

LAMORINDA Seniors

◆ Not to be missed ◆
Senior events are listed on page 19

Bocce Ball Players Caught Between Growth and Regulations

By Sophie Braccini



Moraga Commons Bocce Ball court

Photo Andy Scheck

When it comes to Bocce Ball, Dom Sidari cannot help but speak with great passion. The retired Moraga resident has been playing the game for many years and was at the origin of the Moraga Bocce Ball Club, now in its twelfth year. Since the 90's the Club has grown and the two bocce courts that were originally built at the Moraga Commons are no

longer enough for a club that boasts 120 members, organized into twenty teams, that compete on a regional level in which more than 5000 players participate regularly.

It did not seem unreasonable to Sidari to request the building of two new courts for which residents were willing to pay. But since the first courts were built, regulations have changed and Sidari has been

caught for months in a sticky web.

Bocce ball is an Italian game belonging to the "boules" precision sport family; cousin to pétanque (played in Lafayette), the sport has its origin in the games played in the Roman Empire. It is played from Europe to Australia, to North and South America. Bocce is traditionally played on an oyster shell court, but has also been played on decomposed granite, soil, or asphalt courts approximately 65-88 feet in length and 8-13 feet wide, sometimes with wooden boards of approximately 1/2 foot in height surrounding the court.

"The game is great fun and many of our members are playing it," says George Fisher, President of the Moraga Movers, an organization of active seniors in Lamorinda. Fisher has been an advocate for Sidari's cause.

"We have to expand," explains Sidari, "our twenty teams play five nights a week, we compete in the County Leagues and

right now we have sixty people on the waiting list."

Sidari has played bocce ball in surrounding communities and seen the many courts that are available to seniors. "Martinez has sixteen courts, Antioch has ten, Rossmoor has three, why wouldn't the Town let us build two additional courts?" asks a distressed Sidari.

The Club offered to pay for the whole construction and submitted drawings to the Town Engineer.

The response was not the enthusiastic "yes" he was expecting. Sidari received a letter from Town staff that listed all the technical requirements for the project.

"The rules of the game have changed in twelve years," explains Public Works Director Jill Mercurio, "for example, the courts have an impact on the adjacent creek and

runtoffs have to be mitigated, the simple sketches that we received are not sufficient for an approval."

Furthermore, the Department Fish and Game (DFG) Code, Section 1602, requires an entity to notify DFG of any proposed activity that may substantially modify a river, stream, or lake. Environmental Scientist Suzanne Gilmore of the DFG confirmed, "Development projects near creeks are advised to submit a 1600 notification to the Department."

In addition, the Moraga Commons Park suffers from an endemic parking problem. "The Town Council asked us to produce a plan for the development of the Commons," explains Parks and Recreation Director Jay Ingram, "at this time there is no

budget to draft such a plan." He adds that he is doubtful that the 2 new courts could be accepted if a general plan that includes parking has not been approved. "There are different projects for the Park, each with potential parking impacts; we cannot approve each of them separately without a vision for the park."

Ingram is sensitive to Sidari's plea and says he is planning to meet with stakeholders to try to mediate a solution. That's what Fisher is hoping for: "Since we do have members playing, we would like to see improvement," he says, adding, "The rules are hard for Dom to work around; the staff should facilitate the process, rather than just reading the rules, and help guide him through the system."

Health Alternatives: The Alexander Technique

By Kay Hogan, M.Ed.



Kay working with a patient

Photo provided

Recently an 81 year old friend of mine had a set of symptoms that might have sent her to the doctor. Before calling for an appointment, however, she consulted the patient handbook that she received from her medical provider. For her symptoms, the handbook recommended that she see a Feldenkrais Practitioner, Alexander Teacher or Rolfer. Because she does not have a computer or know much about health alternatives, she called me -- I am an Alexander Teacher.

Although The Alexander Technique is often mistaken for body work, it is actually an educational process that teaches movement and improves posture.

If you watch, in profile, a person move from a sitting posi-

tion to standing, you might observe that they look down while pulling the head back into the body, pulling the shoulders up around their ears, arching both the low back and the neck and then putting their hands on their thighs as they pull down into their body and then struggle under the weight of that downward movement as they get up.

Over time, this will create neck and lower back problems. Instead, one should look into the horizon, releasing the head forward and up and letting the spine follow the movement which takes the weight out of the body and allows it to float up.

F.M. Alexander (1869-1955), the founder of the Alexander Technique, developed and taught his work at the end of the

eighteenth century in London. His important discoveries were, "conscious use of self," meaning that you could bring movement to a conscious level and "direct" muscles to "lengthen and widen" instead of "shortening and tightening" which over time causes pain and wears out joints. Alexander also found that we have poor "habits" which, when we become aware of them, can be eradicated.

Because we have what Alexander referred to as "false sensory awareness," one needs the feedback from the hands of a trained professional in order to change.

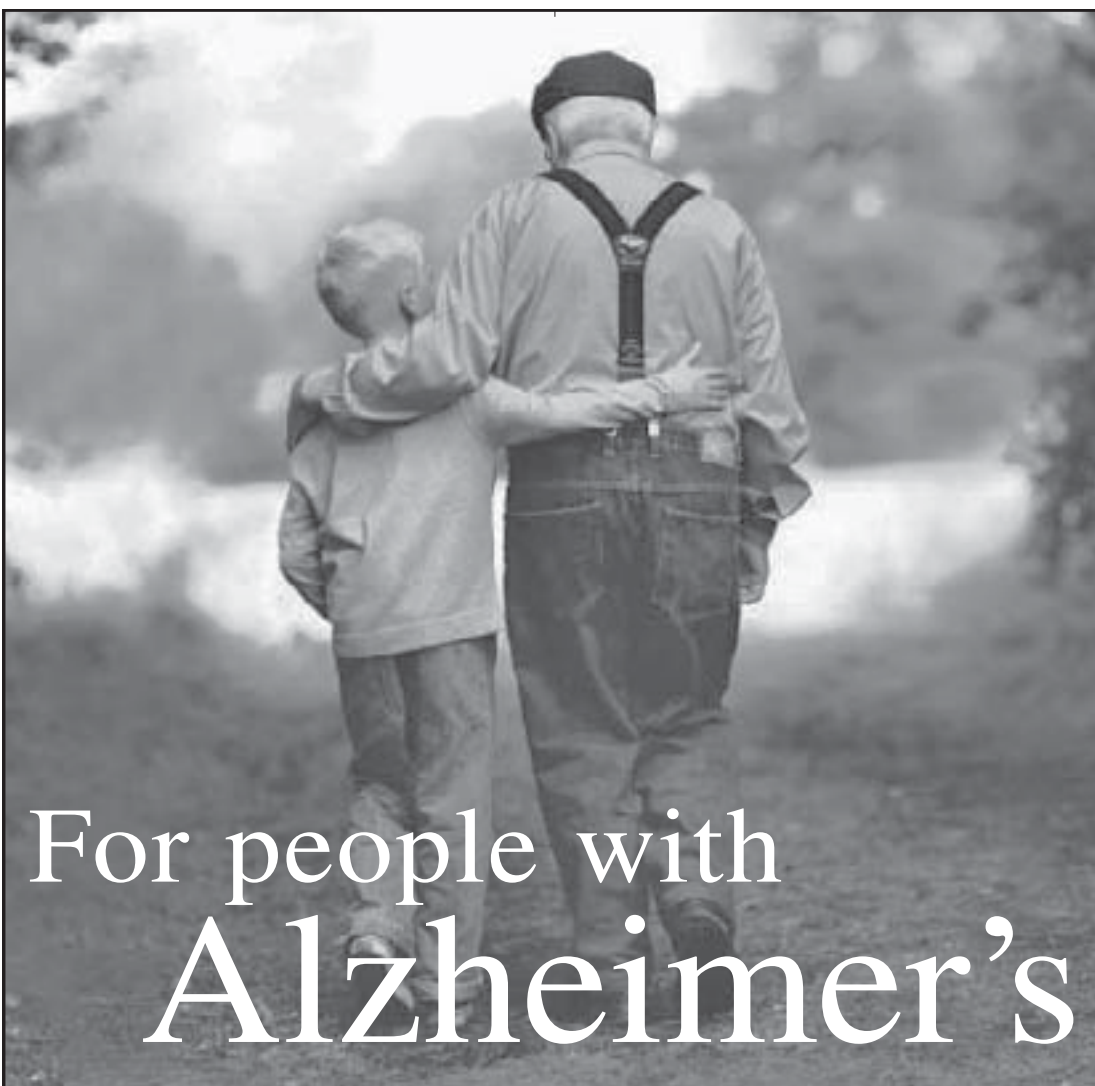
Alexander Teachers attend a three-year course and are certified by a school that is approved by The American Society of Alexander Teachers.

An Alexander lesson is forty-five minutes to an hour and is designed to improve posture and movement. Often musicians, singers, actors and athletes take lessons for better performance, but many people come to a lesson in pain and want to avoid joint replacements and the use of debilitating drugs.

A recent study published by the British Medical Journal (BMJ) determined that back pain can be reduced by 85% through the study of the Alexander Technique. This research is online at: <http://www.bmj.com/cgi/content/full/337/aug192/a884>.

For more information go to www.alexandertech.org.

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For people with
Alzheimer's
there's no time to lose.

Alzheimer's disease is a neurodegenerative disorder—a disorder in which brain cells are lost. It is characterized by progressive loss of memory and cognitive function, such as movement control and decision-making ability. Alzheimer's disease is the most common cause of dementia in the elderly and affects about 18 million people worldwide—5 million in the U.S. alone. Although there's currently no cure for Alzheimer's disease, research is under way to find a new investigational treatment aimed at slowing the progression of the disease. The current medications are mostly aimed at maximizing the remaining brain activity. That's why the ICARA study was created—to explore a new investigational treatment option.

Throughout the 83-week study, participants may receive the investigational drug, study-related physical exams and laboratory services at no charge. All participants will be monitored by a medical team, including a nurse or study coordinator and a physician.

Ask your doctor if the ICARA study is right for you. For more information,

Dr. Kathleen Toups
Bay Area Research Institute
3736 Mt. Diablo Blvd., Suite #204
Lafayette, CA 94549
925.283.9006



Social Security, Medicare & Long Term Care

- Confused on how to calculate your retirement benefit?
- What if I take my benefits early?
- Can I work and receive social security?
- Are my benefits taxable?
- What does Medicare cover?
- Do I need long term care?

If these are questions you have, attend our upcoming presentation on social security benefits presented by the Social Security Administration and long term care strategies with Lincoln Financial.

The Stratford at Countrywood
1545 Pleasant Hill Road
Lafayette, CA 94549
April 2, 2009 from 6-7pm
(Beverages and dessert served)

Hosted by:
Lisa Shinhira, Sagemark Consulting
44 Montgomery Street, Ste 2950, San Francisco, CA
CA Insurance License #0F48728

RSVP required. Space is limited.
Call Lisa @ 415-263-1323 or email at lisa.shinhira@lfg.com by March 30th.

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