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St. Mary's Gardens neighborhood fun run participants and cheerleaders Hayden Holloway, Lisa Weil, Dave Cunningham, Madison Kahn and Abby Cunningham. Photo A. Schreck

# Neighbors gather in fellowship on the Fourth

By Sophie Braccini and Jennifer Wake

With the cancellation of traditional Fourth of July festivities, Lamorinda neighbors found safe ways to reconnect while celebrating the birth of the nation. At one gathering on Gloria Court in Moraga, children decorated their bikes and scooters, parents took out loudspeakers, chairs, tables and barbecues and the party started. Old fashion games were organized such as a bike rally and an egg relay, all executed either within the same family or with proper social distancing.

Those who had been in neighborhoods for a long time were delighted and amazed at the number of children and new families who came out. In spite of the

heat, the energy level was high and children threw firecrackers to add to the musical ambiance.

Moraga residents Rob Schwartz and Tom Shephard wanted to get their neighborhood out on the Fourth of July as well, and thought a safely-spaced fun run/walk would be perfect for their St. Mary's Garden neighborhood.

The nearly 50 participants, all residents of the neighborhood, ranged in age from 1 to 98. "People were given start times in one-minute increments and told to arrive five minutes in advance of their start time to avoid a big crowd gathering," Shephard said. "The fun run was free, but we gave neighbors the option to make a donation to the ALS Association."

Shephard's wife, Angela Seitz, was diagnosed with

ALS (Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis) in February and currently experiences a slowness in speech and a weakness in her hands, but is still quite healthy and able to be mobile. St. Mary's Gardens neighbors contributed nearly \$2,000 for the ALS Association. "The donations we collected go to the ALS Association which provides direct funding for ALS focused research studies to find a cure," Shephard said.

ALS is currently 100% fatal, and most people with ALS die within 2 to 5 years of diagnosis.

Seitz has her Master of Public Policy (University of Chicago) and is bringing attention to two bills that have been introduced in the Senate and House:

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# Lafayette forms task force; needs community engagement to address systemic racism in city



Screen shot from virtual meeting  
The newly-formed task force held its first meeting July 1.

By Pippa Fisher

Unanimously supported by the Lafayette City Council, three council members held their first task force meeting to brainstorm vision, objectives and to identify strategies to address equity in the city. It quickly be-

came apparent that in order for that to happen and to engage the entire community, a whole lot of listening was going to have to happen first, and that led the newly-formed group to plan a first town hall meeting at the end of the month.

The task force, as yet unnamed, held its virtual meeting July 1 with over 50 members of the public in attendance, many of whom offered practical advice and opinion.

During the June 22 city council meeting, members voted to form the task force with three council members, making it subject to Brown Act rules. Vice Mayor Susan Candell, along with Council Members Cam Burks and Teresa Gerringer were appointed. At the first task force meeting, members voted Candell as chair and Burks as vice chair.

Candell was quick to point out that the task force was certainly going to be a group effort. And as the discussion over vision, objectives and strategies progressed it became clear that a main priority was to have community-wide engagement.



Task force members agreed the best way to ac-

complish that was by listening. To that end a town hall-style meeting was proposed for the end of July, after the public safety committee's similar town hall meeting on police practices. Notably, despite any overlap in subject, the two committees are remaining distinct from one another at this point – a two-pronged approach to examine both systemic problems within the police, and systemic racism and inequality within the community.

Next steps include bringing in implicit bias training for the city council and including school board members, eventually offering such training community-wide, finding a facilitator to help run the town hall meeting and trying to reach out to those affected by systemic racism within the city to have them either speak during the town hall meeting or send in letters telling of their experiences, and not limiting it to Lafayette residents but to include those in Moraga and Orinda and those who visit or work in the city.

Gerringer noted that the meeting was a good first start.

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