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The Sympathetic Fibers of Orinda

Residents' altruism makes life better in and beyond city's borders

By Laurie Snyder

"A community is like a ship; everyone ought to be prepared to take the helm." With those words by Henrik Ibsen, a small group of thoughtful citizens launched an enterprise which would quickly, quietly become part of the bedrock of Lamorinda.

"Orinda is home to many creative and caring people who work hard to support our schools, library, seniors and youth," wrote Richard Westin in June 2010 as he announced the formation of the Orinda Community Foundation (www.orindafoundation.org). Its purpose, he explained, would be to enhance the quality of life for Orindans while ensuring that the community's most beloved traditions would continue even as the nation's economy persisted in its stubborn sluggishness.

The letter was signed not just by Westin, but by younger and older residents from diverse birthplaces, spiritual traditions and political backgrounds, and has been responded to ever since with countless small and large contributions which have been put back into the community to fund the arts, educational initiatives, recreation and sports activities, and civic and community engagement projects.

As OCF has continued to thrive, it has been able to expand its reach even further, helping to strengthen transportation options for seniors across Lamorinda and providing critically needed support for the county's food bank. Recently, as foundation leaders announced their latest round of grants they once again demonstrated the power not only of Ibsen's words - but those of Herman Melville: "We cannot live for ourselves alone. Our lives are connected by a thousand invisible threads, and along these sympathetic fibers, our actions run as causes and return to us as results."

Recent Orinda Community Foundation Grants

Grants and commitments as of Jan. 7:

Art in Public Places Committee: \$8,000

Concerts in the Park: \$1,000

Friends of the Joaquin Moraga Adobe: \$5,000

Lamorinda Spirit Van: \$3,500

Lamorinda Village Concept: \$3,000

Opera in the Park: \$1,000

Orinda Arts Council for Lamorinda Idol: \$2,500

Orinda Association for Fourth of July Parade & Celebration: \$5,000

Orinda garden clubs: \$1,000

Orinda Jazz Festival: \$1,000

Orinda Junior Women's Club for Youth Ink: \$1,000

Wilder Fields scoreboard: \$8,000

Total: \$40,000

Additional grants made in 2013:

Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano: \$2,000

Orinda Arts Council (for 2013 Orinda Jazz Festival): \$1,000

Orinda Chamber of Commerce: \$2,000

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