

LAMORINDA



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Thumbs up for the all-access playground. From left: Cliff Dochterman, Tony Schoemehl, John Erickson, Frank May, Kevin Reneau, Evie Michon, Jay Ingram and Ann Damaschino. Photo A. Scheck

All-Access Playground is a sure thing

By Sophie Braccini

There are very few playgrounds in the Bay Area that offers kids, regardless of their abilities, the opportunity to play side by side. As a Lamorinda parent of a disabled child puts it, some of the hardest realities when raising a disabled child are the isolation created by the difference, the difficulty to find playmates and play opportunities, and the disruption to the other siblings.

But now, thanks to a group of Moraga Rotarians that did not believe their dream was too big for them, an accessible and inclusive playground will open this fall at the Moraga Commons Park. The club reached its \$250,000 goal this month and Moraga Parks and Recreation Director Jay Ingram plans to bring constructions bids to the town council in June

Moraga Rotary club members are justly proud of their achievement. Just over six months ago the group of passionate Rotarians started fundraising for the park. Some were skeptical, even within the club itself, that this would be feasible. Club president Kevin Reneau stresses that this was a group effort reaching out all over Lamorinda.

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DANA GREEN

Goodness, gracious, snakes alive!

By Cathy Dausman



A rattler seen in Bollinger. Photo provided by Spring's arrival means longer, warmer and drier days — perfect for a hike in the Lamorinda hills. Enjoy the flowers and wildlife but give *Crotalus oreganus*,

or the western rattlesnake, a wide berth. “Steer clear,” counsels Lesa Johnston, marketing specialist for the California Department of Fish & Wildlife. Rattlesnakes are found throughout California and known to defend aggressively after presenting a series of warnings: rattling their tail, coiling their body and pre-strike posturing. “March was a busy month for rattlesnake encounters,” Johnston said, citing data from the California Poison Control System. Lamorindan Ginny Hair didn’t need those statistics when she came across a “big healthy guy” rattlesnake on a hike last month. “We were in Moraga at the end of Bollinger Canyon,” Hair said. Neither Hair nor her hiking companion were harmed, but they managed to take pictures. Some suggest that this year’s drastic change in weather is responsible for an increase in the rattlesnake population.

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70 years of bean dip and margaritas at El Charro

By John T. Miller



Employees of El Charro beneath the signature sombrero. Photo J. Miller

It’s 7:30 on a Tuesday night and the parking lot at El Charro’s is virtually full. As one car backs out, another enters to take its place. El Charro has been packing in customers for Mexican food and margaritas for 70 years now, and to mark the occasion the Chamber of Commerce will sponsor a ribbon cutting and celebration at 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, June 1, an event that will surely fill up its ample parking lot and then some. Since 1947, when Fidel “Frank” Garcia occupied the original log cabin on Mt. Diablo Boulevard, El Charro has been serving family-style Mexican food to satisfied customers. Dave Shields, the current owner, took over the business from his brother in 1993.

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