

## Letters to the editor

**Scott Parker for Mayor of Moraga**

I've lived in Moraga for nine years now and I love and appreciate so many things about the community and the people that live here. That said, when you compare us to the neighboring towns that comprise Lamorinda, it's not hard to see why Moraga feels like it's stuck in third place in the 1980's.

For the last nine years, I've heard the same issues confront the town that, year after year, go unaddressed. The same storm drains that back up and flood streets. The same empty store fronts that don't get leased. The same crumbling buildings that aren't repaired. The same vision for the town that re-

mains on a drawing board.

Enter Scott Parker. I don't know Scott, but I know a person of action when I see one. In case you missed the last edition of Lamorinda Weekly – he's the Moraga resident that spent 4 months picking up 30 years of litter around town with a goal of 'ridding Moraga of litter and making sure it stays that way.' I don't know this, but I am pretty sure Scott didn't waste his time petitioning the town to do a better job cleaning up. He just put trash bags in his car and started doing it himself.

I'm not naïve to the obstacles the town faces to progress. Entrenched views on growth. Wealthy landowners that won't compromise. Traffic. Climate

change. Legal hurdles, limited budgets – I appreciate each one of those present obstacles to progress and that a lot of people have worked tirelessly to make things better.

But Scott's mission stands out in a town that is mired in reasons for 'why we can't' – as a striking example of how we can. He shows us that if you want to make Moraga better, you've got to be willing to do it yourself. Thanks for showing us the way, Scott. And thank you to the many other Morgans that do the same. Let's resolve to be more like them in 2022 if we want to make Moraga better.

Keith Pearce  
Moraga

### Acts of Kindness

I would like to propose a resolution for 2022 that we all can keep. Perform one act of kindness every week. There are about 16,000 residents in Moraga. If we each did one kind thing a week for a year, that would be 832,000 acts. Yes, I'm including the kids.

Last summer the girls on my street left me a painted rock that said, "You're fabulous." I put it on my desk and smile every time I look at it.

Drop a card to a neighbor who is having health problems, pick up a piece of litter, sweep a storm drain clear of

leaves, send a thank you to the fire department, when you bake make an extra for someone who doesn't. It won't have to be much, or cost anything. We have a neighbor who has been dragging our garbage cans out every week and bringing them back after they are emptied. I can't tell you how much my knees and I appreciate that act of kindness. Well, I guess I just did.

Please join me in filling this year with kindness. Hopefully, it will catch on.

Jo Mele  
Moraga

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## Local foodie family conducts annual taste-test tradition



Photos provided

### Submitted by Craig Coane

The Coane family loves food. Whether it's mom, Karen, cooking her favorite family meals at home, daughter Kayla journaling another entry into her Instagram "thatfooddoe" account, son Michael eating everything in sight to put on extra weight for high school sports, or dad, Craig, and his obsession with tasting different types of foods.

Four years ago the family came up with a novel idea to help ring in the New Year and fill their stomachs after their late night New Year's Eve celebrations: a blind taste test of their favorite foods from local restaurants.

The idea was simple – pick a common food theme and three restaurants that serve similar items. Order the same items from all three restaurants and bring them all home to taste side-by-side. And of course, have a scoring sheet to tabulate the results and pick an overall winner.

"We always talked about doing something like this," said Craig Coane, looking

back to four years ago. "Once we came up with the concept, we couldn't wait to try it."

The first year they chose upscale burger joints, tasting the best burgers, fries, and vanilla shakes at three nearby spots. And they spared no details, even adding the homemade ketchups for each into their scoring sheets.

"Not knowing for sure which item came from which restaurant definitely made it even more fun," Craig Coane recalled.

Lafayette's own Roam was the big winner that year. "We were pretty surprised," Kayla Coane remembered. "We always like Roam but matched up against the competition it really stood out."

After subsequent years with themes that included sushi in 2020 (that's a lot of spicy tuna rolls) and Mexican food in 2021 (last year's version was held in Lake Tahoe where the family lived for a month), this year's edition of the Coane family New Year's Day taste test was an obvious choice for Lamorinda diners: Chinese food.

With a plethora of Chinese restaurant options in

Lamorinda to choose from, the Coanes settled on the three choices from their hometown of Moraga: Chef Chao, China Moon and Golden Palace. With so many food items to choose from, they narrowed it down to four 'go-tos' for most Chinese food lovers: hot and sour soup, pot stickers, chicken chow mein and orange chicken.

One of the keys to success, as the family has learned, is ensuring all food items make it back to their house at the same time to ensure the freshest and hottest comparisons.

"This year was easy," says Karen Coane. "All three restaurants were basically within walking distance!"

Craig and Kayla sped off to grab the food items while Karen and Michael prepped the table and scoring sheets for this year's competition. "We're getting this thing down," says Michael Coane. "We were ready to eat!"

After laying out the enormous feast across their expanded dining room table and pinning their scoring sheets to clip boards, it was go time.

The hot and sour soup winner? A three-way tie. "They were all really good in different ways."

Next up: pot stickers. Again, the Coanes were surprised at how different each pot sticker was prepared. "I used to think pot stickers were pretty much all the same – that is not the case," said Karen. The winner: China Moon. "They just have that classic take on a pot sticker with fresh stuffing and a golden slightly crisp dough."

Their third item: chicken chow mein. With healthy portions and mounds of chow mein to dig through, the Coanes were again surprised by each restaurant's take. "The thickness of the noodles, amount of vegetables and chicken, and overall flavor were very different," recalled Craig Coane. The chow mein winner: Chef Chao.

Finally, orange chicken was the entrée of choice to close out the food eating extravaganza. If you thought orange chicken is the same at every Chinese joint, you are sorely mistaken. "We saw the biggest difference between

restaurants with their take on orange chicken, but the top choice was obvious to all of us," said Michael. The orange chicken champion: Golden Palace.

As Craig gathered all the sheets for the final scoring, the Coanes were happy to see each restaurant had a winning food item. "They were all good," remembers Kayla.

But every great taste test competition needs a champion, and after final tabulations the 2022 champion was Golden Palace.

"We love Chef Chao and have for years," said Karen, "but we're planning to frequent all three restaurants now that we've been able to taste them all side by side."

COVID has made it even more meaningful to come up with traditions that can bring the family together and have a little fun.

Craig added, "This is our way to support local businesses ... and get a great meal at the same time!"

What's on tap for a theme for next year's feast? They're leaning toward Italian.

## Business Person of the Year selection hits a high note with Lamorinda Music co-owner John McCormick

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They created a business plan and found the perfect Lafayette location, "less than two miles from home," John McCormick happily notes. The building had originally been a beauty salon and John McCormick remembers that "all the walls were plastered with pink wallpaper. We spent weeks scraping it off."

The goal was to have a warm, friendly, welcoming spot where music is fun and everyone is treated like family and friends, John McCormick states.

Colleen McCormick ran the day-to-day operations of Lamorinda Music in the beginning while John McCormick stuck with that old adage, "Don't quit your day job." He didn't. He continued working in the tech field but spent nights and weekends working at their store. That all changed approximately five years ago when John

McCormick did quit his day job and began working full time in the store.

Lamorinda Music provides instrument sales, rentals and repairs and offers lessons in everything from voice, piano, guitar and various band instruments. They have expanded twice and currently have 13 studios and 30 instructors working with hundreds of students, "from pro musicians, enthusiastic amateurs and wide-eyed elementary students renting their first instruments," McCormick says. The store hosts recitals, group classes, jams and concerts. There are two full-time repair technicians working on a variety of instruments for both individuals and local school districts.

One recent customer, reviewing Lamorinda Music on social media, said, "This place is fantastic, the people who work here all have great knowledge ... and the fact

that you can rent-to-own is absolutely amazing."

Once he began working at the store full time, McCormick joined the board of the Lafayette Chamber and immediately became an active and involved member. In 2020 he was elected president. "I had a vision of all the Chamber could do under my presidency," McCormick says. "I had lots of ideas. And then COVID happened." That, of course, presented very different challenges. According to the Chamber's executive director, Jay Lifson, once COVID hit, goals and projects changed out of necessity and "under John's leadership, we were able to pivot to a new purpose: saving our local economy."

The Chamber worked hard and, McCormick states proudly, "did phenomenal work during the pandemic. The Chamber was, in many ways, the lifeline for local businesses," he says.

While a new Chamber president is typically elected every year, McCormick asked to serve a second term. "John asked for another year," Lifson reports. "He felt he hadn't been able to do all the great things he had planned and he wanted to continue helping our local businesses."

Lifson states that under McCormick's leadership, some really meaningful work was done "and we have more members now than we did before COVID, actually adding 100 new members last year alone."

It wasn't a difficult decision, then, when the time came to select the Chamber's 2022 Business Person of the Year. McCormick more than meets the organization's criteria: Working to support and promote a healthy business climate and enhance lives in Lafayette; modeling excellence in everything he does; giving time and energy to help make Lafayette a com-

munity where people want to live, work and shop; and making us proud to be a member of this community. "John is the perfect mix of nice guy, extremely bright and interested in everything that's happening around him," Lifson says.

As if Lamorinda Music and the Chamber haven't kept McCormick busy enough, he was a Lafayette Partners in Education (LPIE) volunteer for 20 years and is currently an active volunteer with the Park Theater Trust. And he has returned to school: McCormick will proudly receive his master's in history from Harvard later this year.

The Chamber's dinner to honor McCormick, originally planned for next month has, unfortunately, been postponed due to COVID; it will be rescheduled as soon as it's safe to do so.