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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.

Letters to the Editor continued

Editor:
Food, education, clothing, shelter. When was it that education got dropped as one of our basic necessities?

My husband and I moved seven years ago seeking the education for our two daughters that so many in our state can only dream to experience. Through those years we've come to realize the trophy we landed ourselves and to witness the sacrifices the families in this community have made for the sake of learning and village camaraderie. The dedication of the countless fathers, mothers, teachers and administrators is a poignant testament to how deeply ingrained education is to this area.

I am writing this from the heart of a community and asking for your help. A parcel tax of \$112/parcel or .31/day will help maintain programs that currently give our students the competitive edge when applying to colleges. It will allow teachers to maintain manageable class sizes, allow students to receive the attention they deserve and let current school hours to remain undisturbed. It will prevent our award winning music programs from being cut and enable us to maintain strong sports venues. It will allow us to keep and continue to achieve National Blue Ribbon Awards and in turn allow this to all reflect in our high property values.

In a state where budget deficits and layoffs will surely impact everyone, we have the power to overcome the statistics and remain no.1. Please vote yes on Measure A.

Tina Tankka
Lafayette

Dear Editor:

I remember when California was rated in the top 3 for education amongst the states. Now it is rated in the bottom 3. Those high rated times were before Proposition 13. On top of that, California is only one of 4 states that requires a 2/3 vote to raise taxes. Neither of these is good for democracy. Justice Holmes remarked that taxes are the price that we pay for civilization.

The Measure A Tax is \$112/year or less than 3 lattes per month. Those in dire straits might well vote against this tax, but most Lamorinda citizens can afford this. The measure has an exemption clause for those over 65, which I think for me, is a mistake. My property taxes are over \$10,000/year less than my neighbor's taxes, because I am covered by Proposition 13. Other long term residents should consider this windfall before deciding against a \$112/year tax increase. I will vote for the tax and I will pay the tax.

My house's value has increased 20X in 40 years. House values have decreased for some, but many of us, like myself, have had high appreciation in the value of our homes. Good schools and teachers are responsible for a good part of this appreciation. Please vote for this tax.

Sincerely,

Hubert Russell
Orinda

Editor:

California underfunds its schools - we rank 46th in the nation on spending per pupil. Acalanes Union School District's response for many years has been to invest locally controlled funds from a school parcel tax. These funds

allow Acalanes, the top ranked high school district in California, to remain competitive in spite of consecutive years of state budget reductions.

Our children graduated from Miramonte and have gone on to top notch University of California programs. We are happy to pay an additional \$112 annually to ensure that the students of the future have the same opportunities that our kids had. Core curriculum, staffing, AP classes, foreign language, journalism, public speaking and other vital programs are all at stake.

Please join us in supporting Measure A.

Robin and Paul Ludmer
Orinda

Dear Editor,

We moved to Orinda because of the reputation of the schools. In the nine years since, my children have thrived from classes and teachers that engaged and challenged them to reach their potential. My daughter, now a college freshman back East, was able to pursue varied interests in history, public speaking, creative writing, psychology and advanced math. She got more than just a basic education and is able to succeed in a very competitive environment. I want the same lasting foundation for my 9th grader and for all our children in the district. Without Measure A passing, 50 plus teachers will be laid off, affecting programs and classes that enrich our children's lives and help them be successful in the future. I believe as a community we need to rally around our children. \$112 a year for five years seems a small price to pay to give them the tools to succeed. Please join me in voting Yes for Measure A.

Susie Epstein
Orinda

To the Editor:

In these tough economic times, our Acalanes District high schools are facing a fiscal crisis despite sound management practices. The persistent reductions in funding for education from the State of California are now so significant that our District will spend less than half of what similar schools in New York State spend per student annually. Next year, our District will receive \$8 million less in state funding than two years ago. Yet our students are expected to compete at a national level for increasingly demanding college admissions. Through no fault of their own, the Acalanes District high school students stand to lose important science, math, English, arts and AP classes. These critical classes have helped rank our District amongst the best in the state and the nation for over 55 years! While new taxes can be painful, not passing a \$112 short-term emergency parcel tax to protect our schools would be worse. A weakened school system will have a lasting negative impact on our community and our property values. Strong schools and strong communities go hand in hand. Please join me in voting Yes on Measure A.

Sandra Breber
Orinda

To the Editor:

A recently published letter questioned what type of message we would be sending our children by voting in favor of the Acalanes High School District's parcel tax given these challenging economic times. That message, I believe, is

that education matters. By voting in favor of Measure A, we'll be showing our children that education is a priority that deserves our attention in good times and in bad. Surely, there's no better investment in the future than investing in our youth today. And for my money, there's no better investment in education than in our local schools, which continue to rank among the top schools in the state.

Our high schools are not asking for extras. The \$112 parcel tax will simply help protect students and teachers from the state's continuing budget cuts. Considering that California's schools already are among the lowest funded, with some of the largest class sizes in the nation, further cuts to schools will seriously erode the quality of education our schools can provide. Please don't let this happen. Vote Yes on Measure A.

Margarita Woodbury
Lafayette

Editor:

We write to urge our fellow Lamorindans to vote Yes on Measure A. Acalanes Union High School District is facing a \$4.8 million budget cut. Over 50 full time teaching positions are facing elimination! Firing these teachers will cut deep into the core curriculum, including eliminating our students' seventh periods. We are blessed with some of the top public schools in California and the country. These schools have been our area's crown jewel for generations. Remember when you bought property in Lamorinda? We knew by buying and living in our community our children were guaranteed an academically-top education, at public school "prices." Who among us didn't weigh the huge savings and peace of mind we would experience during our children's K-12 years because some of the best schools in the country were in our home town?

Public education in Lamorinda is an amazing bargain; friends in San Francisco, Marin and other communities routinely pay \$25,000 to \$30,000 per year for their children's K-12 education. But top public schools are not free. Parents volunteer long hours in our schools and all of us contribute financially. Payment of our parcel taxes is a crucial part of our economic support. These payments are not only a tremendous investment in our children's future, they literally ensure the continued viability of our schools and property value. Passage of Measure A demonstrates to Lamorinda citizens and prospective citizens alike that our community is still among the best places to live and raise a family.

Over and over, when our students return from college they talk about how well prepared they were by our local schools and how college is often "easier" than their high school experience. For our children's future and for our economic well being, we must continue to support our schools without reservation. In these tough economic times, we all are getting by on less. But Measure A's \$112 per parcel annual investment in our schools - allowing us to preserve our core curriculum and teacher positions -- is something we cannot afford to do without. Vote Yes on Measure A!

Ben and Janet Riley
Orinda

Community Service
Orinda Academy Raises Funds for Chile

Submitted by Miriam Schaffer



(L-R): Hillary Calef, Katherine Saxby, Anissa Laval Kiyemba, Cindy Gifford Palermo, Lino Sanchez Siegel, Elizabeth Jurado, Joe Romak, Beau Hall, Crystal Cardona, and Ben Ishibashi.

The Orinda Academy community raised over \$2,300 to aid in Chilean earthquake relief efforts. The students responded to a heartfelt plea from Spanish teacher Elizabeth Jurado, a native Chilean, who showed the students pictures of the severe damage in Chile as a result of the 8.8 magnitude earthquake. Elizabeth also described her very emotional story of how she was unable to connect with her family for three

long and worrisome days, before confirming Monday morning that they were all safe. Her sister, who was in the epicenter city of Concepcion, arrived safely at the parents home while Elizabeth was on the initial phone call from her parents. It was a very positive and emotional ending to three trying days.

The students were inspired to help their teacher and the country of Chile. The students, especially sen-

iors like Ben Ishibashi and Crystal Cardona, mobilized to have a luncheon with donated and home cooked Chilean and ethnic food. Along with other donations from the Orinda Academy community the students raised over \$2,300 to donate to Un Tech Para Chile (A Roof for Chile), an organization that builds small, temporary homes for \$1,000 each. OA students raised enough for two homes to be built, which surpassed their goal of only one home. Many OA students and families pitched in to prepare authentic Chilean dishes, or dishes from their culture, which reflected the diverse population of Orinda Academy. The community service aspect was then additionally a learning experience as the students learned about the destruction of earthquakes and tsunamis, as well as the culture and geography of Chile. Most importantly, the students felt good about giving and the faculty were impressed about their mobilization, organization, and giving attitude.

Saint Mary's College Honors International Women's Day with Wo/men's Leadership Forum

Submitted by Sharon Sobotta,
Women's Resource Center Director - Saint Mary's College



Moraga Mayor Ken Chew participates on the panel
Photo courtesy Saint Mary's College

Men and women from far and near, from Moraga to Portugal, came together on Monday for the Wo/men's Leadership Forum in honor of International Women's Day. True to this year's theme, building bridges, women and men, young and old, community and campus, came together to participate in workshops such as The Rhythm of Leadership, during which time Yamaha Fellow Musician Eduardo Lopes from the University of Evora collaborated with SMC staff members Sharon Sobotta and Tammy Appling-Cabading to get participants to think outside of the box about leadership, balance and group awareness; Changing the World with a Tabla and Changing the World with your story. The day also featured a lunchtime panel on male students

who are allies to women and a popular session called Following Your Inner Compass, during which Moraga Mayor Ken Chew shared his story about how his life journey led him from Malaysia to Moraga. To bring the day to a close, the Women's Interfaith Circle of Service collaborated with the Women's Resource Center to offer an Inter-generational Bridges of Peace Ceremony. "The event was open to the Public and it will be in the future as well," says Sobotta, "We intend to keep it as a tradition of building bridges between men and women from all backgrounds year after year with the continuing title Wo/men's Forum. For information about how to get involved next year, contact Sharon Sobotta, Director of the Women's Resource Center, at 925-631-4171.

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