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Walking to School

By Chris Lavin



Crossing guards help guarantee a safe crossing for Lamorinda students. Photo Chris Lavin

While schools don't keep statistics on how many students hoof it home, early morning and afternoon commuters see streams of students toting backpacks to and from school. And the commuters are something that one Moraga crossing guard is constantly concerned about.

"Some people just don't pay any attention to me," said a guard on Camino Pablo in Moraga who didn't want his name in the paper. "Sometimes the kids are the same. It's why they need us out here." Another perk.

"The first thing people ask me is whether their kids can walk to school, or where the bus stops are," Evans said. "That's why it's almost always the first thing described in the listing." And while school buses don't service the high schools, County Connection runs a multitude of special service buses in the mornings and afternoons to cover the gap.

"People's interests change," Evans said. "Lots of people come from San Francisco because they have young families, or people come from the hills areas where they're paying for private schools."

Another agent, Michelle Holcenberg, agreed. "There are lots of reasons people move," she said. "But yeah, many people are looking for good schools. It may not be necessarily whether the kids can walk to school, but they definitely want to be close to one," she said.

Charlton, the dad in Moraga, likes nothing better than to watch his daughters head out the front door in the morning. "It's a great neighborhood, a tight niche," he said. "They'll stop at their friends' houses and pick them up, and go together. It's a great tradition."

He walked to school himself as a kid, but in an East Bay neighborhood that would not be as safe now. Sure, his daughters complain about having to walk. But someday, they will be telling their own kids that it was 10 miles uphill both ways, through pouring rain.

We all heard the stories growing up: "Don't complain about it! I had to walk 10 miles uphill both ways to get to school when I was your age, through 10 feet of snow!" For many Lamorinda parents, carpooling and hauling kids in the early morning hours is part of the routine, but for some lucky parents, giving the kids a kiss on the forehead and shoving them out the door is a luxury they can't beat.

"It's why we moved here," said Josh Charlton, dad to Cassie and Sophia, who walk to school together each morning in Moraga. "It's a great neighborhood, and we can do that here."

For almost all new families moving to Lamorinda, the proximity to good schools is not just one reason, but the main reason, they pick up roots they have planted elsewhere. And getting to walk to school is simply icing on the cake.

"Some real estate agents say getting close to a school is the main reason that 98 percent of the

people want to move here. Others say it's 99 percent," said Jason Evans, a Coldwell Banker agent.

"They feel that their kids can go to public schools rather than private schools, which allows them to pay higher prices."



Amy waits at a crosswalk with her walk-to-school children, Ava and Luke, at Camino Pablo Elementary School in Moraga.



. Photos Chris Lavin

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