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Moraga Rotary Odyssey of the Mind Team Competes at World Finals in Iowa

Submitted by Diana Lee



Moraga Rotary Odyssey of the Mind members, from left: Kaveh Boostanpour, Navid Boozarpour, Ming Qian, Austen Li, Claire Matrangola, and coach Omid Boozarpour. Photos Diana Lee



Kaveh Boostanpour works on one of the mechanisms.



Austen Li and Navid Boozarpour performing.

The Moraga Rotary Odyssey of the Mind team took Iowa by storm May 28-31, competing in the Odyssey of the Mind World Finals at Iowa State University. Competing in the High School Division of the "Not-So-Haunted-House" Technical Problem, the team took third in the spontaneous portion of the competition and placed 11th overall in a field of 49 teams from all over the world. The team's solution included an 8-minute skit involving four mechanisms that, although intended to scare, result in different reactions. Over 830 teams, including teams from 30 countries and 37 U.S. states, took over the ISU campus, filled the dorms, and performed risk-taking, original, and creative solutions at the 35th Odyssey

of the Mind World Competition.

Odyssey of the Mind publishes five problems each year, and teams from third grade through college develop their solutions and compete at regional, state, and world levels. The focus of OoTM is problem-solving through creativity and team work. Teams must present solutions they work on for months, as well as solve problems on the spot—all without any outside assistance from parents, teachers, or others. The kids' odyssey starts every year in the fall and continues through the spring depending on qualifying level. This team would like to send a special thank you to the Moraga Rotary Club which sponsors all the Moraga teams, and has for the past 10 years.

Lamorinda's Specialties of the House

Dining al fresco for breakfast or lunch

By Amanda Kuehn

The days are longer, the sun is brighter. Summer is nearly here and with it comes added incentive to spend time outdoors, even while eating. Dining al fresco is one of summer's great pleasures, and from a morning egg scramble with hot black coffee to an afternoon luncheon over curry chicken salad, specialty cocktails and jazz-inspired wine tastings to heirloom tomato salad and sustainable smoked short ribs, the Lamorinda area has plenty to offer. The following is a sampling of some of the breakfast and lunch outdoor dining available in this first of a two-part series:

At the Ranch House Café in Moraga, summer locals can sip their coffee and enjoy their breakfast burritos and eggs rancheros on one of six red picnic tables situated on the front lawn under the apple tree of the 100-year-old building. The café, which is located by Safeway and right along the Lafayette-Moraga Regional Trail, has been making their own salsa and serving up fresh crab dishes for 17 years. Manager Lori Bilecci recommends the fresh corned beef hash with eggs and toast. "We have a very regular clientele," said Bilecci. "A lot of families and retired and widowed customers come in to visit with each other. You can see some of the same people every day." The café serves breakfast and lunch and features daily specials and homemade soups. The Ranch House Café is located at 1012 School St. in Moraga. For information, call (925) 376-5127.

"Regular" is the word of the day every day at Geppetto's Café. Originally opened in Lafayette in 1984, owner Sue Fitzsimons moved the establishment to Orinda's Country Club Plaza in 1992. "I didn't realize how small and nice this community is," said Fitzsimons. "We get the same people day in and day out." Geppetto's lunch menu is tried and true as well. "Our clientele really like continuity," Fitzsimons noted. A long-standing favorite is the chicken curry sandwich on sunflower wheat bread. Another is the chicken brie and pesto. For the morning crowd, Geppetto's serves breakfast sandwiches made to order and standard coffee and espresso drinks. The outdoor seating has the ambiance of a European sidewalk café and is a great place to sip a house-made lemonade or indulge in a scoop of caramel sea salt gelato. Geppetto's is located at 87 Orinda Way. For info, call (925) 253-9894.

For over 20 years, Bill and Marcy Sheldon have been crafting sandwiches for the patrons of Bianca's Deli in Moraga. "I have an incredible memory," remarked Bill Sheldon, who claims he can recall the orders of nearly all his regular customers. "Everybody knows everybody here." Sheldon recommends the grilled chicken and jack, as well as the roasted turkey and homemade salads. The chicken salad, made with boneless skinless chicken breast, is particularly popular. "Almost everything is done here," Sheldon added. Bianca's offers covered outdoor seating that opens to the Moraga Shopping Center. Bianca's is located at 1480 Moraga Rd. For information, call (925)



The Ranch House Café in Moraga

Photos Amanda Kuehn



Geppetto's Café in Orinda



Bianca's Deli in Moraga



Barbacoa in Orinda's Theatre Square

376-4400.

Orinda's Theatre Square offers a few great patios, the largest of which belongs to Barbacoa. Authentic Mexican at its tastiest, Barbacoa features dishes that are "off the beaten path," according to manager Rickey Dobbs. From fried plantains to chipotle-rubbed rotisserie chicken, you're sure to find something you've never tried, as well as traditional tacos, burritos and enchiladas. Barbacoa has recently opened for lunch from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. They offer an express menu where can build your own burrito, na-

chos, rice bowl or salad, and an all-day happy hour running from 11 a.m. until 6 p.m. Jason Yerbick (Chef Jay) is in the process of creating new menu options, including a Mexican Hot Chocolate Cake and Happy Hour snack options that are sure to please outdoor diners. Barbacoa is located at 2 Theatre Square #145, Orinda. For information, visit www.barbacoaorinda.com or call (925) 254-1183.

Lamorinda Weekly will feature part two, drinks and dining al fresco, in its July 2 issue. Buon appetito!

Love of Art and Literature

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Her love of both literature and art was apparent throughout Vann's classroom. She describes herself as a "classical teacher," noting that while technology certainly has its place in a learning environment, she believes that "children really need to connect their thoughts with their hands and their minds." She doesn't just read a story to her students; she puts voices to each of the characters, making the story come alive. She hopes that books will transport her students into the worlds of their imagination.

It's not only academics that Vann brings to her classroom. "We are a classroom family," she said, and "I try to inspire my students to respect and care for each other. I don't want to just teach them. I want to inspire them to be the best

they can be, both academically and personally."

And Vann herself continues to learn. "I think that's one of the reasons I'm still so excited about teaching," she said. "I still have so much passion and energy for it because I'm constantly evolving, learning new ways to revamp the programs to keep them fresh and current."

"Teaching is truly an art form," Vann proclaimed. "To be able to guide the next generation, giving them the tools and confidence to become great readers, writers, mathematicians and creative thinkers is to inspire a better world."

Contra Costa County began recognizing outstanding teachers in 1972, establishing the Teachers of the Year program, which is directed

by the Contra Costa County Office of Education. It is open to all K-12 teachers in public and private schools. The selection process involves both in-person observations of the nominees by a committee of education specialists followed by a personal interview with each of the district's Teacher of the Year representatives.

Lamorinda Weekly featured the Acalanes Union High School District Educator of the Year, Jane Kelson, in the March 12 issue of *Lamorinda Weekly*; the Orinda School District Teacher of the Year representative, Trisha Newhart, in the May 7 issue; and the Moraga School District Teacher of the Year representative, Ann Ralph, in the May 21 issue.