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Photos Sophie Braccini and provided

Lamorinda Couples Share the Secret to Their Longevity

By Sophie Braccini

With the divorce rate in the United States nearing 50 percent, and typical marriages lasting approximately 8 years, what's the secret to a long-lasting relationship? Five Lamorinda couples, all who met as students at Acalanes, Miramonte and Campolindo high schools – with marriages now spanning 10, 20, and 30

years – share what makes their relationships work.

For Karen Blodgett, who met her husband, Larry, in an Acalanes High School Spanish class in 1980, it's all about friendship. "We've grown together, and we are also best friends," she says. After attending class together for a few months, Larry Blodgett built up the courage to ask the

younger girl out and "the relationship has not stopped since," he says. Larry went on to college in Idaho after graduating from Acalanes in 1982 – Karen graduated the following year – but he never stopped thinking about the girl he left behind. "Karen was the only one on my mind," he says.

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Quote of the Week:

"The pig happens to be my favorite animal and the one used more and more in every kitchen across the world. We can all relate to that animal." Read Words That Change Our World - page B11.

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After Impasse, What's Next?

By Nick Marnell

The Moraga-Orinda Fire District board of directors announced Jan. 28 that it had declared an impasse in labor negotiations with its firefighters, represented by the United Professional Firefighters of Contra Costa County, Local 1230.

The union has worked under the terms of a contract that expired Dec. 31, 2010, and this is not the first time that the district has declared an impasse in labor negotiations. In June 2012, the district made a last, best and final offer that was rejected by the union. Though the board declared an impasse, no further action was taken by either side. "We mutually agreed to wait until Gov. Brown's pension legislation went through to see how that would change things," said MOFD union representative Mark DeWeese.

But negotiations went nowhere throughout 2013, and an impasse was declared in January after the district presented the union its last, best and

final offer; the union proposed a counter (see sidebar). The union now has until Feb. 27 to formally request that the district go through a state mandated fact-finding process, according to Eddie Kreisberg, the district's labor negotiator.

The fact-finding process is a form of mediation. Each side appoints a member to a panel chaired by a neutral party approved by both the district and the union. The three-person panel conducts an investigation and within 30 days, recommends the terms of a settlement. Its findings are advisory only; "Whatever the fact-finding panel says will be non-binding," said DeWeese.

Not only is the process non-binding; it can be expensive. The hearings can last for several days, and may require the attendance of district staff, witnesses and legal counsel. Plus, both MOFD and the union split the costs of the neutral panel member.

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Oak Tree Down



In the aftermath of last weekend's heavy rain, this majestic oak came crashing down at noon Monday onto the 90-year-old Casa Vernana building at Camino Pablo and Miner Road in Orinda. Photo and information provided by John Fernbacher

Life in Lamorinda

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Survivor's Heart

The story of a long-awaited Purple Heart - page B1.



Sports

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Girls' Soccer Heats Up

The DFAL title is on the line tomorrow night - page C2.



Our Homes

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Eichler Revival

Lafayette homes with someone in common - page D1.

