

## Letters to the Editor

### Interesting Moraga budget report

Having heard from opponents before Moraga's storm drain election that there was no need for a new revenue stream, I found the June 13 budget report by the administrative services director interesting. In his report to the Moraga Town Council he said that there is an annual shortfall of \$400,000 in funding to keep the condition of the streets at

its current level, and there is an annual shortfall in funding the stormwater program of \$542,000.

"A revenue source will need to be identified in the future to address the town's aging infrastructure," he concluded. His full report is available on the town's website: moraga.ca.us.

Dale Walwark  
Moraga

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## 911 texting now available in Lamorinda

By Nick Marnell

You can now text 911 in case of an emergency in Lafayette, Moraga and Orinda, but the program still has a major hurdle to clear to offer seamless emergency texting service.

On June 13, the Contra Costa County Office of the Sheriff rolled out its Text to 9-1-1 program, which allows the county dispatch center to handle text messaging in addition to voice calls from your cell phone.

According to the sheriff's office, when texting 911, enter those numbers in the "To" field of your cell phone. In the body of the message, include the exact location of the emergency and whether you need police, fire or an ambulance. Keep texts short and simple, with no photos or videos, and do not include abbreviations, jargon or slang.

"Make the phone call when you can. It's so much faster," said Will Pigeon, Contra Costa County Fire Protection District assistant fire chief, communications division. Pigeon said that text notifications can take 10 minutes or longer before dispatchers can determine the exact details of the incident. The sheriff's office also recommends to text only when you cannot make a phone call.

The chief listed situations that especially call for emergency text messaging, such as an incident involving a person with a hearing or speech impediment, or during a cell phone call overload period when text messages can still get through. A person who hears an intruder inside the home may not want to risk speaking aloud, so texting 911 would be the preferred

choice there. "Or in a hostage situation, with someone held at gunpoint and who cannot make a phone call," Pigeon said.

The county uses a web-based Text to 9-1-1 solution, and the dispatcher may not know the exact location of the caller. "We will know what cell tower the call comes in from with some reliability; however, the distance from the cell tower can be several hundred meters. A caller must be able to text us their location," said Jimmy Lee, director of public affairs for the sheriff's office.

Lee said that the Text to 9-1-1 program is temporary, until Next Generation 911 service is available nationwide. NG911, which has no target date for implementation, is a more resilient, digital system that allows voice, photos, videos and text messages to flow seamlessly from the public to the 911 network.

Text to 9-1-1 is available only in English and is not available in every area of California. Should you text 911 in an unavailable location, you will receive this message: "Make a voice call to 911 for help; text to 911 is not available." Lee said that the state has requested that all agencies in California be Text to 9-1-1 capable by Dec. 31.

The ConFire dispatch center receives most of the calls for fire and ambulance from the sheriff's office communications center and dispatches appropriate personnel to all points of the county. The Moraga-Orinda Fire District contracts with ConFire for its dispatch service.

## Community kicks off Moraga's Thursday night Summer Concert Series



Hunter Mason, age 2, of Moraga, enjoys the music with his dad Will. Photos Cathy Dausman



Adults get into the swing of things at the first summer concert at the Moraga Commons.



A sunny first day of summer and good music at Moraga Commons.

## Local restaurants optimize the outdoors

By Pippa Fisher



Outdoor diners enjoy the summer sun at Batch and Brine in Lafayette.

Photo Andy Scheck

Making the most of the area's beautiful climate by offering outside dining is nothing new -- in fact these days it's an almost obligatory trend along restaurant row. But Lafayette's latest eatery Batch and Brine has really embraced it. And they are getting it right.

In fact there is a deliberate continuation of outside brought inside, thanks to the restaurant's tall, fold-back windows that open up the interior for an airy feel. The outdoor walls are a mixture of reclaimed wood and "living" walls, planted with succulents. The patio wraps around the building and features a fire pit with lounge seating. There is a counter facing the street for those who enjoy people-watching.

"There isn't a bad seat in the house," says co-owner Celina Gonzales, explaining that the design was planned to allow maximum visibility across the entire restaurant, both inside and out, to encourage a community feel. Gonzales draws attention to the low booths and open, curved walls, which she notes were all part of the vision.

The ambience is upscale "cool." More Oakland than traditional burbs, and that, says Gonzales, is a hit with the changing demographic of Lafayette. She says she loves to see families coming in with their kids on scooters. But it's not just young families -- the restaurant is attracting a mix from young professionals to older groups. She says the community has been very supportive and excited about this new venture. Watching recent Warriors' games on the big screen TV and now the World Cup is are examples of the community feeling the place fosters.

Batch and Brine, which moved into the old Swaad Indian restaurant location and knocked through into what used to be a knitting shop, had its official opening at the beginning of June.

The hipster vibe is evident from the custom-painted murals by Berk Visual -- also responsible for menu design, coasters, T-shirts and even the eye-catching bathroom stall graffiti-style décor. The interior design by Crome Architecture is modern and sleek.

The restaurant is family-owned by siblings Mike, Rolla, and David Ghaben together with their cousins Sam Ghaben and Celina Gonzales and their son Victor Ghaben. This ain't their first rodeo. Together this family brings many years of restaurant experience to the venture, coming from their family restaurants La Ultima of Oakland, Danville and

Walnut Creek and Hof Brau and Hubcaps of Walnut Creek. They now have three generations of owner-operator experience, overseeing multiple East Bay locations of Black Bear Diner, Mel's Diner and two Broderick Roadhouse locations.

It's quite a pedigree and it all started with patriarch Zafer Ghaben. "My father is the rock of the family," acknowledges Rolla Ghaben, attributing everything they have learned of guest relations to him.

Many of the recipes, such as the falafel and kofta burgers on the menu are family recipes handed down from Zafer Ghaben who, although now retired at 82, still comes by the restaurant and heads straight for the kitchen.

The name Batch and Brine represents the small batch beers, wines and spirits on the menu and the family's culinary techniques.

The food itself reflects the blend of the family's Mediterranean and New Mexican heritage with bold flavors and locally sourced, seasonal produce. Rolla Ghaben, whose favorite is the kafta burger, points out that the house-made pastrami involves a 13-day brining process.

Not surprisingly, the family brought in a world-class chef to lead the operation -- Executive Chef David Suarez who trained under Chef Thomas Keller in New York. The result is surprisingly excellent food, from Victor Ghaben's hatch chile burger to Suarez' steak au poivre burger. Must-tries on the menu include the duck and cheese fries.

All the food is beautifully presented; no detail overlooked. "Food is art," says Rolla Ghaben simply.

The restaurant offers a brunch menu on Saturdays and Sundays featuring several different Benedict-style egg dishes and an interesting-sounding PBJ stuffed French toast dish.

The drink menu has an extensive cocktail list, a wine selection of small-production artisanal wines and 20 craft beers on tap. At the helm of the bar is mixologist Casey Carr. His passion is creating craft cocktails and perfecting flavors. He comes to Batch and Brine via such restaurants as The Cooperage.

Batch and Brine is open everyday from 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. Brunch is served on Saturdays and Sundays from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Go to <https://batchandbrine.com/> for more details.

With reasonable prices, and its edgy, fun ambience this restaurant is sure to become a favorite.

## Summer reading project for all ages underway until Aug. 4

By Sora O'Doherty

From the beginning of June through Aug. 4, all libraries in the Contra Costa County system, including Lafayette, Orinda and Moraga libraries, are participating in the County's Summer Reading Program, "Reading Takes You Everywhere." Readers of all ages can visit [ccclib.org/summer](http://ccclib.org/summer) for activities and challenges to feed the imagination and explore new skills. Patrons may also visit any of the 26 Contra Costa County library locations for free and fun happenings all summer.

Each participant receives a passport. Every completed passport is eligible for a free book and will be entered into a raffle to win prizes. There is a Baby Passport for children ages 0-3, and the Readers Passport is for kids, teens and adults of all ages. All types of reading count -- audio books, comic books, fiction, non-fiction, silent reading or reading aloud. Reading can be done in any language and isn't limited only to library books. Patrons who visit the library have even more chances to win prizes, according to Orinda

Community Library Manager Sierra Compagna.

Upcoming events at the Orinda Library include the Try-It-Truck on July 12, 5 to 7 p.m.; A Bird's Rainbow, July 30, at 10:30 a.m.; and Road Scholar on Aug. 1 at 1 p.m. According to librarian Maura Hennessy, the Lafayette library will include Rockets Away! on July 3 from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.; Uncle Jer's Bee Show July 17 from 2 to 3 p.m.; The Paper Airplane Guy Aug. 1 from 2 to 3 p.m., and a Teddy Bear Overnight on Aug. 8 from 4 to 5 p.m., and the Moraga branch will include some special events for adults like the Moraga Library Book Club: The Invention of Wings, by Sue Monk Kidd, July 19 from 1 to 2 p.m. and Birding Talk: "Changing Seasons" July 26, from 1 to 2 p.m. Also on July 19 from 3 to 4 p.m. there will be a Teen Game and Crafts for those in grades 6-12. All events count toward the summer reading program, and can be found on the library website, according to Community Library Manager Geneva Moss.