

# LAMORINDA WEEKLY

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## State Budget Cuts to Education



# What's at Stake for Lamorinda's Schools?

By Andrea A. Firth

(Contributing: Lee Borrowman)

Members of the Acalanes Union High School District (AUHSD) Governing Board were not celebrating a "happy" new year as they convened last Wednesday for the first time in 2008 and listened to a sobering budget presentation by Chris Learned, Assistant Superintendent, Business Services. Learned reviewed Governor Schwarzenegger's proposed budget cuts to education and outlined preliminary estimates of the decrease in state funding that the District could expect. "The proposed budget is the most devastating budget proposal that I have seen since Proposition 13," reported Jim Negri, Superintendent of AUHSD, in his newsletter to the community. "Draconian," "Bleak," "Bad, really bad," were all words used by school administrators across Lamorinda over the past week to describe the state's proposed budget as they worked ardently to determine the repercussions

of the cuts on their budgets and to their stakeholders.

The Governor's budget proposes to eliminate over \$4 billion in funding to schools in the next year, which translates to a loss of over \$2.7 million in revenue for the Acalanes Union High School District in 2008-2009 according to Learned. This projected budget reduction equates to a loss of \$489 per student in AUHSD. In addition, AUHSD projects categorical programs such as class size reduction, counseling, and special education will be reduced by another \$60 per student.

The situation in the Moraga School District looks no better. Preliminary estimates reveal that the district faces a funding reduction of \$582,000 less than what was projected for 2008-2009—a loss of \$342 per student below projected revenue and \$162 per student below the current year's funding level. These amounts do

not yet reflect the impact of the anticipated federal funding reduction to categorical programs and special education.

In Orinda, Superintendent Joe Jaconette says, "Our preliminary review of the Governor's budget cuts would leave the District short around one million dollars next year."

Lafayette Superintendent Frank Tom has preliminary estimates as well, but says the Governor's budget proposal has "a lot of different pieces," so it's hard to confirm at this point what the actual numbers will look like. He meets with his Budget Director and Cabinet this week to further assess the situation, and stated unequivocally, "It's definitely going to impact all school district programs."

"This is not business as usual this year," said Superintendent Negri at the recent AUHSD Governing Board meeting.

continued on page 14

### LAMORINDA WEEKLY

#### this week

##### Chaney Field



Page 2

##### Moraga Revisits Bumps



Page 14

##### Miramonte Women Defeat Acalanes



Page 17

Town News	2,3,4
ABAG Allocation Revisited	2
Town "Bank"	3
Crooked Tree Trimmers	4
A Deadly Gas	5
Treeline Triathlon Training	5
County Budget Woes	6
Filippi Hall Opens	7
Calendar, SMC Happenings	8
How to Contact Us	8
SMC Children's Theater	9
Lamorinda Real Estate	10
Business	11
Fudge Alley	11
Schools	12,13
Poet of Sleepy Hollow	12
Kindergarten Registration	13
In the Back Yard	15
Lamorinda Restaurants	16
Cooking with Beer	16
Sports	17, 18, 19
Miramonte Women's Soccer	17
Packed House Greet Dons, Cougars	18
SMC Beats Chico State	19
Classifieds	18
Love Lafayette	20

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## The Treacherous Information Highway

By Jennifer Wake

Recent advances in software and technology have enabled users to browse the Internet from remote locations (including their cell phones) and meet new friends via the Web on social networking sites. At the same time, more doors have opened for the cyber criminal.

In the past few years, Orinda Police Detective Nate McCormack has seen a large increase in local identity thefts. "Some are through the mail, but more are through the Internet," he said.

According to a report by the National Cyber Security Alliance (NCSA), more than 70 million people use social networking sites such as MySpace and Facebook, and the numbers are increasing daily. Of those adults who "social network," 83 percent expose themselves to hackers and thieves by downloading unknown files potentially opening up their PCs to attacks, and 74 percent have given out some sort of personal information such as their e-mail address, name, and birthday — even social security numbers.

"Providing this type of information can provide enough ammunition for criminals to hack into financial records and compromise users' personal

information," the report noted.

Although not a "social networker," Lafayette resident Ginna Bowles says she gets about two dozen spam e-mails a day on her home computer. "Some e-mails say, 'You only need to click here to get \$2,400.' I just delete them," she said.

Many of these e-mails can include links that send victims to bogus Web sites that look legitimate. Requests for users to reenter passwords or provide personal information can look safe, but often the information is either sold to scammers or used by identity theft criminals.

Unfortunately, the number of identity thefts

in this area is difficult to nail down because they are often classified in different categories, such as petty theft or grand theft, McCormack explained. "It's hard to get exact numbers," he said. "It's even harder to catch the online perpetrators because they're often operating out of state or out of the country."

The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) states that only 39 percent of identity theft victims notify a police department after being scammed, so the actual numbers are likely much higher than reported.

continued on page 7

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