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Civic News Lafayette, Moraga

Dedicating the Acalanes Ridge Open Space



Photo courtesy Paul Garber

Under stormy skies, scores of supporters of the Acalanes Ridge Open Space made the muddy uphill trek for the official dedication ceremony on Saturday. The City of Lafayette, Walnut Creek, the East Bay Regional Park District and the Muir Heritage Land Trust col-

laborated to purchase the prominent twenty-three acre parcel behind Acalanes High School. Organizers of the celebration called it a "treasured oasis" in the community; the property features spectacular views from the Carquinez Straits to Mt. Diablo. C. Tyson

Banner Days Continue in Lafayette

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Banners typically last five or six years (hanging one month per year) before fading and tearing; then they're destroyed. Lafayette and the Chamber of Commerce share in the cost of the program, with the Chamber contributing roughly twenty five per cent. The city's share runs \$25,000 annually.

San Francisco graphic artist Jennifer Morla has designed Lafayette's silkscreen-on-canvas banners since 2002. "Design time takes about two to three weeks," says Morla by e-mail. "Our ideas are generated by the nature of the title and how that title relates to the town of Lafayette. We often reference the town's landscape, civic structures or retail/restaurant community when developing the illustrations." Limiting designs to two ink colors (to manage cost) "is the most difficult aspect of the design process," but Morla says what's most important to her is that the posters "have a sense of whimsy and verve that mirrors Lafayette's wonderful, sunny attitude."



These banners will remain up through the Fourth of July. Photo C. Dausman

Dollar Tree Opens For Business in Moraga

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On Sunday morning, a full squadron of local and corporate staff was present, making sure that everything ran smoothly and the newly hired staff, about 15 students from local high schools and colleges, was operating successfully.

Moraga's Mayor, Town Manager, Chamber of Commerce president, and members of the Economic Development Team (EDT) all showed up to wish them well. "I think it will be successful and I invite the community to shop here," said EDT member Renée Zeimer.

What can you buy for a dollar? "I bought tinfoil containers, granola bars, and bubble wrap," said Moraga Town Clerk Marty McInturf. Resident Dona Ward was looking for specific items - "I've been a 'room-mom' for three years," she said. "You can find a lot of craft items at a Dollar Tree store," she added, although she did not find the sheets of stick-on jewels she had seen at another store.

"This store is not huge, so we had to make some choices," said a manager. "We've heard that we should expand our party supply section though, and will be working on that." He added that every store manager has some latitude to choose items from the pool provided by the company.

Small groups of teens roaming the store thought students leaving Campolindo High School in the afternoon would come to the Dollar Tree for candies and sodas. A future Saint Mary's freshman pointed out items of interest

such as school supplies and energy shots.

Mayor Karen Mendonca was found in one aisle, talking with District Manager Gary Ferguson. "It's a lovely store," she said, "keep it clean and we'll be happy," said the mayor. The store is very neat, almost striking with its bright signature green everywhere.

In the middle of the store food items are aplenty, including bags of candies, canned soups, boxes of pasta, bags of trail mix, and bottles of water; frozen foods are at the back. School and party supplies occupy one side of the store, including a double rack of cards. On the other side are home products - plates, containers, cleaning products, utensils and more. The beauty section offers creams, soaps, shampoos, tooth brushes and the like.

EDT member Rich Larsen commented that he believes that the store might draw people from outside of Lamorinda and contribute positively to the Town's bottom-line, while Chamber of Commerce President Edy Schwartz noted that the store had joined the Chamber and she was looking forward to having it become an active part of the business community.

Many of the residents who voiced opposition to the Town's decision to allow Dollar Tree in Moraga chose not to come to the opening, citing concerns regarding product safety and a desire to support other types of businesses.

Controlling the Wild Things

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Kiwanis President John Haffner, who asked the Moraga Town Council not long ago to do something about the turkey issue, recently obtained a depredation permit for his home from California Department of Fish and Game Warden Nicole Kozicki.

The permit gives Haffner the authorization to kill the birds himself; but he thought it more humane to contact Peter Lacy, a trapper with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Wildlife Services program, who would catch the large birds. "Pete explained that the turkeys visit our neighborhood because of the olive trees they feed on," said Haffner, "and the pine trees they roost in. He can help individual homeowners who get a depredation permit, but not a whole neighborhood, unless a homeowners' association contacts the Department with a permit of its own."

Lacy's philosophy is to manage wildlife, not eradicate it. He believes that many problems can be solved with behavioral change on the part of humans, like removing sources of food.

Haffner could cut down his pines and harvest all his

olives, but he believes that it would not solve the problem at the neighborhood level; he sent letters to his neighbors asking for their input. "Some asked me what they could do to help," said Haffner. Lacy indicated that trapping at this time, when there is an ample food supply in the area, would not be very effective and that he could come back in November when hungry birds would be more easily enticed by food left in traps. "I do not see a solution to the problem yet," says Haffner, "And right now all the females are nesting, preparing a new generation of turkeys for next year."

Fortunately for Moraga, urbanized wild life has not reached the level of Cape Town, South Africa, where baboons open windows, refrigerators, and garbage bins in search of food. And anyone who vacations at Lake Tahoe knows that the local bears will help themselves to just about everything - reportedly even wandering into a popular North Shore restaurant last fall as diners hastily made their way out the other door. One might hope nobody teaches Moraga's turkeys and skunks to do that.