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Published January 18th, 2012

Stepping Up to Serve the Library Foundation

By Cathy Tyson



Seth Hamalian



Suzy Pak Photos provided

Funding 53% of the Lafayette Library and Learning Center's (LLLC) operating expenses is no easy task. That's the role of the Lafayette Library and Learning Center Foundation (Foundation), which was established to support the construction and operations of the Library with the help of only four Foundation staff members. Recently some of the original members of the Foundation Trustees stepped down: Anne Grodin, Teresa Geringer, Bret Peterson and Jack Jenkins-Stark. Seven community-minded volunteers offered to step in and fill those positions; the new Board members will play active roles on committees, fundraising and in leadership positions for upcoming events. "They are also our spokespersons in the community," said Executive Director Kathy Merchant.

The new Foundation Trustees - Victoria Bjerke, Seth Hamalian, Todd Jacobson, Sid Luckenbach, Suzy Pak, Laurie Phillips and Denise Zetterbaum, join thirteen existing members to form a full roster of twenty - the maximum allowable.

Despite the demands of his day job as a principal of Mission Bay Development Group in San Francisco, where he

is responsible for strategic planning, marketing and finance,

Seth Hamalian stepped up to serve on the Foundation Board. "I felt my experience in fundraising and working with public private partnerships and redevelopment agencies could be valuable in helping the LLLC to thrive," said Hamalian. "Lafayette's library is unique in that, instead relying on property taxes the way most libraries do, its operations are highly dependent on donations and the generosity of individuals and local businesses."

He adds, "I want to see the Lafayette Library and Learning Center do well because libraries hold a special place in my heart. Growing up, I spent hours in the Berkeley public library and developed my love of reading and research there. I remember vividly the great satisfaction that came with finding locations in the stacks that contained whole new area of interest, and then pouring through that section, looking for the best books and checking out the maximum allowed on each visit. I want to tackle how, in an age of digital books and the internet, a physical space like the library can still provide that spark for a love of reading and promote intellectual curiosity. In addition, I want to build on the library's success in providing an important and unique gathering space that grows the fibers of community in Lafayette."

Fellow new board member Suzy Pak also has many demands on her time, with two young children, now in fourth and first grade respectively, a full time job with an asset management firm in San Francisco and as one of the founders of grassroots group, Lafayette for Education. "It's important to recognize that the community extends beyond school," said Pak. Her mother was a children's librarian, so she understands the importance of reading and libraries.

"The LLLC has an amazing breadth and depth of services and collaborations (with the Glenn Seaborg Consortium), it's really an impressive program," said Pak, "I'm excited to be a part of it." She feels fortunate to live here and wants to make sure the library keeps going for future generations, "it's a vital part of the community."

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