

# LAMORINDA WEEKLY



925-377-0977

www.lamorindaweekly.com

*Christmas Eve Services*

Sunday, December 24

Morning Service: 10:00 a.m.

Family Services: 3:00 p.m. and 4:30 p.m.

Traditional Services: 7:00 p.m. & 8:30 p.m.

Candlelight Communion Service (New!): 11:00 p.m.

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*New Year's Eve Services*

Sunday, December 31

Sunday Morning Services: 9:00 a.m. & 11:00 a.m.

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Free horse-drawn carriage rides were a highlight of this annual event on Dec. 9.

Photo Sora O'Doherty

## 'Holiday Magic' delights locals in Orinda's downtown

By Sora O'Doherty

It was a quiet but bright holiday night on Dec. 9 for the "Holiday Magic at Orinda Theatre Square" event. Locals lined up to patiently wait for free rides on an elegant old-fashioned horse-drawn carriage, complete with bright carriage lantern and Christmas lights, which did a lazy loop of Moraga Way from Theatre Square to Northwood Drive and

around the roundabout at Bryant Way. Traffic slid by with quiet respect, engines barely audible in the brisk evening air. Along Moraga Way, families wandered, checking out the menus in the brightly decorated restaurants, deciding where to enjoy their evening meal. Inside Theatre Square, there was a gentle buzz as families walked about, meeting live cartoon

characters for a chat and a photo. A vivid red furry Elmo from Sesame Street delighted the little ones, along with bright blue Chase from Paw Patrol. None of the children, who were grinning ear to ear, seemed frightened by the life-sized characters that enthusiastically posed for photos.

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## Eye-opening Lafayette Police Community Forum on ID theft and fraud

By B. B. Kaye

Lafayette Police Chief Eric Christensen shared important tips on how to avoid the latest identity theft and fraud scams before a large turnout Dec. 6 at the Lafayette Veterans Memorial Center.

Christensen said that identity theft is a crime anyone can easily fall prey to, calling it a relatively low-risk endeavor. Bank robberies average less than \$2,000, the odds of being caught are extremely high, and jail time for such offenses is very long. But identity theft is considered to be a "victimless" crime, so jail time is low, and the average take for a single such fraud is \$5,000. In 2016, one out of every 16 Americans reported some kind of identity theft, and losses amounted to \$16 billion. In California alone, four million people fell victim to ID theft.

The chief named tax fraud the No. 1 type

of ID theft, cautioning that if you get multiple return statements or paystubs from employers you don't know, or you are told by tax agencies that you have already received the refund you were waiting for, your information may be stolen. "It's hard to get through that phone-tree," Christensen said. "Usually an hour-and-a-half to two hours, but they'll fix it for you. Make sure you write down the name of everyone you talk to. And come to us! Reporting it is very important."

The most frequent way that people lose a credit card or other valuables is by leaving them in a car. Thieves go "rooting" from car-to-car to see which one is unlocked and if something entices they may even break a window to steal it. This year, one Lafayette resident lost \$25,000 in cash by leaving it in his car.

... continued on page A12

## A town on the brink

By Nick Marnell

Despite its declaration of a fiscal emergency, the town of Moraga has made little effort to reign in its spending and at its current rate is headed toward financial unsustainability.

In a 2016 Community Priorities survey commissioned by the town, Moraga residents said that not maintaining storm drains was their second highest source of dissatisfaction with town performance, behind attracting and keeping local businesses. A follow-up survey asked residents how much they would be willing to pay to fund the \$26 million the town says it needs to repair the drains. Not one of the survey options was to have Moraga reduce its spending to help fund the capital project.

"The survey was conducted as a council goal to identify a possible revenue measure. That is what was done," said City Manager Bob Priebe. "There has been no opportunity to allocate any dedicated funding to the storm drain deficiency."

So the town, having declared a fiscal emergency after unforeseen expenditures to repair the Rheem Boulevard sinkhole and the Canyon bridge, is considering asking taxpayers for more money to fund the storm drain project, even though Moraga, knowing that the storm drain repair was a necessary capital project, has not only failed to set aside any of its revenue to fund the project

but continues to pile on more operating expenses each year.

According to the town 2017-18 operating budget, after making adjustments for reallocated Measure K revenue, Moraga total revenue – general fund revenue plus other financing sources – will have increased 20.7 percent in 2017-18 from five years ago, and general fund operating expenses will have jumped 22 percent over the same five years, an unsustainable financial performance.

The Moraga audit and finance committee does not see it that way. "The town manages its expenses extremely carefully and very well," said Tim Freeman, a member of the committee, which reviewed the proposed 2017-18 budget at its May 16 meeting.

The town's No. 1 general fund revenue source is property tax. In its 2014 five-year financial plan Moraga projected total property tax revenue of \$13.2 million for four years between 2015-18. Updated in the recently approved town budget, property tax revenue will have finished at \$14.8 million through the same period. None of the \$1.6 million windfall was set aside for the storm drain project. Priebe said that any budget surplus since 2016-17 had to be returned to a developer account; the projected surplus for this fiscal year is less than \$50,000.

... continued on page A12

### A Note About Our Newspaper Carrier

Blackhawk Enterprise (email –mailblackhawk@gmail.com) has been delivering the Lamorinda Weekly to all homes in Orinda, Lafayette and Moraga since January 2011. The team of eight drivers works hard to make sure you get your newspaper every other Wednesday. Blackhawk Enterprise and its team members would like to wish our readers a joyous holiday season and a very happy new year. You will also see a flyer from them in this week's issue.

Thank you, Lamorinda Weekly

### Civic News A1-A12

Orinda City Council amends Moraga Adobe land use – page A6

### Fire Districts A8

Another Fire Station 43 setback – page A8

### Life in Lamorinda B1-B10

Local volunteers ring in holidays – page B1.



### Sports C1-C4

Campo loses in CIF heartbreaker – page C1.



### Our Homes D1-D16

One home's over-the-top rooftop decor – page D1.





**Lafayette**

**Public Meetings**

**City Council Special Meeting**

Monday, Dec. 19, 2 p.m.  
Lafayette City Offices, 3675 Mt. Diablo Blvd., Conference Room 265

**City Council**

Monday, Jan. 8, 7 p.m.  
Lafayette Library & Learning Center, Community Hall, 3491 Mt. Diablo Blvd.

**Planning Commission**

Monday, Dec. 18, 7 p.m.  
Lafayette Library & Learning Center, Community Hall, 3491 Mt. Diablo Blvd.

**Design Review**

Monday, Jan. 8, 7 p.m.  
Lafayette Library & Learning Center, Arts & Science Discovery Center, 3491 Mt. Diablo Blvd.

**School Board Meetings**

**Acalanes Union High School District**

Wednesday, Jan. 10, 7 p.m.  
AUHSD Board Room  
1212 Pleasant Hill Road, Lafayette  
www.acalanes.k12.ca.us

**Lafayette School District**

Wednesday, Dec. 13, 7 p.m.  
Regular Board Meeting  
District Office Board Room  
3477 School St., Lafayette  
www.lafsd.k12.ca.us

**Check online for agendas, meeting notes and announcements**

**City of Lafayette:**

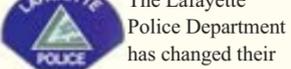
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**The Lafayette Police Department**

has changed their reporting and we were unable to get the complete information before press time.



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**Reliez Valley residents may soon resort to protests over congestion**

By Pippa Fisher



Residents are determined to make their point. The Circulation Commission listens to multiple speakers talk about the congestion on Reliez Valley Road. Photos Gint Federas

With louder and more insistent voices, north Lafayette residents are demanding solutions to their everyday frustrations of congestion along Reliez Valley Road. At the end of their tether, the residents are now threatening protests, sit-outs and picketing in their efforts to get heard. And they want state Sen. Steve Glazier to get involved. In a packed Dec. 4 Circulation Commission meeting, the audi-

ence and commission heard from 24 mostly north Lafayette residents who complained of long commutes to schools, frequent "tardies" for their children and diminishing home values because of the solid traffic between 7 and 8 a.m. every weekday.

As a result, Circulation Commissioner Carl Di Giorgio will be reaching out to Reliez Valley residents to discuss and listen to their ideas on congestion solutions in the Reliez Valley corridor, while city staff continue to meet with their counterparts from the neighboring jurisdictions of Contra Costa County and Pleasant Hill.

Not all residents think this is enough. "This has been a frustrating process," says Kristen Altbaum, cofounder of the group Reliez Valley Residents for Reduced Traffic. "No one seems to be truly advocating for our fair and reasonable request which is simply to protect residential Reliez Valley Road and the school bus route, by way of restricted access signs from 7 to 8:30 a.m., and improve efficiencies at the Pleasant Hill Road/Deerhill intersection so all Lafayette/Acalanes district kids can access schools efficiently and reliably and not at the expense of our regional neighbors. Why is that so difficult?"

For most of the speakers at the meeting, the answers were clear – applicable to the morning commute hours they want "No Left Turn" signs at Reliez Valley Road/Grayson Road, as well as "No Right Turn" at Taylor Boulevard/Gloria Terrace, and Taylor Boulevard/Withers Avenue to prevent out-of-area traffic from cutting through and to prevent apps such as WAZE and Google from directing out-of-town drivers along their road.

... continued on page A10

**Potential new city hall on Oak Hill Road**

By Pippa Fisher



Could this old Blockbuster Movie site become Lafayette's new city hall? Photo Pippa Fisher

As Lafayette continues to explore options for buying new city offices as an alternative to renting, the city council gave the go-ahead to discuss further the possibility of building on Oak Hill Road and at the same time rejected the idea of building on a donated property on Deerhill Road.

City Manager Steve Falk laid out the pros and cons of the two sites at the Nov. 27 council meeting.

In September the city council gave the go-ahead for consideration of opportunities to purchase a building or site for construction of new city-owned offices provided the price tag be kept below \$10 million. It was determined at that price to make better financial sense than continued renting over a period of 50 years. Since the September meeting, Falk said, the city had received two unsolicited offers of possible locations.

Falk explained that the Stuart family, current owners of the property on Oak Hill Road, better known to many as the old Blockbuster Movie building, had approached him to see if the city might be interested. At 52,000 square feet, the site could easily accommodate the 10,000 square foot facility required by the city, plus parking and with enough capacity to add additional conference rooms.

However none of the three existing buildings on the site would be suitable so redevelopment would be necessary. Falk said that although it is a big site and well located, close to BART, retail and downtown – meeting requirements

for a new city hall according to the Downtown Specific Plan – he thinks that buying and building there within their below \$10 million range could be a challenge.

The second property, the parcel of land opposite BART on Deerhill Road that Falk presented came with one obvious "pro" – no cost. Charles Clark offered to donate the land that currently is home to the Crosses of Lafayette Peace Memorial.

But on such a steep hillside, initial drawings of a city office in this location showed that the building would exceed the General Plan's height limit by as much as 15 feet. Furthermore the General Plan calls for restricting commercial and multifamily uses to the south side of the freeway and Falk again quoted the DSP's recommendation to keep city offices in the Plaza or downtown retail districts.

The council unanimously agreed to schedule a closed session to discuss price, terms and negotiation strategy on the Oak Hill property. However the council (minus Vice Mayor Don Tatzin, who had recused himself from the Deerhill Road presentation due to potential conflict of interest) agreed that the Deerhill property be rejected.

In the end, it will come down to the bottom line and whether the city can accomplish what it needs within its budget. However not all residents believe that is likely.

One such resident, Michael Walker, says that the public should have very little confidence that the final cost will come in as predicted.

While the Sept. 25 "Rent vs. Own" study was sensitive to ini-

tial land acquisition and final construction costs, Walker says the city has a very poor track record of estimating those costs. "The study suggests a total capital cost of \$9 million using \$6,116,000 available funds (some cash, some property sales). However, the study states that if the cost of the project tips beyond \$10 million, the net present value becomes negative."

Walker says the reasons for public concern are obvious. "The new library has become an enormous (and permanent) drain on city resources. It was constructed with large cost overruns and is expen-

sive to operate. The city has a poor track record with these projects and I think a new city hall project would be more of the same."

Still other residents are supportive of the city owning its own offices, according to responses to the question on the new city online forum of whether to buy or rent. All responses indicate they are in favor of buying with several qualifying that they would like to be assured of cost containment.

As this subject heads into closed session for discussion, as Falk said, this will be their challenge.

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## New parking lot finally in sight for East Enders

By Pippa Fisher



The new parking lot will take the place of the old EBMUD pumping station, located just to the east of Ace Hardware. Photo Pippa Fisher

The east end of Lafayette will be getting a long-awaited new parking lot to be completed by August, helping to address what the city council recognized as a desperate need in that area. But it comes with a price tag.

The city council voted unanimously at the Nov. 27 meeting to allocate up to \$180,000 from the city's parking fund to get the lot next to Ace Hardware finished including the cost of landscaping and irrigation.

The East Bay Municipal Utility District agreed to provide the city with a new 16-space parking lot at the 3305 Mt. Diablo Blvd. location as part of a 2013 land exchange agreement, which enabled EBMUD to build a new pumping station up the street at the intersection of Mt. Diablo Boulevard and Mt. Diablo Court.

The agreement included an al-

lowance of \$90,930 (the difference in land values) to be used for the development of the lot. However the EBMUD contractor's bid now comes in at more than four times the allowance amount, leaving the city to contribute \$157,170 plus roughly \$23,000 for landscaping and irrigation with EBMUD contributing an additional \$100,000.

The council heard from two members of the group known as the East End Coalition, an informal group of residents and business owners on the east end of the city. Both speakers expressed the dire need for parking and pointed to the possibility of future discussion around reducing the median by Ace Hardware at some point, to allow access to the new parking lot.

The EEC said it is thrilled to be getting more parking.

... continued on page A12

## It's a Wonderful Life starts the season right

By Pippa Fisher



Photos Pippa Fisher

With Santa's arrival on Old Betsy, Lafayette's historic fire truck, it became official – the holidays are well under way in Lafayette. Santa even had a police escort into the Plaza.

A large crowd turned out to visit with the merry man and enjoy the free refreshments and holiday musical entertainment provided by local youth.

Police Chief Eric Christensen was in attendance too with several

of his jolly policemen who had a great time chatting with the crowd and allowing kids to explore a real police car.

After an enthusiastic countdown, the event culminated with the lighting of the tree on the Plaza.

"It feels like we are in the Midwest," commented Orinda resident Lynn Hogan, referring to the community spirit as she watched her daughter perform holiday songs with Lamorinda Academy.



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# Moraga

## Public Meetings

### City Council

Wednesday, Dec. 13, 7 p.m.  
Council Chambers and Community Meeting Room, 335 Rheem Blvd.

### Planning Commission

Monday, Dec. 18, 7 p.m.  
Council Chambers and Community Meeting Room, 335 Rheem Blvd.

### Design Review

Monday, Dec. 26, 7 p.m.  
Council Chambers and Community Meeting Room, 335 Rheem Blvd.

### School Board Meetings

**Moraga School District**  
Thursday, Jan. 9, 7 p.m.  
Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School Auditorium  
1010 Camino Pablo, Moraga  
www.moraga.k12.ca.us  
See also AUHSD meeting page A2

Check online for agendas, meeting notes and announcements

### Town of Moraga:

www.moraga.ca.us  
Phone: (925) 888-7022

### Chamber of Commerce:

www.moragachamber.org

### Moraga Citizens' Network:

www.moragacitizensnetwork.org

## Moraga Police Report

Summary covers  
Nov 21 to Dec. 3

<b>Alarms</b>	14
<b>Traffic</b>	41
<b>911 Calls (incl. hang-ups)</b>	4
<b>Noise Calls</b>	4
<b>Suspicious Circumstances</b>	6
<b>Suspicious Subject</b>	6
<b>Suspicious Vehicle</b>	1
<b>Burglary, Auto</b>	
St. Mary's Rd./Moraga Rd.	
<b>Death, non-criminal</b>	
location n/a	
<b>Domestic Disturbance</b>	
50 block Ashbrook Pl.	
200 block Scofield Dr.	
<b>Fish &amp; Game</b>	
Larch Ave/Sparrow Ct.	
<b>ID Theft</b>	
300 block Constance Pl.	
20 block Laird Dr.	
<b>Hit and Run</b>	
Moraga Rd/Rheem Blvd.	
<b>Medical Hospital</b>	
100 block Miramonte Dr.	
<b>Mentally Ill Commit</b>	
Saint Mary's College	
<b>Theft, Petty</b>	
Safeway	
<b>Unknown Problem</b>	
400 block Birchwood Dr.	
<b>Vandalism</b>	
500 block Center St.	
Rheem Valley Shopping Center	
<b>Warrant Service</b>	
10 block Francisca Dr.	
<b>Warrant Arrest</b>	
10 block Francisca Dr.	



# Bob Priebe: 38 years serving Moraga

By Sophie Braccini



Bob Priebe LW archive

When Bob Priebe leaves his town manager office in a few days, he will leave behind 38 years of work history, a lifetime. Most of the manager's career developed in law enforcement until he was appointed town manager almost two years ago. While Priebe has ample right to claim retirement, his departure was still a surprise.

When he started out as a young police officer, Moraga was not his dream job. Even today, Priebe says that he was born to be a Berkeley cop. A friend who was part of that police force showed Priebe during a night ride-along how the adrenaline rush one gets on the job can make life exciting. Making people safe and arresting bad guys was the most important part of Priebe's motivation. But destiny did not have Berkeley in its long-term plans for Priebe.

Priebe was sworn in on Aug. 28, 1978 and worked in Berkeley for 18 months, and in his own words

it was the most fun he ever had on the job. But one of his former police academy instructors, Tom Simms, had his eyes set on the young officer to start a brand new police department in Moraga from the ground up, and took him on a tour of the place. Priebe remembers that the town felt more alive in the early '80s, with more retail and the fresh look of a place recently built. Simms also told Priebe that this department would one day become a Lamorinda operation.

The young man was still not interested, but Simms called Priebe's wife, Tracy, then a young mother of an 11-month-old baby. She was not as excited as her husband was about the Berkeley job; in fact, every time the phone rang, she was uneasy. The Priebes, now married for 40 years, discussed the opportunity ... and the rest is history.

When Priebe started in Moraga, 10 officers were in charge, with one part-time chief, Larry Olson, who was also working for the East Bay Regional Park District. The men had the same uniform as their EBRPD counterparts, the cars also came from that agency with patches on the doors saying Moraga, and the office was located in a trailer behind the fire station. At first, the men were independent contractors, then they created a bargaining unit, and it was not until 2006 that the department became a part of the California Public Employees Retirement System.

Priebe tested the waters for other opportunities and almost left a couple of times, but Moraga had its own interesting challenges, and the officer was regularly promoted until he became chief in 2009.

There are so many interesting stories from Priebe's Moraga life, including the time a woman came to the police department with a WWII Japanese hand grenade she wanted to get rid of that turned out to still be very much operational; Priebe keeps a piece of the grenade on his desk as a reminder of how quickly things can go wrong.

Priebe believes that his years in the police department were well spent, with a lot of good and a little bad, including a lot of educational activities and building trust with the residents. He is convinced that Moraga's independent police department costs residents much less than the officers contracted by Orinda and Lafayette through the county sheriff's office. He believes that an independent Lamorinda police force would make sense and be a good financial solution for the three cities.

When Town Manager Jill Keimach left Moraga in 2016, Priebe became interim town manager. A few days later, the culvert under Rheem Boulevard collapsed and a sinkhole formed. In September of the same year he was offered and accepted the permanent position. He says that until then, he thought that the police department was getting all the complaints in town; he got a shift in per-

spective as town manager.

In Moraga, residents have direct access to the manager. Priebe said he was surprised by the number of emails and phone calls he received daily from residents – some friendly, but most expressions of displeasure. He said he made a point to respond to everyone, but got frustrated at the amount of what he perceives as disinformation circulating on social media. He believes that this made his job, and his department heads' jobs harder.

Priebe explains that while the town was incorporated in 1974 with a promise for minimal government, people nonetheless demand maximum service. He thinks that residents have to realize that they own the town's infrastructure and assets and that it requires funds to be maintained. He also believes that the level of staff today is at a minimum, as compared to surrounding communities.

Among Priebe's last public appearances were the reopening of the Rheem Boulevard and of the Canyon Bridge, where he praised his team for a work well done in spite of administrative hurdles.

He made a lot of friends in Moraga over the years. He really loved being a part of Moraga Valley Kiwanis where he discovered the pleasure of giving back. But he has no regrets about retiring. He might seek new adventures in the future, but he will certainly take a few months to enjoy life and his family.

## Transitions in Moraga – interim town manager to be hired on Dec. 13

By Sophie Braccini

When one asks Planning Director Ellen Clark or Administrative Services Director Amy Cunningham why they are leaving their management positions in Moraga, they give a similar response: a small staff does not provide upward opportunities for managers; the only possibility to get a more important job is to change the city. But why is mid-level staff also leaving Moraga?

The exodus of Moraga staff is severe. The planning department is depleted with only two planners left, now that Associate Planner Coleman Frick announced he is leaving Moraga, and the administrative department is now reduced to only one person with the concomitant resignation of Administrative Services Technician Tina Davis. Transition will take time since the interim town manager may not be tasked with replacing the missing department heads, which will be the choice of the future permanent town manager. Aside from the police force personnel, approximately one third of Moraga town staff has left the town over the past six-months.

Cunningham said that no one on her staff was qualified to become the interim administrative director; when she spoke last week, she said that everything would be organized before her departure to

make sure that there is no interruption in services, but she was not sure who would replace her. Yuliya Elbo, the town's accountant, is the only person left.

The planning department will be headed by Senior Planner Derek Farmer, with the support of Brian Horn, associate planner, and Kelly Clancy, senior administrative assistant. Clark said that it is likely that the town will call in consultants on an ad hoc basis to complete on-going projects.

The town will approve at its Dec. 13 meeting the hiring of James Holgersson as interim town manager. The staff report prepared for the Dec. 13 meeting indicates that Holgersson has over 40 years of experience in government management in California and beyond. "He has served as the City Manager and Interim City Manager for the City of Modesto; Deputy City Manager Neighborhoods for the City of San Jose; City Manager for the City of

Arlington, Texas; City Manager for the City of Waco, Texas; City Manager for the City of Kalamazoo, Michigan; City Administrator for the City of Germantown, Tennessee; and Senior Assistant to the City Administrator of the City of Davenport, Iowa," states the report.

Council Member Dave Trotter noted that each of the department heads that resigned had their own reasons for seeking promotions and higher paying positions in other cities and that the town of Moraga has historically been an incubator for people working in municipal government positions. "They come here to become first-time department heads in a smaller community, provide excellent service here, get noticed by our neighboring cities, and depart for greener pastures," he said. "The town will get through this, as we have in the past."

Other examples of this phenomenon from the recent past include former town manager Jill

Keimach who was hired as the Alameda City Manager after five years in Moraga, or former administrative services director Stephanie Hom who returned to a senior post in Oakland when Libby Schaaf was elected mayor.

Yet, having about a third of staff, police department aside, resigning within a few months of the declaration of fiscal emergency is concerning and raises questions regarding the continuity of operations. Some of the big projects that will need to be continued at the beginning of 2018 include whether or not the town will seek more revenue for storm drains, the completion of the ridgeline and hillside development rules, and the start of MCE as a new energy provider. The only department heads still in place with historical knowledge of the town are city clerk Marty McInturf, Public Works Director Edric Kwan, and Chief of Police Jon B. King.

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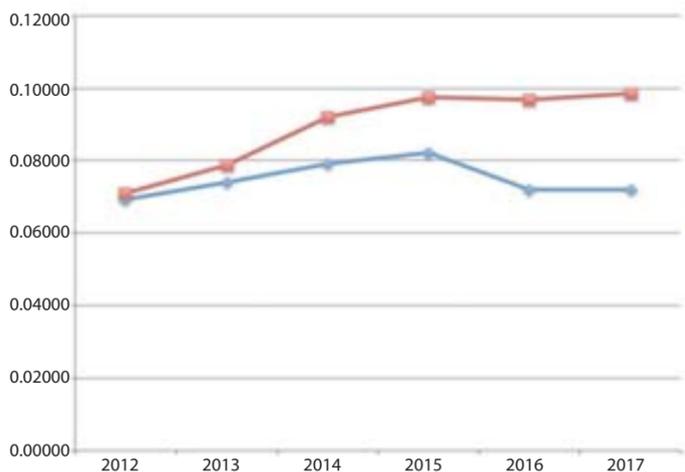
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**Moraga will have access to more renewable energy in 2018**

By Sophie Braccini



Evolution of MCE and PG&E all usages residential rates between 2012 and 2017, figures provided by MCE.

The Moraga town council voted in 2017 to join Marin Clean Energy, and 2018 will be the year residents become a part of this large local energy provider. By April of 2018, MCE will produce the electricity needed for all residents who will not have opted out, while PG&E will continue to deliver the energy and bill everyone. The beginning of the year will mark the start of MCE's outreach campaign in Moraga and the other communities that have recently decided to join MCE as well. Lafayette has been part of MCE for one year, while Orinda declined the move.

In Contra Costa County, in addition to Moraga, the cities of Concord, Danville, Martinez, Oakley, Pinole, Pittsburg and San Ramon, as well as unincorporated Contra Costa County, will join MCE in April; El

Cerrito, Lafayette, San Pablo, Richmond and Walnut Creek are already enrolled. A little over two thirds of the 19 cities will have joined the community energy provider by April of 2018.

MCE's arguments to convince the different decision makers are that residents will not be charged more than what PG&E costs them if they choose the Light Green program – 50 percent renewable in the electricity mix – and that they will be charged only a few dollars more for 100 percent renewable energy. Residents can also opt for Local Solar, a program that supports solar electricity produced in the Bay Area.

The electricity customers of the eight cities will automatically become a part of MCE, but can opt out of the program to stay with PG&E. It is therefore crucial that every-

one is fully informed.

Coleman Frick, the Moraga planner that worked most closely with MCE, explains that each resident will receive four mailers before April 1 to inform them about the program and their rights. The young planner who will leave Moraga soon to join the Concord planning team explains that joining MCE represented a lot of work for staff, but that it is one of his most significant achievements during his three-year tenure in Moraga.

Jamie Tuckey, the director of public affairs for MCE, explains that three Community Leadership Advisory Groups will be formed within the nine new cities to work on an outreach plan, and that MCE needs local volunteers. Interested people can sign up to be on the CLAG at [www.mcecleanenergy.org/clag/](http://www.mcecleanenergy.org/clag/). Alexandra McGee, who is in charge of the outreach for Moraga, says that the town is part of the South CLAG with San Ramon and Danville. This CLAG will meet three times and is open to the public. The first meeting was in Danville on Dec. 7 and there will be a second meeting in February. Interested parties can attend any CLAG meeting.

Frick adds that he and other staff members and elected officials have created a robust list of organizations to be contacted, as well as a list of events that MCE could attend. He adds that MCE will also have a person in Moraga some weekdays that will be training staff and answering questions from the public.

Tuckey says that the switch will take the entire month of April at the start of the billing cycle and that people will not see any difference. If residents do nothing they will be enrolled in the Light Green, 50 percent guaranteed renewable program. The MCE director

adds that this year Light Green included 55 percent of renewable energy, with 50 percent being the minimum.

The big question for customers is, of course, rates. Tuckey says that MCE has reduced rates two years in a row and will likely be reducing them again in April of 2018, which is the standard timeline for assessing and changing rates. The data provided by MCE shows that over the past five years the MCE's residential rate has always been less than PG&E's.

During the signup period at the beginning of the year and within 60 days of joining, opting in or out of MCE will be free. Opting out after the 60 days of the April enrollment will cost a one-time administrative fee of \$5 per residential account or \$25 per commercial account, which will be applied to the electric bill. PG&E will prohibit residents from returning to MCE for one year. In Lafayette, 10 percent of residents opted out of MCE.

MCE is a nonprofit public agency formed by the public in Marin County to buy cleaner power and invest in local economies. MCE has served Bay Area electric customers since 2010. Today, MCE provides service to more than 250,000 customers in Marin, Napa and Contra Costa counties. The new Contra Costa County entities joining will almost double that figure with over 230,000 new customers and MCE will reach a half million accounts. PG&E has 5.4 million electric customer accounts. MCGee adds that MCE is exploring opening a second office in Contra Costa County and is hiring more staff. For more information about the Contra Costa program, visit [www.mcecleanenergy.org/mce-contra-costa/](http://www.mcecleanenergy.org/mce-contra-costa/).

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# Orinda

## Public Meetings

### City Council

Tuesday, Dec. 19, 6 p.m.  
Library Auditorium, Orinda Library  
26 Orinda Way, Orinda, CA 94563

### Planning Commission

TBA  
Library Auditorium, Orinda Library  
26 Orinda Way, Orinda, CA 94563

### Citizens' Infrastructure

Oversight Commission  
TBA  
Sarge Littlehale Community Room,  
22 Orinda Way, Orinda, CA 94563

### School Board Meetings

Orinda Union School District  
Monday, Jan. 8, 6 p.m.  
Regular Board Meeting  
8 Altarinda Rd., Orinda  
www.orindaschools.org  
See also AUHSD meeting page A2

Check online for agendas, meeting notes and announcements

### City of Orinda:

www.cityoforinda.org  
Phone (925) 253-4200

### Chamber of Commerce:

www.orindachamber.org

### The Orinda Association:

www.orindaassociation.org



## Orinda Police Department Incident Summary Report

### Nov. 19 to Dec. 2

- Alarms 37
- Noise Complaints 4
- 911 Calls (includes hang-ups) 5
- Traffic Stops 60
- Suspicious Circumstances 7
- Suspicious Subjects 12
- Suspicious Vehicles 19

### Abandoned Vehicle

- 40 block Valley View Rd
- 100 block Ravenhill Rd
- 20 block Brookwood Rd

### Barking Dog

- 60 block Brookwood Rd

### Burglary, Auto

- Bevmo

### Credit Fraud

- 10 block Lind Ct

### Death, non-criminal

- 10 block Modoc Rd

### Disturbing the Peace

- Camino Pablo/Ardilla Rd

### Disturbance, Juvenile

- Donald Dr/Hall Dr

### Disturbance, Fight

- 10 block Dolores Way

### Dispute, Verbal

- Overhill Rd/Overhill Ct

### Dispute, Verbal

- 70 block Moraga Way

### DUI Misdemeanor

- Moraga Way/Camino Encinas

### Fire/ EMS Response

- 10 block Altarinda Rd

### Indecent Exposure

- Casa Orinda

### Health & Safety

- Lavenida/Donna Maria Way

### Medical Hospital

- 20 block Irwin Way 20 block

### Missing Adult

- 10 block Lost Valley Dr (2)

### Promiscuous Shooting

- Diablo View Dr/Canyon View

### Public Nuisance

- Sanborn Rd/Moraga Way

### Public Nuisance

- 40 block Donald Dr

### Reckless Driving

- Shell gas

### Reckless Driving

- San Pablo Creek/Camino Sobrante

### Robberty, Strongarm

- Camino Pablo/El Toyonal

### Shoptift

- San Pablo Dam Rd/Wildcat Ct

### Shoptift

- Camino Pablo/Camino Sobrante

### Shoptift

- Camino Pablo/Brookwood Rd

### Shoptift

- Moraga Way/Hall Dr

### Shoptift

- Monte Vista Rd/Marston Rd

### Shoptift

- CVS

### Shoptift

- Bevmo

### Shoptift

- 10 block Scenic Dr

### Shoptift

- 40 block Ivy Dr

### Shoptift

- Starbucks

### Shoptift

- Trespass

### Shoptift

- 300 block Camino Sobrante

### Shoptift

- Orinda Senior Village



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## New Mayor, Vice Mayor

By Sora O'Doherty

Amey Worth has been elected by the Orinda City Council as Mayor for 2018. She will be assisted by Vice Mayor Inga Miller. The election went smoothly, with only one nominee for each office; both candidates were elected unanimously at the Dec. 5 council meeting. Worth was nominated by Council Member Dean Orr and Miller was

nominated by outgoing Mayor Eve Phillips.

Worth brings a great deal of experience to the job, having served as mayor in 2000 and 2005. She has served four terms on the city council since first being elected in November 1998, and was outgoing Mayor Eve Phillips' vice mayor. Worth is a Cal graduate, so the rallying cry,

"Go Bears!" will likely continue to be heard at council meetings.

Inga Miller was elected to the Orinda City Council in November 2016. Miller, who was raised in Orinda and has lived here most of her life, previously served on the Parks and Recreation Commission from 2011-13. Miller attended Miramonte High School at the same time as Phillips, and

both competed in cross country and track events there. In addition to her work as a real estate attorney, Miller previously was employed as a journalist.

Mayor Worth and Vice Mayor Miller will be profiled in an upcoming edition of the Lamorinda Weekly.

## Sinkhole team receives Orinda mayor's Award of Excellence

By Sora O'Doherty

In recognition of the tremendous amount of work, including many hours of overtime, put in by the staff charged with the physical and legal solutions to the Miner Road sinkhole, outgoing Mayor Eve Phillips dedicated her Award of Excellence to the city's sinkhole team. Receiving the honor were: Senior Administrative Assistant Cynthia Casey; Senior Civil Engineer Jason Chen; Facilities and Parks Supervisor Steve Ecklund; Public Works Inspector Tod Fierner; Director of Public Works Larry Theis; and attorney Osa Wolff.

Phillips spoke to the hard work and dedication of the staff members, who managed to achieve the repair of the sinkhole and the reopening of the road in a very short six months. Although the repairs have been successfully completed, the work continues as staff navigate the complex process of trying to obtain reimbursement for the funds expended on the repairs from the federal government.



Sinkhole team honored at Dec. 5 Orinda City Council meeting.

Photo Sora O'Doherty

## Council clears the way for Moraga Adobe restoration

By Sora O'Doherty

Despite pleas from the residents of Donna Maria Way, the Orinda City Council voted unanimously on Dec. 5 to introduce Ordinance 17-09 on or after Dec. 19 and approved Resolution 89-17, which amends the General Plan Land Use Map by changing the designation of the Moraga Adobe parcel from residential low density single family to parks and recreation.

The adobe, the oldest residential building in Contra Costa County, has been the subject of a memorandum of agreement between J&J Ranch LLC and the Friends of the Joaquin Moraga Adobe. J&J Ranch will be building new homes on 14 parcels surrounding the historic adobe, and has agreed to restore the historic building. If they can raise the half million dollar purchase price, the Friends will buy the restored building and allow limited public access to it, particularly to school groups interested in the historical significance of the building.

Residents are concerned about the types of uses that will be allowed, the number of events they may be held annually, and the level of noise and traffic that may result. Although this is covered by the MOA, any future use of the building will be specifically covered by a use permit that may be issued by the city. Should the Friends be unable to raise

the purchase price, the structure would be retained by J&J and used as a type of clubhouse for

the development. The ordinance will come back before the council on the same

date that the final map for the development is submitted for approval.

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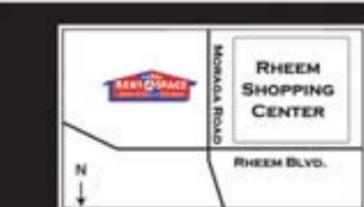
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## Mayor Phillips completes the year of the sinkhole with kudos

By Sora O'Doherty



From left: Dean Orr, Darlene Gee, Eve Phillips, Any Worth and Inga Miller

It was an exciting year for Eve Phillips, as she raised her baby daughter and transitioned to a new job at Google while continuing as mayor of Orinda. But perhaps the most significant thing to happen during Phillips' term of office was the sinkhole on Miner Road, which occurred during a torrential storm in early January, not even one month into Phillips' 2017 term. The huge sinkhole completely closed Miner Road, one of Orinda's important

arterial and feeder roads. Shortly after the sinkhole occurred, further winter storms caused serious flooding of the homes nearby.

As Phillips handed over the mayoral gavel on Dec. 5, she received praise from state and county government officials, the other city council members, and members of the public, who were unanimous in recognizing her excellence in handling the sinkhole disaster, as well as her other accomplishments as mayor. Contra

Costa County Supervisor Candace Andersen lauded Phillips for her leadership, remembering receiving a telephone call on the night of the sinkhole. Andersen presented Phillips with a proclamation from the County. Teresa Gerring, a representative from state Sen. Steve Glazer's office, also presented Phillips with a proclamation on behalf of the senator.

Members of the public spoke of their appreciation for Phillips, who did not always agree with the majority on the council but presided over meetings with a sense of calm and efficiency. Much was made of the fact that the sinkhole was repaired with great rapidity, and council members hailed her as hardworking and very professional.

Phillips received gifts from the council members, including flowers, beverages, and a ceremonial gavel and a miniature gavel for daughter, Cary. Phillips was honored with a dessert reception at a break in the meeting, where assorted mini cupcakes and sparkling juice were served. The reception was arranged by City Clerk Sheri Smith.

## 'Holiday Magic'

... continued from page A1



Moana and Queen Elsa, from the Bay Area Cinderella Company, share a holiday moment with Valeria and Brent Tyndall, and their children, Juliana and Serena.

Further inside the Square, lovely Moana and Queen Elsa from the Bay Area Cinderella Company welcomed fans near the tall and beautifully adorned Christmas tree. They chatted with children about their favorite songs from the movies "Moana" and "Frozen," coming down to child level for the sincere exchanges among the lighted packages under the tree.

Elsewhere in Theatre Square,

children were getting their faces painted and families were dining at the busy restaurants or window shopping, perhaps for holiday gifts. The merriment will continue at 7 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 21 with the free movie screening of the holiday classic "The Polar Express" in the 178-seat auditorium. For information about other events, visit [www.orindatheatresquare.com](http://www.orindatheatresquare.com).

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## Fire Districts

### Public Meetings

**Moraga-Orinda Fire District** Board of Directors Wednesday, Dec. 20, 7 p.m. Go to the website for meeting location, times and agendas. Visit [www.mofd.org](http://www.mofd.org)

**ConFire** Board of Directors Tuesday, Jan. 16, 1:30 p.m. Board Chamber room 107, Administration Building, 651 Pine St., Martinez For meeting times and agendas, visit <http://alturl.com/5p9pu>.

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# Another setback with Fire Station 43 construction

By Nick Marnell

Frustration over the lack of progress with the construction of Fire Station 43 in north Orinda took on an added dimension when the Moraga-Orinda Fire District terminated its agreement with Federal Solutions Group, the second contractor the district had hired to do the job.

"It's shocking," said board President Kathleen Famulener. "We thought we had a good company. We thought we had a good company the first time."

As one of the terms of the agreement, FSG was to obtain a

performance bond but it failed to do so, constituting a material breach of the contract. Performance bonds typically guarantee that a contractor will perform all aspects of a project according to the contract. If a contractor fails to uphold its end of the deal, then the performance bond will require a surety to fulfill the terms of the contract.

"We couldn't risk taking a waiver and proceed with the construction without the bond," Famulener said.

Kabir Singh, FSG principal, did not return calls seeking comment.

The original winning bidder for the Station 43 project, Pacific Mountain Contractors, pulled out of the job this summer.

So now it's back to the drawing board, almost literally. The district has hired a company to go over the construction plans and confirm that the plans are still workable. After authorization by the board, the district plans to issue a new request for proposal for the Station 43 construction project, likely in mid-January.

Also coming on board will be a law firm to deal with potential

construction litigation. "It's been a troubled project. It's been a complicated project," said director Brad Barber. "We need counsel with experience in the litigation of public agency construction matters." So the district brought on Renne Sloan Holtzman Sakai LLP to provide those legal services. Geoffrey Spellberg, one of the company lawyers, specializes in construction law and complex business and real estate litigation, according to the firm's website.

# ConFire chief and his deputy share a special bond

By Nick Marnell



Fire Chief Jeff Carman, right, and Deputy Chief Lewis Broschard at the Advisory Fire Commission meeting. Photo Nick Marnell

Fire Chief Jeff Carman waxed eloquent as he recognized Lewis Broschard, his deputy fire chief, for his 10 years with the Contra Costa County Fire Protection District.

"His qualities are too numerous to mention," Carman said. "He has the ability to free-think. He's a well-rounded person, and a great family guy. And that means a lot to me."

Carman told his Advisory Fire Commission Dec. 4 that he and Broschard would often exchange emails late into the night, and when Carman woke up in the morning, there was already a list of email responses from his deputy chief.

"He's a great partner, but that gives too much credit to me," Carman said. "It's nice to be able to take credit for all the things that Lewis has done."

Carman ended the ceremony by presenting Broschard the ultimate compliment. "I hope that he's my replacement when I leave," the chief said of the man who was a finalist for the fire chief position in 2013.

Broschard had been spearheading the Lafayette Fire Station 16 rebuild, but turned over the project to Assistant Chief Aaron McAlister in 2016. McAlister said the district prefers to piece out the station demolition and the construction to two different firms, and due diligence is underway for the district award of the demolition contract, for which the board of directors approved the funding Dec. 5.

Once ConFire awards the contract, Station 16 demolition should take two to three weeks, McAlister said.

# Dispatch supervisor explains proper 911 call etiquette

By Nick Marnell

The Rotary Club motto is succinct: Service above self. At its Nov. 29 luncheon at the Orinda Community Center, the Rotary Club of Orinda honored a group that lives that motto each and every day: the first responders of the Orinda Police Department and the Moraga-Orinda Fire District.

Orinda Chief of Police Mark Nagel deflected praise to the dispatchers of the county sheriff's office and the fire district. "They are the true first responders," said Nagel, who turned the program over to Erinn Riley, supervising dispatcher for the Office of the Sheriff.

Riley ran down the procedures for making a competent 911 call. "Make sure when you call there is an emergency in progress, like a fight, or a suspicious person walking around," Riley said. "Do not call us with a report of an aban-



Orinda Rotarians honor first responders at the Nov. 29 luncheon. Photo Andy Scheck

doned car, or for directions on how to cook a turkey, or how to do your math homework."

The more specific you can be, the better, Riley said. Supply

a landmark, or a cross street. Describe the suspect and the vehicle. Relay information on any weapons. And do not get frustrated with the questions the dispatchers ask.

"Please do not confuse our directness with rudeness," Riley said. "Safety is first. We ask questions very quickly, and we do not have time to listen to long explanations." The dispatch center is a highly intense, multitasking environment, with information being relayed to officers as operators speak to the caller.

Should you accidentally dial 911 on a cell phone or from a land line, Riley cautioned to stay on the line. If you hang up, dispatch will call back to confirm, and if there is no answer, dispatch must send a responder, which unnecessarily ties

up resources.

Ten dispatchers are on duty at any one time, and they work over four radio channels. "Our goal is to answer 90 percent of our calls within 10 seconds," Riley said. Dispatchers can handle calls in 20 foreign languages; those calls are transferred to the appropriate linguist.

At the end of the luncheon, Riley made an announcement that many have felt was long overdue. "Texting to 911 is coming in nine months," she said.

Fire and emergency medical calls from Moraga and Orinda are forwarded from the sheriff's office to the dispatch center of the Contra Costa County Fire Protection District, with whom MOFD subcontracts its dispatch service.

# Rescue One Foundation board of directors seeks applicants to fill vacancy

Submitted by John Kennedy

The Rescue One Foundation has a vacancy on its Board of Directors and seeks applications from interested residents from the Moraga-Orinda Fire District, particularly those from Orinda.

The Rescue One Foundation was formed to receive tax-free donations, fund educational programs for firefighter/paramedics, and purchase lifesaving equipment to enhance the effectiveness of fire district emergency medical services. Since its formation, the foundation has purchased over \$400,000 worth of equipment that would not have been available through the district's regular

budget. The board presently consists of 11 members who meet on the first Monday evening of the month nine months each year. The foundation's primary activities are participation in the fire district open houses in Orinda and Moraga in April and October, respectively, plus the Fourth of July celebrations in Orinda and Moraga each year. For further information about this position, please visit [www.mofd.org/about/rescueone](http://www.mofd.org/about/rescueone).

Letters of interest should be sent no later than Dec. 31 to: Rescue One Foundation, 1280 Moraga Way, Moraga, CA 94556.

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# Letters to the Editor

## Orinda Must Chart its Own Course

The State of California recently passed Senate Bill 35 which expedites housing development approvals in cities like Orinda. It is one that Orinda residents should pay attention to. In short, it's the opening salvo by the state against cities like Orinda that have prime access to regional transit like BART, but have outdated general plans that continue to govern land use policies and prevent new housing from being built.

With so many communities in the Bay Area claiming they are "built out" and unable to fit new housing in, the region now faces a severe housing shortage. The result of this shortage is skyrocketing rents and home prices that may benefit longtime homeowners, but condemn future generations to a lifetime without the possibility of affordable home ownership in communities close to their place of employment.

Some say another negative consequence of restrictive housing policies is the enormous environmental cost of sprawl in outlying areas. SB 35 is one way that state legislators are beginning to address the problem with a potential outcome of reining in cities who are resistant to the addition of new housing stock.

What should Orinda's response to this new law be? Some want us to retreat further into our cocoon, closing off our downtown for any new investment. But that will only increase the state's bulls eye on us, given our convenient freeway and BART access. The longer we try to prevent new development through restrictive zoning, the more likely it will be that the state and outside developers will do it for us, without our input.

Fortunately, there is a better way forward. Orinda should take action and chart its own course for downtown. Residents here are already frustrated with its ongoing decline. We should begin planning for a more convenient, fun and beautiful downtown, where empty nesters, young professionals, and other locals can live and support better retail amenities and public spaces that will benefit everyone in the community.

Our City Council shouldn't retreat from Sacramento's warning shot. It should immediately begin a process for a comprehensive update to the rules governing downtown development with the end goal of creating a Downtown Specific Plan. Earlier in the year, a City Council downtown subcommittee was created to discuss the process of downtown renewal. We urge this subcommittee to get to work and address our call for action. State and local agencies provide grant opportunities for such a process. Our current general plan is outdated, and its restrictive codes provide no incentive for the investment need required to bring in new retail, public spaces and a revitalized downtown creek.

It is time for Orinda's City Council to begin the long overdue process of updating our downtown planning policy right away, before others end up doing it for us.

Tom Trowbridge  
for the OrindaVision  
Steering Committee

Kirsten Larsen  
for the What's Up Downtown  
Steering Committee

### Who's bullying who?

The gun control advocates, Safemoraga.org, are perfectly entitled to voice their opinions. This is a constitutionally protected right. And as such, even if the remaining 98 percent of us believed that they should not be allowed to speak their minds - it still wouldn't matter. This is what having a constitutionally protected right means. They are not subject to the whims of local government or pressure groups. Our Founding Fathers designed it this way for a reason.

However, Safemoraga.org doesn't seem to understand this when it comes to Second and the Fourth Amendment rights. Apparently, only their opinions matter, here. Make no mistake. The "safe storage" ordinance is about telling us what we can (and cannot) do in the privacy of our own homes. If you don't like guns, then pick any other thing you might do in your home. Ask yourself - are you certain that all of your neighbors approve of your life style? If not, should they be able to affect the way you act in your home by passing a town ordinance?

In the half dozen towns that have enacted this ordinance - not a single citation has ever been written. Not one! San Rafael PD has stated they will not enforce their ordinance because it "causes neighborhood tensions." This ordinance can only be enforced by one neighbor calling the police on another. This sort of thing was tried in Germany in the 1930's and it didn't turn out well.

Amazingly, our PTA went on record "unanimously supporting" this ordinance BEFORE the first draft was completed. I was not aware our PTA is clairvoyant. I guess we need waste no more time STAR testing our children because the PTA already knows the scores.

On cue, Safemoraga dismissed a letter by the NRA as "bullying tactics". I've read the letter and have no idea what Safemoraga is talking about. Rather, the letter clearly illustrates how this ordinance would be in direct violation of current State and Federal law. Isn't this something we should be aware of? How is this "bullying"? Perhaps it is time to put aside our ideologies and actually try to understand what the letter is telling us. Better yet - we might try actually reading the ordinance before throwing ourselves blindly behind it.

Call me crazy.

Doug Home  
Moraga

### Support for RVR stop signs

I appreciate that the City of Lafayette has added new stop signs and a cross walk on Reliez Valley Road. I used to walk and ride my bike to Springhill elementary and cars were always driving too fast. I support efforts to reduce the amount of traffic and the speeds on my road.

Mac Follmer  
Lafayette

# Saranap factions come together to plan future

By John T. Miller

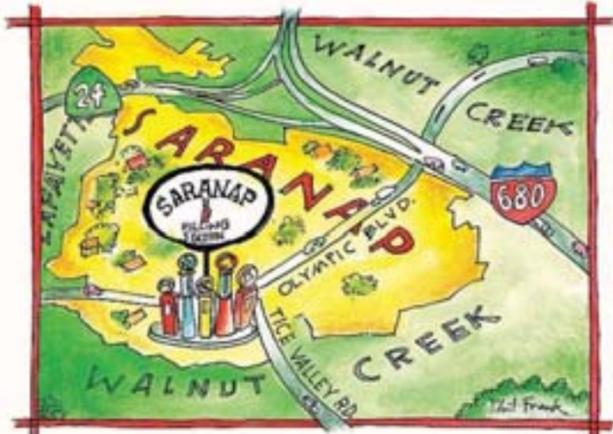


Image provided

In a move that would have been unheard of just a short time ago, members of disparate groups of the Saranap area came together to work toward future development plans that would be satisfying to all.

Supervisor Candace Andersen held a meeting attended by approximately 60 residents to find out what they envisioned as the future of the Saranap Avenue/Boulevard Way area last Monday night at Parkmead Elementary.

More importantly, on the Saturday evening prior to the meeting, individuals representing the Saranap Homeowner's Organization (SHO), the Saranap Community Association (SCA), and Sufism Re-oriented met at the home of Niroop Srivatsa to find common ground after nearly 10 years of contentious planning issues polarized many in the neighborhood.

According to David Dacus, president of SCA, the pre-meeting was the idea of Srivatsa. Although she is head of planning for the city of Lafayette, her main motive for calling the meeting was as a member of the Saranap community to get members of the different groups to come together and find common

ground.

Tim Lynch, president of SHO, said, "After 10 years of not really communicating, it was nice to sit down in the same room and plan for the future as a community."

One of the main points that came from the pre-meeting was an objection to the county's use of the words "Downtown Saranap" as being too directional for the public meeting. In a letter to Andersen, Lynch and Dacus asked that a new title be considered, and their suggestion resulted in a title of "Saranap Avenue/Boulevard Way Planning Process."

According to the county website, "The Saranap Ave/Boulevard Way Planning Process is a community engagement process to create a planning document that reflects the community's vision for the future of this area."

Supervisor Andersen said she was delighted that so many people came to Monday's meeting and were so engaged in talking about the future of Saranap. "For a community that was so divided, it's nice to see them all on one page wanting what's best for the area."

After a presentation from mem-

bers of the County Planning Department about what sort of planning tools, elements, and goals could be considered, along with attempting to describe the geographic scope of the area, the staff took questions, suggestions and comments from the participants.

Each of the five staff members from the County Planning staff and the Department of Conservation and Development then headed a breakout group for additional discussion and questions. A survey was available to rank the types of goals, amenities, elements and land use types that residents would like to see in the future.

According to Andersen, the next step would be to "percolate the survey and get additional feedback and present the findings to the community at the next meeting." She also mentioned reaching out to the current property owners along Boulevard Way to hear what they might like to see in the future and continuing to look into funding sources: "If the community wants a park, what kind do they want and how will it be funded and maintained?"

What the community and the county don't want is five years of fighting over each new project. "We would like the outcome to be a consensus from the neighborhood, a set of rules that we can show to the County staff when they're asked to approve these sorts of things," said Dacus.

Since there are no current applications for anything in the area at the moment, there is no sense of urgency as these meetings continue.

For those members of the community wishing to fill out a survey to let their wishes be known, they can find it at [www.cccounty.us/PlanSaranap](http://www.cccounty.us/PlanSaranap).

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# Diablo Writers' Workshop inspires Lamorinda writers

By Kara Navolio



From left: Andrea Firth and Janine de Boisblanc

Photo provided

Andrea Firth of Moraga and Janine de Boisblanc of Lafayette met in 2013 while working on their MFAs in Creative Non-Fiction from Saint Mary's College. Both authors pursued their degrees in order to hone their craft and tell their stories. Firth has written a collection of personal essays while de Boisblanc is writing a coming-of-age memoir. They both had a passion to help other writers tell their stories as well.

"Lamorinda is a very literary community," explained Firth, "with the great libraries, book stores and other literary programs. But the writing element was missing." Many writers travel to Berkeley and Oakland or other locations west of the tunnel for writing groups or classes. The two women decided to start Diablo Writers' Workshop in March and began teaching classes at Orinda Books and at Firth's writing studio in Moraga.

The classes, which nurture new writers and also help foster the careers of more experienced writers, meet for four to six weeks and focus on writing from life experience for whatever genre works best for each writer, whether memoir, fiction, personal essay or poetry. They employ the workshop method learned in graduate school where students read their work out loud and peers and instructors both give

positive, constructive feedback. "If you do the workshop right," added de Boisblanc, "people feel good and supported even if they may have a list of things to work on."

Student Lauren Matthews of Orinda agreed. "I've gained confidence in my voice, my passion, and my ability to edit and refine my work. Janine has taken the essence of an MFA program (read everything, write often, workshop) and distilled it into a weekly class that is at once challenging and approachable."

Many of the students return for multiple sessions to continue working on their skills in the supportive environment. "I am currently enrolled in a second session of Learn from the Masters," added Lynda Sauer of Orinda. "Andrea is an excellent teacher who provides focused instruction tailored to each individual writer. I have found her class format, which combines discussion and analysis of contemporary writers with opportunities to workshop students' writing, useful and inspiring. She provides a warm, supportive atmosphere in her comfortable writing studio and fosters a sense of community. All of the students in our last class have enrolled in a second or third session and some of us have attended lectures and readings together outside of class." They keep the class size small, about

six to 10 students, to keep the group intimate. "I am inspired by the bond the writers develop with each other," de Boisblanc stated of the small group format. "It's wonderful to witness people coming together, helping each other."

Those looking for inspiration need only ask student Monica Brar of Alamo. "It has been a fantastic experience. She (de Boisblanc) is an excellent teacher, always providing instruction on the craft of writing, a nurturing environment in which to share my work, encouragement and praise regarding what I am doing well, and constructive advice to take my work to the next level. Having the accountability of a weekly class has forced me to carve out the time in my busy day to do something that I enjoy deeply, and I have written some of my best work in this class."

All of their fall classes are full, but new classes will begin in January. Firth and de Boisblanc, who also offer one-on-one consulting and editing services, have plans to expand their offerings in 2018. They hope to add student readings and writing retreats to the mix.

"We are pleased to bring this outlet to the East Bay," said Firth.

To find out about upcoming classes, visit [www.diablowriters.org](http://www.diablowriters.org).

## Reliez Valley congestion

... continued from page A2

Residents do not want metering lights at Withers Avenue/Reliez Valley Road, an idea proposed by city staff, which they say will penalize those Lafayette residents living north of Withers Avenue in the unincorporated area.

"It is shocking the city staff suggested metering lights at the intersection of Withers Avenue and Reliez Valley Road," said Lafayette resident and co-founder of RVRRT Roger Chelemados after the meeting. "They know that will make commutes to school even worse for many of our students at Acalanes, Stanley Middle School and Springhill Elementary, including our school buses. They understand this will divide our city and could lead to negative funding consequences for our schools. They just don't care about our schools or reasonable morning access to them. Shocking."

The problem with restricted turn signs at the above locations, is that they lie in unincorporated

Lafayette and, say city staff who have been meeting with their counterparts in the neighboring jurisdictions, Pleasant Hill and Contra Costa County are not prepared to try such restrictions without a detailed study of impacts to upstream traffic within their jurisdictions.

Additionally the residents spoke again of lengthening the right turn lane at Pleasant Hill Road and Deerhill Road along with the left turn lane onto Stanley Boulevard in front of Acalanes High School, which they claim would significantly keep traffic moving at the "funnel" end of the corridor. City staff once again pointed to studies that it had done last year on the intersection, which they say showed negligible benefits for traffic.

Many of the speakers did not approve of the recently installed trial stop signs, which were brought in to address the separate safety issue of speeding, saying that those signs serve only to further slow

down the crawl of traffic in the morning commute.

The Circulation Commission will hear back from commissioner Di Giorgio in January and at that time hopes to send a prioritized list of the residents' input on traffic calming solutions to the city council although as commissioner Adrian Levy pointed out, they have already heard multiple times what the community wants.

Altbaum says in an email to a school board member that RVRRT will be advocating for maximum momentum. "We'll be protesting and keeping our K-8 kids out of school on Jan. 16, the first of perhaps many sit-out days, to picket along Reliez Valley Road, and at city offices, and at Sen. Glazier's Orinda office," although she notes that if Glazier gets involved to facilitate cooperation between jurisdictions, and foster support for restrictive access ahead of the sit-out school date, they would gladly cancel the protest.

## TK and Kindergarten registration for 2018-19 school year

Registration for Lafayette students entering TK and Kindergarten for the 2018-19 school year will take place Jan. 16 and 17. In addition, an informational presentation, "A Roadmap to Kindergarten" will be held at the Springhill Elementary Multi-Purpose Room from 6 to 7:30 p.m. Jan. 11 for all interested parents in the Lafayette School District. Further information can be found at [www.lafsd.org](http://www.lafsd.org).

### Lafayette Kindergarten/TK registration times: Jan. 16-17

Burton Valley Elementary: 9-11 a.m. and 1-3 p.m., 561 Merriewood Drive, Lafayette, (925) 927-3550

Happy Valley Elementary: 9-11 a.m., 3855 Happy Valley Road, Lafayette (925) 927-3560

Lafayette Elementary 9-11 a.m., 950 Moraga Road, Lafayette (925) 927-3570

Springhill Elementary 9-11 a.m., 3301 Springhill Road, Lafayette (925) 927-3580

The Moraga School District TK and Kindergarten registration is scheduled from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Feb. 1-2 at Camino Pablo, Donald Rheem and Los Perales elementary schools. For information about 2018-19 registration, visit the MSD website at <https://www.moraga.k12.ca.us/childergarten>.

The Orinda Union School District will hold its early TK and Kindergarten registration Feb. 6-9 at Del Rey, Glorietta, Sleepy Hollow and Wagner Ranch elementary schools. Registration for grades TK-8 will begin on the first Monday in March. For information, visit [www.orindaschools.org](http://www.orindaschools.org).

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# Orinda urgent care center back in operation

By Nick Marnell



Dr. Patricio Chavez, second from left, with staff of Sutter Urgent Care in Orinda. Photo Clayton Warren

Sutter Urgent Care in Orinda reopened Dec. 1 after the facility shut down in April because of difficulty with doctor staffing. "It's all settled now," said Dr. Patricio Chavez, medical director of the Sutter Urgent Care Department. "A physician or an advanced practitioner is now available every day."

The center is open from noon until 8 p.m. Monday through Friday, and from 10 a.m. until 2 p.m. on weekends and holidays. "Our goal is to open at 8 a.m. once we have the added capacity," Chavez said. "For now, we felt it would be better to capture patients who need care after regular business hours."

Sutter Urgent Care in Orinda offers a limited level of care, as do most urgent care centers, which market a faster, more convenient and cheaper alternative to the hospital emergency room. The Orinda facility will treat non-life threatening injuries, like flu-related symp-

toms, sprains and abrasions, and offers basic lab work and X-rays. But advanced imaging services, like MRIs or CT scans, are not available. Nor will the Orinda Center treat infants less than 3 months old.

"One of our goals is to reduce trips to the hospital emergency room," said Chavez, who noted that 30 percent of all emergency room patients could be treated successfully in an urgent care center. Should a patient require hospitalization, the Orinda center will arrange for ambulance transport with the Moraga-Orinda Fire District.

Two other urgent care facilities exist in Lamorinda, but Chavez stressed the benefit of Sutter Urgent Care in Orinda. "We're the front door to a large, integrated health care system, with access to primary and specialty care," he said, explaining that satisfied walk-in patients can become long-term patients of the Sutter Health Network

by making a connection with a primary care physician. Medicare and Medi-Cal, as well

as private commercial insurance, are accepted at the center, and no appointment is necessary. Sutter Ur-

gent Care in Orinda is located at 12 Camino Encinas in the Sutter East Bay Medical Foundation building.

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Giving Dreams an Address

## Community Forum on ID theft and fraud

... continued from page A1

What else was in that bag? Losing your driver's license could lead to "you" buying a house somewhere. If your address or keys were in it, you should rekey all of your door locks. Christensen recommends blacking out the address on a copy of your auto registration card. Keep the copy in your car to produce in the eventuality of an accident, and keep the original at home.

Outright possession of a credit card is not needed to perpetrate a fraud. Cheaply acquired card readers are so small that they can be concealed in a hand, and dishonest employees can scan a card in between your table and the legitimate reader at a restaurant you dine in, or behind the counter at any business.

A good thing about credit cards is that consumers are responsible for no more than \$50 of a loss. An ATM card, on the other hand, is a direct open window into your account, and not protected by a liability limit. In spite of this, many people write their pin number on the card itself, in essence saying, "Here you go; clean me out!"

The Lafayette Police Department recently captured a credit card fraud ring. Operating out of a hotel room, the criminals gathered letters from mailboxes at night, and used equipment set up in their room to print credit cards.

Christensen showed security camera footage from around Lafayette, taken in the wee hours of the night, showing thieves emptying mailboxes. This is especially common around Christmas time, not only for identity thieves, but because bonus checks and gifts travel by mail at this time of year.

Bank statements, mortgage invoices, bills, or almost anything with your name and address on it can be tools for thieves to set up false credit card accounts in your name, to buy a car, or even a house. The chief advised emptying your mailbox every day, and having the post office stop your mail if you go away for a few days. Never leave mail in the box overnight.

Checks can be "washed" – dropped in a plastic container with acetone or brake fluid for a few moments. The pen ink dissolves, leaving a nice blank check for thieves to fill in. Lip balm applied over your signature before the bath preserves your John Hancock, and away the thieves trot with your hard-earned dough. "But if you write your checks with a fine Sharpie pen," said Christensen, "that ink sinks into the paper and cannot be removed."

A way to prevent theft of your paper trail is by going paperless. Use online payment methods and ask for email statements, instead of having your important information sitting in a vulnerable mailbox. Shred everything before you put it out for recycling. Make sure to use a cross-cut shredder; long-cut shreds are easily reassembled with tape.

Christensen said that phone scams are very common. The rule of thumb is, if someone calls you – no matter how official or professional they sound, even if they say they are from a bank, charity, bill collector, utility, insurance, or medical organization that you feel that you recognize – never give them any personal information whatsoever. Try to get their tele-

phone number: this may be a valuable clue for the police. Be polite, hang up, and then call the listed telephone number for that organization. Tell them that someone has called in their name, and then call the police. Do not call any number provided by a caller or an email, and never answer texts claiming your account is compromised. Never, ever click on a link in any email, even if it looks just like official bank correspondence. If you are unsure, contact the bank directly through the telephone number on your card, or through its official website.

If you suspect that your information has been compromised (getting bills for things you did not buy, medical treatment you didn't have, or seeing purchases you did not make on a statement), make sure to file complaints with the police department and the Federal Trade Commission, inform the Social Security Administration, place a fraud alert on your account and contact your creditors. The chief said informing the police is a critical step in proving your innocence, recovering anything and putting the bad-dies away.

It's also a good idea to do one free yearly credit report with each of the big reporting agencies, and you may want to consider placing a credit freeze on your accounts.

Christensen noted, "Our Lafayette Police Department is so successful because of the help we get from you, our community – the equipment you buy us, the tips and information you give us. It's a partnership with you. We have an 83 percent solve rate for burglaries here; the national average is 12 percent."

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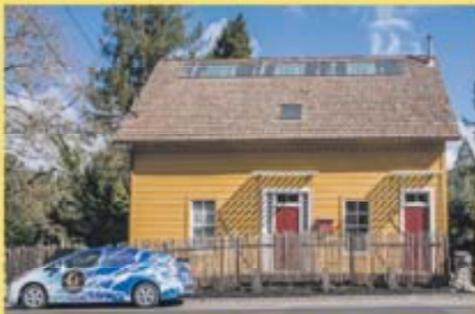
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## A town on the brink

Amy Cunningham, former Moraga administrative services director, said that the town cut \$83,000 in expenses out of the current budget, but despite that cut, total operating expenses still increased over the prior year by \$300,000. Cunningham blamed a \$240,000 unfunded pension liability payment for a large portion of the rising expenses and said that further cost reductions in the operating budget would result in a direct impact to service delivery in the community.

But how does the town know that cutting expenses would even be of concern to the community, especially when faced with a potential tax increase to pay for much needed infrastructure repairs? No survey has been commissioned asking that question. "It is my opinion ... that the town is minimally staffed and served very well by the outstanding employees we have," Priebe said. "Any discussion to reduce spending on a broad scale would have to be approved by council."

The town 2017 community survey offers hints that a spend-

ing cut would not be summarily rejected by the residents. Just under 26 percent of those surveyed said that Moraga practiced poor financial planning or had mismanaged its funds; 12.5 percent said that the town had too many employees, whose salaries and pensions were too high; and 11 percent said that Moraga was mismanaged by its council or government. A plurality of residents sampled in the survey said that Moraga was going in the wrong direction.

"Given the fact that the survey was taken while the bridge was out and the sinkhole repairs were not completed, I'm not surprised by the percent of residents who thought Moraga was heading in the wrong direction," Mayor Teresa Onoda said. "It's my hope that now that progress has been made on both fronts, future surveys will reflect greater satisfaction with the state of Moraga."

Moraga faces the departures of Priebe, three department heads and other high-level employees. "I have not filled (the vacancies) to provide the next town manager

... continued from page A1

and council options if they think a change is necessary," Priebe said. "All of these permanent positions will be vacant and open for possible reorganization."

But Onoda said she did not think that a reorganization was realistic. She said she doubts anyone thinks changes should be made to the police department, and said that most of the staff are wearing multiple hats trying to accomplish all the tasks of towns larger than Moraga. "Could 're-organization' really create that much more efficiency? I don't think so," Onoda said.

Town officials complain that Moraga is stuck with a revenue problem because of its low property tax rate and lack of sales tax revenue, yet for the past five years, town expenses continue to rise at a higher rate than its revenue. With the changes coming to town leadership, Moraga has the opportunity to rethink its financial strategies and business model and reverse course from the wrong direction the public says it is headed.

## New parking lot

"We would like to see more transparent and open dialogue with the city and EBMUD on this lot, since it is adjacent to our businesses and if change orders are implemented," said an EEC spokesperson. "We hope the construction will provide adequate signage so as not to adversely impact the businesses adjacent to the lot, as it did for

Blodgett's, also on the East End."

The council discussed ways to keep cost down, looking at gravel versus asphalt but recognized that the ongoing cost of maintenance of gravel combined with the difficulty in striping ruled that out. City Manager Steve Falk advised against cutting costs on landscaping and irrigation, saying that the city has

... continued from page A3

certain requirements in place and noting that it would be bad practice to ignore the city's own standards.

EBMUD plans for the new pumping station to be operational in March 2018. Following that a couple of months later EBMUD will demolish the old building and start the parking lot which should be ready by August 2018.

# ~ Life in LAMORINDA ~

## Local Salvation Army volunteers ring in the season collecting kettle donations

By Cathy Dausman



Coronet players Danny Grant, left, and Doug Madsen play for the Salvation Army kettle at Kmart. Photo Cathy Dausman

Jingling bells are part of the holiday season, especially when it comes to the Salvation Army. Six days weekly, eight hours daily, late November through Christmas Eve bell ringers work a bit of kettle magic, soliciting donations for the less fortunate.

This tradition dates back to 1891 in San Francisco, when Salvation Army Capt. Joseph McFee decided to provide free Christmas dinners for the poor. He rigged a crab pot on a tripod and stood at the Oakland ferry landing to collect donations.

Locally, kettle stations are staffed by a mix of volunteers from service organizations, church groups and even seasonal employees working for minimum wage. "We can't find enough (volunteer) help," explained Ralph Brigman, Salvation Army red kettle coordinator for central Contra Costa County. Brigman has been ringing bells for 50 years, starting in Michigan. He says money from East Bay kettles stays within the county to provide food for 400 households monthly, underwrite music lessons, provide summer camp tuition, addiction recovery counseling and other Salvation Army services. A few Lamorinda volunteers recently shared their bell ringing stories. Like Brigman, many are in it for the long haul.

Doug Madsen has worked at red kettle sites since he was a student at Miramonte High School. But Madsen doesn't ring a bell — he plays coronet with music partner Danny Grant (also on coronet) at Concord's Kmart. Madsen was born into a Salvation Army family, grew up in Orinda and has caroled throughout the Bay Area. While some people don't like the bells, Madsen says they do like the music.

Since retiring, Madsen can devote more hours to Salvation Army work. On weekends he performs in his church music ensemble. "It's kind of cathartic," said Madsen, who had a career in law enforcement. "I used to 'protect and serve'," he said. "Now I just serve." He's not worried about playing a brass instrument outside in the cold, either, especially after comparing his lot with those who staff Salvation Army kettles in the upper Midwest, Canada and England.

Since Joe Haughin's parents

were Salvation Army ministers, he says he was originally introduced under protest to bell ringing as a young boy. But 74 years later Haughin continues this work. Now when kettles are collected he counts the money, a process he says takes seven to 10 people two to three hours every other day. Haughin and his group are responsible for the contents of up to 35 kettles. "I could spend all evening telling stories (about emptying the kettles)," Haughin said.

Cheryl Collins is in her second year as a bell ringer but has admired kettle workers since childhood. A church bulletin notice attracted her attention last year. "I thought it would be a cool way to help people," she said. This year ringers are needed in Alameda, so that's where she'll be. Collins says she dances to keep warm, but don't ask her to sing: "I have a terrible voice," she said.

She remembers a teenage boy last year who walked by several times before finally making a donation. "He told me he thought he could go without a snack to help someone else," Collins said. The teen then pestered his friend until he too donated, and both boys left smiling. Collins also sees passers-by paying it forward for the help Salvation Army once gave them.

What else falls into those red kettles? Haughin sometimes sees foreign coins. "I realize we're a worldwide organization and the donors are well meaning, but no banks will take these coins," he said.

Brigman says he has seen South African Krugerrands and a diamond ring in a kettle (the rings sometimes dropping unintentionally) and Las Vegas kettles will get casino chips. Occasionally gold teeth or counterfeit money also goes into a pot.

Salvation Army kettles are now being staffed at Lamorinda Safeway stores, as well as nearby Raley's, Nob Hill and Lunardi's Markets. Bell ringers wear Salvation Army aprons; seasonal workers also wear photo IDs.

Brigman says there's still time to

volunteer as a kettle ringer this year. Go to <https://volunteer.usawest.org/OpportunityDetail.aspx?ID=2970> or call (925) 676-6180, extension 14 for more information.

"Hopefully we're helping people," Haughin said.

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# Golden Gate Audubon Society celebrates 100th anniversary near Orinda

By Sophie Braccini

Going on a hike in the East Bay hills with the Audubon Society is a treat on multiple levels: enjoying the sheer beauty of the trails traveled; observing surrounding birds and nature at a mindful pace; and learning from experts about the remarkable richness of the local avifauna. This year is also extra-special as the Golden Gate chapter of the Audubon Society, one of the West's most respected and impact-



Golden Gate Audubon Society members discover the McCosker Loop Trail.

Photo Sophie Braccini

ful nonprofits that embraces large parts of the East Bay including Orinda and Moraga, celebrates 100 years of study and preservation.

One of the important events that ran during this commemorative year in the East Bay was the hike of the new two-mile McCosker Loop Trail located in the East Bay Regional Park District's Sibley Volcanic Regional Preserve near Canyon. The trail is located in the 1,300 preserved acres of the Gateway – now Wilder – property. This trail has a very long and significant history behind it, for the Society and for local nature lovers.

The access point of the trail is the Wilcox Staging Area located on Pinehurst Road. The relatively short loop, with some somewhat steep climbs, takes walkers to beautiful viewpoints of this side of the East Bay. The Oct. 29 walk led by the Audubon Society was of specific significance. The trail is part of strategically-located acres that were added to East Bay protected wildlands through negotiation with a succession of Wilder developers over a 20-year period, with Golden Gate Audubon playing a large part in the successful outcome.

At the beginning of the October walk several Audubon members

recalled how things happened. William Hudson, Orinda resident and very active birder, recalled that the extensive grading and drainage that were needed to support roads and construction of the first proposed project in the '80s would have destroyed existing creeks, wetlands and seeps, and numerous old growth trees, a variety of habitats home to species including endangered California red-legged frogs and Alameda whip snakes, as well as majestic golden eagles.

The opposition to the development of the Gateway project was led by a well-organized and persistent group of Orinda residents called Save Open Space – Gateway Valley, several of them also members of GGAS. In 2002, Farallon Capital Management acquired the development rights to the Gateway area. Farallon approached GGAS's executive director, Arthur Feinstein, and asked him to bring SOS into discussions toward a compromise. The efforts were successful and the responsibility for the 1,300 protected acres was subsequently assumed by the East Bay Municipal Utility District, the East Bay Regional Park District, and a small Geologic Hazard Abatement District funded by Wilder homeowners.

During the GGAS walk in October the participants realized the extent of the land that was saved and the richness of its habitat. Each equipped with binoculars the birders observed finches, robins, phoebes, bluebirds and chickadees, and some red-tailed hawks. The acres that are now protected complete a vast north-south wildlife corridor that goes from Wildcat Canyon to Lake Chabot. The trail takes walkers from charming woodsy areas to hillcrests with views of vast wild territories.

The Golden Gate Audubon Society has over 7,000 members and is the ninth biggest Audubon chapter in the U.S. It covers San Francisco, Oakland, Berkeley, Alameda, Albany, El Cerrito, Richmond, Orinda, Moraga, Piedmont, San Pablo, El Sobrante, Kensington and Treasure Island.

The Chapter offers a multitude of classes, trips and restoration activities to its members, including being part of the worldwide Christmas bird count. A traveling exhibit celebrating its 100th anniversary and its achievements is now on display at Lindsay Wildlife Experience in Walnut Creek, through Jan. 2. More information about the club can be found online at [goldengate-audubon.org](http://goldengate-audubon.org).

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## Local Middle School Arts Contest touts fifth year

Submitted by Charlie Keohane



The LYAS team, from left: Isabel Rurka, Charlie Keohane, Kristi Conner, and Isaac Douglas

Photo provided

For the fifth year in a row, middle schoolers who live or attend school in Lafayette can enter

the Lafayette Youth Arts Society Writing and Photography Contest. Students can submit their photographs and short stories to win cash prizes and gifts. The contest opened Nov. 13 and runs through Jan. 31.

Writers can pick from five different prompts to get their creative juices flowing. Some prompts include "A mysterious package arrives at your door," or "You wake up in the morning to find your dreams came true. But it's not like you expected." There are also five prompts in photography, ranging from "Celebration" to "Behind the Scenes" to "Spooky."

Students can enter up to one writing piece and two photographs. Entries must be submitted by Jan. 31 either digitally or to the P.O. Box listed on the website, [www.lyas.org](http://www.lyas.org).

Participants can win up to \$100, and there will be additional prizes for the runners-up. Also, participants can win fabulous books and, of course, the fame and glory that

goes with winning.

The LYAS contest is completely run by teens who are passionate about providing opportunities for kids to be recognized for their creative works. It was founded in 2012 by Uma Unni and Linnæ Johansson when they recognized a need for a contest in Lafayette. The dedicated group of student organizers meet regularly to ensure that the contest runs smoothly.

"LYAS is what knocked over the first domino for me and my writing, which is why I think it's important to have something like LYAS in every community, to catalyze in young kids a love for writing and photography," said John Kalil, winner of the Third Annual LYAS Contest.

LYAS is a nonprofit only made possible with generous donations from the community, including the Chamber of Commerce, the Lafayette Rotary Club, and other local Lafayette businesses.

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# Lafayette's Kathy Wharton – happiest when hiking

By Diane Claytor



Kathy Wharton hiking up to Forcella Roa in the Dolomites in Italy during this year's Munich to Venice Trek. Photo provided

What's your idea of a perfect vacation? Lying on a white sandy beach? Sipping cappuccino at a quaint outdoor Parisian cafe? Relaxing at a spa? Or maybe it's a family trip to Disneyland, watching the pure joy on your children's faces. While all of these may sound wonderful to Lafayette native Kathy Wharton, nothing quite so sedate is on her vacation schedule. In fact, she's planning her next trip: the Irish Coast to Coast Walk, a 21-25 day, 350-mile trek across Ireland.

To say Wharton is a hiker is like saying the Beatles were a rock group. True, she's been hiking since she was young, spending most of her summers hiking and biking in the Sierra Nevada Mountains. She regularly walks the Lafayette Reservoir and hikes Mt. Diablo as well as other Bay Area trails. And in 2008, she decided to take it up a notch by hiking Yosemite's Half Dome. That walk was so successful and such fun, Wharton reminisced, that she started looking for more adventurous – and lengthy – hikes.

The following year, Wharton found the hike she was looking for – and began an adventure that has taken her on miles and miles of incredible trails where she has seen truly amazing vistas and lovely quaint villages, made new friends from all over and “learned so much about the world around us,” she proclaimed.

That first big 17-day, 205-mile hike in 2009 was the Coast to Coast Walk across England, once named the second best walk in the world by a survey of hikers. Having been to England before and “absolutely loving the English countryside,” Wharton believed this would be the perfect journey. “It would get me out in the countryside and seeing things I'd always wanted to see.” She went with a friend who, unfortunately, after four days, “blew her knee out and had to quit.” That didn't stop Wharton. She continued on, admitting that “it was pretty

lonely heading out that first day.” But she met people along the trail and soon joined other American hikers to finish out the journey.

She was hooked. In 2010, Wharton and three friends did the same Coast to Coast Walk, only in reverse (walking west to east across England). The next year, the same core group of women did the Tour du Mont Blanc, one of the most popular and classic long-distance walks in Europe. This was a mere 12 days and 110 miles with 6.2 miles of ascent/descent and passes through parts of Switzerland, Italy and France.

Wharton and her friends then ventured on the 95-mile Dachstein Round Trip Trek in Austria. This was followed by a trip closer to home – a 150-mile hike through Canada's Waterton Park and Montana's Glacier Park. “It's an incredibly beautiful hike,” Wharton said, “and looks very much like the Alps.” Next came the Offa's Dyke Trail, a 200-mile footpath, walking the entire length of Wales along the Wales-England border. After this came the longest walk to date: the Via Alpina, 252 miles across Switzerland – from Lichenstein to Geneva – considered to be one of the most spectacular hiking trails in Europe. It was “both physically challenging and awe inspiring,” Wharton reported.

In 2017, Wharton and her hiking pals walked Der Traumpfad, commonly known as the Munich to Venice trek. According to cicerone-extra.com, this is an “epic trans-alpine adventure ... combining challenging terrain, spectacular scenery and culture ... it's a journey across cultures as well as mountains.”

Wharton is a detailed planner and begins researching each trip months in advance. She goes on websites, buys books, looks at maps, and reads suggestions made by other hikers. “I comb everything I can find,” she said. And yet, she admits, before each trip she questions herself. “Have I trained

enough: Is this trek too ambitious? Is my backpack too heavy?”

These are not camping trips; Wharton and her hiking partners stay in B&Bs and inns when they can; other times accommodations are in refuges positioned along the trails. While these refuges may not be luxurious, they provide a bed as well as meals which, Wharton stated, are surprisingly good. “And this way, we don't have to carry camping equipment or food,” she noted. “As it is, our packs weigh about 20 pounds with water; if we were carrying gear and food, they could be closer to 35 pounds.”

Wharton trains by loading her pack several months in advance and walking every day, increasing her mileage daily. “Walking with a pack is vastly different than walking with a phone, listening to music,” she explained. She's definitely learned how to pack over the years. “The absolute key is to keep the pack light. I may get sick of wearing the same things over and over, but I thank myself as I climb ... that I decided not to be the trail fashion plate ... there may be things you think you need, but when you start carrying it around on your back, you realize, yeah, I can live without that.”

Now a grandmother of nine, Wharton has no plans to stop. She already has a list of other long distance hikes she hopes to take. As she states on her blog, hiketreks, “Hiking is my escape from the real world ... all the worries of everyday life melt away when I'm surrounded by the beauty of nature.”

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## Feline fundraiser helps homeless kitties

Submitted by Billie Cummings



This little kitten was discovered to have curled up feet by its foster parent. She took it to Community Concern for Cats' clinic where its back feet were splinted. Now, after time has passed, it is back to normal and able to walk.

Photo provided

Lamorinda residents concerned about homeless cats and cat overpopulation have a chance this month to support the rescue work of their neighbors.

For 31 years in Lafayette, Moraga and Orinda Community Concern for Cats, an all-volunteer cat rescue organization, has been caring for abandoned, injured and sick felines that people find on their property or on their street. CC4C also helps to find homes through its adoption site at Pet Food Express in Lafayette.

The Giving Tree is CC4C's end-of-the-year fundraiser, which runs through Dec. 24. Donations support CC4C's new veterinary clinic where they do neuter/spay and other

surgical procedures, including emergency ones, vaccinations, microchipping, leukemia/FIV tests, and well-kitty checks.

"Our new clinic is allowing us to help many more cats and realize some cost savings," says Candace Olsen, area supervisor.

CC4C president Gemma Osendorf hopes people will come in to Rescued Treasures, the organization's thrift shop in the San Miguel Shopping Center, and select a special kitty ornament, which will hang on their window tree. The shop is located at 1270 Newell Ave., Walnut Creek. Hours are Monday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sundays, from noon to 4 p.m. For information, call (925) 937-3201.

## Cycle Recycle Success

Submitted by Bobbie and Tom Preston



The 2018 Cycle Recycle had a banner year, collecting almost 300 bikes, many in ride-ready condition. Over 40 ride-ready bikes went straight to Napa and Sonoma fire survivors, and another 70 to Trips for Kids in time for their Christmas Party Give Away in the Canal District of San Rafael, home to many refugees and immigrants. The Oakland School District got 45 bikes for their after-school Earn-A-Bike program. The remaining almost 150 went to the sheriff's department job training program at Marsh Creek Detention Center, which repairs the bikes while teaching inmates a marketable skill, to be given away to local charities during the 2018 pre-holiday period.

Photo provided

## Moraga Girl Scouts repair park benches for Silver Award

Submitted by Bobbie Hartman



From left: Haley Hartman, Kimberly Nelson, Moraga Parks and Recreation, and Emma Bennett.

Photo provided

Girl Scout Troop 30228 members Haley Hartman and Emma Bennett earned their Silver Award this fall for repairing several picnic benches at Rancho Laguna Park. The girls, both freshmen at Campolindo High School, worked for more than 50 hours sanding, repairing, and refinishing the wooden structures. They organized bake sales to raise the money for the supplies needed to complete the work. The Silver Award is the

second-highest award that can be earned in Girl Scouting. Haley and Emma have been involved in scouting for 10 years and will continue as scouts in high school.

"This is a great contribution to the community because the benches at Rancho Laguna are used almost every weekend," said Kimberly Nelson, Recreation and Facilities Coordinator, Moraga Parks and Recreation.

Community Service: We are pleased to make space available whenever possible for some of Lamorinda's dedicated community service organizations to submit news and information about their activities. Submissions may be sent to [storydesk@lamorindaweekly.com](mailto:storydesk@lamorindaweekly.com) with the subject header In Service to the Community.

## Share Your Celebrations and Remembrances

If you would like to share an announcement about a special event or achievement, such as a wedding, engagement, scholarship or graduation of a local resident, or about a special person from Lamorinda who has passed, send a photo along with your text (up to 250 words) to [storydesk@lamorindaweekly.com](mailto:storydesk@lamorindaweekly.com), and include "Celebrations and Remembrances" in the subject line.

## Sizeable donation from local business supports LPIE

Submitted by Angie Zener

The Lafayette Partners in Education, a not-for-profit education based foundation supporting the six Lafayette public schools, last week received \$25,000 by Leila Douglass of Luxe Home by Douglass Designs – the largest donation ever from a single business entity since LPIE's establishment in 1980.

"Our philosophy at Douglass Designs has always been that while we establish a world-class interior design and remodeling company to one of the most beautiful communities in the Bay Area, we must also do our part to ensure the quality of the schools and our environment," said Douglass, who was also named the East Bay Leadership Council's Outstanding Corporate Philanthropist in 2013.

The donation could not have come at a more ideal time. LPIE has a big task ahead. This year alone, LPIE must raise \$3.2 million dollars to maintain current educational instruction. With a \$1.8 million fiscal shortfall going into this academic year for K-8 schools, the Lafayette School District was forced to eliminate critical programs. Unfortunately, the funding for schools remains inconsistent and inadequate, and further reductions could be necessary in both the

Lafayette School District and for Acalanes High School. To this end LPIE continues its efforts to gather business and community support through donations.

The past four years LPIE has hosted an annual "power party" gala auction event – the biggest and highest grossing fundraiser in its calendar year. This year, LPIE will be hosting the "LPIE Derby" auction in May at Wilder Fields in Orinda. Attendees will stroll through silent and live auctions tents, sip mint juleps, and enjoy southern fare. Over 450 attendees are expected to come enjoy the live bluegrass band, derby games and the special acoustic performance of Nashville recording artist Jake Ousley.

"Given sorely inadequate and inconsistent funding from both the state and federal government, community support for our schools is absolutely critical and deeply appreciated," said LAFSD Superintendent Rachel Zinn. "We sincerely thank Luxe Home by Douglass Designs for their generous contribution to the Lafayette Partners in Education. It shows that our community and businesses together truly care about building a strong foundation for today's generation and those to come."

## Children's Health Guild Holiday Boutique raises much-needed funds

Submitted by Libby Dafferner



Boutique shoppers Danielle Lederman and Molly Castaldi.

Photo provided

The Children's Health Guild hosted its annual holiday boutique and luncheon Dec. 1 at The Ritz-Carlton Hotel in San Francisco. Over 380 guests attended the event, themed "The Spirit of Sharing," which raised \$200,000, with all proceeds dedicated to UCSF Benioff Children's Hospital Oakland and George Mark Children's House. Together these organizations provide the full spectrum of medical care for children, including: emergency care, on-going treatment, transitional and respite care, and

palliative care that help children and their families live life to the fullest during a child's final days, regardless of the family's ability to pay.

The Children's Health Guild, a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization, is dedicated to improving the quality of and access to pediatric medical care in the East Bay. Comprised of approximately 50 talented and passionate Lamorinda women, CHG's members focus on raising funds for these two organizations each year.

## Angel Tree program helps foster kids celebrate the holidays

Submitted by Cynthia Coito



Photo provided

Over 20 years ago, local realtor Dick Holt challenged his Orinda office to participate in an ongoing program that supports Contra Costa County foster children. Specifically, to provide gifts and new clothes to those county foster children that otherwise would receive little or nothing at this time of gift-giving and good cheer.

Coldwell Banker Orinda has continued to participate in this program each year. This year, Coldwell Banker's support of the Angel Tree program will help over 70 local foster children have a brighter holiday.

Pictured is the annual collection of gifts about to be loaded onto Santa's sleigh in front of the Coldwell Banker Orinda office and then delivered to the County Children and Family Welfare staff for ultimate delivery to the children. These gifts were provided by "Angels" (Coldwell Banker Orinda

agents, office staff, and numerous clients that have chosen to get involved).

The foster children who receive these gifts are personally chosen by the county staff based upon their need and situation. Their "wish lists" are then forwarded to "Angel" organizations such as Coldwell Banker Orinda, as well as local churches and other generous organizations, that have volunteered to take on the commitment to fill them.

When asked about the Angel Tree program and how it relates to his office, Manager, Jeff Gillett responded, "I am proud and impressed that our busy agents and staff still choose to take time and effort to think about those less fortunate, and to help a very needy cause at this time of year." Anyone interested in participating or learning more about the Angel Tree program should contact Dick Holt at (925) 297-9150.

# Bethlehem event retells a timeless story

By Cathy Dausman



Kazy the camel greets visitors to The Bethlehem Experience accompanied by his owners Rob and Robyn Lyon Photo provided

Every two years or so, the Lafayette United Methodist Church transforms its Fellowship Hall, creating the illusion of a nighttime passage through the

streets of Bethlehem over 2,000 years ago. The church's Bethlehem Experience brings to life the Christmas story; 2017 marks the 20th anniversary of its presentation

at LUMC.

Over the course of three days, guides lead groups of about 10-12 people on 50-minute tours through the marketplace of Bethlehem, cap-

ing the spirit of what life would have been like on the night of the Messiah's birth. Performers dressed in robes and sandals sell their wares in market stalls, while festive Jewish music plays and unleavened bread is sold. There are even live animals in the stable, such as Kazy the camel – the church's first and much-beloved therapy animal from Sonoma's Lyon Ranch.

The program was initiated in 1997 by then-program coordinator Bev Luther, says LUMC parishioner Teresa Gerringer. Participants sing carols, hear live music and play a biblical trivia game. They may also dress as shepherds, although the latter is not required. In addition to being family-friendly, this is a family tradition for many LUMC members. "Fran and Vic Smith and Barbara and Rod Levander are still very active in the production of The Bethlehem Experience and are original set builders, greeters and actors," Gerringer says. She added the Logan,

Placzek, Kintner and Shepard/Seitz families as those who have contributed to the production.

Gerringer says "the live animals in the manger scene are always a huge hit with kids and adults."

Some years the youngest actor is an infant portraying baby Jesus. Even inclement weather doesn't deter visitors – Gerringer recalls that LUMC hosted the most attendees ever in 2006 "when it poured rain for the three nights."

The 20th annual Bethlehem Experience runs Dec. 15-17 at Lafayette United Methodist Church, 955 Moraga Road, Lafayette. Tours are first-come, first-served; doors open at 5:30 p.m. The last tour departs at 8:30 p.m. Suggested donation is \$5 per person or \$20 per family.

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Moraga Valley Presbyterian Church offered its similar no-cost program Dec. 2 when MVPC's Live Nativity transformed the church courtyard into a Bethlehem manger featuring live animals.

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# Orinda Junior Women's Club Announces Youth Ink 2018

Submitted by Chantal Valentine

The Orinda Junior Women's Club recently announced details for Youth Ink 2018, the annual creative writing contest open to all sixth-, seventh- and eighth-grade students who live in or attend school in Orinda. The Youth Ink 2018 prompt is "My World." This prompt was chosen because it encompasses almost limitless potential for subject matter, thereby encouraging young writers to personalize their pieces.

Entrants are encouraged to

write about anything they like: real or imaginary. There is no limit to the imagination, and entrants do not have to adhere to the prompt. It is suggested that whatever entrants write about, they should have fun.

"We eagerly await the results of how Orinda's talented young writers approach this year's prompt, although they can write about anything they choose," said Katie Walsh, president of Orinda Juniors.

Co-sponsors of Youth Ink 2018, including The Orinda Community

Foundation, Friends of the Orinda Library, and the Lamorinda Arts Council, make it possible to provide prizes of \$250 for first place, \$125 for second place, \$75 for third place, and gift certificates for 10 honorable mentions.

A panel of several local professional writers, including reporters and best-selling novelists, will evaluate Youth Ink 2018 submissions and choose winners. The judges' names will be shared when the winners are announced at an

awards ceremony in April at the Orinda Public Library,

Youth Ink 2018 submissions will be accepted on an ongoing basis once the competition opens, but must be emailed or postmarked by Wednesday, Feb. 14 in order to be considered for an award. Full entry details will be on the Youth Ink 2018 submission forms, available through the administrative offices and/or English departments at Orinda Intermediate School and other Orinda schools, the Orinda

Public Library, and online at [www.orindajuniors.org](http://www.orindajuniors.org).

Orinda Juniors, a local non-profit service organization, supports a variety of organizations in the greater East Bay. Every year, its community service projects help the Orinda Senior Village, STAND! Against Domestic Violence, the Oakland Children's Hospital Family House, Bay Area Crisis Nursery, and others. For more information, visit [info@orindajuniors.org](mailto:info@orindajuniors.org).

## Bûche de Noël a holiday hit

By Susie Iventosch



Bûche de Noël

Photo Sora O'Doherty

One of our Lamorinda Weekly reporters and I love to exchange recipes. Sora O'Doherty is always sending delicious ideas my way, and a couple of months ago she sent me photos of her holiday sugar cookies, mincemeat tarts and Buche de Noel, along with a treasure trove of holiday recipes! I immediately knew that I'd have to try her Buche de Noel (yule log) chocolate cake. It's been one of my favorite holiday desserts ever

since my first French class in junior high school.

"I don't really have one recipe for the Buche de Noel," Sora said. "I start with the Chocolate Cloud Roll by Rose Levy Beranbaum and then fill it with her Chestnut Mousse, or stabilized whipped cream and raspberry jam, then frost it with a chocolate buttercream and decorate it with meringue mushrooms and marzipan holly leaves. A dusting of icing

sugar snow gives it the perfect finishing touch."

I thought my meringue mushrooms looked real, but Sora says that by blowing on the cocoa powder right after dusting the meringue, the mushrooms obtain an even more fantastically real look. I'll definitely give that a try next time.

Sora's recipe for the mushrooms came from the famous cookbook "Cocolat: Extraordinary

Chocolate Desserts" by Alice Medrich. One time, when Sora was living in Ireland, she brought a basket of the meringue mushrooms to a party given by her friend Frank Duggan.

"His lovely wife, Geraldine, passed them around, but nobody took one," Sora recounted. "She then made a second pass, telling each guest that these were actually cookies. Once the truth was known, the meringues disappeared like snowflakes falling on a campfire."

I, too, loved the meringue mushrooms and they could easily be the featured dessert, if not for the amazing cake. Every year So-

ra's family asks for this Christmas dessert and she obliges them. No wonder. It is absolutely divine!

Since I am not a chestnut fan, I made the cake with a chocolate mousse filling and it was a big hit with my family. You can make this cake with whatever kind of filling your family enjoys from raspberry whipped cream to chestnut mousse, and the result will be perfect for your holiday dessert. If you use a whipped cream filling, consider adding a whipped cream stabilizer so that the whipped cream will hold up longer and won't weep.

Wishing you all a wonderful holiday season!

Susie can be reached at [suziventosch@gmail.com](mailto:suziventosch@gmail.com). This recipe can be found on our website: [www.lamorindaweekly.com](http://www.lamorindaweekly.com). If you would like to share your favorite recipe with Susie please contact her by email or call our office at (925) 377-0977.



## Cooking Term of the Week

### Stabilized Whipped Cream

When using whipped cream in desserts it is a good idea to add a stabilizer if you want the cream to hold up for any length of time. Normally, whipped cream begins to wilt or weep after several hours, but with the addition of a stabilizer, it will hold up for days. I used a powdered stabilizer that I purchased at a cake decorating supply store for a wedding cake I made a couple of years ago, but you can also use bloomed plain gelatin to stabilize the whipped cream. Here is a link that illustrates how to do that: <https://ourbestbites.com/2015/11/how-to-make-stabilized-whipped-cream/>.

## Chocolate Cloud Roll

(Original recipe by Rose Levy Beranbaum)

### INGREDIENTS

- 6 large eggs, separated
- 1/4 cup granulated sugar plus 2 Tbsp. granulated sugar
- 4 oz. semisweet chocolate
- 3/4 tsp. cream of tartar
- 1 Tbsp. unsweetened cocoa powder

### DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 350 F.

Line a jelly roll pan (approximately 12 x 17) with parchment, leaving a 1-inch overhang on longer sides. Butter the pan first, then butter and flour the parchment.

In a mixing bowl, combine egg yolks and 1/4 cup granulated sugar, beat until light yellow in color and fluffy (about 5 minutes). Add the melted chocolate and beat until incorporated.

In a separate mixing bowl, beat the egg whites until foamy, then add the cream of tartar. Beat until soft peaks form and then add 2 Tbsp. granulated sugar, continue beating until stiff peaks form. Fold 1/4 egg whites into chocolate mixture until combined, then fold chocolate mixture into remaining egg whites, being careful not to deflate, until well combined. Pour batter into prepared pan, spreading evenly to all corners and sides. Bake 16 minutes.

Remove cake from oven, run a sharp knife around edges to free cake from pan. Sprinkle the top of the cake with 1 Tbsp. cocoa powder and immediately cover cake with a slightly damp clean dish towel and allow cake to cool.

Remove dish towel from cake, and using the parchment overhang on one of the long sides of the pan, gently slide cake from pan onto a flat surface.

Spread filling over cake and roll up from a narrow end using the parchment paper to guide the cake along. Cover tightly with foil and refrigerate until ready to frost and decorate. (Frosting recipe below.)

When ready to frost, cut a "branch" or two from the end of the cake and place on the sides, attaching with frosting to keep in place.

Frost cake leaving the ends of the branches exposed if you like. Using a fork, make bark-like marks on the frosting to look like a log.

Decorate with marzipan holly and berries and meringue mushrooms, or use real holiday greens to decorate the cake plate.

Serve slices of cake with a spoonful of chocolate sauce drizzled over the top.

## Chocolate Mousse Filling

(See below for Chestnut Mousse Cream)

### INGREDIENTS

- 2 egg whites
- 1/8 tsp. cream of tartar
- 1/2 cup granulated sugar
- 1 cup heavy cream, whipped
- 3 ounces bittersweet chocolate melted and cooled
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract

### DIRECTIONS

In a large bowl, beat egg whites with cream of tartar until soft peaks form. Slowly add sugar and continue to beat until very thick and stiff peaks form. Slowly and carefully, fold in melted chocolate and vanilla.

In a separate bowl, beat heavy cream until stiff peaks form. (Use a whipped cream stabilizer at this point.) Gently fold whipped cream into egg white mixture. Spread over cake and roll into log.

## Chocolate Buttercream Frosting

### INGREDIENTS

- 1 1/2 cups butter, at room temperature (I used just one cup, half salted and half unsalted)
- 3 3/4 cups + 2 Tbsp. powdered sugar (I used just 3 cups of powdered sugar)
- 1/2 cup + 2 Tbsp. cocoa powder
- 3 - 4 Tbsp. heavy cream
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract

### DIRECTIONS

Whip butter in a large bowl (either in an electric stand mixer or with a hand-held beater) on moderately high speed until very pale (almost white in color) and fluffy, about 6 to 8 minutes, scraping down sides of bowl occasionally. Sift in cocoa powder and beat until well combined. Next, sift in powdered sugar, 3 Tbsp. heavy cream and vanilla and mix on low speed until combined. Add additional powdered sugar or cream, to arrive at desired consistency.

Spread frosting over chocolate roll, leaving one of the branches exposed if desired.

## Meringue Mushrooms

(Recipe by Alice Medrich)

### INGREDIENTS

- 4 large egg whites
- 1/4 tsp. cream of tartar
- 1 cup sugar (preferably superfine)
- 2 tsp. unsweetened cocoa
- 2 ounces bittersweet or semi-sweet chocolate, cut into small pieces

### Equipment:

Cookie sheet lined with parchment paper

Pastry bag fitted with plain 1/2-inch tip, or you can use a baggie and cut off a corner for the pastry bag.

### DIRECTIONS

Combine egg whites with cream of tartar in bowl of an electric mixer. Beat on medium speed until soft peaks form. Gradually sprinkle in sugar, beating at high speed until mixture is very stiff and dull looking.

Scrape meringue mixture into pastry bag. Pipe round, button shapes to make mushroom "caps." Pipe pointed "kiss" shapes about one inch tall to make "stems." Dust with cocoa. (This is where you want to gently blow on the cocoa powder to get a more natural look to the mushrooms.) Bake 2 hours in 200 F oven until crisp and completely dry.

Assemble the mushrooms: Place chocolate in a small bowl. Set bowl in a skillet of barely simmering water. Immediately turn off heat and stir chocolate until melted and smooth. Spread a little melted chocolate on the flat side of each meringue mushroom "cap." Use a sharp knife to cut off and discard the pointed ends of meringue "stems." Attach stems to caps while chocolate is still soft.

Set assembled mushrooms aside until the chocolate has dried and caps and stems are "glued" together. Meringue mushrooms may be made 3 to 4 weeks in advance and stored in an airtight container.

## Bittersweet Chocolate Sauce

### INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup of bittersweet chocolate chips
- 1/4-1/3 cup water
- 2 Tbsp. agave syrup
- 2 tsp. vanilla extract

### DIRECTIONS

Place chocolate chips in a small sauce pot. Add water, agave and vanilla. Heat over medium heat until all is melted. Bring to a boil and stir until well-incorporated. Remove from heat.

## Chestnut Mousse Cream

(Recipe by Rose Levy Beranbaum, from Cake Bible)

### INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup unsweetened chestnut puree
- 2/3 cup powdered sugar
- 2 Tbsp. dark rum
- 2 cups heavy cream

### DIRECTIONS

Refrigerate the mixing bowl and beater for at least 15 minutes.

In a food processor fitted with the metal blade, process the puree, sugar and rum until smooth.

In the chilled bowl, beat the cream until beater marks just start to appear. Add the chestnut mixture and beat until stiff peaks form when the beater is raised. Makes 5 cups

Lynn's Top Five

# The Importance of financial planning for women

By Lynn Ballou, CFP®

I recently had lunch with a good friend who is working with her daughters to instill in them the importance of retaining some financial autonomy even as they forge new relationships and build families. Her daughters are grown, college graduates, and by all appearances, successful. But it's amazing how much control they and many women are willing to give up for the sake of a shared future with someone else. Let's review five important financial matters that all women should never abdicate to others.

**1) Know where your liquid assets are and have access to them.** In addition to having access to all jointly owned bank and investment accounts, I believe it's very important for every woman to have her own money and complete and sole access to it. It can be something as simple as a separate savings account, checking account

and yes, even a credit card. Define the amount that makes you comfortable (maybe six month's living expenses) and make it happen. You can set up access rights for your partner if you become unable to care for yourself or pass away, via an intelligently crafted estate plan.

**2) Track your family spending and live within (or below) your means.** Use credit very carefully. Many women who first start working with us are unaware of the amount of money it takes to support their and their family's lifestyle. Busy world, busy lives means dividing and conquering all the work, including the fiscal management of the family. Make time! Know what you have, what you earn, what you spend, and what you need to be comfortable and stay fiscally safe. Don't just let someone "take care of you." Sounds romantic initially, but it rarely is long-term.

**3) Have goals, make plans,**

**review regularly.** At the risk of sounding like a shampoo bottle, it really is all about lather rinse repeat! Making plans, and then not staying on top of how things are going and adjusting goals and objectives as life unfolds, is foolhardy. A good financial outcome sometimes can happen accidentally, but most often requires care and nurturing and much thought. Be the voice of calm and "future think" in your relationship. Have at least an equal voice in your family's financial decision making.

**4) Understand investments, and risk, and like your portfolio.** You don't need to be a money management pro, you just need to find folks who are and who are willing to design portfolios that match you, your goals and your risk tolerance. Ask questions and invest your money with those who give you straight answers, create ongoing educational opportunities for

you and meet with you regularly to review your accounts.

**5) Seek financial knowledge and/or outside professional help, even if you are an expert.** Read! Form discussion groups or book clubs; share ideas with friends and don't be afraid to talk money. In my experience it's a topic that makes women uncomfortable in groups, which is ridiculous. Men talk about money all the time! That's why they control so much of it! So in conclusion:

**Women ask directions:** Don't be embarrassed to "not know" as long as you are willing to ask and then listen and learn.

**Women change their minds:** Women are continually "recalibrating" as new information becomes available. We get laughed at for that but instead we should be embraced!

**Women are constantly saying they are sorry:** Being a fiscally

smart woman is nothing to apologize for: welcome it and share your knowledge and interests. Working together we can create a fiscally responsible future for all.



Lynn Ballou is a CERTIFIED FINANCIAL PLANNER™ professional and Regional Director with EP Wealth Advisors, a Registered Investment Advisory Firm in Lafayette. Information used in the writing of this column is believed to be factual and up-to-date, but we do not guarantee its accuracy and it should not be regarded as a complete analysis of the subject(s) discussed. All expressions of opinion reflect the judgment of the author as of the date of publication and are subject to change. Content is not intended to be interpreted as tax or legal advice. Always consult a tax and/or legal professional regarding your specific circumstances.

# California Cannabis for pets? Not yet . . .

By Mona Miller, DVM

With the approaching date of Jan. 1, when recreational marijuana becomes legal in California, there is intensified discussion among pet owners and veterinarians about the possibilities of using marijuana in animals. Much of the information I impart below may incur some response among readers, which further illustrates the dynamic nature of this conversation.

The topic of veterinary medical use of marijuana is complicated, in part due to federal and state regulatory agencies and in part due to the complexity of the plant itself. Marijuana, also known as cannabis, has two important components to it: THC (tetrahydrocannabinol), which causes psychoactive effects, and CBD (Cannabidiol), which potentially has a multitude of medicinal effects. CBD has no psychotropic effect, and is comprised of over 100 different chemical compounds. Technically, all parts of cannabis contain THC, although different amounts are found in different parts of the plant.

THC is designated by the Federal Drug Enforcement Administration Department of Justice as a controlled substance in Schedule 1 (which also includes heroin, mes-

caline, LSD and Ecstasy, for example). Schedule 1 controlled drugs have a high potential for abuse, lack acceptable safety criteria and do not meet criteria for accepted medical use in the United States. Veterinarians do not have Schedule 1 clearance.

Further information about the DEA's position statements about marijuana and industrial hemp can be found at <https://www.dea.gov/divisions/hq/2016/hq081116.shtml>. This position statement includes a paragraph that states: "DEA fully supports expanding research into the potential medical utility of marijuana and its chemical constituents."

From a medical perspective, it is quite possible that cannabidiol chemicals can be used to alleviate a variety of conditions, including severe pain from cancer or arthritis, appetite stimulation, anti-cancer effects, anti-inflammatory effects, seizure activity and anxiety. It appears that the ratios of THC to CBD may be very important in the specific medical action.

How safe is marijuana? Marijuana toxicity has long been a component of veterinary practice, when dogs or other animals have ingested THC-laden foods. More toxic-

ity has been seen in recent years, since the legalization of medical marijuana in California as well as recreational marijuana in nearby states. The vast majority of dogs who suffer from THC toxicity appear as expected – stoned, lethargic, depressed, not eating, wobbly and off-balance. Some can become urine incontinent. Approximately 25 percent can become hyperactive and agitated. More severe signs include disorientation, low body temperature, low heart rate, and tremors. Signs can be seen 30 minutes after ingestion, and can last up to 72 hours. During this time, dogs may require intensive care support, such as intravenous fluids and in-hospital monitoring. While death is extremely rare, there have been two reported cases. Furthermore, there can be associated toxicities of chocolate, butter or dough if the pet has ingested THC contained in any of these ingredients. More information on marijuana toxicity can be found at <http://www.veterinarypartner.com/Content.plx?P=A&S=0&C=0&A=1382>.

survey is titled "Pet Owner Hemp and Cannabis Survey." More information and the link to the survey can be found at <http://www.vet-med.ucdavis.edu/whatsnew/article>.

One of the most important things to understand about this discussion is that at this time, there is no question – it is illegal for veterinarians in California to incorporate cannabis into practice, as overseen by the Veterinary Medical Board. This means that vets cannot legally recommend, approve, administer, dispense or prescribe cannabinoid products. A veterinarian who engages in these activities is not only breaking federal law (unauthorized use of their DEA license) but also state law.

In order to further understand and allow discussion about the possible benefits of using cannabis in pets, UC Davis School of Veterinary Medicine is conducting an anonymous survey for pet owners. This is a valid survey, with goals of identifying the types of species receiving cannabis products, owners' perceptions of benefits and to potentiate scientific research. The

survey is titled "Pet Owner Hemp and Cannabis Survey." More information and the link to the survey can be found at <http://www.vet-med.ucdavis.edu/whatsnew/article>.



Dr. Mona Miller lives in Lafayette with her son, two cats and yellow Labrador. She attended UC Berkeley as an undergraduate, and received her DVM from UC Davis. She has been happy to call Lafayette home since 2001. She can be reached via email at [MonaSDVM@aol.com](mailto:MonaSDVM@aol.com). She welcomes questions from readers that may get incorporated into a column.

# Acalanes High School students participate in 2017 Santa Cruz Forestry Challenge

Submitted by Diane Dealey Neil



Students from Acalanes High School recommend a sustainable harvest volume for a redwood forest near Boulder Creek, California. From left, front: Eliana Mann, Nell Kessenich, Siena Marchiano, Jada Paniagua(Advisor), Alexandra Gold and Abby Lapporte; back: Jeremy Hathaway, Richard Kravitz (Advisor), Amanda Shepherd, Ashley McCluskey and Alexis Carlson. Photo provided

Nine students from Acalanes High School participated recently in the 2017 Santa Cruz Forestry Challenge, one group of a total of 107 high school students from 14 schools from the Santa Cruz and Central California region. The event was held Nov. 15-18 at Redwood Christian Park, near Boulder Creek, California.

One of the highlights for the students this year was the opportunity to visit a redwood forest that

will soon be harvested using single tree selection. Students collected data on how much the trees have grown since the last selective harvest 12 years ago, and used the data to recommend the volume that can be sustainably removed in the upcoming harvest. During the Challenge, teams of students also completed field training, followed by a field test to assess their technical forestry knowledge.

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## Not to be missed

### ART

**Valley Art Gallery 52nd "Artful Giving" Holiday Exhibition.** From objects found to impressions visualized, artists have been busy creating this show of more than 300 works of art for sale or for rent. The show will run through Dec. 23. 1661 Botelho Drive, Suite 110, Walnut Creek. [www.valleyartgallery.org](http://www.valleyartgallery.org)

**Small Things Holiday Pop-Up Gift Shop at Jennifer Perlmutter Gallery** through Dec. 23. Imagine stepping into a local gallery and finding the perfect gift. Then discovering that your purchase supports local artists! It's all possible at "Small Things" – The Holiday Pop-Up Gift Shop. Discerning shoppers will find an array of unique handcrafted items from original art to jewelry, porcelain, wood sculptures and even mixed media shadow boxes. [jenniferperlmuttergallery.com](http://jenniferperlmuttergallery.com)

**The California College of the Arts Fall 2017 BFA Thesis Show** will feature Illustrator Jaya Griggs who is a 2013 graduate of Campolindo High School. The show will be held at the McClintock Building, 100 Carolina, San Francisco and is open to the public from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. through Dec. 14 and an Artist's Reception will be held from 6:30 to 9 p.m. on Thursday, Dec. 14.

**Moraga Gallery Holiday Boutique.** The current show at the Moraga Art Gallery, featuring the K. De Groot's Asia-accented jewelry, continues through Jan. 6. In addition, member and guest artists are displaying a bounty of one-of-a-kind gifts: jewelry, paintings, scarves, ceramics, photographs, woodware, tree ornaments, greeting cards, and more. The gallery, 522 Center Street in Moraga's Rheem Shopping Center, is open daily from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. until Christmas. For more information, go to [www.moragaartgallery.com](http://www.moragaartgallery.com), call (925)

376-5407 or email [moragaartgallery@gmail.com](mailto:moragaartgallery@gmail.com).

### MUSIC

**WomenSing presents "Beginning With A Bang: Strike the Drum and Join the Chorus!"** from 8 to 10 p.m. on Wednesday, Dec. 13 at the Church of Santa Maria, 40 Santa Maria Way, Orinda. WomenSing adds percussion to the holiday season in a joyous concert of traditional and unexpected repertoire, led by Artistic Director Ofer dal Lal. Cost: \$28 general admission; \$10 student. For more info, visit <https://womensing.org/CurrentSeason>, call (925) 798-4875 or email [info@womensing.org](mailto:info@womensing.org).

**Hip Hop For Change is presenting two free concerts** this month: Legionnaire at 9:30 p.m. on Thursday, Dec. 14 at located at 2272 Telegraph in Oakland and 6-9 p.m. Friday Dec. 15 at Spats located at 1974 Shattuck Ave. Berkeley. For more information go to [hiphopforchange.org](http://hiphopforchange.org).

**Join local band "JetBlacq" for its annual holiday show "Jingles with JetBlacq"** featuring husband and wife Rebecca and Frank Faiola singing all of your favorite holiday songs at 7 p.m. Friday, Dec. 15 at the New Rheem Theatre. Cost: \$15. Tickets are available online at [www.lamorindatheatres.com](http://www.lamorindatheatres.com). Check out JetBlacq at [www.reverbnation.com/jetblacq](http://www.reverbnation.com/jetblacq).

### THEATER

**CAPA presents The Nutcracker - Snow falls** onstage and the Christmas tree magically grows in the California Academy of Performing Arts presentation of a full-length, narrated Nutcracker. A beloved Lamorinda tradition for over 20 years, this energy-filled spectacle reflects the studio's dedication to young dancers with more than 100 local performers and extra characters and surprises. Performances Dec. 15-17 at 5:30 and 8 p.m. on Friday, 2 and 7 p.m. on Saturday, and 1 and 5 p.m. on Sunday at the Campolindo Performing Arts

Center. For tickets, go to [www.cashows.eventbrite.com](http://www.cashows.eventbrite.com).

### KIDS, PARENTS & TEENS

**Just for Teens: Holiday Crafts at 4 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 14** in the Orinda Library Garden Room. Make holiday gift bags, boxes and tags with artist Valerie Adinolfi. All materials provided. For grades 6-12. No registration required.

**Jewish Gateways presents Hanukkah Celebration** for Families with Young Children from 10:30 a.m. to noon on Sunday, Dec. 17, at the Jewish Community Center East Bay, 1414 Walnut Street, Berkeley. Celebrate this festival of lights with Hanukkah songs, stories, a hands-on project, and treats. Led by Rabbi Bridget and Isaac Zones. Cost: \$30 per family, plus \$5 per sibling over 5. For more info see <https://www.jewishgateways.org/hands-on-holidays>, call (510) 410-0622 or email [rabbibridget@jewishgateways.org](mailto:rabbibridget@jewishgateways.org).

### OTHER

**Jane Goodall in Walnut Creek - The documentary "Jane"** is this month's selection for Mountain Shadow. It contains never-before-seen footage of Jane Goodall and her chimps and is backed by a beautiful score by Phillip Glass – two geniuses in one film. The film will be shown at 7:30 p.m. on Saturday, Dec. 16 at the Walnut Creek Library, 1644 North Broadway St. Cost: \$12 general admission. More information about the film as well as Mountain Shadow Film Society, is available at <http://mountainshadow.org>.

**The Bethlehem Experience: The Lafayette United Methodist Church** presents an interactive performance that takes you back through time from 5:30 to 8 p.m. Dec. 15-17. One-hour-long tours begin every 15 minutes. Tour Guides will lead groups of about 12 people through the marketplace of Bethlehem on the night of the Messiah's birth. The Bethlehem Experience is a feast for the senses: the smell of exotic spices, the festive sound of music, the sight of robed and sandaled merchants in their stalls, the taste of freshly baked unleavened bread, live animals in the stable and the soft feel of flaxen "swaddling clothes." Freewill donation: \$5/person or \$20/family. For information, call (925) 284-4765.

**St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, Orinda, invites** all East Bay worshipers to attend their Christmas services and events including a special Festival of Lessons and Carols at 5 p.m. on Sunday, Dec. 17 in the church. The service will be followed by a festive reception in the Parish Hall.

**Lamorinda Grand Menorah Lighting. Amazing Hanukkah Celebration.** Share with Family and friends and come celebrate Hanukkah together at 5:45 p.m. Tuesday, Dec. 12 at Lafayette Plaza Park. Corner of Mt. Diablo and Moraga Road. For Adults and Children Alike. Free. [www.Chabadoflamorinda.com/Menorah](http://www.Chabadoflamorinda.com/Menorah)

**Community Hanukkah Celebration! Dinner Buffet** with a Menorah Lighting, Acrobat Show, Games Music, Latkes, Doughnuts, Special Kids Entertainment at 4:30 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 17 at the Orinda Community Center, 28 Orinda Way, Orinda, CA 94563. [www.Chabadoflamorinda.com/Party](http://www.Chabadoflamorinda.com/Party)

**Hanukkah Oil Press. Join dozens of children** from across Lamorinda for a Live Olive press presentation together with arts and crafts and learning about Hanukkah. Accompanied by traditional Holiday foods: Latke, Sufgoniot, Chocolate Gelt! For adults and children at 4 p.m. Wednesday, Dec. 13 at 790 Solana Drive, Wednesday. [www.Chabadoflamorinda.com/Oil](http://www.Chabadoflamorinda.com/Oil)

... continued on next page

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### St Stephen's Episcopal Church

66 St. Stephen's Drive, Orinda

254-3770. [www.ststephensorinda.org](http://www.ststephensorinda.org)

**Christmas at St. Stephen's Episcopal Church**

Sunday, December 24

4th Advent: 8am

Christmas Pageant & Family Service: 11am

Christmas Eve: 8pm (music at 7:30)

Christmas Eve: 11pm (music at 10:30)

Monday, December 25

Christmas Day: 10am

Sunday, December 31

Feast of the Holy Name: 8am & 10am

Fruitcake Sunday (bring left overs)

**Festival of Lessons and Carols**

**(aka Stories and Songs) December 17 @ 5pm**

Lessons and Carols is a time-honored event that has been celebrated at King's College in Cambridge for 99 years.

Churches around the globe gather for this special way of remembering the great story of Christmas through stories and songs from our tradition. On Sunday, Dec 17 at 5pm, St Stephen's will join ourselves to that tradition in our own special way, re-imagining Lessons and Carols as "Songs and Stories," and inviting people of all ages to come and participate, read, listen, pray, and sing our way into Christmas together. The service will be followed by a festive reception in the Parish Hall.

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**Advent / Christmas Season:**

December 17 – Pancake breakfast in the Peace Room following the 9am Mass. St. Nicholas will make an appearance. All are welcome!

**Christmas Eve / Christmas Day Mass Times:**

December 23 – 5pm

December 24 – 7:30, 9 & 11am / 4,6 and 8pm  
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Film Clips

# Favorite films for the end of December

By Derek Zemrak

**M**  
**O**  
**V**  
**I**  
**E**  
  
**R**  
**E**  
**V**  
**I**  
**E**  
  
**W**



Images provided

The weather outside is getting chilly and there is the scent of holidays in the air. It is also a great time to go to the movies in Lamorinda. This is the busiest time of the year for the theatres. There are so many choices heading to the Rheem and Orinda theatres – from Oscar contenders to family films. The following films are a few of my picks for the last half of December.

On Dec. 14, the most anticipated film of the year will be having its premiere screening at the Orinda Theatre at 7 p.m. Yes, “Star Wars: The Last Jedi.” Having taken her first steps into the Jedi world, Rey (Daisy Ridley) joins Luke Skywalker (Mark Hamill) on an adventure with Leia (Carrie Fisher), Finn (John Boyega) and Poe (Oscar Isaac) that will unlock the mysteries as well as the secrets of the past.

You can expect long lines for the opening weekend of “Star Wars: The Last Jedi.” The film is rated PG-13 with a total running time of 2 hours and 20 minutes. Yes, it is the longest running Star Wars movie in its franchise history.

“Ferdinand,” the new animated film based on the beloved 1936 children’s book, hits theaters nationwide on Friday, Dec. 15. After Ferdinand (John Cena), a bull with a big heart, is mistaken for a dangerous beast, he is captured and torn from his home. Determined to return to his family, he rallies a misfit team on the ultimate adventure.

Adapting a film from a book is never an easy task. The screenplay is very well-written, and the humor is timely. I think it is the funniest children’s animated film of the year. Please do not let “Ferdinand” get overshadowed by “Star Wars;” take the time to see both films. “Ferdinand” is rated PG with a total running time of 1

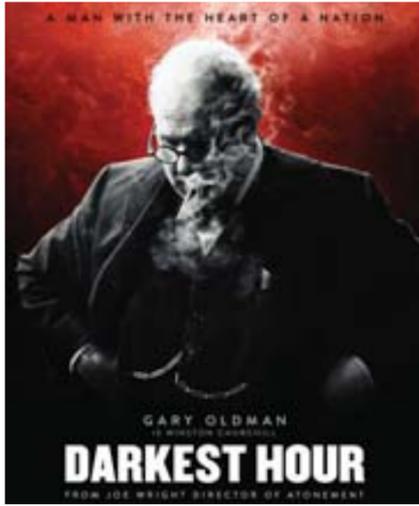
hour and 46 minutes.

Looking for Oscar buzz in your movie watching experience? I recommend “Darkest Hour,” which will be at the Orinda Theatre beginning Dec. 22. During the early days of World War II, the fate of Western Europe hung on the newly-appointed British Prime Minister Winston Churchill (Gary Oldman), who must decide whether to negotiate with Hitler or fight against incredible odds.

Oldman (“Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy”) is overdue for an Oscar and I am making an early prediction that he wins Best Actor for his role of Winston Churchill in “Darkest Hour.” His performance is amazing, and he is truly transformed into Churchill. Do not miss acting at its best.

“Darkest Hour” is rated PG-13 with a total running time of 2 hours and 5 minutes.

See you at the concession stand!



## Local artist exhibits



Jaya Griggs

Photo Wendy Scheck

The California College of the Arts Fall 2017 BFA Thesis Show will feature Moraga Illustrator Jaya Griggs, 2013 graduate of Campolindo High School. The show will be held at the McClintock Building, 100 Carolina, San Francisco and is open to the public from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. through Dec. 14 and an Artist’s Reception will be held from 6:30 to 9 p.m. on Thursday, Dec. 14.

Griggs uses an ink and watercolor technique in many of her illustrations and captures human emotions in the various animal characters she creates. Some of her work has been on display at the Rheem Valley Pet Store in Moraga for the last several years where she has worked while attending CCA. For more information about the artist see [www.jayagriggs.com](http://www.jayagriggs.com). —W. Scheck

## Service Clubs Announcements

<p>Meets Friday mornings at 7:00 am at The Lafayette Park Hotel &amp; Spa, Mt. Diablo Blvd, Lafayette. Check us out at <a href="http://www.lamorindasunrise.com">www.lamorindasunrise.com</a> or email us at <a href="mailto:lamorindasunrise@gmail.com">lamorindasunrise@gmail.com</a></p>	
<p><b>December 15</b></p> <p>Allan Martinson runs business and operations of Starship Technologies, a technology company revolutionizing last-mile delivery of goods.</p>	<p><b>December 22</b></p> <p>Photojournalist Paul Goldsmith shares how he happened to be in the “right” place at the right time!</p>
<p><b>Happy Holiday Wishes To All</b></p>	

## Community builds the all-access playground in Moraga

By Sophie Braccini



Carlene McCart, right, the interim parks and recreation director talks with volunteers. Photo Sophie Braccini

Carlene McCart looked with an appreciative eye at the 50 or so volunteers working hard on Dec. 9 to build the new Moraga all-access playground. The interim parks and recreation manager for Moraga comes from San Rafael where a similar installation was under her supervision. She said that she was struck by the number of volunteers present, something quite unique from her perspective; she also noted how comprehensive and spacious the park was, a luxury very few have in the Bay Area.

For Kevin Reneau, the Moraga Rotarian who advocated for this project for his club and Steve Woehleke, the new club president, this was a day of hard work and immense pride. They worked side-by-side with Kiwanians, Saklan students, Boy Scouts from Troop 246, and residents with no particular affiliation that were there to be part of the project, such as Moraga Town Council Member Jeanette Fritzky.

John Bawden, local representative of the playground equipment manufacturer Ross Recreation, explained that organizing this day

had required some preparation and needed constant management. But he said that the 50 volunteers would achieve in one day what a small team of professional builders would take a week to assemble. On the ground, stations were prepared, with parts laid out and plans to follow. Bawden noted that most people in fact needed little supervision and were doing a great job.

Public Works/Parks Maintenance Manager Kyle Salvin was also there. He commented that the town’s contractor still had work to do, sanding the concrete retaining walls and finishing the paths that would lead from the parking lot to the park. Reneau explained that the rubberized surface will be installed next week and that the inauguration should be scheduled sometime at the beginning of the year. The Rotary Club of Moraga will install a plaque in the park. The club raised over \$300,000 for the creation of this park, which is a gift to the town in celebration of the club’s 50th anniversary.

Salvin expects the inauguration to be held on Jan. 7.

## Not to be missed

Others ... continued

visit [www.DaughtersoftheGoddess.com](http://www.DaughtersoftheGoddess.com).

### SENIORS

**Daughters of the Goddess, a Bay Area women-only** Goddess Temple, will be holding its yearly Winter Solstice Ritual beginning at 7:30 p.m. on Wednesday, Dec. 20. East Bay address given upon RSVP. This is our annual Peace ritual to help bring peace, love and joy into the World. At this sacred time of year come and join women and girls as we dance and sing in celebration of the returning of the light. Newcomers discount is \$15. Email [Leilani@DaughtersoftheGoddess.com](mailto:Leilani@DaughtersoftheGoddess.com) or

**Senior Scam Workshop at 1 p.m. on Wednesday, Dec. 13** in the Orinda Library Garden Room. Learn about the scams that target seniors the most. Get tips on how to avoid these tactics, which red flags to be aware of, and what resources to use to lower your chances of becoming a victim. Presented by the Better Business Bureau.

## Lamorinda Weekly

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## In Memory

### Frank Broad

July 26, 1919 – December 8, 2017



At age 98, Frank passed away peacefully. He lived a very full life: husband to Dorothy for 71 years, father to seven children, grandfather and great-grandfather, and officer in WWII. He and Dorothy lived in Moraga for 32 years. After retiring in 2001, they moved to Carmel Valley Manor where they have lived for 16 years.

A celebration of Frank’s life for family and friends will be held at 2:00 pm, Saturday, January 27, 2018, at the Meeting House, Carmel Valley Manor, 8545 Carmel Valley Road, Carmel, CA 93923. In lieu of flowers, due to allergies, donations can be made to the Carmel Valley Manor Endowment Fund.

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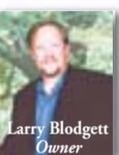
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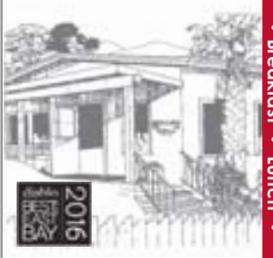
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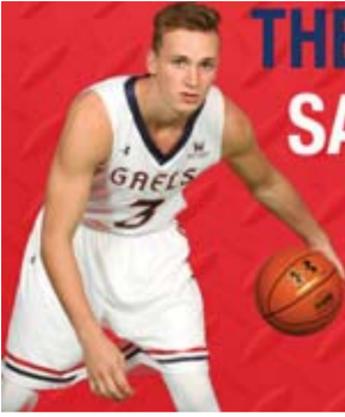
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# LAMORINDA SPORTS

## Campolindo falls to Milpitas in state regional game

By Jon Kingdon



John Torchio

Photos Gint Federas



Parker Windatt

In a back and forth game that at times resembled a heavyweight fight with each team taking their best shots, Campolindo fell to Milpitas by a score of 52-38. Though Campolindo stood in against the much bigger Milpitas team, it was more like a heavyweight fighting against a middleweight.

Campolindo head coach Kevin Macy was very critical of a match-up between a school with 1,200 students facing a school with 3,000 students: "Where are the checks and balances. It's a dirty political thing. We're a small-town school and asking us to go up against a Division I school is too much."

Still and all, Campolindo made more than a representative showing in a game that remained in doubt well into the fourth quarter.

Once again, the Cougars were led by quarterback John Torchio who was 25 for 42 for 352 yards and four touchdowns. Torchio also ran 11 times for 111 yards, which included a 59-yard touchdown.

Macy accepted that his team could not play a power game versus Milpitas and had the Cougars pass on the team's first nine plays. With the lead changing hands nine times in the first half, Milpitas led at half-time 30-28.

For the first time, Campolindo lost the field position game. The

Cougars began the second half at their own 6 yard line due to a fumbled kickoff. Torchio went on to complete a 44-yard pass to Parker Windatt to get the team out of the hole. Windatt had a career game, catching 15 passes for 225 yards and three touchdowns. Seppi Ortman was just wide left on a 30-yard field goal that would have given the lead back to Campolindo.

After another Milpitas score, Max Schoenberger slipped on the kickoff return and Campolindo began this drive at their own 4 yard line. Again Campolindo marched down the field, converting a fourth down play and eventually scored on a 36-yard Ortman field goal.

The Campolindo defense had no answer for Milpitas running back Tariq Bracy who ran for 310 yards, scoring four times on 36 carries. Milpitas would end up with 625 yards in total offense. Campolindo amassed a total of 588 yards, punting only once the entire game.

With 10 minutes to go in the fourth quarter, trailing 44-38, Campolindo defensive back, Ian Concepcion came up with an interception at the Cougars 39 yard line. Driving into Milpitas territory with a chance to take the lead, running back Shun Ishida fumbled at the Milpitas 30 yard

line, which was then returned to the Campolindo 34 yard line. Bracy went on to score on a 19-yard run closing out the scoring. Still, Ishida had a solid game otherwise, rushing for 89 yards on nine carries while scoring a touchdown on a 22-yard reception.

At the end, Macy did not hold back in praising his team: "We did all we could do tonight. We should be proud. We never backed off or stopped fighting."



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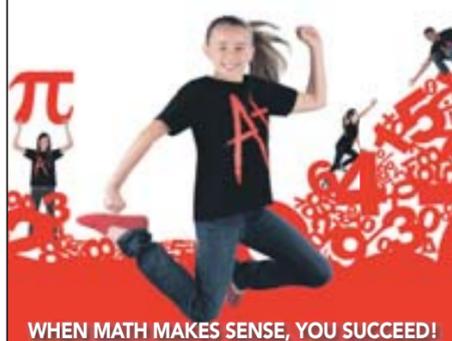
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## Campolindo wins NCS Championship, 42-7

By Jon Kingdon



Justin Ehrenberger

Photos Gint Federas

It was déjà vu all over again, Groundhog Day and the more things change, the more they stay the same. To all these famous repetitions, we can now add Campolindo's performances in the playoffs. After three dominant wins in their prior playoff games, the No. 1 seeded Campolindo expected a much more competitive game from the second seeded Granada High School. Prior to the game, Granada Head Coach Mike Silva expected a much closer game: "We're very

similar teams," he said. Both teams entered the game with identical 9 and 4 records. The similarity ended there.

Granada did win the coin toss to determine who would receive the opening kickoff but their successes after that were few and far between. Dominating from the start, the Cougars won the NCS Championship scoring over 40 points for the fourth consecutive time, defeating Granada 42-7.

Campolindo head coach Kevin Macy



Vincent Mossotti

relied on his offense to set the tone for the game: "We counted on our passing game. We were able to figure out from their alignments when they would be playing either man or zone defense. We wanted to get up early to take away their running game and force them to throw."

Throwing almost exclusively to Vince Mossotti on the first drive, quarterback John Torchio marched Campolindo down the field for their first score, a 17-yard pass to Mossotti. Torchio would go on to throw four more touchdown passes, one more to Mossotti (20 yards), two to Parker Windatt (16 and 27 yards) and one to Justin Ehrenberger (27 yards). For good measure, Torchio scored as well on a 1-yard run. Torchio's final stats were 20 for 29 for 280 passing yards, and eight runs for 52 yards. Windatt finished with four receptions for 70 yards; Mossotti with nine receptions for 139 yards and two end around runs for 29 yards. Macy was effusive about Mossotti's performance: "He's one of those kids who can elevate himself. He has that high end where he can just keep blossoming."

Campolindo's offense kept the Granada defense off balance gaining a total of 501 yards (286 yards passing and 215 yards rushing) while holding Granada to a total 237 yards.

Defensive coordinator Billy Leavy attributed their success to the fact that "our defense was able to adjust to their alignments. It was the best game for our defense combined with our offense."

There was only one breakdown by the Campolindo defense, allowing a 50-yard touchdown run by Granada's Tommy Reaves to bring the score to 21-7.

Macy pointed to the Acalanes game for the improvement in the team's defense: "We changed some things after the loss to Acalanes. We played with more speed tonight."

With five turnovers and gang tackling on nearly every play, Campolindo prevented Granada from crossing midfield until there was 7:33 left in the second quarter. Granada fumbled on the next play which Cougars linebacker Grant Larsen recovered. Charlie Craig and Torchio also recovered fumbles. Larsen and Ian Concepcion each had an interception.

Backup quarterback, Grant Harper also got more playoff experience, playing the entire fourth quarter, going 1 for 1 for 6 yards. Harper marched the team down to the Granada 1 yard line with just over two minutes to go in the game. Rather than scoring again, Macy had Harper take a knee two times and allowed the clock to run out rather than score again.

**Correction:**

In our Nov. 29 article, "Miramonte wins NorCal CIF Championship," the following names were misspelled: Acalanes coach Misha Buchel and senior Bella Wentzel. We apologize for the error.



### Commissioner's Cup Champions

## 5-6 Grade Girls, AUSTRALIA



Back (L-R) Sarah Vaughn, Julia Rohde, Coach Doug Ingham, Madeline Martindale, Carolina Wackowski, Anna Mollahan, Tatum Haggerty, Jojo O'Shea, Maddie Ingham, Coach Bill Vaughn. Front (L-R) Sarah Chen, Caroline Griffith, Helena Linnen, Georgie Wackowski Grace Ayers.

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# Campolindo Girls Cross Country team wins state championship

*Acalanes and Miramonte reload*

By Jon Kingdon



Jenna Miles 12th place - top campo girls finisher

Photos provided

With much of the focus in the athletic world on the major sports, it is very easy to overlook the accomplishments of the other less recognized athletes. There have been numerous books written about football, basketball, baseball and any number of other sports. What do cross country runners get? "The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner."

Over 5 kilometers (3.1 miles) on a smog-filled, 75-degree day at Woodward Park in Fresno, this past Nov. 25, under the leadership of head coach Chuck Woolridge, the Campolindo Girls Cross Country won their third state Division III Championship (2010 and 2013 previously). Competing against 28 teams that qualified for the finals, the Cougars came out victorious.

Running in the state tournament requires a different approach to other meets. How does one approach such a competitive meet? According to senior Jenna Miles: "The pace was not what we were used to. Our first mile was 15 seconds faster than in any other race. In the first part of the race, we wanted to start quickly and all of us got ahead of the pack. In the second part of the race, we wanted to pass other runners that were not in as good of shape as we were. The last mile, we just tried to hold on and keep our position."

It's not unusual to have muscle and shin issues, but Campolindo's injury list throughout the season

looked more like a MASH unit. Four-year letterman Hannah Ruane battled through what she thought was tendonitis until being diagnosed in mid-October with a stress fracture in her leg, ending her season. Her teammates confronted tendonitis, abdominal pulls, hip ailments and oddest of all, Miles, who missed two weeks with a concussion after hitting her head on a locker room door.

Woolridge had to feel jinxed after so many injuries: "It was a really difficult year to have so many different runners on our team to be on the sidelines. Cross country takes a special type of athlete. These girls were driven by an internal will rather than the extrinsic rewards."

Jessie Foxworthy's consistency became more and more important as the season progressed. Said Woolridge: "Jessie was always the runner we could rely on to run to her potential and she served as a true barometer as to where we were as a team."

"We were fortunate to have great leadership from Chao and Ruane, both four-year lettermen," said Woolridge. "They took on the responsibility for continuing the legacy, keeping spirits up and reminding the girls what the goals of the team were."

All teams were faced with the air quality problems during the Napa fires, having practices and events canceled for four days. Said

Woolridge: "The girls on their own went to fitness centers or found friends with a treadmill and worked out on their own."

Ironically, Woolridge feels that it was the hurdles that his team had to overcome that directed them to their ultimate success: "The challenges we faced this season provided the tests and shared experiences that allowed us to become a real team. Once we overcame these obstacles, the girls really began to connect with each other. From a character building perspective, it really brought the girls together. It

became more of a collective effort to achieve the goals that they set for themselves."

Coming off a very successful 2016 season, where Miramonte High School won the Division 4 Northern Coast Section Title, head coach Brian Henderson, knew it was going to be difficult to match that team's success: "We graduated six of our seven runners and then one returning starter. Senior Sarah Vurnick was a phenomenal leader on a young team. She did a great job in getting the girls together and facilitating the bonding process. It really facilitated the process of having our young runners transfer to the varsity level."

Junior Cassy Haskel, who was the individual section champion last year, suffered a hip injury. Haskel was unable to get back into "race fitness." Henderson looks forward to Haskel's return next season: "I'm glad to see that she is back running and I look for her to have a strong track season."

Henderson had to rely on a lot of new runners, many of whom were sophomores and were new to racing the Varsity three-mile races. Stepping up for the Matadors was sophomore Beatrice Whitaker. Henderson was effusive in his praise: "Beatrice had a fantastic season for a first timer. She finished 12th in the NCS section meet, just missing going to the state meet by two places."

Sophomore Colette Kimura

and another influx of underclassmen will be counted on to fill out the squad next season.

Acalanes head coach Michael Maloney described last season as "a transition one for the program. We had a lot of new and young talent."

The top runner for the Dons was freshman Nicole Frigon, who was the number one finisher for Acalanes in every race this season. Frigon went on to win the league championship in the frosh-soph division. Another freshman, Lena Johnson, also displayed the potential to be a runner that Maloney will count on next year.

Maloney cited Caroline Kelly and Sidney Zimmerman for their role as captains of the team: "They did a great job managing their teammates and leading by example with effort and attitude."

Acalanes will be graduating three seniors but will returning two sophomores and five freshmen.

It is going to be important for Maloney to have his runners to step up their game next season:

"There was a lot of consistency among the runners on our team. We had good depth but not a lot of consistency. It was hard to pick out who to choose each week but the girls did a good job in pushing each other. We did a lot of rebuilding this year and we should be set to compete next year."



The team with the State Championship trophy.



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Photography by Lauren McSorley

Looking to keep your child's skill improving, over the holidays, the **National Academy of Athletics**, used by LMYA, is offering a Winter Break Camp, December 27-29 in the Wagner Ranch Gymnasium. Full and half day programs offered. To Register call (925) 254-2445 or, online, at [www.orindaparksandrec.org](http://www.orindaparksandrec.org)

# LAMORINDA SPORTS

## Miramonte JV Basketball wins tournament

Submitted by Nicole Radlow



Back row, from left: head coach Anthony Ertola, asst. coach Chris Lang, Lars Ohlson, Trevor Sidlauskus, Dominic Davidson (junior), Michael Giertz;; front row: Nicholas Wong, Joshua Radlow, Ryan Schwarz (freshman), Quentin Breznikar, Chris Watson, Tanner Zwhalen, and Nick Watson (kneeling). Photo Nicole Radlow  
The Miramonte JV basketball team won the Livermore JV Tournament Dec. 2., beating top team Dublin High School.

## Marcellini/Brill on Team USA at Youth World Sailing Championship in China

Submitted by Margo Marcellini



From left: Neil Marcellini and Ian Brill, with their 29er sailboat USA 10, at Long Beach, Calif. Photo provided

Neil Marcellini (Acalanes graduate, Richmond Yacht Club, age 18) and crew Ian Brill (Mission Bay Yacht Club, age 17) won gold medals in the U.S. Youth Sailing Championships, 29er skiff fleet, in June in Corpus Christi, Texas. They were tied on the last day of racing with 29er team David Eastwood (Santa Barbara) and Sam Merson (San Diego), but moved into first place on a tie-breaker of more second place finishes in combination of regatta scores from Corpus Christi, and the March 29er Mid Winters West event in Coronado, Calif. By winning, they qualified to represent the U.S. at the Youth World Sailing Championship in Sanya, China.

oment Program for the past two seasons in many locations, including San Diego, Santa Barbara, San Francisco, Long Beach and Miami. This summer they competed in the Gold Fleets in Long Beach, Calif., finishing eighth of 116 teams in 29er Nationals, and 10th of 129 in 29er Worlds.

Team USA for Youth Worlds includes top male and female U.S. Youth Champion sailors in the 29er, Laser, 420, Nacra 15, and RX windsurfer groups. They have prepared for the Youth Worlds by attending training camps this fall on East and West coasts with Olympic Development coaches. Athletes and coaches will travel to Hong Kong with Team USA, then on to Youth World Sailing Championship in Sanya, Dec 9-16.

Marcellini and Brill have been racing and training as members of the U.S. Sailing Olympic Development Program for the past two seasons in many locations, including San Diego, Santa Barbara, San Francisco, Long Beach and Miami. This summer they competed in the Gold Fleets in Long Beach, Calif., finishing eighth of 116 teams in 29er Nationals, and 10th of 129 in 29er Worlds.

## Magic 2008 Girls BooCup Champions

Submitted by Megan Shields



Photo provided

The California Magic 2008 girls soccer team competed in the San Ramon BooCup on Oct. 28 and 29. The Magic girls faced tough competition over two days, played hard and won their age group. Coach

Beto said, "The team did a great job meeting all their goals for the tournament and I am very proud of the team." Congratulations to all the Magic 2008 girls on a job well done.

## Santa Maria 6th Grade National Boys Champions

Submitted by Laura Amsden



From left: coach Chris Gee, Matt Lin, Coach Patrick Lin, Aidan Rascher, Stephen Klein, Jordan Rodino, William Hashimoto, Joseph Pak, Caleb Kim, coach Ron Hashimoto, Cedric Gee. Photo Laura Amsden

The Santa Maria CYO 6th Grade National boys basketball team won the Red Division in the 2017 MVP Turkey Shootout Tournament over Thanksgiving weekend.

They won three out of three games, beating some talented tournament teams to emerge as Champions in their division.

## 7th Grade St. Perpetua Boys Champions

Submitted by Catherine M. Habas



Top row, from left: head coach Dr. Mike Michlitsch, Dominic Sarica, George Churchill, Andrew Habas, Mason Michlitsch, assistant coach Vince Bonner; bottom row: Aaron Brown, Riley Bonner and Zubin Acuna. Photo provided

The 7th Grade St. Perpetua Boys basketball won the championship of MVP Flight Turkey Shootout. The boys

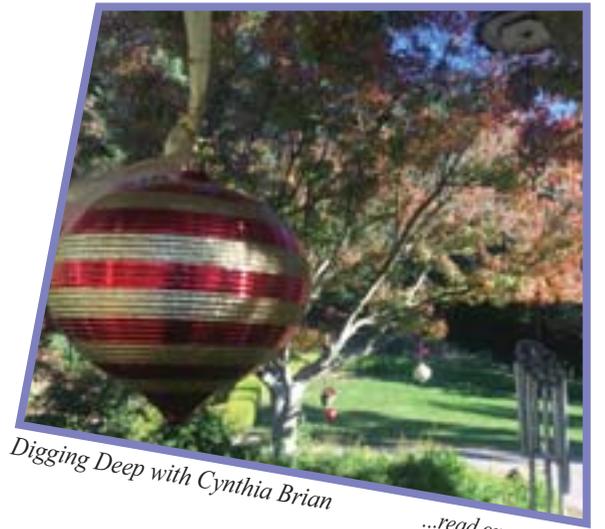
won all three of their tournament games, one in overtime and one in a buzzer-beater.

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# Lamorinda OUR HOMES

Lamorinda Weekly Volume 11 Issue 21 Wednesday, Dec. 13, 2017

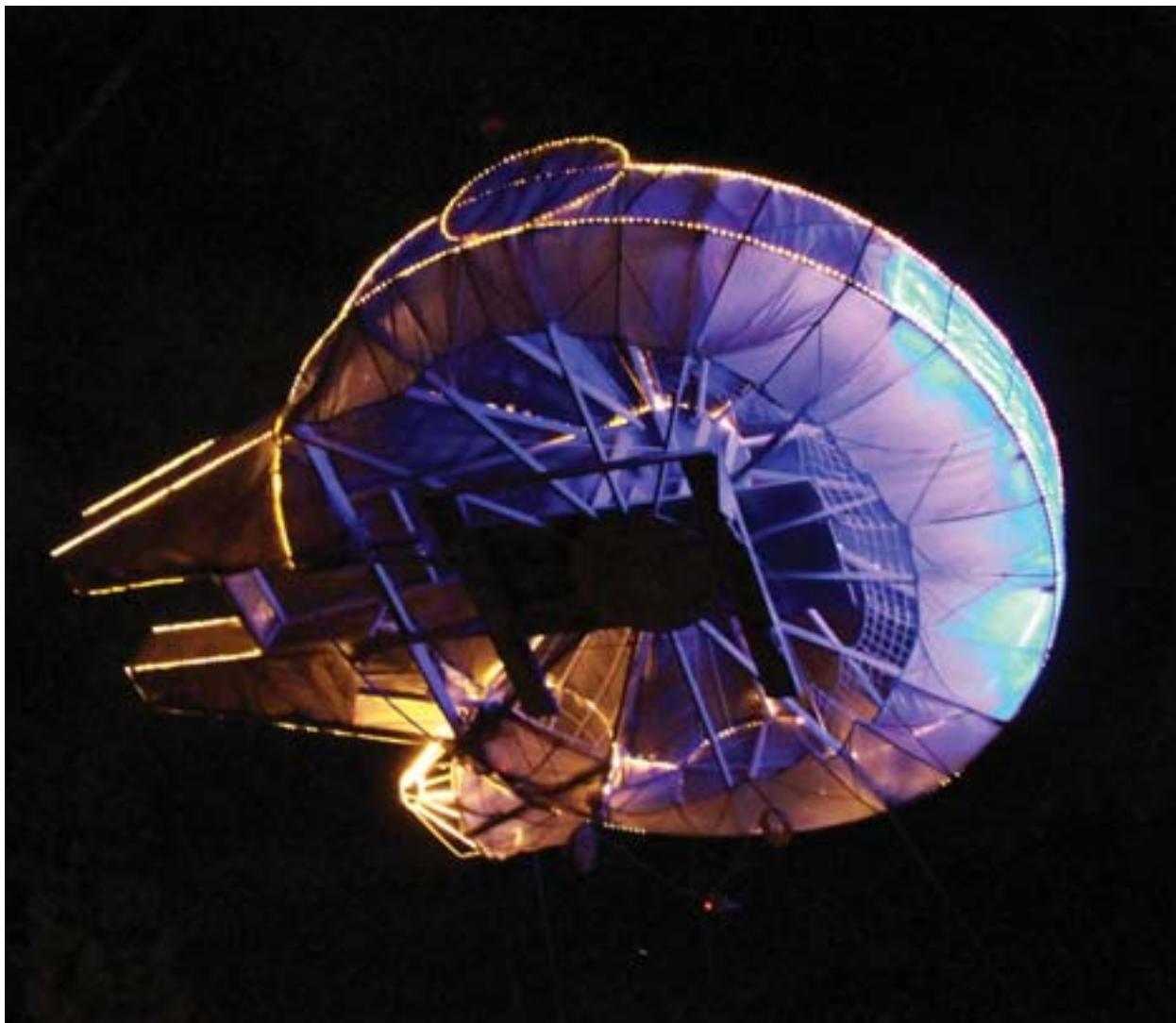


*Digging Deep with Cynthia Brian*

*...read on page D12*

## Up on the rooftop (...again!)

By Cathy Dausman



*It's not a reindeer—it's the ship that made the Kessel Run in less than twelve parsecs.*

*Photo provided*

Colby Powell's rooftop features something that flies this December, but it is definitely not reindeer or a sleigh. It is a 28-foot-long model of a Corellian YT-1300 light freighter, better known to Star Wars fans as the Millennium Falcon.

Powell, his family and neighbors assembled the starship on the ground, then it was lifted into place by a 70-foot crane. The lighted ship made its debut at Halloween. Powell says it will remain aloft until the premiere of the latest Star Wars movie, "The Last Jedi."

As elaborate as it is (a 28 by 20 by 5-foot replica, weighing 700 pounds, pitched at a 40-degree angle on an 11 by 6 foot stand to perfectly showcase the top of its iconic shape) this creation is not Powell's first space rodeo.

Two years ago, he and his family designed and built a replica Death Star ahead of the release of the 2015 blockbuster "Star Wars: The Force Awakens."

This time Powell says there were lots more neighbors assisting – everyone from the youngest "Padawans" to enthusiastic adults. Still, he kept his neighbors guessing about what the finished project might be during the five weeks and 400 work hours it took to complete the assembly.

*... continued on page D4*

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## Lamorinda Home Sales recorded

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LAFAYETTE	8	\$1,050,000	\$1,950,000
MORAGA	9	\$710,000	\$1,530,000
ORINDA	12	\$650,000	\$2,250,000

Home sales are compiled by Cal Resource, an Oakland real estate information company. Sale prices are computed from the county transfer tax information shown on the deeds that record at close of escrow and are published five to eight weeks after such recording. This information is obtained from public county records and is provided to us by California Resource. Neither Cal Resource nor this publication are liable for errors or omissions.

### LAFAYETTE

3226 Brookwood Drive, \$1,050,000, 4 Bdrms, 1897 SqFt, 1973 YrBlt, 11-9-17;

Previous Sale: \$193,000, 01-10-86

634 Glorietta Boulevard, \$1,450,000, 4 Bdrms, 3783 SqFt, 1979 YrBlt, 11-20-17;

Previous Sale: \$600,000, 04-10-97

3676 Hastings Court, \$1,950,000, 3 Bdrms, 1886 SqFt, 1960 YrBlt, 11-9-17;

Previous Sale: \$1,025,000, 12-21-11

3513 Moraga Boulevard, \$1,615,000, 4 Bdrms, 1837 SqFt, 1941 YrBlt, 11-14-17;

Previous Sale: \$768,182, 12-31-14

3949 North Peardale Drive, \$1,650,000, 4 Bdrms, 2924 SqFt, 1951 YrBlt, 11-13-17

3509 South Silver Springs Road, \$1,589,000, 3 Bdrms, 1689 SqFt, 1956 YrBlt, 11-13-17

805 Tanglewood Drive, \$1,610,000, 4 Bdrms, 3059 SqFt, 1975 YrBlt, 11-8-17;

Previous Sale: \$1,045,000, 11-20-09

3346 Walnut Lane, \$1,270,000, 4 Bdrms, 2031 SqFt, 1968 YrBlt, 11-9-17;

Previous Sale: \$336,000, 04-17-98

### MORAGA

503 Augusta Drive, \$1,395,000, 4 Bdrms, 3713 SqFt, 1985 YrBlt, 11-8-17;

Previous Sale: \$969,000, 07-24-03

785 Augusta Drive, \$1,000,000, 3 Bdrms, 2195 SqFt, 1978 YrBlt, 11-20-17

403 Belfair Place, \$1,530,000, 4 Bdrms, 2560 SqFt, 1968 YrBlt, 11-14-17;

Previous Sale: \$1,238,500, 07-03-07

335 Constance Place, \$1,420,000, 4 Bdrms, 3222 SqFt, 1980 YrBlt, 11-8-17;

Previous Sale: \$1,160,000, 08-13-04

116 Cypress Point Way, \$1,120,000, 3 Bdrms, 1644 SqFt, 1973 YrBlt, 11-8-17;

Previous Sale: \$825,000, 11-01-04

103 Devin Drive, \$1,400,000, 4 Bdrms, 2849 SqFt, 1961 YrBlt, 11-8-17

8 La Salle Drive, \$1,000,000, 3 Bdrms, 1573 SqFt, 1961 YrBlt, 11-9-17;

Previous Sale: \$739,000, 10-17-14

191 Miramonte Drive, \$710,000, 2 Bdrms, 1514 SqFt, 1965 YrBlt, 11-9-17;

Previous Sale: \$426,000, 10-18-02

255 Sharp Drive, \$1,200,000, 4 Bdrms, 1956 SqFt, 1965 YrBlt, 11-8-17;

Previous Sale: \$1,085,000, 06-30-15

... continued on page D11

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# Up on the rooftop (...again!)

... continued from page D1

And the project nearly failed before it began when Powell couldn't locate any to-scale drawings online.

His son solved the problem by suggesting they scale it after his LEGO Star Wars ship.

A last-minute design change during construction scrapped the use of some plastic in favor of wood to in-

sure the necessary frame rigidity, but the Millennium Falcon was ready to fly in time for the Powell Halloween party.

Asked if he might consider a career change to full-time prop construction, the Lafayette contractor laughed. "It's pretty fun, actually," he said of his price-

less rooftop projects.

Would Powell design a different model before the release of Star Wars IX in 2019? Possibly. There just might be one more light sabre trick left up his Jedi sleeve.

... continued on page D9



Working on a classic: Powell's neighbor Michael Ferrif and friend Bob Christopher inside the framework.



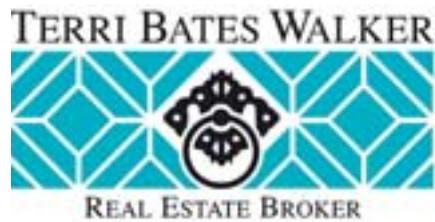
Ian (7), Drew (12) and Cameron (11) Powell.



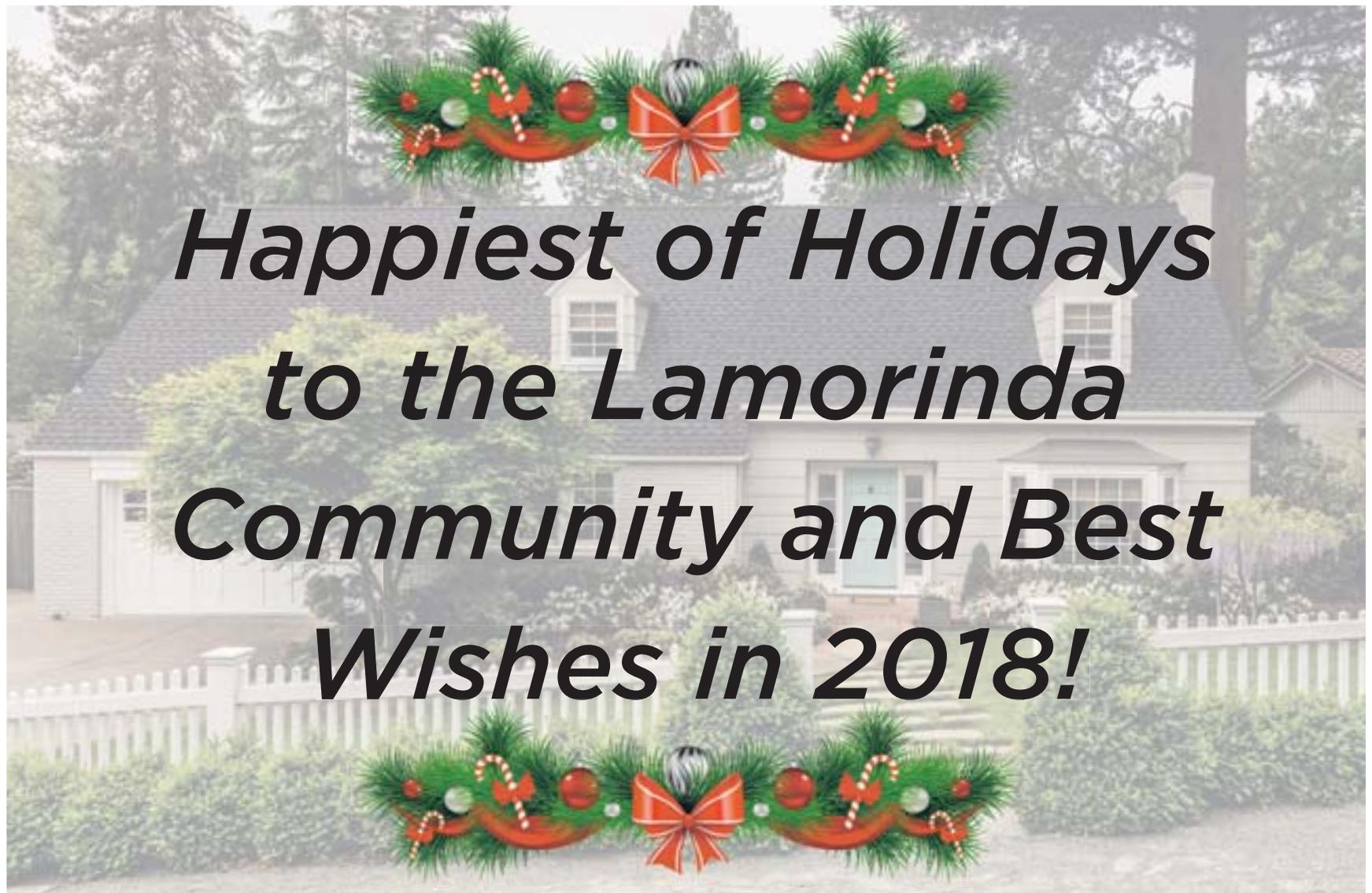
Framework assembled, and filling up the driveway.



Familiar faces, both human and humanoid, look toward the stars.



## BRINGING LAMORINDA HOME



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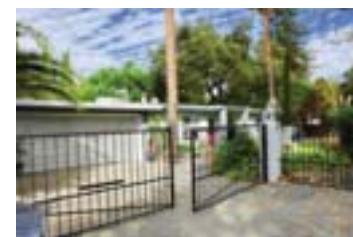
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## Spring Market- Prepare Now

Despite the hustle and bustle of the holiday season, now is the perfect time to start laying the groundwork for a successful sale. This is especially true in Lamorinda where the “spring” market has gotten progressively earlier; school enrollment begins in the early spring which means many buyers are looking to close on their new home even earlier in the year to ensure that their child is able to attend neighborhood schools. It is more important than ever to start making your to-do list now if you want to take advantage of this typically strong early selling market.

We always suggest that sellers spend time de-cluttering and getting rid of things that they no longer use or need. Consider donating your unwanted treasures. These donations not only help deserving non-profits, but your generosity will be repaid come tax time when you are looking for those itemized charitable deductions.

Now is also the time to start getting quotes, picking finishes and lining up contractors if you plan to make updates to your home prior to selling. Make sure that you consult with your Realtor throughout this process to ensure that you are making choices that will appeal to current buyers. It is important to make sure that the money you put into upgrades will translate into more profit at the close of escrow. However, there are some circumstances in which it does not make financial sense to make updates in advance of a sale. In this case or when the budget for repairs and upgrades is limited, I often recommend just a simple coat of paint. It can go a long way to brightening up a house.

And finally, take a good look at what your home is worth before you go full speed ahead. This means looking beyond your Zestimate and seeking the advice of a local Realtor who understands the nuances of the Lamorinda market. They can help you to evaluate your situations and make sure your expectations are realistic and that a move makes financial sense.

We wish you and your family a wonderful and restful holiday season.

Please feel free to contact us with your real estate questions - Erin at [erin@MartinHomesTeam.com](mailto:erin@MartinHomesTeam.com) or Darrick at [darrick@MartinHomesTeam.com](mailto:darrick@MartinHomesTeam.com).



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## Making your holiday parties bright

By Amanda Eck



*Photos Amanda Eck*

The Holidays are fast approaching and there's lots of hustle and bustle happening. The endless list of gifts to buy and parties to attend can be daunting. But I do enjoy setting aside time to entertain friends and family in my home. Over the years I have hosted countless cooking exchange parties, Christmas tea parties, and pajama and wine nights. I have learned to streamline my party preparedness so that I can actually enjoy my guests instead of feeling completely wiped by the time the doorbell rings.

Here are a few of my holiday party tips:

A week before your event shop for all your nonperishable items: Paper goods, wine, coffee, etc. Keep your list with you at all times, so when you are out and about you won't forget something. Or if you are tech savvy, download a “to-do” list app. I am old school and still prefer to write things on paper.

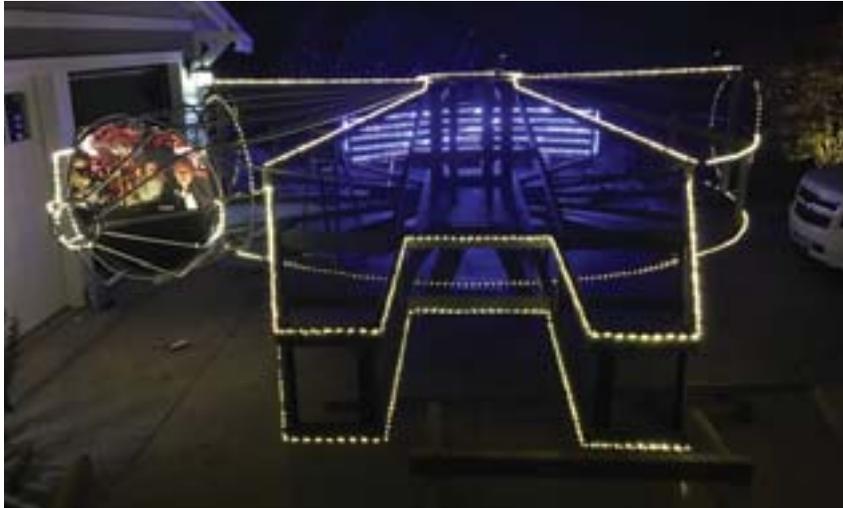
Keep the décor simple: Fresh flowers or greenery and candles are your best friends. Make sure to use unscented candles near food. No one likes to smell aude de gardenia while eating hummus dip.

Keep the menu simple: This is not the time to try that new recipe you found on Pinterest. Keep to your “go-to”s and crowd pleasers. Or be sneaky like me and pick up some yummy pastries from La Chataigne bakery in Lafayette or some tasty orzo pasta from the Whole Foods' deli. From that point on it's all about presentation. I like to use unique items to serve or display the food.

... continued on page D10

# Up on the rooftop

... continued from page D4



Running lights on and primed for liftoff!

## What it takes to build a Millennium Falcon:

- 630 feet of LED lighting
- 400 feet of conduit
- 1,000 wood screws
- 728 board feet of 2 x 4 wood
- 2 T-10 parachutes from eBay

## What it took to assemble a Death Star:

- 162 geo hubs
- 18 cans of paint
- 2,000 feet of ½-inch PVC conduit, cut in six various lengths

Watch Death Star and Millennium Falcon construction videos online at:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OT0RH4EAnLY&feature=youtu.be>  
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It helps to have a 70 foot crane for pre-launch

# Patti Camras

*I* believe in the art of living well.

## Happy Holidays



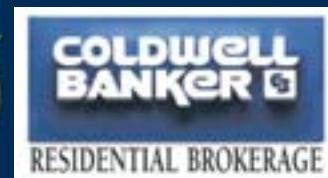
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# Making your holiday parties bright

... continued from page D8



Photo Amanda Eck

**Party Favors:** I love sending my guests home with a little treat or memento. I've given Christmas ornaments, small wrapped hand soaps, votive candles, small potted plants tied with ribbon, chocolates, and hot cocoa mix with a peppermint stick tucked in a mug.

**The day before:** I like to have the table set at least a day before, if it is a formal

sit down. For more casual parties I lay out all my serving dishes and attach sticky notes with what food items are going where. It sounds silly, but I promise you, it's a lifesaver when you are running around the day of trying to get things ready. Place all the fresh flowers in their containers, this will give them a full day to open up and if you happen to realize you need more you are not running to the store last minute. I make sure all of my running around is done a day ahead, so that on the day of I can focus on getting the house ready.

**Day of:** After all the finishing touches, the table is set, the flowers are placed, I try and set aside at least an hour or two of downtime before the party. It may mean taking a leisurely bubble bath, or curling up on the sofa with a book and a cup of tea, or even a little power nap. Having that quiet time will help you recharge. One hour before everyone arrives light the candles and turn on some music.

**Ding dong!** Now go enjoy your guests. Happy Holidays, friends. I wish you and yours a very wonderful holiday and Happy New Year! See you in 2018!

## Amanda's go-to cocktail: Sparkling Pomegranate Punch

- 3 tbsp. sugar
- 1 c. pomegranate juice
- 2 bottle Sparkling wine
- ¾ c. white wine
- 2 oranges
- 1 c. diced fresh pineapple
- ¼ c. pomegranate seeds
- Ice cubes
- In a punch bowl, dissolve the sugar in the pomegranate juice, stirring vigorously. Add the sparkling wine and white wine, then add the orange slices, diced pineapple, and pomegranate seeds. Serve the sparkling pomegranate punch over ice cubes.

As the Owner and Principal Designer of Lamorinda-based Amanda Carol Interiors, Amanda Eck believes your home's interior should be both approachable and well-appointed. She often asserts, "Beauty is a necessity."

With a distinct sense of style that mixes contemporary and classic design she fashions spaces that are both elegant and inviting. Her design aesthetic is inspired by anything visual but especially fashion, architecture and art.

Visit <http://amandacarolinteriors.com> for more design ideas.



# Lamorinda Home Sales recorded

... continued from page D2

## ORINDA

- 187 Canon Drive, \$1,265,000, 3 Bdrms, 1779 SqFt, 1955 YrBlt, 11-17-17;  
Previous Sale: \$800,000, 10-13-10
- 210 Canon Drive, \$1,275,000, 4 Bdrms, 1956 SqFt, 1986 YrBlt, 11-8-17;  
Previous Sale: \$990,000, 09-01-10
- 20 Coffee Berry Lane, \$2,040,000, 4 Bdrms, 3196 SqFt, 2016 YrBlt, 11-9-17
- 29 Dias Dorados, \$1,790,000, 5 Bdrms, 3537 SqFt, 1958 YrBlt, 11-13-17
- 45 East Altarinda Drive, \$1,300,000, 4 Bdrms, 2254 SqFt, 1973 YrBlt, 11-14-17;  
Previous Sale: \$89,500, 12-13-73
- 6 El Nido Court, \$650,000, 3 Bdrms, 1619 SqFt, 1951 YrBlt, 11-9-17
- 9 Las Mesas Path, \$920,000, 3 Bdrms, 1144 SqFt, 1939 YrBlt, 11-15-17;  
Previous Sale: \$25,000, 08-10-70
- 51 Martha Road, \$1,850,000, 3 Bdrms, 2918 SqFt, 1977 YrBlt, 11-17-17
- 49 Singingwood Lane, \$1,775,000, 4 Bdrms, 2955 SqFt, 1973 YrBlt, 11-15-17;  
Previous Sale: \$900,000, 03-03-89
- 28 Sunnyside Court, \$1,225,000, 2 Bdrms, 2153 SqFt, 1980 YrBlt, 11-15-17;  
Previous Sale: \$772,500, 09-12-03
- 53 Tappan Lane, \$1,405,000, 5 Bdrms, 2862 SqFt, 1975 YrBlt, 11-16-17;  
Previous Sale: \$489,000, 06-23-88
- 9 Valley View Road, \$2,250,000, 4 Bdrms, 4268 SqFt, 2008 YrBlt, 11-8-17;  
Previous Sale: \$950,000, 08-12-04



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*Digging Deep with Cynthia Brian*

## Light the night

By Cynthia Brian

*“Moon and stars are giving light. With gifts of nature’s giving, we complete the cycle of living. Let us give from our mind, hands, and heart to the world.” – Chitrabhanu*



*The azaleas and bergenia highlight the blow-up Santa and snowman.*

*Photos Cynthia Brian*

It was a holiday tradition for our family of seven to pile into our old station wagon to head to the hills of San Francisco to experience the beauty of the decorated homes in Pacific Heights. We called our favorite street Teddy Bear Lane, since we were so young we didn’t know its real name. (And I still don’t know where it was!) It was spectacular with a full block of beautiful Victorians lit up with teddy bears flanked by flickering candles in every window. Another street boasted sparkling reindeer, glistening snowmen, serene nativity scenes, and some even show-

cased Santa and his sleigh on the steep rooftops. Gardens twinkled with illumination making the night merry and bright.

After all the “oohing and aahing,” we’d head to Fisherman’s Wharf to pick up fresh crabs for our Christmas Eve meal, then wander down to Ghiradelli for a cup of hot cocoa. The coins we had been saving all year to help children enjoy a festive celebration were deposited into the bucket of the man ringing the bell from the Salvation Army. We kids dreamt of sugarplums, teddy bears, star-studded skies, and busy elves on the two-hour drive back to the ranch as we anxiously anticipated the excitement of the season. It was a deeply satisfying annual excursion, the kind that etches itself into one’s memory forever.

Since we lived in the middle of nowhere, down a mile-long lane with no street lamps to light the night, our fear was that Santa wouldn’t be able to find our farmhouse, much less our chimney. To ease our worries, our parents lit two acres of our fields, orchards, and gardens, creating a virtual runway as a navigational guide to steer Rudolph to the right place. We pulled carrots from the vegetable garden to nourish the tired reindeer. Naturally we baked gingerbread cookies as a treat for Jolly St. Nick accompanied by a big glass of milk and a note of gratitude for his generosity. We hoped his list had checked us off as “nice” instead of “naughty.”

This December as I drive around local neighborhoods, I am reliving the joyfulness of my youth without having to drive to Teddy Bear Lane in San Francisco. Residents who celebrate Christmas adorn their houses, trees, shrubs and gardens with garlands, wreaths, ornaments and twinkling lights of every color. The décor is rich, festive and fun. It takes time and patience to unravel a string of lights, especially if they are from a previous year, but the rewards are worth the trouble.

Aside from raking leaves, mulching, planting cover crops, and transplanting cuttings, there isn’t too much work to do in a December garden. Across the country, most landscapes are setting in for their winter slumber. With less chores to accomplish, I champion a different decorating challenge every day with the final goal of having the crape myrtle trees on my driveway shimmer under the glinting moonlight. I’ll be snipping fresh redwood, cypress and pine boughs for their fresh forest scent to add to doors and windows adorned with holly and pistache berries. Poinsettias are already on the porch and vases of blooming narcissi perfume the bathrooms. Amaryllis is budding in anticipation of a Dec. 25 appearance.

This is an enchanted time of year. Take time to savor the seconds with family and friends as you watch the lights of the nights. Offer your heart. Bequeath your soul. Gift suggestions that cost you nothing include forgiving someone who has injured you, being a role model to young people, providing kindness to all, while respecting and loving yourself.

As Norman Vincent Peale wrote, “Christmas waves a magic wand over this world, and behold, everything is softer and more beautiful.” May the magic of this blessed time shine a light on you and your loved ones. Merry Christmas from my home to yours.

... continued on page D13





*Holly is a traditional symbol of the holidays.*



*Guavas as falling from the trees. Make cookies, jams and guava duff.*



*The red, regal, and exotic dragon fruit will spark a holiday conversation.*



*Be on the alert for the first signs of the snow plant.*

# Cynthia Brian's mid-month garden guide

... continued from page D13

**CLEAN** the dead leaves from bearded iris to prevent rot and insect hideouts.

**CUT** boughs of evergreens to mold into wreaths and garlands.

**PLANT** a cover crop to increase nitrogen and protect against winter erosion. Fava beans, clover, vetch and mustard are excellent choices. To find seeds, visit [www.rareseeds.com](http://www.rareseeds.com) or [www.sowtrueseeds.com](http://www.sowtrueseeds.com).

**GIVE** the gift of my new book, "Growing with the Goddess Gardener," 12 months of inspiration and gardening tips to sustain your inner gardener with a full year of kindness and happiness in nature. Buy directly from [www.cynthiabrian.com/online-store](http://www.cynthiabrian.com/online-store) and 25 percent is a donation to Be the Star You Are!® charity, plus you'll receive extra goodies and an autographed copy.

**FEED** the birds. Baby, it's cold outside and our birds need food and shelter. Make sure to clean your birdhouses and feeders regularly.

**WATCH** for rats and mice. As the cold weather begins, vermin seek a warm bed and easy-to-find food.

**CHECK** plants that you've brought inside for the winter for any insect infestation.

**WATER** your Christmas trees. If you purchased a cut tree, make sure it has plenty of water throughout the month as indoor heat will quickly dry out any conifer.

**COVER** frost tender plants with burlap, sheets, newspaper or straw. Be on the alert for swift temperature swings.

**REMOVE** the longer canes from wisteria.

**PRUNE** crape myrtles and fruit trees once all the leaves have dropped.

**RAKE** leaves as they fall and add to the compost pile. Allow a half inch to an inch of leaves to remain on the soil. Compost the rest.

**PERUSE** garden catalogues and read books about landscaping as you curl up with with cup of hot chocolate or licorice cinnamon tea.

**PREVENT** snails and slugs from devouring your plants by adding copper strips or bowls of stale beer to the perimeter of your garden.

**PICK UP** guavas that fall and use for jams or juices.

**ADD** a bowl of freshly picked Meyer lemons to your countertop as a useful culinary display.

**FILL** your Christmas tree or Hannukah bush with every family ornament that you've been saving for years! Nostalgia reigns supreme.

**BUY** a small living cypress tree to use as an inexpensive Christmas tree in lieu of a cut fir. Some stores have been selling three- to four-foot specimens for less than \$8.

**VISIT** an Asian market to buy the delicious exotic Dragon fruit.

**SELECT** colorful and easy-to-grow crotons or ginger plants to add a fantasy island fling to your festivities.

**WATCH** for snow plants to sprout in the Sierras.

**MAKE** a tax-deductible donation to help with hurricanes and California fires disaster relief at [www.BetheStarYouAre.org](http://www.BetheStarYouAre.org). Every dollar counts. Be the Star You Are!® cares.

It is the season of giving and sharing. Have yourselves a very Merry Christmas.

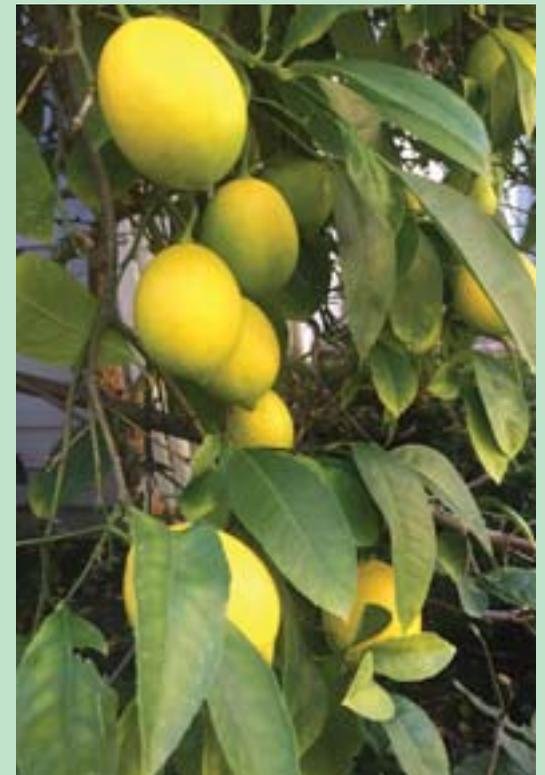
Happy Gardening and Happy Growing!  
Cynthia Brian



*Crotons are easy to grow and make lovely houseplants.*



*Tropical ginger plants may need draping with burlap as they are frost tender.*



*Meyer lemons will ripen on the counter.*



A traveler's tree with a row of white poinsettia.



*Wishing you a holly, jolly Christmas*

Cynthia Brian and her Be the Star You Are!® volunteers wishes you a Holly Jolly Christmas.

Cynthia Brian, The Goddess Gardener, raised in the vineyards of Napa County, is a New York Times best selling author, actor, radio personality, speaker, media and writing coach as well as the Founder and Executive Director of Be the Star You Are!® 501 c3.

Tune into Cynthia's Radio show and order her books at [www.StarStyleRadio.com](http://www.StarStyleRadio.com).

My new book, Growing with the Goddess Gardener, is available at [www.cynthiabrian.com/online-store](http://www.cynthiabrian.com/online-store).

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