

Kiwanis contribute to clearing Lamorinda trails

By Sophie Braccini



The hidden entrance of the connector trail.

Photo Sophie Braccini

Away from the public eye, the parks and recreation departments of the three Lamorinda communities, along with community groups, are now working on the creation of a Lamorinda Trails Challenge, a concept to get the communities moving and exploring. But the project has prerequisites, such as a comprehensive mapping system – something the agencies are close to completing – the creation of connector trails, and

the clearing of existing ones. This summer, Moraga Valley Kiwanis has undertaken the cleanup of a key segment for the connection of the Lafayette and Moraga trails.

Next to the border of Moraga and Lafayette, along Moraga Road, on the east side lies the vast expanse of the Palos Colorados property and its promise of trails over 100 acres of open space. On the west side, hidden behind bushes was the entrance of an

inconspicuous trail leading to the Lafayette Reservoir Rim Trail.

One bright Tuesday morning at the end of July, a group of Moraga Kiwanians joining with East Bay Trail Dogs, and the Friends of Lafayette Trails formed a group of about 15 people eager to make a difference. After parking their cars on Via Granada, the volunteers opened their trunks and grabbed serious tools.

The group of six Kiwanians had been corralled by Larry Beans, an avid hiker who is also part of Trail Dogs, a group of volunteers who maintain trails throughout Contra Costa and Alameda counties. Beans had told the six that they should be ready for brushing, weed abatement, tread work, or raking leaf litter off the trail and that there could be some poison oak. The Trail Dogs' president, Carol Lane, was there as well; she is an experienced trail cleaner who noted that they might even have to cut some big tree branches that day.

The morning went fast for all the volunteers, and by noon the half mile of trail leading to the Reservoir Rim Trail had been

completely cleared. The trail entrance, on the west side of Moraga Road, is now much more noticeable, although no sign is posted – something that the Lafayette Parks and Recreation Department staff said would be corrected.

Beans said that the volunteers had fun, engaged in physical exercise, and added that one fellow Kiwanian told him he wanted to hear more about the Trail Dogs. Beans, who is also a member of the Orinda Hiking Club, has been a Trail Dog for seven or eight years. He says he has loved it, doing cleanup or even carving new trails every Tuesday morning. He has made many friends over the years and he says he does not need to go to the gym anymore. The Moraga Kiwanians have volunteered with the Lafayette Parks and Recreation Department several times, including on Fish Ranch Road. Beans says that they welcome new projects.

For information about Moraga Valley Kiwanis, visit www.moragavalleykiwanis.org, or for East Bay Trail Dogs, visit www.eastbaytraildogs.org.

Square Baby opens in Theatre Square

By Sora O'Doherty



Square Baby co-founders in front of their shop in Orinda's Theatre Square.

Photo Sora O'Doherty

Two Orinda moms with five children between them at Glorietta School have just launched a new business in town: Square Baby. Square Baby recently launched its online site, selling its products that

are delivered to the door frozen, in 100 percent compostable boxes. On Friday, Aug. 30 they will launch their brick and mortar store in Theatre Square, which will be open for business the following day.

Katie Thomson is responsible for the concept of Square Baby, which is to provide convenient baby food that is completely organic and provides 100 percent of a baby's nutritional needs. Thomson was the first nutritionist to work for Starbucks in Seattle. Through her career in the food industry, Thomson learned how food is marketed. Thomson looked at the convenient baby foods in the aisles of the supermarket, and she didn't like what she saw. She found the products to be unbalanced, and their labels to be misleading. She wanted food to be marketed with honesty and transparency and she wondered, "Why is no company making this easier for me?"

In 2010, when her son was 18

months old, Thomson left Starbucks and Seattle as her husband's job took the family elsewhere. She began to research what infants need in a day and to develop a meal plan where every meal is balanced, and every day provides 100 percent of a baby's daily requirements. Four years ago, the family moved to Orinda. Thomson began volunteering at Glorietta Elementary School in the lunch program, as well as the wellness program. She met Kendall Glynn, a scientist who specialized in clinical genetics and, Thomson says, "Our stars aligned." Thomson had a business plan and model in place. The two women became partners and co-founders of Square Baby and launched their online business on July 10. Thomson's husband is in advertising, and designed the labels, ingredient cards, shipping boxes, and produced videos for social media.

The way it works is that customers order a two-week supply of meals at a time. For younger babies, this will mean one four-ounce jar of food per day to supplement nursing or bottle feeding. As children grow, they can step up to two, three or four jars per day. Flavors have to pass the Kendall and Katie test: they have to want to eat them. The two women are currently doing all the cooking in a commercial kitchen on the Berkeley-Oakland border. Parents can pick and choose from a variety of dietician-designed recipes. The foods come in three stages: stage one being smooth pu-

rees, and later stages introducing more complexity and texture.

Apple curry chicken is a favorite, according to Thomson. One of the goals of the company is to develop children's palates, so they introduce a few herbs and spices into their recipes, using organic ingredients. They use diverse protein sources, including sprouted grains, because they are more nutritious, and organic bone broth from an Oakland supplier. Where baby food pouches are very sweet and have on average 10 to 16 grams of sugar, Square Baby foods have an average of 4 to 5 grams of sugar per 4-ounce meal.

The shop in Theatre Square will be a place where children and parents can come and sample the products. In addition to a tasting bar, there will be gift products for sale, and the partners plan to have events as well. They want the shop to have a community feel, where moms can meet. They may organize some "Mom's Night Out" events.

Each 4-ounce jar costs approximately \$5, and shipments vary from 14 jars (1 jar per day for two weeks) to 28, 42, and up to 56 jars (4 jars per day). The products are shipped to the door with dry ice to keep them frozen. Currently there are 20 recipes on offer, with others in development.

Square Baby will be open from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday through Saturday and by appointment. Learn more at the Square Baby web site: <https://squarebaby.com/>.

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BART bill to head for senate vote

... continued from page A3

The news was welcomed however by Nonprofit Housing Association Policy Director Michael Lane.

"We are pleased the bill has been sent to the Senate floor for a vote and have agreed to major concessions and amendments to the bill in response to concerns raised by our local elected officials to ensure all planned developments on BART property blend in well with existing neighborhood building heights and densities and conform to the locally-adopted design and architectural standards," said Lane, adding, "Final permitting authority remains with the local government. We are absolutely committed to being good and respectful neighbors."

Lafayette Vice Mayor Cam Burks described the vote in favor of AB 2923 as a significant blow

to local governance democracy in California.

"While I haven't seen the new amendments, I'm profoundly disappointed in the committee for not hitting pause and hope that the full senate will exercise common sense in the coming days to vote down this bill," he said.

Burks said that cities across the Bay Area, and all over the state, are against this legislation, which strips local land use, zoning and development control and places it into the hands of a "largely dysfunctional transit agency." He stressed he was proud of residents who had sent "a tsunami" of emails and letters.

"I will continue to directly engage Sacramento and elected officials all over California in the coming days in an attempt to stop this bill from moving forward," Burks said.

La Finestra coming to Moraga

... continued from page A5

"We welcome everyone from Lamorinda and the surrounding areas," Assadi said.

As thrilled as Assadi is about his grand reopening in the Moraga Shopping Center, he mused about the lost Moraga opportunity of earlier this year.

"My dream one day is to open a restaurant in the Hacienda," Assadi

said. "And I hope that dream comes true."

According to Town Manager Cynthia Battenberg, Moraga remains interested in establishing a partnership with a restaurateur to operate at the Hacienda, and is working out a strategy which includes applying for county grant money and building out a restaurant shell.

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