

Yes SIR, There's A Club For You

By Kara Navolio



On left: Spencer Christian (the TV weatherman)

Photo provided

What's a guy to do with all his free time after retirement? If he's interested in staying active, making new friends, and trying new things, he might join Sons in Retirement (SIR). Its mission is to promote independence and dignity in retirement.

The Lamorinda area has two branches of SIR, branches 171 and 174; both meet at the Holy Trinity Cultural Center in Moraga for a monthly lunch and speaker.

There are no fees to pay; members simply pay \$25 for the lunch.

"This is a place to come for new friendships and new activities to try. It's a refuge, in a way, from other demands on your time like community service and fundraising. We just enjoy being together socially," explains Tyler Hunt, a branch 174 member for four years.

In addition to the monthly luncheon, members enjoy a plethora of activities to choose from either on a weekly or monthly basis. Some gather for bridge, poker, dominoes or pinocle. There are groups who like to hike, golf, bowl or play bocce. There is a fishing group, a book club, and wine tasting groups. In addition, there are extended learning opportunities in investments or computer technology. While spouses are not included in the monthly lunch, they are invited to most of the other activities. In December both Lamorinda branches come together for a couples' luncheon and holiday celebration.

SIR was started in 1958 in San Mateo and conceived by Damian L. Reynolds. He gathered three friends together to meet for lunch. From there the idea was born, and the next month they had 18 for lunch and adopted the name Sons in Retirement

along with some rules for membership, including the idea that there would be no dues or fees and that this was a place for men who were retired and semi-retired from full-time employment to enjoy social time together.

There are now 150 branches throughout Northern California. The Lamorinda branch got so big and had a two year waiting list, so another branch was added in 2009. Each branch boasts more than 100 members, ranging in age from mid-50's to over 90 years old.

Jon Leuteneker, Big Sir of Branch 174, serves as chairman for the year. "I enjoy the monthly speakers and the camaraderie of the people I meet doing things I enjoy doing. We welcome new members to join us."

Larry Thompson, a 20-year member of branch 171, adds, "It's a great way to get out of the house and get involved. You form friendships within the activities you choose to be a part of."

For more information or to inquire about membership, visit www.branch171.sirinc2.org or www.branch174.sirinc2.org.

An Artist's Prompt

Local middle schoolers tap talent in annual LYAS writing and photography contest

Submitted by Charlie Keohane



First place LYAS writing category winner John Kalil

Photo provided

Every year, the teenagers who run the Lafayette Youth Arts Society host a writing and photography contest for middle schoolers, arranging prompts, judges, mon-

etary prizes and an awards ceremony. The contest has flourished over the past years, and has attracted hundreds of budding artists to submit entries.

John Kalil is no exception.

After two years of receiving honorable mentions, John, who was an eighth-grader at the time, claimed first place in the writing category of the third annual LYAS Writing and Photography Contest at the Lafayette Library Community Hall on May 15. The hall was filled with proud parents and excited teens gathered to celebrate the winners.

When asked if LYAS sparked his passion for writing, John responded, "I was somewhat interested in writing when I was a lot younger, but when Linnae [former LYAS member] came into my sixth grade English class to talk about a brand new writing contest, I immediately knew I wanted to enter and started my entry that night."

John said it was not only rewarding to win first place after receiving honorable mentions in the first two years of the contest,

but to read his first entry and see how much he has grown as a writer since then.

The winner of the \$250 grand prize and a book shared some insights he gained through his participation in the contest. "Don't be afraid to step outside of your writing comfort zone," John said. "My first two entries were fantasy/adventure stories, but only after I stepped out of the box and wrote more of an emotional piece did I win. Never be afraid to switch things up in your writing."

This was John's last year participating in the contest, as it is only open to middle schoolers. Although he said he is sad, John is grateful for the experiences LYAS has given him and plans on continuing writing in high school.

At the ceremony, other winners read their stories or presented their photos to an audience of peers and parents before claiming prizes of

money, books and other gifts.

"We're really fortunate to live in a town that supports creativity," said Uma Unni, founder of the LYAS. "We have so many supporters and sponsors from the community - for example, some of our main donors are the Sunrise Rotarians, the Lafayette Community Foundation, Lori Legler of Alain Pinel Realtors and The Lafayette Chamber of Commerce. On top of that, there are several local businesses who have really supported us over the years, like Pizza Antica and Patxi's and Powell's Sweet Shop."

LYAS plans to release the prompts for the Fourth Annual LYAS Writing and Photography Contest on Nov. 14. Middle schoolers are encouraged to enter, and express their creativity and passion through photos and words. For more information, visit lyas.org.

Day Trippings

Sneak in a Carmel-by-the-Sea Weekend

By Fran Endicott Miller



Courtyard at Hotel Carmel

Photos Fran Endicott Miller

Carmel's charm is undeniable. From the storybook quality of each building and storefront, to the ocean views along the coastal walk, a weekend in Carmel refreshes and rejuvenates. At only two hours and 15 minutes driving time south (give or take depending on traffic conditions), it's far enough away from Lamorinda to provide a different environment, yet close enough for even a day trip. Whether for a romantic weekend, a girls or guys getaway or a family vacation, Carmel delivers sights and activities to please everyone.

A great home base for your Carmel weekend is the newly remodeled Hotel Carmel, centrally located and a stone's throw from the shops, galleries, winetasting rooms and restaurants that lure visitors to the area. Formerly the

Dolphin Inn, the freshly refurbished boutique hotel blends classic Carmel-by-the-Sea cottage architecture with modern seaside aesthetics. The area's ever-present coastal fog calls for elements of warmth, which are delivered in spades in the form of a courtyard fire pit and fireplace, a concealed courtyard Jacuzzi and fireplaces in 14 of the 27 rooms, of which one is a one-bedroom suite, and another a two-room suite, each perfect for families. The cozy lobby serves as the hotel's communal gathering spot, where guests can peruse a wall of classic music cassette tapes. Pop your favorite into the vintage cassette player while you enjoy a glass of complimentary wine with fellow travelers after a day of sightseeing. Wind down further with a game of backgammon, or select

a book from the lobby's lending library. Return to the lobby each morning for fresh coffee, bagels, and delicious house made granola.

The hotel's onsite restaurant, Brophy's Tavern, serves possibly the best burger and Cobb salad in town. Vintage beer cans and sports memorabilia line the interior walls, and a refurbished juke box plays classic tunes. The vibe is warm, welcoming and convivial, as it is at most restaurants in town. For breakfast, visit quaint spots like Village Corner, the Carmel Coffee House or Tuck Box. For lunch, consider Little Napoli or the very popular La Bicyclette. A classic Italian dinner at Vesuvio is always festive - be sure to start with a cocktail at their rooftop bar.

Work off your meal with a walk along beautiful and expansive Carmel Beach and its adja-

cent tidepools. Stroll the one-square-mile village streets and explore boutiques, shops and nearly 100 art galleries. Formula One racing fans will love the Light+Shadow Fine Art gallery on Sixth Avenue featuring race-themed works by Thierry Thompson. Make sure to venture into the numerous courtyards that you'll pass. Each is more enchanting than the next, with secret gardens, unique boutiques, and restaurants hidden within.

Carmel Plaza, for instance, looks modest from the street, but inside you'll find A-list stores and gourmet dining spots. Don't miss the Cottage of Sweets on Ocean Avenue, a traditional British style sweet shop with delicious varieties of house made fudge and other goodies sold by the pound. And you don't need to be a kid to appreciate magical Thinker Toys, an old-fashioned

toy store and Carmel institution since 1969. Offering classic educational and imaginative toys for children AND adults, their motto is: "Where play is a way of thinking."

If your wanderlust extends beyond enchanting Carmel Village, visit Point Lobos State Natural Reserve, the crown jewel of the California State Park system, just three miles away. Travel along the 17-Mile Drive for a peek at intriguing mansions, or plan a golf game at the one of the area's iconic courses. Head inland to Carmel Valley and explore the area's pastoral landscape - home to premier wineries and luxury resorts like Carmel Valley Ranch, Quail Lodge, and Bernardus Lodge. You'll never find yourself at a loss for things to see and do in Carmel.



Thinker Toys