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Letters to the Editor

Editor:

Years ago, a study was released giving the statistic that about one person in every ten is gay. There are around 1300 students at Miramonte, and as a student there, I know of only a handful of individuals who have openly come out. Either my high school has an unusually low number of LGBT students, or some are simply too afraid to let others know that they're homosexual.

I wouldn't be surprised at all if the latter was true. And it's the largest, most-respected institutions in our society that contribute to this fear. Religious groups like the Catholic Church tell us it's a perverted sin to be attracted to the same sex. Recently, the Boy Scouts of America refused to give a Moraga boy his Eagle Scout rank because he was openly gay. Proponents of the "protecting marriage" movement tirelessly make the case that the institution of marriage itself is meant for a man and a woman, despite the fact that men and women have been getting divorced at a rate of about 40-50% for years.

I attended Catholic school for nine years of my life, and I know that the church's teachings of love and compassion are the complete antithesis of the hypocritical stance that Catholicism takes on homosexuality and gay marriage. I was a Boy Scout long enough to know that the scouts' values of service, kindness, and helpfulness don't fall in line with its administration's judgmental thinking. And I as I grow older I recognize that marriage is based on the ability to love, cherish, and commit to another, and not on sexual orientation or gender.

For those who are gay at Miramonte and the rest of the world, who haven't yet come out, I don't blame them. They are confronted by a world that doesn't accept but rather shames them for something over which they have no control. Powerful forces in our society have led them to believe that their simple difference in preference is in fact a disorder. It's time that these institutions realize not only their immense hypocrisy, but also the tremendous damage they are inflicting upon others.

Brian De Luna
Orinda

Editor:

The police department personnel and paramedics who saved the life of cardiac-arrest victim Jim Engelhardt [Lamorinda Weekly November 21, 2012] received well-deserved praise for their successful resuscitation efforts. But what about those unnamed Good Samaritans, the bystanders who started CPR before the professionals arrived on the scene?

We encourage our citizens to learn CPR and AED operation as well as emergency first aid, because seconds count in cases like these. The bystanders who initially stepped in may well have made a critical difference between success and failure in this patient's outcome. They too should be recognized for their role in his recovery.

Eugene L. Gottfried, M.D.
Orinda

(Editor's note: We have attempted to discover the identities of the above-referenced Good Samaritans, but nobody seems to know who they are. Do you? Please let us know by emailing lee@lamorindaweekly.com.)

Editor:

Le Colbert, Paris, 17 Nov. 2012

My parents, from northern Germany, tell me of a delightful evening at Le Colbert in Paris, France, with a couple from Lafayette, CA. To their great dismay they misplaced the couple's email address. We'd be most delighted if you could contact me, their daughter living in Oakland, at abrown@dvc.edu.

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Am•ie Brown

Editor:

So, the Orinda City Staff has announced the award of the prestigious Golden Nugget Grand Award for Best Senior Housing Community - On the Board, to the pending Eden Housing project in Orinda, all before a shovel is even in the ground. Prestigious for whom?

A little digging at www.goldennuggetawards.com reveals that the Golden Nugget Awards are actually granted by the PCBC, which translates to Pacific Coast Builders Conference, a self-serving trade event for developers and such, sponsored by the California Industry Building Association. These awards themselves are sponsored by Builders Magazine. Only a real estate development insider, with something to gain, could tout this "award".

If a trade association wants to go around patting its own members on the back, so be it, but is that really

newsworthy, or prestigious for the citizens of Orinda, who are looking down the barrel at a high-rise, high-density, low-income, residential housing project within the city's commercial district? Perhaps, not so much.

Owen Murphy
Orinda

Editor:

Sharply lower home values in Lafayette, Moraga, and Orinda are likely to occur if the federal government goes ahead with plans to limit tax deductions for home-mortgage interest and property taxes. Lamorinda -- a collective term for Lafayette, Moraga, and Orinda -- contains many well off residents earning high annual incomes. Such residents are likely to itemize deductions on their federal income taxes. Itemization allows tax deductions for home-mortgage interest and for property taxes. Here is an hypothetical example: Suppose a Lamorinda home has a 30-year fixed-rate mortgage for \$800,000. If the loan's interest rate were 4 percent, the yearly mortgage-interest payment would be about \$46,000. (If the loan is new, mortgage payments go mostly for interest.) The property tax on the home might be \$12,000 annually. Together, the two payments equal \$58,000 a year. The owner of the home would, under current law, be able to deduct \$58,000 from his annual income. Currently, some members of Congress are considering lowering the amount of deductible income to \$17,000. Thus, instead of deducting \$58,000, the homeowner might only be able to deduct \$17,000 and would owe \$41,000 in additional federal taxes. If the home were sold, the buyer might not want to pay as much as the seller wants. The buyer, citing an increased tax liability, might demand a lower price for the home because the buyer would have to pay higher taxes. California now has the nation's highest annual average for deductions for people who itemize (The Wall Street Journal, Nov. 19). That average is \$33,901. Indiana has the lowest number: \$20,111. The big question is: Will homes in Lamorinda plummet in value if Congress limits tax deductions for high-income individuals who itemize their federal tax returns?

Richard S. Colman
Orinda

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