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## Eukel Teacher Trust to Honor Contra Costa Teachers, Nov. 20

Two Lamorinda teachers among three honored  
Submitted by Alan Plutzik



Michael Meneghetti



Paul Verbanszky

Photos provided

Three teachers who educate and inspire with creative and effective teaching methods will be honored at the 23rd annual Warren W. Eukel Teacher Trust Awards Dinner. Stanley Middle School science teacher Michael Meneghetti, Campolindo High School social studies teacher Paul Verbanszky and St. Francis of Assisi School first grade teacher Karen Kreider Short are the trio of outstanding instructors honored this year. Each will receive a check for \$10,000 that they can spend however they wish.

Michael Meneghetti has been a teacher for more than 30 years. He says children are natural born scientists who thrive when given hands-on activities to study science. He's well known for his Albanian Mystery Box, Magnetic Levitation Train and experiments such as putting Alka Seltzer and tap water in clear sandwich bags to watch the bags expand and the water turn colder.

Paul Verbanszky has been a teacher for 13 years, the past 10 at Campolindo High. He uses "real

world" projects such as the Presidential Campaign Simulation to bring civics home to his students. He also helps coordinate the district's GATE program and has coached Campolindo's Academic Decathlon team, which has captured the national championship in the mid-school division the past two years.

Karen Kreider Short has been in the education field for a quarter century, 14 years as a teacher. In her classroom, she uses puppets, songs and a secret wave to help her first graders learn their lessons. Kreider Short has a colorful, visual classroom with student art projects and academic work hanging from wires above the students' desks. Her positive, cheerful approach instills confidence in her students.

The Eukel Teacher Trust's 2014 Awards Dinner will be held at 6 p.m. Thursday, Nov. 20 at the Diablo Country Club. Renowned food and wine expert Narsai David will collaborate with premier Contra Costa County restaurants — Esin Restaurant & Bar, Faz, Prima Ristorante, Va de

Vi Bistro & Wine Bar, Yankee Pier, Diablo Country Club, and the Contra Costa College Culinary Arts Program, each of which will contribute a course to the dinner. Terry Koehne will serve as master of ceremonies. The awards dinner is open to the public.

The Warren W. Eukel Teacher Trust, a community-based nonprofit, annually honors outstanding K-12 classroom teachers in Contra Costa County. The award winners are selected each year from teachers nominated by teaching colleagues, principals, parents and students. The Eukel Teacher Trust is funded by contributions from area businesses and community members. Since its inception in 1992, the Eukel Teacher Trust has made cash awards totaling over \$540,000 to 64 Contra Costa County teachers.

Tickets for the dinner are \$175 per person (of which \$87.50 is a tax-deductible contribution) or \$1,750 for a table of 10. For further information or to purchase tickets, call (925) 945-0200 or visit [www.eukelteachertrust.org](http://www.eukelteachertrust.org).

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## Cultural Differences Add to Lamorinda's Tapestry

... continued from page B3

She says that her husband is eager to go back to South Korea at the end of 2015. "The family ties are very strong in Korea," she says.

Kim feels that she has been changed forever by the expatriation; it opened her mind, not only about Western ways, but also about other Asian countries and people. Kim was a journalist in South Korea, and she's been sharing her thoughts with her friends in a blog. She thinks her kids are also enjoying the environment, but thinks when they go back, they might have a shock as to the amount of work that will be asked of them. They already have additional schooling with Kim teaching them Korean after school.

Additional schooling is very popular among Yue Li's family as well. "It is a common problem for parents like us who came from China, that our children are more American than Chinese," says Yue Li, "so every Saturday I take them to Chinese school in Pleasanton for two hours." Her elementary school age children have also practiced Chinese 40 minutes daily for the past three years. "Sometimes I wonder if I am being a Tiger Mom," says Yue Li with a smile, "but Chinese language and piano are the two things I don't want them to quit."

Campolindo High School sophomore Austen Li, from a different Li family in Lamorinda, went to Chinese

school for a while, but says he didn't do the homework. "And now I regret not maintaining the bilingualism," he says. His sister Anya, a freshman, adds that they understand when their parents speak Mandarin to them, but that they respond in English. "At home the cultures are clumped together," she says.

As with other cultures, food is a link they share with friends, especially during the holidays. "We do get together with Chinese friends for Chinese New Year, share food and catch up," says their father, Zhan Li, dean of the School of Economics and Business Administration at Saint Mary's College. "We also used to play cards or sing Karaoke."

Both Austen and Anya say their friends, who come from a variety of backgrounds, are important, but that the link with their family comes first.

Their father says, "This is a great place for any minority group to really get involved in the American culture." He notes how technology is changing the communication landscape. Li belongs to the online app, WeChat, where a Lamorinda group formed. He noticed that since he joined that chat he pays more attention to Chinese news; it made him more connected to his roots and up to date with what's happening. "Deep down, we are still Asian and

we do not want to lose our roots," says Li. "My wife and I are the cultural bridge generation."

Sharron Sue is a third generation American whose grandparents came from the Canton Province of southern China and her husband is of Japanese ancestry. She does not speak Chinese or Japanese but her family maintains traditions and celebrations, such as Japanese-inspired events advertised in the Nichi Bei Weekly ([nichihei.org](http://nichihei.org)). Sue formed the Lamorinda Asian-American Club in 1996 with other friends of Asian descent. "We started the club to be a place for Asian-Americans to discuss common issues, cultural differences, civic involvement, and build a community," she says. At the time most members had kids in local schools and discussed classes, then college applications became the hot topic. The group also started an annual golf tournament to raise funds for different causes. "We bought books for the school libraries to promote diversity," she says. "We wanted kids going to the school libraries to see pictures of kids that looked like them or were in similar situations, doing normal things in everyday life."

The Lamorinda Asian-American Club also organizes culturally relevant activities such as a recent Kimchi workshop. For more information on the club, contact Sue at [nssue@aol.com](mailto:nssue@aol.com).