

SCHOOL CALENDAR

School Governing Board Meetings

Acalanes Union
High School District
Board Room AUHSD Office
1212 Pleasant Hill Rd, Lafayette
Wednesday, Oct. 29 at 7:30 pm
- Special Session
Wednesday, Nov. 5

Lafayette School District

LAUSD Office
3477 School Street, Lafayette
Monday, Nov. 17 at 7:00 pm

Orinda Union School District

OUSD Office
8 Altarinda Road, Orinda
Monday, Nov. 3 at 4:00 pm

Moraga School District

Joaquin Moraga Intermediate
School Auditorium
1010 Camino Pablo, Moraga
Monday, Nov. 18 at 7:30pm

Sorenson Leads OUSD Board in Difficult Economic Times

By Andrea A. Firth

Having recently stepped into the president's shoes on the Orinda Union School District (OUSD) Governing Board, Riki Sorenson knows the District will face some difficult challenges over the next year. Sorenson feels that the three biggest issues that the Board will deal with are the state budget crisis, the Pine Grove property project, and the proposed parcel tax.

"We have already trimmed everything that we can within the District's budget," states Sorenson, who anticipates that the District will have to deal with midyear cuts to State education funding.

The demolition at the Pine Grove development, which requires moving the District offices and maintenance facility by the end of

December, is one of the most pressing issues that Sorenson has to manage. "This is the most controversial issue that I have dealt with since being on the Board," says Sorenson, who has worked on this issue for four of the past six years she has served on the Board.

The Pine Grove development will require the District administrators to be relocated over the next eighteen months until a new District office is constructed at the site. The more challenging element of the relocation process is that maintenance operation, which has been sharing space with the City, must also be moved to a completely new site.

After previous locations at the Wagner Ranch and DeLaveaga properties fell through as relocation

options, the District hired a consultant to rethink the maintenance operation and its facility needs. Sorenson explains that the Board is evaluating a proposal to downsize the physical space needs of the maintenance facility and to switch to a more mobile operation with a small administrative center and well-equipped trucks. The place for this new vision of a maintenance operation remains the challenge.

"We have to be able to maintain our schools. They need a place to work," explains Sorenson. She recently attended a meeting of teachers, parents, and Ivy Drive residents to discuss the plan for using a blacktop at Orinda Intermediate School (OIS) as a temporary site for the maintenance crew and their belongings. The OIS site had been identified, in part, because the location already has utilities in place from portables that had been housed there during the OIS modernization project.

Along with noise and safety concerns, a major objection of the Ivy Drive residents to the proposed placement at OIS is the potential for increased traffic which is already a significant problem and sore subject in the neighborhood. Sorenson acknowledges the neighbors concerns but feels that the seven-man maintenance crew will not add a significant amount of traffic. "We have talked about having the maintenance workers arrive early, by 6:45, to get their working orders and move on to the schools to avoid heavier traffic times," she explains.

Sorenson's third big agenda item is the proposed parcel tax to help further fund the OUSD. Sorenson and fellow Board member Pam West are part of a subcommittee that is working on the parcel tax initiative. "It will be interesting to see how measures across the State fare in this environment," notes Sorenson. She believes that the Board is in consensus that a parcel tax should be placed on the ballot in 2009, but when and how much must still be determined.

Lamorinda Schools

Lamorinda Moms Club to Hold 11th Annual Preschool Fair

By Jean Follmer

The Lamorinda Moms Club (LMC) will hold its 11th Annual Preschool Fair on November 13 from 6:30 to 9:00 pm at the Oakwood Athletic Club. In a recent press release, LMC said it has organized the annual preschool fair designed to help local parents find the perfect preschool for their child. The event is open to LMC members as well as the general community. "Over 30 Lamorinda preschools will be available to discuss their programs and answer questions. The event is free and children are welcome. The event is a great timesaving tool for parents. LMC will provide a comparison of each of the participating preschools in addition to offer the chance to meet the director and parents from each school. "I think it's a great opportunity to speak with all of us at the different preschools and learn our philosophies," said Joyful Beginnings Preschool Director Dot Feist. Feist said the Preschool Fair has helped her school gain greater exposure

and increase the enrollment.

"In one evening you can see more than 35 preschools. This year we've been getting inquiries from preschool in other communities (outside Lamorinda)," said Preschool Fair co-chair Larisa Genin. Dr. Genin said the LMC Preschool Fair has a very good word-of-mouth reputation and that explains the participation requests from other communities.

In conjunction with the annual LMC Preschool Fair, the Community Outreach Committee will gather donations for the Bay Area Crisis Nursery (BACN). The purpose of the Bay Area Crisis Nursery is to prevent abuse and neglect of children by providing support to families who are in crisis. The primary service is providing a warm, loving, homelike environment for children birth through five years of age by offering 24-hour residential care. Services are free, confidential and voluntary. "They're always looking for donations. Some specific donation requests are Enfamil Lipil w/ iron formula and winter clothes. They only ac-



cept new clothes after November 15 during the holiday season. They also need tooth brushes, toothpaste, basic toiletry needs and cash for office supplies," said Amy McDonough, LMC Preschool Fair Community Outreach Chair. The BACN web address is www.bacn.jkmas.com.

The LMC is a social and support club for parents with children under five years of age in the greater Lamorinda area, including the cities of Lafayette, Moraga and Orinda.

LMC strives to help members enrich their lives through cultivating new friendships, personal and professional growth, and community involvement. Since its origin in 1995, the LMC has evolved to become one of the largest parenting organizations in the San Francisco Bay Area, with approximately 570 members. The club hosts dozens of activities and special events each month, and provides valuable resources to parents in the Lamorinda area. Learn more about the Lamorinda Moms Club including how to join at www.lamorindamomsclub.org or by calling (925) 941-4714.

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Red Ribbon Week Reminds Kids to Make Healthy Choices

By Jean Follmer



1st Grade Class Lafayette Elementary School with teacher Tina Skuce

Photo provided

"Are you doing the right thing at the right time with the right people?" asks Springhill Red Ribbon Week Coordinator Karen Elliott. Springhill's Red Ribbon Week theme this year is "Do the Right Thing."

Springhill kicked off Red Ribbon Week with a highly attended assembly featuring Ralph the Great of "The Pro-Kids Show." "In his entertaining show, which included magic, illusions, comedy, student participation and a very funny puppet named Rosco, Ralph the Great taught the children some very important lessons. These messages included: cooperation, honesty takes courage, doing the right thing when nobody is looking proves you have excellent character, and respect your teachers," said Elliott.

While Springhill always kicks off Red Ribbon Week with an assembly, this was the first year with Ralph the Great. Elliott said she's received the best feedback to date as a result of "The Pro-Kids Show". Elliott has been the Red Ribbon Week chair at Springhill for five years and said she received the best assembly feedback to date after Ralph the Great. "I really feel passionate about this," said Elliott. Each of the Lafayette schools has a different approach to Red Ribbon Week and Elliott would like to see a more cooperative approach in the future. "I would love to see the other schools use my assembly guy," said Elliott. In some other districts, the assembly is offered on different days at different schools and culminates in a larger presentation for the entire community to attend at the local high school.

Springhill is piloting a program for the district called Char-

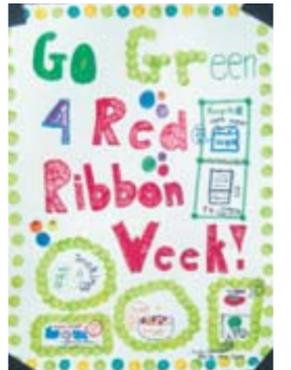
acter Counts. The program is based on six pillars: Trustworthy, Respect, Responsibility, Fairness, Caring and Citizenship. The pillars are part of daily conversation in and out of the classroom and each pillar is assigned a color. Springhill decided to incorporate the Character Counts colors into Red Ribbon Week this year. One day was blue and yellow for "Trustworthy" and "Character" and another was orange for "Fairness". Red stood for "Caring" in addition to Red Ribbon Week and Green and Purple stood for "Responsibility" and "Citizenship". The students were engaged in a scavenger hunt, poster making and a "Wheel of Fortune" game show hosted by Principal Bruce Wodhams.

Lafayette Elementary's Red Ribbon Week activities were coordinated by Kathy Dexter. The Lafayette Elementary theme is "Healthy Choices for Healthy Futures." "We really focused on making healthy choices now. It could be eating correctly, turning off the television and video games in your home, having family time, reading or playing with your friends. We're reminding the kids with red ribbons," said Dexter. Lafayette started Red Ribbon Week by tying red ribbons around the school and handing out red pencils and red bracelets to use and wear throughout the week. Students were encourage to bike or walk to school or engage in some type of exercise-related activity during the week. Students throughout the school made posters and parent volunteers hung them. On Friday, the students wore red to school. "The general feedback is positive. It reminds families

about healthy choices," said Dexter.

Happy Valley Elementary also participated in Red Ribbon Week last week. They also encourage students to bike or walk to school and to wear red. Happy Valley also asked their families to have a "Family Night". Danette Wieczynski said they wanted the families to talk about things that were both healthy and unhealthy. The children were asked to write a pledge at home about what healthy choices they will put into practice. "At Happy Valley, we seek to incorporate the themes of Red Ribbon Week into our current goals of helping our children make Healthy Choices for Healthy Futures. This begins at home," said Wieczynski. Daily prizes included passes to Jamba Juice and Family Fun Packs from Blockbuster.

Burton Valley Elementary is holding their Red Ribbon Week this week. Burton Valley Secretary Marsha Dahl said all the students wore red on Monday and were given a Healthy Choices worksheet to take home and complete with their families. "Our big thing is Wednesday we're doing a walk-a-thon where all of the students participate for 30 minutes," said Dahl.



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