and final spot in the event. Strong finishes from junior Jonathan Fiero (7th) and senior Pete Bull (11th) punched their ticket to Saturday's action.

The Mats finished 17th overall on Saturday. Fiero recorded the Mats' best time, coming in at 16:02.0 (54th overall). The team graduates just one runner, Bull, and Henderson anticipates both his teams will continue to "raise the bar" in 2016.

The Campo Cougars sent both their boys' and girls' squads to Fresno. The week before, both teams secured their third-consecutive NCS Titles at the sectional meet in Hayward, Calif.

Campo senior Hana Sun shaved 10 seconds off her fourth-place NCS time, finishing sixth overall with an impressive 17:37.3. Sophomore Hannah Ruane finished 18th overall (18:16.9), helping the Lady Cougars secure their third-consecutive top-five state finish – they earned 5th overall.

Junior Jared Yabu led the Cougars on the boys' side, finishing 8th overall (15:29.4). The Cougars' goal was to make their first podium visit – i.e., a top-three finish – since 2008, but ultimately came up short, finishing sixth overall.

"It was a fast race but we had the ability to move up," head coach Andy Lindquist explained. "We just didn't do it today. It's hard to come in as underdogs and manage the expectations and pressure. I'm extremely proud of their efforts."

Yabu echoed his coach's sentiment. "We got too far back in the beginning and weren't able to make up places in the second half of the race," he said.

Acalanes senior Cameron Gaskell qualified for State as an individual and placed 37th overall (16:03.4).

## Eclipse Boys U14 Lunar Team Wins Tournament

Submitted by Lora Easley



Photo provided

The Eclipse Boys U14 Lunar team had a stellar showing in the Year End Tournament in Cupertino, Calif. Monster defense and great team play allowed the team to go undefeated in the two-day tournament. The boys

won their first game 3-0, the second game 3-1 and their third game 6-1. The championship was played in extremely windy and wet conditions and the boys squeaked out a 2-1 victory in overtime.

## Saint Mary's Basketball ... continued from page C2

Those around Saint Mary's women's basketball are excited about the mix of young and veteran talent on this season's roster. "I'm very happy with the collection of individuals we have that make up this team," said head coach Paul Thomas.

The Gaels have played well on the road so far, earning road victories against University of Wyoming and Northern Colorado. It's apparent early on that Saint Mary's has an inside-out approach at the offensive end. Forwards Sydney Raggio (17 points per game) and Devin Brookshire (14.8 points per game) lead the way in scoring for a team that's only attempted 49 three-pointers compared to 121 by their opposition.

"We do like getting it into our post players and letting them work, says senior guard Lauren

Nicholson. Nicholson, who just returned from injury and was the leading scorer of last year's squad, highlights coach Thomas's strategy of high-percentage shots. Whether it's a jump-hook from a forward like Devin Brookshire or a layup from senior guard Shannon Mauldin, the Gaels look to take advantage of their ability to finish at the rim.

Thomas believes much of the team's success hinges on capitalizing on their rebounding prowess and limiting their turnovers. "Our demon is our turnovers," explains the coach. "Until we can control that demon, put it in a box, and pack it away, that's going to be something that's going to hurt us." If the Gaels can do that, they have a good chance of finishing at the top of the WCC come March.

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# Lamorinda OUR HOMES

Lamorinda Weekly Volume 09 Issue 20 Wednesday, December 2, 2015



Cynthia Brian's December Gardening Guide ...read on page D8

## Recent Rain Small Respite for Drought-Stressed Trees

By Chris Lavin



Redwoods are especially suffering in the Lamorinda area with the drought. The upper branches and lower ones, like these, die off to conserve water, according to experts.

Photo Chris Lavin

Mother Nature has been a tease. One good rainstorm – even a few claps of thunder – and she figures that is enough. She is even going to give us a few more little showers in the next couple of weeks, but

after four years of holding back, it is of little use to thousands of our most adored neighbors: the trees.

“Four years is a long time,” said Kenny Murakami, who runs the Moraga Garden Center. “I think all the

trees are hurting.”

Usually by conventional standards, rainy season starts Oct. 1. But for the past four years, Mother Nature has turned her back on the calendar and crossed her arms with a huff. The

brief showers that have been teasing the landscape here and there have not even begun to make a dent in the drought that has hit Northern California, and it is evidenced in the extreme stress on Lamorinda trees.

“I’ve never seen such mortality,” said Mark Silva, a ranger with the East Bay Municipal Utility District. “We’re seeing dead trees everywhere.” Redwoods and other trees are dying, or showing signs of stress that he has not experienced before. “I’ve never seen anything like it.”

Whether in yards or parks or natural areas throughout our neighborhoods, trees are showing signs of significant stress. Many have died, others are moving toward the nursing home. More dead branches are falling, more needles are raining down, and arborists are busy trimming branches and felling dead trees.

“It (the drought) is definitely not good for the trees,” said Abby Bill, a nursery worker at Moraga Garden Center.

“They’re just having a harder time reaching down to the water table,” her boss Murakami said.

... continued on page D4

# THE *Beaubelle* GROUP



## Red Bows & Silver Bells Happy Holidays

We would like to say thank you to our clients and friends for their continued support and trust over the years. It is because of you that we continue to be leaders in the Lamorinda residential real estate market.

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## Lamorinda Home Sales recorded

City	Last reported:	LOWEST AMOUNT:	HIGHEST AMOUNT:
LAFAYETTE	7	\$790,000	\$2,405,000
MORAGA	5	\$1,036,000	\$1,450,000
ORINDA	11	\$765,000	\$2,400,000

Home sales are compiled by Cal REsource, an Oakland real estate information company. Sale prices are computed from the county transfer tax information shown on the deeds that record at close of escrow and are published five to eight weeks after such recording. This information is obtained from public county records and is provided to us by California REsource. Neither Cal REsource nor this publication are liable for errors or omissions.

### LAFAYETTE

3 Gilmore Court, \$1,300,000, 3 Bdrms, 1777 SqFt, 1953 YrBlt, 10-14-15;

Previous Sale: \$876,000, 06-15-10

3921 Happy Valley Road, \$2,405,000, 3 Bdrms, 4583 SqFt, 1996 YrBlt, 10-9-15

948 Janet Lane, \$1,025,000, 3 Bdrms, 1739 SqFt, 1950 YrBlt, 10-13-15;

Previous Sale: \$500,000, 06-14-00

3478 Monroe Avenue, \$790,000, 2 Bdrms, 968 SqFt, 1952 YrBlt, 10-5-15;

Previous Sale: \$80,000, - -

3395 Moraga Boulevard, \$965,000, 3 Bdrms, 1534 SqFt, 1963 YrBlt, 10-5-15

1440 Reliez Valley Road, \$1,269,000, 992 SqFt, 1899 YrBlt, 10-14-15;

Previous Sale: \$320,000, 04-01-97

3020 Rohrer Drive, \$1,450,000, 4 Bdrms, 1993 SqFt, 1961 YrBlt, 10-6-15

### MORAGA

244 Corliss Drive, \$1,300,000, 4 Bdrms, 2294 SqFt, 1965 YrBlt, 10-9-15;

Previous Sale: \$995,000, 06-24-11

108 Hardie Drive, \$1,036,000, 3 Bdrms, 1828 SqFt, 1962 YrBlt, 10-5-15;

Previous Sale: \$699,000, 01-23-04

1825 Joseph Drive, \$1,260,000, 4 Bdrms, 2074 SqFt, 1971 YrBlt, 10-6-15;

Previous Sale: \$750,000, 08-20-01

121 Paseo Del Rio, \$1,450,000, 4 Bdrms, 2650 SqFt, 1973 YrBlt, 10-6-15;

Previous Sale: \$119,000, 09-04-15

132 Selborne Way, \$1,300,000, 5 Bdrms, 2463 SqFt, 1965 YrBlt, 10-7-15

### ORINDA

170 Camino Sobrante, \$1,270,000, 3 Bdrms, 1808 SqFt, 1955 YrBlt, 10-5-15;

Previous Sale: \$460,000, 04-25-96

17 Charles Hill Road, \$1,425,000, 3 Bdrms, 2156 SqFt, 1957 YrBlt, 10-13-15;

Previous Sale: \$925,000, 01-10-03

111 Coral Drive, \$1,050,000, 4 Bdrms, 1548 SqFt, 1957 YrBlt, 10-13-15

63 Donna Maria Way, \$1,350,000, 3 Bdrms, 1992 SqFt, 1954 YrBlt, 10-14-15;

Previous Sale: \$428,000, 05-20-97

122 El Toyonal, \$925,000, 3 Bdrms, 1883 SqFt, 1948 YrBlt, 10-6-15;

Previous Sale: \$268,000, 05-31-96

74 Estates Drive, \$1,675,000, 4 Bdrms, 2844 SqFt, 1966 YrBlt, 10-5-15

15 Monte Vista Road, \$765,000, 2 Bdrms, 1930 SqFt, 1951 YrBlt, 10-9-15;

Previous Sale: \$306,500, 01-17-92

30 Oak Drive, \$845,000, 3 Bdrms, 2227 SqFt, 1965 YrBlt, 10-13-15

215 Rheem Boulevard, \$1,250,000, 4 Bdrms, 2122 SqFt, 1956 YrBlt, 10-13-15;

Previous Sale: \$695,000, 08-08-03

521 Tahos Road, \$1,465,000, 4 Bdrms, 2614 SqFt, 1967 YrBlt, 10-9-15;

Previous Sale: \$1,220,000, 06-18-12

319 Tappan Terrace, \$2,400,000, 5 Bdrms, 3769 SqFt, 1988 YrBlt, 10-9-15;

Previous Sale: \$2,300,000, 10-29-04



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# Recent Rain Small Respite for Drought-Stressed Trees

... continued from page D1

Dead and dying trees are not only a fire hazard, but a blight on the landscape. Wetter weather that might or might not be coming could ameliorate fires. Yet homeowners with a beloved tree – and mandatory restrictions on water use – are wringing their hands over some of their favorites, and have them considering gray-water systems and more to conserve water to feed the trees.

“I think people are trying to figure out a lot of things,” Bill said. “No one wants to see this.”

So far this year, the Lamorinda area has received about 1.5 inches of rain. The average, adult live oak tree drinks 20 to 30 gallons of water per day, and its roots are relatively shallow – they spread out as wide as their canopies. Some homeowners have taken to installing drip systems around their trees to enhance the natural flow from the sky.

And while estimates vary, redwoods slurp up as much as 300 gallons a day, which then transpires off into the atmosphere. (Their roots go deeper than oaks.) Recently scientists such as Steve Sillett of Humboldt State University and Todd Dawson of University of California-Berkeley have found that redwoods also suck up as much as 40 percent of their water from fog during the dry months. After all, carrying hydration from the water table up 20-or-so stories isn't all that easy. But alas, it turns out that redwoods can take in the fog directly through their bark and needles.

If only there was more fog. So far, Mother Nature has said nix on that, mostly, too.

## Ways to Protect Your Trees

Before the rains start in earnest – if they do indeed start and stay in earnest – homeowners have various ways of helping their stressed-out trees that have been suffering from the four-year drought. Yet, there are problems besides lack of water.

One: Many homeowners have planted trees with high water requirements. “Trees planted with high water needs such as magnolias, weeping birches and other non-native trees have been planted in areas, particularly lawns, that are now not receiving water or in areas with inadequate irrigation,” said Lorie Edwards of Advance Tree.

Two: People are still spraying their gardens with hoses.

It's kind of a Vegas craps game to see which species will recover. Birches are weeping, willows are shedding their skins like birches. And while a wagging finger can say the homeowner is at fault for planting a non-native, it is not just the non-natives that are suffering. “Even our native trees that are used to our annual summer drought can suffer because of this extended drought,” Edwards said.

Stressed-out trees are also more susceptible to diseases and pests, she said. Edwards recommends what arborists and landscapers say, too. “The remedy is obviously to increase the water to these trees,” she wrote by email. “One method is to use a deep-root irrigation device.” That means, yes, burying it under dirt and mulch and giving it a regular squirt through the household system, metered through EBMUD.

Another is to mulch and mulch. Do not, according to arborists, just lay your drip line on the ground. Pile some mulch over it. So dig down, put your drip in, then set a timer.

And a lot of love won't hurt, either.

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# Feng Shui Tips to Warm Up Winter Months

By Michele Duffy



*A white kitchen shows off food the best*

How do you create holiday glow in your home? For many, it starts with a personal commitment to glow from within. Even in winter, our hearts and minds should be like bamboo: flexible and pliant, not rigid and frozen. Bring fiery, passionate warmth inside with loving gestures that affirm your commitment to self so you can manifest joy for others fully and completely.

What are the rituals you preserve each year and what new traditions will you try this year? The holiday season offers so many opportunities to introduce grace into our lives, for our personal enrichment as well as for the benefit of others, and we should keep in mind that if a holiday tradition stresses us out, then perhaps it is better to instead create space for what makes us happy, content and healthy.

Winter is ruled by the water element – think freezing cold ice and snow – so we do well to activate lots of the fire element in our now much cozier homes and even turn some of that attention to the workplace. Fire elements balance out the water element. Use spherical sculptures, candles, red Santa mugs to hold piping-hot peppermint cocoa, red berry arrangements, red bowed wreaths gracing the front

entrance, plush red throws and pillows, and, of course, fire in safely-lit gas fireplaces to take winter's chill down a few notches.

Sound feng shui incorporates the five elements and when a space is truly balanced, using space as medicine, we can feel the benefits immediately. The fire element area of the Feng Shui Bagua is fame and reputation, but interestingly, this area also rules respect – with self-respect a large component of that.

This area is located at the far middle from the front entrance. It is a good placement for the kitchen with the fire energy of the stove. The stove and kitchen are highlighted around the holidays since holiday meals are prepared in this area of the home. Make sure stoves are functioning properly, new batteries are in the smoke detectors, there are abundant fire extinguishers, and carefully supervise candles. Or, if you prefer, use battery-operated candles.

Some tips for sound kitchen feng shui include cleaning your kitchen thoroughly, tossing out end-of-year fridge stuff, cleaning out date sensitive items from pantries to prepare for festive seasonal extras in the house, bringing a festive touch to countertops with holiday wine stoppers, filling the air with holiday scents like soy cinnamon vanilla candles, and adorning kitchens with fir tree groupings or wreaths, gingerbread houses or an advent calendar to delight the kid in us all. We all spend so much time in the kitchen, even if we are not the ones cooking, so bringing some joy and glitter to this area adds the warmth we need for sustenance during the winter months. Where your kitchen is placed in your home also will determine if the favorite color white for kitchen walls is truly auspicious in your particular home. It is believed that white shows off the colorful food best and enhances healthy eating.

As Feb. 8, 2016 and the New Year of the Yang Fire Monkey approaches again, the fire element continues to play a central energetic role so any fire safety preparation taken now will benefit the mindful.

Allow the warmth of the season to wash over you and ground you, restore you, renew you, so one reflectively gains powerful clarity about this and next year's lessons. Do your best to enjoy this holiday season's gifts with loved ones near.



Michele Duffy, BTB M.F.S. is an Orinda resident who, since 1999, enjoys creating "Space as Medicine" Feng Shui one space at a time, as well as hiking in nature, cooking, and spending time with her family; Canyon Ranch Feng Shui Master, International Feng Shui Guild (IFSG) Red Ribbon Professional. To schedule a professional 2015 Feng Shui Consultation, contact Michele at (520) 647-4887 or send an email to [spaceharmony@gmail.com](mailto:spaceharmony@gmail.com).





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# Cynthia Brian's Gardening Guide for December

By Cynthia Brian

*"I look upon the pleasure we take in a garden as one of the most innocent delights in human life." – Cicero*



Cynthia's mother decorates so that Santa can find the ranch.

Photo Cynthia Brian

It is hard to believe that the holidays are already here. Wasn't it just yesterday that I was taking down Christmas decorations?

What would the holidays be without the high voltage displays of thousands of twinkling lights illuminating our landscapes? We drive around neighborhoods "ooing and aahing" at the inflatable snowmen waving to us, Santa's sleigh on the rooftops tethered to his blinking reindeer, and flickering candy canes hanging from tree branches. My mom's house is lit up like Disneyland to make sure that Santa can find his way to our ranch.

My last few columns have initiated numerous emails and comments. It appears that gardeners are very interested in hugelkultur as well as growing grass that is not water thirsty.

Regarding the hugels, from the state of Washington I received this very astute email:

"I just read your gardening guide and immediately thought about how the trees where we go camping do this naturally. Frequently, trees have started by growing from a stump

or downed tree trunk. Then, over time, everything mounds up at the base of the new tree. The spaces underneath provide habitat for a multitude of creatures, and the rotting logs, needles, and leaves are material for insects to do terra-forming. They combine the organic with rock that continually slides down from the mountains and into the streams and eventually becomes sand, to form rich soil.

Another thing all this debris on the ground does is to shade the soil, keeping it cooler and protected from evaporation. We use rocks in favor of bark or mulch in many places in our yard. I have thought for years about the practice in the Southwest of keeping all the undergrowth cleared out of forests to help with the wildfire problem – how it sterilizes the forest, taking away opportunities for habitat and soil protection.

We certainly had more than our share of wildfires in Washington State the last couple of years, and I will admit the forest is quite different in those regions. The trees, until you get up really far into the mountains, are very spaced out with no green undergrowth. They traditionally have very cold winters with a lot of snow that lingers, then long, very hot and dry summers.

The mounding practice is something we see nature doing all the time in the mountains near us." KC

KC hit the nail on the head! I was really thrilled to receive this correspondence because hugelkultur derived from exactly this natural forest procedure. In my own yard I have now built two hugels and am planning to continue to build them, especially on my hillsides to prevent erosion, maintain water, and allow plants to grow deeper roots.

On the subject of lawns, I have installed three different areas of Pearl's Premium grass: sun, shade, and sun-shade. It is still too early to report results to you but I do promise to keep you posted on how this miracle turf flourishes. Many of you are very interested in growing a low maintenance grass. With just one or two weeks left of optimum weather, buy new top soil and start sowing. The seed may be carried at your local garden centers or big box stores, but if not, go online to [www.PearlsPremium.com](http://www.PearlsPremium.com). Don't forget to type in "Blue Moon" at check out to receive a 20 percent discount and free shipping.

The festival of lights is upon us as we hark the heralded angels and remember the reason for the season. Light a fire in your heart and shine brightly with love. Tidy your garden, then enjoy the merriment.

... continued on page D10



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## Cynthia Brian's Garden Guide for December

- **POT** an amaryllis for mid-winter blooms happening eight to 12 weeks after first watering. All you need is a small pot not much bigger than the bulb, soil and water.
- **ADD** alliums to your planting schedule for spring lollipop blooms. Voles, rabbits, deer and squirrels will not eat these onion family bulbs.
- **COVER** azaleas and tender shrubs with burlap, sheets or blankets (any fabric will do) to prevent damage from drastic drops in temperature.
- **HARVEST** prickly pear when the skins are red. Wear gloves and use tongs to peel before adding to salads.
- **CUT** branches from redwoods, cedars, pines and other evergreens to use indoors for your yuletide décor.
- **HANG** a spray of magnolia leaves tied in a colorful ribbon on your mailbox. Magnolias with the coned seedpods stimulate a festive welcome.
- **GATHER** pinecones. Sprinkle with a cinnamon oil for a lovely holiday fragrance.
- **CHANGE** out your current houseplants with colorful seasonal plants including cyclamen, paperwhites and poinsettia. Beautiful long blooming cymbidium orchids are currently available in stores. Orchids contribute an elegance and beauty to every room.
- **RAKE** the fallen leaves to add to your compost pile.
- **PRUNE** roses for the final burst of December blooms before the January pruning begins.
- **BE** eco-friendly and wrap gifts in used newspaper with twine. You'll save money while saving the earth. And while you are at it, repurpose Christmas cards into gift tags!
- **PLANT** cover crops to enrich the soil over winter. Good choices include fava beans, alfalfa, clover and mustard.
- **PURCHASE** a living tree for your Hanukkah bush or Christmas tree.
- **ALLOW** winter's coat of bright berries, rosehips, moss and boughs to be the inspiration for your decorating.



*Magnolia cones turn red in December.*

*Photos Cynthia Brian*



*A combination of ferns and poinsettias brighten a porch.*



*Moss is pretty growing on a winter wall.*



*Yew berries are excellent for holiday decorating.*

- **CARE** for the birds by keeping feeders clean and filled. Make sure to provide a water source and shelter.

- **HOLIDAY FAVOR:** Help local charity Be the Star You Are!® without spending a penny. If you purchased a TV or computer screen between 1999 and 2006, you are due a refund and can donate it directly to Be the Star You Are. You will receive a tax receipt once the donations have been dispersed. Please do this today. It costs you nothing. Thanks from Be the Star You Are. <http://www.donatedirect.net/be-the-star-you-are-crt/> Read more: <http://www.btsya.com/>

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Although it is the end of the season, boxwoods, hydrangeas, rosemary and greenery brighten this corner.

As we prepare for the holidays, let's offer thoughts and actions of faith, hope, and love with the expectation that peace can prevail on our beautiful planet. Take pleasure in nature. Our gardens are a precious refuge. Happy Holidays!

Happy Gardening, Happy Growing!



Cynthia Brian among the orchids.

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