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Lamorinda Alcohol Policy Coalition

By Sophie Braccini



Jaime Rich gives a presentation in Orinda. Photo Sophie Braccini

Jaime Rich was excited as she stood before an audience in Orinda to talk about the Lamorinda Alcohol Policy Coalition. Some key stakeholders were in attendance – Lamorinda’s three police chiefs, a middle school principal or two, Orinda City Council member Sue Severson, Moraga Parks and Recreation staffer Kimberly Nelson, and several parents.

Rich’s objective is to form an ongoing coalition that will act to reduce youth access to alcohol

and underage drinking, and to create a healthy and safe environment in Lamorinda. Anyone interested in this project is welcome to attend the Coalition’s monthly meetings. The group meets twice on the third Wednesday of every month – once in the morning, from 10:00-11:30 a.m. in Orinda City Hall’s Community Room at 22 Orinda Way; and again from 6:30 to 8:00 p.m. at Supervisor Gayle Uilkema’s office at 3338 Mt. Diablo Blvd. in Lafayette. The next meeting date is November 17.

Rich was hired by the Center for Human Development, a community-based organization that since 1972 has provided wellness programs and support aimed at empowering people and promoting positive growth, to start a coalition in Lamorinda. Rich, an Orinda mother of two teenagers, had a career as a Clinical Exercise Physiologist. Her passion for prevention and wellness led her to volunteer in the schools. She is the co-chair of the Healthy Choice Committee at Miramonte High School. “In our school district alcohol is the drug of choice for

many teens,” says Rich, “the purpose of the coalition is to increase community awareness, and improve the social norm regarding underage and binge drinking.”

During the first meeting Rich conducted brainstorming exercises to identify the audience’s perception of the problem, as well as possible corrective actions. “Parents are often in denial that there is a problem,” said Severson. “We’ve noticed a growing lack of respect for authority,” said Moraga Police Chief Bob Priebe. “We have a feeling of entitlement here,” said a mother who would rather not be identified, “there is a perception that we can break the rules because we run the show.”

“Parents model for their kids,” said another mother, “if they see that the only way their parents have fun is through drinking, they will want to do the same.”

Participants were just as vocal when they started brainstorming solutions. “I’d like to see in print the police reports for ‘disturbing the peace’ infractions,” said a mother. “A local network could serve as a support system for

parents who want a change,” proposed another parent.

“We’d like to see the County make some changes in the legislation, commit resources and add teeth to the juvenile punishment system,” said Priebe.

“Maybe we could revisit our social ordinance,” said Severson, “and clearly state what is not acceptable.” Nelson added, “The youth groups, such as the Moraga Youth Involvement Committee, could get involved and give their perspective.”

At the end of the meeting, Rich asked participants to reach out to different community groups and ask for their participation. “The coalition depends on community members being involved,” she stated, “we need a consistent number of people from police, local governments, schools, parents and young people to continue to attend.” Interested parties unable to come to the meetings are encouraged to contact Rich at Jaime@chd-prevention.org to offer suggestions or ask to receive Rich’s monthly updates regarding the Coalition’s progress.

Orinda Academy Teacher Wins Award

Submitted by Miriam Schaffer



Orinda Academy’s Jeff Quittman

Photo provided

Orinda Academy, an independent, college prep school serving grades 7-12, recently announced that history teacher Jeff Quittman is the winner of a \$10,000 grant from

the Warren W. Eukel Teacher Trust.

Quittman, who has taught at Orinda Academy for 23 years, is one of three Contra Costa county teachers receiving

the award from the community-based nonprofit organization, which honors teachers who show extraordinary commitment to students.

“Jeff is highly deserving of this award,” says Ron Graydon, founder and director of Orinda Academy. “Many of our students have learning differences and have often been told what they are unable to do. Jeff’s warmth, patience, passion, and encouragement have inspired students to understand all that they can achieve, enabling many students to excel.”

As a history teacher, Quittman’s philosophy is to provide a broadly humanistic approach to the ideas, events, peoples, and extraordinary individuals that have shaped our world. Students learn critical

thinking skills while gaining a passion and appreciation for the rich variety of past and present experience, and the multiplicity of ways in which they connect to and illuminate one another.

The award will be presented to Quittman and two other recipients at the Eukel Teacher Trust’s 19th Anniversary Awards Dinner on November 18, 2010 at the Diablo Country Club. The event, which is open to the public, is hosted by food and wine critic, Narsai David. He will design a multi-course dinner prepared by chefs from the several local restaurants.

For more information, go to: <http://www.eukelteachertrust.org> <http://www.orindaacademy.org>

Kids and Bandz

By Lou Fancher



If you haven’t heard of Silly Bandz, the silicone bracelets shaped into animal forms and so much more, then you’re not hanging around at elementary and middle schools in Lamorinda.

The retro toy—when was the last time a rubber band was all the rage?—has become a hot trade, a cool reward, and a fast-food perk. Silly Bandz even have their own web page. Today, there are Justin Bieber, Barbie, Rainforest, Yo Gabba Gabba, and Hello Kitty packs. There are “retired” packs. And, as if training an entire generation to misspell “bands” wasn’t

enough, there are now Silly Ringz, Caribinerz and buttons. (Why it’s not “buttonz”, we can’t explain, but school teachers around the world are thanking their lucky stars.)

Some teachers, that is. Silly Bandz have become so popular, teachers have had to ban them from the classroom. At Orinda’s Glorietta Elementary School, Principal Wendy Sparks was proactive; using the school’s online newsletter to inform the community.

“We need your support so we can make certain the Silly Bands

[sic, sort of,] are not disrupting the educational process,” she wrote. A bullet pointed list of guidelines followed, covering everything from sharing only during recess, wearing no more than five, and allowing kindergarten students to only wear them on Fridays.

Rheem Elementary principal Elaine Frank wrote in an email on the subject, “We are living peacefully with the Silly Band craze and have not ‘banned the bands’ yet.” The school has a strict “no trade” policy and the students have been warned that the Bandz will be banned if they become a nuisance.

Frank reports that teachers have had to take them away from students on several occasions, but no more than any other “jewelry” or similar distraction.

Sparks, in a recent phone call, said “the problem is minor. We have great kids here, so I think common sense has really been the best policy.”

With all the fervor, one has to wonder if the concern over Silly Bandz is just...silly. But when you think about kids trading while mingling in the bus lane, or becoming so consumed with Bandz acquisition that they ignore the real reason

for going to school (listening to teachers and learning how to spell, amongst other things), you begin to understand the need for controls.

Sparks and Frank, and most kids, are enjoying the social aspects of Silly Bandz. For now, trading, sharing and even designing custom bands provides valuable interaction. With a few rules in place, Silly Bandz are what a toy should be: fun. And maybe, a little silly.



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