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Big Sisters Training to Lead at the Summit for Girls Submitted by Tricia Vaughan and Ksenija Soster Olmer

Ask any young adult today if they would like to go back to their middle school years and you would most likely get a resounding "No!" The junior high years as they were known in the past can be years of adjustment to new academic and social pressures, but they can also be years of new growth, new friendships and new self-awareness.

The local branch of the American Association of University Women is doing their best to help girls in our community celebrate the latter and deal effectively with the first. Once again the adult committee and nearly fifty high school facilitators are hard at work organizing the 2008 Sister-to-Sister Summit. It will be held March 15th at Acalanes High School in Lafayette. The summit, now in its ninth year, is a day-long event for Lamorinda and Walnut Creek middle school girls to come together and discuss the things that are crucial to their lives right now. These topics are varied and range from body image and peer pressure to harassment and "mean girls." They learn to talk about the ins and outs of relationships, trust and the surprising difficulties that can come with an ever-widening circle of friends, something that seems to really take off in middle school.

The beauty of this day for the middle school girls is that it is



L to R, Sylvia Marton & Keely Kuhn, seniors at Las Lomas, Amber Kanwer and Helen Wang, both juniors at Acalanes

Photo Sharon Metcalf

led by a dynamic group of local high school girls, specifically chosen and trained by parent educators and psychologists specializing in adolescence, just for this type of event. Small discussion groups and activities led by girls who just recently went through – and survived – the angst and confusion of their middle school years are inspiring and at the same time comforting to younger girls who are experiencing the first pangs of uncertainty that come with entering the teenage years. The positive attitude, the sense of acceptance among girls and the fun, creative and inspiring activities and presenters make this day special.

The high school facilitators representing all four high schools in our district have been meeting regularly for leadership and com-

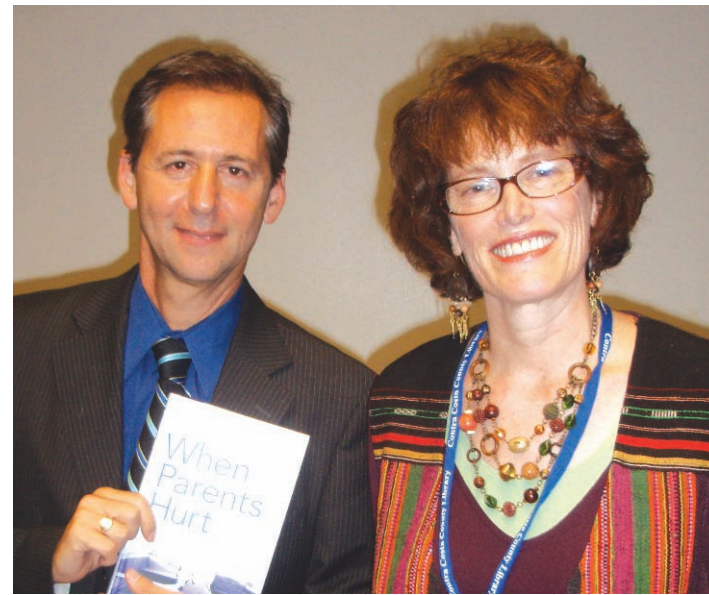
munication skill training sessions as well as for work in different committees that decide every detail from what will be the main theme of the summit, to what will be the topics of discussion groups, down to which kind of pizza would their Little Sisters enjoy most.

If you have a girl attending middle school save the date, Saturday, March 15, 2008, for an unforgettable day. The first hour of the summit a parenting workshop on raising daughters will be run concurrently. If you would like to hear from local parenting and counseling experts and their take on issues they are working with and connect to other parents of girls in the community plan to save some time after dropping your daughter off.

For more information visit: www.aauwoml.org

Coping with Intergenerational Hurtful Relationships

By Linda U. Foley



Dr. Joshua Coleman and Linda Waldroup, Senior Branch Librarian, Moraga Library

Photo Linda Foley

Dr. Joshua Coleman addressed the issue of hurtful relationships between parents and their adolescent or adult children on November 1 at the Moraga Library. The Orinda resident is an internationally renowned relationship expert who has guested on 20/20, Today Show, Good Morning America, the BBC and numerous news programs.

His latest book *When Parents Hurt: Compassionate Strategies: When You and Your Grown Child Don't Get Along*, examines how the cumulative effects of divorce, personality mismatches within the family struc-

ture, and demands of a competitive society can create distancing and chasms between parent and child.

This topic, Dr. Coleman explained, is "underground" because this subject is not readily identified or openly discussed leaving parents with a lingering and festering heartache. Whereas thirty years ago, Dr. Coleman explains, parents believed that children were strong and resilient, today's omnipotent parents "over protect" the child from every possible danger. The child who once was ready to take flight in his early 20s, today tends to linger in the "nest" until his late

20s. This creates democratization within the family or a blurring of boundaries setting the stage for resistance and resentment, providing the child with the position of rejecting the parent.

Dr. Coleman spoke eloquently from his personal hurtful experience with his own daughter – after his divorce – now in a mending stage. He also presented viable excerpts from his case studies from his book. Dr. Coleman provided strategies for managing the guilt and regret that often plague parents resulting from their own parenting mistakes, mistreatment of their children or feeling responsible for their child's inability to launch a happy or successful life.

His suggestions for coping include: forgiving yourself for mistakes you made as well as forgiving your child for being disappointed by them or whatever he/she may have done to hurt you and, not using guilt in order to keep him/her closer to you.

The book is an excellent resource for stressed intergenerational relationships to begin rebuilding and healing, and how to start the dialogue.

Dr. Coleman's other books include *The Marriage Makeover*, *Imperfect Harmony*, *The Lazy Husband*, *Married with Twins*.

Lafayette Party Shack Smashed

Officers were stunned by the use of brand new lumber for the floors, the tar paper covered roof, outdoor fire pit, couches, comfortable chairs, bar and electric lamp, suggesting a generator was there at one point. What was not a surprise was the amount of contraband found, namely used condoms and empty alcohol bottles. The outdoor fire pit was troubling as well; drunk teens, an open fire

and tall dry grass are not a great combination. Speculation remains that the construction and parties started in the summertime, when fire danger was extremely high.

"Our main concern was stopping the party that night," Greenwood explained. To that end, after demolishing "The Shack," an officer was posted at the entrance to turn teens away.

Word on the street is "The

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Shack" is known as an Acalanes senior hangout. It's clear that more than a couple of people over a period of time worked on the structure. Lafayette parents of teens, who happen to be missing some lumber and building supplies, take note.

Prosecution will be up to East Bay Regional Park Police, as "The Shack" is in their jurisdiction.

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