

# Los Perales Elementary Gets New Principal

By Chris Lavin



Incoming Los Perales Elementary School Principal Amy Banks was welcomed to the school by Superintendent Bruce K. Burns. Photo Chris Lavin

The students at Los Perales Elementary School welcomed the newest kid on the block Aug. 28: their new principal, Amy Black.

"It feels fantastic to be in Moraga," Black said. "I feel like I've struck gold in coming here. Everyone has been so welcoming. I was impressed by the teachers and the staff, and then I met the kids, who are just great."

Black replaces Charles Miller.

She comes to Moraga from the San Ramon Valley Unified School District, where she served

as principal of Sycamore Valley and Alamo elementary schools, and assistant principal at Tassajara Hills Elementary School. Ultimately, Black said, it was her sons who tipped the scale to be closer to home. She lives in Walnut Creek, and she has two sons attending Lafayette Elementary School.

"I was already involved in this district as a parent. So I finally decided it was time to give back to the community where I live," she said.

In a statement, Moraga School District Superintendent

(and former longtime Los Perales principal) Bruce Burns described Black as "an excellent communicator with a passion for working with teachers and students."

Black earned her undergraduate degree at San Jose State University, her master's in educational leadership from California State East Bay, and her multiple subject teaching credential at Saint Mary's College. She has taught second and fifth grades, as well as high school English. She has also served as a reading specialist and a teacher on special assignment.

## Local Nonprofit Picks Up Pieces after Burglary

Cynthia Brian, founder of the Moraga nonprofit Be the Star You Are (and *Lamorinda Weekly's* gardening goddess), found front doors smashed, with wood and sheetrock scattered in the hallway following a Sept. 2 burglary where suspects stole video and production equipment.

"What kind of person burglarizes a charity?" Brian said.

Teen volunteers of the nonprofit that has empowered women, youth, and families through improved literacy and positive message programming for the past 15 years were shocked by the devasta-

tion. Drawers had been ransacked, books flung from the shelves, and paper strewn throughout the rooms. With limited financial resources, the nonprofit couldn't afford adequate insurance for business property coverage.

Doug at the Moraga UPS store was outraged about the burglary, and offered to print flyers for the organization's Letters for Literacy programs and upcoming essay contest.

Brian is determined to get things back to normal. She and teen volunteers are still planning to host writing activities at the Be The Star You Are

booth Sept. 28 during the Moraga Pear Festival. "I'll be at the booth to meet the public all day," said Youngjoo, a writer for *Lamorinda Weekly's* Teen Scene and host of the young adult radio show, Express Yourself. "We are going to have fun and move on."

For more information on the Pear Festival booth, visit [http://starstyleradio.com/Events/Entries/2013/9/28\\_Pear\\_Festival\\_2013.html](http://starstyleradio.com/Events/Entries/2013/9/28_Pear_Festival_2013.html). For more information about Be the Star You Are, visit [www.bethestaryouare.org](http://www.bethestaryouare.org).

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## TEEN SCENE

### Music Makes the World Go Round

By Konnie Guo

Music is a constant presence found practically everywhere. While some of us are content to simply enjoy listening to music, others are dedicated to making music an integral part of their lives. Lamorinda is fortunate enough to have many talented young musicians. Even though it's summer vacation, many are still working hard making the music that they love.

Kelvin G, a clarinetist who studies at Miramonte High School attended a three week intensive music camp over the summer. He was part of the Stanford Youth Orchestra, which provided an opportunity for gifted young musicians all across the world to gather and play together. In the three weeks that they were there, the entire orchestra had to learn several different pieces and be able to perform them in a concert held at the end of each week. Despite the heavy workload, the orchestra was able to make every concert professional and a success. "Being around and working together with people my own age made it a really fun and educational experience. Although we had to practice rigorously, it was all worth it in the end. I was able to make many new friends who all share my passion in music."

Moraga teen and enthusiastic pianist Yurika Kazama also devoted part of her summer to music. She participated in a chamber music program by the San Francisco Conservatory of Music called Summer Music West. In the program, young musicians were assigned groups to perform in ensembles. Though students received the music beforehand, they had just ten days at the Conservatory to get to know each other, rehearse, and polish their pieces to make them performance-

ready. Coaches worked with the students, making sure that they were practicing efficiently and effectively. Kazama explains, "We played in groups of three or four, which meant that everyone had to do their best, since a single mistake could really stand out. I learned so much in just a week and a half. The coaches were really helpful, and I now appreciate music even more. I only wish it had lasted longer!"

Music can really bring the world together. As a pianist myself, I know how much work and practice it takes to make just a few notes perfect. It makes it all the more admirable that these two Lamorinda teens would give up their time to learning more about music. As the school year begins, keep this in mind: the best way to succeed is to practice. After all, practice makes perfect!

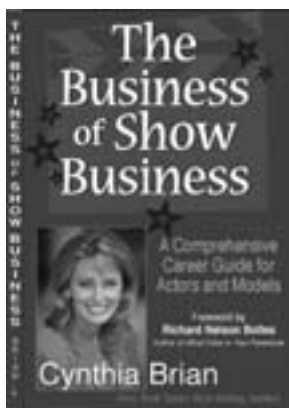
*Konnie Guo, a junior at Miramonte High School, is a member of Club Be the Star You Are!®. She is an avid reader, and during her spare time, enjoys playing the piano and doing volunteer work.*



Teen Scene is YOUR voice. If you have something to say or have writing skills and want to be part of our Teen Scene team, email our Teen Coach, Cynthia Brian, [Cynthia@CynthiaBrian.com](mailto:Cynthia@CynthiaBrian.com).

The opinions expressed in Teen Scene are those of the writer and not necessarily those of the Lamorinda Weekly.

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