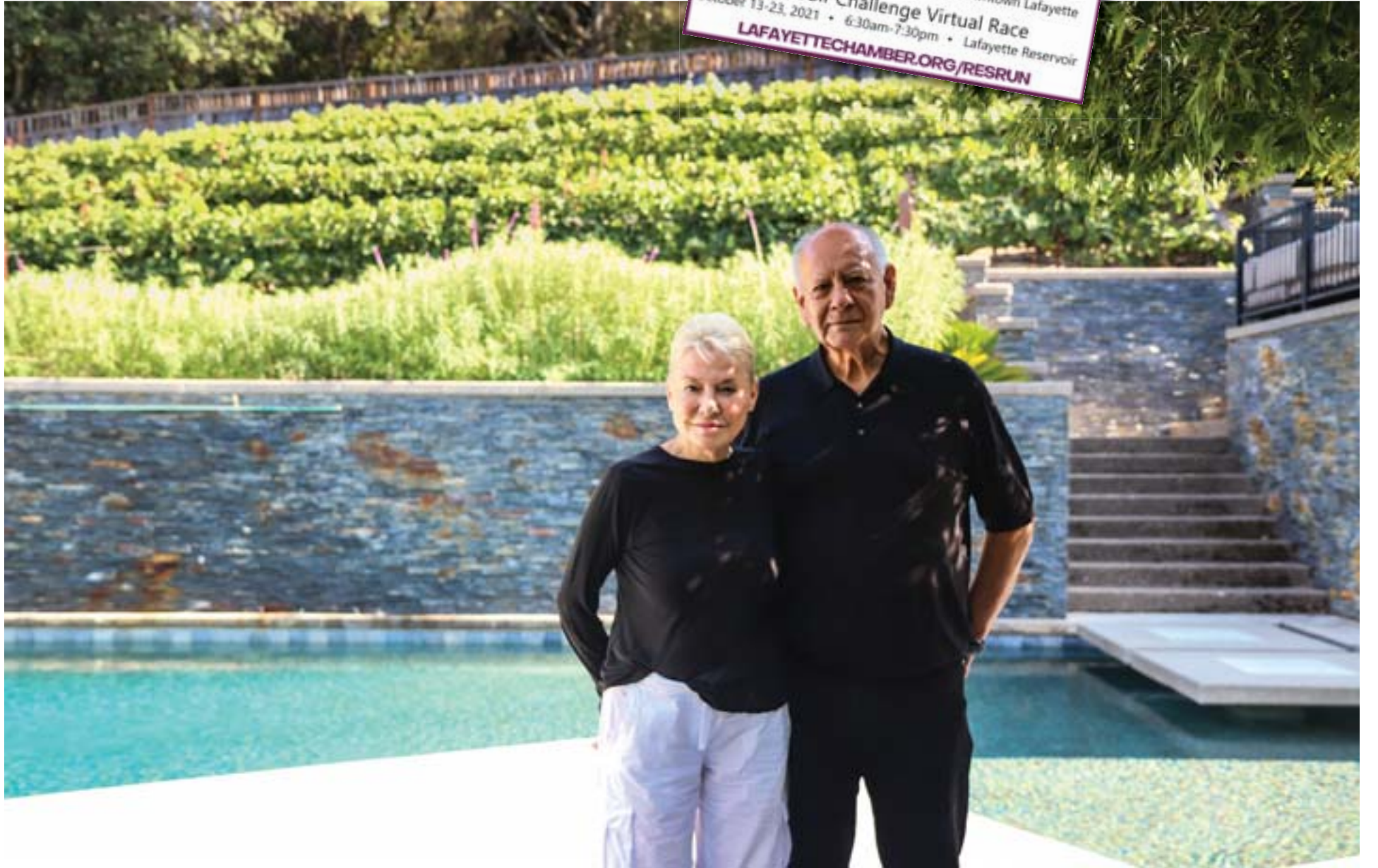


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Michele and David Ledesma in front of their Orinda vineyard.

Photo Sora O'Doherty

Backyard vineyards a labor of love in Lamorinda

By Sora O'Doherty

Tucked away, high on a sunny hill but minutes from downtown Orinda, Michele Smith-Ledesma and her husband David Ledesma are growing luscious Cabernet and Merlot red wine grapes in a small but prolific vineyard. The vineyard is about 20 years old. The Ledesma's have been nurturing it for about 11 years, having bought the property from Robert Snook. On a sunny afternoon in September the eight rows containing about 150 vines were bursting with fruit. But Michele said that the Brix, the level of sugar in the grapes, was just a tad short of what they want at harvest. At 23 degrees Brix, the grapes were probably about a week shy of harvest, when the desired Brix

would be 24-25 degrees.

California natives, the couple has traveled the world for their jobs. He specialized in mainframe computers, and she worked in fashion, including a long stint at British luxury line Burberry in London. Michele acquired her fashion credentials working at I. Magnin in San Francisco while attending San Francisco State and UC Berkeley. David supported her career, moving with her to New York when she had the opportunity to work for Barney's, and later to London.

When they decided to return to California, David found their home in the Orinda Hills, which Michele says has been perfect for the pandemic. They love the spacious modern house and keep busy with the vine-

yard. Before the pandemic, Michele says, she never really had time in one place to watch the entire cycle as she has now, and she really appreciates the experience. She now works as a consultant for fashion brands and skin care lines, which requires less travel, and none during the pandemic.

In the past the Ledesma's grapes were used in blends, such as the 2014 Ava Isabelle Blend by Captain Vineyards, but when the Captains decided to focus on their winery and other distractions, such as grandchildren in Connecticut and Carmel, they recommended wine-maker Tony Inzerillo. Now Inzerillo is on hand for the Ledesma harvest, and he takes the grapes from there and uses them in blended wines.

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Lamorinda women take to streets to march for justice



Photo David Rowland, Probono Photo

By Diane Claytor

Approximately 250 people from throughout Lamorinda and nearby cities gathered in front of the Orinda Theatre on Oct. 2. The group was predominantly women, the majority were holding signs, many were wearing pink and all were there for one main reason: to ensure that women continue to have access to safe, affordable and legal abortions.

The Lamorinda Women's March was one of more than 650 marches on that date attracting thousands of people across all 50 states. Every one of these thousands of marchers were doing their part to defend a woman's constitutional right to an abortion.

Jennifer Tejada, a longtime Orinda resident, organized the Lamorinda event with the help of her recent college graduate daughter, Aiofa. "I've raised my daughter to have a voice, to speak up and know the value of the democratic society and our role in making sure we preserve that," Tejada explains. Unable to find any local marches protesting the recent abortion restrictions signed into law in Texas, Tejada elected to organize one

herself. "I expected maybe 40 to 50 people to show up," she notes, expressing both surprise and pleasure that so many feel as strongly as she does about this cause.

For Tejada, the march was not strictly about the abortion issue. "I believe we are seeing a slow erosion of our freedoms and our right to choose and right to vote is something we should all be concerned about," she says. "This is not just an abortion justice issue."

The Lamorinda Women's March participants were spirited and enthusiastic. They marched in single file or in pairs or small groups from the Orinda Theatre to City Hall. They wore their masks. They sweated in the 90-plus degree afternoon weather. They held their signs high and chanted "our bodies, our choice," and "keep your bans off our bodies." They cheered loudly every time a passing car honked or a pedestrian waved in support.

Once the group arrived at City Hall, they were greeted by Orinda Mayor Amy Worth, who warmly and emotionally welcomed them, seemingly surprised and touched by the large turnout.

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