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Families Play for Families at May Faire

By Sophie Braccini



Dean Myatt, Jane Daniels, Eric Eckstein, Dorothy Watson, Ric Hattabaugh

Photo provided

As green and orange banners unfurl around the Town of Moraga, residents may recognize the signs of the imminent return of the Community Faire. On May 14 the 5th annual event crafted for residents young and old will take place at the Rheem Center from 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

The Faire is also an opportunity for local businesses and organizations to showcase their offerings. Every year, Mistress of Ceremony Ellen Beans looks to add something fresh and entertaining. "I want to draw attention to two of our music groups this year," says Beans, "Littledog2 from Moraga and Oak Grove, a family bluegrass band. They are families playing for families and bringing wonderful energy and fun to our event."

Oak Grove is a family of five from nearby Walnut Creek— Bob

Schwartz, his wife Gail Miles, their two teenage sons Nate (16) and Max (13), and younger daughter Tessa (7). "I discovered bluegrass six years ago," says Schwartz, "I went to a festival, saw families and kids playing together, and came home and asked my boys if they would be interested. We got them instruments, and they learned very quickly. My wife, who had never played, tried the bass and we got going. Our little daughter had no choice. We needed a fiddle, so as soon as she was strong enough to hold one, she learned to play."

Schwartz says that the kids became very good, better than their parents, and started pursuing musical adventures of their own while still maintaining the family tradition of training together and playing in gigs in the East Bay where they live. "Now they are involved in picking the

songs and arranging the material," says Schwartz, "we all continue to enjoy bluegrass that's such a uniquely American music. The themes are simple and universal, often with a sad tone when you listen to the words, but so upbeat and fun that listeners inevitably start tapping their feet as they get taken by it."

The members of LittleDog2 are not from the same family, but they are all Moraga parents who met five years ago during the planning of a father/daughter dance at Los Perales Elementary School. "Between the five of us, we have 14 children age 9 to 26," says Dorothy Watson, who plays bass and sings with the band. "We all have other jobs; this is our music passion, and we try to get together once or twice a week to practice and add new songs to our repertoire." The band plays rock and roll music, from

the 1970s and 1990s to now. "Music that people our age enjoy and recognize, and for younger kids, we add a couple of songs that are on the radio right now," says Watson.

Over the years the musicians and their families have become good friends. "We do not really have a leader in the band," says Watson, "some are more experienced than others; it becomes a collective thing with different roles." The other musicians are Eric Eckstein, Dean Myatt, Ric Hattabaugh and Jane Daniels.

Other music groups such as the Campolindo Chorus and the JM Ensemble will perform at the Faire. The last hour will be a 'Happy Hour' where appetizers will be served to accompany the drinks available for purchase, while the East Bay Banjo Club performs. The day's activities will include a classic car show, arts and crafts, a sidewalk chalk art contest, a free climbing wall, two bounce houses, and a chance to sample Lamorinda wines and local restaurant cuisine.

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