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Orinda students deliver peace kits to Paradise students impacted by Camp Fire



Students are led through mindful yoga poses.

Photos Jenn Freedman

By Jenn Freedman

Local nonprofit Mindful Littles and the Orinda Union School District, under the OrindaCares program, offered a unique type of relief for students in Paradise, California, who were affected by the Camp Fire this past November. Mindful Littles led over 1,600 Orinda students in creating "peace kits" for Paradise students at Ponderosa Elementary School to help overcome the emotional trauma that lingers from the fire.

In mid-March, Orinda students across all four elementary schools built the peace kits. Jointly funded by the Orinda and Paradise Rotary clubs, the kits were filled with items to help students practice mindfulness, including breathing buddies to help students relax, gratitude journals, mindfulness books, weighted eye pillows and many other practical and useful tools. Other sponsors for the peace kits project included Lamorinda Tooth Buds, Michelle Groft Real Estate and Andrew Jordan Nance and Parallax Press.

Tuesday, April 9 was the "Day of Peace," when OUSD students, staff, volunteers, and Mindful Littles leaders delivered 300 peace kits to the students in Paradise. They spent the day teaching the kids how to use the mindfulness and compassion tools in their kits.

Tanuka Gordon, founder and executive director of Mindful Littles, describes the experience: "The Day of Peace was an unforgettable experience with tears, laughter and heartfelt moments all around. To be able to empower Paradise students with practical and tangible tools to help them have inner peace and resilience after such a devastating natural disaster was deeply meaningful to all those that have been part of our OrindaCares program. Even more incredible was watching our OUSD students on the trip teach their friends in Paradise how to practice these tools. We saw the ripple effect of our compassion work in full effect and we are grateful for the opportunity to spread some peace to so many kids and families in need."

The experience was powerful for all those involved, and enthusiasm around Mindful Littles service learning model for schools is spreading: discussions are underway to continue mindful service learning programs at

Paradise and other local Bay Area school districts. If you are aware of other schools who may be interested in these programs, you can reach out at info@mindfullittles.org.



Bubble wands are used for a Mindful Bubble Breath practice. In order to blow more bubbles, we can practice a mindful slow and deep breath.



Lacrosse balls are used for myofascial release and can be used to release tension in the body.

Orinda Concert Series season finale features Brett Barrett



Brett Barrett Photo provided

Submitted by Michael Williams

If you haven't experienced the Live at the Orinda concert series at the Orinda Theatre yet, you don't want to miss the one year anniversary season finale at 7:30 p.m. Thursday, May 2, with Broadway and West End leading man, Brett Barrett, in his Bay Area concert debut.

Barrett received an Olivier Award nomination (the British Tony Awards) for his starring role in the London premier of the Tony-winning Broadway revival of "Kiss Me

Kate" (also recorded for broadcast on PBS and DVD). Barrett also received raves when he co-starred with Reba McEntire in the smash Broadway revival of "Annie Get Your Gun." Other shows include "Phantom of the Opera," "Grand Hotel," "West Side Story" and "Chicago" (LA Drama Critics Award). Film and television roles include "The Producers," "Hercules," "Longtime Companion" and "All My Children." Barrett has recorded three solo albums, including a duet with film icon Lauren Bacall.

For tickets and information, visit www.OrindaMovies.com

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