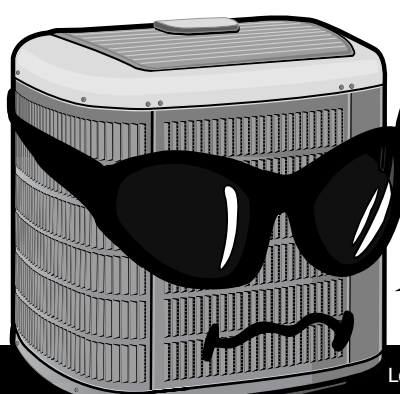


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St. Stephen's Church to Serve as Community Link for 2010 Backpack Project

By Lucy Amaral



The Klein family (Steve, Kimi, Matt, and Roxy) helped deliver backpacks to St. Cornelius last year. The current school year isn't even over yet, but St. Stephen's Episcopal Church in Orinda is already gearing up for Back to School 2010. For the second year, the Church's outreach committee has set a goal to donate new, fully-loaded backpacks to St. Cornelius Catholic Elementary School in Richmond. The project will kick off on Memorial Weekend with announcements during all St. Stephen's services, followed by an information campaign to the Lamorinda area.

According to St. Stephen's Reverend Mary L. Hudak, last year's project came as an offshoot of efforts by parishioners who work on various projects with St. Cornelius. Hudak said that the families at St. Cornelius struggle financially and parishioners felt that backpacks and school supplies donated by St. Stephen's would be welcome. She said the St. Stephen's Outreach Committee discussed the options, and the Backpack Project was born.

"This congregation is incredibly generous. We saw a need and saw where we could help," said Hudak. Armed with school-supply request lists from St. Cornelius, the committee began collecting the needed items.

Hudak said the members of St. Stephen's and the Lamorinda community came together quickly. "Our parishioners gathered the first

50 backpacks," she said. "Then, people (from the community) were dropping off packs filled with everything we requested."

Hudak said eventually the church had 100 brand new backpacks filled with school supplies, plus copy paper, classroom supplies and monetary donations to take to St. Cornelius. "Because everyone in our area is so generous, the stores began to run out of supplies," she said. "Everyone went above and beyond on this project."

This year, Hudak said, the needs are nearly the same. Traditional school supplies such as glue sticks, and colored markers for the younger grades have been requested, while some of the older grades are hoping not only for basics like pencils and markers but also extras like math compasses and writing journals. Also on the list are general classroom supplies like paper towels, tissues, and reams of paper. "This is a boon for the teachers," said Hudak. "(Last year) for the first time in years the teachers had an abundance of supplies."

Chaired by Roxy Klein and Maria Hjelm, Hudak said this year's committee hopes to again reach the 100-backpack number. All donations are welcome and can be dropped off at St. Stephen's Church's entrance or at their office. The deadline is August 8, Hudak added, so the backpacks

can be taken to St. Cornelius for the school's Back to School night. Supply lists and other information about the backpack project can be found at www.ststephensorinda.org. Hudak said she hopes that

with the support of the community this program continues to grow. "We want to offer everyone the opportunity to get in there in a small but meaningful way to help those who have less," she said.

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Community Service • Lafayette's Sunday of Sustainability with a Symphony on the Green

Submitted by Dr. Susan Hahn, Lafayette Local Food Group

It was as good as any April day could get, Sunday April 25th in downtown Lafayette. The sun shone with intensity, the winds were mild, and the air was as healthy as one could want it to be for 2010 in California. As a 5th generation Californian, so concerned about the wellbeing of our state, a deep breath of fresh air provided me with some relief. Living here in Lafayette and watching a maze of volunteers working in concert toward creating an afternoon of artistic beauty, provided me with a surge of new hope. "Yes, it can happen when we all work together for a more sustainable community!" We humans still possess the power to improve our existing social and emotional conditions.

The Team on the Green that Sunday in Lafayette, led by Janet Thomas, Rebecca Calahan Klein

and Barbara Hollenbach, turned out to be a symphonic melody as rehearsed as one could ever imagine. The amazing reality however, was that there was no rehearsal...it just all happened so smoothly without a glitch in bringing hundreds of local people together in harmony. Now this is what real community is all about...camaraderie of dedicated individuals working in unison for a more perfect place to live, to work, to go to school, and to have fun.

This Symphony on the Green brought twinkles to the eyes of those in wheel chairs and puscharts, fresh strawberry stains to the cheeks of the little ones, laughter and joy to the adults, an air of relaxation to our elders, and opportunities for Lafayette residents to get to know each other in a new and refreshing mode. The healthy food not only tasted as good as one could get in any local restaur-

ant, it was all prepared with hard work and the love of the many volunteers. The music and stage presentations and acknowledgements all added to the splendor on the grass on that remarkable symphonic day on the green in downtown Lafayette.

No, there were not any big brass instruments or artists in tuxedo tails, but there was a symphony of another kind. There were just a bunch of us Lafayette ordinary folks coming together for an afternoon of a casual and healthy community happening. This special event makes me a kinder, softer, and gentler person in unison with those other volunteers that care so deeply about the place where we live. Thank you to all of the Lafayette Local Food Group (LLFG) who welcome other participants to our little family of volunteers.



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