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New Lamorinda Arts Council Supports All the Arts

By Sophie Braccini

The official launch reception for the Lamorinda Arts Council, an all-volunteer arts education and advocacy organization born from the long-standing Orinda Arts Council, is planned for May 27. At the kick-off reception, musicians, graphic artists, dancers and literary artists will present their crafts – a perfect way to underscore this citizens' movement that promotes all forms of artistic expression and education in the three Lamorinda communities.

The change from the Orinda Arts Council to the Lamorinda Arts Council is the result of efforts by president Lawrence Kohl, with the support of his board as well as representatives from the two other cities, including Moraga council member and landscape painter Teresa Onoda. Founded in 1950, the Orinda Arts Council is best known as the organizers of the Lamorinda Idol, and of the high school Visual Arts Competition.

Kohl, who is the music director at Pacific Chamber Symphony and an Orinda resident, joined the Orinda Arts Council board in 2014. He became a co-president with Susan Garrel, before taking the helm when she stepped down. "It seemed to me that the arts council had a lot of potential," said Kohl. "The first thing that I did

was to establish a strategic planning group, to reflect on several basic issues." During the soul-searching process the group looked into what the other towns were doing and realized the OAC was the only arts council in Lamorinda. It seemed to the group that expanding the reach to the three communities would multiply the possibilities.

"The Lamorinda Arts Council will be able to achieve far more than the sum of our three towns individually," explained Kohl. "The possibilities are endless." The maestro met with council member Onoda at the Orinda Arts Council holiday luncheon. "She is interested in creating a public art committee like Lafayette and Orinda have," said Kohl. "For this to happen, she needs grass roots support, and that is one of the things an art council can foster."

Onoda started rallying artists and interested parties in Moraga and Lafayette. On April 6 a group of 20 or so artists and patrons came to discuss possibilities.

"(The purpose is to) capture the combined experience, expertise and exuberance of people who enjoy the arts," said Onoda. "For the first time, we intend to create a means to identify, encourage and support all of the

arts – performance, literary, painting, singing, etcetera – of all types and kinds. We intend to engage both Saint Mary's College and all of our local schools." Artists from the three cities came: ceramists, painters, gallery owners, musicians, a board member of the Saint Mary's creative writing program, Dr. Lino Rivera, a concert pianist and teacher at the college, as well as three members of the Lafayette Public Arts Committee, a branch of the Lafayette government, who indicated that it would be useful to have a non-government organization to work on some programs.

The next move happened at the April 23 Orinda Arts Council board meeting when a unanimous vote officially changed the OAC's name to the Lamorinda Arts Council. Those present were asked what their interests were and what projects they would be interested in developing, and they were asked to join the board and the strategic planning group. The launch reception will be held from 6 to 8 p.m. May 27 at Merrill Gardens, 3413 Mt Diablo Blvd., in Lafayette.

The LAC board assured that its commitment to Orinda and its schools will continue, and believes that the expanded Lamorinda Arts Council will enable everyone from the three

towns to work together to expand the reach, deepen the impact, and bring more of the arts to the broader community.

Artists and patrons of the arts who are interested and have ideas can come to the party or reach out to the group online at lamorindaarts.org.



The new Lamorinda Arts Council with Moraga councilmember Teresa Onoda (first row, center) and the council's president, Lawrence Kohl (to her right). Photo provided

Lynn's Top Five

College Students: Create your Own Internships!

By Lynn Ballou, CFP®

I'm hearing from a lot of clients that their college-bound kids are having a very tough time this summer finding meaningful work to do, paid or not. This is so frustrating for parents in our community who have worked tirelessly to instill the value of money and time in their kids, and even more so for their children who want to be useful and accomplished citizens with enhanced future employment prospects. My thought is this: If nothing created by someone else is forthcoming, create your own internship! Here are some ideas that others have shared with me over the years, and hopefully will resonate with you, on how to go about this.

Foster a pet. If you have a love of animals, giving a pet a loving home for the summer could be a great experience. Often you'll be asked to bring your new buddy to various pet

adoption venues, and help place them in a permanent loving home. You can also volunteer in pet shelters. Whether it's walking a dog or cleaning out kennels and cages, there's much work to be done. Your local veterinarian can help you with contact information for shelters, as can pet stores who often host adoption days.

Volunteer in assisted living facilities. Time can pass slowly for us when we live in even the best group assisted living situations, and having activities to do makes life much more fun. You and some friends who are talented in theatre arts, for example, could put together a "Revue." Call or visit the managers of these types of group homes and offer to put on a weekly show. Another idea: Volunteer to come read, sing, play music or create art. Whatever your talents are, they can be shared and enjoyed by many who are living in a group situation.

Help with literacy. Contact your local library to learn about how to help someone with English as their second language learn to read. Or volunteer in a community where English is not the primary language to help people navigate their lives in an English-speaking world. One of my client's children volunteered her time to assist a Spanish-speaking family friend go to doctor's visits and interpret instructions from the medical team to her when the woman's daughter was unable to go due to work conflicts.

Get involved in church or temple activities: Check with your local community churches and synagogues, even if you are not a member, and ask what charitable work they do and if you can lend a hand. It might be as simple as collecting canned goods in your neighborhood for their coor-

dinated food bank initiative. Or it might involve helping out someone who is temporarily incapacitated by watering their plants, mowing their lawn, and maybe preparing a few simple meals.

Become a camp counselor. Some of these are paying jobs and some are not. And most are probably filled by now. But guess what? It's not unusual at every camp that some of the college kids who serve as camp counselors (and work in other camp functions such as cooks and office workers) bail out on their jobs at some time during the summer. It's not too late to call around to local summer camp programs and even some of the live-in camp programs in the mountains, for example, and offer to be an "alternate" if someone gets sick or leaves. You never know – you could be the perfect replacement and then next summer have priority as a first hire. This is great for someone outgoing with a flexible schedule.

These are just a few, very simple ideas. If you are a college student reading this, my advice is to narrow down your top three or four interests – hobbies and studies – and think about where you could add value in your community while focusing on these areas. And remember, by taking the initiative to offer your services to those in need, not only are these fantastic resume builders, but you may actually come across a field of interest or new hobby you never considered before! The experience of reaching out alone will help you as you navigate future job opportunities with your presentation skills and poise. Plus the contacts and friends you make can be invaluable to you for years to come. Wishing you much success!



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