

Caring Hands volunteers make a difference in seniors' lives

Submitted by Stacy Appel



Lamorinda volunteer Kristen Headley, far left, took her longtime match and Navy veteran, Hilbert "Si" Seiwert (wearing cap), on an outing to the USS Hornet in Alameda. Headley's husband, Clayton, and son, Brett, came along to make it a real celebration. Photo provided

Life at any age involves challenges, but these intensify as we age. The first concern may be that it becomes too difficult to drive to the doctor or the grocery, or to just get a haircut. Support systems change, neighbors and friends may not help as expected, and loneliness may put a damper on daily routines.

The Caring Hands Volunteer Caregivers Program, which serves seniors throughout Central, East, and South Contra Costa County, including Lafayette, Orinda, and Moraga, makes an extraordinary difference in the quality of life for many seniors.

About three years ago, Lafayette resident Kristen Headley started seeing a recurring paragraph in her church bulletin asking for volunteers for the Caring Hands organization. "Having been an occupational therapist," she said, "I thought this would be a perfect fit for me 'someday.' I didn't make any inquiries for several months, thinking I was too busy. But one Monday morning I decided it was time. It was meant to be, because a training was scheduled for the following week and the coordinator and I were able to make it work. I am so glad I made that call!"

Headley was matched with "Si" Seiwert – a 93-year-old living on his own and, fortunately for both of them, right down the street. Because of macular degeneration, Seiwert was unable to drive or read very well. "We started visiting on Wednesdays, reading mail and a great Life magazine on World War II," Headley said. "Si is a World War II veteran and a fountain of information." Headley or-

ganized a trip to the USS Hornet in Alameda and said Seiwert was like a rock star while touring the aircraft carrier. "The veteran volunteers providing the tour were thrilled to be with a World War II veteran."

Aside from visiting and reading with Seiwert, Headley also helps him get to doctors appointments, get haircuts and get to the grocery store. "Our time together always puts into perspective what truly matters in this life," she said. "I love that I get to slow down from my crazy life with three teenagers and enjoy quality time with an individual who has a wealth of life experiences to share."

Caring Hands is a collaborative community outreach program between John Muir Health, social service agencies, congregations of various faiths and the community-at-large. The goal of the 20-year old program is to create finely-tuned one-on-one matches to help aging adults in Contra Costa County remain independent as long as safely possible with the help of a volunteer. Isolation and loneliness shorten lives and may make health problems worse.

Because Caring Hands has an unusually long waiting list of isolated seniors right now, they are in dire need of more Lamorinda volunteers or those who might know a neighbor or friend who could volunteer. The program is offering two volunteer trainings on Oct. 13 and again on Nov. 10 in Walnut Creek. For information, call Caring Hands at (925) 952-2999, ext. 36063 or email Stacy Appel at Stacy.Appel@johnmuirhealth.com.

Classical music is alive and well, flourishing in youth

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Though I had been playing violin for a few years, I hadn't played in a group before, and knew that it would be a wonderful new experience. The orchestra welcomed me, and I felt at ease. I found that I simply loved my instrument, and that playing gave me much more satisfaction and enjoyment than listening to others, as nice as it can be.

"Though we play pieces that make us stretch our limits, nothing we do is ridiculously hard. I always improve slightly from a piece I play in this orchestra, and I think that has helped me become the musician, and the person, who I am today."

Djemilev said, "I try to find repertoire that will resonate with young artist's hearts, that will reflect their youthful spirit, their energy, their view of the world. Also, I am trying to challenge them by sometimes introducing very complex and innovative works, unusual compositions, helping to stretch their musical horizons."

"I consider myself very privileged working with so many amazingly talented young musicians. I've learned the importance of de-

veloping creative, constructive, and critical thinking for growing young musicians, not just their technical skills. I believe in teamwork, where everyone's voice is heard and everyone's opinion matters. A conductor's role is to help channel all of that powerful, imaginative energy to build our own new, unique interpretation of the material we are working on. We are a team- a conductor can't succeed alone!"

Long hair swings into his boyish face and he smiles, flipping it aside. Cheerful and optimistic, always dressed in a suit, Djemilev is at ease in his element.

"When I took over our Youth Orchestra in 2001, it had only 14 players in it. Now, after 16 years, we have about 80-85 members in both intermediate and advanced orchestras. Consistently, 30-40 percent of our membership come from Lamorinda."

"We have a terrific tradition in both groups – we have a group of older players volunteer to help and work with our younger musicians. This creates an amazing experience for both – beginners and advanced,

Lamorinda Arts Council hosts Art of Mixology fundraiser, Oct. 7

Submitted by Christy Mack



More than 20 well-known and upcoming East Bay mixologists will come together from 4:30 to 7 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 7 to support the Lamorinda Arts Council – a nonprofit that has been igniting and sustaining artistic expression and appreciation in the visual, performing and literary arts for people of all ages in our community for over 65 years – at its 4th annual Art of Mixology Fundraiser at the Orinda Theatre Square.

Art of Mixology attendees will have the opportunity to sample unique cocktails from exceptional mixologists as well as vote live on site to help determine who will be named Mixologist of the Year, Top Amateur and Audience Favorite.

Ryan Wehrenberg of Park Bistro at the Lafayette Park Hotel was named Mixologist of the Year last year and is returning again this year for another chance at the title. Vying for this year's title will also be David King of Oakland's Hutch Bar and Kitchen,

Jeremy Vadurro from Beer Baron Bar and Kitchen in Pleasanton, Portia Battistini of Lafayette's Cooperage American Grille, and more creative mixologists.

"I'm thrilled that my participation, as well as the participation of other local mixologists who love the craft of designing and innovating cocktails, will support local arts," said Wehrenberg. "Last year was my first competition and to be able to win on my first attempt was amazing for me. I loved constructing my cocktail and watching hundreds of fundraiser attendees enjoy it as well as share their thoughts. I can't wait to compete in this year's Art of Mixology and join in the fun again for a cause."

Tickets are \$45 in advance and can be purchased online at www.lamorindaarts.org/mixology. Day of tickets can be purchased at the event for \$55.

"Art of Mixology brings together community members in the most festive of ways while celebrating the arts," explained Lawrence Kohl, president of Lamorinda Arts Council. "It's one of my favorite fundraising events and I look forward to it each and every year."

For more information on LAC, visit www.lamorindaarts.org.

Annual bike event benefits

Holden High School students

Submitted by Mawiyah Johnson

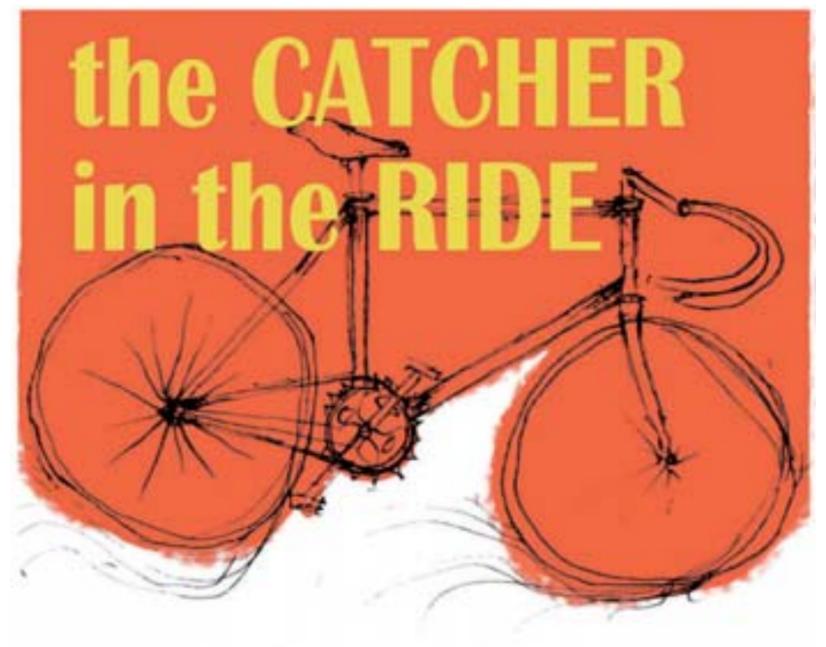


Image provided

For nearly 50 years, Holden High School in Orinda has been quietly referred to as "the miracle in the basement" by grateful parents and students.

Holden helps teens with learning challenges transform limiting self-beliefs into personal and academic confidence. Young people who have experienced traumatic life events and have struggles in mainstream school settings say Holden is a safe haven.

Since its inception in 1969, Holden has helped transform the lives of some of the Bay Area's finest citizens. Students who were labeled as deficient by traditional organizations are now working in cutting-edge technology jobs, running nonprofits, and attending some of the finest colleges.

On Saturday, Oct. 14 Holden High School will be hosting its third annual

"Catcher in the Ride Benefit Bike Ride" from 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., starting at the Holden High School parking lot, 10 Irwin Way in Orinda (just one mile away from the Orinda BART station). There will be two scenic routes through Orinda, Moraga and Lafayette to choose from: an 11-mile mostly flat beginner-friendly ride and a 23-mile hilly and flat challenge ride.

Perfect for beginners, families and cycle enthusiasts alike, the event will also include giveaways, food, a post-race celebration and bike inspections. Riders must be at least 14 years old or older.

One hundred percent of the proceeds from this event will go directly to serve the students at Holden High School. To register, visit: Holdenhigh.org/holden-events/bike/.

since it teaches how to become a teacher, how to become a mentor. Our beginners get help and nourishment for their talent, and our advanced mentors learn how to teach! This helps to build many bridges and close connections between the two groups. Our typical age is 7-13 years old for our Intermediate Orchestra, and 12-19 for our Advanced Orchestra."

Audrey Burns, an Acalanes High School student, is one of several virtuoso players in the Advanced Community Arts Orchestra. Audiences are electrified by her fiery intensity and technical mastery. "I started playing piano at age 6," she said, "but what grabbed me about playing violin at Community Arts was the social aspect; performing with our full orchestra is much different than performing with piano. Some of my own students now play at CAYO." Burns shares her seasoned experience with younger players, helping them hone their own skills and confidence.

Cellist Eilidh Kilpatrick, a Lafayette middle-schooler, said, "It's nice to be surrounded

by other people when you're playing. It's not boring to practice by yourself -some pieces sound really good- but the pieces that Rem chooses are super pretty."

"I was very lucky to witness many young musicians grow up and become bright, educated young adults. I remember how many of them developed from very shy, timid, inexperienced young kids into powerful, strong, confident, talented young people. We are always looking for new members!" Djemilev said. "I can't tell exact numbers – but I can safely say: more than 20 or 30 orchestra members over the years became teachers and performers, some work in the recording or publishing industry, some became composers. I hope to see orchestra numbers grow, reaching out to all social and economic brackets, making youth orchestra affordable and available for all. Joy and excitement of creating beautiful music together has to be accessible for everyone!"