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The Rippers at the Roundup Saloon last Friday night.

Photo Andy Scheck

Local community bands together

By Pippa Fisher

It was a rainy night on a holiday weekend, but no one would have guessed it from the capacity crowd at the Roundup Saloon in downtown Lafayette who came together to raise over \$6,000 in a few hours for victims of the Butte County fire at a benefit concert Nov. 23.

As one of several local fundraising endeavors, the Rippers played into the small hours of the morning, together with

sets from SKOOL and No Flow, as people jammed into the bar to enjoy the music. Collection buckets filled and four separate raffles were drawn. The silent auction continued through the following day. The total amount raised is expected to grow.

Roundup owner Karen Johnson said the concert came from an idea that snowballed. As she listened on the news about the plight of all those who lost loved ones and homes

in the Nov. 8 Camp Fire she said she realized she and her husband Mike Johnson had a vehicle for raising money in the iconic downtown bar. She says she was happy to do it.

"I am so proud of the employees and customers – everyone's coming together. It's awesome," said Johnson, as she explained how a couple of bartenders voluntarily went door-to-door asking for auction donation items.

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Advertising

Bollinger Valley Project goes before the Moraga Town Council

By Vera Kochan



Bollinger Valley

Photo provided

A nearly five hour Special Town Council Meeting was held in Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School's auditorium Nov 14 to accommodate the anticipated large crowd.

Head town attorney Michelle Kenyon, from Burke, Williams & Sorenson, explained why Vice Mayor Teresa Onoda would lead the proceedings. "On Nov 13, 2018, BWS re-

ceived an advice letter from the Fair Political Practices Commission indicating that Mayor (Dave) Trotter should not participate in the Bollinger Valley Hearing. BWS has questions with the opinion, but in an abundance of caution, BWS suggested that Mayor Trotter not participate."

... continued on Page A5

After an early Thanksgiving, holiday events dominate December

By Sora O'Doherty

Now that the turkey and fixings are put away, Lamorinda residents can turn their attention to the many holiday events planned in the area, starting with the return of Holiday Magic at Orinda's Theatre Square from 6 to 8 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 1. There will be a free kids ornament workshop from 6 to 7 p.m., followed by a performance by Lamorinda Theatre Academy at 7 p.m., ending with the 7:30 p.m. tree lighting. Throughout the event there will be free horse and carriage rides, as well as visits with Santa and photo opportunities.

Earlier on Dec. 1, at 4:30 p.m. in Orinda Village by the Bank of America, the Orinda Tree of Lights will be lit. For 32 years, Hospice East Bay Tree of Lights ceremonies have offered community members a way to honor the lives of friends and loved ones. Memorial names will not be read at this ceremony, which is part of the Orinda community holiday celebration.

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OIS students at last year's Hospice East Bay Tree of Lights event in Orinda.

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Public Meetings

City Council

Monday, Dec. 10, 7 p.m.
Lafayette Library & Learning Center,
Community Hall, 3491 Mt. Diablo Blvd.

Planning Commission

Monday, Dec. 17, 7 p.m.
Lafayette Library & Learning Center,
Community Hall, 3491 Mt. Diablo Blvd.

Design Review

Monday, Dec. 10, 7 p.m.
Lafayette Library & Learning Center,
Arts & Science Discovery Center,
3491 Mt. Diablo Blvd.

School Board Meetings

Acalanes Union High School District
Wednesday, Nov. 28, 7 p.m.
AUHSD Board Room
1212 Pleasant Hill Road, Lafayette
www.acalanes.k12.ca.us

Lafayette School District

Wednesday, Dec. 12, 7 p.m.
Regular Board Meeting
District Office Board Room
3477 School St., Lafayette
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No final decisions made on filling empty council seat

By Pippa Fisher



Lafayette City Council at the dais during its Nov. 13 meeting.

Although the topic was on the agenda at the Nov. 13 Lafayette City Council meeting, no decisions were made regarding the process for filling a now-vacant council seat. Mayor Don Tatzin encouraged any residents who might be interested in serving to contact the city clerk for an application form. The decision will be up to the new city council when they are seated at the Dec. 10 meeting, with interviews taking place soon after.

The council must appoint a new city council member to take the place of Council Member Mark

Mitchell, who passed away unexpectedly Nov. 5. Since there are fewer than two years left of that term, government code states that the seat must be filled by appointment within 60 days of its becoming open, rather than by special election.

With Vice Mayor Cam Burks having left the meeting early to catch a flight, and Council Member Ivor Samson having stepped out of the room because of potential conflict in the ensuing discussion, there was no quorum. Agreeing that any decision made so soon after losing

Photo Jeff Heyman, City of Lafayette

Mitchell would be untimely and inappropriate, and better left up to the incoming city council lineup in December, Tatzin and Council Member Mike Anderson heard public comments from more than a dozen residents offering their thoughts on next steps.

All expressed their sorrow at Mitchell's passing and noted how he will be missed. There were two main differences in the types of comments beyond that, however.

Many suggested that since the city has just had an election, the appointment should go to third place

candidate Ivor Samson, arguing that this represents what the voters wanted. Others, however, said that usual procedures (applications and interviews) should be followed and suggested that third place might not have been third choice had there been three openings on the ballot.

The item was received and filed and will come back on the Dec. 10 agenda for action by the council, which will then see new Council Members-Elect Teresa Gerringer and Susan Candell join Burks and Anderson.

Also discussed at the same meeting was the ongoing process for hiring a new city manager following City Manager Steve Falk's decision to retire at the end of the year. Tatzin says he has received proposals from four hiring firms. Again the council was in agreement that the new council should be as involved as possible with all steps of the process. Falk said he would expect interviews to take place in early to mid-January before the new complete city council.

Stanley flute choir serenades city council

By Pippa Fisher



The Julia Burke Flute Choir performs at Nov. 13's Lafayette City Council meeting. Photo Jeff Heyman, City of Lafayette

In an ongoing series of performances before city council meetings, Stanley Middle School's Julia Burke Flute Choir, directed by Lafayette Partners in Education flute coach Martha Uhay, brought its sweet music to the Lafayette City Council audience on Nov. 13.

The concerts are intended to showcase the many talents of the community – the goal to have a performance before the first council meeting of each month.

The flute choir is in its second year at the middle school. With community backing and support from Stanley Middle School band director Bob Athayde, the Generations in Jazz Foundation now owns four bass flutes and four alto flutes.

The talented youngsters will also be performing holiday music within the school district over the next few weeks.

Second right-hand turn on Moraga Road at Mt. Diablo Boulevard trial period underway

By Pippa Fisher



Barricades close off the Mt. Diablo Boulevard pedestrian crossing from Plaza Park to Bank of America as part of the testing of a second northbound right-turn lane from Moraga Road in Lafayette. Photo provided

The long-awaited second right-turn lane from Moraga Road onto Mt. Diablo Boulevard is finally here, albeit just for a 90-day trial period. And the city wants to hear opinions on how it's working out for drivers.

The pilot program, approved as part of the downtown congestion reduction plan adopted in March, is intended to evaluate whether the extra turn lane feeding traffic onto Mt. Diablo Boulevard can help ease congestion farther south,

downstream on Moraga Road.

New road striping guides motorists with an extra turn arrow painted in the middle lane at the lights and additional striping on Mt. Diablo Boulevard facilitates merging after the turn.

Because drivers turning right from the second lane have limited visibility, the pedestrian crossing from Plaza Park to the Bank of America corner of the parking lot opposite has been closed.

... continued on Page A12

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Santa to appear in downtown Lafayette, stay for breakfast, shopping

By Pippa Fisher



Last year's Santa visit

Photo Gint Federas

It's a wonderful life in Lafayette and Santa Claus must agree because this year he's sticking around, at least for breakfast, and he might even fit in some shopping as well at one of three scheduled events.

The jolliness of "It's a Wonderful Life in Lafayette" holiday celebration starts at 4 p.m. with Santa arriving at Plaza Park on his "sleigh" - in this case, Lafayette's historic fire truck, Old Betsy - around 4:30 p.m. on Friday, Dec. 7, in a procession along Golden Gate Way complete with a police escort.

The fun, free event now in its sixth year, hosted by the Lafayette Chamber of Commerce, is sponsored by Dana Green Realtors and Branagh Development and has become a family favorite with activities for the kids, light refreshments and lots of photo opportunities with Santa and his Town Hall Elves in addition to the official holiday tree lighting ceremony at 5:30 p.m. Local student

musicians and singers will be providing musical entertainment. Lafayette musician Kiki Stack will be debuting her new holiday song "Christmas Time Once Again."

The evening is truly an extravaganza kickoff for the holiday season because from 6 to 8 p.m. Dec. 7 residents are invited to explore the downtown as they "Stroll, Shop and Dine." More than 70 local merchants are participating, many offering holiday specials only available during this event. Local artists will be showcasing unique gifts. The atmosphere will be festive with holiday décor on display and street musicians adding to the ambience. It is even rumored that Mrs. Claus will be there playing her ukulele.

More details on the Wonderful Life in Lafayette and the Stroll, Shop and dine events are available on the Lafayette Chamber of Commerce website (<https://lafayettechamber.org/>).

... continued on Page A11

Santa's Bag Boutique, now in 28th year

By Pippa Fisher



Avery Bahl preps the sign for the big event.

Photo provided

In what has become a Lafayette tradition, the Santa's Bag Boutique will once again be bringing a huge array of crafters and their wares to the Lafayette Community Center for the first weekend in December.

Now in its 28th year, the boutique originally started at the old Veterans Hall with a group of just 10 artists selling their handmade items. Over the years the event became larger and moved to the Community Center. Each year new artists join the show - this year the boutique will have over 60 vendors.

In addition to the arts and crafts for sale, the Boy Scouts will be selling fresh wreaths and the Lafayette Community Foundation will showcase themed gift baskets donated by local businesses, organizations and individuals. All proceeds from the event benefit the programs and

ongoing physical improvements to the community center.

Event organizer Judy Gregerson has been in charge of the boutique since she started it 28 years ago.

"The show has very much become a community event where families and friends can shop for the holidays," says Gregerson. "It is at the boutique where you will see old and new friends in the community while enjoying some cider and cookies."

"It's all about community camaraderie and people visiting with each other."

The Lafayette Community Center at 500 St. Mary's Road will be transformed into a bustling marketplace from 11 a.m. until 7 p.m. on Friday, Nov. 30 and then from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday, Dec. 1 and 2.

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This Thanksgiving, the Price Gallegos Group is especially grateful for our wonderful clients, our amazing community and for the love and the support of our families. In light of the recent tragic forest fires, and to assist those who have lost so much, we have made a donation to The Norcal Fire Recovery Fund.

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Moraga

Public Meetings

City Council

Wednesday, Dec. 12, 7 p.m.
Council Chambers and Community Meeting Room, 335 Rheem Blvd.

Planning Commission

Monday, Dec. 17, 7 p.m.
Council Chambers and Community Meeting Room, 335 Rheem Blvd.

Design Review

Monday, Dec. 10, 7 p.m.
Council Chambers and Community Meeting Room, 335 Rheem Blvd.

School Board Meetings

Moraga School District
Wednesday, Dec. 11, 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

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Students help teacher give Paradise hope

By Vera Kochan



Rheem Elementary School teacher Angie Guidi is shocked by outpouring of support. Photos Vera Kochan

Angie Guidi, a second grade teacher at Donald L. Rheem Elementary School in Moraga, knows firsthand the devastation of the Paradise, California fires. She grew up there, and several of her family members lost their homes. Even though her aunt, uncle and cousins' houses and possessions are gone, her parents' home was spared. Guidi said, "Some businesses have survived. A building here and there, but Paradise is resilient and that's enough to give them the spirit to rebuild." That type of determination gave

Guidi's students and their families the idea that they could help in the process. Spearheading the recovery endeavor was Kimberly Anderson, organizer and mom to one of Guidi's students.

Anderson spread the word for parents to buy gift cards to various stores and donate them to Paradise. Quickly gift cards from grocery stores, big box stores, clothing stores and even pet stores came pouring in. The gift cards would allow the Paradise fire victims the opportunity to make their own purchases for whatever they needed most.

The surprise presentation was to have taken place in Guidi's classroom, but schools were closed due to unsafe air quality. Instead, the Rheem Starbucks played host on a smoky Nov. 16 morning.

The gift cards, representing blooms, were artfully arranged around two large plants – a Spider Plant and Peace Lily – which according to Anderson (and NASA) are nature's air filters. Several of Guidi's students, their parents and Rheem Principal Brian Sullivan were on hand for the surprise. Sullivan said, "Ms. Guidi has been a

special part of the Rheem community for over 10 years. I'm glad that we can provide her with a little bit of support in these very trying times."

Before Guidi's arrival, she was told that the kids wanted to help her hometown, but she had no idea what was planned. When presented with the "bouquets," she was visibly moved to tears. As late arriving students approached with handfuls of more gift cards and handmade tokens of affection, the spirit behind the gesture was intensified.

Amid the hugs and expressions of support, Guidi stated, "I have a small car and was wondering how

I could fit things in it to donate to Paradise. These cards solved the problem!"

Guidi explained why she loves Moraga so much. "It reminds me of home. Paradise and Moraga have the same type of people. Neighbors supporting neighbors."

Donations of gift cards are still being accepted by anyone wishing to participate in the Paradise recovery efforts. Simply stop by the Donald L. Rheem Elementary School's administration office and let them know you're donating for Guidi's Paradise cause.

For information call (925) 376-4441.



Holiday toy drive looking to top last year's success

By Vera Kochan

In the spirit of the season, the Moraga Police Officer's Association along with the Moraga Police Department is once again partnering with The Marine Toys For Tots Program, to bring joy to less fortunate children in the community and throughout the United States.

This year's second annual Holiday Toy Drive, takes place at 6 p.m. Friday, Dec 7 at the Hacienda De Las Flores, 2100 Donald Drive, in Moraga.

Attendees are asked to donate

a new, unwrapped toy or make a cash donation. Beer, wine, hors d'oeuvres and good cheer will be provided to all who drop by.

Moraga Police Det. Kevin Mooney is this year's event organizer. "I have been involved with the Toys for Tots program since my Marine Corps Reserve days in the '90s," he said. "I count it as one of the most important and satisfying endeavors in which I have participated. A great program for a great cause."

Last year, six Toys for Tots boxes were filled with all types of toys. Cash contributions totaled a little over \$5,500. Toy drive organizers are hoping to double those numbers this year. Even one extra toy or dollar can go a long way to making the holidays happy for a needy child.

Mooney noted that approximately 75 people attended the event last year and were very generous in supporting the cause. And while volunteers are no longer needed,

donations for the food or beverages would be greatly appreciated.

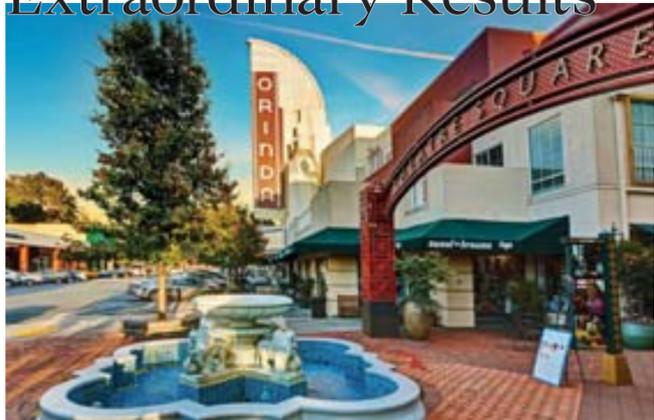
If you can't make it to the festivities, but would still like to donate new, unwrapped toys or cash, please drop them off at the Moraga Police Department, 329 Rheem Blvd. If you'd like to donate online, go to the Toys for Tots website: www.toysfortots.org.

Additional information about the event can be seen at the town of Moraga website: www.moraga.ca.us. Or call Mooney at (925)

888-7056.

According to Mooney, "The Toy for Tots program began in Southern California in 1947, and became a nationwide Marine Corps Reserve program in 1948." He proudly stated, "Since that time, the program has donated over 548 million toys to over 251 million children. Ninety-seven percent of donations go directly to providing toys for children, with the remaining 3 percent going mostly to fundraising efforts."

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Bollinger Valley Project goes before the Town Council

... continued from page A1



Map of existing landslides – a concern identified in the Bollinger Valley Project Environmental Impact Report.

Moraga Planning Director Derek Farmer reiterated his presentation from the Planning Commission meeting held last month to the town council. He stressed that the original Bollinger Valley Project (126 single family homes), as it stands, does not conform to the Moraga General Plan. Issues with landslides, vegetation, slopes, air quality emissions, onsite drainage, ridgelines and open space were part of the Environmental Impact Report recap.

Public safety was also a concern to Farmer. "This project is located in an area prone to geologic hazards such as known landslides and it doesn't provide a maximum emergency response driving time of three minutes, and/or a travel distance of not more than 1.5 miles from the closest fire station," he said, adding, "Lafayette will not grant an Emergency Vehicle Access that goes through their jurisdiction, which will require multiple permits from them, on a project that's not even in Lafayette."

Moraga-Orinda Fire District Chief Dave Winnacker stated that Station 42 on Moraga Road in Rheem is located 3.2 miles from the project and would have a response time of seven minutes to arrive at the top of Valley Hill Road. Station 41, on Moraga Way near Canyon Road, is 3.3 miles away from the project and could have a longer response time using St. Mary's Road, if the college has an event.

Winnacker is concerned about the reduced visibility on the current road to the project and the possibility of high traffic if there is a residential evacuation. "As it stands, MOFD does not support the project because its requirements haven't been met," he said.

The applicant, the Bruzzone family, requested that the town "work with the applicants' technical experts to correct the critical mistakes and omissions in the current Draft Final EIR. Work with us under the existing application to find an acceptable yet feasible housing plan and provide feedback on changes you feel may be needed to make findings of General Plan consistency

for the 85 (Alt 6) home RSA."

After a brief recess, the floor was opened to public comment. Moraga Chamber of Commerce representatives, Bob Fritzky and Kathe Nelson, stressed the need for some type of housing development on the Bollinger Valley site, saying it would have a positive impact on Moraga's revenue through extra retail dollars and taxes.

Others overwhelmingly disapproved of the project during the public comment portion of the meeting, with the greatest concern for EVA, given the recent firestorm climate. One "out-of-towner" from Lafayette, came to express her worries about evacuation should an emergency arise.

In a final summation before a vote, Council Member Kymberleigh Korpus said, "I think there's a lot of room for negotiation to figure what exactly can be put in the right location on the property. There's room for small development."

Council Member Renata Sos agreed, "We're not here to decide whether there will be development of the Bollinger Valley area, but about how much development may occur given the requirements, constraints and policies behind the town's General Plan."

Council Member Roger Wykle stated, "I too agree with the staff and Planning Commission and find that the project as presented, whether it's 85 or 126 homes, has inconsistencies with the General Plan."

Vice Mayor Teresa Onoda concluded, "Our Constitution is our General Plan. That's how we decide about development. I see there are possibilities for some type of housing there, but when the fire chief says, 'No,' I say, 'Yes, sir.'"

The town council moved to adopt the resolution denying the appeal of the original (126 Single Family Home) Bollinger Valley Project.

According to Town Manager Cynthia Battenburg, "The Bruzzones can submit a new application for one of the alternatives. A new EIR would be developed, however much of the information

in the EIR for the 126-lot project could be reused and/or updated." She added, "The council also provided direction to staff to return within 120 days with a schedule and funding recommendations for a General Plan Amendment and Rezone."

Holiday Tree Lighting
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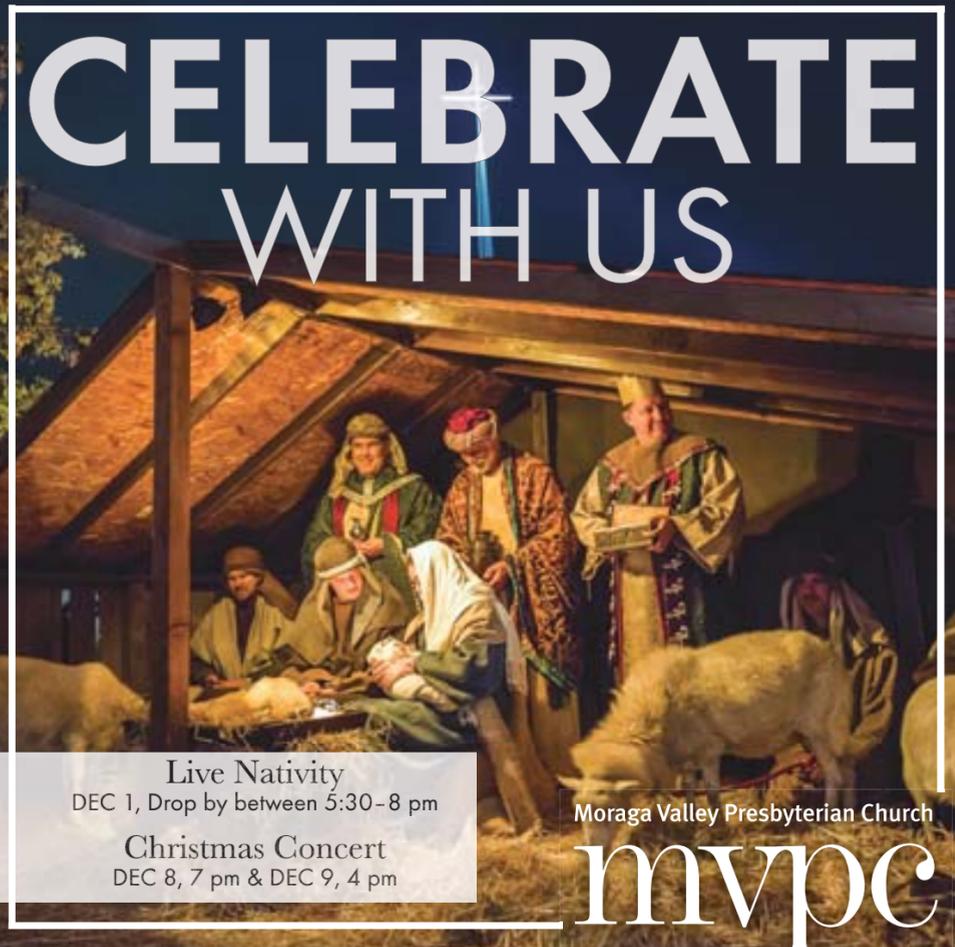
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Tuesday, Dec. 11, 7 p.m.
Library Auditorium, Orinda Library
26 Orinda Way, Orinda, CA 94563

Planning Commission

Tuesday, Dec. 4, 7 p.m.
Library Auditorium, Orinda Library
26 Orinda Way, Orinda, CA 94563

Citizens' Infrastructure Oversight Commission

Wednesday, Dec. 12, 7 p.m.
Sarge Littlehale Community Room,
22 Orinda Way, Orinda, CA 94563

School Board Meetings

Orinda Union School District
Monday, Dec. 10, 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

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Orinda approves 9.2 percent hike in garbage fees

By Sora O'Doherty

On Nov. 13 the city council approved an increase in garbage collection rates of 9.2 percent, to be implemented by RecycleSmart, the Joint Powers Authority to which Orinda is a member. The fee increase, if adopted by the JPA, will be in effect from March 1, 2019 to Feb. 29,

2020. The increase will amount to an additional \$3.36 per month for residential 20-gallon bins and \$3.84 for 32-gallon bins. The majority (80 percent) of Orinda subscribers use either a 20- or 32-gallon bin. For those who use a 64-gallon bin, the increase would be \$7.20, and commercial

users will also see rate increases of either \$44.69 or \$67.03.

The 9.2 percent increase consists of an increase of 2.44 percent for operating costs, and 6.76 percent for the refuse vehicle impact fee adopted by the city council this year. The refuse vehicle impact fee will provide

an additional \$334,275 in road maintenance funding per year.

The fees for solid waste collection are based solely on the side of the trash bin; there is no additional charge for recycling pick up.

Orinda joins other Contra Costa County cities in declaring a shelter emergency

By Sora O'Doherty

At the urging of former Orinda city council member California Sen. Steve Glazer, Orinda adopted a resolution declaring a shelter crisis in Contra Costa County at its Nov. 13 meeting. The adoption of the resolution was required in order for the county and cities within the county to receive grant funding from the Homeless Emergency Aid Program. The State of California Homeless Coordination and Financing Council announced the availability of \$500 million in HEAP grant funding

Sept. 5. The resolution was adopted without discussion as part of the council's consent calendar.

In 2017, according to the county, 10 clients from Orinda received services such as meals, food pantry items, clothing, showers, laundry services, emergency supplies, transportation, case management services, rehabilitation services, veteran's rapid rehousing services, housing eligibility and vulnerability assessment services, emergency shelter, warming center shelter and street outreach services. Of

the 10 Orinda clients, one was a veteran and five were seniors over the age of 60.

The county is in a position to increase its funding for homeless emergency services by over \$7 million with the HEAP money. In order to receive funding in the first round, applicants must apply by the end of this year. Half of the money must be obligated by Jan. 1, 2020, and all of the funds must be spent by June 30, 2021.

Included in the background material for the resolution was a table of current year homeless-

ness data for the county, broken down by municipalities. Orinda was at one, as was Discovery Bay. Nine municipalities, including Moraga, were at zero, while Lafayette was at six. Cities with high homelessness included Antioch at 350 and Concord at 252. Martinez, Richmond and Pittsburg were over 100, and the rest were between seven and 100. The total was 1,352. The data for 2017 of individuals homeless for at least a year totaled 2,680 for the county, including six for Orinda.

After an early Thanksgiving, holiday events dominate December

... continued from Page A1

Lafayette's Tree of Lights ceremony will be held at 4:30 p.m. Nov. 29 in the Roundup Saloon parking lot, at the corner of Mt. Diablo Boulevard and Lafayette Circle, and the Moraga tree lighting is scheduled at 5:30 p.m. Dec. 16 at the Moraga Country Club.

On Sunday, Dec. 9, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. toys will once again come to life at Orinda Theatre Square. Children are invited to meet their favorite characters, including: Belle, Elsa, Chase from the Paw Patrol and Spiderman, plus real live reindeer. There will also be a photo booth. Also at The-

atre Square, Square Baby will be collecting new diapers for victims of the recent fires. There will be a collection container outside their store. Lafayette has several holiday festivities planned on Dec. 9 as well (see stories on Page A3).

The Orinda Ballet Academy will once again present "A Sweet Dream Nutcracker," with performances on Dec. 7 at 6:30 p.m., Dec. 8 at 11:30 a.m. and 4 p.m., and Dec. 9 at 11:30 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. at the Orinda Library Auditorium, 26 Orinda Way. Tickets for adults and children cost \$22 in advance or \$25 at the door, if avail-

able. Advance tickets can be purchased from brownpapertickets.com. There is also a Toys for Tots donation event planned in Moraga that day (see story on Page A4).

On Thursday, Dec. 13, 6:30 p.m. there will be a free movie screening of "A Christmas Story," presented by the California Independent Film Festival and Diablo Magazine and sponsored by Cine Cuvée.

On Sunday, Dec 16, from 3:30 to 5:30 p.m. families are invited to join members of the Orinda/Tabor Sister City Foundation for a Czech cookie class in room number 4 in

the Orinda Community Center. Participants will get a hands-on experience with traditional Czech cookie making and will be able to bring some home. The event, sponsored by Sokol S.F., costs \$10 per family.

Finally, while not quite holiday oriented, the Orinda City Council will honor outgoing Mayor Amy Worth and Council Member Dean Orr at 7 p.m. Tuesday, Dec. 11 at the Orinda Library. The meeting, which will feature the welcoming and swearing in of newly elected council members and selection of the 2019 mayor and vice mayor, will be followed by a reception.

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"Laura helped us sell my parents' home in Orinda. She was knowledgeable, hard working and went beyond what one wouldn't normally expect in a broker. She truly advocated for us and gave excellent advice in the negotiation process. I highly recommend her - ours was a challenging property to sell." - Marian

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7 Darnby Court, Orinda

RECENTLY SOLD
62 Hacienda Circle, Orinda
9 Las Mesas Path, Orinda
145 Warfield Drive Moraga
515 Miner Road, Orinda
1276 Lindell Drive, Walnut Creek

ACTIVE
1055 Silverhill Drive, Lafayette
25 Rustic Way, Orinda

6 Dover Court, Orinda
132 Camino Sobrante, Orinda
770 El Verano, Walnut Creek
4400 El Nido Ranch Rd, Orinda
1076 Serrano Court, Lafayette
1217 Leisure Lane, Walnut Creek

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New executive director of Orinda Chamber of Commerce is a familiar face

By Sora O'Doherty

Cindy Powell, an Orinda icon, has taken over the job of executive director of the Orinda Chamber of Commerce from Sophie Braccini, who moved to a job at UC Berkeley. Powell had been sharing the office with Braccini. While Braccini handled the Chamber, Powell was often handling calls for the Orinda Association's Seniors Around Town transportation service. When Braccini convinced Powell to apply for the job, and she was hired, she needed only to move from one chair to another to take up her new responsibilities. Since she started the new job at the beginning of October, she occupies both chairs, at different times.

Powell, who has lived in Orinda for over 30 years and raised her three children here, has been active in several local organizations over the years. In the early days, she commuted to downtown San Francisco, where she enjoyed working for Crocker Bank as a middle market lender. A banker who loves numbers, Powell also loves to preserve food; Powell is known as the

Green Bean Queen. She makes hundreds of jars of jams and pickles every year and won award after award from the Orinda Association until the end of its program. The awards may have ended, but Powell continues to love canning and pickling. Every year she enters the Mixology competition. This year her cocktail was based on her Mandarin Orange Marmalade. In November she was busy canning her ginger cranberry sauce.

After the canning awards program ended, Powell joined the OA and has been very active in the association, assisting with the Fourth of July Parade, and rising through the ranks to OA president. She has been a board member since 2004.

Last year the Orinda Junior Women's Club gave Powell a big party and a pin to celebrate her 25-year membership. Powell loves the organization, noting that she has "met more wonderful smart women from all over the world" in the local small service group, and she still sits on its board.

Powell grew up in San Diego,

but moved to Orinda in 1983; her family purchased their first home in Orinda in 1988. Her three children all attended Miramonte High School. Her oldest went to Glorietta, then, when they opened Wagner Ranch, her other two children went to that elementary school where Powell worked while her children were attending. Now they are grown and gone, and she has more time to devote to Orinda in other areas.

Powell is now turning her attention to Orinda businesses. She has spent time talking to Orinda City Manager Steve Salomon and Finance Director Paul Rankin, brainstorming ways to build up business in Orinda. She is planning lots of new, fun events to promote Orinda businesses, and believes that the new business registration program will help. Powell is excited that Dec. 1 is Shop Orinda day, and has helped organize some incentives to get shoppers to go local. For example, Orinda Chevron will give away free shopping bags, and the Village Inn Café will be open for extended hours to serve hungry shoppers.



Cindy Powell

Photo Sora O'Doherty

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Fire Districts

Public Meetings

Moraga-Orinda Fire District

Board of Directors
Wednesday, Dec. 5, 7 p.m.
Nov. 21 cancelled
 Go to the website for meeting location, times and agendas. Visit www.mofd.org



ConFire

Board of Directors
Tuesday, Dec. 11, 1:30 p.m.
 Board Chamber room 107, Administration Building, 651 Pine St., Martinez. For meeting times and agendas, visit <http://alturl.com/5p9pu>.



Orinda teenager dies in early morning house fire

By Nick Marnell



Heat damage to a helmet worn by an MOFD firefighter responding to the Orinda house fire

Once firefighters got 10 feet inside the building, the fire flashed, and everything inside the building became combustible.

Two additional occupants and one firefighter were injured. An MOFD firefighter suffered second-degree burns to his shoulder and ear – through his turnout gear – and was treated and released from John Muir Medical Center.

A total of nine engines responded and the fire was controlled at 5:08 a.m. Units from the Contra Costa County Fire Protection District assisted MOFD firefighters on the scene.

The confirmed fatality was Luca Gero, 16, a student and member of the debate team at Miramonte High School. A GoFundMe campaign has been created for the teenager's family and as of the final week of November had raised more than \$160,000.

"The incident is currently under investigation as is standard for all fatality fires," MOFD Chief Dave Winnacker said. "The district will not be releasing additional information until the investigation is complete." Due to the complexity of the incident, the chief gave no timetable for the release of the information.

Photo courtesy MOFD
 A teenage girl died and three people were injured after a single-family home in Orinda went up in flames in the predawn hours of Nov. 18.

According to fire officials, just before 4 a.m. Moraga-Orinda Fire District units responded to a structure fire at 524 Moraga Way in south Orinda near Ivy Drive. The first arriving unit found the residence engulfed in flames and immediately went into rescue mode after determining that there was an imminent threat to life.

Halfway through, Alliance contract a financial and operational success

By Nick Marnell



Photo courtesy ConFire

There were times when Contra Costa County Fire Protection District Chief Jeff Carman felt unsure about the future of the Alliance, the business model that he spearheaded to provide ambulance transport service for most of Contra Costa County, which has performed better than critics expected.

When the county hired Carman in 2013 to run the struggling fire district, he was charged with finding new sources of revenue. "The ambulance contract was the low-hanging fruit," Carman said, as the county contract with American Medical Response to provide ambulance service was expiring at the end of 2015. Carman reasoned that ConFire could not only provide faster ambulance response times but also provide them more cost effectively by eliminating the duplication of resources on medical calls.

But many thought the chief was taking on too much, and was dangerously shifting the financial risks of an ambulance service from a private company to taxpayers. "There were people saying we couldn't even run a fire department, so how were we going to run an ambulance service?" Carman said.

The chief quickly learned that he could not do it by himself. Consultants convinced Carman that the prudent thing to do was to team up with AMR as a subcontractor and pitch for the ambulance contract as the Alliance. For \$200 million over five years, AMR agreed to provide ConFire a trained and knowledgeable workforce, equipment and unmatched buying power.

Not all of Carman's experiences with consultants were positive. An early presentation to the board of directors by a poorly pre-

pared consultant nearly derailed the project. "That presentation was inaccurate, terrible. Were it not for me being new and the board understanding, I think that could have shot us down," Carman said.

Citygate Associates, a consultant that the county hired to project Alliance financial data, told the board that the numbers would be only 10 percent of what the chief had forecast. "Although it still showed us as being profitable, it wasn't what I was sharing with my bosses. At the end of the day we were right and they were wrong," Carman said.

After ConFire secured the five-year contract, things did not begin smoothly, mainly due to technology issues in the district dispatch center. Response times were long. It took over a month for the AMR dispatch center to merge with ConFire's. "I called for meetings to talk about the issues every morning and ultimately we got it worked out. But for me, it was a nightmare," Carman said.

Problems also arose with the billing agency. "Things they said they could do they were now saying they couldn't," the chief said. "I was watching the finances like a hawk, and with every little glitch I would have someone on the phone. It all worked out, but it was just that there were so many naysayers out there that I didn't want anything to go wrong."

Thirty months into the 60-month contract, not much has gone wrong.

According to its 2017 annual report, Alliance 2017 response times on 74,000 transports dropped a minimum of 32 seconds from the 2015 response times under AMR. District records show that Lafayette

2017 response times improved nearly three minutes over the 10 minutes, 37 seconds of 2015, the final year of the county AMR contract.

The county reports Alliance financial information in a special Emergency Medical Services Transport Fund. Revenue for 2017-18 totaled \$51 million with expenses of \$44 million, and as of June 30 the Alliance reported a surplus of nearly \$17 million for its first 30 months of operation.

Perils lie ahead, like the uncertainties of the Affordable Care Act and potentially disgruntled AMR employees who opposed the passage of Proposition 11, requiring ambulance workers to remain on call through their meal and rest breaks. Also hovering is the decision of the California Emergency Medical Services Agency to take away ConFire's exclusive right to provide county ambulance service, alleging that the county Board of Supervisors suppressed competition in awarding the contract to a company – ConFire – for which it also serves as the governing board. The county has appealed the decision.

Carman agreed that securing the ambulance contract was a career accomplishment, though he still gets nervous knowing that nationwide many are watching the Alliance business model, which is the first of its kind in California.

In 2016, the chief resisted high fives until he saw results after six months. "Now, three years later, we are going strong," Carman said. "Providing excellent service, using resources efficiently, and remaining financially sustainable – everything we promised."

Police Departments

Lafayette Police Department Incident Summary Report Oct. 29 - Nov. 17



Suspicious Circumstances 4

Vehicle violations

- Auto Burglary
 - 900 Blk Of Oakhill Rd.
 - 50 Block Lafayette Cr.
 - Stanley Blvd./Camino Diablo (2)
 - 3200 Block St An Ley Blvd.
 - Brown Ave./Deer Hill Rd.
 - 900 Block Dolores Dr.
 - 3500 Block Mt Diablo Blvd. (2)
 - 3600 Block Mt Diablo Blvd. (3)
 - 100 Block Of Lafayette Cir.
 - 1000 Block Oak Hill Rd. Laf
 - 1000 Block Dyer Dr.
 - 3400 Block Moraga Blvd.
 - 4000 Blk Mt Diablo Blvd.
 - Happy Valley Rd/Mt Diablo Blvd. (2)
- Hit And Run Felony
 - Old Tunnel Rd/Pleasant Hill Rd.
- Hit And Run Misdemeanor
 - 2Nd St/Mt Diablo Blvd. (2)
 - Chestnut St./Dewing Ave.
 - 1600 Block Rancho View Rd.
 - 20 Block Lafayette Cr.
 - 3600 Blk Mt Diablo Blvd.
 - 1200 Blk Pleasant Hill Rd.
 - 3300 Block Mt Diablo Blvd.
- Police Department
 - Moraga Rd./Mt Diablo Blvd.
 - 1000 Block Willow Dr.
- Tc - Fire And Amb Enroute
 - 1100 Block Via Roble
 - Taylor Blvd./Pleasant Hill Rd.
- Tc - Property Damage
 - 3400 Block Mt Diablo Blvd.
 - Reliez Station Rd./Olympic Blvd.
 - N Thompson Rd./Glen Rd.
 - Upper Happy Valley Rd./Rahara Dr.
 - 3500 Blk Mt Diablo Blvd.
 - Pleasant Hill Rd./Greenvalley Dr.
 - 200 Block Lafayette Cr.
 - 800 Block Reliez Station Rd.
- Vehicle Theft
 - 900 Block Moraga Rd.
 - 1000 Block Willow Dr.
 - Mt Diablo Bumt Diablo Ct.
 - 4000 Blk Mt Diablo Blvd.
 - 1000 Block Blackwood Ln.

Other criminal activity

- Fraud Credit Card
 - 3400 Block Echo Springs Rd.
- Fraud False Pretenses
 - 3400 Block Moraga Blvd.
- Grand Theft
 - 1000 Block 2Nd St. Laf
- Identity Theft
 - 3600 Block Powell Dr.
 - 1000 Block Miller Dr.
 - 3400 Block Shangri La Rd.
 - 10 Block Hawk Canyon Pl.
 - 1700 Block Ivanhoe Ave.
 - 3300 Block Deer Hill Rd.
- Petty Theft
 - 3400 Block Golden Gate Way
 - 3900 Block Rancho Rd.
 - 3100 Block Stanley Blvd.
 - 3500 Blk Mt Diablo Blvd.
 - 4000 Block Marianne Dr.
 - 3100 Block Stanley Blvd. Laf
- Petty Theft From Veh
 - 3700 Block Mt Diablo Blvd.
- Shoplift
 - 3600 Blk Mt Diablo Blvd. (5)
 - 3500 Blk Mt Diablo Blvd. (2)
- Vandalism
 - 10 Block Moss Ln.
 - 3600 Block Bickerstaff St.
 - 3300 Block Carlyle Terrace
 - Pleasant Hill Rd./Mt Diablo Blvd.
 - Via Roble/Dolores Dr.
 - 20 Block Lafayette Cr.
 - 1300 Block Martino Rd.
 - 1000 Block Carol Ln.
 - 800 Block Solana Dr.
- Nuisance to the Community
 - Disturbing The Peace
 - 3500 Block Mt Diablo Blvd.
 - Loitering
 - 3600 Blk Mt Diablo Blvd.
 - Loud Music
 - 900 Block Hawthorn Dr.
 - Loud Noise
 - 3200 Block De Young Ln.
 - 3200 Block Mt Diablo Ct.

Moraga Police Department Incident Summary Report Nov. 6 - Nov. 19



- Alarms 18
- 911 Calls (includes hang-ups) 9
- Traffic 62
- Suspicious Circumstances 11
- Suspicious Subject 10
- Suspicious Vehicle 8
- Service to Citizen 37
- Patrol Request/ Security Check 33
- Supplemental Report 10
- Welfare Check 4

Vehicle violations

- DUI Misd
 - St. Marys College
 - Safeway
 - 10 Block Miramonte Dr.
- Excessive Speed
 - Moraga Rd./Commons
 - Rheem Blvd./ Moraga Rd.
 - Devin Dr./Moraga Rd.

Moraga ... continued

- Excessive Speed
 - Seven Eleven
 - Moraga Rd./Donald Dr.
 - St Marys Parking Lot
 - Moraga Way/Schools St.
 - Moraga Rd./Campolindo Dr.
 - Larch Ave./Dickenson Dr.
 - Moraga Rd./Ascot Dr.
 - Moraga Way/Hardy Dr.
 - Moraga Way/Moraga Valley Ln.
 - Moraga Rd./School St.
 - St Andrews Dr./Moraga Way
- Hit And Run Misdemeanor
 - Moraga Way/Moraga Rd.
- Reckless Driving
 - Rimer Dr./Camino Pablo
- Safeway
 - Campolindo High School
 - St Marys Rd./Moraga Rd.
 - Moraga Way/Camino Ricardo
 - 1200 Block Rimer Dr.
- Revoked License
 - Moraga Rd./Draeger Dr.
- Traffic Hazard
 - 2100 Block Ascot Dr.
 - 900 Block Country Club Dr.
 - Moraga Rd./Rheem Blvd.
 - Fernwood Dr./Newberry Pl.

Other criminal activity

- Identity Theft
 - 100 Block Paseo Del Rio
 - 30 Block Fieldbrook Pl.
- Shoplift
 - Safeway
 - Rheem Valley Shopping Center
 - San Jose
- Vandalism
 - 2000 Block Donald Dr.
 - 100 Block Calle La Mesa
- Violation Restraining Order
 - Camino Pablo Rd./School St.

Nuisance to the Community

- Barking Dog
 - CVS
 - 70 Block Hardie Dr.
- Disturbing the Peace
 - Campolindo High School
 - 2000 Block Ascot Dr.
- Drunk In Public
 - 1200 Block Rimer Dr.
 - 40 Block Miramonte Dr.
- Loud Music
 - 1200 Block Rimer Dr.
- Loud Noise
 - 2000 Block Ascot Dr.
- Public Assembly Check
 - Roundtable
 - Moraga Rd./Campolindo Dr.
 - Rheem Valley Shopping Center

Other

- Accident Property
 - CVS
- Fraud False Pretenses
 - Safeway
- Mentally Ill Commit
 - Campolindo High School
 - Rimer Dr./Tharp Dr.



Orinda Police Department Incident Summary Report Nov. 11 - Nov. 17

- Alarms 27
- 911 Calls (includes hang-ups) 4
- Traffic 56
- Suspicious Circumstances 5
- Suspicious Subjects 3
- Suspicious Vehicles 10
- Patrol Request/ Security Check 12
- Service to Citizen 19
- Supplemental Report 7
- Vacation House Check 11
- Welfare Check 3

Vehicle violations

- Reckless Driving
 - Moraga Way/Glorietta Blvd.
 - San Pablo Dam Rd./Bear Creek Rd.,
 - Wildcat Canyon Rd./Camino Pablo

Other criminal activity

- Commercial Burglary
 - Rite Aid
 - 10 Block Camino Sobrante
- Grand Theft
 - 60 Block Muth Dr.
- Susp Circ/Sexual
 - Miramonte High School
- Warrant Arrest
 - Beverages And More
 - Safeway
 - El Nido Ranch Rd./Acalanes Rd.

Nuisance to the Community

- Drunk In Public
 - Miner Rd./Oak Arbor Rd.
- Loud Noise
 - Barbara Rd./Oak Rd.
- Public Assembly Check
 - 10 Block Theatre Sq.
- Public Nuisance
 - Orindawoods Dr./The Knoll
- School Assembly Check
 - Miramonte High School
- Vandalism
 - Bates Blvd./Davis Rd.
 - Beverages And More
- Other
 - Accident Injury
 - Safeway
 - Accident Property
 - Camino Encinas/Moraga Way
 - Prom Shoot
 - 100 Block Ravenhill Rd.
 - 10 Block De Soto Ct.

Share your thoughts, insights and opinions with your community.
 Send a letter to the editor: letters@lamorindaweekly.com

... continued

Letters to the Editor

An appeal for air quality

Now that everyone's attention is focused on air quality let's address what we can do about air pollution. All drivers can start by not idling their engines for more than a minute while waiting for someone or something. It is appalling how many of us sit with our engines running while we text, talk on the phone, sleep or just plain wait oblivious to the fact that we are polluting the very air we breathe for no apparent reason. It is understandable to leave the engine running when we are stuck in traffic (although there should be a time limit even in this scenario) however it makes no sense to park and leave your engine running for 15-30 minutes at a time on a daily basis. The worst culprits are parents waiting for their kids after school. I have watched the same drivers park and idle for 30 minutes waiting for their child's dismissal 5 days a week. Unfor-

tunately the kids are the ones who spend the most time breathing in the bad air created by dozens of cars idling in the same location. Please be thoughtful and turn off your engines. Everyone's lungs are at risk but children are the most vulnerable.

Below is an excerpt from the Bay Area Quality Management District Resource Page

Turn Your Key, Be Idle Free

You can save money, reduce air pollution, and help everyone breathe easier just by turning a key! Turn off your car engine if you'll be sitting for more than 30 seconds at a car wash, drive-thru or pick up spot. You'll save gas, money and help Spare the Air! The Spare the Air Resource Teams have launched "Idle Free Bay Area" to help create cleaner air around your community. For more information or to get involved, please visit Idlefreebayarea.org.

Grandma Ginny in Lafayette

Opinions in Letters to the Editor are the express views of the writer and not necessarily those of the Lamorinda Weekly. All published letters will include the writer's name and city/town of residence -- we will only accept letters from those who live in, or own a business in, the communities comprising Lamorinda (please give us your phone number for verification purposes only). Letters should be 350 words or less; letters of up to 500 words will be accepted on a space-available basis. Visit www.lamorindaweekly.com for submission guidelines. Email: letters@lamorindaweekly.com; Regular mail: Lamorinda Weekly, P.O.Box 6133, Moraga, CA 94570

Saranap General Plan proposals nearing completion

By John T. Miller

After three contentious projects roiled the Saranap community in the past decade, the County Department of Conservation and Development is nearly ready to finalize policies to be added for the Saranap Avenue-Boulevard Way Planning Process Study Area.

Sean Tully, Senior Planner with the DCD, announced there will be one additional meeting taking place in the new year. "After that county staff would initiate the process for having the vision statement and policies adopted." This would conclude with a vote by the Board of Supervisors to add language to the existing General Plan for the study area.

Some of these proposed policies would discourage changing single-family residential land use designations to other urban designations; improve pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure where feasible, especially along the full length of Boulevard Way; and designate a location for a neighborhood park or other community space that could include such elements as a playground, lawn areas, dog run/park, picnic area, exercise equipment, and community garden.

Policies for the Boulevard Way Mixed-Use corridor include encouraging mixed-use projects over single use, and should consist of neighborhood-serving commercial use and multiple family dwellings; limiting roof heights to 50-55 feet; discouraging projects with a density exceeding 40 units per net acre; and making sure each building's scale, massing, and architectural style will be harmonious with its surroundings and contribute to a visually pleasing streetscape.

The Boulevard Way right-of-way, from Saranap Ave east to the Walnut Creek border, which was originally designed as a four-lane thoroughfare, would be reduced to two lanes with diagonal parking and bicycle facilities on both sides. In addition, proposals include traffic calming devices, a traffic circle, metered angled parking, crosswalks, parklets, widened sidewalks, street trees, landscaping, decorative streetlights, street furniture, water features, public artwork, and other amenities, as appropriate.

These proposals were the result of three public outreach meetings over the course of last year, an online community survey, and a property owner's meeting.

However, both Tim Lynch and David Dacus, presidents of the Saranap Homeowners Organization and the Saranap Community As-

sociation, respectively, expressed concern that the process needed more input, at least through the summer of 2019.

In a joint letter to John Kopchik, director of the DCD, and to Supervisor Candace Andersen, Lynch and Dacus spoke for their cooperative working groups requesting "at least three more meetings to achieve increased input." The letter noted that only about 3.5 percent of the Saranap population had weighed in on the planning process, representing "an inadequate level of community input."

The letter pointed out that the three public meetings were not advertised beyond the memberships of the two neighborhood groups representing 250 of the well-over 5,000 residents (based on the 2010 census), and asked the county advertise to all residents of the Saranap area.

The fact that both the SHO and SCA groups are working together represents great progress since the neighborhood's intense fights over the King Estates project, the Sufism Reoriented Sanctuary and Hall Equity Group's Saranap Village development proposal.

In response to Lynch and Dacus's requests, Kopchik replied, "If the community wishes to have another meeting (after the public outreach meeting on Oct. 16), I have no objection. However, I think it is important to recommend amendments to the General Plan to the board soon." Kopchik added that they are working on a comprehensive overhaul of the General Plan for the entire county, to be completed by the end of 2020.

According to Lynch, the Saranap neighborhood groups will meet again in early December to discuss what feedback they want to give to the county.

There may still be some push-back on the height limits, both higher and lower than the 50-foot proposal, and Dacus expressed concerns on the impact of other parts of Saranap, especially the Olympic Boulevard corridor.

Citizens wishing to view the agendas, PowerPoint presentations, and draft vision statement and policy documents, can access the webpage at <http://www.contracosta.ca.gov/6914/Saranap/Saranap-AveBoulevard-Way-Planning-Process>. NOTE: Process spelled with one 's' in this case.

An email address is available on the webpage to propose an edit or comment on the policies, which can be done through this Sunday, Dec. 2.



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Keeping your hair Sharp in Lafayette

By Jon Kingdon

In movies like “Barbershop” and shows like “The Andy Griffith Show,” the barbershop was far more than a place to get your hair cut. It was a place for friends to meet, share ideas, debate the issues

of the day and leave the shop looking better than when you walked in. Since 2016, the Sharp Barbershop at 1001 Oak Hill Road in Lafayette has proven to be such a place. When Sheldon Torson de-

cidated that he wanted to open up his own barbershop, he had a vision of a place that would bespeak a friendlier time with his barbers and the overall environment of the store: “I have worked very hard to find the old-time barber chairs from the 1920s and 1930s which are no longer made.”

Torson’s manager, E.J. Colberg, says the shop is more than just unique chairs: “The entire shop is all traditional. We’re not trying to be trendy or new age. Besides the classic chairs, we have old church pews and old-time light fixtures. We provide complimentary whiskey, beer (legal since 2017) water and juice boxes for kids. It allows our customers to be more relaxed in the chair, whether for a haircut or for a hot towel shave.”

Just as important for Torson and his staff is communication: “We want to anticipate and listen to the wants and needs of our customers. We offer crafted haircuts that fit our customer’s head shape, texture and lifestyle.”

It was Torson’s long held dream to open a barbershop and he always knew what it would be called: “In 2009, long before we began Sharp, I registered the name with Contra Costa. I have a tattoo with a straight razor and the razor is built into the name of the store.”

Torson followed the three rules of real estate in opening his shop in Lafayette: location, location, location. “I searched for five years for the right spot,” said the owner, who grew up in Concord. “I wanted a small town that was underserved in the industry, a place with adequate parking that was right off the freeway and near BART.” He says they plan to do fake shaves on the kids at the future Canyon Club Brewery in Moraga or Philz Coffee Shop in Lafayette. “We want to help new businesses here and we want to be able to let our customers know of their businesses when they come into our shop.”

As welcoming as the shop is, the final product is what’s most important, says Torson: “At the end of



Sharp Barbershop staff, from left: Dustin Lowenthal, Gabe Colorado, E.J. Colberg, Sheldon Torson and Angelo Gerosolimo. Photo provided

the day, a barber has to be an artist. Cutting is like sculpting. We are creating a shape and we have to have an eye for aesthetics. The best barbers are natural artists and have a passion for detail.”

Though the clientele is almost exclusively male, there are women who will come in and ask to have their hair to be styled “on the masculine side,” says Torson.

Yet it is not an uncomfortable environment for women, says Colberg. “A lot of mothers will bring their children in to get their hair cut and then their husbands will come in not long after. We get a lot of customers through word of mouth.”

It’s the welcoming attitude that Torson wanted to establish: “It’s important that the adults and children feel comfortable in our shop. Whatever their needs are, we want to be accommodating. We have Amazon Echo and will play whatever music a customer requests, though drawing the line at offensive music. It also allows us to learn about new artists.”

Cutting hair may not be for everyone, but it’s a happy crew at Sharp. Says Colberg: “I like the lifestyle that working as a barber allows you. You’re your own boss and you control your hours. There is no competitiveness here at all as regards our customers. As long as you’re in Sharp, we’re just happy to have you in the shop. People are welcome to try all of our barbers.”

Convenience has been an operative word at Sharp as they try to operate around their customer’s needs. “The store will open up at 7 a.m. to allow people to get their haircut prior to going to work,”

Colberg says. “Still we will take special requests. I tell my clients that if it is crucial, contact me and I will fit them in instead of taking a break.”

Torson has also developed a special group of customers: “I met Jeff Head, the strength trainer for the San Francisco Giants and at his direction, I became one of the barbers for the team. I will take care of 10-15 players prior to the games about twice a month. During the off season, some of the players will make the trip out to our shop as well.”

Torson is already leaving a legacy by taking on an apprentice named Dustin Lowenthal, allowing him to learn how to cut hair rather than going through barber school. After two years of training, he will then be allowed to take the state board written and practical exams.

“I have been able to take tips from everyone in the shop and have been learning their tricks of the trade,” says Lowenthal appreciatively. “We have our own unique brand here. It’s different from anywhere else and people recognize our style.”

Though the shop does not take credit cards, an ATM machine is available in the back of the store. Appointments can be made online at Vagaro.com/sharpbarbershop, which allows people to see the schedules of the barbers at any time.

Torson gives much of the credit to his father for his career choice: “His advice was to be your own man or you will have to deal with someone else’s bull. I know we will never be replaced by robots.”

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Santa to appear in Downtown Lafayette, stay for breakfast, shopping

... continued from Page A3

But wait, there's more ... the big man will be reappearing from 8:30 to 10 a.m. on Sunday, Dec. 9 at Sideboard, 3535 Plaza Way in Lafayette, for a special pancake breakfast with Santa to benefit the Lafayette Historical Society at a first-ever special event.

This is the perfect opportunity

for photos as residents will enjoy a private meet and greet with Father Christmas while enjoying off-the-menu pancakes and a choice of freshly squeezed orange juice or pour over coffee courtesy of Sideboard at the site of Lafayette's original Pioneer Store.

Lafayette Historical Society

Advisory Board Member and event organizer Lauren Herpich hopes to encourage an interest in history in youth, while raising money for the society. "This is the first kid-focused event the Historical Society has done in quite some time," she said.

Families will have a chance to

learn more about Lafayette's past through historical photos and to bring to life a special kids' coloring sheet at their tables. There will be a silent auction with all proceeds going to the Lafayette Historical Society. Families will also receive an annual family membership to the society through 2019 (a \$50 value).

Tickets for the breakfast cost \$49 for adults, and \$39 for seniors and kids 12 and younger. To book tickets go to <https://www.localfoodadventures.com/breakfast-with-santa/> Tickets must be booked by noon, Dec. 8.



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Local community bands together

... continued from Page A1

She says regular customers donated, along with many businesses in Lafayette.

For several in attendance there were personal connections to the fire. Johnson said that one of the former Roundup bartenders came in. "She lost everything in the fire. She told me about her experience," Johnson explained. "It was very emotional."

Johnson said the benefit proved so successful that they are planning to hold a second such event after the New Year.

The event was one of several being held around Lamorinda to benefit fire victims, includ-

ing a Nov. 30 benefit concert at Lamorinda Music, organized by Mighty Fine Guitars owner Stevie Coyle (see story on Page B3), the Blind Date with a Book program at Orinda Books (see story Page B5), and a fundraising drive organized by Rheem Elementary School students on behalf of their second grade teacher (see story Page A4).

To donate online, residents can go to the North Valley Community Foundation's website <https://www.nvcf.org/?fbclid=IwAR1NVLvgdGyd2LF9KyCamwo2ENKxNVcvX9YUkgy6muv-2TCRYhPc0JFkcNA> or can simply drop off a check at the Roundup.

Second right-hand turn on Moraga Road at Mt. Diablo Boulevard trial period underway

... continued from Page A2

Orange barricades with fencing and signage have been placed to direct pedestrians to use alternate crosswalks. Overhead pedestrian "walk" lights have been covered and are turned off.

Additionally, signal technology upgrades are being installed at both this junction and at Mt. Diablo Boulevard and First Street that will enable data collection. This technology will include updated

signal controllers to run the signal timing plans. The upgrades are the first steps toward implementing another Downtown Congestion Reduction Plan strategy to achieve better signal coordination and traffic management on downtown roads.

Following the 90-day trial period, data gathered will be brought back for council consideration early next year.



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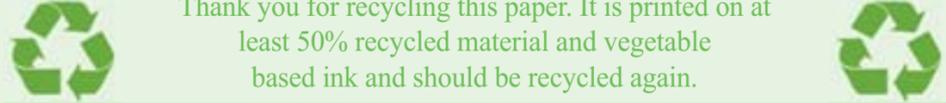
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~ Life in LAMORINDA ~

Dance for Kindness international flash mob spreads joy in Moraga

By Jenn Freedman



Photo provided

Approximately 50,000 dancers across 100 cities in 40 countries danced to the same song with the same choreography on Sunday, Nov. 11 – with 200 of those participants dancing right here in Moraga. The Dance for Kindness is an international event, founded seven years ago by Life Vest Inside (based in New York City) in celebration of World Kindness Day. For the past five years, Justin Cole, co-founder of local dance company Joy in Motion, has been involved in the event in various roles, from dance leader to group leader to choreographer. This year he led the community in the freeze mob and flash mob outside his new Moraga studio on School Street.

Even the smoky air couldn't keep the enthusiastic dancers inside; they danced in the studio's parking lot to a packed crowd of proud onlookers.

This year, the global impact of Dance for Kindness is greater than ever: Life Vest Inside is donating 10 percent of each city's overall fundraising to a local nonprofit chosen by the city's group leader. Cole's

choice was Luna Dance Institute in Berkeley, renowned in early childhood education for dance. Four teachers at Joy in Motion have taken the institute's training classes.

Cole explained why Dance for Kindness is so important to him personally: "It was one of the catalysts for helping me make the decision to co-found my own dance organization. ... I realized I wanted to spread more joy and kindness into the world and ... in our community. What is crazy is, once I did, so much opportunity and positive light started shining upon me.

"My favorite part is seeing everyone come together for good. Each year it seems like there is something horrible happening ... this year it was the fire ... and it's a much needed day for the community to come together and choose to spread love, kindness and joy. Regardless of our differences, kindness is universal, just like dance. That is why I do it year after year."

For more information about the event, visit www.danceforkindness.com.

LAMA charity event raises \$100,000 for local nonprofit

By Pippa Fisher



Grateful Gatherings co-founders Christine Flitter, left, and Donna Wright Somerville. Photo provided

When two local, volunteer groups team up with the generous and caring community in Lamorinda, good things are going to happen. In this particular case local nonprofit, volunteer group Lamorinda Gives Back hosted a 'Giving Back in Black' fundraiser held to benefit Grateful Gatherings, a local organization which helps furnish homes of families transitioning out of homelessness or crisis.

Held at a Lafayette home, emceed by Andrew Firestone, former star of the hit show "The Bachelor," with music provided by local cover band, The Peelers, and craft beers served by Canyon Club Brewery, the fun event raised over \$100,000.

Director of Programs Christine Flitter, who together with Donna Wright Somerville founded Grateful Gatherings just four years ago, said that they could have never imagined the outpouring of support for their small organization. "We are incredibly grassroots, it's run by the two of us, an amazing board and thousands of volunteers. In a matter of 20 minutes, LAMA and hundreds of donors allowed us to help so many more families next

year. It was incredibly powerful, humbling, and inspirational all at the same time.

"We have helped 125 people in 2018 and can't wait to see what holds for 2019 with an extra \$100,000 raised! We just feel honored to have been the beneficiary and can't wait to share the immediate impact of these donations," said Flitter.

LAMA consists of about 100 members dedicated to making a difference in the community through volunteerism, fundraising and advocacy and is not aligned with a single beneficiary. Instead the group is constantly seeking to identify new opportunities where resources are needed most.

LAMA President Brian Britton is grateful for the support that made the event such a success.

"Grateful Gatherings is a remarkable organization with great leadership who make real differences on a daily basis. We are so thankful for the support from our members, donors, and all the 'Give Back in Black' attendees who participated at this great event and helped raise money for this worthwhile cause."

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Local author publishes emotional memoir of life with celebrity parents

By Sora O'Doherty



Author Christine Scherick O'Brien
Photo Sora O'Doherty

In "Crave: A Memoir of Food and Longing," author Christine Scherick O'Brien writes of her life growing up with her famous movie and television producer father, Edgar Sherick, and her mother, a former Miss Missouri and talented musician who was afflicted with health problems. Her mother's search for health through nutrition affected the lives of her four children, O'Brien and her three brothers, as they were growing up. O'Brien appeared at an Orinda Books luncheon Nov. 14 to speak about her life and her book. Her book was published on Nov. 13 by St. Martin's Press.

Born on the East Coast, O'Brien came to California as a teenager, moving with her father's career from New York City to Hollywood. Eventually she wound up in the Bay Area. Having lived for six years in Lafayette, O'Brien and her husband Tim now live in Walnut Creek. She teaches at Saint Mary's College in Moraga and he coaches rugby there. She met her husband when she was an undergraduate at UC Berkeley. Having grown up with three brothers, O'Brien was tough and physical, so when she was invited to start a women's rugby team at Cal, she accepted the challenge. Having completed her senior year at Beverly Hills High School, where O'Brien didn't feel that she fit in with the surfers and jocks, playing rugby at Berkeley made her feel "seen again."

When she graduated from Cal, she went on to earn a master's degree at Saint Mary's. She is proud of her writing in "Crave." My language, she says, has been called "so evocative, so unusual." O'Brien believes that each writer's language is unique, "like your fingerprints."

In "Crave," O'Brien writes about how both of her parents

affected her. Her father was, she says, "a rage-aholic: he was addicted to yelling." But he was also creative and powerful. When O'Brien was with her father on the sets of some of his productions, she was deep within the magical world of filmmaking, where the actors were treated like royalty, and she was too. This led her to feel that celebrity was very important, and for a time skewed her approach to relationships.

When O'Brien was 10 years old, her mother collapsed for the first time. They were living in New York City at that time, in the historic Dakota apartment building, where O'Brien once went trick-or-treating to the door of Lauren Bacall. O'Brien's mother tried various doctors, but they failed to make her feel better, so she took matters into her own hands, turning to practitioners of healing through diet. She followed several diets that seemed extremely radical at the time, although perhaps less so now. After starting on blended drinks containing fresh yeast and raw liver, she moved on to a regimen that focused on blended salads and vegetable juices, with small amounts of daily protein.

O'Brien mentions in "Crave" that in her father's film, "Rosemary's Baby," which was filmed at the Dakota, Mia Farrow is "forced to ingest blended green drinks with strange ingredients to prepare her to spawn an unhuman child."

"I feel some relief," she noted, "that someone is recognizing the very thing I have myself felt, that this is a scary place to live."

O'Brien and her brothers followed the diet as their mother directed, because, O'Brien says, "we felt we were keeping her alive." But they were always hungry, if they were not in fact malnourished. O'Brien writes about how she was "deliriously eager" for smoked salmon, and savored the experience of eating lobsters. At summer camp she dreamed of steak and reviled the white diet of carbohydrates. "It doesn't matter how much I eat," she says, "I am never full."

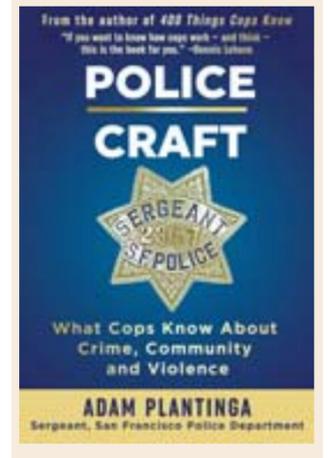
O'Brien details how she admired both of her parents, but worried about her mother's health and her father's rage. She ricochets from the relative deprivation of her mother's strict diet to the luxurious trappings of stardom, as she gets to hang out on her father's movie sets or accompany him on the red carpet at the

Golden Globes.

Always a writer, O'Brien kept diaries as a child, and her memoir stretches from those early days in Manhattan to her present live in the Bay Area. "Crave" is her first book.

Book Signing for another local author Dec. 1

Moraga resident, author and San Francisco Police Sgt. Adam Plantinga will be talking about and signing his second non-fiction book about law enforcement, "Police Craft," from 7 to 8:30 p.m. Dec. 1 at Orinda Books.



Looking Good in Lamorinda

Fashionable holidays

By Moya Stone



Marcia Brunning knits up samples for her shop Busy Stix.

Photo Moya Stone

As a knitter I'm always looking for quality yarn and in Lamorinda we have Busy Stix, which is located in downtown Lafayette. The spacious shop offers an array of yarns in wool, cotton, silk, and blends in bright and subdued colors by top-quality brands like Shiburi.

Owner Marcia Brunning was taught how to knit by her mother and she has been working in some capacity of the yarn business for more than 20 years. With her shop, Brunning has created a welcoming environment for experienced and novice knitters alike, who stop by with needles in hand, sit around the shop's large dining table and stitch away. "We encourage peo-

ple to come in, knit and relax," says Brunning. Some arrive with questions, some are looking for new projects, others just want company while they make progress on sweaters, socks, or the latest hot item – shawls.

Brunning says that knitters have taken to the shawl and sport it in fashion-forward ways, like the back in the front. Other fashionable choices are knit hats, chunky sweaters, and tunics that layer well with designer clothing brands such as Eileen Fisher. For inspiration, Busy Stix stocks magazines and books. Also available are knitting kits by local business Bella Yarn, knitting needles, crochet hooks – anything a stitcher might need. Plus there's no shortage of gift items. Felt bags, soaps and lotions, shawl pins, and charming holiday ornaments. Think gifts for your favorite knitter or how about encouraging someone to get started? Brunning offers classes and often works with Lafayette children's bookstore, Bel & Bunna's, teaching both young boys and girls to knit. Busy Stix is located at 3409-D Mt. Diablo Blvd. in Lafayette.

Lafayette hat designer Chris Del Monica will be showing her festive wares at the Hacienda Holiday Faire (2100 Donald Dr.) in Moraga Nov. 30 to Dec. 2. Hats are really in style," says Del Monica, who has been selling out of her fascinators at recent shows thanks to the influence of this year's Royal Weddings. For in-

formation, visit haciendafoundation.org/hacienda-holiday-faire.

The Center for Community Arts Handcrafted Holiday Sale is happening Nov. 30 to Dec. 2 in Walnut Creek. Center for Community Arts offers classes throughout the year and hosts this annual show featuring the works of more than 70 students and instructors, many of whom are from Lamorinda. Program Manager Maile Ogasawara says there will be jewelry, ceramics,



How about putting this on your holiday wish list? "East Meets West" jewelry exhibit at the Legion of Honor in San Francisco.

Photo courtesy Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco

glass art, mosaics, photos, and much more. "We support local artists and community members," says Ogasawara, "giving access and opportunity to curated shows." The opening reception, with music, food, and a crafts table where shoppers can explore their own creativity, will be held at 5 p.m. Friday, Nov. 30. The first 50 attendees each day will receive a free tote bag. Center for Community Arts is located at 111 N. Wiget Lane in Walnut Creek: www.communityarts.org/handcrafted.

Tucked away near FedEx behind La Fiesta Square in Lafayette is Alicia Klein Showroom, which offers for sale handbags, briefcases, and small gift items such as key chains, card cases, luggage tags – just right for stocking stuffers, Hanukkah, teachers gifts, babysitters, or Secret Santa. Stop by through Dec. 23 for holiday shopping and some Moraga-made chocolates. Hofssi Chocolates will be passing out samples and selling their popular sweets. Alicia Klein Showroom is at 3541 Wilkinson Lane in Lafayette: www.AliciaKlein.com.

For a festive treat with plenty of sparkle, I recommend the current exhibition at the Legion of Honor Museum in San Francisco, "East Meets West: Jewels of the Maharajas" from the Al Thani Collection. On now through Feb. 24, this exhibit includes 150 items of stunning jewelry and other accessories from 17th century India to modern inter-



Alicia Klein is a co-designer of the Taxi Wallet, available at Alicia Klein Showroom in Lafayette.

Photo Moya Stone

pretations by western designers: legionofhonor.famsf.org.

Speaking of bling, local jewelry designer Natasha Grasso is closing her Moraga shop in the Rheem Shopping Center. Everything in the store is 20 percent off through the middle of December. The bricks and mortar may be going away but Grasso is still designing and selling her popular jewelry online at www.natasha-grasso.com.

Enjoy a safe and happy holiday season and remember to go forth in style!

Moya Stone is a freelance writer and fashion blogger at www.overdressdeforlife.com.

Mighty Fine Guitars Nov. 30 benefit concert helps fire victims

By Lou Fancher



The Quitters

Photos provided

One way to determine the humanitarian temperature of a community is the degree of difficulty required to convince people to take credit for their own good deeds and generosity.

It requires a boatload of persuasion to get Mighty Fine Guitar shop owner Stevie Coyle to pop the cork about the Nov. 30 Camp Fire Benefit at MFG concert; the entire proceeds of which will go to people rebuilding their lives after the Nov. 8 Camp Fire in Butte County. On the list of performers joining finger-picking guitarist Coyle are Glenn Houston (Coyle's co-guitarist in the duo, The Quitters), Leftover Dreams (Tony Marcus and Patrice Haan), Teresa Tudury, Tricia Hellman Gibbs and others. The 8 p.m. performance takes place in The Big Room, a well-known, 75-person, in-store performance space located next door to Coyle's Lafayette shop. Use of the space is donated by Lamorinda Music owners Colleen and John McCormick.

Of course, like Coyle, the McCormicks aren't out waving the flag of giving either. They're just giving.

Coyle and the McCormick's reticence could come because the show, by the time this article goes to print, is sure to sell out and have a waiting list. Coyle put the word out when he heard that people would be uplifted to learn about the rapid response and to know of the North Valley Com-

munity Foundation, and created a Facebook Live stream of the concert with the suggestion for sending donations.

"Within five hours, we had 67 seats reserved," says Coyle. "I had to go with RSVP so we don't have a throng out there. I only wish I could add a second show." During a busy holiday season, The Big Room is mostly booked, as are other locations in Lamorinda that Coyle contacted. "I would have liked to have done this even sooner, but I'm grateful to my niece, Colleen, for allowing us to use the space for even one night."

Coyle says the NVCF is already accepting donations and will be easily accessed during the concert broadcast by people unable to attend the live show. "You just hit Mighty Fine Guitar's Facebook page or my personal Stevie Coyle FB page. You'll have the show to watch and it will have the URL for where to donate. Facebook Live is astonishing, so hopefully donations will come in that way as well."

The foundation, he emphasizes, has low administrative costs. "So many people have found out that organizations devote little money to the people who actually need the help. But as far as I have learned, this one does a great job."

Asked to talk about the camaraderie between artists, Coyle opens up. "There's serendipity onstage," he says, about per-

forming with Houston. "He was with me in the first iteration of The Waybacks (a four-member band Coyle, Houston and Wayne "Chojo" Jacques founded in the late 1990s that was joined by singer, songwriter and guitarist James Nash in 1999). Glenn plays left-handed and upside down as well. He doesn't turn the low strings around so they're closer to his face. He plays bluegrass, Chicago style blues on the electric, all flat-picking, where I do finger-picking. Our styles are complementary. We can turn on a dime and play something we've never played before and feel confident."

Coyle says the two jazz musicians who make up the duo Leftover Dreams and every solo artist he invited instantly said "Yes." Some of them had played in Butte County area music festivals, but most performers just wanted to use their art to benefit people in need. Coyle and Houston recently had a private gig near Paradise. "It was a house concert, almost at ground zero," he recalls. "Their place was luckily spared. So for us there's personal stake, but also, being hundreds of miles away, breathing the smoke - let's just say it's easy to put something together."

... continued on page B7

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Kiwanis starts 9th year of See's Candy Fundraiser

Submitted by Tim Freeman



Photo provided

Kiwanis of Moraga Valley is celebrating its ninth annual See's Candy Fundraiser with two stores open in the two Moraga shopping centers. Pictured with this year's first customer, Chris Van Stralen, are John Haffner and Barbara Van Sickle.

Handmade dresses sent to Congo, Uganda and Dominican Republic

Submitted by Sue Renno



Photo provided

Lafayette United Methodist Church women show some of the 529 dresses handmade this year to give to girls through the Dress A Girl Around the World Association. Dresses this year will go to girls in Congo, Uganda and Dominican Republic. All dresses are made with love.

Campo musician offers unique class to strengthen breathing and improve lung function

By Cynthia Brian



Jack Pawlakos Photo Cynthia Brian

Many of us take breathing for granted, but for those suffering with respiratory issues, normal breathing is serious business. Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease has the third highest mortality rate in the United States. Over 12 million Americans suffer from COPD as a chronic lung condition making breathing difficult. Emergency room visits have skyrocketed to over 1.4 million annually because of this difficulty.

Lamorinda and the surrounding areas were blanketed in smoke because of the horrendous Camp wildfire in Paradise. The heavy air filled with particulate matter significantly compromised breathing for those with respiratory issues.

Studies indicate a 50 percent loss in lung function between the ages of 30 and 70, and while most Lamorindans are active participants in aerobic activities, those exercises benefit the heart, endurance and general fitness, but have significantly less benefits for our lungs.

At the request of the American Lung Association, Campolindo High School sophomore and award-winning harmonica player, Jack Pawlakos, designed a program for the Bay Area that improves and strengthens breathing and exercises lungs. Having been inspired by a relative who suffers from pulmonary challenges, Jack jumped at the opportunity to help others. He is a blues harmonica player who played his first big gig at the age of 12 among some of the world's most renowned musicians.

The harmonica is the only musical instrument that has the ability to create stronger lungs and improve breathing. Harmonica programs have been used across the country at places such as the Mayo Clinic, and Baylor Medical Center, but this is a new program to the East Bay. Playing harmonica requires deep inhaleds and exhales. It is one of the few instruments that can achieve this feat. The consistent breathing in and out strengthens the diaphragm facilitating deeper breathing in players. Playing exercises the muscles that help pull and push air out of the lungs. Additionally, abdominal muscles are strengthened, which assists in more effective coughing as well as gaining better control of breathing.

Participants in programs increase their respiratory ability and enjoy reduced anxiety and increased social experiences. An added bonus: playing is fun.

The John Muir Concord Pulmonary Support Group will feature Jack as its guest speaker at 2 p.m. Wednesday, Nov. 28. He will discuss the benefits of playing the harmonica, how it can improve your breathing, and demonstrate an introduction to harmonica playing.

Beginning Saturday, Jan. 5 and every Saturday through March 9 from 9:30 to 10:30 a.m., Jack will teach a class at Pleasant Hill Recreation and Parks District, Course 2352.801, "Play Harmonica, Strengthen Your Lungs!" Registration opens Dec. 3 with a limited class size (<http://pleasanthillrec.com/101/Programs-Activities>).

These fun programs are open to all who would like to improve their health and have a good time learning how to play the harmonica. This class is specifically tailored for COPD and other related pulmonary diseases. The harmonica is an easy to learn instrument that will provide participants with an increased quality of life. No musical experience is required.

For more information and to register, contact PHPR at (925) 682-0896, and John Muir Hospital Pulmonary Group, (925) 674-2351.

In Memory

Luca Katalin Gerő

(December 13, 2001 - November 18, 2018)



Luca Katalin Gerő was born December 13, 2001, at St. Luke's Roosevelt Hospital in New York, overlooking the smoldering rubble of Ground Zero—the aftermath of the terrorist attacks of 9-11. She was born a survivor: her mother, Réka Pigniczky, was six months pregnant with Luca as she covered the attacks for the Associated Press. Dodging the crashing WTC towers, it was a miracle that Luca and her mother survived.

That rough beginning and the war-like aftermath of living in New York did nothing to dim the light Luca emanated from the day she was born. Her very name: Luca, an archaic Hungarian version of Lucia, means light. And her light shone from the day she blessed this world to the day it was extinguished all too soon in a horrendous fire that destroyed her family's home on November 18, 2018.

Luca was the beloved first child of Barnabás Gerő and Réka Pigniczky. When Luca was six months old, the family moved to Budapest, Hungary (her father's childhood home and her mother's ancestral home). For her doting grandparents there, Luca was the first of 11 grandchildren, including Luca's siblings Jolán and Lukács.

The Gerő household was always bursting with children and activity, with Luca the ringleader. She was an impetuous and joyful child who met the world head-on. Even as a toddler, Luca befriended everyone she met and climbed every tree she saw. Together with her sister Jolán, Luca attended the Zoltán Kodály Music School and sang in the Hungarian Radio Children's Choir. She also sang in the children's choir of the Church of St. Anthony of Padua, where she received her First Holy Communion.

In 2012, Luca moved with her family to Orinda, CA (her mother's childhood home). Within months, Luca had made herself comfortable in a brand new circle of friends at Del Rey Elementary School. Before she even spoke English properly, she captivated the school talent show with a song about Hungary and the friends she'd left behind.

Luca enjoyed rock climbing, read voraciously in both English and Hungarian, and liked to write. She played volleyball competitively until her sophomore year. She loved to travel, hike, and ski with her family; she was planning a trip to Bhutan with her mother as a high school graduation gift in 2020.

As she became a teenager, her childhood chattiness sharpened into a sophisticated verbal ability that she deployed to defend her opinion on any issue at hand. Her mother's suggestion that she join the Debate Team at Miramonte High School was inspired. Debate was not an academic exercise for Luca; it was how she made sense of the chaotic post-terror world into which she was born. She learned to use analysis and criticism to take a stand and defend it, with eloquence and wit. She planned to become a lawyer.

She had an incredible sense of humor, empathy toward those in trouble, and fierce loyalty to her friends. Even in her teenage years, she was open and honest with her parents, much more likely to spill the beans than to tell a lie.

Since childhood, Luca was an enthusiastic member of the Hungarian Scout Troop of the San Francisco Bay Area. She was a natural leader of the younger scouts in her charge. Among her scout peers, it was often Luca who set the tone, came up with the skits, wrote the songs, and rattled off zany ideas in her signature mile-a-minute chatter.

Luca's natural magnetism drew many friends from her many communities, but she knew her essential home was her family. Only a few weeks ago, Luca defied her parents' wishes and got herself a small tattoo. Just four discreet letters on the inside of one finger: rblj—representing her mother, father, brother and sister, whom she loved indelibly and permanently.

Luca lived life as it was meant to be lived, full of love and inquiry and the yearning for justice. But love is what drove her and gave her the ability to not fall prey to pettiness, insecurity, or hatred. Even as she argued and sought the truth, she remained respectful and tolerant.

Now, that powerful love is all we have left of Luca. Though her loss and our grief are infinite, we can still cling to that love. As we return to our everyday lives in a world marked by brutality, intolerance, and injustice, we honor Luca best by following her example, by radiating love and forgiveness to our families and communities.

Those left to cherish Luca's memory include: parents Réka Pigniczky and Barnabás Gerő; sister Jolán; brother Lukács; grandparents Katalin Vörös (Wayne Phillips), Dr. László Gerő and Dr. Eszter Jánossy; great-aunt Elizabeth Vörös; aunt Eszti Pigniczky (Endre Szentkirályi); cousins Keve, Bendegúz, Vajk, and Enese; uncle Andrew Udvarnoki; aunt Villő Gerő (Zsolt Andrask) and cousins Sára, Samu, Emma; aunt Borbála Gerő (Ákos Pogány) and cousins Áron, Emese, and Vera; uncle Dr. Domokos Gerő (Dr. Eszter Simon) and cousins Anna and Blanka; and numerous loving relatives, friends, classmates, scouts, and their parents and teachers in the U.S. and in Hungary.

Luca is preceded in death by her grandfather, László Pigniczky.

Arrangements for a memorial service are pending.

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 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, and include "Celebrations and Remembrances" in the subject line.

Please...



...thanks

Blind Date with a Book program raises funds for fire victims

By Vera Kochan



Blind Date books ready for purchase at the checkout counter.

Photo Vera Kochan

As a way to help raise money for fire victims, Orinda Books owner Maria Roden is capitalizing

on a unique idea: her Blind Date with a Book program. Book stores typically receive a free copy of a

new book given by a publisher, for promotional purposes, to booksellers before the book is printed for mass distribution. Roden said, "I get so many books for free and am not allowed to sell them, so I decided to give them away to various causes on a regular basis."

The Blind Date with a Book program utilizes these books, which are wrapped in plain paper. Roden writes just a hint of what the book is about on the front. The books range in topic and are fiction or non-fiction. There's even a category for kids denoting a suitable age range included with the short synopsis.

The suggested cash donation is \$5, but Roden said, "We'll take any amount. I just set out the basket of books on Thursday (Nov. 15), and

already we've taken in over \$700! One person wrote a check for \$300. I can't fill the basket fast enough. It's been amazing!"

When asked how long the fire relief promotion is expected to last, Roden foresees it going to the end of the year. And it doesn't stop there. Orinda Books is generously matching all donations dollar for dollar. "Every month we 'Blind Date' for a new cause, but this a very urgent one."

Orinda Books has consistently given away books to various causes over the years. They've sponsored an author school visit, providing 130 books, donated books to local Title 1 low-income schools, and participated in the Reach Out and Read program, which underscores how reading aloud promotes lan-

guage development and early literacy skills.

All money collected from the Blind Date with a Book program will be sent to Global Giving, which in turn forwards the donations to The California Wildfire Relief Fund. Global's website says, "This fund will provide relief to people impacted by the fires in the form of emergency supplies like food, water, and medicine, in addition to long-term recovery assistance to help residents recover and rebuild." To donate directly visit www.globalgiving.org.

To support Blind Date with a Book, stop by Orinda Books, 276 Village Square, Orinda, visit their website: www.orindabooks.com, or call (925) 254-7606 for more details.

Boy Scouts Providing Fuel for Life



Photo provided

Orinda Boy Scouts Troop 237, from the Orinda chapter of Grateful Gatherings, helped lift a family out of darkness and into the light. In one day, hard-working Scouts and families were able to furnish a home for a single dad and his four children recently transitioning out of homelessness. This family has never had a home to feel comfortable or safe. Now they don't have to sleep on broken beds and can have a family dinner together at one table. The only girl with four

boys in the home, the 11-year old daughter sobbed when she saw her room fit for a teen girl. As the family hugged, the eldest son said, "Thank you, this is going to give us fuel!" Troop 237 thanks Oakland-based, nonprofit organization Grateful Gatherings (gratefulgatherings.org) and the support of the community and troop families for allowing them the opportunity to give this family a new start.

Village Associates helps families keep Thanksgiving traditions alive

Submitted by Brent Bamberger



Photo provided

Village Associates, an independent real estate brokerage firm in Orinda, continued its Thanksgiving tradition of helping families in need with children at UCSF Benioff Children's Hospital, Oakland by preparing and providing over 75 meals, supplies and support.

When a child is admitted at Children's Hospital Oakland, many of these families live in temporary housing close to the hospital. In conjunction with Social Services,

Village Associates and its 30 agents, bought, organized and presented baskets of meals and supplies for families on Nov. 14.

Organizers said the feeling of home is not something every family gets this time of year. "This is our 14th year of supporting families who are dealing with extenuating medical circumstances. It's our way of making the holiday feel more personal and special for them."

The Peter Pan Foundation continues quest to help others

Submitted by Gina Campo



Who are these selfless superstars? The kids and teens of The Peter Pan Foundation in Lafayette.

Photo provided

The Peter Pan Foundation started as an organization that inspired children of all ages to be creative and give back while pro-

ducing several big stage musicals a year. Since adding a performance troupe and partnering with local charitable organizations, PPF is

now involved in non-stop community service. Any given month, they will be performing at an average of 8-10 events, as varied as St. Baldrick's Brave the Shave at UCSF Benioff Children's Hospital in Oakland, participating in the Dance for Kindness event, to helping at local food banks.

"Doing community service activities with the PPF teaches kids and teens what can't be taught in any classroom," explained Juliette Benazra, a senior at Acalanes High School and president of the PPF teen leadership council, Bay Area Magic Makers. "We are able to realize the significance of kindness, empathy and our ability to make a difference in our community and on a larger scale."

PPF has participated in about 30 events so far this year for both The Make-A-Wish Foundation and Easter Seals Bay Area and is thrilled to be joining forces with the Born This Way Foundation in 2019.

This Veterans Day, the troupe

performed their annual abridged version of their signature musical "Wish Upon A Star" at Children's Hospital. This was the PPF's 12th time bringing this magical show to the hospital and the performance concluded with a donation of \$15,000 and more than 150 Play-Station video games. With this recent donation, the PPF has donated more than \$200,000 to the hospital over the past 10 years.

In addition to the audience that day, patients at the hospital throughout the year will get to enjoy the show through the weekly showing through the hospital's closed circuit TV system.

"Performing at Children's Hospital Oakland was an extremely impactful experience because we were able to bring our show to the kids who can't come to us," said PPF performer Alex Young.

"These events are instilling a sense of self, as well as a desire to be selfless," explained Leslie Noel, founder and artistic director for the PPF. "Our participants see first-

hand how capable they are – how capable we all are – of making positive changes in the world. PPF is providing a safe space for them to grow, feel confident that they have much to give others and then to use their gifts to spread love and light. It is a beautiful and humbling thing to be a part of."

Where the excitement never stops, the foundation is thrilled to be moving into their new home Jan. 1 on Mt. Diablo Boulevard in Lafayette that will serve as an inspiring environment for their teen leaders, philanthropists and children of all ages, enabling them to extend love and light to even more people in need. They will be performing a winter gala of holiday music with a silent auction to help raise funds to support the expenses of the new location and their ongoing philanthropy work. The public is invited to attend on Dec. 7 at the Lafayette Library. Ticket information can be found on their website, peterpan-foundation.org.

White Pony Express sends ready-to-eat meals and cash donations to Paradise fire victims

Submitted by Steve Spraitzar

Starting Nov. 14, White Pony Express, the 2018 California Nonprofit of the Year in California Senate District 7, commenced sending a refrigerated truck daily with perishable ready-to-eat food and envelopes with donated cash to aid the fire victims in the Paradise area. WPE intends to continue making these runs until there is no longer an acute need for area fire victims.

WPE volunteers Jim May and Eric Cox drove a refrigerated van with food and donations to a little-

known town called Brownsville Nov. 14 where the manager, Kathleen, has been putting up about 50 evacuees in her small motel. "She fixes food for them in the morning and the townspeople do it in the evening," May said. "The ready-to-eat sandwiches and salads that White Pony Express brought were enough to provide them with lunches for several days. In Brownsville, we handed out envelopes of money, which is desperately needed for necessities."

The ready-to-eat meals are

from the regular donations made daily to WPE's Food Rescue program. These donations have been providing a substantial amount of food that is distributed by WPE to the hungry in Contra Costa County.

"Going on to Oroville, we found people camped out in parking lots," May continued. "Fortunately, we were able to provide food to all of those who needed it. It was a wonderful experience to be a part of this."

These food and cash donation trips to the impacted areas are be-

ing carried out by WPE's Food Rescue Program staff and volunteers. The Food Rescue Program picks up quality surplus food each day from supermarkets, restaurants, and farmers' markets and then sorts and delivers that food to shelters, churches and other facilities that feed the hungry in our communities. All of this is done free of charge. In five years, WPE has rescued more than 7.5 million pounds (equivalent to about 6.3 million meals) of fresh, nutritious food that would otherwise go to

waste.

Says WPE Executive Director Gary Conner, "Although we principally serve Contra Costa County, White Pony Express is most grateful to be able to send needed food to the families in the Paradise area, who are now coping with survival in the aftermath of the fires. It is important that we remember and help serve our brothers and sisters in Paradise, many of whom have lost everything."

Not to be missed

ART

In the spirit of the season, the Moraga Art Gallery presents "Holiday Magic in Porcelain and Paint," a colorful new show featuring the works by two of Lamorinda's most celebrated artists: Lafayette's Donna Arganbright and Orinda's Maria SantaStefano. The show, which includes paintings, jewelry, ceramics, photographs, and many other gifts of art by the gallery's 14 members and guest artists, runs through Jan. 5. For more information, visit www.moragaartgallery.com or call (925) 376-5407.

Valley Art Gallery's annual Artful Giving show runs through Dec. 29 and includes a wide variety of beautifully crafted ceramics, wood and glass pieces, original designer jewelry, fiber arts, holiday decorations, small paintings, and many other unique, one-of-a-kind gift items all handcrafted by our talented East Bay artists.

Santa's Bag Boutique from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. on Nov. 30 and from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Dec. 1 and 2 at the Lafayette Community Center. Get your holiday shopping underway with Handcrafted items from 60 artists. The 3-day event has been a Lafayette tradition for 28 years. Donated gift baskets benefit the Lafayette Community Center Foundation.

InsideOut Art show and auction from 1 to 4 p.m. on Dec. 2 at the Lafayette Christian Church. InsideOut Art promotes rehabilitation and restorative justice through the arts. Art work donated by incarcerated artists will be displayed and sold. Proceeds from the art sales will help purchase art supplies for the art programs in High Desert State Prison and to support local healing programs for the victims/survivors of crime. lcc-doc.org

3rd Annual Small Things Exhibition at the Jennifer Perlmutter Gallery through Dec. 22. Over 35 artists have been chosen to display 3D and 2D artworks in a variety of media and styles. www.jenniferperlmuttergallery.com

MUSIC

Holiday sing-a-long concert with the Saint Mary's Chamber Choir and Glee Club at 8 p.m. on Thursday, Nov. 29 and at 8:15 p.m. on Saturday, Dec. 1 in the Chapel, 1928 Saint Mary's Road, in Moraga.

The Diablo Women's Chorus presents their fall concert "Winter Peace," at 3 p.m. on Sunday, Dec. 2. at Temple Isaiah, 945 Risa Road, in Lafayette. Drawing on a variety of musical genres and eras we bring you songs from John Legend, Enya, Hoagy Carmichael,

Not to be missed

Rogers and Hammerstein, Irving Berlin, Sara Bareilles, and others – all selected to warm the heart, lift the spirit, and soothe the soul. Purchase advance tickets by calling 1-800-838-3006 or online at www.DiabloWomensChorale.org. Prices are \$25 General Admission and \$15 Child/Student. A limited number of tickets may be sold at the door for \$30.

Sara Couden, Contralto, Performs at St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Walnut Creek, with Special Guest Marina Tolstova, Soprano, and Simona Snitkowsky, Piano at 7 p.m. on Dec. 7 at 1924 Trinity Avenue, Walnut Creek. At St. Paul's, Sara will perform her program Awkward Love, where she visits some of opera and art song's most awkward musical romancers. Donation at the door: average \$20, Students \$10 (all are welcome regardless of donation).

Experience a heart-warming presentation of new and traditional Christmas music at the Moraga Valley Presbyterian Church Christmas on the Hill concert at 7 p.m. on Saturday, Dec. 8 and at 4 pm on Sunday, Dec. 9. No cost, but an offering will be taken.

Join the Oakland Gay Men's Chorus for 'Tis the Season for Singing, beloved seasonal carols and songs to celebrate winter solstice, yuletide, and

holiday festivities at 7:30 p.m. on Dec. 15 at the Lafayette Christian Church, 584 Glenside Drive Lafayette. Whether you're a lover of wintertime or a Scrooge, this concert will warm your heart and fill you with the spirit of the season. <https://tistheseasonforsinging.eventbrite.com>

THEATER

Town Hall Theatre "Lost & Found" Season 2018-19 continues with the holiday offering: the West Coast Premiere of "Great Expectations," an adventure-packed adaptation of the classic Dickens' coming-of-age story by Gale Childs Daly. "Great Expectations" will have 12 performances, including two previews, Nov. 29 through Dec. 16 at Town Hall Theatre Company, 3535 School Street, in Lafayette. Tickets are \$18 - \$30, and are available through the Box Office at (925) 283-1557 or online at www.TownHallTheatre.com.

Solo Opera and award-winning Bay Area composer, David Conte, bring to life the timeless turn of the century short story, "The Gift of the Magi," by O. Henry. Set in the original 1905 time period, the opera will contain a cast of seven singers, accompanied by a seven-piece chamber orchestra under the baton of Maestro Alexander Katsman. The opera will be performed

at 8 p.m. on Nov. 30 and Dec. 1, and at 2:30 p.m. on Dec. 2 at the Leshar Center for the Arts, 1601 Civic Dr., Walnut Creek. Tickets: \$25-\$40, call (925) 943-7469.

Orinda Intermediate School Bulldog Theater stages The Addams Family Young@Part Edition, Dec. 6 through 8 at Orinda Intermediate School, 80 Ivy Drive. The beloved and kooky Addams Family comes to life in this delightful musical comedy! Tickets are \$3-\$10. Visit www.showtix4u.com for show times and tickets. Tickets are also available at the door.

The Rheem Theatre and the Classic TV Preservation Society (CTVPS) nonprofit are aligning to bring live theatre productions and events to the Rheem Theatre, beginning with A Three's Company Christmas Parody at 6 and 8 p.m. on Dec. 8 and at 2 p.m. on Dec. 9. Tickets are \$25 for this laugh out loud evening and can be purchased online at www.lamorindatheatres.com or at the Rheem Theatre box office.

The Peter Pan Foundation presents its winter musical, "Into The Woods" Dec. 14-16. This award winning show is a modern twist on the beloved Brothers Grimm fairy tales in a musical format that follows the classic tales of Cinderella, Little Red Riding Hood, Jack and the Beanstalk, and Rapunzel – all tied together by an original story involving a baker and his wife, their wish to begin a family and their interaction with the witch who has put a curse on them. There will be six performances held throughout the weekend at the Northgate High School Little Theatre and ticket information is available on their website, peterpanfoundation.org.

KIDS, PARENTS & TEENS

Free Photo with Santa from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Dec. 15 at 5A Rent-A-Space 455 Moraga Road, Moraga. Cookies, fruit, cocoa and candy canes will be served and children will complete and take home arts and crafts. Fun for all ages. Everyone welcome.

OTHER

For the 21st year, Bobbie and Tom Preston will be holding the Cycle Recycle, collecting repairable bikes to be refurbished and given to charitable groups to distribute at Christmas. This year the recipient organizations include Oakland International High School's Earn-A-Bike program, Marsh Creek Detention Center, and Trips for Kids in Marin. New and/or used bikes and trikes—in working order or repairable, or useable bike parts may be delivered to the side driveway of the Preston's home at 1307 Larch Avenue in Moraga, throughout the month of November only. No skateboards or plastic bikes please; no need to call beforehand, but for more information contact Bobbie or Tom Preston at (925) 376-8474.

Hospice East Bay Presents Tree of Lights 2018: Lafayette Tree at 4:30 p.m. on Thursday, Nov. 29 at the Roundup Saloon parking lot, Mt. Diablo Blvd and Lafayette Circle East; Orinda Tree 4:30 p.m. on Saturday, Dec. 1 in Orinda Village by Bank of America; Moraga Tree at 5:30 p.m. on Sunday, Dec. 16 at the Moraga Country Club, 1600 St. Andrews Drive. <https://hospiceeastbay.org>.

See the Christmas story come to life at the 14th annual Live Nativity from 5:30 to 8 p.m. on Saturday, Dec. 1 at 10 Moraga Valley Ln., Moraga. Drop by to see the MVPC Courtyard transformed into a Bethlehem manger complete with live animals. No cost.

... continued on next Page

Lamorinda's Religious Services



Lafayette United Methodist Church

955 Moraga Road 925.284.4765 thelumc.org
 Sunday 10am Worship and Faith Formation for all ages
 Opportunities to Love God, Love Others,
 and Serve the World

St. Anselm's Episcopal Church
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Sunday Services: 8 and 10 AM

In-church Youth Zone, 10 AM Nursery Childcare
 682 Michael Lane, Lafayette, 284-7420, www.stanselms.ws

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www.christianscienceorinda.org



St Stephen's Episcopal Church

66 St. Stephen's Drive, Orinda
 254-3770. www.ststephensorinda.org
 Sunday 8am, 10am

Holy Shepherd Lutheran Church
 433 Moraga Way, Orinda, 254-3422
www.holyshepherd.org



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'Great Expectations' realized at Town Hall Theatre for the holidays

By Sophie Braccini



From left: Kenneth Greenwell and Salim Razawi in "Great Expectations." Photo Stu Selland

The idea of a Charles Dickens' play for the holiday season brings back memories of adaptations of "A Christmas Carol," of Ebenezer Scrooge, of ghosts, of bad people turned good through the miracle of the heart, and of very touching stories that end well. This winter, Lafayette's Town Hall Theatre has decided to tackle another deeply moral Dickens' story with "Great Expectations." In the words of artistic director Susan Evans, the positive moral values and happy ending of the play capture the spirit of the holiday season, without "beating you over the head with it." The fast and often humorous play is for all audiences.

Set in Victorian England the original novel and its adaptation by Grace Childs Daly tells of the coming of age and redemption of Pip, a young commoner who wants to become a gentleman, and who will discover that what makes the real value of a human being is more in his self-worth than in his social standing. It is also a story of love and revenge that goes from surprise to surprise until

the end.

Over the past 10 years, Town Hall Theatre has grown to successfully tackle complex playwrights. Childs Daly's adaptation of the Dickens' book requires the competent hand of a director to express the complexity of the characters through dives into the past, returns to the present moment, as well as rapid scenery and character changes for the actors. This reporter experienced one of the final rehearsals of the play.

To see actors working on the construction of a show has a charm of its own. Even a few days before opening, it was still controlled chaos, fine-tuning of entrances, exits, changes of costumes; and in the middle of the rapid twirling, the characters emerged through nuggets of dialogue and acting, already fully formed, giving the incongruous spectator the desire to see more.

Director Dennis Markam explained that he chose eight young actors, many new to the Lafayette stage, to energize the dozens of characters of the

play. Almost in "A Christmas Carol" style, Pip is confronted to elements of his past that come out of trunks or armoires, to help him reflect on his prior actions, informing the present moment and the decisions he has to make.

Evans says that when she read Childs Daly's adaptation of "Great Expectations" she was captured by the high energy of what was already her favorite Dickens novel, and saw its great potential for her stage. She decided to give the direction to Markam, who has shown the quality of his craft at THT directing plays such as "The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance" on the main stage or "Treasure Island" with the middle school cast, also a very fast-paced and complex production.

Markam says that his actors had no difficulty embodying Dickens' rich and complex characters, and enjoy the rapid succession of scenes where characters pop out of trunks like memories that had long been forgotten and suddenly re-emerge. The actors, except for Salim Razawi who plays Pip, embody up to 12 different characters each, a tour de force that had to be synchronized to the millisecond. During the rehearsals, actors learned their choreography just as precisely as their text, entrances and exits having numbers, and props moving fast to precise locations on the stage like a controlled ballet of things.

Razawi, a teaching artist for the Berkeley Rep School of Theatre Outreach program, brings a surprising range and maturity to the young man who starts his life as a poor blacksmith apprentice, becoming an educated gentleman, always believing that his great expectations will materialize. Very young actors from the THT education program participate to the production to personify children in memories of the heroes.

"Great Expectations" opens Nov. 29 and will play through Dec. 16 at Town Hall Theatre in Lafayette. More information and tickets are available at www.townhalltheatre.com.

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283-2988 www.waredesigns.com Tuesday-Saturday 10-6

Service Clubs Announcements

Lafayette Rotary Club

Step in on a Thursday and join us for our lunch meeting. Thursday at noon Oakwood Athletic Club, 4000 Mt. Diablo Blvd., Lafayette.

November 29: Jim Marggraff: Talking about his inventions (Lamorinda Sunrise Rotarian)	December 6: Christmas Luncheon at Lafayette Park Hotel 11:15am-1:30pm
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www.rotarylafayette.org
www.facebook.com/Rotary-Club-of-Lafayette-CA

Breakfast, Friday 7:00 - 8:15 a.m.
The Lafayette Park Hotel & Spa,
3287 Mt. Diablo Blvd., Lafayette, CA
www.lamorindasunrise.com
or email lamorindasunrise@gmail.com

- DECEMBER MEETINGS**
- 7:** Dr. Lorraine Granit on Loving acts of kindness and the White Pony Express
 - 7:** "Luv Bug" RAFFLE DRAWING. Holiday Celebration, 4:00-6:30 pm. Downtown Lafayette Plaza Park
 - 14:** U.S. House of Representatives Congressman, Mark DeSaulnier serving our district.

Happy Holidays !

Mighty Fine Guitars benefit concert helps fire victims

... continued from Page B3

Easy: especially in a community with a heart and a (took-some-convincing) voice for giving. Coyle, still resistant to a story about one person's efforts, mentions calls from musicians and emails from community members asking how they can participate. Without a second show option and not wanting to put on a six-hour marathon, he says the

two-set, two-hour concert is firm. Community generosity to meet the needs of fire victims, however, remains ongoing, unlimited and welcome.

For information about the North Valley Community Foundation or Mighty Fine Guitars, visit <https://www.nvcf.org/> and <http://mightyfineguitars.com/> or <http://www.steviecoyle.com/>.

Not to be missed

OTHER.. continued

Hacienda Holiday Faire at the beautiful, historic Hacienda de Las Flores located at 2100 Donald Drive in Moraga from noon to 8 p.m. Friday, Nov. 30 and 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 1 and Sunday, Dec. 2. Enjoy the festive atmosphere and find hand-crafted, specialized items from over 50 local artisans.

Radiance Family Wellness presents their Holiday Gathering and Open House from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Dec. 1 at 914 Dewing Avenue, Lafayette. Complete your holiday shopping while you relax and sip on a cup of homemade chai or mimosas. Meet Radiance Family Wellness practitioners, sample their work and learn more about the healthful products available at RFW. To learn more visit us at www.radiancefamilywellness.com

Saint Mary's College Guild's Christmas Luncheon fundraiser from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Dec. 5 at the Soda Center, Moraga Room. It will feature The award-winning Saint Mary's Choir directed by Dr. Julie Ford and accompanied by Sharon Kim, pianist. Enjoy a raffle for the infamous Christmas money tree along with six other fabulous gift baskets and the delicious annual Bake Sale. All proceeds benefit students applying for financial aid scholarships. Cost is \$45. Send a check made out to SMC Guild addressed to Karen Kinsey, 135 Longfield Place, Moraga, CA 94556. Direct all questions to Karen (925) 376-2225.

The Lamorinda Wine Growers Association is hosting its first annual Holiday Celebration from 6 to 10 p.m. on Dec. 6 at the Serbian Cultural Center, 1700 School Street, Moraga. Join us for local wine, food and dancing to the music of Diamond Dave. Seating is limited and must be 21 to attend. For more information and to register: <https://lamorindawinegrowers.com/eventcalendar/#!event/register/2018/12/6/lamorindawine-growers-association-holiday-party>

Chanukah on Ice from 7:15 to 9 p.m. on Thursday, Dec. 6 at the Walnut Creek Ice Rink, 1375 Civic Dr, Walnut Creek. Skate around a giant menorah to Chanukah songs and music. Kosher Food concessions will be available.

Moraga's annual Holiday Tree Lighting Ceremony 6:30 p.m. on Thursday, Dec. 7. Enjoy cookies and hot cocoa in the Commons Park at 6:30 p.m. with the tree lighting at 7 p.m.

All women are invited to "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star," Presbyterian Women's annual Christmas tea to be held from 1 to 3 p.m. on Dec. 7 at Lafayette-Orinda Presbyterian Church. There will be musical entertainment as well as a traditional tea. Call (925) 288-9990 for reservations.

Bring the whole family for a holiday Family Movie Night: The Star at Moraga Valley Presbyterian Church at 6:30 p.m. on Friday, Dec. 7 at 10 Moraga Valley Ln., Moraga. Children may come in pj's as we watch many tails tell the greatest story ever. Popcorn will be served. No cost.

"It's a Wonderful Life in Lafayette" community celebration from 4 to 6:30 p.m. on Dec. 7 in Lafayette's Plaza Park, located in downtown Lafayette. This fun and festive event includes visits with Santa, official holiday tree lighting ceremony, live musical entertainment, holiday treats and a holiday sing-along. For more details and the entertainment schedule, please visit www.lafayettechamber.org/holiday.

Kick off holiday shopping in small town style during Lafayette Stroll. Shop and Dine from 6 to 8 p.m. on Dec. 7. Stroll through downtown Lafayette with friends and family while the boutiques are still open! Experience Lafayette at its holiday best, plus street musicians, local artists and Mrs. Claus! For a list of participating merchants, please go to www.lafayettechamber.org.

Girlpreneur Pop-up Shop from 2 to 5 p.m. on Dec. 9 at the Lafayette Community Center. Shop local, girl-owned businesses - everything from all-natural bath products and fashion stationery to hand-made jewelry and magic wands. There's something for everyone!

5A Rent-A-Space presents Santa's Secret Wrapping Room from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Dec. 1 through 24. Equipped with colorful paper, ribbon, bows, boxes, scissors and tape. Everything needed to wrap gifts free, without the watchful eyes of the recipients! Open to the public.

Please submit events:
calendar@lamorindaweekly.com

Lamorinda Weekly

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Two savory and sweet dishes just in time for the holidays

By Susie Iventosch



Winter Wild Rice

Photos Susie Iventosch

We didn't have enough room to include these two wonderful recipes from Celine Sherwood in our last issue, but they are really delicious and would make great side dishes for the holidays. I made the savory and sweet version of the Smashed Carrots, and absolutely loved them. But, in my husband's culinary world, there appears to be a law against mixing

sweet and savory, so I also made a third version eliminating all of the sugar, spice and orange zest and adding caramelized shallots and a tablespoon of soy sauce. I kept the dill weed in the savory-savory version, and added a sprinkling of red pepper flakes. In all of the versions, crème fraiche adds a lovely creamy character to the dish.

'Three's Company Parody' ignites Rheem Theatre's new alliance with Classic TV nonprofit

Submitted by Derek Zemrak

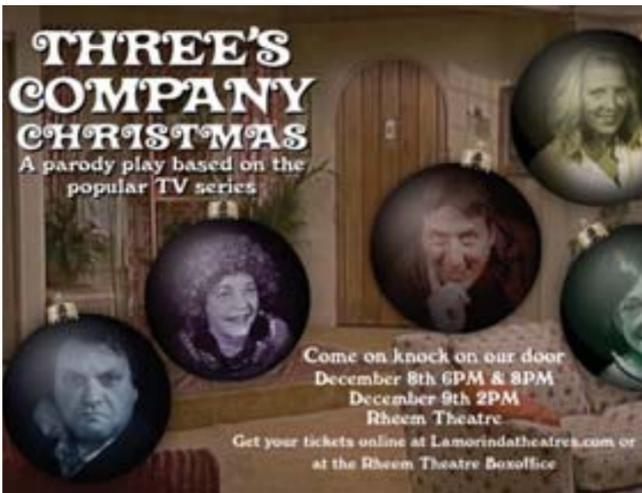


Image provided

The Rheem Theatre and the Classic TV Preservation Society nonprofit are aligning to bring live theatre productions and events to the Rheem Theatre, beginning with "A Three's Company Christmas Parody," set for Dec. 8 and 9.

"We're thrilled to team with The Classic TV Preservation Society," says producer/co-director Derek Zemrak. Adds CTVPS founder Herbie J Pilato, "It's an honor to work with such a prestigious establishment as the Rheem Theatre, while also being granted the opportunity to combine classic TV and live theatre in such a unique way."

Zemrak and Pilato envision an eclectic list of classic TV events and productions for the Rheem Theatre, including special screenings of classic TV shows, personal appearances by classic TV celebrities, and more. "Classic TV has never been more popular than it is today," says Zemrak, "and to be able to connect with the CTVPS and celebrate it all in a positive way is exciting."

For starters, Zemrak adds, "Most baby boomers remember the classic television show 'Three's Company' and I thought it would be fun to bring it to the stage." The evening will include a video presentation on the late 1970s, and a live stage performance complete with '70s and '80s TV commercials. After the production, audience members can join the cast for

a meet and greet, holiday cookies, and eggnog.

"Three's Company" was a sitcom that aired for eight seasons on ABC, from March 15, 1977 to Sept. 18, 1984. Based on the British sitcom "Man About the House," the story revolves around three single roommates: Janet Wood, Chrissy Snow, and Jack Tripper, who live together in a Santa Monica, California apartment complex owned by Stanley and Helen Roper.

The Bay Area/Lamorinda cast includes: Janet (Suzie Mele), Chrissy (Nicole Berzins), Jack (Derek Zemrak), Mrs. Roper (Patti Leidecker) and Mr. Roper (Lance Mack). The play is co-directed by Reed Summers-Pirkle and Zemrak.

Tickets are \$25 for this laugh-out-loud evening and can be purchased online at www.lamorindatheatre.com or at the Rheem Theatre box office. While the 6 p.m. show on Saturday, Dec. 8 is sold out, at press time tickets were still available for the 8 p.m. Dec. 8 show and the 2 p.m. matinee on Sunday, Dec. 9. Attendees are encouraged to bring a canned food item for the Contra Costa Food Bank. Proceeds for the evening will be donated to the CTVPS and the Moraga Community Foundation, both 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations.

For more information, visit: www.classictvpreserve.org and www.moragacommunityfoundation.org.

WINTER WILD RICE

(Full recipe serves 12 as a side dish. Half recipe serves 6)

Celine's Notes:

The key to making this dish is to keep stirring each new ingredient you add to the pot, until it is time to move on to the next step. Also it's important to toast the rice by sautéing it before adding the liquid.

Susie's Notes:

Celine told me that her mom thinks there are not enough vegetables in this dish. It actually calls for a lot of veggies, but I accidentally cut the recipe in half for the rice and broth, but kept the same amount of veggies and it was fantastic, so maybe her mom is on to something! Also, I used dried apricots as the fruit, pecans and blanched almonds, and a blend of fresh spinach and arugula for the greens.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 large shallot (thinly sliced)
- 1 large carrot (diced)
- 2 celery sticks (diced)
- 4 tablespoon grape seed oil or butter
- 3 cups wild rice medley
- 8 oz. mushrooms, any variety is fine (sliced)
- 3 cups chicken broth
- 2 tablespoon Osem chicken style consomme soup and seasoning mix, or poultry seasoning
- 1 cup golden raisins, or dried fruit of choice (dried currants, blueberries, and/or apricots work well)
- 5 oz. bag spinach leaves

*Optional vegetables can be added in, like broccoli, zucchini, bell peppers, peas, asparagus, etc. Just be sure veggies are chopped to the same size as the carrots and celery to allow for even cooking. Slivered almonds, pecan halves, chopped walnuts, or hazelnuts, can be added in during step 9. I recommend 1 cup of nuts.



Winter Wile Rice Photo Celine Sherwood

DIRECTIONS

1. In a heavy lidded pot, warm grape seed oil over high heat until hot (or butter until melted)
2. Add in shallots, carrots, celery, and any optional vegetables, cook until shallots are translucent.
3. Add in rice, and toss to coat in oil. Keep tossing and toasting the rice until it releases its aroma (about 1-2 minutes).
4. Add in mushrooms. Stir until the mushrooms start to release their water.
5. Add in chicken broth, and seasoning, and stir until seasoning is well dissolved.
6. Bring to boil and continually stir for 5 minutes.
7. Lower the heat to a simmer, cover and let cook for 30 minutes.
8. Uncover pot and stir contents.
9. Turn heat up to medium, and stir in raisins or dried fruit of choice, and nuts (if you are using them) cook uncovered for 10 minutes, stirring occasionally.
10. Lower heat to simmer, and cook until done (about 20 minutes)
11. Turn off heat, stir in spinach until wilted, and serve!

SMASHED CARROTS

Celine's Notes:

A savory and sweet version of this dish can be made. Ingredient substitutions for the sweet version are noted in the ingredient list. This dish can be made ahead of time, and reheated in either a microwave or in an oven. This is a dish I happened upon by accident. Back when my husband Shon and I first had kids, I made my own baby food, and one day made way too much carrot purée. I didn't have any stock on hand, so making a soup was out of the question. I did have brown sugar and raisins however. This recipe has evolved over time, and because I don't like to break out the blender, it is reserved for special birthday requests or major holidays. When it does come out, it's gone in minutes!

Susie's Notes:

I used a small food processor to purée the carrots in batches, since we don't have an immersion blender and it worked just fine.

INGREDIENTS

- 2 lb. bag of baby carrots
- 4 cups water
- 1 cinnamon stick
- 4 tablespoons butter
- 3/4 teaspoon ground ginger
- 3/4 teaspoon all-spice
- 3/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1/4 teaspoon dried orange peel, or zest of 1 orange
- 4 tablespoons maple syrup (for sweet version, substitute 3T brown sugar, and 1T orange marmalade)
- 2 tablespoons creme fraiche for savory version only (I don't recommend substituting sour cream, or anything else as it gives the dish a very heavy/paste-like mouth feel)
- 1 tablespoon brown sugar for savory version
- 1 tablespoon honey for sweet version
- 1/3 cup dried currants (I don't recommend substituting the currants for a different dried fruit as it'll make the dish too chunky.
- 1 teaspoon fresh dill (for savory version only).

DIRECTIONS

1. In a heavy bottomed stainless steel pot (you're going to be using an immersion blender, so use a pot capable of withstanding heavy duty use), bring water to boil.
2. Add in carrots and cinnamon stick.
3. Boil for 15 minutes/until fork is easily inserted into a carrot.
4. Remove cinnamon stick and discard.
5. Drain pot of water into a cup (you'll need it for later), leaving carrots in pot.
6. Put pot over low heat.
7. Add in butter, ginger, all-spice, ground cinnamon, orange peel or zest, maple syrup (or brown sugar and orange marmalade) to pot. Mix until butter is melted.
8. Take pot off of heat, and blend carrots using an immersion blender, adding in small amounts of reserved water if the mixture becomes too dry.
9. Blend until smooth.
10. For savory version - add in creme fraiche, and fold into the mashed carrots.
11. Scoop into serving bowl.
12. For savory version - sprinkle top with brown sugar. For sweet version - drizzle with honey.
13. For savory version - top with dried currants and dill. For sweet version - top with dried currants.



Smashed Carrots Photo Susie Iventosch

Lafayette Kindergarten and TK registration dates

Registration for Lafayette students entering TK and Kindergarten for the 2019-20 school year will take place Jan. 14 and 15. Additional information can be found at www.lafsd.org.

In addition, an informational presentation, "A Roadmap to Kindergarten," will be held at the Burton Valley Elementary multi-purpose room at 561 Merriewood Drive from 6 to 7 p.m. Jan. 20 for all interested parents. This presentation is for parents only.

Kindergarten/TK registration times (Jan. 14 and 15):

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

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

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

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

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The success of coach Kelly Sopak and the Miramonte girls basketball team

By Jon Kingdon



Kelly Sopak

Photo Gint Federas

Geno Auriemma, the head coach of the University of Connecticut women's basketball team, has an 88.3 winning percentage during his tenure at Connecticut. Kelly Sopak, the head coach of the Miramonte girls basketball team has an 87.5 winning percentage during his nine seasons at Miramonte. The great UCLA head coach John Wooden had an 80.0 winning percentage. Sopak is in very good company.

Sopak, who grew up in the Seattle area, played football, baseball and wrestled. Ironically, with all of his successes coaching basketball, Sopak never played the game in high school or college: "I only played basketball recreationally."

Still, Sopak found an outlet in coaching basketball that fulfilled an inner drive that kept him involved in athletics: "I think the competitive side of me believes that coaching can make a difference and have an impact on the game in any sport. I love how in basketball, if you keep coaching your kids and developing them, inch by inch and day by day, you see a huge improvement in the players over the course of the season, particularly when the playoffs begin in March."

Wooden was a great fan of women's basketball, appreciating the "purity" of the women's game. Sopak has his own observations about coaching girls basketball: "I just think that the girls are mentally tougher and smarter than the boys. You can't use the bench to motivate girls. You have to motivate the girls by being inclusive. They have to feel they're a part of a team and what you're all about. That's why I play so many of the players each game - the more they play, the more cohesion we have on our team."

Sopak credits Mark Buckleau, the longtime coach at Northgate, for getting him into coaching: "Mark was my first mentor. He taught me how to run a program and was able to illustrate the difference between coaching boys and girls."

Despite his overwhelming record, Sopak is not one to stand on his past achievements: "I am always trying to learn more and more about the game. Recently I spent two days with Geno Auriemma who has become a friend and is someone that I can call and ask questions. Geno's practices are not all that different from anyone

else's practices but the message that he hands down to his players is accountability. I believe you hold people accountable which has to come from within, not from the coach yelling at you. You set your own standard and get the players to buy into it and then hold them to it. People want to be held to that standard and once they get a taste of that, you owe it to them to push them to be great."

Auriemma is just one of many coaches that Sopak studies, such as Kelly Graves (Oregon), Mike Neighbors (Arkansas), Lindsay Gottlieb (California) and Tara VanDerveer (Stanford). Says Sopak: "I have been humbled and flattered by these coaches as they have at times contacted me to ask questions as well. I love to share things with them as well as with any number of other high school coaches."

If you had to sum up Sopak's philosophy of the game in one word, it would be "pressure," which applies to his team's offense and defense. It's a demanding task for the players to play pressure defense all over the court the entire game while attacking constantly on offense. Being in shape to be able to play this way requires long and hard practices which the players have accepted, says Sopak: "Even with the number of transfers into our program, I take a lot of pride in that we have never had anyone transfer out. It speaks volumes about our school, our community and our players. I preach to our players all the time that the best part of all of this is the struggle and learning how to handle it, learning lessons that they will use in their adult life. This is just the first struggle they will go through, their first bit of adversity and it's on a basketball court. This is the fun part, learning from your losses, building on that, though the kids may not agree with that right now. We practice very hard and our practices are open for their parents to come watch. Our kids take pride in being the hardest working team and they thrive in that environment."

While Sopak's attitude and coaching scheme has been consistent through the years, he will still make some minor changes to fit the personnel: "We will adjust to our talent but our whole mantra is putting pressure on teams both offensively and defensively and being able to play under pressure. We

don't deviate from applying pressure."

What has been a new experience for Sopak the last two years is coaching his daughter, Leah, which has been a positive for him: "It's fun, though I will catch myself watching her more as a dad than as a coach. Since I've been a coach long before she came along, it's probably harder on her, which is something I am trying to work on. She's just a great kid so I can remove my coach's hat. She is very coachable and a tough, hard worker who is stepping up as a leader as well as being a pleasant kid to coach, which may be what I am most proud of."

With such a successful record, one would think that the colleges would be calling for his services. In fact, Sopak has been offered the opportunity to coach on that level but chose to remain at Miramonte: "I did give it a lot of thought but it just wasn't to be. That would have been a job. Coaching at the high school level is more of a hobby for me and I just enjoy it so much."

As if coaching Miramonte wasn't enough, Sopak founded the Cal Stars Club team in 2006 and is now the Stars Club director and Nike Elite head coach. What started out as a simple, local club team, has grown to 16 teams and a national power and another opportunity for Sopak to put his imprimatur on girls basketball: "If I knew then what I know now, I probably wouldn't have started the program. My intention was just to provide the opportunity for some local kids to be able to play basketball. It was simple as that. Right from the start, we had more people try out than we thought we would have and it has grown and grown and grown where it is now a Nike sponsored program. I have gotten the opportunity to coach the elite players. Now there are club teams

almost everywhere. Still the core value of the club team remains to give locals a chance to play. It was just dumb luck that as we started the club team, the colleges began to come to our tournaments and scout our players and then we were on our way."

Besides all of his coaching, since 1994, Sopak has run his own business as a State Farm Insurance

agent in Albany. As with all of the students who have to balance practice and playing sports with school work, Sopak has found a way to handle his job and coaching the club teams and Miramonte: "Time management is crucial and I have great people at Cal Stars, as we have expanded, running the day-to-day stuff."

... continued on Page C2

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Lamorinda boys basketball preview

By Jon Kingdon



Ian Archer Photos Gint Federas



Carter Mahaney

Last year's team had what Henik described as a "football mentality." It's a new group with a new attitude, according to Henik: "We have a number of players jockeying for playing time which will determine how we identify ourselves. This year's team has a higher basketball IQ. They understand the offense with its spacing and cutting. There is a hunger on the squad and they are all very coachable kids that love to play basketball."

The Dons are not lacking for size in the front court. Jackson Kirke, a 6'6" senior, opted not to play last season, concentrating on water polo is a welcome addition at center. Says Henik: "Jackson plays hard and has a nice shot. He understands the game and with his experience in water polo, knows the spacing and angles on the court. He brings good toughness and is not afraid to bang with anyone. 6'5" sophomore Austin Kinnear has come over from the volleyball team bringing a great work ethic and competitiveness. He really wants to get better." Juniors 6'4" John Kalil and 6'3" Aiden Bodner will both bring toughness, effort and depth.

Sophomore guard Scott Ruegg played in the NCS playoff game last season and is playing beyond his years, says Henik: "Scott has a very high basketball IQ and is fundamentally sound. He has emerged as a leader, always the first to practice and the last to leave. He can be a top scorer." Another sophomore, Joe Carillo, is being counted on to be the inside scorer at power forward.

Henik feels strong about the team's overall defense: "We have a very good foundation and fundamentals with great communication and talking between the players." Senior Clark King is expected to be the key player on defense with his athleticism and man coverage ability.

Without any one dominant player, Henik appreciates the character of his team: "The strength of this team is how well they are playing together and sharing the ball. It's a very un-selfish bunch. I've been amazed at how many guys will pass up a shot for a better shot by a teammate. For us to be successful, we have to share the ball and play together."

Acalanes opens the season with tournaments in San Rafael and Amador Valley and will then play their first home game on Dec. 11 versus Santa Rosa. They will then play tournaments in El Cerrito and in the Chris Huber Classic. Says Henik: "I enjoy the tournaments plus it's a toughening up process which is important as we are in such a competitive league."

Campolindo head coach Steven Dyer, entering his third year as the team's head coach, has been affiliated with the league since 2003 when he participated as a player, and has never seen the league so competitive with no sign that there will be a let up this year.

The Cougars are returning only two starters, senior David Ahazie and junior Carter Mahaney. Says Dyer: "Both David and Carter are good leaders. We are going to lean on them a lot." Mahaney (13.9) and Ahazie (13.2) were the two leading scorers on last year's team.

As the team's point guard for the third straight year, Mahaney is very much in charge on the floor. Dyer is particularly impressed in how Ahazie has worked this off season: "David is a very underrated player. He deserves a lot of praise. He's also a good defender and his really improved his game this off season."

Dyer is counting on two freshmen, Aiden Mahaney (Carter's brother) and center Matt Raddel, the tallest player on the team, to play significant roles, but as Dyer says: "It remains to be seen when push comes to shove how well they do."

With a roster comprising four seniors, three juniors, three sophomores and two freshmen, it is fairly balanced. Sophomores Emmanuel Callas and Max Weaver and seniors Jake Chance and Ryan Jeter all saw playing time last season and are all being counted on to step up and play key and complementary roles on the team.

Dyer is looking for improved defensive play this season: "That's an area that we have been working on every day. I am looking for us to be tougher mentally than we were last year. It's important that we take ownership on the defensive end. We have to do a better job in forcing the weaker players on the opposing team to try and beat us."

Campolindo will be playing in a number of tournaments: The NorCal Tipoff Classic, the Russ Peterich, the El Cerrito Tournament, the Modesto Christian Tournament and the Martin Luther Classic at Saint Mary's College.

Dyer welcomes the challenge in playing against top competition: "We have been playing a progressively harder nonleague schedule and are glad to be invited to such elite tournament. It's very challenging but it will prepare us for league play."

Miramonte was another team that showed how competitive the Diablo Foothill League was last year. Without a win in league play,

Miramonte was 9-7 against nonleague opponents.

Head coach Wayne Hunter's aim is to have his team bring a toughness and an attitude to every game: "We're going to be a scrappy team that is going to grind it out every game. We want to set the tone for each game right from the beginning."

With only six players returning from last season's roster, Hunter appreciates his team's fresh attitude: "One of the differences this year will be our toughness. Last year we did not play to our potential. This team is feeding off of each other. "With so many new players we really needed a lot of practice time but it has been limited due to the smoke issues."

Miramonte does not have a lot of size up front and it's been further limited due to the air quality. Co-captain, Matt Meredith is being counted on to be a force in the front court. However, as the quarterback for the Miramonte football team, his arrival has been delayed since the football playoffs have been postponed for two weeks. Says Hunter: "Matt has really stepped up in the off season and will give us much needed size up front. Even with Meredith, we're not a big team so we are going to have to constantly battle for rebounds."

The other co-captain, Jayson Fernbacher, will be leading the team on and off the court says Hunter: "Last season, Jason became the team's point guard and it was all new to him but he did a great job. He's our vocal leader on the floor and is the one who is holding his teammates accountable and I'm looking for him to have a top season."

As a freshman last season, Niyi Olabode was a big contributor to the team and Hunter anticipates his continuing to elevate his game: "Niyi is a top athlete and the hardest worker in our program. He's in the gym a lot and is always working on his game."

Quenton Breznikar, who will be playing wing is a good shooter and brings good toughness to the team's defense. Henry Davis should also contribute on offense with his outside shooting.

Chris Watson and Nick Watson played on the JV team last season and Hunter is looking for them to be key players on the Matador's defense: "They are both very competitive. They want to be assigned to guard our opponents top player. You'll see them diving all over the floor."

The success of coach Kelly Sopak

Sopak has been witness to many changes in the game and had the foresight to see where the game was going: "The game has changed and fortunately we were ahead of the curve when I began at Northgate. We went to the pressure defense and 3-point shooting offense and people thought that strategy was crazy and we carried that over to Miramonte playing 'small ball' but that was the evolution

of the game. We did not have the big kids and we needed to play a different style."

Yet as the game has changed, Sopak feels it's not the kids who have changed, it's the parental influence that is the difference: "The thing that we hear all the time is that kids have changed but that is not the case. It's the parents who have changed. The players are the same. Any change in them comes from

the parents, both positive and negative. Big picture wise, it goes back to the no pain-no gain philosophy that has changed. We don't treat people that way anymore, though that's not always a bad thing either. Too often as coaches, we view that as negative."

Though the winning percentage numbers have to be satisfying to Sopak, he is stepping up to a new challenge at Miramonte this sea-

... continued from Page C1

son. After winning their division so many times, Miramonte is now playing an independent schedule: "We have 26 non-league games and there isn't an easy game on the schedule which will be tough for us as a team. I love the competition. We may lose more games this season but it's okay to lose sometimes as it reveals your character."

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5-6 grade MOL Eagles win championship

Submitted by Eric Van Olst



Front row, from left: Kyle Rundel, Grady Brown, John Kemner, Kai Van Olst, Mitch Reichenbach, William Myers; middle row: Steve Barnett, Weston Hoppe, Michael Hamilton, Mitchell Herring, Gian Maguire, Miles Blackhart; back row: coaches Eric Van Olst and Stuart Reichenbach

The Eagles won the MOL - NFC Conference Super Bowl. The NFC conference is for fifth and sixth graders. The Eagles won over the Saint by a score of 19-0.

First place for JMIS 8th grade girl's volleyball

Submitted by Judy McNeil



From left: Anna Dendiger, Ava Spalding, Meagan Kennedy, Samantha Brouhard, Kalena King, Kyra Xiong, Kylie Williams, Caroline McCool, and coach Eric Standing in back Photo provided

The Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School eighth grade girl's volleyball team took first place in the Stanley Tournament. JM beat Foothill before losing to Orinda Intermediate School the next day. With victory over Head Royce and Piedmont they entered the semifinal to meet OIS again and beat them this time. Next, JM played Stanley in the final and won in two sets. Because the tournament was double elimination format, JM had to play Stanley again. JMIS won in three sets to take the championship. It was a long journey and the girls were ecstatic at their win. Coach Eric Standing said, "I knew all along that they could do it." Meagan Kennedy received Best Middle Player. Anna Dendiger received Best Outside Hitter. Kyra Xiong received MVP.

Lamorinda girls basketball preview

By Jon Kingdon



Mia Mastro Photos Gint Federas

There are two things that the Lamorinda girls basketball teams all have in common as we go to print. They all made the playoffs this year and each of the coaches is terribly frustrated at the inability to practice due to everyone's least favorite words – air quality index. There is one substantial change in the Diablo Foothill League this year – Miramonte has left the league to go independent. This will allow Miramonte to play a more competitive schedule and it will provide, for the first time in a number of years, a greater opportunity for the rest of the teams to win the league.

Acalanes head coach Michelle Sasaki led the Dons to a 16-11 record last season even though the team was shorthanded through most of the season, at one point having to play a game with only six players.

Having lost only two players to graduation, this is going to be a much more mature team. Sasaki is very positive about their prospects: "I really like this team. As a group, they are really trying hard to get better and to embrace the process. There is a lot of positive energy and it has been an enjoyable team to coach."

Gabby Schneider and Grace Gebhardt, coming off top freshman seasons, are being counted on to be the foundation for the team. Sasaki believes the strength of the team is its overall balance: "Our guards can all shoot and our posts can handle the ball and shoot the threes. They can play inside and outside. Teams won't be able to just key on any one player on the team. We will be able to put five players on the court that can all contribute. We've improved our range with a lot of good work in the offseason."

Juniors Lauren Kobashigawa and Lauren Frechman, both excellent three-point shooters, will again be counted on to complement the team's inside game. Says Sasaki: "A lot of our players have different strengths and they all complement each other. Our offense will start inside with Grace and Gabby and we will also have the ability to score from the outside."

There are three new additions to Acalanes this year: Junior Kaylee Pond, who missed all last season with knee surgery is coming along well and should be ready for the team's league games; freshman Michelle Goll, who did very well in the team's summer program, earning a spot on the varsity; and Daphne Gantner, who was promoted from last year's JV team and should see a fair amount of playing time as well.

Though still limited in numbers and with only one senior on the roster, Kate Schirmer, Sasaki is optimistic about her team: "Depth is our main concern and the biggest challenge is for us to manage it and it can be an advantage. With only nine players on the roster, they all will contribute to the team. Everyone has a lot of responsibility and they understand that we lack the luxury of having a bad day on the court. We have a lot of tough games scheduled prior to our league play. Our league is wide open this year. All of our games are going to be close and fun and it is going to make for an interesting season."

The Don's first home game is scheduled for Nov. 28 and over Christmas will be playing in the West Coast Jamboree tournament.

Miramonte head coach Kelly Sopak is excited about the new challenges his team will be facing: "This is something that we have been working on for a number of years. Having had so much success over so many years, we met the criteria to make this change. This allows us to always get competitive games and it will allow the other teams in the league to play for the championship." So far the only regret that Sopak has had was "having to learn what AQI (air quality index) stands for."

Despite making it to the state semifinals last year, Sopak broke down what went wrong with his team from every perspective: "We had a number of one-on-one meetings with our players and coaches to figure out what caused our lack of success at the end of last season and to determine how to work things out on the court and with our coaching. We have hit the ground running this fall and I've been pleasantly surprised at how far along we were prior to the fires."

Junior Amerika De Los Santos will be the team's point guard, replacing Claire Steele. Says Sopak: "Amerika is a good kick starter for the team. She had a great off season and is taking on the load." Sophomore Mia Mastrov had an excellent freshman year averaging 7.5 points and 4.6 rebounds and is being counted on by Sopak: "Mia has really blossomed. She is coming into her own and has great potential to be a star."

Never lacking in depth, Sopak has brought up four players from last year's JV team: Katlin Miller, Julia Miller, Katrina Schrittwieser and Jennifer Tierney. Sopak utilized what he calls his swing team to ease the players' transition to the varsity: "These four kids would practice with the varsity but play with the JV so they are familiar with our culture and the program."

Sophomores Erin Tarasow (10.1) and Rebecca Welsh (6.9) should continue to improve and the team's only senior on the roster, Emily Houston (4.2), who missed the summer program due to knee surgery, has made a great rehab, according to Sopak: "Emily looks 100 percent healthy. You can see the spring back in her step and she looks good playing the wing and the post. Our main shooters are back and a year older."

Some things never change. "We'll still have the same pressing defense and we will be playing at a faster pace than last year," says Sopak. "We may be a smaller team but we are going to be playing a lot more five out offense. We are going to have five scorers on the court at all times."

Sopak is trying to address the team's lack of size on the boards: "We are working hard to concentrate on rebounding though we lack some size. Everyone is on board working to be able to rebound as a team."

As an independent team, Miramonte will be playing in nine different tournaments: The La Jolla Sweet 16, The Elite Showcase at Chabot College, The John Peyo Mats Tip Off Classic, the Steve Geramoni Classic, the West Coast Jamboree, the Matt Demming Classic and the Elite Is Earned Invitational, the MLK Showcase and the Lamorinda Classic.

Sopak appreciates how this schedule works to the team's advantage: "The best part of it is that once the season starts, we only play on one school day. We will be playing every Saturday and will be able to schedule some off days during the week."

When a team graduates five of their top six scorers, a new head coach may claim that they did not know what they were getting into. Campolindo head coach Matthew Kirby can not make that claim, having been Cougars JV coach the past seven years.

With so many new players on the varsity, Kirby's first goal has been to get the team working together: "The girls who have returned and the ones that played on JV last season are getting comfortable in their expanded roles. With so many players on the JV team that got playoff experience last season, it has eased the transition to the varsity and they know what they need to do this year."

Junior co-captain Kate Brown will be the team's point

guard and is being counted on to lead the team on the floor: "Kate has taken great strides as a leader," says Kirby. "Last year, after losing Ashley Thoms to injury, Kate got a lot of experience. She can be a top player. Running our offense, she is our most important player. She'll be the stick stirring the drink."

Besides Brown, there is a lot of depth in the team's back court according to Kirby: "Our guard play is going to be a strength. We have a lot of returners there and it is helping to stabilize the team."

There are a number of young players that are still trying to learn where they fit on the roster. Sophomores Meg Larson and Emily Marsten, new to the team, are still trying to establish their spots, says Kirby: "Meg and Emily have shown a lot of potential but it is going to take a while for them to get used to the varsity and seeing what their roles will be."

Kiana Thorson appeared in 26 games last season as a freshman, scoring 4.1 points a game. She is another player whose position was not defined last year but is being counted on to be a strong contributor this season.

Senior co-captain, Mariella Crudelle is a key for the Cougars offense, says Kirby: "Mariella is our key offensive person on the perimeter. She is a very good 3-point shooter."

Another co-captain, Sarah White is the leader on the defense. "Sara played very well last season when she was called up for the playoffs. Her defense was a real key for the team and the same is expected of her this season."

Zoe Crouch is the team's fourth co-captain and they have all done their part in pulling the team together, says Kirby: "Off the court, they're a great group of girls. They played together a lot over the summer. They all get along. I feel they have a chip on their shoulders because there is not a lot expected of them and they want to prove people wrong."

Campolindo will be playing in four tournaments: the Marin Catholic Lady Cat Classic, the Paris Twins Classic, the West Coast Jamboree and the Lamorinda Classic. Kirby welcomes the challenge for his team: "Our schedule is going to be tougher this season and we will be playing a lot of tough teams. With Miramonte dropping out of the league, it's going to be a more balanced league. The teams are fairly equal so everyone is going to have to be ready to play each night."



Amerika De Los Santos

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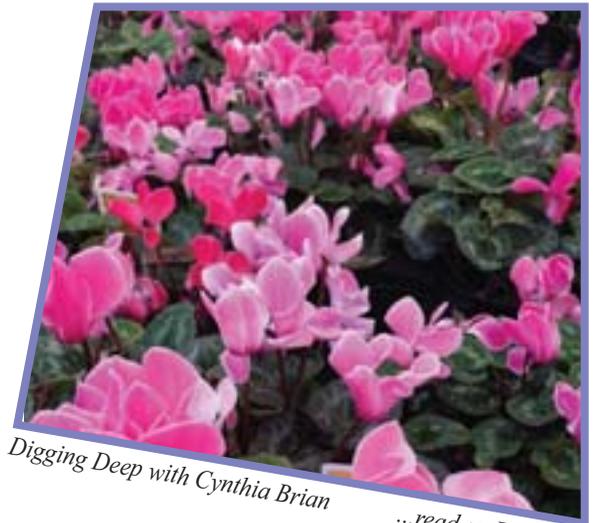
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Lamorinda OUR HOMES

Lamorinda Weekly Volume 12 Issue 20 Wednesday, November 28, 2018



Digging Deep with Cynthia Brian

...read on Page D12

Antiquing: A fun way to recycle

By Vera Kochan



Two-piece hutch (top piece 18th century, bottom piece 20th century)

Photo Vera Kochan

When people hear the word recycle, they usually think of bottles, cans and paper – and what bin to toss them into (green or blue). It's rare that folks equate antiquing with recycling, unless you're the owner of Orinda Village Antiques, Susan Leech, who has been refurbishing furniture since 1982, when she first opened her shop at 107 Orinda Way.

Much more happens than recycling of wood through the reuse of furniture. The popular phrase comes to mind, "One man's junk is another man's treasure," but to those who love historical pieces, that phrase is never assigned to antiquing. For Leech, it's all treasure!

... continued on Page D4



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City	Last reported:	LOWEST AMOUNT:	HIGHEST AMOUNT:
LAFAYETTE	9	\$795,000	\$3,210,000
MORAGA	6	\$710,000	\$2,000,000
ORINDA	5	\$680,000	\$1,900,000

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

- 810 Acalanes Road, \$2,800,000, 5 Bdrms, 5271 SqFt, 2008 YrBlt, 10-19-18,
Previous Sale: \$2,600,000, 05-15-14
- 42 Circle Creek Court, \$795,000, 2 Bdrms, 1248 SqFt, 1978 YrBlt,
Previous Sale: 10-19-18,
- 912 Dana Highlands Court, \$1,550,000, 5 Bdrms, 3103 SqFt, 1994 YrBlt, 10-15-18,
Previous Sale: \$1,100,000, 07-07-15
- 1176 Glen Road, \$1,895,000, 4 Bdrms, 2578 SqFt, 1950 YrBlt, 10-18-18,
Previous Sale: \$1,080,000, 02-08-11
- 3417 Goyak Drive, \$1,335,000, 4 Bdrms, 2071 SqFt, 1965 YrBlt, 10-17-18,
Previous Sale: \$630,000, 10-07-10
- 857 Las Trampas Road, \$1,511,500, 3 Bdrms, 3067 SqFt, 1987 YrBlt, 10-15-18,
Previous Sale: \$1,150,000, 07-11-12
- 3279 Mt Diablo Court #25, \$800,000, 3 Bdrms, 1731 SqFt, 1986 YrBlt, 10-18-18,
Previous Sale: \$730,000, 05-30-13
- 1040 Oak Knoll Road, \$1,235,000, 3 Bdrms, 1520 SqFt, 1962 YrBlt,
Previous Sale: 10-19-18,
- 1 Oliveira Lane, \$3,210,000, 5 Bdrms, 5269 SqFt, 1904 YrBlt, 10-17-18,
Previous Sale: \$1,000,000, 08-01-89

MORAGA

- 3812 Campolindo Drive, \$1,305,000, 4 Bdrms, 2192 SqFt, 1970 YrBlt,
Previous Sale: 10-15-18
- 10 Hansen Court, \$952,000, 3 Bdrms, 2095 SqFt, 1984 YrBlt, 10-19-18,
Previous Sale: \$650,000, 03-21-13
- 288 Lakefield Place, \$2,000,000, 7 Bdrms, 4032 SqFt, 1970 YrBlt,
Previous Sale: 10-16-18
- 77 Marie Place, \$1,235,000, 4 Bdrms, 2102 SqFt, 1967 YrBlt, 10-16-18,
Previous Sale: \$885,000, 05-21-13
- 126 Miramonte Drive, \$710,000, 2 Bdrms, 1514 SqFt, 1965 YrBlt, 10-19-18,
Previous Sale: \$629,000, 09-05-06
- 1722 Saint Andrews Drive, \$985,000, 3 Bdrms, 2079 SqFt, 1974 YrBlt, 10-18-18,
Previous Sale: \$910,000, 09-27-17

ORINDA

- 5 Heather Lane, \$1,650,000, 4 Bdrms, 4720 SqFt, 1952 YrBlt, 10-15-18
- 15 Honey Hill Road, \$1,900,000, 4 Bdrms, 2751 SqFt, 1969 YrBlt, 10-19-18
- 6 Idyll Court, \$1,300,000, 3 Bdrms, 1936 SqFt, 1966 YrBlt,
Previous Sale: 10-17-18
- 14 Snow Court, \$680,000, 6 Bdrms, 3667 SqFt, 1974 YrBlt, 10-19-18
- 224 The Knolls, \$1,129,000, 3 Bdrms, 2252 SqFt, 1974 YrBlt, 10-17-18,
Previous Sale: \$1,000,000, 06-16-17
- 24 Vista Del Mar, \$1,592,000, 4 Bdrms, 2382 SqFt, 1963 YrBlt, 10-18-18

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COMPASS



Antiquing: A fun way to recycle

... continued from Page D1



Orinda Village Antiques owner Susan Leech in doorway.

Photos Vera Kochan

Leech was born in Nottingham, England, but grew up in the United States. She goes back to her birthplace often for visits. She has virtually lost her British accent, however when she reminisces about the UK, a faint trace of it crops up in her speech.

According to Leech, anything between 50-100 years old is considered a collectible and over 100 years old is considered an antique. “Women are good at re-inventing the wheel. We repurpose things into different rooms and use them not necessarily for the original purpose it was intended,” she explained, as she held up an old pewter mug with lid that she had turned into a candle holder.

Many of the china cabinet/hutch pieces of furniture in the shop are mix and match. The top piece of the cabinet was not made for the bottom or vice versa. They can even come from different centuries. It’s all part of the recycling process.

When asked how to identify what type of wood a piece of furniture comes from, Leech explained, “You can tell by the grain.” One of the more common trees used to make furniture 200 years ago was rosewood from Brazil; its deep rich brown tones with a darker grain was a popular choice among the wealthy. “Rosewood is not seen anymore. It was harvested to death,” Leech said.

A discussion about the overexploitation of trees turned into a history lesson. “Lots of trees are gone in England, because from the mid-17th century through the

19th century, ship building for the Royal Navy was in high demand,” Leech said. “The biggest trees were saved for the ship masts, while the rest was harvested to build the fleets.”

When asked if she had heard of wood with the Forest Stewardship Council label, Leech said. “Yes, I’ve heard of it, but it’s a relatively new concept and wouldn’t apply to antiques.” According to the FSC, wood that is tagged with this logo has been harvested in a more environmentally friendly way than wood used to make conventional furniture.

Leech believes antique stores are very good for the environment. Customers help to recycle wood and glass while keeping things like 200-year-old porcelain figurines, bone china and silverware out of landfills, thus turning a cherished possession from a bygone era into a personal treasure.

“My job is to take something and give it a new lease on life,” Leech said.

For information and hours of operation, visit www.orindavillageantiques.com.

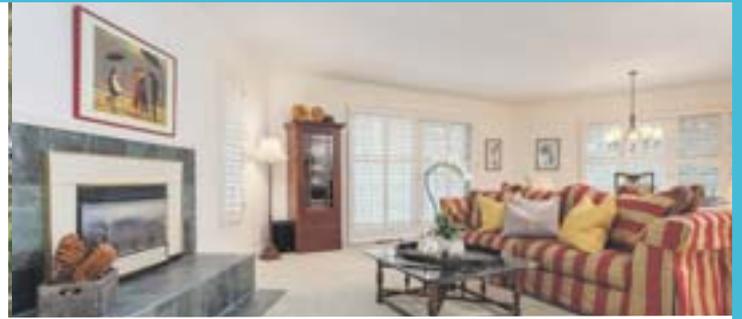


There are three antique stores in Orinda. In addition to Orinda Village Antiques: Tally Home at 85 Orinda Way and Hilton House Consignment & Design at 21 Orinda Way.

Book a special High Tea at Orinda Village Antiques

Orinda Village Antiques hosts “History of High Tea – Taking Tea in the English Manor,” where Leech serves a delectable array of homemade sweet and savory treats while giving her guests a history lesson, and she insists that men are some of the most astute pupils she’s ever had. Tea parties aren’t just for girls anymore. The tea is by appointment only. For more information visit www.orindavillageantiques.com or call (925) 254-2206.





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Feng Shui

Using mirrors strategically in the home

By Michele Duffy



Mirrors over fireplaces correct a long list of challenging Feng Shui.

Photos provided

Mirrors are symbolic of the water element, which governs the winter season including November, December and January and they are the one Feng Shui tool you can instantly benefit from when placing them correctly throughout your home. The shape of the mirror – a round mirror for Metal, a rectangular mirror for Wood, and a square mirror for Earth – comes into play and mirror placement per the BAGUA map is important, but the most important aspect is incorporating mirrors in the following ways to enhance your space and welcome positive energy into your home.

First, let's begin in the foyer. There are lots of conflicting Feng Shui ideas in terms of placing the mirror opposite the door, which reflects all the positive chi back out, however I have also seen many small dark foyers and the placement here can open the space and make it seem much bigger, thus overriding other concerns.

... continued on Page D10



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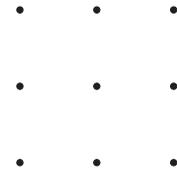


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Feng Shui

Using mirrors strategically in the home

... continued from Page D6

With all things being equal it's best to place the mirror on the side wall so it's not behind the door. The light and powerful chi from outdoors will reflect inside and the mirror also enlarges the feeling of the foyer in a beneficial way. The middle front area of the home, according to the BAGUA, is also ruled by Career and the water element, and since mirrors represent water and are also very yang/active, if your front entrance or foyer is in the middle of your home, a mirror placed here is seen as a stimulant to your career.

While we are on the topic of the Front Entrance area, another Feng Shui use for a mirror is over the front door facing out toward the street. We place a special type of mirror here called a BAGUA mirror, used to deflect negative chi away from the home. If your home faces an electrical tower or water tower, a busy road, a church (happy and sad events here), a fire or police station, a graveyard or an empty lot, place a BAGUA mirror outside over your front entrance doorway to deflect the negative chi away from your home.

Next, mirrors also correct and adjust "missing" areas of the Feng Shui BAGUA map. If, when you overlay the BAGUA map over your entire home, you are "missing" an area or two or three, do not despair. Mirrors to the rescue! Chances are if your home is not perfectly rectangular or square you are missing a BAGUA map area. Mirrors visually extend the space when you place one on both adjacent walls to the area that is missing in the BAGUA map. When the mirrors are placed this way, the space is visually expanded and the missing area is no longer as prominent. Missing areas symbolize that very little energy exists there, creating struggles or blocks, so adjusting and correcting that problem is important on many levels.

You can also simply use mirrors decoratively by placing them to add more light into your environment; by placing a mirror opposite a lush natural outdoor landscape it has the potential to bring more natural light into that area of your home. This also works really well in darker rooms or in those with scant natural lighting. If the mirror reflects trees and flowers into your home, then you welcome the upward growth of wood energy, or if there is a mountain, then a lot more grounding energy visits.

Adjusting an ill-placed fireplace is also the function of hanging a mirror over one. No one will know you are adjusting with the decorative mirror (water) over the fireplace (water overcomes fire) if you have one in your master bedroom (too much fire can cause marital disharmony), or in the center of your home (fire burns up your health) or a fireplace located in the metal areas of home (fire melts metal) including helpful people or children with equally challenging results. Placing a mirror over a fireplace in these instances will prevent the negative effects and allow for a strong adjustment.

While we are mentioning bedrooms, it is smart Feng Shui to limit mirrors in the places we are meant to sleep soundly since mirrors are considered Yang or active. If you begin to have trouble sleeping in your bedroom and have lots of mirrors, try this experiment. Cover the mirrors with sheets for a couple of nights and notice if your sleep improves or not. Use the examples in this column to discover other places and uses for your bedroom mirrors if your sleep improves when they are not as much of an influence in your bedroom.

Finally, since this time of year we are enjoying our dining rooms a lot with family and friends gathering, the dining room is one of the most festive rooms to place a large mirror to reflect happy times, multiply the number of our guests as well as the wealth we have by sharing the harvest with others. Remember, mirrors are referred to as the aspirin of Feng Shui because they are prescribed to quickly adjust many challenges, therefore by just moving one or two mirrors strategically, you will create many levels of benefits – all the while creating more light and space in a subtle way that doesn't scream Feng Shui.

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The Bagua Map: Front Door

Michele Duffy, BTB M.F.S. is an Orinda resident who, since 1999, enjoys creating "Space as Medicine" Feng Shui one space at a time, as well as hiking in nature, cooking, and spending time with her family; Canyon Ranch Feng Shui Master, International Feng Shui Guild (IFSG) Red Ribbon Professional. To schedule a professional 2018 Feng Shui Consultation, contact Michele at (520) 647-4887 or send an email to spaceharmony@gmail.com.





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Digging Deep with Cynthia Brian

Making scents

By Cynthia Brian

"If you have a garden and a library, you have everything you need." – Marcus Cicero



Pick narcissus to add sweet scents to indoor spaces.

Photo Cynthia Brian

With all of the disasters and tragedies of this year, logic seems to have disappeared. The senseless shootings of innocent people and the devastating California fires have rendered so many of us feeling helpless and hopeless. But in times of turbulence, besides the consolation of close relationships with family and friends, I advise my clients to turn to two things: gardens and books.

The smoke from the Camp and Paradise fires has been so thick and suffocating, that spending time in the garden has been impossible. Continued alerts have been pinging on my cell phone warning me of the dangers of breathing toxins. The alerts advise to avoid being outdoors as the air quality is hazardous to our health. The sky is gray and gloomy with harmful haze reminiscent of Beijing. When the sun pokes through the smoke, it is a roiling red.

To combat the noxious air, I have been freshening my home with the calming aromas of hand crafted potpourri and herbal sachets. Although making scents does require time and considerable clean up, potpourri,

wreaths, and sachets make beautiful hostess gifts and holiday décor. Be prepared for magnificent earthy scents wafting to your nostrils as you style your ingredients. To fashion your own rustic creations, choose sweet smelling botanicals with strong colors that will dry well. If you enjoy burying your nose in a flower or herb, these are specimens for your project.

My recommendations for making lovely potpourri include:

rose	rosemary	yarrow
lavender	bay	eucalyptus
chamomile	tulip	amaranth
nigella	orchid	lemon leaves
sage	bougainvillea	marigold
thyme	daffodil	nasturtium
liquid amber	oregano	

I also like to dry citrus rinds and add whole buds of small flowers to the mix. Remove petals from stems and dry on a cookie sheet. If you are in a hurry, you can heat your oven to 150-200 F and put the pan in the oven until

the flowers are dry, but not cooked. I prefer to allow them to dry naturally on a counter in my garage as I find the fragrance is fuller and lasts longer.

Once all the leaves, flowers and herbs are dry, it's time to design various "flavors" of potpourri. I make seasonal potpourri in varying color schemes and smells. For holiday scents, add cinnamon sticks, shaved nutmeg or other spices. You can also spritz the mixture with a few drops of your favorite essential oil and toss with your hands before adding the ingredients to jars, bowls, netting or clear wrap to give as gifts.

With the sweet perfume of my garden inside my house, I can turn my attention to books.

As you've probably read, I published my seventh and eighth books recently, an extreme endeavor to publish two books in one year while still working on numerous other projects, yet somehow the task was accomplished. Book One in the Garden Shorts Series, "Growing with the Goddess Gardener" is filled with 24 months of inspiration, tips, photos and stories that you can use now in times of distress.

... continued on Page D15



Finished potpourri is ready for gifting.



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Cynthia Brian's Gardening Guide for December

BANISH the winter blah's with Amaryllis. Try something different with Nymph Amaryllis that showcase distinctive heavily petaled flowers on strong stems.

LOVE the actress Judi Dench? You can now buy her special rose: a sun-kissed shade of apricot with a fragrance of cucumber and kiwi from David Austin Roses. <http://www.DavidAustin.com>

DECORATE with living plants. Popular and easy to grow specimens include Split-leaf Philodendron and Fiddle-leaf Fig to Palm, Dieffenbachia, Zeke and Snake Plants.

MAKE wreaths from cuttings from redwoods, cedars, pines and fir. Prune your trees and use the boughs!

MOW lawns short as the grass is dormant. Winterize with an application of fertilizer to help the grass survive and thrive during the cold months.

ADD color to the winter garden with asters and cyclamen.

LOOKING for plants that will grow in your area? Use Plant Finder at <https://www.highcountrygardens.com/>

REVIVE your soil with mulch and plant a cover crop on bare dirt to bring nutrients and pump carbon into roots to feed microorganisms.

GROW sage (*salvia officinalis*) for culinary and prescriptive enjoyment. Place in full sun with well-drained soil, water occasionally when you notice the leaves curling, and harvest stems above new growth. Don't cut into the wood or the plant will die back.

BUY autographed copies of Cynthia Brian's first edition books with free shipping and extra freebies all benefiting disaster relief at <http://www.CynthiaBrian.com/online-store>.

PICK sweet smelling narcissus as they begin to bloom to freshen your bathrooms.

PROTECT frost tender plants with burlap, blankets or sheets.

DISCOVER the lotus flower. This time last year I was in Cambodia where every establishment showcased glorious arrangements of lotus symbolizing purity, enlightenment and awakening. We could use more of this botanical symbol of peace and protection.

BREATHE easier with a harmonica class to increase your lung power. Contact Jack Pawlakos, jepawlakos@gmail.com.

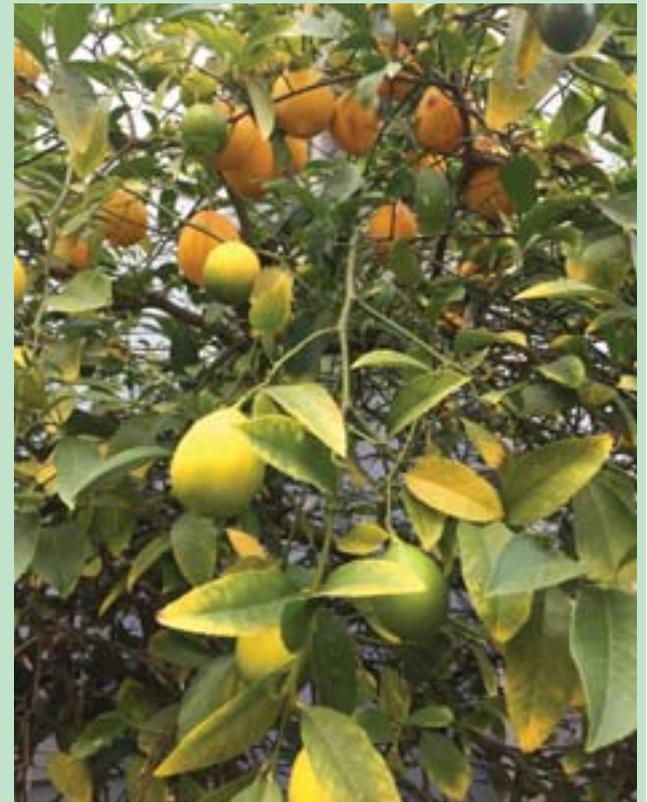
CONTINUE being grateful for being alive and living in wild California.

Happy Gardening. Happy Growing.



The lotus flower symbolizes peace and protection.

Photos Cynthia Brian



Use slices of Meyer lemon as well as leaves to add fragrance to potpourri.



Sage can be added to bouquets or used as incense.



Drying flowers and herbs on a cookie sheet.

Digging Deep with Cynthia Brian

Making scents

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The second book is “Be the Star You Are! Millennials to Boomers Celebrating Gifts of Positive Voices in a Changing Digital World.” This book illustrates how similar the various generations are and offers insights on how we can all prosper to make this world a better place.

I am shamelessly promoting these books in this column for three reasons:

1. They will make fabulous, life enhancing gifts for the

holidays. (Buy them at <http://www.CynthiaBrian.com/online-store>)

2. The proceeds from sales of all of my books benefit Operation Disaster Relief to help the victims of the California wildfires recover. (<http://ow.ly/X0Ia30mF4zZ>)

3. I will continue to donate copies of my books to Operation Disaster Relief that is spearheaded by the volunteers of the top rated local charity Be the Star You Are!®

501 c3. (<http://www.BetheStarYouAre.org>)

To borrow a tagline from Sow True Seed, these books are “open-pollinated, untreated, and GMO-Free!” And they are filled with ideas, exercises, and fun activities that you can do indoors even when the air is unbearable outside or the weather is insufferable. I encourage you to support disaster relief by buying copies of the books and start enjoying making scents and sense.



A zeke plant is an excellent houseplant choice for areas with low light.



Liquid Amber leaves can be included in autumn potpourri sachets.



Buy Cynthia Brian's books with free shipping, extra goodies, and money goes to Disaster Relief at www.cynthiabrian.com/online-store

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.

Buy a copy of the new book, Growing with the Goddess Gardener, at www.cynthiabrian.com/online-store.

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