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Volume 03 Issue 21

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Wednesday, December 23, 2009

Remember to check out the 10 different yoga classes at Lafayette Community Center!

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Photos: Left, by Doug Kohen; top right, provided; lower right, by Ohlen Alexander; graphic by Amanda Griggs

It must have been magic, like the snow that fell earlier this month; in the weeks leading up to Christmas, Santa Claus seemed to be everywhere you looked. Sitting under the tree at the Moraga Commons (left photo), he met one young man who did not appear to be completely convinced that climbing onto the big red lap was such a good

idea. On a rainy day at Lafayette's La Fiesta Square, Santa and his helpers were warm and dry on the enclosed patio that is part of Mangia, offering a complimentary photo with Santa and candy canes for the kids. The Connor family (top right photo, from left: Kate, Caroline, Kristi and Kevin) paid a visit, and got the perfect photo for

their Christmas cards. And what better place for Santa to be but at the screening of White Christmas at the Orinda Theater? Cameron Arman of Lafayette was pleased to be able to whisper his wish list directly to the man in charge (lower right photo).

...See more holiday happenings on page 20

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Caldecott Tunnel Fourth Bore to Get Underway

By Andrea A. Firth



Simulation of cars heading west through the east portal of the 4th bore to be added to the Caldecott Tunnel. Simulation courtesy of CalTrans.

"Fully funded and ready go" was the mantra of an enthusiastic team from the California Department of Transportation (CalTrans) as they outlined the plans for the Caldecott Tunnel Improvement Project—a.k.a. the Fourth Bore—at a community outreach meeting held in Orinda on December 10th. Construction of the two-lane bore on the north side of the Caldecott Tunnel is scheduled to get underway by mid-January and projected for completion by the winter of 2013-2014.

... continued on page 7

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

Many readers have told us over the past year how much they enjoy the local coverage our paper provides, and what a difference it makes in the community. Since we started the Lamorinda Weekly, nearly three years ago, we have built an excellent team of editors, writers, photographers and columnists to produce our bi-weekly paper. All of them are connected to Lamorinda and most are involved in a variety of community projects, schools or sports teams. Many have been with us right from the start.

... continued on page 19

Burning too much, Lamorinda?



By Sophie Braccini

At a recent Rotary meeting Contra Costa County Supervisor Gayle Uilkema expressed her concern over the wood burning habits of Lamorindans. Uilkema is also a member of the Board of Directors of the Bay Area Air Quality Management District (BAAQMD); she noticed too many unhealthy days reported in Contra Costa, so she decided ... read on page 13

Campo Falls in Final Minutes to Acalanes



By Alex Crook

Last Friday night, December 19th, at Acalanes High School, the Dons varsity soccer team hosted rival Campolindo, and escaped with a close 1-0 win over the Cougars. Acalanes, now 7-1-0 and 2-0-0 in league play, came into the match fresh off of a 2-1 win against Berkeley; the Dons' lone loss was against DFAL powerhouse Dublin.

David Helfrich (#19) looks for a pass from his teammate. Photo: Tod Fierner

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Lafayette

Public Meetings

City Council NEW Meeting Location
Lafayette Library and Learning Center
Community Hall, 3491 Mt. Diablo Blvd

City Council Monday, January 11, 7:00 pm
Lafayette Library and Learning Center, Community Hall, 3491 Mt. Diablo Blvd

Planning Commission Monday, January 4, 7:00 pm
Community Center, Manzanita Room, 500 St Mary's Road

Design Review Monday, January 11, 7:00 pm
Community Center, Manzanita Room, 500 St Mary's Road

Circulation Commission Tuesday, January 19, 7:00 pm
Lafayette Library and Learning Center, Community Hall, 3491 Mt. Diablo Blvd

Check online for agendas, meeting notes and announcements
City of Lafayette: www.ci.lafayette.ca.us
Chamber of Commerce: www.lafayettechamber.org

• **Police Report** •
will be back next time



Correction, issue date 12/09/09, Notorious House for Sale: This article contained a factual error. The phrase "never been lived in" is inaccurate. According to Daniel Horowitz, the property owner, the home in Hunsaker Canyon has been occupied for over two years. The article has been corrected in our online archive, <http://www.lamorindaweekly.com/archive/issue0320/Notorious-Home-for-Sale.html>.



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Happy Holidays

Tuesday-Saturday 10-6

A Celebration of Mayors in Lafayette

By Cathy Tyson



The Lafayette Orinda Presbyterian Church performs with Lafayette Mayor Brandt Andersson Photo Erik Andersson

After a substantial number of accolades from his constituents, Lafayette's five-time Mayor Don Tatzin finished his term and welcomed former Vice Mayor Brandt Andersson to his new job as Mayor. Fellow City Council Members, along with friends and family, filled the new Community Hall at the Lafayette Library and Learning Center for the festivities at the December 14th City Council meeting that culminated with a choir performance that included Andersson. Carl Anduri was appointed Vice Mayor.

Having served a total of twenty-four years on the City Council, Tatzin has seen the city through thick and thin. Many in the audience came forward to point out what a wonderful job he's done this past year, especially with the completion of a project near and dear to Lafayette – the Library and Learning Center. Alternating between sincere praise and poking fun, Library Foundation members Gwen Lennox, Kathy Merchant, and Anne Grodin, along with Maeve Pessis of the Lafayette Homeowners Council, effusively congratulated him for a job well done while gently roasting him. For example, Marechal Duncan of the Lafayette Historical Society had everyone laughing when he commented, regarding the Mayor's

longevity, "Our gift to Don Tatzin is that we'll put him in our archive." Even incoming Mayor Brandt Anderson quipped about having to make remarks after Tatzin spoke, "It's tough to follow the 19th, 24th, 29th, 34th and 41st mayor." Fellow Council Members commented that only now do their combined years of service equal the years Tatzin has put in.

Tatzin remarked that over the years he's always looked for the positive compromise – and that during his tenure this past year the city has completed a substantial amount of roadwork, had the library open and adopted the Parks and Recreation Facility Master Plan. He talked about a virtuous circle, building trust, being open and inclusive. "Think grandly and spend carefully," he advised. In 2009, "We learned that measurement is useful, and that construction takes time. This has been a successful and fun year."

City staff presented a gift, a plaque made out of teak with a granite inset – both materials from the exterior of the Lafayette Library and Learning Center, and of course a gavel.

New Mayor Andersson said of his new position, "A good friend asked, 'Who in their right mind wants to be Mayor?'" He responded, "Your initial premise is

probably faulty." Andersson sees the coming year as full of problems and opportunities, with the number one problem being street improvements. Opportunities include balancing the need to preserve open space against pressure for development and with the help of the Downtown Strategic Plan – making plans

for the amenities that most want. Hearty thanks were given to Andersson's family and city staff who, "Keep the city running and make it better every day for the people that live here. I also want to recognize colleagues...it's always a joy to come to these meetings."

Audience members were treated to a first in the Community Hall, Mayor Andersson is a member of the Lafayette Orinda Presbyterian Church Chamber Choir. He penned new lyrics for two compositions and sang both songs with the choir, which made a special appearance. The very timely "Downtown Strategic Plan," highlighting Lafayette's current struggle with the Plan, was written by Hans Leo Hassler (1564-1612) and "Money Worries" was written by Karl Heinrich Graun (1703 -1759). Both tunes had the packed house in stitches.

Spike in Crime in Lafayette

By Cathy Tyson



This car parked in Lafayette had its window smashed. Photo provided

No one enjoys a visit by the Grinch who stole Christmas gifts out of the back seat of your car. Although there has been no confirmation of actual Grinch sightings, the damage is still the same. Lafayette residents have seen a spike in the number of property crimes lately. Sergeant Gwen Brady of the Lafayette Police Department explains, "We are a safe community but not a secure community. There's a big difference. People forget that not every person in town is a resident. While there's very little violent crime, there's a fair amount of property crime."


She offers the following advice: "Put packages and purses in the trunk, lock your car and your house. If you have an alarm - set it. Keep aware of your surroundings, if you see something unusual, jot down the license plate number and call the police."

Maybe it's a sign of the times, but it's unlikely that this trend will stop on New Year's Eve. In November, the most recent month that data became available, there were eleven residential burglaries, five vehicles stolen and fourteen petty thefts, mostly smash and grab incidents from addresses all over the city. "Be smart, these are normal common sense things," said Brady.

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Parks and Recreation Master Plan Adopted

By Cathy Tyson

It took two long hard years of meetings and study, but in the end the Parks, Trails and Recreation (PTR) Commission along with city staff put together a Master Plan to meet the needs of Lafayette citizens. Adopted in late November of 2009, it provides a framework for finding suitable sites and looks at costs for development and maintenance. "Currently, the city needs to acquire an additional 44 acres of parkland to meet its General Plan goal of 5 acres/1,000 people," stated the Lafayette Park and Recreation Facilities Master Plan. It's clear that as the population grows so must available parkland.

There are currently 91.3 acres of city-owned park and recreation facilities that are categorized into four types: neighborhood parks, community parks, the Community Center and downtown parks. They range in size from the compact .3 acre Plaza Park at the corner of Moraga Road and Mt. Diablo Boulevard

to the spacious 68 acres of Lafayette Community Park. Although that sounds large, in order to preserve riparian habitat, oak woodland and more, 70% of the Community Park will remain in its natural state.

After gathering extensive input from the public and analyzing the results, a priority list was developed based on community need and the location of existing parks. A public workshop was held, press releases were generated, a survey was completed and local neighborhood groups hosted a series of presentations by PTR Commissioners. Bottom line, 90% of survey respondents wanted the City to provide more parks, with the number one preference being additional sports fields, and secondly neighborhood parks.

The Park and Recreation Facilities Master Plan came to the conclusion that parkland should be developed to provide the following facilities:

- A new sports field facility to accommodate soccer, lacrosse, softball and/or baseball

• One or two active or passive neighborhood parks, to be located in Northeast Lafayette or West Lafayette

- Downtown parks to be identified in the separate Downtown Specific Plan
- A bike park to accommodate motocross (BMX) and mountain bicyclists
- An off-leash dog park with separate areas for large and small dogs
- A nature park to support nature education and appreciation

The Master Plan spells out exactly the minimum acreage required along with facility options, minimum width, length and slope and whether or not parking and restrooms are required – making it easier to look at parcels that may become available in the future.

For more information about funding for parks and to read the complete Master Plan, go to www.lovelafayette.org and click on Master Plan.

What's going on with the Bike Park?

By Cathy Tyson

Although a site is being examined as a potential location for a bike park, planning for it and actually having it complete and open to the public can be two entirely different things. "For several years, local youths have been building unauthorized bike jumps along Las Trampas Creek and other sensitive areas in the Community Park. Following a request from an organized group of bike enthusiasts, the Parks, Trails and Recreation (PTR) Director and PTR Commission thought it was important to address this environmental harm and simultaneously enhance the recreation opportunities in the Park by providing an area for bike riders to enjoy their sport in a clearly designated area within the Community Park," said PTR Director Jennifer Russell in a statement.

Back in November of 2008, the PTR Commission passed a motion to approve going forward with Phase I of the *Bike Park Project* – this includes design of the park and

submission of a recommendation for funds to start the design phase of the project.

In April of 2009, after input from the community and a design consultant, the PTR Commission approved a proposed design. In June of 2009 the proposed site was staked and a visual impact study was conducted, notices were posted in the park for three weeks and a consultant was hired to do an environmental habitat assessment of the area.

In October of 2009 there was a PTR Commission meeting to learn about the results of the habitat assessment. As it turns out, there is the potential presence of a special wildlife species. Biologists from Condor Country Consulting discussed the findings and possible mitigation measures.

"The bike park design is undergoing rigorous environmental review," said Russell. "That review has identified a documented sighting in 1994 in Las Trampas Creek of

a California Red-legged Frog, a protected species under the Federal Endangered Species Act. As a result, additional environmental analysis is being conducted to ensure that the bike park's effects will be mitigated and special permits are being sought through the Army Corps of Engineers, US Fish and Wildlife Service and California Fish and Game before construction can be authorized. Mitigations are being developed so that special plant and wildlife species are protected."

A biological survey is scheduled for the coming spring, and an environmental consulting firm has been selected to review drainage changes in the creek that may affect permitting requirements with the Army Corps of Engineers. Parks Trails and Recreation Director Jennifer Russell invites questions or comments via her e-mail address: jrussell@ci.lafayette.ca.us or go to www.lafayettebikepark.com for more information.

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Civic News



Moraga

Public Meetings

Town Council Wednesday, January 13, 7:30 pm
Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School, 1010 Camino Pablo

Planning Commission Monday, January 4, 7:30 pm
Moraga Library, 1500 Saint Marys Rd

Design Review Monday, January 11, 7:00 pm
Moraga Library, 1500 Saint Marys Rd

Liaison Friday, January 8, 8:00 am
Fire Station, 1280 Moraga Way

Check online for agendas, meeting notes and announcements
Town of Moraga online: www.moraga.ca.us

Chamber of Commerce: www.moragachamber.org

**The Town offices will be closed
December 25, 2009 to January 1, 2010**

• **Police Report** •



Smoke filled car, 12/12/09 Three vehicles were parked at an undisclosed Moraga school, after regular class hours. Only one of the cars was occupied, presumably with friends from the other two vehicles. As a police officer approached, he noticed a heavy cloud of marijuana smoke inside which wafted out when the driver opened the window. The five 17-year-olds in the car admitted they had smoked pot and that there was beer in the trunk. No actual pot was found – possibly up in smoke, but three glass pipes were identified. All the kids' parents were contacted, and their kids were released to their custody after a serious talk with the officer. Both the beer and the pipes were properly disposed of.

Indecent exposure, 12/09/09 A student from JM was walking home around 2:30 on Camino Pablo, just east of Dickenson Drive. The student walked by a grey compact car and was contacted by the driver through the open passenger window. The white male in his 30's or 40's exposed himself. The student just kept on walking and the flasher drove away. This case is under investigation.

Tire stolen, 12/02/09 Sometime between 8:20 in the morning and 2:20 in the afternoon, the left front tire from a 1996 green Jeep Grand Cherokee was removed while it was parked at the Campolindo Cabana Swim Club. A concrete cinder block was placed under the vehicle where the tire was missing. Total value of the tire, including missing lug nuts is \$270. Is some under-privileged Moraga child getting a tire swing for Christmas? Or perhaps this is the work of some high school hooligans?

State of the Town

By Sophie Braccini



Dave Trotter mingles with the community after his presentation

Photo Andy Scheck

On December 7th, Dave Trotter presented the State of the Town address to a crowd of about 80 residents who gathered in the community room of the Holy Trinity Serbian Orthodox Church. Moraga's State of the Town presentation is traditionally offered in December, at the end of each Mayor's tenure, giving outgoing mayors the opportunity to highlight accomplishments for which they would like to be remembered.

The Mayor's chair seemed to suit Dave Trotter; he was able to provide leadership and the ability to move discussions forward while avoiding conflicts. In his address, the outgoing Mayor portrayed a year that has been both challenging and rewarding, with a balanced budget in spite of the tough economy, and with significant progress made on some of the town's largest development

projects. His conclusion indicated that the challenges in the coming years will be to find new sources of revenue, if the town's residents want to maintain the quality of service to which they are accustomed.

Trotter presented the year's results according to the seven objectives he set last December when his fellow council members elected him mayor. The first one was to select a new town manager. This was achieved by the hiring of Michael Segrest last April. Trotter's second objective was to get the Moraga Center Specific Plan approved. The plan is now in its final phase, and should not be delayed beyond the first semester of 2010. With the Specific Plan Trotter's objective #3 should also be adopted; the housing element, a plan that will define higher density housing in the down town, and will

permit the town to satisfy its State obligation to plan for different types of housing needs.

Other development projects moved forward in 2009. Of particular importance is the final approval of the Palos Colorados project, which will build 123 homes, after 20 years in the planning phase. \$17 millions in impact fees for the town are associated with this project.

Goal #4 had to do with a balanced budget and Trotter congratulated staff on being able to curtail spending and to have released a surplus for the 2008/2009 budget period, as well as approving a balanced budget for 2009/2010 with a \$450,000 projected excess.

However, the funding of the infrastructure maintenance stays below the needed levels and to remedy this situation Trotter was pleased to recall that goal #5 had been achieved, the establishment of a Revenue Enhancement Committee that worked over six months in 2009 and presented its report to Council at the end of November. "Implementing the recommendations of the Committee will be one of the major tasks of the coming year," added Trotter. Among the proposals made by that committee, suggestions pertained to the business community and what needs to be done to revive Moraga's business life. It was Trotter's 6th objective to enhance the com-

mercial centers; his success in this area is more arguable, although he highlighted the passage of a measure waiving certain fees for businesses in transition.

There's no argument as far as objective #7 is concerned. It had been Trotter's intention to restore civility on the Council. Those who went to the meetings throughout the year witnessed very courteous and cooperative deliberations.

2009 brought a few unanticipated elements to the forefront. Among them was the move of Town staff to the Hacienda de las Flores, which was very badly received by the community. Trotter was congratulated by resident Ellen Beans on the Council's quick action in bringing this topic to the agenda. The result was a change in the initial decision and instructions given to staff to vacate the Hacienda as quickly as possible.

Trotter concluded his presentation by saying that he enjoyed his year as a mayor and will continue to serve as a Council member in 2010. In Moraga, the Mayor has the same voting power as the other members of the Council, so Trotter shared the credits of the year's successes with his fellow council members and staff. Trotter would not confirm if he will run for an additional 4 years when his current term ends.

Being a Part of Moraga Politics

By Sophie Braccini

Christine Kuckuk always felt that Moraga was a special place to live in and that investing time in the community was the right thing to do. Kuckuk decided to volunteer, first serving on the town's Beautification Committee and later on the Design Review Board. This month the Town of Moraga is recruiting for positions on the Boards and Commissions that are staffed by resident-volunteers like Kuckuk. "The Town of Moraga depends on its volunteers to assist in a number of venues," says Town Clerk Marty McInturf, "All of the Boards, Commissions, and Committees depend on citizen involvement." Positions are open at the Parks and Recreation Commission, the Planning Commission, the Design Review Board (DRB), the Traffic Safety and Advisory Committee, the Americans with Disabilities Act Commission, and the Urban Forest sub-committee. "The way to keep Moraga a special place is by getting involved, and the town needs its volun-

teers," says Kuckuk.

"As a member of the Moraga Parks and Recreation Commission for the past three years, I have realized how volunteering for the town can have such an impact on the recreation programs and services offered," says Liz Faoro. The Parks and Recreation Commission has worked on a variety of issues and projects in recent years, such as the development of a sound ordinance, updating the Parks and Recreation Master Plan, and replacing several play structures and the splash pad at the Moraga Commons. "While these are only a few of the undertakings, we also worked throughout the year on supporting Jay Ingram (Parks and Recreation Director) to provide many special town events," says Faoro, who adds that she hopes Moraga residents will consider being a part of the Parks and Recreation Commission, which currently meets on the third Tuesday of each month at 7:00 p.m.

The demand on DRB members is higher as they meet

bi-monthly, on the second and fourth Monday of each month. Dick Socolich was part of the Design Review Board (DRB) and after two years applied to be on the Planning Commission. "DRB's primary responsibility is to review projects that are ready for construction," says Socolich, "they have to meet the town design guidelines." Socolich is a retired engineer who felt that his expertise could be put to good use for the benefit of the town. "I enjoyed listening to people, hearing their side of the story and seeing the project once it is finished," he adds. On the same Board, Kuckuk, who is a banker by training, was recruited as a "lay" person. "I find the work on the DRB very rewarding," she says, "it can be complicated when we work on a project such as the Palos Colorados development, but it is very rewarding to have an impact." Kuckuk estimates that she spends a maximum of ten hours of preparation before each monthly meeting.

Now on Planning Com-

mission, Socolich enjoys working on the big picture. "We've been working on the Specific Plan and the Housing Element for the Town," he explains, "our guidelines are the General Plan, and the Open Space Ordinance." Next year projects such as the Rancho Laguna development or the Hetfield project will be reviewed by the seven-member commission, and possibly the specific plan for the Rheem Center as well.

"I feel that I have an impact," says Socolich, "there are seven of us on the commission; sometimes my point of view is shared by others, sometimes not."

"Moraga needs its volunteers," concludes Kuckuk, "the recommendations of the commissions are important and working for the town raised my awareness about what is happening here."

For more information on the open positions or to send an application, go to http://moraga.ca.us/production/moraga_employment_volunteer.php?mn=6. The deadline to submit an application is Friday, January 8th.

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“Ministerial Process” Delays Specific Plan Approval

By Sophie Braccini

At the December 7th meeting of the Moraga Planning Commission, Commissioner Margaret Goglia, realizing that this was the last time the Commission would be able to review the document, asked for more “green” requirements and for public transportation options to be studied before making a final recommendation regarding the 20-dwelling-units per acre ordinance that’s included in the town’s housing element. The housing element goes hand in hand with the down town Specific Plan.

Once the ordinance is adopted by the Town Council, a developer will be able to build residences at a 20-dwelling-units per acre density (up to 30 du/a for senior housing) on a six acre lot located

in the down town area, either by Aegis of Moraga on Country Club Drive; or on the north side of the creek, across from the Moraga Commons. There would be no public hearing regarding this potential development, and only approval by staff is required.

This “Ministerial Process” is a requirement of the California Department of Housing and Community Development, the agency that must approve Moraga’s housing element. Moraga, like every other jurisdiction in California, has a State obligation to plan for the construction of a certain number of affordable housing units. Moraga chose to meet its obligation by zoning a set area for higher density.

The ordinance that defines all

the parameters of this potential development was drafted by a sub-committee that included two council members, two members of the planning commission and the design review board, Town staff, and the main property owner, the Bruzzone family.

Since traffic has been a concern both for residents and the neighboring towns of Lafayette and Orinda, Goglia asked that a shuttle or public transportation option to BART be included in the ordinance. The Commission will meet again on January 4th to discuss it and will probably make its final recommendation to the Council that night. The Council will consider its final decision on January 13th.

Ken Chew Elected Mayor of Moraga



Ken Chew Photo Andy Scheck

On December 9th the Moraga Town Council elected Ken Chew to serve as mayor in 2010; Karen Mendonca was elected vice-mayor. Three of the four council members present voted in favor of Chew; Council Member Mike Metcalf abstained. Mendonca was elected unanimously. Chew presented his objectives for the coming year and the meeting was adjourned at an unusually early hour as those present celebrated the election. Read more about Mayor Chew in our next issue.

S.Braccini

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Civic News



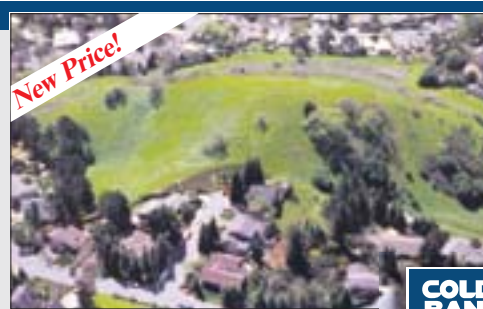
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Happy Holidays!

Orinda

Public Meetings

City Council Tuesday, January 5, 7:00 pm
Auditorium, Orinda Library, 26 Orinda Way

Planning Commission Tuesday, January 12, 7:00 pm
Auditorium, Orinda Library, 26 Orinda Way

Art in Public Places Committee Monday, January 4, 3:30 pm
May Room, Orinda Library, 26 Orinda Way

Mayor's Community Liaison Meeting Monday, January 4, 8:15 am
Community Room, City Hall, 22 Orinda Way

Check online for agendas, meeting notes and announcements
City of Orinda: www.cityoforinda.org
Chamber of Commerce: www.orindachamber.org

Orinda City offices, except police, are closed 12/24 and 12/25, and 12/28 through 12/31.

Police Report



D.U.I., 12/12/09 Police noticed a car weaving between three lanes on eastbound Highway 24 prior to St. Stephens at 2:50 in the morning. Once the officer flashed his lights, the driver veered into the center divide slightly, striking the median before eventually pulling off the highway. Driver had a blood alcohol level of .163 and was taking hydrocodone for an injury. Label on the hydrocodone prescription bottle noted: do not take this with alcohol. Bad combination that could have killed someone.

Senior robbery, 12/08/09 Around lunchtime a 74-year-old suspect walked into BevMo and swiped two bottles of whiskey and two cans of Sapporo beer. Apparently his beverage of choice is a Boilemaker. As a store clerk attempted to stop him, the elderly gentleman ran into the clerk's chest almost knocking him to the ground. Suspect was eventually apprehended at Orinda BART.

Residential burglary, 12/03/09 An unknown suspect opened an unlocked car parked in front of a Via Hermosa residence and took several undisclosed items. The unknown suspect then opened an unlocked sliding glass door to the living room of the home and took several more items. The homeowner discovered the missing items in the morning as he was getting ready for work. Estimated loss \$1648. Two for two.

Although the "Avoid the 25" drunk driving crackdown started Friday, December 18, five drunk driving arrests were made on the weekend of December 5 - 6. One of the drivers happened to be four months pregnant, had an open container in the vehicle and was driving on a suspended license. The goal of the "Avoid the 25" crackdown, which runs through January 3, is to reduce or hopefully eliminate D.U.I. fatalities. Extra patrols will be on duty looking specifically for drunk drivers. At D.U.I. checkpoints all passing cars will be checked to verify that the driver is licensed and sober.

Use Orinda's New Pharmaceutical Disposal Collection Box

Orinda residents can safely dispose of their unwanted or outdated medications in the new pharmaceutical disposal collection box located at City Hall in the upper level lobby. In addition to the disposal collection box, a green plastic recycling bin is available for recycling empty plastic pill bottles. Unwanted pharmaceuticals can be dropped off during normal business hours, Monday through Friday 8 a.m. to 12 p.m. and 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.

Orinda Roads—Council Tackles How to Fund a \$73 Million Fix

By Andrea A. Firth

To bring Orinda's road system to optimum condition has an estimated five-year price tag of \$73 million according to the City's Citizens' Infrastructure Oversight Commission (CIOC).

At the December 15th City Council meeting the CIOC, a seven-member commission comprised of residents with engineering and public works expertise, presented five alternative plans for rehabilitating the City's road and drainage systems. The CIOC's strong preference was that the City pursues a plan to return all of Orinda's roads to good condition. Continuing to maintain the roads at current spending levels, about \$2 million per year, will leave the residential streets, which represent 68% of all of Orinda's roadways, to turn to gravel according to one CIOC member.

Less expensive, middle-of-the road alternatives, with five-year costs between \$31 and \$38 million, were only minimally acceptable according to the CIOC. These plans would maintain the most traveled streets in the City at

an optimum condition and prevent further deterioration of residential roads as a whole, but many residential streets would be left at substandard levels.

The Total Cost? Earlier gross estimates of the cost to repair Orinda's aging road infrastructure, as presented by the City's Revenue Enhancement Task Force last year, have been as high as \$120 million. Not included in the CIOC's road repair plan is the cost to upgrade water pipes that run under the roads, which the Commission concluded were owned by and the financial responsibility of the East Bay Municipal Utility District. Residents Art Haigh and Steve Cohn strongly encouraged the City Council to factor the water pipes into the road repair mix noting that the upgrades were necessary and much more cost-effectively done during road repair.

The CIOC also identified the ongoing maintenance costs associated with keeping Orinda's roads in optimum condition, which ranged from \$2 million to

\$3 million annually for the preferred and mid-range infrastructure management options.

How to Fund It. The goal of the CIOC report was to identify for the Council a reasonable range of options to manage the City's infrastructure. Where the CIOC left off and the City's Finance Advisory Committee (FAC) stepped in was with how to pay for the infrastructure plan. Carol Penskar, Chair of the FAC, presented an updated report of revenue options, and the Council engaged in a discussion of what tax or combination of taxes would be most palatable to Orinda residents. The Council voted to hire a public opinion research strategy firm, FM3, to develop and implement a community phone poll to assess the residents' views about the infrastructure problem and how best to fund fixing it. A draft of the poll questionnaire regarding infrastructure plan options and funding will be presented at the next City Council meeting on January 5th.

The F.A.I.R. Option. Early in the course of the December 15th

Council meeting, residents Art Haigh and Steve Cohn, members of the citizen group F.A.I.R. (Fire and Infrastructure Renewal), requested the Council hear a presentation from their organization. "Our presentation is about taking control of our property taxes. We want to show you how Orinda can generate \$65 million over the next 12 years without compromising emergency services," said Haigh. "The substance is relevant and important in light of the new taxes being proposed," he added.

F.A.I.R. contends that the Moraga Orinda Fire District can be run more cost efficiently and proposes that a portion of the MOFD property tax revenues can then be redirected to address Orinda's crumbling roads, storm drains, and water delivery system. MOFD Chief Randy Bradley was also in attendance and indicated to the City Council that the department encouraged a presentation. F.A.I.R. will give a Power Point presentation at the City Council's next meeting on January 5th.

Orinda Evaluates Police Service Options

By Andrea A. Firth

By many measures, Orinda receives high-level police services from the Contra Costa County Sheriff's Office (CCCSO). The City's \$3.9 million contract for law enforcement services from the CCCSO represents 35% of the City's \$11 million budget. The multi-million dollar question facing the City Council is whether the cost of the CCCSO contract, which is expected to increase significantly over the next several years, is sustainable. To identify options to address this fiscal dilemma, Orinda, along with the cities of Danville and Lafayette, commissioned the Matrix Consulting Group to conduct a po-

lice services study, which was outlined to the City Council at a public workshop on December 7th.

Going forward, the total cost of the CCCSO contract is expected to increase considerably due to rising retirement benefit expenses, but by how much is unclear. The City has received conflicting information on cost projections for retirement benefits. "We won't know exactly what next year's [CCCSO contract] retirement costs until January of 2010," stated City Manager Janet Keeter.

Local agencies across the State are wrestling with how to

manage the escalating costs of funding public employee pension benefit programs, and some estimates project pension costs will double in the next five years.

Orinda resident Carol Penskar, who serves as the Chair of the City's Finance Advisory Committee, pointed out that, even with the unknowns, in the next fiscal year the City will pay more in retirement benefits to the CCCSO than in salaries for the 14 sworn officers dedicated to Orinda. Given the widespread challenge posed by rising public agency pension costs statewide, Keeter said she expected some sort of pension reform measure to be placed before voters in November.

Orinda's current cost per resident for police services, a budgeted cost of \$212 annually, falls in the mid-range as compared to other local communities according to the Matrix report. Compared to its neighbors, Orinda is on the high end. In Lafayette, which also contracts with the CCCSO but has a larger population, the annual per resident cost for police services is

\$158. In Moraga, which has its own police department and a similar number of residents, police services cost about \$137 a head.

Matrix evaluated the cost of Orinda maintaining its contract with CCCSO over the next five years as compared to five alternative police services delivery options. With the rising costs of the County's retirement benefit structure, Matrix concluded that staying with the CCCSO might not be economically viable for the City. Matrix recommended that Orinda further explore the formation of an Orinda Police Department or a partnership with Lafayette and/or Moraga. Projected cost estimates for these alternatives were lower than maintaining the CCCSO contract, however, the creation of a new police department in Orinda or in combination with another municipality would include a number of start-up costs as well.

The City Council has planned a follow up workshop to further discuss the police services study on February 3rd at 6:00 p.m.



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Trash Rates Likely to Rise

By Andrea A. Firth

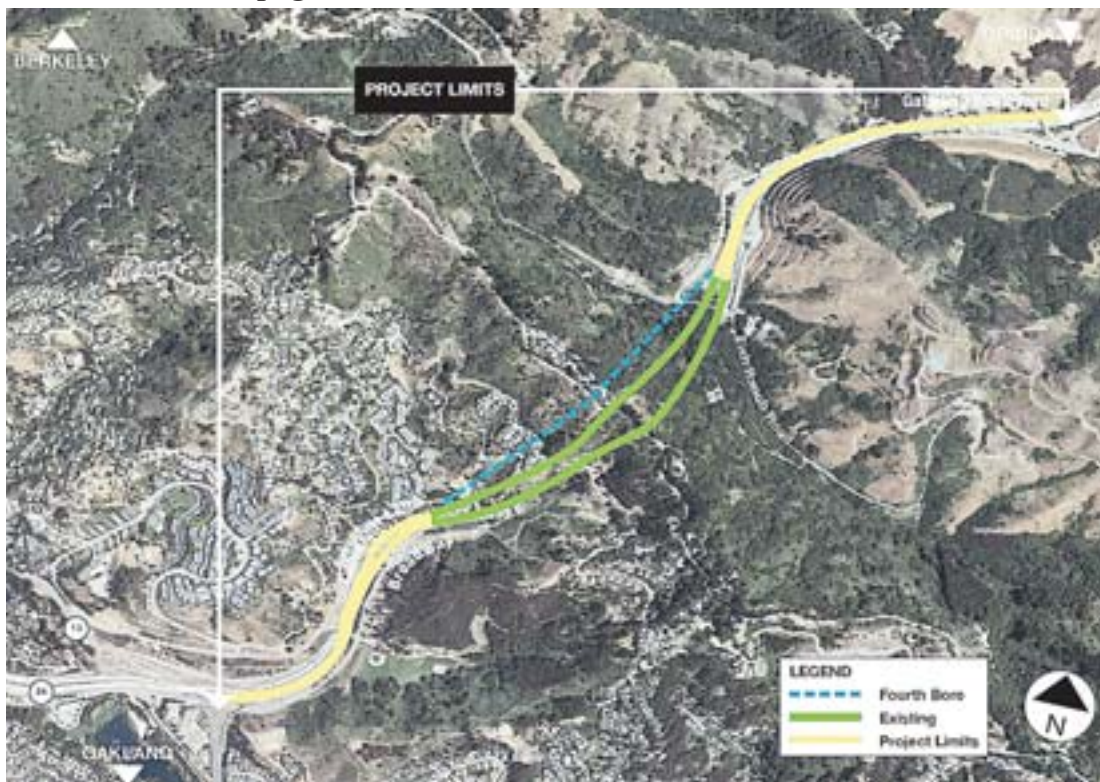
The Central Costa County Solid Waste Authority (CCCSWA), the body that determines how much residents pay for the disposal of their trash and recycling, will adopt new rates in January and an increase in fees charged to Orinda residents and businesses is likely. The recommended rate adjustment is a 2.4% increase for Orinda residents and a 3.6% increase for Orinda's commercial customers. Vice Mayor Victoria Smith and Council Member Steve

Glazer serve as representatives to the CCCSWA Board. A commercial food waste program, sponsored by the CCCSWA, is geared to begin later in 2010 and will enable local restaurants and food stores to recycle food waste in the same way that residents use their own green bins. The goal of the CCCSWA Board is to get the most diversion of waste from landfills possible, explained Smith. "Unfunded" state mandates require cities to divert 50% of the waste generated

by residential and commercial customers away from landfills but provide no financial resources to make this happen. The CCCSWA has partnered with Allied Waste Management and East Bay Municipal Utility District (EBMUD) in the commercial food waste program that is designed to "digest" food waste, which represents 19% of all commercial waste, in a process that captures the methane produced by the waste and pipes the energy into the EBMUD plant and grid.

Caldecott Tunnel Fourth Bore to Get Underway

... continued from page 1



Projected new bore

"It is a unique project in the state of California, because it is coming together through the partnership and funding of several agencies," stated Amy Worth, an Orinda City Council member and a representative to the Contra Costa County Transit Authority. The \$420 million fourth bore project will be funded through regional, state, and federal funding sources, including \$123 million in Contra Costa County Measure J monies and \$192 million from the federal stimulus

package. "This project is the largest recipient of American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funds in the nation," stated CalTrans Project Manager Cristina Ferraz, adding that approximately 7,000 to 8,000 jobs will be generated by the project. The addition of the fourth bore will relieve traffic congestion in the non-peak direction, eliminate the daily lane-direction reversals of the center bore, improve travel times, and increase safety and evacuation access in the case

Graphic courtesy of CalTrans of an emergency. "On top of all that, the fourth bore will look very nice," stated Ferraz, who also assured community members that they would continue to receive clear radio and cell phone transmissions (hands-free device required, of course) as they travel through the brightly lit tunnel. *A Little History.* Work on the Highway 24 connector between the Contra Costa and Alameda counties, through the Berkeley hills, started almost 140 years ago

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in the 1870's. Public funding for infrastructure was as hard to come by then as it can sometimes be today, and it took until 1903 before a timber tunnel passageway opened. The design for two bores placed on the southern side of the hill began twenty years later, and bores one and two opened in 1937 followed by the addition of bore number three on the north side of the hill in 1964. Almost a half-century later, the construction of a fourth bore will get underway.

How's it Done? The 3,389 foot-long tunnel will have 12-foot lanes, a 10-foot north shoulder, a two-foot south shoulder, a two-foot north emergency walkway, and a three-foot south emergency walkway. Utilizing a sequential excavation method, crews working from both the east and west sides of the hill will be excavating and stabilizing small segments of the tunnel progressing about one to two meters a day. Situated less than half a mile from the Hayward fault, the project has been designed to withstand a significant seismic event and will include seven cross passages to the adjacent tunnel.

"We will be closing bore three quite a bit during excavation," stated a CalTrans construction manager, however he explained that these closures would be conducted between 10 p.m. and 4 a.m. "Traffic impact on

a daily basis will be relatively small," he said adding, "there will never be a full freeway closure during the project."

The Noise and Dust! There will be no blasting at night, and noise levels will be monitored throughout the project to ensure that the noise level is kept down, according to CalTrans. To control the dust and dirt, stockpiles of excavated material will be wet down,


trucks hauling debris will be covered, truck wheels will be washed, and local streets swept.

CalTrans will conduct further community outreach meetings throughout the project as needed. A fourth bore website will be up and running by mid-January. Until then information about the project can be accessed at the Cal Trans website, <http://www.dot.ca.gov/dist4/caldecott/index.html>.

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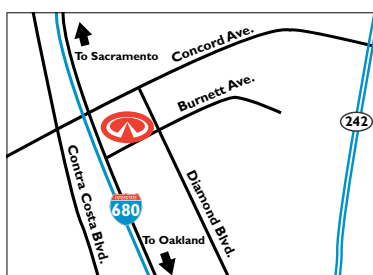
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8:15 a.m. Traditions Worship Service
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10:45 a.m. Celebrations Worship Service
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Christmas Eve Services
4:00 p.m. Joy to the World (Children's Christmas Pageant)
6:00 p.m. The First Noel (Candlelight Communion Service)
10:00 p.m. Silent Night (Candlelight Communion Service)
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LAMORINDA Community

Letters to the Editor

Share your thoughts with our community! Opinions in Letters to the Editor are the express views of the writers and not necessarily those of the Lamorinda Weekly. All published letters will include the writer's name and town (please give us your phone number for verification purposes only), and should be 350 words or less.

email: letters@lamorindaweekly.com; Regular mail: **Lamorinda Weekly, P.O.Box 6133, Moraga, CA 94570**

Dear Editor,

As a 45 year resident of Moraga, my husband and I have supported the Rheem and Orinda Theaters, by going to the movies they have shown. Now there is a chance, they will close due to lack of attendance. What I would like to know, is how anyone aside from locals even knows of their existence? There is no listing of the theaters along with listings of other theaters in the newspapers. Theaters can not rely on local attendance alone. Pay to have your theaters listed, and I am sure attendance will improve. At least people will not have to call, as we have done, to see if you are open, or have to drive by to see what is being shown. Just a thought.

Sydney L. Brown
Moraga

Editor:

I was disappointed to see the light tone with which you reported a citation for an 18 year old who hosted a party with alcohol. It has been only a few weeks since your newspaper reported the latest in the sad story of the Orinda boy who died at a party just like that one. A 18 year old having the run of the house to serve alcohol to other 18 year olds is not funny. I'm not approaching this from some sort of uptight puritanical point of view. I'm strictly concerned about the risks of serious injury or death to those kids, and the road safety risks to which they and their parents exposed the rest of us. Your writer should save the levity for other events.

Tony Rodriguez
Moraga

Editor:

As a member of the Board of the Hacienda Foundation of Moraga, I am very pleased to learn that the Town Council has initiated action to remove the corporation yard – and eventually other town offices -- from the Hacienda grounds. This relocation of the Town's unsightly garbage dumpsters, trucks, and maintenance equipment from Hacienda grounds is essential to the Foundation's goal to Enhance, Protect, and Preserve the Hacienda as a treasured recreational asset for future generations or Moragans. Removing the corporation yard from the Hacienda grounds will:

- Remove this eye sore from the beautiful Hacienda grounds.
- Provide much needed access to the Hacienda from Moraga Road.
- Supplement the currently inadequate parking within the Hacienda grounds.
- Vastly improve access to the Hacienda's Pavilion facility – including access for people with disabilities.
- Make it possible to book two or more summer weddings at a time – and allow Moraga recreation to increase rental income to offset maintenance costs.
- Make way, finally, for initiation of the Hacienda plan to create a thriving Community Center for residents.

Since the Town Council's action, the Moraga blogosphere has been charged with questions about the acquiring the building and grounds at 331 Rheem Blvd. for the new corporation yard. While it is true that Moraga's budget – like your budget and mine – is under stress, let's take a look at some facts:

- When moved to Hacienda grounds in the 1980's, town offices and the corporation yard were to have been "temporary" tenants. The opportunity to find a permanent solution is long overdue.

- The prior tenant of the 331 Rheem Blvd. property extensively renovated the buildings, offices, communications, etc. to the light industrial standard appropriate for a corporation yard. The Town is now doing its due diligence to assure it is suitable for Town use.
- The financing plan for the 331 Rheem property involves selling off unused Town real estate. Mostly, it is an asset swap, selling off nonproductive Town assets to buy productive ones that are much needed.
- A "bridge loan" will permit going ahead with the asset purchase and needed renovations at the Town offices at 329 Rheem.
- Developing a Town corporation yard at any other site would surely cost more than the purchase of 331 Rheem. Alternative sites are not available. Any alternative plan would involve very expensive green-field development.
- The overwhelmingly well attended 2009 Cinco de Mayo and Oktoberfest events at the Hacienda clearly demonstrate that greater access to Hacienda buildings and grounds is something the residents need and will support.

I encourage everybody to take a close look at this opportunity that is not likely to be available again. In my view, it is a great chance to move forward with recreation, good government, and sound financing at the same time.

Bob Reynolds
Moraga

Editor:

I was mildly amused by the comments made by Ms. Caroline Wood regarding dog parks. Ms. Wood would be well-advised to gather some more facts about this subject. First, the City of Baltimore operated an off-leash dog park and was fined by the United States Environmental Protection Agency for having fecal bacteria counts in the dog park soil several thousand percent above acceptable levels. The poor taxpayers of the City of Baltimore were fined many thousands of dollars for this unforeseen problem. Second, Ms. Wood neglects to consider the tremendous liability exposure on property owners from unprovoked dog attacks and dog bites. Perhaps Ms. Wood has an idea on how to indemnify the Bruzzone family from this liability. Finally, there is the novel progressive political philosophy of suggesting or invoking eminent domain to seize/use private property for the public good. My suggestion to Ms. Wood would be that she volunteer to use her own private property as a pilot program for a dog park and report back to all of us about her findings. By the way, I own a lovely golden retriever whose only loyalty is to his food bowl and a kind word.

Dennis Wanken
Moraga

Public Forum JOIN IT

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Lafayette's New Business Person of The Year

By Sophie Braccini



Ed Stokes poses in his store by a picture of himself taken 20 years ago, when he first received the Business Person of the Year Award
Photo Sophie Braccini

Twenty years ago the Lafayette Chamber of Commerce elected its first businessperson of the year. Ed Stokes, founder of Diablo Foods, was the first nominee. This year, the Chamber de-

ecided to honor once more the veteran businessman who remains active at the helm of one of the last independent grocery stores in the area. Ed Stokes is once again, and to his amazement, Lafayette Busi-

ness Person of the Year.

"I was shocked when I heard it," says Stokes, "I am part of the Advisory Board of the Chamber that nominates the candidates and I had no idea that my colleagues had been conspiring to elect me." In his office above the store where he comes to work every day, the plaques displayed on the walls are the testimonies of his generosity. They read "Founding Sponsor of The Lafayette Jazz Festival," "Acalanes Friend of Education," "Generous Rotarian," "Lafayette Honorary Mayor." These signs explain the popularity and the success of Stokes and his family. "We have to give back to the community where we live," says Stokes, who has been a Lafayette resident for 40 years, "our profits are spent and re-invested here." Stokes was also Citizen of the Year. He is a past President of the Chamber of Commerce, the Rotary Club and Town Hall Theater.

Stokes, who is now helped by two of his children and one grandchild, does not plan to retire soon. "I am only 87," he says, "I enjoy coming to work every morning and keeping an eye on everything." Stokes' recipe for success is working because, despite a difficult economy, Diablo Foods reports over 4% growth for 2009. The storeowner believes that this is the result of the excellent work of each of his department managers who run their own operations, the quality and diversity of his products, the reasonable pricing, and the excellent customer service. Innovative elements such as the new local fruit and vegetable stand contribute to the growth of the business as well.

With a first great-grandchild on the way, Stokes' perspective is definitely set on the future. "We will keep the business for years to come," he promises. A dinner to celebrate Stokes will be held at the

Lafayette Park Hotel on January 22. Lafayette's new Mayor, Brandt Andersson, will present the State of the City Address during the evening.

Lamorinda Weekly business articles are intended to inform the community about local business activities, not to endorse a particular company, product or service.

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business briefs

Living Lean Partners with Moraga-based Star Pilates

A few years ago, Sheena Lakhota created "Living Lean," a fully customizable nutrition and exercise program. She developed her business by partnering with local restaurants and food businesses to provide her customers and others with balanced nutrition on-the-go. She has now established a partnership with Miles Morsey, owner of Star Pilates in Moraga. "The new location will provide convenience for Moraga residents and will allow me to train them on the Pilates reformer, which is a great complement to the strength cardiovascular workouts and yoga that we are currently offering. Optimal fitness requires variety, challenge, and consistency. Convenience and a complete repertoire are important for success," says Lakhota. The original Living Lean trainers will be working in all three locations, the two studios in Orinda and at Morsey's studio, 1460 Moraga Road. The studio is open 7:00 a.m. - 7:00 p.m., Monday thru Friday, and 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. on Saturday.

Mt. Diablo Business Women Networking Dinner

The next networking dinner will be held on Thursday Jan. 14, 2010. The guest speaker will be Mary Jane Ryan on, "This year, I will...How to Change a Habit, Keep a Resolution or Make a Dream Come True." The event will run from 5:45 p.m. until 8:30 p.m. at the Lafayette Park Hotel, 3287 Mt. Diablo Blvd, Lafayette. For information and registration please contact www.mtDiabloBusinessWomen.org Registration required by noon on Jan 11th, no walk-ins.

Closed: Kopitiam in Lafayette

It seems like only a few months ago we talked in this column of Kopitiam, the Singaporean restaurant located next to Trader Joe's. The light and tasty food was a favorite of many residents, but the owner had to close his business. In its place, a new Lava Pit Hawaiian Grill is scheduled to open soon. Lava Pit is also at Theater Square in Orinda.

Time to Nominate the Lafayette Green Award

The Lafayette Green Awards will recognize outstanding efforts during 2009 that have contributed to a more sustainable community and helped the city achieve its environmental goals. Winners will be announced in April, in conjunction with Earth Day 2010. Up to ten awards will be given across five different categories: residents, businesses, schools, community organizations, and builders. This year, the nominating period begins on January 1st and ends on February 28th. Nominations can be made by any Lafayette resident or organization with a Lafayette address. You can nominate yourself or another person or organization. Winners will be selected during March by the city's Environmental Task Force. For more information or to see last year's winners: <http://www.sustainablelafayette.net/greenawards/>.

News from the three Chambers of Commerce

Lafayette

Chamber Office closes for the holidays: "The Lafayette Chamber of Commerce is here for YOU!" says Chamber CEO Jay Lifson, "but beginning at noon on Wednesday, December 23, we won't be here for you. We will be hibernating until Monday, January 4, 2010. Happy Holidays to our members and our friends!"

Moraga

Check out the new Chamber website with modernized graphics and improved functions at www.moragachamber.org. Grant Stubblefield, of Community Marketing Group, and Lynn McAuliffe, of Champagne Design, both Chamber members, worked cooperatively on the site.

Orinda

Mark your calendar for a new event in Orinda. On Friday, March 5th: "Live at the Orinda," the Chamber of Commerce presents a champagne-splashed evening of live professional comedy in conjunction with Tommy T's Comedy House of Pleasanton, and the Lamorinda Film and Entertainment Foundation.

If you have a business brief to share, please contact **Sophie Braccini** at sophie@lamorindaweekly.com

Lynn's Top Five

Tax Tips Roasting on an Open Fire...

By Lynn Ballou, EA, CFP

I'm so glad that my last column of the year will appear in mid-December, because I love to chat about year-end tax planning ideas! As you know, I try to uncover a few unusual ideas and angles about things you already have heard a lot about. This year will possibly provide us with the most atypical year-end tax planning ideas for the decade. So here they are:

1) My first column of 2010 will be devoted to Roth IRA conversions because as of January 1st 2010 the current limit of Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) at \$100,000 will be permanently repealed. But THIS year there are still a couple of ideas to think about. First is the notion that your AGI for 2009 may actually be under \$100,000. Examples: Those of you who are retired weren't required to take an RMD for the year, with high unemployment many have experienced reduced taxable wage or self-employment income, and very few of you will be posting any taxable capital gains on your tax returns. So you may want to quickly explore with your tax advisor the idea of pulling some money out of your traditional IRA(s) this year and converting those to Roth IRAs before the end of the year. This would be an especially good idea if you anticipate you'll have negative taxable income. Having low income and a high deductions such as a mortgage is the most frequent example of this type of phenomenon.

2) If you are thinking that next year could also be a very low taxable income year for you, think about moving funds from your regular IRA to a Roth first thing in January. While investment markets have certainly recovered, they are still down quite a bit from their highs. Moving the funds at the beginning of the year could be a good strategy as that might accelerate the growth in the Roth. If you over contribute, you have time to move the funds back to your regular IRA. A lot to discuss about the mechanics of Roth's which I hope to cover in my next column. Meanwhile, I recommend you consult with your tax and financial advisors. One cautionary note: Every advisor I know recommends you only do a conversion if you have additional money OUTSIDE your IRA/Roth IRA with which to pay the taxes.

3) For those who are experiencing a low income year, try to defer any deductible expenses until next year when hopefully your income will increase. Don't prepay property taxes, an extra mortgage payment and the like because

those deductions may be far more powerful next year, especially if Congress raises rates to help with the ever increasing deficit.

4) If you were aggressive about harvesting losses last year and earlier this year in your portfolios, you probably have a sizable capital loss carry forward. If your holdings are recovering well, and in fact some have gains, why not lock in those gains by selling assets this year before the end of the year and then buying them right back? There are NO WASH SALE RULES when it comes to selling assets for a profit. So if you sell, create gain, offset prior year losses against that gain, and create a higher basis for yourself, that might stand you in very good stead when you sell these assets in future years in a possibly more hostile, higher capital gains tax environment. BE VERY CAREFUL that you know for SURE that you have losses either from prior years that you are carrying forward and/or from earlier this year. Check with your tax advisor to run some double checks on this. And to be sure you aren't running into any AMT (alternative minimum tax) problems. And of course factor in trading costs.

5) We live in a very charitable community. If you are about to do year end gifting, think through which assets you will be giving. If you have the opportunity to gift appreciated securities, be careful to pick those with the lowest basis. For example, if you have owned a stock for many years and have been reinvesting dividends, you should consider gifting those shares with the lowest basis. With reinvested dividends having spanned some up years in the mar-

ket and some down years, pick those that were invested in years when stocks were least expensive and keep the others. You will need to do this "Specific Identification Method" with the firm that custodians your assets so that they know which you are gifting and which you are not. Otherwise, they might use an average cost basis accounting method which may not be in your best interests. Your favorite charities don't care about low basis --- qualified charities pay no taxes on the sale. Good for you and good for them!

Wishing everyone a wonderful holiday! Let's hope the only coal in our stockings is due to the improving economy and that it all turns into diamonds! Cheers!



Lynn Ballou is a Certified Financial Planner (CFP) and co-owner of Ballou Plum Wealth Advisors, LLC, a Registered Investment Advisory (RIA) firm in Lafayette. Lynn is also a Registered Principal and Branch Manager with LPL Financial (LPL). As such, she is required by securities regulations to add the following information to this column: The opinions voiced in this material are for general information only and not intended to provide specific advice or recommendation for any individual. Securities offered through LPL Financial, member FINRA/SIPC. Reach Lynn Ballou at lynn@ballouplum.com



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ART

Moraga Art Gallery's group show, "Pitchers, Pictures and Lotsa Bling" featuring the work of potter Donna Arganbright and painter Bob Wahrhaftig, will run through January 9, 2010.



Jellies by Leslie Swartz

The new group show, "Three Continents," featuring local artists showing watercolor, acrylic and oil paintings, ceramics, photography, mixed media, jewelry and glass designs, begins January 12, followed by an Opening Reception, 3:00-5:00 p.m., January 23, and will run through March 14, 2010. It will feature the work of 2 Moraga artists, Leslie Swartz and Mariann Mortensen. Moraga Art Gallery is located at 570 Center St, Rheem Valley Shopping Center/next to CVS Drugs in Moraga. Open Tuesday - Sunday, 12-5 p.m. (925) 376-5407.

Hearst Gallery presents Ralph Borge:



A Symbolic Realist and His Circle, January 17 - March 14, 2010. A retrospective exhibition by California College of the Arts beloved master professor of painting and drawing, Ralph Borge (1921 - 2009), including a selection of works by some of his most noted former students. Opening Day Events: Sunday, January 17, 2-3 p.m. Panel discussion, moderated by Vincent Perez, with Philip Linhares, chief curator, Oakland Museum of California, Richard McLean, Jack Mendenhall, and Borge's son, Jason. Reception following, from 3:00 to 5:00 p.m., with Martha Borge and many of the other artists in attendance. Musicians Julian Smedley and Michelé Borge, daughter of the artist, will perform during the reception. The Hearst Gallery is located at Saint Mary's College, 1928 Saint Mary's

◆ Not to be missed ◆

Road, Moraga. The building is directly behind the Chapel. Hours: Wednesday through Sunday, 11 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Suggested admission donation: \$3. The Opening Reception is free.

The Lafayette Gallery is pleased to announce the opening of our new winter show "Treasures from the Heart," which focuses on distinctive gifts for the special people in your life. "Treasures from the Heart" will be on display from January 5 to March 6, 2010. The Gallery is open from 11:00 to 5:00 from Tuesday through Saturday. You are warmly invited to a Champagne and Chocolate Reception on Friday, January 29th, from 6:30 to 8:30 pm. Lafayette Gallery, located at 50 Lafayette Circle, Lafayette. Gallery hours Tuesday-Saturday 11 AM - 5 PM. Phone (925) 284-2788. www.lafayettegallery.net.

Book Club Meeting: The Orinda Books - 2nd Wednesday Book Group will read and discuss *The White Tiger* by Aravind Adiga. They meet monthly at Orinda Books, 276 Village Square, and welcome new members. The next meeting is Wednesday, January 13th at 3pm. (925) 254-7606.

Book Club Meeting: The World Affairs Book Group will discuss *The Heartless Stone: A Journey Through the World of Diamonds* by Tom Zoellner. They meet bi-monthly at Orinda Books, 276 Village Square, and welcome new members. The next meeting is Tuesday, January 19th at 3 pm. (925) 254-7606.

tations begin at 7:15 pm. Opportunity to network and meet the speakers before and after the presentations. Tickets: \$5 Students and Seniors / \$10 Health Medicine Forum members/ \$15 Advance (non-HMF members) / \$20 at the door (non-HMF members) Tickets may be purchased at the box office, over the phone or on the website: www.lesherartscenter.org. Box Office: (925) 943-7469 ((925) 943-SHOW).

Strokes - Are You or a Loved One At Risk? Harvey Brosler, Contra Costa County Stroke Support Group. One of the three most common killers is a stroke. Learn what causes a stroke and how to recognize when a stroke is happening so that you or your family member can avoid some of the devastating effects. The discussion will also include some tips on controlling diabetes and comments about heart disease. Mr. Brosler will speak from personal experience as well as a facilitator of the Contra Costa County Stroke Support Group. Tues, Jan 26, 10:30 - Noon. Lafayette Senior Services, 500 Saint Mary's Road, Lafayette. All event/programs \$1 Members/ \$3 Non-Members. Please call 284-5050 to reserve a spot.

THEATRE

Rip Van Winkle will be presented at LeFevre Theatre in January. Audiences, young or old, will delight in this entertaining story, written in 1820 by Washington Irving and adapted for the stage by SMC Professor Michael Cook. Find out where Rip goes, why he is gone for so long, and what happens upon his return to his village. The short story is elaborated into a full one-hour of children-focused entertainment. When: Wednesday, January 27, at 7 p.m. and Thursday, January 28, at 4 p.m. Where: LeFevre Theatre, Saint Mary's College of California, 1928 St. Mary's Rd., Moraga. Ticket Price: \$8.00
Tickets and information: For information, please call (925) 631-4670 or e-mail scashill@stmarys-ca.edu.

California Independent Film Festival screens "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest," Jan 16th, 2010, 7 PM, Orinda Theatre. Q&A with Oscar winner Louise Fletcher (Nurse Ratched). General Admission: \$20; Seniors & Students: \$15; \$125 Movie, Q&A & VIP Reception. Tickets available at Orinda & Rheem Theatres and www.caiff.org or call (925) 277-1355 for info.

LITERATURE

Contra Costa County Library Holiday Schedule and Closures. Due to County budget cuts and holidays, all Contra Costa County Library locations will be closed from Wednesday, December 23 through Sunday, December 27 and from Thursday, December 31 through

KIDS & PARENTS

Parent Education Night: When things go "haywire" even with parents' best intentions. Wednesday, February 3, 2010 from 6:30 p.m. - 9:30 p.m. 66 St. Stephen's Drive, Orinda. Youth and young adult experts: Dr. Francis Bartolomeo, Jack Kline and Karen Fitzhugh from CRC Health Group will talk in a panel format on helping our youth manage stress and issues that can result in unhealthy behavior. Free/No cost to attend. No reservations needed. Phone: 254-3770; email: office@ststephensorinda.org; website: www.ststephensorinda.org.

Roughing It Day Camp Show & Tour: January 18th @3:00 PM, located at 1010 Oak Hill Road, Lafayette CA 94549. Free. Whole Family Welcome. Snacks & refreshments provided.

OTHER

Health Medicine Forum (HMF) hosts "Emotional Wellness: Letting Go," the 6th event of the Rethinking Wellness Series, at the Leshner Center for the Arts in Walnut Creek on Tuesday, January 26th. Presentations

CLUBS

Sons In Retirement Lamorinda Branch 171 meets first Wednesday monthly at Holy Trinity Culture Center 1700 School St. Moraga. Social hour 11:00 am, lunch at 12:00 pm. The after-lunch speaker will be Bud MacKenzie, the founder of Trust in Education which provides health care, education and economic development programs in Afghanistan. For details and membership information, call Larry at (925) 631-9528.

Montelindo Club general meeting and speakers, third Friday of the month, September through May, Orinda Community Church, #10 Irwin Way, Orinda. Refreshments and plant sale at 9 a.m., meeting at 9:30, speaker at 10:30. The meeting is free and welcomes guests and new members. Web Site: www.montelindogarden.com. Email contact: montelindogarden@aol.com. The speaker for the January 15th meeting will be Neal Richmond, a garden judge and former president of the NorCal Daylily Group, who will speak about "Daylilies."

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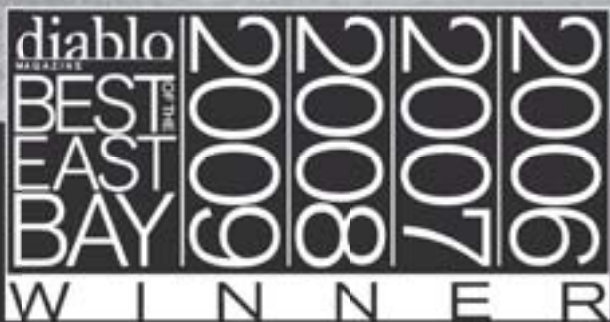
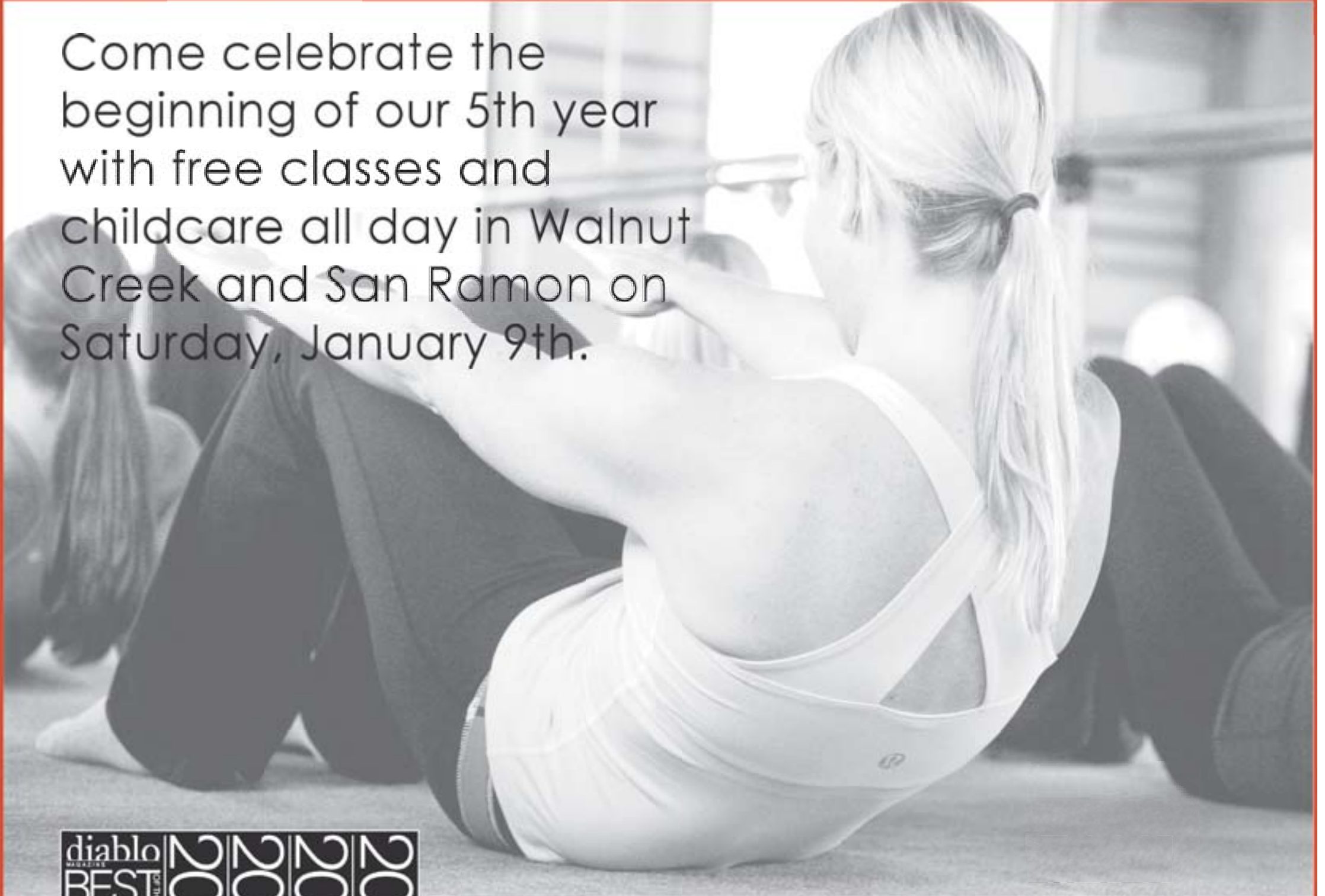
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Lamorinda Home Sales continued


| | |
|------------------|------------------|
| LAFAYETTE | Last reported: 7 |
| LOWEST AMOUNT: | \$560,000 |
| HIGHEST AMOUNT: | \$1,259,000 |
| MORAGA | Last reported: 5 |
| LOWEST AMOUNT: | \$590,000 |
| HIGHEST AMOUNT: | \$836,000 |
| ORINDA | Last reported: 6 |
| LOWEST AMOUNT: | \$750,000 |
| HIGHEST AMOUNT: | \$1,822,000 |

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**
- 3210 Glenside Drive, \$800,000, 3 Bdrms, 2412 SqFt, 1974 YrBl, 11-25-09
 - 3500 Hamlin Road, \$1,259,000, 3 Bdrms, 2585 SqFt, 1951 YrBl, 11-18-09
 - 3495 Moraga Boulevard, \$940,000, 3 Bdrms, 1903 SqFt, 1946 YrBl, 11-18-09
 - 1533 Pleasant Hill Road, \$560,000, 4 Bdrms, 1982 SqFt, 1949 YrBl, 11-19-09
 - 3330 St. Marys Road, \$562,500, 3 Bdrms, 1866 SqFt, 1940 YrBl, 11-17-09
 - 3162 Stanley Boulevard, \$805,000, 3 Bdrms, 1454 SqFt, 1951 YrBl, 11-20-09
 - 805 Tanglewood Drive, \$1,045,000, 4 Bdrms, 1864 SqFt, 1975 YrBl, 11-20-09
- MORAGA**
- 891 Augusta Drive, \$673,000, 2 Bdrms, 2333 SqFt, 1978 YrBl, 11-20-09
 - 309 Constance Place, \$836,000, 4 Bdrms, 2335 SqFt, 1970 YrBl, 11-19-09
 - 128 Draeger Drive, \$638,500, 4 Bdrms, 2198 SqFt, 1956 YrBl, 11-25-09
 - 26 Hanson Court, \$590,000, 3 Bdrms, 2095 SqFt, 1984 YrBl, 11-24-09
 - 606 Rheem Boulevard, \$850,000, 5 Bdrms, 2578 SqFt, 1971 YrBl, 11-20-09
- ORINDA**
- 525 Miner Road, \$1,365,000, 4 Bdrms, 2962 SqFt, 1942 YrBl, 11-18-09
 - 65 Muth Drive, \$990,000, 4 Bdrms, 2703 SqFt, 1979 YrBl, 11-17-09
 - 254 Overhill Road, \$750,000, 3 Bdrms, 1482 SqFt, 1950 YrBl, 11-20-09
 - 404 Ridge Gate Road, \$975,000, 2 Bdrms, 2212 SqFt, 1980 YrBl, 11-25-09
 - 11 Southwood Court, \$960,000, 3 Bdrms, 1913 SqFt, 1939 YrBl, 11-17-09
 - 275 Sundown Terrace, \$1,822,000, 5 Bdrms, 3924 SqFt, 1992 YrBl, 11-20-09

- Lamorinda Foreclosures continued**
- LAFAYETTE**
- Dewing Avenue, HSBC Bank, 11-30-09, \$685,000, 2872 sf
 - Highland Road, Deutsche Bank, 11-19-09, \$762,829, 1676 sf, 4 bd
 - Old Jonas Hill Rd., Rww Properties, 11-02-09, \$1,360,000, 3401 sf, 6 bd
- ORINDA**
- Claremont Avenue, Paragon Mortgage, 11-09-09, \$545,700, 1869 sf, 3 bd


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Build it in 2010!
A somewhat optimistic perspective on building and real estate in Lamorinda
 By Sophie Braccini



Partners Matt Kunz (left) and Jeff Wendt (right) in front of one of their projects. Picture courtesy of KW Builders Inc.

Jeff Wendt, Judy Dinkle, and Kathy Kovell agree, 2010 will be a good year for their construction businesses in Lamorinda. The three contractors specialize in remodeling; a large majority of their business is done locally and their perspective for 2010 is very good. The outlook is not quite as optimistic for the new-home builders in Lamorinda, in sync with the Builders' Association's prediction of a mild recovery in 2010. As for realtors, they are conscious of operating in a protected market, and even if they do not expect a boom in 2010, they believe that the market will stay stable with a healthy demand for homes priced at less than one million dollars.

There are projects in the pipeline for new construction in Lamorinda, but according to Orinda Planning Director Emmanuel Ursu, it appears that developers are getting things in order and approved, but are waiting for the economy to pick-up before breaking ground. "In Orinda, the 245-home Wilder project should break ground with a private pool and recreation center, and according to the Development Agreement, they should construct two new public ball fields," said Ursu, who adds that if the economy gets better, Orinda could see the start of the Orinda Grove project, a 73-unit residential project, and several others including senior housing developments.

"We've seen a 35% drop in the number of planning and building applications during the first semester of 2009," said Ursu, "and I do not expect activity to really pick up before the mid to end of 2010."

In Moraga, Planning Director Lori Salamack sees potential on the 2010 horizon as well. "The 123-home Palos Colorados development should start grading of the property in 2010," said Salamack, "and other projects such as the 20-dwelling-units per acre zone in the Town Center, or the 67 approved lots in the Country Club, could start being developed, economic conditions permitting."

Builders of new homes may be hesitant for good reason, since local real estate professionals report that sales of expensive homes continue to be sluggish, while in turn, the market for homes priced at less than a million dollars stays active. "Growth is in the under \$1 million market," says Keith Miller, Manager of the Contra Costa Pacific Union Real Estate Office, "as long as the schools' scores in Lamorinda remain the same we'll have a demand." For Miller, one difficulty is that sellers still expect their homes to be valued at the level they reached four years ago.

"We've seen a build-up of inventory that has dragged the prices a bit down," says Ben Olsen, a realtor with Village Associates, "but they have now stabilized." According to Olsen the average time on the market is now 30 days, and the selling price varies around 2% of the asking price. Elena Hood, Coldwell Banker, agrees that the difficulty is in the higher end market. "Homes over one million are under pressure because banks are reticent to lend," says Hood, "they make the process longer and sellers are hesitant because the market is low."

Neither building nor buying, many Lamorindans continue to provide work for local contractors, or at least for the ones who have survived. "The bad economy has weeded out some not-so-good contractors, so the ones who are left have good perspectives for 2010," says Kunz. He reports that his company, KW Builders Inc., had a good year in 2009 and expects that more people will want to remodel in 2010, taking advantage of lower labor costs.

Dinkle, and her JD Design Company, have an optimistic perspective as well. She reports more projects slated for 2010 than she usually has at this time of the year. Contrary to others who see more smaller projects, she envisions larger developments next year.

Big Red Construction's Kovell sees fewer people doing larger jobs or people buying older homes and remodeling them. She also says 2009 was a good year, and that 2010 promises to be so busy that she recently hired two new employees.

Whether they remodel, build new, buy or sell, Lamorindans may have new opportunities in 2010. "Everybody has cut back so much that now there is a light at the end of the tunnel," says Cheryl O'Connor, Acting CEO of the Home Builders Association in San Ramon, "lenders are more conservative, but mortgage financing is getting better, and affordability levels have never been as good, which makes for great opportunities."

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Winter Wood Fires: Burning too much, Lamorinda?

By Sophie Braccini



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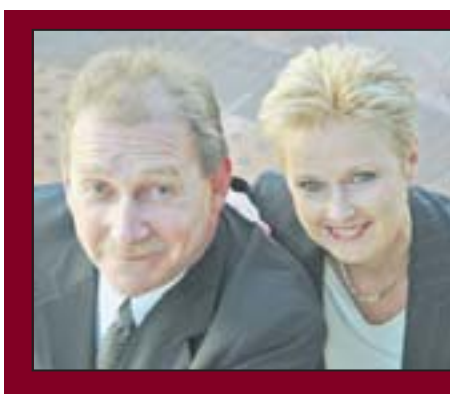
At a recent Rotary meeting Contra Costa County Supervisor Gayle Uilkema expressed her concern over the wood burning habits of Lamorindans. Uilkema is also a member of the Board of Directors of the Bay Area Air Quality Management District (BAAQMD); she noticed too many unhealthy days reported in Contra Costa, so she decided to find out if the jurisdictions of her district, including Moraga, Lafayette and Orinda, are in the habit of burning wood. The results are in and are not very complementary for Lamorinda. Are we

burning too much wood? "The air quality agency operates monitoring stations that check that we are meeting our objectives in term of air quality with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)," explains Uilkema, "and if evidence of high rates of particulate matters is found in the air, we start accumulating violation days. The consequence is that we immediately have to make a new federal plan with the EPA, and federal money for transportation is withheld from the area." Uilkema points out that, more importantly,

these particulate matters are unhealthy, and make it difficult for people with asthma, other respiratory or heart conditions to breathe when concentration rises.

According to the BAAQMD, wood smoke is the largest source of wintertime air pollution in the Bay Area. When there is no wind to disperse pollutants from smoke, they become trapped close to the ground. "When temperatures drop and with very little wind, a blanket of wood particles lingers over the residences," says Uilkema, "on 'Spare the Air' days, I have seen a horizontal cloud caused by wood burning hovering over Lafayette."

A concerned Uilkema decided to poll residents to find out if her district was doing its part and reducing wood burning. "For the last 3 1/2 years I have sent polls to communities, randomly," says Uilkema, "One of the questions is 'do you burn wood in a fire place or open pit?' What is scary is that 61.8% of Lafayette residents said yes, in Orinda 43.5%, and in Moraga 39.1% reported burning wood." As a comparison, only



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28% of Hercules residents and 5.3% in Rossmoor burn wood. Among Canyon residents, however, 77.7% burn wood.

Uilkema believes that these numbers are concerning and she wants to raise the awareness of her constituency and urge them to choose alternatives. "Any type of burning is prohibited on Spare the Air days," says Uilkema, who reminds residents that the BAAQMD can fine offenders that are found burning on those days. "Finding out what days are 'Spare the Air' days is easy," she says, "You can call the Air District to receive automated email or phone alert messages." Residents concerned about burning emission can call 800-334-ODOR to report the problem.

The Winter Spare the Air season runs from November 1, 2009, through February 28, 2010. During this period, it is illegal to burn wood, pellets, or manufac-

tured fire logs when a Winter Spare the Air Alert is issued. Residents can ask to receive automated PhoneAlert notification telephone

calls by calling 1-800-430-1515 or sign up for e-mail alerts at <http://baaqmdsparetheair.enviroflash.info/>.

Orinda Library January Exhibit

By Andrea A. Firth



Photo by Andrew Grupe

Six artists with a diverse set of creative interests will exhibit their works at the Orinda Library Art Gallery throughout the month of January. The Gallery exhibits, which rotate each month, are sponsored by the Orinda Arts Council and feature the works of Bay Area artists including many who reside in Lamorinda. The Gallery extends along the hallway outside the Library entrance and through the corridor to the Library auditorium. "I consider myself a dedicated amateur photographer," says

Andrew Grupe, an Orinda resident whose photographs are part of the January exhibit. "One place I really like to go to photograph is the Mount Diablo foothills," states Grupe. "Every time I walk through I see something different." Grupe's interest in photography started when he was teen. He worked summer jobs to save money for camera equipment and taught himself to develop his own film. A few years ago he made the switch to digital, which he used for the photos in this exhibit, and he has not looked back.

Long-time resident of Orinda Lucia Bennhoff will also be part of the January exhibit. "When my youngest daughter went away to college I enrolled in the Wood Technology Department at Laney College. At first I was very intimidated by the machines, but I enjoyed the design and problem solving aspects and overcame the intimidation," says Bennhoff. She went on to set up a workshop in the basement room of her home and has been making furniture for the past 12 years. Bennhoff works with hard woods using the natural color of the woods and no stain.



Jewelry by Monica Borenstein. Photo provided

Also in the exhibit are photographer Dan Cavalier, utilitarian artist Roger Yee, jewelry designer Monica Borenstein, and artist Terrie Chan who creates beautiful beaded eggs. The artists will host a reception at the Gallery on January 9th from 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.

MOFD Board Elects 2010 Officers, New Public Information Campaign Outlined

By Lucy Amaral

Frank Sperling will serve as President for the Moraga-Orinda Fire District's (MOFD) Board of Directors in 2010. The nomination and election of officers was held at the December 16 board meeting, and the new term will begin on January 1, 2010. Sperling held the position of Vice-President for the 2009 Board year.

Along with Sperling, the new line-up includes: John Wyro, Vice-President; Fred Weil, Secretary; Brook Mancinelli, Treasurer; and, Pete Wilson, the former President, will return to a general Board Member position. Wilson was presented with a plaque from the Board commemorating his year of service as President.

During the meeting, Wyro outlined his conceptual plan for the Board's public information strategy. Among the actions, Wyro said he would like to schedule public sessions throughout the year

to gather public input, especially around the areas of mid-year budget review, strategic plan review, long range financial forecasting, budget presentation review and the final budget review and adoption.

"We would like to hold our work sessions in larger spaces and possibly move them around the district," said Wyro. "These are meetings we normally have, but we want to make a greater effort to reach out and encourage participation."

Wyro also said that he would like to see a larger-scope public information campaign be implemented including mailers, newsletters, press releases, public presentations, and increased web site information.

"On MOFD's web site, we want to have a Frequently Asked Question section with specific information related to district opera-

tions so that the public can be better informed on the hows and whys of the district," said Wyro. "We want to explain the facts and issues to anyone interested. The questions will come from a list we are developing and any submitted by the public, so it will be a dynamic section."

Wyro said he hopes that this effort will address the public's concern for more transparency.

"I feel that in light of what has happened over the last year, we have not done a good enough job of getting our message out and hearing if community needs have changed," said Wyro. "We are striving to continue our work to maintain the MOFD as the provider of the highest level of emergency and public service to our community. I believe an enhanced public information campaign will make sure we are doing just that."

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Lafayette City Council Honors Longtime Community Advocate

Don Lively Turns 90

By Rosylyn Aragonés Stenzel



Don and Dorothy Lively await start of Lafayette City Council meeting
Photo Rosylyn Aragonés Stenzel

In a break from the normal order of business, the Lafayette City Council recognized the 90th birthday of one of Lafayette's most colorful citizens, Don Lively, on December 14th at the Lafayette Library and

Learning Center.

Mayor Don Tatzin read a Proclamation stating many of Lively's contributions to Lafayette. When asked why the special recognition for Lively, Tatzin replied, "One because he's

90, and it's nice to celebrate people who do (turn 90). And because he has given lots of input at the city council meetings; sometimes he agrees and sometimes not, but he's always constructive. We consider him an unofficial member of the city family."

Lively first saw Lafayette in 1942 when he drove from Treasure Island - where he was stationed in the Navy - to Walnut Creek. The then rural town of Lafayette reminded him of the small town, Ojai, in Southern California where he grew up.

Lively, a WW II and Korean War veteran, worked for many years in the telecommunications and engineering fields including working for AT&T in Iran for four years. He transferred back to the U.S., living in New Jersey before moving back to Lafayette in 1961. Since then he has been very active through

the years in helping to steer the growth and vision for Lafayette. He has sat on several task forces and commissions; including the CATV Commission (assisted with franchise negotiations for the first cable television providers), Technology Task Force (advocating improvements in the city's technology) and the Library Building Committee, just to name a few.

In addition, he is one of the founding members of the Lafayette Taxpayer's Association and the Alliance of Contra Costa Taxpayers. The Lafayette Taxpayer's Association, formed in 1991, says Lively, "Works on both sides of the street; sometimes opposes taxes and other times on task forces to support and sell taxes." The Alliance of Contra Costa Taxpayers is county-wide coalition modeled after the Lafayette Taxpayer's

Association.

Lively and his wife Dorothy (also known as Casey) have been married for 67 years. He credits her as "making him whatever he is." They met while both working for Telco in Southern California. They are both avid painters and have several paintings with personal significance displayed in their home. One particular painting has special meaning. It depicts the 1936 Ford Sedan that he drove when he first saw Lafayette. He also jokingly refers to the Ford as the Loveboat, which he drove when courting Dorothy. Lively has also painted depictions of the USS Finback Submarine and USS Sperry, both of which he served on during WWII.

Although he is somewhat limited due to health issues, Lively continues to advocate for limited government and be a part

of the public dialogue. The best part of living in Lafayette? Lively says, "Its classical, small-town atmosphere. The wonderful role that its founding principals imposed on volunteer participation in the direction and governance of the city. Those people who laid down the 3 P's, public safety, planning and public works - confining local government's activity to just those areas. I think if that kind of strictness applied to every level of government, we'd have a much finer country and state."

Lastly, when asked what his secret is for a long life, Lively explains, "Good genes, an interest in life and all it offers - plus, joy of watching our three great kids carve out their places in the world. This includes trying to hang onto the great country we were fortunate to have been born into!"

• Community Service •

Moraga Movers Celebrate Christmas

Submitted by Lee Barker

The Moraga Movers Christmas Luncheon held on Monday, December 14, was one of the most important meetings of the year. With 135 residents in attendance, it was also the largest gathering since the senior group became the Moraga Movers.

The new Executive Board was introduced after a formalized election was conducted; the new President of the Moraga Movers is Phil Arth.

The SIRpremes from SIRs Branch 171 entertained the delighted audience. (George Fisher, the outgoing President, was part and parcel here.) This was full-voice, Glee Club quality, complete with a dancing snowman that performed during the professional rendition of "Frosty the Snowman." Then, there were the Starr Steppers from Rossmoor--true "Rockettes," tapping their beautiful hoofs and winning round after

round of applause, finalizing with the audience chiming in on a rousing rendition of "Jingle Bells."

Good food. Good friends. Good show.

The Moraga Movers next monthly luncheon, on Monday, January 11, will bring more delicious food, inspiring entertainment, and the opportunity to socialize with good friends and new people. The social hour begins at 1:00 a.m. and lunch is at 12:00 noon at Soda Center, St. Mary's College, Moraga. For reservations (only \$15--payable at the door on day of luncheon) be sure to call 376-6622 by 5 p.m. on Wednesday, January 6, 2010.

To contact the Moraga Movers please call 376-6622 or go to <http://www.moraga.ca.us>.

Santa Visits Lamorinda Senior Transportation

Submitted by Mary Bruns



Pictured is graphic artist John Otto, as Santa. To his right is Ruth McCahan, president of the Lafayette Senior Services Commission. To his left is Liz Patterson and drivers Eddie Carvalho and Craig Harbarth
Photo provided by M. Bruns

drivers, representatives from both the Lafayette Senior Services Commission and the Lamorinda Senior Transportation Advisory Committee, as well as program staff. Coordinator Mary Bruns expressed gratitude for the wonderful service the drivers provide the Lamorinda senior community and for the support provided by staff and volunteers. Santa visited and handed out the 2010 Lamorinda Spirit Van Appreciation Calendar, filled with pictures and accolades of passengers and many of those who serve them.

If you would like to be one of the illustrious drivers, passengers, or donors, please call 284-5546 for more information. This is a door through door transportation service which makes it possible for seniors to live in their own homes longer. Contra Costa Yellow Cab and DeSoto Company, the Lamorinda Spirit Van, Orinda Seniors Around Town, and Senior Helpline Services Rides for Seniors are collaborative partners in Lamorinda Senior Transportation. Mobility = Independence.

The Lamorinda Senior Transportation Program held its fourth annual Volunteer Appreciation Gathering on Tuesday, December 1, 2009 at Lafayette Senior Services. It was attended by the

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We are pleased to make space available whenever possible for some of Lamorinda's dedicated community service organizations to submit news and information about their activities. Submissions can be sent to storydesk@lamorindaweekly.com with the subject header In Service to the Community.

Christmas Wrapped!

Submitted by Sherry Diestler



Photo provided

On December 19th, over a hundred local volunteers came to Willow Spring Church in Moraga to wrap more than two thousand presents for homeless and needy children served by the Bay Area Rescue Mission. Volunteers came from Lafayette Girl Scout Troops 33846 and 31983 (who also raise money throughout the year to buy presents for this event), the Miramonte REACH group, the National Charity League, Stanley Middle School's Opportunity Knocks, Campolindo, Acalanes, and Miramonte High School, Burton Valley School, and Willow Spring Blast Kid's Club. Other volunteers included families, individuals and church members who

want to help the homeless and to model a giving spirit to their children. The teen worship band from Northcreek Church provided jazzy Christmas carols, and volunteers enjoyed hot cider, hot chocolate and pizza while they worked. Many volunteers return every year and make the wrapping party part of their Christmas tradition. The consensus of the volunteers was that they appreciated the opportunity to serve the homeless in a local setting and that helping other children enjoy the blessings of receiving Christmas presents was both meaningful and fun. As nine-year Kiana Lew stated, "I want to help other children who are without toys."

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 ...While Visions of Ginger and Caramel Danced in Their Heads

By Susie Iventosch

It is Chow's delicious ginger cake, served with pumpkin ice cream and warm caramel sauce, that has recently been on readers' minds. Maybe it's the time of year, when sugar and spice add the perfect accent of warmth and holiday cheer!

"If we could get the recipe for the ginger cake with pumpkin ice cream at Chow, all would be right with the world," said Missy Schaez of Lafayette. "If you haven't had it, it is to die for!"

Schaez has lived in Lafayette since 2000, but, originally from the Midwest, she misses the fall season.

"The flavors of this ginger cake bring me right back there,"

she said. "I order it every time I dine at Chow and my family knows to watch me take the first bite as I'm truly in heaven!"

Alas, I fear the sleuth in me may be all washed up. Try as I might, I could not get this recipe from Chow. So, I turned to my kitchen in an attempt to forge a similar cake. This version calls for freshly minced ginger root in addition to a plethora of spices, and since I am not a gigantic molasses fan, mine has a bit less of that in the recipe. But, when served with homemade caramel sauce, Missy is right, ginger cake and caramel sauce are an amazing combination! I hope you enjoy it too.



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Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!



Ginger cake with caramel sauce Photo: Susie Iventosch

Fresh Ginger-Spice Cake

Ingredients

- 1/2 cup (1 cube) softened to room temp
- 1 cup (packed) brown sugar
- 1 tablespoon molasses
- 1 tablespoon unsweetened cocoa powder
- 2 eggs
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1 teaspoon of freshly minced ginger (takes about 3-4 inches of ginger root, peeled and minced)
- 1/4 teaspoon powdered cloves
- 1/4 teaspoon allspice
- 1/4 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1/4 teaspoon nutmeg
- 1/2 teaspoon powdered ginger
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1/2 teaspoon baking soda
- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 3/4 cup milk

Directions

In a large mixing bowl cream butter and brown sugar with an electric mixer. Add molasses and cocoa powder and mix well. Add eggs, one at a time, beating well after each. Stir in vanilla and minced ginger. In a separate bowl, mix all dries. Add dries (to butter mixture) alternately with milk, beginning and ending with dry ingredients. Pour batter into a greased 8-inch square baking pan and bake at 350 for approximately 30 minutes, or until center is done and toothpick comes out clean. Serve with ice cream and spoon warm caramel sauce over both. Look for heaven!

Caramel Sauce

(Yields about 1 cup)

Ingredients

- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 1 cube of butter, cut into pieces
- 1/2 cup heavy cream

*You will need a larger saucepan than you might think to make this sauce. When adding the butter and the cream to the sauce, the mixture bubbles up and increases a considerable amount in volume before settling back down. Be sure to have all ingredients ready, because there will be no time to dilly-dally once the sugar is melted! Also using mitts might be a good idea, because the sauce tends to splatter a bit when you add the butter and cream, and it's very, very hot!

Directions

In a heavy 2 to 3-quart saucepan, heat sugar on medium-high heat. Stir vigorously with a wooden spoon or a whisk as the sugar begins to melt. You will notice some liquid and some sugar crystals, but continue to stir until all sugar is melted. The melted sugar will take on an amber (but not burned) color. Immediately add the butter to the pan and whisk until all butter is melted. Take the mixture off the heat and right away add the cream in a slow stream, whisking all the while and until caramel sauce is smooth in texture. Cool to room temp and store in a covered container for up to two weeks.

*Note - a thick pan will help prevent the sugar from burning when melting.



This recipe is available on our web site. Go to: www.lamorindaweekly.com
 Susie can be reached at suziven@gmail.com
 Many of our readers like Susie's recipes. Our website now features a link to our recipe page where you can read, print or download all of the recipes we have published.

If you would like to share your favorite recipe with Susie please contact her by email or call our office at 925-377-0977



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Lamorinda Schools

SCHOOL CALENDAR

School Governing Board Meetings

Acalanes Union
High School District
Board Room AUHSD Office
1212 Pleasant Hill Rd, Lafayette
Wednesday, Jan. 13, 2010 at 7:30 pm

Lafayette School District
LAFSD Office
3477 School Street, Lafayette
Tuesday, Jan. 12, 2010 at 7 pm

Moraga School District
Joaquin Moraga Intermediate
School Auditorium
1010 Camino Pablo, Moraga
Tuesday, Jan. 12, 2010 at 7:30 pm

Orinda Union School District
OUSD Office
8 Altarinda Road, Orinda
Monday, Jan. 11, 2010 at 4:00pm

Please send story ideas to schooldesk@lamorindaweekly.com

The Planet Protection Project A student-led green club at JM

By Sophie Braccini



Painted recycling containers Photo Kim Lockett

Protection Program) club started.

The first objective of the Club, that meets every other Wednesday at lunch time, is to eliminate styrofoam from lunch leftovers. "The students made a presentation during the PTA's November meeting that was very well received," remembers Lockett, "and the PTA promised to contact the vendors that supply hot lunch at the school to ask

the rest of the trash."

What is hopeful about this program is that many teachers are getting involved too, trying to federate the different green aspects that have been developing at JM. "We are trying to get gardening included, and to involve the 6th graders," says Core teacher Dawn Lezak. "She adds that this year the students are doing more in terms of group gardening and composting, and trying to reduce the waste at lunchtime."

In that same spirit, Monopoli and Hunger participated in December at a joint meeting with Stanley and OIS students who want to challenge their peers to a zero-waste lunch on Earth Day in April 2010. "It was fun to see all of the eco groups from each school," says Monopoli, "A lot of other kids are aware of these questions too and that made me happy." The student noted that other interesting projects are going on in the two other local middle schools, such as a project to eliminate plastic bottles.

Social Studies teacher Hillary Hoppock accompanied the students to the meeting. "It can be challenging to convince the students to recycle," she said, "we will use the daily video bulletin and give examples of what is compostable or recyclable, and explain how to bring a zero-waste lunch."

"We hope that the children will get a consistent message at home and at school," adds Lockett, "and with the students' leadership we will make this work."

Marissa Monopoli and Margaret Hunger are 7th graders at Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School (JM) and share a passion for improving the planet. A few months ago they contacted their Science teacher, Kim Lockett, to discuss ways to reduce the use of Styrofoam in Moraga. "This material releases a lot of bad things when it comes in contact with water," says Monopoli, "Ms Lockett wanted to start a new environmental club at school, so this was a great opportunity to work together." Lockett agrees, "I wanted to see a movement stemming from the children that want to make JM greener." That's how the 3P (Planet

them to eliminate Styrofoam."

The next step is to get students to recycle in the right containers. "We have separate containers for the bottles and cans but the students can be lazy and if there are not enough different cans it all gets mixed up," says Monopoli. So with the help of the teachers, the students got new containers with transparent plastic bags so the students can see what goes where, and they painted the recycling containers with bright colors to raise awareness.

"It is a matter of education," says Lockett, "most of the recycling containers are getting contaminated at lunch time and the custodians are obligated to dispose of them with

8th Grade Poetry Winner

Submitted by Stacy Swain

Earlier this year Molly Swain, an 8th grade student at Orinda Intermediate School (OIS), submitted a poem to a contest that was held for young poets. Swain's poem was selected from thousands of entries as one of the top ten in her grade division. The contest was held for all students in grades K-12. The top ten poets in each di-

vision (grades K-3, 4-6, 7-9, 10-12) will each receive special recognition in the poetry anthology "A Celebration of Poets." Each top ten winner receives a complimentary copy of the anthology and a \$50 savings bond. Poems are selected for their literary merit, creativity, and social significance. Creative Communication in

Logan, Utah, sponsors this contest to offer a creative outlet that honors our youth. Creative Communication also awards over \$12,500 each year in Language Arts Grants to schools to further encourage young people's writings. Teachers, parents, and students alike have been pleased with the contest.

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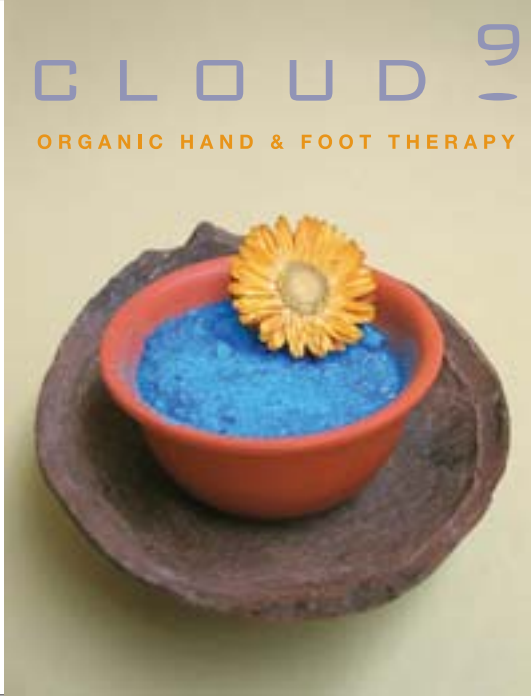
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Ask Dr. Harold

"Lawnmower" Parents

By Harold Jules Hoyle Ph.D.

A couple of weeks ago I was conducting a training with a group of Catholic school principals. The subject of helicopter parents came up. I heard a new term when the superintendent said, "We call them lawnmower parents because the blades are much closer to the ground."

Helicopter or lawnmower parents are a concept I was first introduced to in an e-mail sent out to the faculty at Santa Clara University two years ago. The e-mail contained instructions on how to deal with parents of undergraduates who were following up on the assignments of their children. I would like you to think just for a moment about some of our patterns of interacting with our children. The principals discussed it and frankly they were of the opinion that we parents are doing too much for our kids.

So, are we doing too much for our kids?

In developmental psychology, the human being attempts to solve new problems using techniques that were successful in solving problems in the past. This process is important because through trial and error (that is right, I said error) we learn. The one-year-old throws his spoon/food/plates on the floor because it gets your attention. If you attend to the child only when they make noise or throw things then you are using behavioral psychology to teach your child to do those very activities that you do not like. If we keep our children from making mistakes we are doing too much.

In the recent research on brain development, we have learned that on average, boys' brains develop their motor areas more quickly than their language areas. We also know that on average, language areas of boys' brains can develop one or more years behind those of girls. In his book *Boys Adrift*, Dr. Leonard Sax notes that boys opt out of school because their brains are not ready for the curriculum that has made its way from 1st and 2nd grade into kindergarten.

Part of why we parents do not understand why boys are opting out, is that many of us were raised when the world decided that avoiding poor self-esteem was the main goal of psychological development. I do not argue that it is better to feel good about yourself, but the breakdown happens when we equate failing or struggling at a task with low self-esteem. That is just not how it works. I recently took my 15 year old nephew surfing. It was cold, big, stormy surf. One of his favorite moments was, as he put it, "getting absolutely obliterated by a big set."

Here is how it works. If I am a first grader and I can't sound out a blend to save my life, I look around the world and find something that I am good at and I build positive self-esteem around that. Kids look around and say, "Hey I am not a classroom kid, I am a playground kid." The majority of our kids are positive self-esteem-building machines. When we do so much that they never fail, we are doing too much.

One of the principals at our training talked about the drop-off table at his school and how he was going to get rid of it. He felt that the parents dropping off lunches and clothes and projects and homework was contributing to the lack of initiative, creativity, and responsibility he was seeing in his high school students. His opinion was that if the child goes hungry or has to share with other kids to get their lunch, then they will build the type of out-of-the-box thinking that only a hungry kid can come up with. When we make our kids' lives easier and take away their creativity and initiative, we are doing too much.

I have to getting going now as I forgot to make my son's lunch and need to go drop it off.....all that tough talk starts in January, you know!



www.drharoldhoyle.com
Harold can be contacted by phone or email:
510-219-8660
hjoyle@mac.com

Schools Go Solar



Lafayette Superintendent Dr. Fred Brill flipped the switch during a ceremony at Lafayette Elementary School on December 7th, bringing that school's solar panels on-line. Solar panels are now in operation at Stanley Middle School, Burton Valley Elementary and Lafayette Elementary. Springhill Elementary will be up and running within weeks and plans are currently underway to install panels at Happy Valley Elementary.

J.Follmer

Photo Jean Follmer

Girl Scout Leader-Daughter Tea

Submitted by Janet Riley



Pictured above, in back row: Tory Wong, Linden Brentano, Thama Brentano, Haley Lewis, Lindsey Lewis, Elizabeth Lewis, Danielle Albo; in front row: Marina Allen, Emily Nenni, Hannah Tennant, Jamie Riley and Emma Smith.

Photo provided

Miramonte choral members Marina Allen, Emily Nenni, Hannah Tennant, Jamie Riley, Emma Smith, and Danielle Albo sang at the Orinda-Moraga Girl Scout Association Annual Leader-Daughter Tea. Leaders and their daughters

come together every year to be honored for all their work and to enjoy each other's company. This year's theme was "Let it Snow." Cookies and sandwiches prepared by Troop 977, all juniors at Miramonte, were enjoyed by all.

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Burns to Lead Moraga School District

By Andrea A. Firth



Bruce Burns at his desk

Photo Andrea A. Firth

Bruce Burns, currently the principal of Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School, will step up to the post of Superintendent of the Moraga School District (MSD), taking over for Superintendent Rick Schafer, who is retiring. The transfer will take effect in July, 2010.

"I am very excited and am looking forward to the opportunity to serve the students in our district, and, with the district's strong foundation of student success, build upon their many achievements," said Burns.

A 24-year education veteran,

Burns came to the Moraga School District in July of 1996 to reopen the closed Los Perales Elementary School campus and served as principal there for 11 years. For the past two and half years he has served as the principal of Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School.

"In the 14 years that Bruce has been a principal within the Moraga School District, he has earned the respect and admiration of our teachers, staff, parents, students, and the community-at-large," stated MSD Board President Lisa Evans. "He understands our core values. The Board is delighted that he has accepted the position of Superintendent, and my colleagues and I look forward to working with Bruce to maintain our outstanding curriculum and to build upon the tradition of excellence that defines the District."

Science in the Kitchen – More Magic with Milk

By Jonathan Winter

What do milk and glue have in common? One of the oldest kinds of glue is actually made from milk, using a recipe similar to this one. This is actually a glue you can eat!

1) Gather these supplies:

- Skim milk (2 cups)
- Saucepan and stirring spoon
- Strainer
- Baking soda
- Vinegar
- Water
- Measuring cup, measuring spoons
- Large bowl and stovetop

2) Start your Experiment:

Pour two cups of skim milk into a bowl. Add 6 tablespoons of vinegar. Heat slowly while stirring. When the solution starts to curdle (solids start to form) remove from heat and keep stirring until the curdling stops. Strain the mixture, saving the curds (the solid part). Put the curds in the bowl and add ½ cup water and 1 tablespoon of baking soda. Stir well.

3) What happened?

When you added the vinegar to the milk and heated it, the vinegar clumped the tiny solids in the milk together. These solids are the protein in the milk called casein. You may have eaten casein before-it is

cottage cheese in its most basic form. But little clumps of solids don't make a very good glue. That's why you added the baking soda. The baking soda breaks down the casein just enough for it to flow a little more easily (with the help of the water).

Try gluing some paper together to test the strength of your glue. Keep your glue in the refrigerator. It will last up to two weeks. When it starts to smell like sour milk, it's time to throw it out. As long as it smells o.k., you can eat it. It is even good for you! How does it taste?

4) Experiment Extension

Not only can milk be used to make glue, you can follow this recipe to make "plastic." To make milk plastic, just follow the recipe

above, but skip the baking soda and water step. Instead, mold the blobs of casein into shapes of your choice. Allow your creation to dry and harden completely. Can you make a spoon? Can you use it to eat some ice cream?

Real plastic is made from oil. Plastic doesn't ever rot and is causing a big pollution problem in the world. The "plastic" you made is natural, and will break down over time into natural ingredients again. It is biodegradable. You can check how long it takes your "plastic" to break down by burying your creation in a carefully marked spot and digging it up again in a few weeks. Is anything left? How great it would be if all of the world's plastic would break down naturally!

Young Students Bring Holiday Cheer



Singing at Aegis of Moraga

Photo Tod Fierner

The kindergarten classes from Los Perales Elementary School visited two assisted living facilities, Moraga Royale and Aegis of Moraga, before their winter break. According to teacher Terryl Miller, "The students decided to forego their holiday party, and instead be the party...and the presents!" The children sang for the residents, and made favors for each one.

Acalanes Freshman Creates Digital Flyer for Senator Carol Liu

By Jean Follmer



Marisa Hummel Photos provided

learned about the opportunity to create the hearing flyer from her daughter who works for Senator Liu.

"The subject matter I included (in the flyer) was based on what I saw. I discovered she (Liu) was trying to persuade people not to make the cuts and I tried to put that emotional value into the flyer," said Hummel.

Hummel was very excited to learn that Senator Liu had accepted her flyer. "I thought it was really great. I feel like I'm already making a name for myself and I'm only a freshman. I feel like this has been a really great opportunity for me," said Hummel.

This is only her first year working on Digital Design and Hummel has discovered she thoroughly enjoys drawing on a computer. "The program I used was Adobe Illustrator. It's surprisingly easy to draw with a mouse. I find it much easier than drawing by hand because you can erase your mis-



takes easily," said Hummel. Hummel enjoys working on Digital Design so much that she is already considering some future career plans. "I've actually kind of decided that I want this to be my main career," she continued.

Susan Lane is very proud of Hummel. Lane said many of her Digital Design students have been very active and successful in the community. "We have also designed the map/flyer for the Lafayette Historical Society for the opening of the new Lafayette Library," said Lane.

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Scouting for Food

Submitted by Debra Yarnall



Photo provided

Third grade Cub Scouts from Lafayette participated in the the "Scouting for Food" collection drive for the Contra Costa County and Solano City Food Banks for Thanksgiving. (L-R) Donovan Fuller, Michael Tierentiff, Nicholas Collins-Yarnall, Keaziah Mamer, Erik Voss

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... continued from page 1
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TOP LOOKS HOMEERS

Life in LAMORINDA

No Snow, but still a *White Christmas* at Orinda Theater

By Andrea A. Firth



Miramonte High School's Chamber Choir performed at the Orinda Theater before the *White Christmas* screenings Photo Ohlen Alexander

Although the snow and sunshine from earlier in the week had turned to rain and overcast skies, locals were able to vicariously experience a "white Christmas" at the Orinda Theater on Saturday, December 12th. Over 300 people attended two packed screenings of the classic movie musical *White Christmas*, which was sponsored by the California Independent Film Festival (CAIFF). Santa Claus made an appearance in the theater lobby so younger moviegoers could get their requests in early for what they hoped to find under the tree Christmas morning, and the Miramonte Chamber Choir added to the festive atmosphere with their performance of several holiday tunes. "We were thrilled with the response we received for this event," said Beau Behan, Program and Promotions

Director for CAIFF. The *White Christmas* screening was the second in a series of monthly classic movie events the CAIFF plans to host leading up to the four-day indie film festival in April. "We are very excited about having the film festival in Orinda," stated Behan. "The reception that we have received from the community has been fantastic." Next month, the CAIFF will screen the Academy-award winning 1975 film *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*. Oscar-winner Louise Fletcher, who played the tyrannical Nurse Ratched in the film, will attend the screening and participate in a question and answer session and VIP reception. Tickets for the January 16th show are available at the Orinda and Rheem Theaters and the film festival website, www.caiff.org or call 925-277-1355.

Creekside Toddlers Take a Fieldtrip

Submitted by Nelita Inzerillo



Photos provided

On Wednesday December 9, 2009, Creekside Toddlers ventured out into the wilderness of Moraga. Crossing the street to the Las Trampas parking lot, nine preschoolers along with owner/teacher Nelita Inzerillo and staff member Helen Holobetz visited Sue Renno's tree lot

to bring in a little Christmas cheer. Renno added to the learning experience by teaching the preschoolers how to tell the age of a tree by looking at a piece of the cut trunk, and gave the children a tour while encouraging them to smell and touch the beautiful Douglas furs.

Holiday Sing Along at the French Bakery



Left to right: Christine Vota, Mark Shaw and Jen Carne Photo Cathy Tyson

You can't go wrong with "Jingle Bells," a cozy night, warm cider, cookies and the trio "All Strung Out" performing the first annual Holiday Sing Along at the French Bakery on Lafayette Circle. With front man, realtor and violinist, Mark Shaw along with

bandmates Jen Carne, also on violin, and Christine Vota on cello, the lively string trio - which is usually a quartet but one member was unable to attend - provided rousing accompaniment to the full house that really was singing along. C. Tyson

Moraga's Holiday Home Decorating Contest Winner

By Sophie Braccini



The Ginley Family holiday decorations on Hetfield Place in Moraga Photo Rick Ginley

On the night of December 17th, four members of the Moraga Women's Society set out to judge the homes that participated in the first Moraga Holiday Home Decorating Contest. "We had such a great time seeing so many beautiful homes driving

around Moraga," said Judge Nancy Comprelli, "but the one at 10 Hetfield Place was magical and won first place."

The judges thought that this particular set of decorations had a theme that appealed to all ages; it also had music and included a na-

tivity scene, reminding visitors of the original meaning of Christmas. Second place went to the house at 83 Lynnwood Place, which featured a magnificently decorated tree. The third place went to 1320 Larch Ave. for the elegance and simplicity of its dec-

oration. An honorable mention was given to the residents at 54 Merrill Circle North for their unique inside decoration.

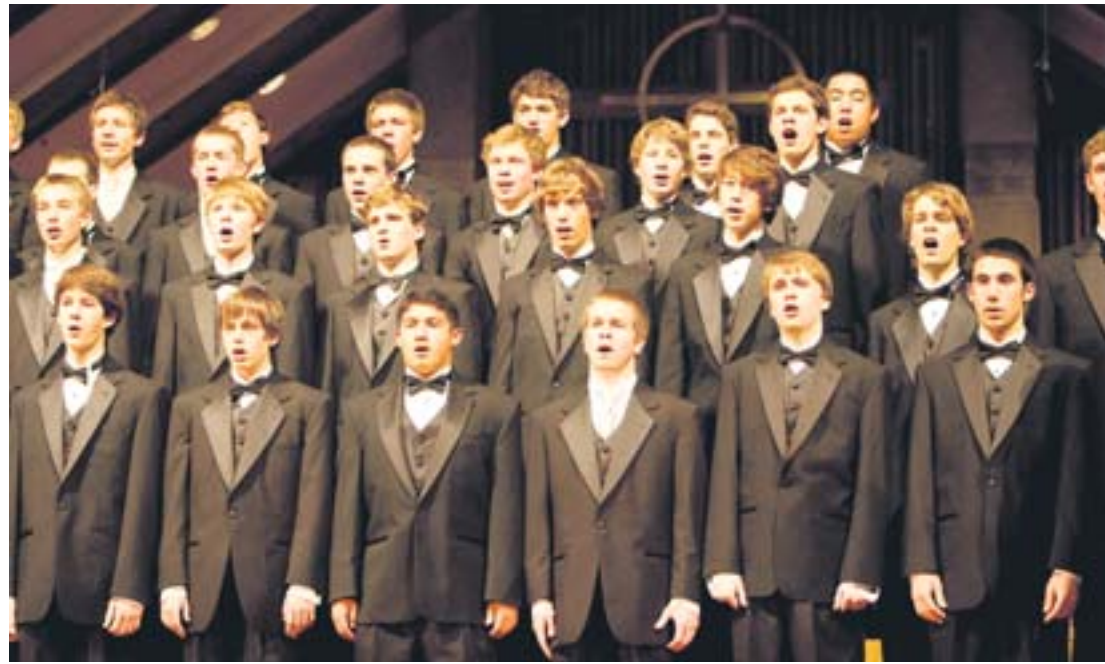
"We hope that more homes will enter the contest next year," said Comprelli, "and maybe we could add a neighborhood or street category."

"I want to say thank you to all the Moraga homes that participated in our first Holiday Home Decorating Contest, sponsored by Moraga Parks and Recreation and Moraga Hardware and Lumber," said Parks and Recreation Director Jay Ingram. The Director, who organized this first contest to encourage the Holiday spirit, promises to make the contest an annual tradition. The winners will be recognized at the Town Council meeting on January 13th. The first, second and third place homeowners won gift certificates to Moraga Hardware and Lumber.

Holiday Concert

The Campolindo Concert Choir and Chamber Singers performed a holiday concert at the Moraga Valley Presbyterian Church on December 16th. A. Firth

Photos Doug Kohen



Erika Henningsen, grade 12



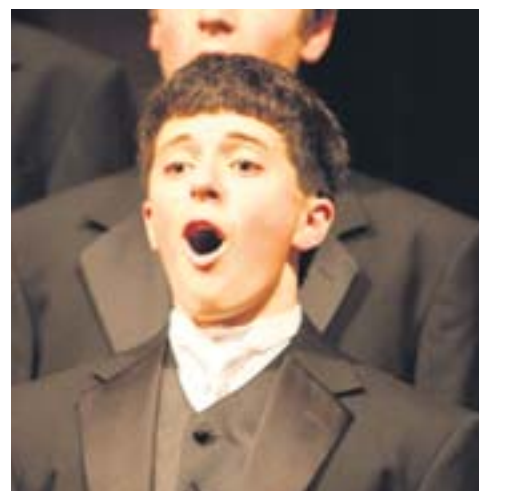
Forrest Bagley, grade 12



Laura Diestler and Ben Rudolph, both grade 12



Josephine Tseng, grade 11



Robby Bisel, grade 12

SPORTS LAMORINDA'S LOCAL SPORTS NEWS

Saint Mary's Men's Basketball Defeat Portland State, Pacific

Samhan leads offense with 31, 28 points

By Justine Sgalio



Omar Samhan (#50) led the Gaels with 31 points and 17 rebounds in the win against Portland State

The Saint Mary's Gaels secured their eighth and ninth wins of the season last week at McKeon Pavilion, defeating the Portland State Vikings 101-80 on December 15th, and the Pacific Tigers 80-65 on December 18th.

The 5-4 Portland State Vikings held the lead over the Gaels just once in the first half, after an early layup by Vikings senior guard Dominic Waters put the first points of the night on the board. But the Gaels caught up quickly. Almost four minutes into play a basket by

senior center Omar Samhan gave the Gaels an eight point lead over the Vikings.

But it didn't stay that way for long. Throughout the next 11 minutes, the Vikings refused to go down without a fight and pulled within just one point four times. A free throw by Waters tied the game at 31 with 5:19 to go in the half. But the Gaels offense stepped up, led by Samhan, who had 13 points in the half, and sophomore forward Clint Steindl, with 12, and by half-time they had a nine point lead.

The Saint Mary's offense



Clint Steindl (#11) notched 15 and 16 points last week, respectively

Photos Tod Fierner

came back strong in the second half, and by the 15 minute mark, had a 15 point lead over Portland State. The Vikings fought within 10 points of the dominant Gaels offense, but couldn't recover to take the lead.

Samhan had 31 points on the night, just two shy of his career record. Steindl, who has stepped up in a big way for the Gaels since senior guard Wayne Hunter went down with a torn ACL (anterior cruciate ligament) against Utah State, recorded 15, a noticeable improvement from the start of the season. "Clint gets better every

night," said Saint Mary's Head Coach Randy Bennett. "We've seen him really grow as a player in the last two weeks."

After the home win against Portland State, the Gaels hosted the 7-2 Pacific Tigers on Friday. The lead bounced back and forth, neither team led by more than six points in the first half. Tigers junior forward Sam Willard led the Pacific offense with 10 points in the first half, but the Gaels held onto the 43-39 lead going into halftime. SMC was led by senior forward Ben Allen who had 11 points in the half, and went

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Saint Mary's Wins Big At Home

Despite Turnovers SMC Defeats Bakersfield

By Mikaela Cowles



Jontelle Smith (#22) went 5-of-8 from behind the arc in the win



Jasmine Smith (#32) was 5-for-7 from the floor (2-for-4 from the three point line), recording 14 points for the Gaels

Photos Tod Fierner

Saint Mary's women's basketball beat Cal State Bakersfield 94-80 on Wednesday, December 16th at home.

Ashlee Smith led the Gaels with a season high 19 points, as Saint Mary's shot a staggering 50.8 percent from field goal range and 44 percent from behind the arc.

The Gaels opened the season 4-4. While on the road against Washington State, head coach Paul Thomas changed the starting line-up, replacing freshman guard Kate Batlin for redshirt sophomore guard Jasmine Smith and sophomore guard Alex Carbonel. The change was just what Saint Mary's needed as they went on a five game win streak, running their record to 9-4.

In the first minute against Bakersfield, Jontelle Smith hit two 3-pointers, and the Gaels jumped out to a 6-1 lead. She would go on to finish the game five-of-eight from behind the arc, combining with her sister Jasmine (2-4) for a sister three-point duo of seven-of-12.

With quick ball movement and the looming 3-point threat from Jontelle, Saint Mary's drew Bakersfield out of its zone and worked the ball inside utilizing the high-low. In response Bakersfield switched to man-to-man defense and forced the Gaels into turnovers. Changing turnovers into fast break points, the Roadrunners brought the score to 15-11 at the 15:08 mark in the first half.

Less than nine minutes into the half, Bakersfield's Tamiko Davis picked up her third foul forcing her to the bench for the remainder of the first. Bakersfield crept to within four points, the closest the game would get, but SMC held them off with help from points in the paint. Sophomore forward Ashlee Smith and junior forward Louella Tomlinson combined for 27 first half points, pushing the Gaels' lead to 59-31 at half.

In the second half Saint Mary's held onto its lead and cleared the bench, playing all 13 players. The Gaels totaled 22 assists for the game, which

Coach Thomas described as, "unselfish play."

The turnover-plagued Gaels have suffered this season, averaging just over 25 turnovers a game. Against the Roadrunners, Saint Mary's recorded 34 turnovers. Thomas said of the turnovers, "We have to stop turning the ball over. I don't want my team to be afraid to make a pass. That's what makes our team shoot 60 percent. We have a great chemistry within our offense; we just are too careless sometimes."

Pleased with the first 30 minutes of the game, Thomas said the message after this game "will be loud and clear. If we'd played all 40 minutes the way we would like to have, I wouldn't have anything to build on. Now I have something to build on."

The Gaels will be on the road for their next three games. They return to McKeon Pavilion on Friday, January 8 against San Francisco for a 7:00 p.m. tip-off for their first West Coast Conference game.

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- Tue, Dec 29 MBB Stephen F. Austin vs. Howard Shamrock Office Solutions Classic McKeon Pavilion 5:00 PM
- Tue, Dec 29 MBB Binghamton Shamrock Office Solutions Classic McKeon Pavilion 7:35 PM
- Wed, Dec 30 MBB Stephen F. Austin vs. Binghamton Shamrock Office Solutions Classic McKeon Pavilion 5:00 PM
- Fri, Jan 8 WBB San Francisco * McKeon Pavilion 7:00 PM
- Sun, Jan 10 WBB Santa Clara * McKeon Pavilion 2:00 PM
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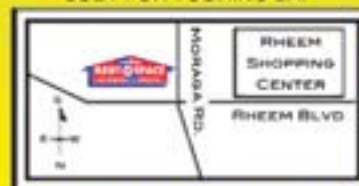


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SPORTS LAMORINDA'S LOCAL SPORTS NEWS



Mats Basketball Records Fourth Preseason Victory

Miramonte Defeats Terra Linda

Submitted by John Hatfield



Davis Louie (#1) contributed nine points in the victory. The Miramonte Matadors boys' varsity basketball team used a combination of a powerful defense and a spirited offensive effort to defeat the Terra Linda Trojans on Friday, December 18th.

The Matadors, under Coach

County League and have a 3-2 record in the pre-season.

The Mats came out strong in the first quarter, quickly took the lead and led the rest of the game to achieve their fourth victory, 75-55.

Brown attributed the victory to strong leadership by the three senior co-captains—forward Chris Hatfield, forward Spenser McDonald and guard Davis Louie—and to a great overall team defensive effort. “The Mats held the up-tempo Trojans to a low scoring game with the Trojans only scoring 22 points in the first half. This is one of the best team efforts of the year. All 12 team members played well together and I’m very proud of them and their accomplishment tonight,” said Brown.

The Matadors’ offensive success was a team effort with balanced scoring from five of the returning varsity players; Hatfield



Front Row from left to right: Kazz Tamura, Nick Mora, Troy Akin, Grant Huhn, co captain Davis Louie, Brian Henson
Back Row from left to right: Payam Vadi, Ross Dolbec, co-captain Chris Hatfield, Co captain Spenser McDonald, Ross Anderson, Anthony Piganelli, Jack Pietrykowski

Photo Jordan Fong

with 14 points, senior guard Troy Akin with 12 points, senior guard Payam Vadi with 12 points, McDonald with 10 points and Louie with nine points.

Coach Brown noted McDonald’s defensive effort in holding Terra Linda’s Christian Manoli

to far less than his average. Hatfield’s double-digit rebounding and four assists were also influential in the game’s outcome.

McDonald and Hatfield agreed that it was “...great defense and playing hard. Now that we have our football guys back

and they’ve played a few games we’re really coming together as a team.”

Friday night’s game was part of a very tough pre-season for the Mats. Miramonte will be going to the Torrey Pines Tournament in San Diego in December.



Spenser McDonald (#2) added ten points for the home team



#11 Grant Huhn, #3 Kazz Tamura



#35 Anthony Piganelli, #10 Jack Pietrykowski
Photos Andy Scheck

Six Pack Plus One Sign with Top Schools

Seven Miramonte Rowers to Row at Collegiate Level

By Lou Fancher



Coxswain Molly Fehr (Miramonte) and rowers (from stroke to bow) are Camilla Polakoff (Bentley High School), Nikki Dahlberg-Seeth (Miramonte), Kelly Bauer (Miramonte), Ali Mittleberger (Brown), Dana Walsh (Miramonte), Barbara Barnes (Stanford), Nicole Sung-Jereczek (Piedmont High School), Katie McKeen (Piedmont High School) Photo Leann Petersen

There’s something in the air at Miramonte High School. Little else could explain the seven young women rowing their way to graduation and entry into the nation’s top colleges.

Derek Byrnes, head coach of the Oakland Strokes (OS), where the seven Miramonte girls train and race, cannot explain this year’s phenomenon, but does speak to the transformational impact of rowing. “Rowing creates a determined, more vocal, more self-assured young woman,” he says.

There’s a hypnotic factor to learning a single skill, then practicing it over and over before performing it—like meditation, it focuses the mind. And like all sports, it tests the body. “Once you start, you can’t stop,” says Bill Fehr, Chair of OS’s fundraising. “At 500 meters the pain sets in and you have to find an inner strength to keep going ’cause if you stop, it’s all

over.” Not a rower himself, but father of Molly Fehr, the team’s coxswain, he downplays his own words but not his daughter’s achievements.

Molly Fehr, steering the boat and guiding the crew of eight rowers from her position as coxswain, presents an impressive picture. At 5’3”, she’s a sixteen-year old charismatic commando hidden in a petite package. Headed to Stanford, the top school in the NCAA’s Division 1 women’s rowing rankings, Fehr understands her role. “You’re directing eight girls who are all bigger and stronger than you are,” she says. Earning their trust and respect comes from being on top of every practice. “The best boats are the [ones with the] girls who are best friends, or who become so during the season,” she explains, offering the first glimpse into the Miramonte girls’ success.

Rowing appears to attract a special breed of athlete. Nikki Dahlberg-Seeth, once an avid basketball player, discovered a surprising affinity for the sport. “My mom

dragged me to the summer camp,” she admits, “but after I started the first season, it was definitely something I wanted to do.” Asked what particular skills she brings to the team, her answer is simple, but revealing: “I’m good at following.” She’s not shy, or falsely humble, she just gets it. “There’s a code of conduct,” she says, “we talk to each other, but you’re not pointing at someone and saying what’s wrong, because it’s about the team.” Sitting in a boat, attending to Fehr’s calls, and rhythmically mirroring the stroke rower, has taught Dahlberg-Seeth the value of community and the power of cooperation.

Whatever lessons the Miramonte Seven have learned, it’s clear that rowing has made them magnets



2007 freshman four with cox. Left to right: Gia Hallaman, Kelly Bauer, Dana Walsh, Molly Fehr, Nikki Dahlberg-Seeth
Photo Beth Anderson

for college recruiters. Dahlberg-Seeth will attend the University of Michigan, Fehr will row for Stanford, and the remaining five rowers have signed National Letters of In-

tervention with Lehigh, Harvard, the University of Virginia, and the University of Pennsylvania (Wharton). While this year’s “six-pack plus one” hail from Lamorinda, the OS

welcomes student athletes from all over the East Bay. The club offers scholarships for kids from underserved communities and two week trial periods for novice rowers.

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SPORTS LAMORINDA'S LOCAL SPORTS

Campo Falls in Final Minutes to Acalanes

By Alex Crook



Acalanes players celebrate their 1-0 victory over cross-town rivals

Last Friday night, December 19th, at Acalanes High School, the Dons varsity soccer team hosted rival Campolindo, and escaped with a close 1-0 win over the Cougars.

Acalanes, now 7-1-0 and 2-0-0 in league play, came into the match fresh off of a 2-1 win against Berkeley; the Dons' lone loss was against DFAL powerhouse Dublin.

The Dons bounced back from the loss quickly, recording four straight victories en route to a championship in their own Winter Soccer Classic tournament. Acalanes outscored its opponents in that tournament 10-1.

Campo entered the contest against the Dons with a 2-4-2 record with two scoreless ties. One of those draws was against cross-town rival Miramonte. With the loss to Acalanes, the Cougars drop to 2-5-2.

The young Campolindo team sports three freshmen, while

Acalanes plays only one. Cougar coach Shane Carney started five sophomores in the loss to the Dons.

The first half went by slowly, with Acalanes given numerous chances to score, but the home team was unable to capitalize throughout the first 40 minutes.

With 31:27 into the first half, Cougar junior striker Marco Tavecchio broke through the Dons defense, but was stopped by Dons senior keeper Logan Spittler.

Just two minutes later, Acalanes was robbed of yet another scoring opportunity by Cougar junior defenseman Matt Reshke.

In the second half, the Dons started to get restless. 11:21 into the half, some offensive power was demonstrated by the Cougars as midfielder and captain Nick Dobon's free kick was caught in mid air by Spittler, who gave up no rebound.

Photo Tod Fierner
With time winding down on the game, Acalanes senior Ben Ewing scored the game-winning goal with 4:02 left, propelling the Dons out of the scare. "We fought hard all game, but we're lucky to come out on top," exclaimed Ewing. Head coach Paul Curtis added, "You just witnessed Acalanes soccer at its finest."

On the other side of the field, Campolindo was disappointed. "It was a tough game, we both battled really hard.... it was an intense game, but Acalanes won it at the end," said Tavecchio.

Afterwards, Carney said, "It was tough to lose in the last minutes.... we're a super young team, this was a huge game, and we proved we're not an easy win anymore."


The Dons stay undefeated at home while continuing their three-game win streak.

Both teams now take a break for the holidays.



Nick Palano (#20) rushes to defend against Acalanes

Photo Tod Fierner



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Cam Carda (#9) heads the ball

Photo Tod Fierner



Campolindo Goal Keeper Alex Mangels

Photo Tod Fierner

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