## ~ Life in LAMORINDA

"We take motivated peo-

ple aged 11 to over 70 and band them together for an un-

believable journey. The best

scenery and the people ... the

opportunity to share these ex-

periences with others is the

most inspiring part of every

restrictions, Casado has cre-

private group experience for

four to 10 participants. "We're

ated TSX Pod Challenges, a

offering a life-changing ad-

venture," Casado writes. "A

friends, take an off-the-grid

family vacation, a getaway

packers for more than 35

years and proudly declares

that he has stood on the top of

retired. But the experiences he

Mt. Whitney 48 times, is now

and Casado developed con-

tinue to inspire adventure-

seekers. "No matter your age,

background or experience, if

you put your mind to it, you

can do just about anything,"

For more information, go

Casado states confidently.

to https://tsxchallenge.com.

no crowds."

with fresh air, good food and

Murphy, who led back-

chance to reconnect with

With COVID concerns and

trip," Casado says.

parts of these trips are the

## An experience that will last a lifetime

www.lamorindaweekly.com



Orinda's Rundell family hike the Hell For Sure Challenge last year

#### By Diane Claytor

Dreams of vacations are filling our heads. It's been almost a year that we've been staring at the same walls of our homes, walking the same nearby trails, playing in the same neighborhood parks and getting food from the same local restaurants. By now, most of us are ready to break free as soon as possible! As wonderful as a Hawaiian beach vacation sounds, most of us have been sedentary long enough. It's time to breathe fresh air, move our bodies, challenge ourselves and take in the beauty of the great outdoors.

Chris Casado has been bringing adventurous backpacking trips to hundreds of people of all ages for 10 years through his company, TSX Challenge. And in keeping with COVID and the safety concerns that are on everyone's mind, TSX is now offering private TSX Pod

Challenges. Casado, an Orinda dad of three, wasn't always a backpacker. In fact, even though he grew up in the central valley with the Sierras in his backyard, he was 14 when he took his first backpacking trip. But that first trip – one week, 75 miles across the Sierras to the top of Mt. Whitney led by Mike Murphy, a local teacher and family friend - hooked him. He knew he didn't want to stop. "It was so inspiring," Casado remembers, "and gave me the confidence to believe I could do just about anything I set my mind to."

Over the years, Casado and Murphy dreamt about providing this same unique sense of accomplishment to more people. Murphy continued teaching in Clovis. Casado went on to college, moved to San Francisco and got a job in finance, "a desk job where I was stuck in a tall tower," he notes. But the dream continued and in 2010 it became a reality when Casado and Mur-

phy co-founded TSX Challenge. "We started out doing three or four trips a year," Casado explains. "We wanted to keep it simple. We weren't looking to set up a typical guide business. We just wanted to do one thing really well." That one thing was the same trip Casado had taken all those years before – the 75

mile, week-long TransSierra hike to Mt. Whitney, the highest point in the lower 48 states.

Andy Wagemaker, a friend living in Arizona, introduced Casado to the Grand Canyon. "Very few places can rival the Sierras," Casado explains, "but the awe-inspiring Grand Canyon is definitely one of them." So a new backpacking challenge was added to TSX's list – a three night, four-day trip from the Grand Canyon to the Colorado River.

Casado continued working his day job while slowly growing TSX.

People started requesting additional experiences so one more backpacking journey was added: the Hell for Sure Challenge, named after the Hell for Sure lake, one of more than a dozen high Sierra lakes passed on this four-day, fivenight loop.

Casado eventually left that "tall tower" and for the last five years has been organically building TSX Challenge. "We have a tight, singular focus and passion for our routes," he notes. Each of their three challenges traverse aweinspiring terrain with a small group of backpackers and knowledgeable, passionate

And TSX handles everything. As their website declares, "Don't own a backpack or tent? Not a problem. We provide backpacks, tents and sleeping pads for those who need them, at no additional charge. We also take care of all group items like pots, stoves, food, food storage, water filters, first aid and more. Your guides will do the cooking and dishes. Just show up with your boots and personal items. ready to hike!"

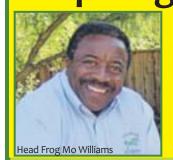
Casado explains that these are called challenges rather than hikes because "each trip affects people in different ways. For many participants, this is their very first backpacking experience. They face mental, physical and emotional challenges. And once they've reached the top of Mt. Whitney or the bottom of the Grand Canyon, they realize that they can do almost anything. These are very empowering trips," Casado continues, "and people feel a tremendous sense of accomplishment. For most, these are definitely trips of a lifetime.



Chris Casado and his children, Brooks, 10, and Claire, 12, at 12,000 feet on Red Mountain, in Kings Canyon National Park last year.



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# **Our Commitment to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion**

It is time that we all stand up against hate, racism and all forms of discrimination. Everyone should be treated with the greatest degree of respect, at all times and in every situation and instance.

As service organizations, actively involved in community work, we know that there is so much more that can and should be done to foster a culture of belonging for all citizens. We must all act in a way that counters marginalization and exclusiveness.



We all have the power to make a positive difference every day. Let all of us commit to creating a community that welcomes all, in order to move forward in the process of healing and reconciliation.

Silence and complacency are not options. Neither is denial. We challenge everyone to act in such a way that shows our communities are truly respectful and inclusive to all.

Endorsed by these Lamorinda service organizations:

**Kiwanis Club of Moraga Valley** National Charity League, Inc., Lamorinda Chapter National Charity League, Inc., Acalanes Area **Orinda Junior Women's Club Moraga Community Foundation Lamorinda Lions Club** 

The Board of Directors of Moraga Citizens Network **American Association of University Women of** Orinda, Moraga, and Lafayette