

## Not to be missed

### KIDS, PARENTS & TEENS ... continued

**Children who like to sing can audition from 4 to 6 p.m.** Wednesday, Jan. 8 at Our Savior's Lutheran Church for Spring Semester. This internationally known chorus is recognized for excellence in vocal training and performance skills. There are choir levels for boys and girls ages 6-16, with local performances and touring opportunities for advanced choirs. The honors level choir is currently preparing to travel to Argentina during the summer of 2014. Call for an appointment or info at (925) 945-7101, ext. 1 or email [frontdesk@childrenschorus.org](mailto:frontdesk@childrenschorus.org).

### OTHER

**Become a Sutter Care at Home Hospice Volunteer.** Provide hospice patients and families in your community with compassionate, caring support. Local training course available free of charge. For more info, call 1-800-853-7454 or email [gaylesn@sutter-health.org](mailto:gaylesn@sutter-health.org).

**Traditional Folk Songs of the Winter Holidays at the Lafayette Library and Learning Center.** Kids and adults can enjoy a free holiday concert with legendary folksinger, storyteller and autoharp virtuoso Adam Miller from 6 to 9 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 19 in the Library's Community Hall. Sing-along songs will include something for everyone: Hanukkah, winter solstice, Christmas carols and more.

Jewish music, the sight of robed and sandaled merchants in their stalls, the taste of freshly baked unleavened bread, live animals in the stable and the soft feel of flaxen "swaddling clothes." The social event that emphasizes the spiritual meaning of Christmas takes place between 5:30 and 8 p.m. Dec. 20-22 at the Lafayette United Methodist Church, 955 Moraga Road, Lafayette. Hour-long tours begin every 15 minutes. Refreshments and entertainment provided while you wait. Freewill donation: \$5 per person or \$20 per family. For questions call (925) 284-4765.

**Join the National Park Service for a free winter solstice-themed campfire program on Saturday, Dec. 21 at John Muir National Historic Site (NHS) in Martinez.** The program begins at 3 p.m. with crafts and games in the park orchards and continues with a campfire from 5 to 7 p.m. No reservations are required. Meet at the front gate of the John Muir National Historic Site, 4202 Alhambra Ave. Come with warm layers, picnic blankets, lawn chairs, marshmallows and a desire to have a good time. Rangers will direct visitors from the gate to the fire ring until 5:30 p.m. If it rains heavily, the program will be canceled.

**Free gift wrapping room from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. every day but Sunday through Dec. 24** with wrapping paper, ribbon, and scissors at 5A Rent A Space, 455 Moraga Rd., Suite F.

**Let's Talk About It: Muslim Journeys, a community reading and discussion series.** Discussions will be led by nationally-renowned scholar Hatem Bazian, Ph.D., (UC Berkeley) and will cover five unique books at the Pleasant Hill Senior Center, 233 Gregory Lane, Pleasant Hill. The first program will explore the book "When Asia Was the World" by Stewart Gordon and will be held from 6 to 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 14. For more information on the series, including links for registering and ordering the books, please visit [guides.ccclib.org/journeys](http://guides.ccclib.org/journeys). For questions or comments, contact Jeff Gibson, project director at (925) 927-3240 or [jgibson@ccclib.org](mailto:jgibson@ccclib.org).

### SENIORS

**Sons in Retirement Lamorinda Branch 171 meets** the first Wednesday monthly at Holy Trinity Culture Center, 1700 School St., Moraga, with social hour at 11 a.m.; lunch at noon. The after lunch speaker on Wednesday, Jan. 8 will be Saint Mary's College Professor Ron Olowin, of the Department of Physics and Astronomy. Olowin is known for his creative and entertaining perspectives on the Universe. He will share his latest views of the cosmos. For details and membership information, call Larry at (925) 631-9528.

Please submit events to: [calendar@lamorindaweekly.com](mailto:calendar@lamorindaweekly.com)

**Help for the Holidays!**  
For yourself or a loved one

Decorating • Gift Wrapping  
Shopping • Driving • Errands

Lamorinda Comforts of Home  
Local - Bonded - Insured  
[www.lamorindacomfortsofhome.com](http://www.lamorindacomfortsofhome.com)

925-285-6272

**Care. Comfort. Compassion.**  
When you need it most.

### Your Lamorinda Senior Checklist ...

- Find cook for better nutrition ✓
- Get driver to appointments, groceries ✓
- Get help with laundry & changing sheets ✓
- Find somebody for companionship, exercise, puzzles ✓

**CALL SENIOR HELPERS ✓✓✓✓**

We can assist with these activities and more.

**Call for a free assessment 925-376-8000**

Bonded and insured.  
Senior Helpers locations are independently owned and operated. ©2011 SH Franchising, LLC



**Senior Helpers**  
Care and comfort at a moment's notice

## Excellent Care AT HOME



Heartfelt & Supportive Care At All Times...

3645 Mt. Diablo Blvd., Suite D Lafayette (beside Trader Joe's)  
[www.excellentcareathome.com](http://www.excellentcareathome.com)



Our mission is to provide personalized care, help maintain independence and enhance our client's quality of life on a daily basis.

- Fully bonded and insured
- Geriatric care management
- Hourly care
- Live-in care
- Transportation to and from medical appointments
- Medication reminders

**Call to schedule a free assessment and plan care review. 925-284-1213**



Rosselyn Ramirez Photo Bilha Serling

**Diablo Ballet will celebrate the Holidays at 7 p.m. Friday, Dec. 20** at Steinway Piano Gallery. This festive event will have attendees ringing in the holidays with an evening of dance led by Diablo Ballet ballerina, Rosselyn Ramirez, and beloved Nutcracker characters, with food, wine, and punch and cookies for children. With a tax-deductible contribution of \$200 or more to Diablo Ballet, patrons can bring up to four guests to the event! For more info, call Diablo Ballet at (925) 943-1775 or visit [www.DiabloBallet.org](http://www.DiabloBallet.org).

**The Bethlehem Experience. The Lafayette United Methodist Church** presents an interactive performance that takes you back through time. Tour Guides will lead groups of 10 people through the marketplace of Bethlehem on the night of the Messiah's birth with the smell of exotic spices, the festive sound of

## Saving Mr. Banks

By Derek Zemrak



Walt Disney Studios Motion Pictures

I went into the press screening of "Saving Mr. Banks" thinking I was going to see a "feel good" Disney holiday movie. But in reality, I got more than a "spoonful of sugar." I saw a solid film with a superior script and superb acting based on the true story about P. L. Travers, the author of "Mary Poppins."

The film stars two-time Oscar winner Emma Thompson ("Sense and Sensibility," "Howards End") as the bitter Travers and two-time Oscar winner and Bay Area native Tom Hanks ("Forrest Gump," "Philadelphia") as Walt Disney. Disney's daughters loved the book, "Mary Poppins," and he promised them that one day he would make a "Mary Poppins" movie. Well, sometimes things are not that easy, even if you are Walt Disney. Travers was very protective of the creation of her characters in "Mary Poppins" and she had no desire to have them come to life on the big screen.

After 20 years chasing his promise to his daughters, Disney continued to pursue the rights from Travers. When the royalties were drying up, Travers finally agreed under one condition: that she maintain total control of pro-

duction. As Disney says, "A promise is a promise," and for his daughters he agreed to the terms. Disney did not have any idea what was in store for him and the production crew as they began making "Mary Poppins." Travers was not happy about anything from the script, the music, the animation, to the casting of Dick Van Dyke.

As the story is told with the use of childhood flashbacks, we learn why the fictitious characters were so important. The film explores how events in Travers' childhood stayed with her and how she became more embittered holding on to the memories. Some of the events are heart wrenching, which I was not expecting. Thompson as Travers is Oscar-worthy and the emotional end scene will receive a lot of attention. I think it will be a tight race at the 86th Annual Academy Awards between Emma Thompson and Cate Blanchett, for her role in "Blue Jasmine."

John Lee Hancock ("The Blind Side") directed "Saving Mr. Banks," which is a high-quality film, but not "supercalifragilisticexpialidocious." Be prepared for a drama - not a lighthearted comedy. "Saving Mr. Banks" is rated PG-13, due

to the intense emotional and troubling scenes from Travers' childhood with a TRT (total running time) of 2 hours and 5 minutes. Heads up: stay for the end credits for a special treat.

In the next issue I will be writing my picks for the 2014 Oscars. Speaking of the Oscars, mark your calendars for the annual Oscar party at the Rheem Theatre on March 2, 2014. Watch the academy awards on the biggest screen (except for IMAX) in the East Bay; enjoy live music, great food from Shellys of Orinda, auctions, raffles and door prizes. Plus enjoy the opening of the Classic Film Hall of Fame and Museum. Costumes and props from blockbuster films will be on display as well as wardrobes worn by Oscar nominees Meryl Streep, Bradley Cooper and Marisa Tomei, just to name a few! The place to be seen on Oscar night is the Rheem Theatre!

Derek Zemrak is a film critic, film producer and founder of the California Independent Film Festival. You can follow Derek on Twitter @zemrak for the latest Hollywood news. Derek can be heard every Friday on KAHN 950AM on the Poppoff Show.

## Rotary



**Explore Rotary clubs in Lamorinda** The heart of Rotary is our clubs—dedicated people who share a passion for both community service and friendship. Learn about Lamorinda's Rotary clubs.

### Lamorinda Sunrise Rotary Club

We meet Friday mornings at 7:00 am at Celia's Mexican Restaurant, 3666 Mt. Diablo Blvd, Lafayette. (Diagonally across from Trader Joes)

#### December 20:

Cynthia Kroll, chief economist for the Association of Bay Area Governments will speak about the **economy and regional**

#### December 27:

No meeting Christmas week. Next meeting Friday, Jan 3, 2014.

Please join us!

