

LAMORINDA WEEKLY

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LAFAYETTE RES RUN
for education

SUNDAY • OCTOBER 21 2018

5K 8am • 10K 8:15am
2 Mile Fun Run/Walk 8:45am

Dogs and strollers welcome for 10K and 2 mile only.

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LafayetteChamber.org/ResRun



Teacher and volunteer Toris Jaeger works with students Jonah Imberg and Ryan Stemmler at the Wagner Ranch Nature Area in Orinda.

Photo Sora O'Doherty

An asset for 40 years at Wagner Ranch Nature Area

By Sora O'Doherty

Sometimes in the midst of life, we need to say to someone, "Wow. You are doing a fantastic job!" Not when they leave or retire, but right in the middle of their career. Thus, Toris Jaeger was honored at a dinner on Sept. 29 in the Orinda Community Center celebrating her 40 years of service to the Orinda community as a teacher and volunteer at the Wagner Ranch Nature Area, where she'll be taking part in the ninth annual Olive Festival on Sunday, Oct. 14. More than 10,000 Orinda children have experienced the hands-on environmental education and social studies programs led by Jaeger since 1978 – and she doesn't plan on stopping any time soon.

Teaching wasn't Jaeger's first career choice. She thought maybe she'd be an anthropologist, an archeologist or a veterinarian. But she wound up taking a teaching credential in Ken-

tucky, where she went into teaching K through 8 in Leitchfield. Later she moved to Missouri, then to Minnesota, finally moving to California in 1972, where she continued to teach for four years. Jaeger loved teaching, but she didn't enjoy being inside. Moreover, subjects were taught separately and she wanted to connect things, to make them meaningful. By 1976, Jaeger decided to get out of classroom.

Jaeger found a master's program at Cal State Hayward, and signed up for her master's in environmental education. In 1978, she heard of a job opening at the Wagner Ranch Nature Area in Orinda. The rest, as they say, is history.

Her goal is to keep the curriculum standards-based, she says. "The core curriculum is trying to accomplish what we've been doing for 40 years: more hands-on teaching of the history

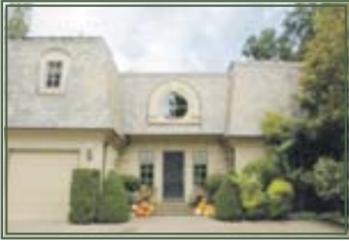
of the cultures and their contribution to California history." She teaches children about the plants and animals, her curriculum evolves every year, and she personally tries to stay current.

The nature area currently operates with a staff of four people, in addition to Jaeger, who teaches every day. The other staff share days. The staff changes, she says. The young ones need to find a full-time job. The ones who stay longer are usually retired or have the knowledge and experience and don't need the money. The Friends of the Wagner Ranch have paid the staff a stipend since 2009 and money raised at the Friends' Olive Festival pays Jaeger and the staff. Jaeger says she is 75 percent volunteer, 25 percent paid. But now the school board is looking at funding the programs again.

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Longtime Lafayette city manager resigns

By Nick Marnell



City Manager Steve Falk reads his resignation letter at the Sept. 24 city council meeting.

Photo provided

In a stunning statement at the Sept. 24 Lafayette City Council meeting, City Manager Steve Falk announced that he will depart at the end of the year.

"This afternoon, I have sent a letter to the city council with my resignation," Falk told the Community Hall audience. "It has been the great privilege of my professional career to serve Lafayette for 28 years, and I am proud of our many accomplishments on behalf of this splendid city. Our residents are engaged; the city council is a model of civility; and the professional staff is brilliant in every way."

An emotional Falk stopped to regroup for a few seconds before he continued. "The time has come, however, for La-

fayette to hear a new voice from the city manager's office and for me to discover my unexplored potential. I hereby resign the position of Lafayette City Manager, effective at the New Year. In the meantime, I will assist the organization in every way as it makes the transition to a new city manager. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to serve this extraordinary community for so many years. I will always Love Lafayette!"

In his letter to the council, Falk elaborated on his reasons for resigning.

"All cities – even small ones – have a responsibility to address the most significant challenges of our time: climate

change, income inequality, and housing affordability. I believe that adding multifamily housing at the BART station is the best way for Lafayette to do its part, and it has therefore become increasingly difficult for me to support, advocate for, or implement policies that would thwart transit density. My conscience won't allow it.

"Meanwhile, in recent years, I helped craft proposals to make Lafayette the very best version of itself. One effort was Measure C, which would have acquired at-risk wild spaces, doubled police patrols, created a downtown park, added new public parking, and restored the historic Park Theater. Another was Measure L, which would have reasonably allowed middle-income development along Deer Hill Road while delivering significant new recreation facilities to the community and avoiding expensive litigation. Local voters rejected both of those measures by wide margins.

"Elections have consequences, and one is that Lafayette residents deserve a city manager who is better aligned with their priorities," Falk wrote.

The city plans to hold a retirement party Nov. 27 at the Lafayette Veterans Memorial Center for Falk and other retiring city officials. As of late September, the city had not decided on a process for recruiting and hiring Falk's successor.

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