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Miramonte celebrates its first championship in 17 years

Photos Gint Federas

Lady Mats Secure First NCS Title in 17 Years

By Spencer Silva

After a 17-year drought, the Miramonte Lady Mats (21-5) finally won the NCS Division II water polo championship. On Saturday, Nov. 14, the Mats ended rival Campolindo's hunt for its fourth-consecutive NCS title, winning by a score of 9-4.

The Mats jumped out to an early lead with goals from

Katrina Drake, Skylar Savar, and Carson Broad. At half-time, the Mats held a comfortable 6-2 lead, and by the fourth period, the Mats held a commanding 9-2 lead.

The win over the Cougars (16-10) was a team effort. The team's five sophomores – or, as head coach Noel Murphy likes to call them, his "Super Sophomores" – all

left their mark on the championship match. Drake and Savar led all scorers with three goals; Broad had two; Kelly Murphy notched three assists; and Grace Tehaney drew two crucial ejections. Senior Hailey Eberle also scored and junior Rose Tuttle had two steals.

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Young Cancer Patient Impacts MOFD Firefighter

By Nick Marnell



Finley Brown, 6, and MOFD firefighter-paramedic Lucas Lambert at the Oct. 3 MOFD open house. Photo courtesy Moraga-Orinda Fire District

A 6-year old girl marched up to the fire engine parked at the Moraga Pear Festival, dragging her brother and babysitter directly toward firefighter-paramedic Lucas Lambert. "Some kids are shy, some are hesitant, but not her," said Lambert, staffing the Moraga-Orinda Fire District apparatus on display that day. "She certainly got all of our attention."

Finley Brown introduced herself to the crew and she explained in detail what she had gone through this year. "She told us about a cancer operation she underwent that removed a tumor the size of a baseball from her kidney," said Lambert. "And she showed us her scars as she freely discussed the whole process." Finley was diagnosed with cancer three days after her 6th birthday in June. She has completed all of her radiation treatments and is undergoing six months of chemotherapy.

"I was thinking, this little girl has been going through hell, and was still smiling, not a care in the world," said Lambert. "It didn't slow her down one bit."

"We teach our kids that, whenever you see a police officer, a firefighter, a soldier, you thank them for

keeping you safe," said her mom, A.J. Brown, who works at the Moraga California Academy of Performing Arts, where Finley dances. "She is well-spoken, and she went right up to the guys and told them what was happening."

So rapt was the MOFD crew that they organized a fundraiser, Dinner for Finley, to help raise money for the Brown family to go on a trip to Disneyland Park after Finley completes her cancer treatments. The MOFD Professional Firefighters Association is sponsoring a raffle of a dinner for up to six at fire station 44 on Saturday, Dec. 12. Tickets cost \$5 each or five for \$20, and they may be purchased at any of the five district fire stations. The association, with the support of the district, hopes to raise \$1,500 for the family.

When he delivered a firefighters' calendar to Finley at her home, Lambert sprung another surprise. Provided he obtains all authorizations, Lambert told Finley that the crew plans to transport her to her final chemotherapy treatment Dec. 21 in a district emergency vehicle.

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Kids getting more tech savvy outside the classroom – page B1.



Sports C1-C3

Cougars pull off win at NCS boys' water polo finals – page C1.



Our Homes D1-D12

Practical tips for holiday home décor – page D6.





Lafayette

Public Meetings

City Council

Monday, Nov. 23, 7 p.m.
Lafayette Library & Learning Center,
Community Hall, 3491 Mt. Diablo Blvd.

Planning Commission

Monday, Dec. 7, 7 p.m.
Lafayette Library & Learning Center,
Community Hall, 3491 Mt. Diablo Blvd.

Design Review

Monday, Nov. 23, 7 p.m.
Lafayette Library & Learning Center,
Arts & Science Discovery Center,
3491 Mt. Diablo Blvd.

School Board Meetings

Acalanes Union High School District
Wednesday, Nov. 18, 7:30 p.m.
AUHSD Board Room
1212 Pleasant Hill Road, Lafayette
www.acalanes.k12.ca.us

Lafayette School District

Wednesday, Dec. 9, 7 p.m.
Regular Board Meeting
District Office Board Room
3477 School St., Lafayette
www.lafsd.k12.ca.us

Check online for agendas, meeting notes and announcements

City of Lafayette:

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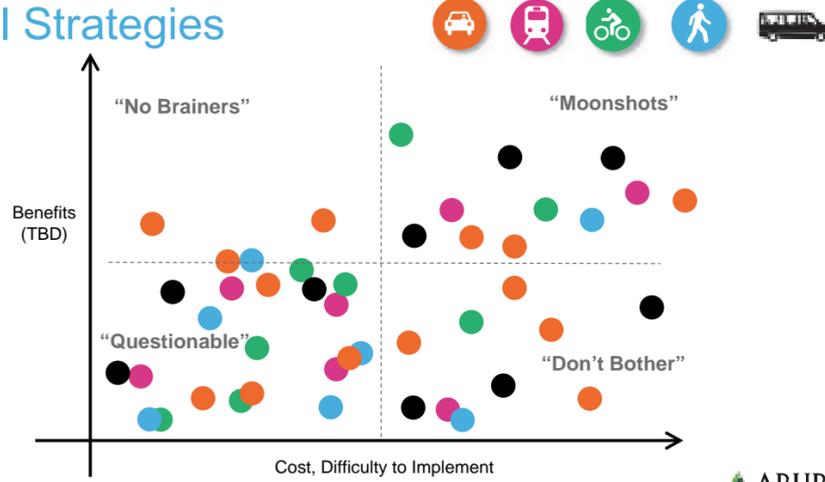
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Downtown Congestion Reduction Study Kicks Off

Feedback needed at www.LafayetteCongestion.com

By Cathy Tyson

All Strategies



ARUP

Image provided

It is no secret to city leaders that traffic and congestion are unfortunately a growing problem in Lafayette, and appear to be getting worse. Looking to address these complex issues, city leaders obtained grant funding to pay for a comprehensive study to take a hard look using game-changing data along with public feedback to identify when, where and why congestion happens and to make recommendations that weigh costs and benefits of potential fixes.

Introducing Phase I of the roughly year-long Downtown Congestion Reduction Study at a recent city council meeting, Arup Principal Will Baumgardner described the overall purpose of the study:

... continued on next page

Construction Set to Begin on First Stage of Pumping Plant

By Cathy Tyson

Job number one for the new East Bay Municipal Utility District Diablo Vista pumping plant is to reroute the existing storm drain that cuts diagonally from the edge of the Lafayette Cemetery across the parcel where the new plant will be built at the corner of Mt. Diablo Boulevard and Mt. Diablo Court, and bisects the Blodgett's Abbey Carpet and Flooring parking lot. When complete, the rerouted storm drain will follow the sidewalk on the south side of the street, rounding the corner to connect with an existing storm drain down Mt. Diablo Court.

The new pumping plant replaces the plant built in 1956 adjacent to Ace Hardware; it will have the capacity to deliver 16 million gallons of water per day to Lafayette, Walnut Creek and Pleasant Hill. In addition to the plant, a massive new 30-inch diameter water pipe will be installed along the freeway side of Mt. Diablo from the old plant to the new one.

Store owner and operator Larry Blodgett calls this the worst part of the entire project. He is concerned about customers as well as delivery trucks being able to access the long-time family-owned business. Contractor GSE has been very cooperative so far, according to Blodgett. Utilities are marked, but with more rain in the forecast, EBMUD spokesperson Michelle Blackwell was vague about a start date for the project: "Possibly November, maybe December."

Planning for the new water pumping plant has taken four years to get to this point. Part of the problem was the murky ownership of the parcel in question. Streets were realigned many years ago to make way for Highway 24 to be widened to accommodate BART. The newly created right-of-way land was never officially transferred from the county to the city of Lafayette.

... continued on page A12



Image provided by EBMUD depicting location of existing and future storm drains.



Lafayette Police Department Incident Summary Report Nov. 1-7

Alarms	35
911 Calls (includes hang-ups)	8
Noise Complaints	1
Traffic Stops	81
Suspicious Circumstances	7
Suspicious Subjects	12
Suspicious Vehicles	10
Abandoned Vehicle	
Natasha Dr/Rahara Dr	
Saranap/Old Tunnel Rd (2)	
Auto Recovery	
Taco Bell	
Burglary, Auto	
1000 block Hoedel Ct	
Civil Problem	
4100 block Happy Valley Rd	
1000 block Lizann Dr	
Disturbance	
Safeway	
Drunk in Public	
Mt Diablo Blvd/El Nido Ranch Rd	
DUI	
Brown Ave/Deer Hill Rd	
Hamlin/Moraga Rds	
Fireworks	
1300 block San Reliez Ct	
Harassment	
3500 Mt Diablo Blvd (phone)	
1200 block Rose Ln (phone)	
Health & Safety	
Violation Vista Bella/Martino Rd	
1000 block Carol Ln	
Springhill/Pleasant Hill Rds	
Hit & Run	
1000 block Oak Hill Rd	
3300 block Deer Hill Rd	
Pleasant Hill/Hwy 24	
900 block Dewing Ave	
Indecent Exposure	
3500 block Moraga Blvd	
Loitering	
Springhill Elementary School	
Panhandling	
Safeway	
Police/Fire/EMS Response	
1000 block Carol Ln	
700 block Moraga Rd	
El Curtola area	
Public Nuisance	
Whole Foods	
Dawkins Dr/Helen Ln	
Reckless Driving	
Happy Valley Rd/Upper Happy Valley Rd	
Mt Diablo Blvd/Dewing Ave	
Hwy 24/Pleasant Hill Rd	
Pleasant Hill Rd/Stamley Blvd	
Taylor Blvd/Withers Ave	
Shoplifting	
3500 block Mt Diablo Blvd	
CVS	
Shots Fired	
Acalanes Rd/Valente Ct	
Theft, Petty	
1200 block Quandt Rd	

Theft, ID	
3500 block Mt Diablo Blvd	
700 block Los Palos Dr	
40 block Bacon Ct	
3300 block Moraga Blvd	
1000 block Via Roble	
Unwanted Guest	
Safeway	
Vandalism	
Reliez Highland/Reliez Valley Rds	



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Sardines Insalata: calamata olives, green beans, potato, feta cheese, balsamic olive oil.....9

Niman Flat Iron Steak: potato gratin, green beans, chimichurri sauce.....18

Fresh Seafood Cioppino: in a rich tomato-basil sauce, parmesan, garlic toast..19

Roasted Scallops: spinach, saliccia sugo.....19

Roasted Wild Salmon: white wine, capers, braised greens, and potato gratin..17

Veal Scallopini: mushrooms, garlic, marsala wine.....17

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Pair of Notable Upcoming Events

Identity Theft Town Hall

Who isn't concerned about identity theft? Find out how to protect yourself and best practices to avoid what can be a real expensive hassle at the free informative Town Hall Meeting at 7 p.m. Dec. 2 at the Veterans Memorial Hall, 3780 Mt. Diablo Boulevard, hosted by the Lafayette Crime Prevention Commission, the Lafayette Police Department and Lafayette Senior Services.

Lafayette Community Breakfast

Roughly a week before Thanks-

giving, on Friday, Nov. 20, community members can take time to reflect and give thanks at the annual Community Breakfast, sponsored by the Lafayette Chamber of Commerce. This year the event will be held at Our Savior's Lutheran Church at 1035 Carol Lane with breakfast catered by Dave's Cuisine. Keynote speaker is Rev. Dr. David Sammons who will discuss "Your resume versus your eulogy." To register, go to Lafayettechamber.org or call for more information (925) 284-7404.

C. Tyson

Downtown Congestion

... continued from page A2

"The intent is to reduce downtown congestion, but also improve the overall quality of life in its broadest sense – safety, economic vitality, local character and environment." Arup is a global consultant group that specializes in infrastructure design, economics and planning.

Acknowledging there have been many studies in the past addressing traffic-related issues in Lafayette, Arup Senior Transportation Engineer Mike Iswalt said the key difference this time is new sources of big data that can specifically identify travel patterns – a critical factor to find tailored solutions. The study is funded by a grant from the Contra Costa Transportation Authority.

Recognizing there are no quick fixes, the Arup consultants will customize the wide-ranging study with input from the Downtown Congestion Reduction Steering Committee, feedback from an online survey, as well as GPS and cell phone information. Ultimately the consultant will identify feasible strategies and focus on implementation, which means finding funding.

The data allows the consultants to zero in on segments that are most congested, and analyze how the street network performs. Iswalt explained that Lafayette is a bit unusual in that there are three to four hours in the afternoon where the congestion is fairly constant – starting around 3 p.m., running until 6 p.m. "Congestion is something that we all dislike as it takes longer to travel places, which keeps us away from home, work, and the enjoyable things in life," wrote Iswalt in a memo for the Nov. 9 presentation.

One of the most surprising findings from the initial work done by the consultant is that 63 percent of the traffic is heading down Moraga Road toward Mt. Diablo Boulevard to Highway 24. "There is pressure at the Y," said Iswalt, referring to the path toward freeway onramps from Moraga

Road. Causes include the number of driveways to businesses and signalized intersections that add to backups.

Consultants are asking residents from throughout Lamorinda and beyond who happen to drive, bike or walk through Lafayette to be a part of the solution by going online to complete a short transportation priorities survey, and to take a moment to map issues and opportunities by dropping pins on a map and explaining briefly what the problem is at that particular location. These two information-gathering tools will be live for approximately the next five weeks at www.lafayettecongestion.com.

Baumgardner made it clear that the consultants understand that any recommendations will have to consider "the bang for the buck – benefits versus the cost and difficulty to implement."

There will be a second round of outreach in the spring that will focus on a short list of specific ideas gleaned from the first portion of the study that are the most promising.

Two public speakers added a somber note to the discussion. Stanley Middle School Principal David Schrag spoke for Lafayette School District Superintendent Rachel Zinn who was unavailable that night; he pointed out there have been three students hit by cars near the school in the last year and emphasized that safety be the top priority.

The mother of an 11-year-old boy who was hit by a car near Stanley on Oct. 29 asked, "What are we waiting for? The next child may not be so lucky." Council Member Traci Reilly pointed out there will be a meeting of the Joint City / School District Traffic and Safety Task Force on Nov. 16 that will discuss this item.

To view the entire Arup presentation, go to www.lovelafayette.com, click on public meetings and go to the Nov. 9 city council meeting, and scroll down to read the attachment.



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Moraga

Public Meetings

Town Council

Wednesday, Nov. 18, 7 p.m.

Wednesday, Nov. 25, canceled

Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School,
1010 Camino Pablo

Planning Commission

Monday, Dec. 7, 7 p.m.

Moraga Library, 1500 St. Mary's Rd.

Design Review

Monday, Dec. 14, 7 p.m.

Monday, Nov. 23, canceled

Moraga Library, 1500 St. Mary's Rd.

School Board Meeting

Moraga School District

Tuesday, Dec. 8, 7 p.m.

Joaquin Moraga Intermediate
School Auditorium

1010 Camino Pablo, Moraga

www.moraga.k12.ca.us

See also AUHSD meeting page A2

Check online for agendas, meeting notes and announcements

Town of Moraga:

www.moraga.ca.us

Phone: (925) 888-7022

Chamber of Commerce:

www.moragachamber.org

Moraga Citizens' Network:

www.moragacitizensnetwork.org



Moraga Police Department

Identity theft 11/3/15 A Larch Avenue resident reported to police that an unknown suspect obtained a loan using his information and the money was transferred to a bank in Texas. No suspects or leads at this time. Imagine that – an unauthorized loan in the Lone Star state.

Broken License Plate Lamp 11/04/15 Perhaps it was the late hour – 2:30 a.m. – that led police to pull over a 1996 Ford Mustang for a broken license plate lamp at Moraga Road near Corliss. As it turns out, the driver had a suspended driver's license resulting from a 2001 felony DUI conviction. He was arrested and released on his signed promise to appear in court.

More identity theft 11/4/15 Someone opened a fraudulent bank account using an Inverleith Terrace resident's personal information. Oddly, the victim was unable to gain access to any of the bank records without first obtaining a police report. Thankfully the reporting person has not lost a dime – so far.

Burglary 11/07/15 Squatters really "made themselves at home" despite being unwelcome. Evidence of food containers and clothing was found at a Lynwood Place home that was vacant and being remodeled, which indicated "guests" had been there for a few days. The owner has no idea how the squatters gained entry, and reports that approximately \$2,200 worth of construction equipment was taken.

Student almost AWOL, 11/09/15 Cops responded to a call from Los Perales Elementary School to assist the staff with a student who was attempting to walk away from campus. Cops found the kid who had returned to the campus without incident. Wandering student was spoken to by the police and school staff about leaving without permission.

Home Invasion Robbery 11/12/15 Police responded to the report of a home invasion robbery that occurred on Via Granada in the Campolindo neighborhood. According to police,

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Is the Moraga Zoning Code Adequate?

Proposed home on Rheem Boulevard brings ambiguities into focus

By Sophie Braccini

Moraga residents have tried more than once to stop developments, using design guidelines from the municipal code, citing inconsistencies with a neighborhood as in the case of Hetfield Place, or attempting to protect ridgeline views on the scenic corridor, as with Moraga Center Homes, but they have had limited success. These guidelines often leave room for interpretation by staff and commissioners. The proposed new home at 287 Rheem Boulevard falls into that category.

The planned 5,276-square-foot residence sits on a 22,000 square foot lot, but there is no floor area ratio requirement in the municipal code for lots over 20,000 square feet, which has caused a long debate and multiple meetings, including the Nov. 9 Design Review Board meeting where members decided to send the property owner back to the drawing board with a few general requirements. "The DRB has discretion to limit home size, based on a series of findings that are stated in the design guidelines," commented Planning Director Ellen Clark after the meeting. "There's more latitude for the DRB to decide on the 'right size' for homes on large lots. But, clearly not everyone may agree on what this 'right size' is."

The new home's neighbors definitely believe this new home is not the right size for their neighborhood. "(This proposed home) is incompatible with the neighborhood. (The design guidelines state that) a harmonious relationship with the

neighborhood should be created with the use of compatible design, scheme and scale," said neighbor and planning commissioner Steve Woehleke.

The Hollingsworth family, who lives next door, said that the proposed house is at odds with other homes in Moraga. "The proposal is out of scale," said Andy Hollingsworth. "There are only 50 homes in all of Moraga that are larger than the proposed home. All but seven of these homes are on lots greater than one acre; the seven homes that are on lots less than one acre are in neighborhoods of larger homes such as Sanders Ranch or Paseo Lunares."

Neighbors also brought up the structure's impact on the ridgeline views. Woehleke brought a photograph that showed how the new structure, which is outlined by story poles at this time, would block the view of the Campolindo Ridge from Rheem Boulevard. The Hollingsworths were concerned that the privacy of their backyard and family room would vanish, and that the two-story structure would cast a long shadow, reducing the amount of light they get in the afternoon.

"It's important to recognize that the actual language is more nuanced than simply 'you shall not block ridgeline views,'" said Clark. Rheem Boulevard is a Moraga scenic corridor and the guideline states, "Each structure ... shall be limited to scale and siting to reduce visual dominance or obstruction of existing landforms, vegetation, water bodies and adjoin-

ing structures." The planning director noted that a phrase such as "reduce visual dominance" also leaves room for interpretation.

"Guidelines tend to be more advisory, and often include subjective standards," added Clark. "The Zoning Code tends to include more quantitative (requirements). These reflect some kind of community consensus about a desired outcome – e.g. a maximum height so buildings don't block view. Unfortunately, as we would love all of these decisions and interpretations to be completely clear-cut, they often are not – and that's probably some of the hesitation on the part of the decision-makers to be declarative about (what is) the ultimate 'right.'"

The unpredictability linked to the interpretation of guidelines makes the development process long and costly for the property owners as well, as various demands are made, requiring them to send their architect Jimmy Fong back to the drawing board numerous times. When the owner took the stand, her frustration was apparent as she described her household of seven people – she and her husband, Richard Yu, two children, two parents and one unmarried sister who currently live together in a 1,300-square-foot home. A Chinese immigrant, she said she had trouble understanding how her family's individual rights could be ignored in this country and could not comprehend how people who have been living in old homes for years, and whose chil-

dren are gone, could stop her family from building something new and beautiful.

Since only three out of four DRB members were present, the planning director indicated that their decision had to be unanimous. Two of the three board members were ready to give their approval. Chairperson Ben Helder said the home was well designed using high-quality design materials, and while he still had concerns about the massing as it relates to this particular site, he supported the application. Board member Chris Crews, an architect, said that the home design was skillfully done and that it would be a net improvement for the neighborhood. Board member John Glover, however, indicated that he had major concerns regarding the project, specifically the frontal mass blocking the view of the ridgeline from the scenic corridor.

The board asked the owners to prepare one or two alternative plans that would mitigate the visual impact on the ridgeline, one possibility being a setback to the second story. The owner was also asked to potentially reconsider making the three-car garage a detached structure, and moving it closer to Rheem Boulevard to further separate it from the neighbor's yard.

This decision can be appealed to the planning commission. The planning commission would then review the application in its entirety.

Is The Town Ready for Winter and Spring Rain?

By Sophie Braccini

The latest data on El Niño continue to show it is still on track to be the strongest in recorded history, with maximum impact in California expected from January to March. Cities and towns are preparing, checking and repairing their infrastructure, as well as working together to prepare their response to emergency situations.

As El Niño strengthens, the persistent warmth of the western tropical Pacific Ocean drops. The drop in temperature could finally get the best of the "ridiculously resilient ridge" that diverted winter storms away from California the past three winters, and also lead to the disappearance of "the Blob" – warm water off the Washington and

Oregon coastlines – believed to also be a result of the ridge. Floods and landslides are a likely outcome of torrential rains on parched soil by years of drought. "Managing hydrological impacts of simultaneously-occurring record El Niño and record drought in California will be challenging," wrote Daniel Swain, member of Stanford University Climate and Earth System Dynamics Group.

"We have or are completing preparation to help Moraga prepare for El Niño this winter and spring," says Moraga Public Works Director Edric Kwan, who notes that his team is inspecting all storm drain inlets and removing debris, clearing out storm drain lines, and repairing storm drain pipelines that are part of this year's paving project.

When Kwan presented the storm drain master plan to the town council this summer he indicated that the

weaknesses of the system are the narrow, obstructed or damaged pipes and the under-capacity culverts. The report listed high priority work with an associated cost of \$8.9 million.

The study done by Schaaf and Wheeler listed the 35 culverts analyzed, with 17 undersized. Five of these were a high priority, including those under St. Andrews Drive, Camino Pablo, Woodford Drive and the Hacienda de las Flores property. One solution proposed by the consultant was daylighting or uncovering the culverts. The report also identified several neighborhood drain collectors that did not have the capacity to handle a 10-year flood (see http://www.moraga.ca.us/council/meetings/2015/070815/TC-070815_XI_B_StormDrainMasterPlan.pdf).

When Kwan presented the storm drain plan to the council, members approved it but recognized that there were no funds for

it at that time. They decided that the first tasks were to determine ownership of pipes and culverts, and to conduct a community needs survey, which includes funding of the town's storm drain system needs. Schaaf and Wheeler is contracted to complete the easement research for storm drain pipes and culverts to determine responsibility.

Storm drain repairs are part of this year's paving program; they include those located on Alderbrook Place, Del Monte Way, Natalie Drive and Scofield Drive. Kwan confirmed that next year's paving program will address locations on Bollinger Canyon Road and Corliss Drive.

The study also showed that the creeks that run in daylight have enough capacity, provided that the neighbors do their cleanup work.

... continued on page A11

Legal Cost in Question

Who will pay the \$55K?

By Sophie Braccini

While \$55,000 is not pocket change for a town like Moraga, when Vice Mayor Mike Metcalf asked the town attorney at the Oct. 28 council meeting what it cost to defend the town against a developers' lawsuit, which challenged the town's acceptance of a referendum petition, the high number sent waves of trepidation through the assembly.

Earlier this year, a group of residents collected signatures to hold a referendum against the rezoning of a

vacant property along Moraga Way near the fire station, where 36 housing units are proposed. Developer City Ventures challenged the validity of the referendum and sued the town of Moraga. A judge recently ruled in favor of the developer.

According to Planning Director Ellen Clark, the town should get its money back. "One of the conditions of approval for the project is that the developer has to pay for legal fees," she said. At the time of her comment

she was not sure if City Ventures would be forthcoming about reimbursing the town, but she said that her department could hold any application that does not comply with its conditions of approval.

Director of development at City Ventures, Charity Wagner, who has been in charge of this project, did not respond to questions about her employer's position regarding the legal fees.



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HOLIDAY TREE LIGHTING
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6:30 pm, Moraga Commons Park



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Moraga School District Gives Math Intervention Priority Over Extended Kindergarten

By Sophie Braccini



Moraga School District governing board members and superintendent bid farewell to Parker Colvin, center, who will be leaving California at the end of the year. Surrounding Parker, from left: Bruce Burns, Jim Obsitnik, Shari Simon, Heather O'Donnell, Jon Nickens. Photo Sophie Braccini

Last spring, the Moraga School District formed an extended kindergarten day committee to study the feasibility and impact of adding a few hours of instruction to the kindergarten day in the district. The report came back favorable, matching a general trend of more children attending full-day kindergarten classes in the United States, according to a report by the Education Commission of the States.

A survey showed strong parental support for the concept of all-day kindergarten, it looked like the idea had momentum. But after fall results from the 2015 California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress assessment, and after further analysis of the scores by grade level, the district felt there was a higher priority to imple-

ment an early intervention math program for first and second grade students. The governing board approved that decision at its Nov. 10 meeting.

Though the logistics have not been finalized, Superintendent Bruce Burns is targeting the end of January as a launch date for the new program. "We are not abandoning the extended kindergarten concept," said Burns, "but with limited resources we have to prioritize what we think is most needed."

The idea is to train existing kindergarten and transitional kindergarten staff who would be using their contracted hours to teach math intervention between 2 and 3 p.m. ... continued on page A12

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CalBRE#01308462

762 Camino Ricardo, Moraga

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CalBRE#01313819

3327 Sweet Dr., Lafayette

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Orinda

Public Meetings

City Council

Tuesday, Dec. 1, 7 p.m.
Auditorium, Orinda Library,
26 Orinda Way

Planning Commission

Tuesday, Nov. 24, 7 p.m.
Auditorium, Orinda Library,
26 Orinda Way

Finance Advisory Committee

Wednesday, Nov. 23, 6:00 p.m.
Sarge Littlehale Community Room,
22 Orinda Way

School Board Meeting Orinda Union School District

Monday, Dec. 14, 6 p.m.
OUSD Office, 8 Altarinda Road,
www.orindaschools.org
See also AUHSD meeting page A2

Check online for agendas, meeting notes and announcements

City of Orinda:

www.cityoforinda.org
Phone (925) 253-4200

Chamber of Commerce:

www.orindachamber.org

The Orinda Association:

www.orindaassociation.org



Orinda Police Department Incident Summary Report Oct. 25 to Nov. 7

Alarms	56
Noise Complaints	5
911 Calls (includes hang-ups)	7
Traffic Stops	156
Suspicious Circumstances	5
Suspicious Subjects	15
Suspicious Vehicles	28
Abandoned Vehicle	
30 block Barbara Rd	
10 block Knickerbocker Ln	
Animal Cruelty	
60 block Moraga Way	
Barking Dog	
10 block Rio Vista	
Burglary, Auto	
Bear Creek Rd/Camino Pablo	
100 block Orchard Rd	
20 block Rheem Blvd	
Wagner Ranch Elementary	
20 block Southwaite Ct	
Burglary, Residential	
100 block Moraga Way	
Civil Problem	
20 block Ardor Dr	
10 block Lost Valley Dr	
20 block Orinda Way	
600 block Miner Rd	
Disturbance	
100 block Estates Dr	
Camino Pablo/Camino Sobrante	
Europa Hofbrau	
600 block Miner Rd (3)	
DUI	
Hwy 24/Camino Pablo	
Fraud	
20 block El Patio	
Harassment	
30 block Irving Lane (phone)	
Hit & Run	
80 block Via Floreado	
Health & Safety Violation	
Oakwood Athletic	
ID Theft	
10 block St James Ct	
300 block Overhill Rd	
10 block Lavina Ct	
Juvenile	
Orinda Intermediate School	
Miramonte High School	
Loitering	
Donald Dr/Alice Ct	
Missing Adult	
20 block El Camino Moraga	
Police/Fire/EMS	
600 block Tahos Rd	
Bear Creek/San Pablo Dam Rds	
Hwy 24/St Stephens Dr	
Promiscuous Shooting	
Brookside Rd/Moraga Way	
70 block Orchard Rd (2)	
Public Nuisance	
CVS	
Reckless Driving	
Moraga Way/Glorietta Blvd	



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Petition Highlights Burgeoning Demand to Improve Downtown Vitality

By Victor Ryerson

A petition to create a more vibrant downtown, signed by nearly 700 Orinda residents, was presented to the City Council Nov. 3 in what may be the beginning of a groundswell of demand to change Orinda's aging center soon. The petition, authored by Monica Fitzsimmons, who submitted it to the mayor and council during the public forum portion of the meeting, asks that the city "immediately commence development of a plan to restore Orinda's downtown area" with amenities "necessary to better serve residents and merchants and bolster the financial health" of the community.

Although city planners have been working on plans for downtown improvement for nearly as long as the city has been in existence, progress has been slow. Residents seem to have taken the lead lately in this effort, remarked City Manager Janet Keeter following the meeting. It seems that the community's changing demographics – at both ends of the spectrum – are fueling the demand.

Creating an effective and workable downtown plan is expected to be the highest priority task for the city's incoming planning director, who will likely take office early in the coming year. According to speakers at the meeting, it cannot happen soon enough.

Presentation of the petition was followed by a variety of comments by a cross-section of the community. The unifying theme of the comments, regardless of the age or family status of the speaker, was that major change is needed soon in order to serve Orinda residents and compete with neighboring cities for their business. Some expressed the hope that they will not find it necessary to move to find what they need before change actually comes.

Ethan Elkind, the father of three small children who grew up in Orinda, whose parents also live here, encouraged the council to "go bold," referring to development of a downtown plan integrating major elements such as the creek that now runs hid-

den behind buildings and zero energy commercial buildings. "We're not afraid of a little excitement in our downtown," he added.

Speakers repeatedly stressed the need for vibrancy in plans for the change, but without disregarding the community's essential character. Orinda "isn't vibrant enough," said Michael Hoffmayer, one of the younger speakers. Fitzsimmons declared the need for a plan with "vitality" and "vibrant elements," while maintaining Orinda's semi-rural character. Karen Brockwell, who recently became an empty nester, would like to downsize and move to a condominium closer to downtown, but lamented that she wants to live in "a town that has a lot more going on." Another speaker decried Orinda's "vast parking lots and empty buildings," conjuring a very austere mental image of downtown. Several speakers expressed a desire for greater density in downtown housing, whether or not this would require changing the building height limit.

Speakers also alluded to the migration of shopping and dining, and the associated loss of tax revenue, to Lafayette and Walnut Creek. One speaker, who wants more than a single food market in Orinda, expressed her dismay at running into neighbors at Lafayette's Whole Foods Market. Others commented on the greater variety of restaurants and entertainment available in those other communities, and the planning process that brought them there.

Although the council could not lawfully comment on remarks made during the public forum portion of the meeting, Mayor Dean Orr assured the audience that the council had initiated the issue for discussion, and encouraged the speakers to stay tuned for further developments in the near future. Whether the council and incoming planning director will be able to fulfill a mandate for major change in the near future remains to be seen, but the pressure to do something to meet the challenge in a hurry is definitely on.

Council Awards Contract for Downtown Traffic Study

By Victor Ryerson

Following through with its earlier decision to hire a consultant to perform a comprehensive study of Orinda's downtown parking situation, on Nov. 3 the City Council awarded the contract to TJKM, a consultant experienced in local transportation matters. With an amendment to cover extras not included in the original request for proposal (principally an as-

essment of Americans with Disabilities Act parking needs), the total contract award is \$51,155.

The study will identify current parking patterns, restrictions, and enforcement, as well as the overall demand for parking and proposed solutions. The council has stressed that it wants an "action-oriented plan" that spells out concrete steps to address

Orinda's downtown parking problems.

Three proposals were received in response to the RFP. The selection process was designed to prevent bias toward any bid, and factored in the bid prices only after other considerations were assessed. TJKM was selected as the most qualified bidder in part because it had previous experience consulting on traffic matters in

neighboring localities.

To kick off the study, TJKM will hold an initial meeting with stakeholders, including representatives from the business community and affected neighborhoods near the downtown. There will be opportunities for public input at later stages of the process.

The study is expected to take about six months to complete.

Story Poles May Become a Thing of the Past

Developers and planners embrace newer, better technology tools

By Victor Ryerson



Image provided Dahlin Group, Pleasanton

Sitting at the dais in their meeting room, the Orinda Planning Commission reviewed the designs for six proposed homes in the Gateway Valley.

Using images of the houses on a screen, commissioners could look at each building from the front, side, back, and above, and from any vantage point on any neighboring lot, comparing them to nearby homes. They could simulate a drive by, alter the color schemes, zoom in and out, and play with the details. Theoretically, they could even view the homes from outer space, if they so desired.

Is this a science fiction scene from "Back to the Future?" Hardly. This is essentially what the commissioners experienced at their regular meeting Nov. 10 when the applicant plugged in an iPad with the data to be viewed, which was projected onto big screens behind the dais so that members of the public could follow along. It was an ironic twist after the commission at its previous meeting discussed the policy

for requiring erection of story poles to help visualize the dimensions and configuration of proposed buildings subject to its review.

Story poles are a time-honored simulation technique whereby the applicant erects a sketchy outline of the proportions of the proposed project on the building site, using lumber, or occasionally PVC irrigation pipe. It is an old technology, simple and low tech, and it works after a fashion if your brain can process what it sees. It is also outmoded, according to a report by Orinda's planning staff.

Currently, the city's design review application form requires story poles for all design review projects. However, the Wilder application checklist gives planning staff discretion to require the installation of story poles within that development. If the Wilder experience has taught the city any lesson, it is that better tools are available to do the job.

... continued on page A14

Moraga Way/Brookside Rd
San Pablo Dam Rd/Wildcat (2)
Camino Pablo/Manzanita
Moraga Way/Ivy Dr
San Pablo Dam Rd/Camino Pablo
Moraga Way/Bryant Way
Shoplift
Safeway
Theft, Petty
50 block Berkeley Ave
20 block Carisbrook Dr
10 block Tara Rd
100 block Orchard Rd (from vehicle)
CVS (in custody)
10 block Estabueno Dr
10 block Evergreen Dr
Theft, Vehicle
Orinda Theater
Threats
20 block Orinda Way
Throw from moving vehicle
Camino Pablo/Hwy 24
Unwanted Guest
Casa Orinda
Safeway (2)
Vandalism
500 block Moraga Way

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Crossroads' Restaurant Scene Changing

By Victor Ryerson



Although a group of Orinda citizens is clamoring for more amenities and bigger changes to liven up the local nightlife, and the city is worrying about the parking to accommodate them (see related stories on page A6), the bar and restaurant scene on Orinda's Crossroads side is quietly evolving on a smaller scale right now. Several current events suggest that business owners are moving to meet changing demand in the short run as the community struggles to define its identity.

Barbacoa, a lively Mexican-themed restaurant that transformed the inner courtyard of Theatre Square over the past three and one half years, abruptly closed its doors and started remodeling on Nov. 7. It is expected to reopen Nov. 23 with all new furnishings as The Fourth Bore Tap Room and Grill, a totally different restaurant and bar concept under the same ownership. Plans are to

offer 30 beers on tap, a classic cocktail program, an extensive wine list, and an American-style pub menu.

"Barbacoa had just run its course," explains owner Michael Karp. "We had this concept in mind for a very long time." The new restaurant will offer comfort food, such as hamburgers and salads, all made from scratch. Asked how it will differ from Table 24, his other Theatre Square restaurant around the corner, he responded that it will be similar, but not as upscale – "more comfortable." And fear not, dog lovers, The Fourth Bore, with outdoor seating, will be dog friendly.

Around the corner in a small space next to the Orinda Theatre, the finishing touches are just being made to a wine bar, Cine Cuvée, something the community has never seen. Cine Cuvée will have a special wine section with a celebrity Hollywood connection, such as Lasseter Wines, Vince Price Wines, Tippi Hedren Wines and Kamen Estates Wines, and food will be tapas style. The lighting is done and cabinetry was about to be added early last week, and it is scheduled to open in mid-December, adding a touch of sophistication to the space previously occupied by Kasper's Hot Dogs.

Down the street, changes are taking place at recently opened Taverna Pellegrini (see the Lamorinda Weekly article "Orinda's Taverna Pellegrini: A Place to Come Back To" in the online archives). In its second month of business, owner Dario Hadjian says he is happy with the way dinner is going, and hopes to start offering lunch within a week or so. He says there is a "lot of demand for lunch," and, as if on cue, a would-be patron walked in the front door during Hadjian's midafternoon interview, apparently looking for just that. ... continued on page A13

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Fire Districts

Public Meetings

Moraga-Orinda Fire District

Board of Directors
 Wednesday, Nov. 18, 7 p.m.
 Wednesday, Dec. 2, 7 p.m.
 Moraga Library Community Room
 1500 St. Mary's Road, Moraga
 For meeting times and agendas,
 visit www.mofd.org

ConFire

Board of Directors
 Tuesday, Dec. 8, 1:30 p.m.
 Board Chamber room 107,
 Administration Building,
 651 Pine St., Martinez
 For meeting times and agendas,
 visit <http://alturl.com/5p9pu>.

Emergency response information and training:
 Lamorinda Community Emergency Response Team (CERT)
www.lamorindacert.org.

Please submit Letters and Opinions:
letters@lamorindaweekly.com

Top Priority for New ConFire Facilities Manager: Station 16

By Nick Marnell



Wendy Riley Photo Nick Marnell

The Contra Costa County Fire Protection District recently hired a new facilities manager, Wendy Riley, whose to-do list leads off with Lafayette's fire station 16.

Fire Chief Jeff Carman immediately assigned Riley the pro-

posed reconstruction of the station, which has been closed nearly four years. "She understands the importance of this facility and has made it a top priority," said the chief.

The district received additional reports from a contractor and an engineer which Carman said make him even more optimistic that ConFire can stick to its original plan of renovating the station instead of tearing it down and completely rebuilding it.

Riley, a mother of three who joined ConFire in September, is in charge of not only the fire stations, but of all of the district infrastructure, including the dispatch center, the administration center and the training center.

She quickly experienced the singularities of her new industry.

"Coming from the private side to the fire district there were some things I had to learn that are a little bit different," said Riley. "I'm seeing all these names on a list and I see 'PM' after their names and I'm saying, 'We sure have a lot of project managers here.'" No, they told her. Those are paramedics.

Her mission is to reduce the stress on the firefighters, whose jobs she said are already stressful enough. "You don't want to have to worry when you come back from trying to save someone's life," said Riley. "That it's too cold in their dorms, or that the lighting is not working properly. Or worry about pest control." She did a ride-along to get the feel for the firefighters' daily routine.

"Three back-to-back medical calls," she said. "Go out, ride back,

go back out again, non-stop. I never even had time for lunch. They were going to have to do a medical call on me."

Riley mentioned no problems with the other two Lafayette stations, but she did say that the station 15 and 17 building exteriors will be painted this spring. "Standard colors, bright red doors on a beige building backdrop."

The passion for and pride in her job exude within seconds of meeting her. "I'm assisting the men and women who are assisting the community," said Riley. "It's like I'm doing my community service every day."

"Wendy has really helped our entire facilities division move ahead quicker and more efficiently, and fire station 16 is no exception," said Carman.

Young Cancer Patient Impacts MOFD Firefighter

... continued from page A1

The confident, self-assured young girl nearly jumped to the ceiling.

"I wouldn't have thought that going to chemo could be that ex-

citing for anyone," said Brown.

Cancer is a disease emblazoned in firefighters' psyches. A 2014 study released by the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health reported that firefighters experienced a higher rate of cancer than the rest of the population, often caused by the flame-retardant chemicals in the gear designed to protect them.

"It's a lot for a little one to go through," said Brown. "Her little brother is experiencing this, too. When we take Finley to the hospital, he misses mommy, and he wants his sister home." She said that Finley's cancer is treatable, with a 90 percent survival rate.

"It's not like you can opt out," continued Brown. "You step up and perform. And you marvel at the number of lives she is touching."

None likely touched more than the firefighter who delivered Finley and her brother a custom set of firefighters' turnout gear.

"Fireman Lucas is my friend," she said. "He's kind and he does

really nice things for us."

"As if we didn't have enough

reasons to love firefighters already," said Brown.



At the Brown residence, top row, from left: engineer-paramedic Matt Epperson, firefighter-paramedic Jared Costanza, captain Mike Rattary and firefighter-paramedic Dave Iman; bottom row: Cooper Brown, Finley Brown and firefighter-paramedic Lucas Lambert

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MOFD Open House and Pancake Breakfast Benefits Burn Foundation

Firefighters of the Moraga-Orinda Fire District helped raise over \$1,235 for the Alisa Ann Ruch Burn Foundation at the district's Oct. 3 Open House and Pancake Breakfast in Moraga. Samantha Zepeda from the Alisa Ann Ruch Burn Foundation accepts the \$1,235 check from MOFD firefighter-paramedic Matt Lopez. N. Marnell



Photo Stephen Healy, MOFD

ConFire Firefighter of the Year



Photo Tomi Riley

Fire Chief Jeff Carman presented the 2015 Contra Costa County Fire Protection District Firefighter of the Year award to firefighter-paramedic Vinnie Aiello at the Nov. 10 board of directors meeting.

"Everyone here has taught me a great work ethic," said Aiello, speaking to the board, district staff and friends and family. "A day doesn't go by that I don't appreciate and respect that work ethic for the fire department. And I'm going to continue that work ethic until the day I retire."

Carman cited Aiello's mentorship of firefighters – from probationary cadets to veterans – as a key factor that supported his selection. N. Marnell

Opinions in Letters to the Editor are the express views of the writer and not necessarily those of the Lamorinda Weekly. All published letters will include the writer's name and city/town of residence -- we will only accept letters from those who live in, or own a business in, the communities comprising Lamorinda (please give us your phone number for verification purposes only). Letters should be 350 words or less; letters of up to 500 words will be accepted on a space-available basis. Visit www.lamorindaweekly.com for submission guidelines. email: letters@lamorindaweekly.com; Regular mail: Lamorinda Weekly, P.O.Box 6133, Moraga, CA 94570

Letters to the Editor

Editor:

Imagine, if developers of Rancho Laguna II and SummerHill Homes (building projects in Moraga) were planning developments that would cause noise, animal odor and become a breeding place for flies, pests and vermin. I think most Moraga citizens would object strenuously. This is exactly what is being planned in the farm animal ordinance being submitted to the Town Council on November 18. It is not planned for new developments, it is being planned for the other side of all of our backyard fences.

A survey of backyard chicken owners, done by UC Davis School of Veterinary Medicine in 2013, lists complaints by neighbors: complaints about noises and smells; manure management; flock size management; handling aggressive chickens; lack of veterinarians trained in treating chickens and lack of reliable "chicken sitters." These multiple nuisance factors regarding chickens, etc. and the invasion of space of neighbors living in close proximity are real, regardless of antidotal stories you hear from chicken owners. The ordinance would allow chickens, turkeys, doves, pigeons, quail, game birds, rabbits and honeybees to be housed in small backyards in residential neighborhoods. Presently, the Moraga General Plan requires a minimum lot size of just under an acre and an approval for housing these animals.

The proposed ordinance is patterned after the Lafayette small farm ordinance. Had the search been widened to Orinda, staff would have found that our neighboring city regards distance and proximity to neighbors as important, requiring structures housing small animals to be set back, "not less than 60 feet from the front property line or any street line, and shall not be less than 40 feet from any side or rear property line." Distance between chickens and neighbor's yards is the issue. There begins the neighbor vs. neighbor conflict with no measurable standards and no enforceable repercussions.

Yes, there have been public disagreements in Moraga, but at the end of the day, we have had a place to come home to where we could peacefully enjoy family and neighbors -- the last bastion of peace in this contentious world. I urge Council members to send this proposal back to staff/planning commission to address the unintended negative consequences of the proposed ordinance.

DeEtta Kay Reynolds
Moraga

Editor:

Your report that Lafayette is considering the Simpson-Lescure building for parking doesn't make a lot of sense. It drives me a bit nuts when I see these projects discussed as if they were stand-alone. They are not! In the current context, we have the development above the Veterans Hall, the Lennar development of 66 condos coming in at Dolores and Mt. Diablo. The intersection of Mt. View/Dolores/Mt. Diablo is already slow. Since there lights have changed on Mt. Diablo (which is a good thing), the wait to turn left from Mt. Diablo to Mt. View is already long. The cross lights are also long. When the two projects above get built, along with the Post Office and TJ, we will have a major problem at this intersection.

This location is also bad. It is off the center of town and not near any major shopping, except TJ and the Post office. Do you really think that people will park here and walk to Lafayette Mercantile? It makes much more sense to put parking on Moraga Road at the parcel the town purchased and the old library which is very central to the major shopping areas. But the best solution to parking would be for the town to get together with BART and create parking at the BART lot. I know the Happy Valley crowd doesn't care for this option, but a garage in

this location, would be smack in the middle of town. As a side advantage would be additional BART parking that will lessen the impact of BART users who park in town.

Leonard Dorin
Lafayette

Editor:

An article in the November 4th issue of the Lamorinda Weekly, "No Draught in EBMUD Employee Compensation," made a couple of claims comparing MOFD to EBMUD that requires clarification.

1) "MOFD experienced a property tax decrease". In the eight years since 2007, MOFD revenues, 92% of which are property taxes, have increased 25 percent. Inflation has only increased 20 percent over that same time period. MOFD property tax revenue has not decreased.

2) "The firefighters received no raise from 2008 until 2015. In fact, their wages were cut a further 3.5 percent in 2014." While this is technically true, over the same eight year period total compensation increased slightly more than inflation; a total of 21 percent. It did not decrease.

All of the increase has come from the increased cost of benefits; medical and pension. In fact, total salaries (base plus overtime) has decreased 8 percent. However the number of firefighter per shift has also decreased from 19 to 17 (11 percent) so the average salary per firefighter has actually increased a small 3 percent, which is still not good from the employees' perspective, relative to inflation.

What has decreased is service to the taxpayers. All of this because retirement benefits were underfunded due to overly aggressive pension plan investments (high risk and "supposedly" high reward investments) which have not borne fruit and due to the fact that medical retirement benefits were not pre-funded at all. And the community and the firefighters themselves are now paying for this lack of foresight.

Are current "assumptions" correct or are we still betting on investments which are questionable rather than taking a more conservative route?

Steve Cohn
Orinda

Editor:

Nick Marnell's op-ed piece, "No Drought in EBMUD Employee Compensation," represents an extraordinarily shallow piece of reporting, and I am left puzzling about why it was written. While Marnell points out that EBMUD employee salaries have not decreased since 2012, and compares that to cuts by the Moraga-Orinda Fire District, he provides no context for his implicit suggestion that EBMUD salaries should have been reduced. Why target EBMUD? What about BART and its overpaid unions? Why not discuss the compensation of some of our local city managers or staffs? The fact that MOFD had salary reductions amounts to "so what?" How are the two districts comparable? What is the history of past pay increases? What are pay levels for different jobs, and on what basis are the jobs the same or different. EBMUD serves many multiples more customers than MOFD. I am not an expert on these issues and I do not know the answers to these questions, or even whether they are the appropriate questions to ask. The fact that I am as uninformed after reading the article as I was before reading it shows that it imparted no useful information except that Marnell has a bone to pick.

Eliot Hudson
Lafayette

Editor:

We are seniors at Miramonte High School who are doing a research project. We are writing to you in order to inform you of the issue of animal test-

ing. According to the Humane Society International, animals used in experiments are commonly subjected to force feeding, forced inhalation, food and water deprivation, prolonged periods of physical restraint, the infliction of burns and other wounds to study the healing process, the infliction of pain to study its effects and remedies, and many other things. One specific company, Church and Dwight, that manufactures brands such as Oxi Clean, Arm and Hammer products, and Kaboom inhumanely treats their animals when testing their products. Our goal is to raise awareness of this issue so that we can further create laws that will protect the health, safety and well-being of these animals that are being used in labs.

Cecilia Gee and Danielle Chan
Orinda

Editor:

Edna St. Vicent Millay once said, "It's not true that life is one damn thing after another; it's one damn thing over and over."

Developer proposes 40 units. Citizens complain. Builder builds 36 units. Developer proposes 60 units. Citizens complain. Builder build 54 units. Developer proposes 80 units. Citizens complain. Builder builds 72 units. Over and over . . .

It was time to take our Pointers, Pierce and Puncture, for a walk. We surveyed the proposed building site next to the Moraga Fire House. Critics are correct; it's not really large enough for 35 three-story units. However, it's perfect for three 35-story units . . . with a 35-story parking garage.

Think of Andy Scheck's four beehives as the inspiration for "Mellifera Manor of Moraga." Now that's a

name that sticks. Visualize those four hives as four buildings flanking a multidimensional "roundabout" for trucks and autos, motorcycles and bicycles, go carts and golf carts, wheelchairs and walkers. From the 35th floor, a spectacular human kaleidoscope! Architectural rendering to be provided -- 'soon as I find my rendering pen.

How fitting the new head of administrative services for Moraga comes from Dublin where the population grew from ". . . the size of Moraga today" to 50,000. Now she can help Moraga grow to 50,000 and Lamorinda grow to 180,000. How exciting! Perhaps she can help transform an image of Andy's beehives into a Lamorinda logo since our residents seem destined to live like bees in hives.

Over and over . . .

Edward C. Hartman
Moraga

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Giving Dreams an Address

Business

Dover Saddlery Offers Everything Equine at New Moraga Store – and Horses are Welcome

By Sophie Braccini



Dover Saddlery ribbon cutting ceremony. Moraga Mayor Roger Wykle, right, and Dover Saddlery Executive Vice-President James Cullen cut the store's ribbon. To Cullen's left, store manager Marc Ayala-Bass Photo Sophie Braccini

More local businesses are becoming dog friendly, but Dover Saddlery, which opened its 30th retail store in Moraga Friday, Nov. 13, has gone a step farther – with horses. Patrons can bring their horse to the store at 444 Center Street, so equipment can be selected and tried on the spot.

"We offer services in our stores that Bay Area clients are now going to be able to take advantage of," said Janet Nittmann, head of corporate communications at Dover Saddlery, a

leader in equestrian equipment. "We have a test ride saddle demo program where clients can try a saddle on their horse for three days; and an onsite saddle consultation program, custom boots and coat fitting. We can also come to your barn, bringing several saddles to work with you on the better fit."

The Rheem Shopping Center is likely to become a hub for horses, ponies and their happy owners as Dover Saddlery plans future events that will focus on everything equine.

Friday morning's ribbon cutting ceremony was a big event at Dover, including Moraga's mayor, Roger Wykle. Councilmember Teresa Onoda, a rider herself, said she was excited to see the store coming to town. "This is huge for the horse lovers all over the region," said Onoda. "Dover is a well-known and well-respected equine retailer. I do not know a rider who has not bought from Dover." The equestrian equipment store already has a large customer base online. "The problem in the past was it took a long time to get what you purchased because it was coming from Kentucky. That has all changed. Dover chose wisely when they chose to open a store in Moraga."

Dover Saddlery caters to English saddle riders, from the novice to those involved in riding competitions. The store offers specialized clothing, boots and chaps, horse tack including numerous dressage, jumping and close contact, all-purpose, or junior saddles, stable supplies, and items for horse care. Western saddle riders can order equipment online at Dover's other business, Smithbrothers.com.

Dover Saddlery was founded in 1975 by Jim and David Powers, two 1972 U.S. Olympic riders, and is celebrating its 40th anniversary this year. The Powers were impressed by the quality of the equipment their competitors used at the Olympic

games in Germany that they decided upon their return to distribute the best English, French, German, Italian and Argentinian equipment in the United States. The online business grew rapidly as the Internet developed, and stores were added over the years. It is now a publicly traded company grossing approximately \$100 million a year. The Powers sat on the board of directors until last year. "The current management is maintaining the same direction of excellence that was given by Jim and David," said Nittmann. "All our management, all our employees are passionate riders, moved by the same passion for horses."

The Moraga store will employ 30 to 40 people. There are still some vacancies, and anyone passionate about horses is encouraged to apply. "We

will be an active part of the community and of the local horse shows," said Moraga resident and store manager Marc Ayala-Bass. "We will have ongoing activities at the store, including book signings, talks by various professionals, and events for children as part of the pony club program." The store is open every day, from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Wednesday, from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. Thursday through Saturday, and from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Sunday.

Dover Saddlery
444 Center Street, Moraga
doversaddlery.com

Lamorinda Weekly business articles are intended to inform the community about local business activities, not to endorse a particular company, product or service.

business briefs

Sanvitalia Opens in Theatre Square 2 Theater Square, 110, Orinda (925) 258-6900

Helen Bentkowski has several passions: food, interior decoration and plants. Her new Orinda store, Sanvitalia Home and Garden, located on the first floor of Theater Square, across from Sweet Dreams Toy Store, combines her love of plants and decorations. The store is currently filled with festive decorations, orchids and succulent arrangements. Inside, unique Christmas ornaments adorn trees, and tables are cheerfully dressed up. "I was a nursery manager for the longest time," says Bentkowski, who has a love for food as well as the plant world, "and several years ago I opened a gift store and cafe combo in Oakland, Terrace Gifts and Coffee." Sanvitalia offers high-end lotions and candles, jewelry and handbags, and even cookbooks. "I love cooking and growing vegetables and fruits," she says. Leelyi, who has been working for years with Bentkowski, will be managing the store when the owner is at her Oakland café.



Helen Bentkowski in her new Orinda store, Sanvitalia Photo Sophie Braccini

Vogue Cleaners and Alterations Moves Near CVS 3629 Mt. Diablo Blvd., # B, Lafayette (925) 283-9696

Following a rent hike at her former location next to Novina Fine Jewelry, Minoo Motlagh, owner of Lafayette Vogue Cleaners and Alterations, recently relocated to the store between GNC and Johnny's Donuts. "I've had this business for 12 years in Lafayette," said Motlagh. "Finally I (found) this location and I am very happy here." Motlagh says her customers are happy, too, and she has the best customers in the world.

Glamorous Boutique Celebrates Four Years in Lafayette 1048 Brown Ave., Lafayette (925) 284-1217 – www.facebook.com/glamorouslafayette

Eliza Jamkochian will celebrate the fourth anniversary of Glamorous Boutique from 4 to 8 p.m. Thursday, Nov. 19, where beverages and light appetizers will be served to clients. Glamorous Boutique's all new fall and winter inventory of special occasion and cocktail dresses has arrived, including something for that special night out. Corrine Christensen, a stylist with J. Hilburn, a men's clothing brand that offers custom shirts made to order and many ready-to-wear options such as cashmere sweaters, custom belts, cufflinks, ties, socks and pocket squares, will be at Glamorous Boutique for the celebration.

Cashmere 'Pop Up' Sale Continues in Lafayette 3604 Mt. Diablo Blvd., Lafayette thecashmeresale.com

The Cashmere Sale pop up store in Lafayette, two doors west of Pizza Antica, is continuing its sale of high quality cashmere sweaters, jumpers, cardigans, and scarves in multiple sizes and colors offered at less than half the retail price. The boutique will be open every day until Dec. 5 featuring gift items such as one-size-fits-all styles, scarves and blankets, all made of two-ply cashmere yarn from China, according to boutique manager Julie Horton Peck, who is partnering with Nancy Katz, former owner of Diva in Walnut Creek. To be informed of boutique locations in 2016, register online at thecashmeresale.com.

News from the Three Chambers of Commerce Lafayette

Save the date for the annual Holiday Mixer at U.S. Bank from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, Dec. 9 at 3498 Mt. Diablo Blvd. in Lafayette. The party includes food, fun, beverages and a big holiday raffle. Cost: \$10 for members; free for those who bring at least three canned items for the Food Bank.

Moraga

Save the date for the Chamber Holiday Party from 7 to 9 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 10 at Aegis of Moraga, 950 Country Club Drive, Moraga. Registration required at MoragaChamber.org. Cost: \$15 per person.

Orinda

Holiday Shop Orinda Kick-Off Mixer from 5:30 to 7 p.m. Thursday Nov. 19 at McDonnell Nursery, 196 Moraga Way, Orinda. Come do some early Christmas shopping!

Save the date for the Christmas Holiday Party at the Hilton House on Thursday at 6 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 3, 21 Orinda Way, Orinda.

If you have a business brief to share, please contact
Sophie Braccini at sophie@lamorindaweekly.com



Photo Jaya Griggs

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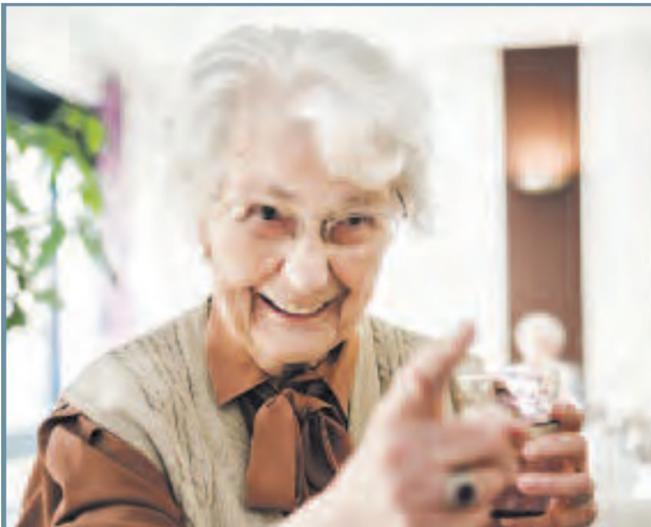
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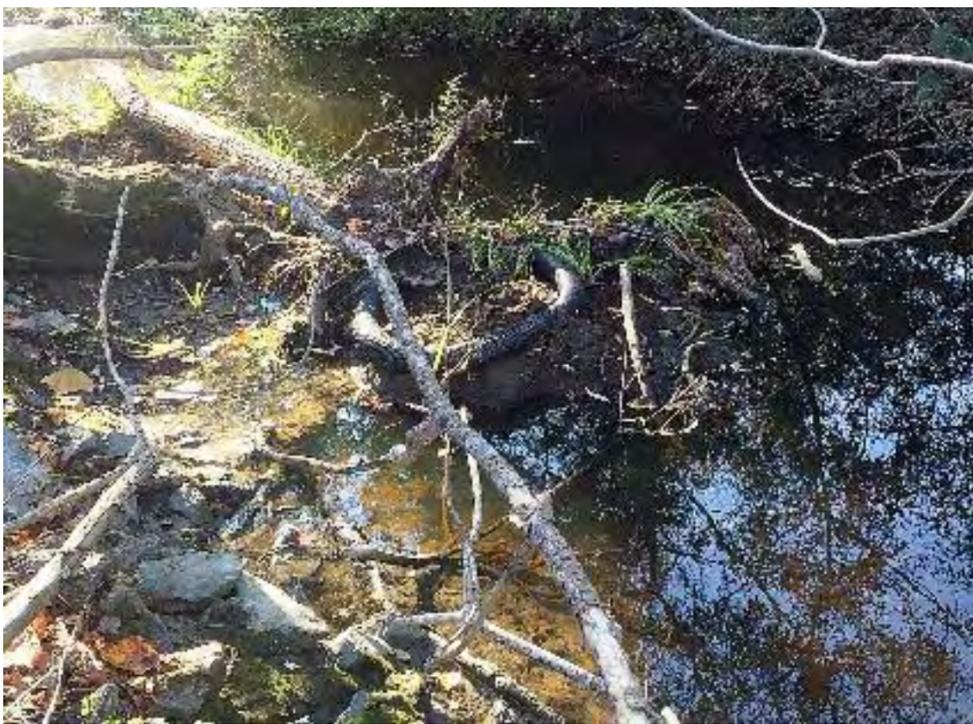
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Moraga

Ready for Winter and Spring Rain?

... continued from page A4



Moraga Creek cluttered with debris

Photo Sophie Braccini

A simple stroll on the Lafayette-Moraga Regional Trail behind Saklan School raises doubts regarding the cleaning up of at least a portion of the Moraga Creek: tree trunks and debris clutter the stream and branches have started to pile under the Canyon Bridge. "In the case of the creek by the bike trail near School Street, the

town is in the process of notifying residents, to reiterate their responsibility of maintaining their creeks as it has been theorized to be an El Niño year," confirmed Kwan.

"We handed out information on how to prepare for storms at the Community Faire and Pear and Wine Festival and shared in-

formation through articles in the Town Crier and About Town," said Kwan, adding that the town did its homework, cleaning rain gutters on all municipal buildings, and delaying the reconstruction of Rheem Boulevard and repair of its underlying slides in order to minimize water erosion.

Lamorinda is also strengthen-

ing its capacity to respond to emergencies. "We are working on disaster drills with Lafayette and Orinda to test emergency radio systems," explained Kwan. "We have done extensive emergency preparedness training with Saint Mary's College and Moraga-Orinda Fire District for all the staff and town council over the past three years, and coordinated train-

ing efforts with Orinda and Lafayette last year." The town also completed a Field Operations Center with needed emergency technology and communications at 335 Rheem Blvd. and has procured multiple yards of fill sand and empty sandbags at station 41, located at 1280 Moraga Way. "Residents are asked to take only what they need," said Kwan.

Small Business Saturday November 28



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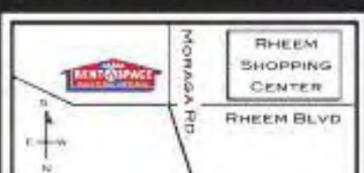
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Lafayette Pumping Plant ... continued from page A2



Rendering of proposed pumping plant That issue has now been settled.

The new plant will look like a very large garage – 45-feet wide by 43-feet deep by 20-feet tall – with attractive landscaping, set back on the rectangular lot, closer to the cemetery than the intersection at Mt. Diablo Court. EBMUD's conceptual design calls for a durable low maintenance structure that is functional and a visual asset to the community.

In a unique deal with the city, once the new plant is up and running, the old plant will be demolished and public parking will take its place.

Storm drain work will presumably begin in the near future; in theory, it should not cause major traffic impacts. However, when the time comes to install the enormous new water pipeline, drivers will see a string of orange cones and will have to deal with intermittent lane closures.

According to EBMUD the project is slated to be complete in September of 2017. Noting the likely wet winter forecast, Blackwell said EBMUD built in potential rain delays to the construction schedule.

Clarification:

The Nov. 4 Lamorinda Weekly article, "No Drought in EBMUD Employee Compensation," stated that the East Bay Municipal Utility District publicized the names of excessive water users, but, to clarify, the agency released the names of customers with excessive use violations to the media and the public when requested under the California Public Records Act.

Moraga Moraga Library Gets an AED

By Sophie Braccini



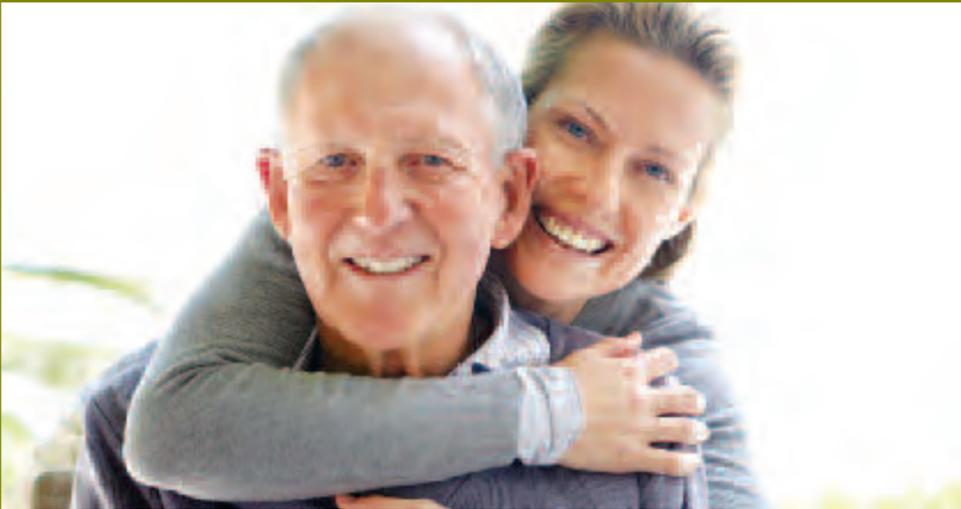
From left: Battalion Chief Jerry Lee, Jay Ingram, Ann Miller and Greg Eames Photo Sophie Braccini

Automated External Defibrillators save lives. This is why the Town of Moraga would like to see AED devices installed anywhere a lot of people gather, such as at the Moraga Library where a defibrillator was installed Sept. 25. "We are extremely grateful to the Rescue One Foundation for buying this device," said Parks and Recreation Director Jay Ingram, who is in charge of public facilities. Police cars and paramedic vehicles are already outfitted with AEDs, and there is one at the Hacienda de las Flores. The Moraga-Orinda Fire District trained library personnel to use the device. "The machine tells you exactly

what to do," said Ann Miller, Moraga's new children's librarian who feels empowered now that she knows how to use the AED. Dr. Eugene Gottfried, board member of the Rescue One Foundation, explained that with this machine people can start saving lives right now. "When a heart stops, seconds count," he said. Battalion Chief Jerry Lee added that recently a defibrillator was used with great success on an Orinda city employee who collapsed. Rescue One president Greg Reams said that the more money the foundation raises, the more units they will be able to gift to the cities of Moraga and Orinda.

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Moraga Moraga School District ... continued from page A5

The superintendent emphasized the effectiveness of early intervention in math. He also indicated that the assessment test children took last spring was detailed enough to help the district select those areas of mathematics that need most remediation.

The governing board members asked questions about last spring's parent survey, and how children would have been impacted by an extended kindergarten day. Director of Curriculum and Instruction Carolyn Parker, who participated in the extended kindergarten day committee, said it would have meant 30 to 45 minutes of additional instruction time. The extended day would have also included lunch at school.

"The earlier we can start math intervention the better," said board pres-

ident Shari Simon. "This will open a whole world of possibilities to those children." She highlighted the importance of making the intervention a playful and interesting experience for the children to help them master mathematical concepts.

"This does not mean we are shutting off the extended kindergarten day project," said board member Jim Obsitnik. "We are just reprioritizing it for a later date."

Burns plans to bring additional details about the math intervention program to the next board meeting in December. The board will also decide at that meeting how to replace board member Parker Colvin, who is moving with his family to Chicago. The missing fifth member will be either elected by residents or nominated by the board.

Lady Mats Secure First NCS Title in 17 Years

... continued from page A1



Cougar freshman Zoe Crouch rips a shot in the second half

Throughout the season, coach Murphy has emphasized the importance of steely defense. Once again, versus Campo, defense took the day.

“Defense was key,” Murphy said. “We were able to lock down their key players for most of the match.”

The centerpiece of the team’s defense, senior Paige Miller, was at the heart of the team’s success all season. On Saturday, she tallied 13 saves, including a 5-meter penalty block with time expiring. Miller is headed to San Diego State for water polo next fall, so notching an NCS title after coming up short the last two years was particularly special.

Asked of the difference between this year’s team and previous ones, Miller said: “The team chemistry this year was unbelievable.”

It was a charmed season for the Matadors, and first-year head coach Murphy was quick to point out that number 17 is not only his lucky number, but also the number he wore on his cap at Cal during his playing days.

“It’s a really special moment for this program,” Murphy added. “It was just our year, it was our turn.”

Coincidentally, the last time the Lady Mats won the NCS Championship, a familiar face was coaching the team: Cougars’ head coach Kim Everist.

“It’s been a long time coming for the Mats,” Everist said after the match. “I’m excited for them.”

The Cougars had a tough season in 2015, by their standards. They graduated much of the talent that netted them three straight NCS titles (and

four in five years), and failed to eclipse the 20-win mark for the first time since 2010.

“Our team motto this year has been: improvise, adapt, and overcome,” Everist explained. “That’s the kind of season it’s been.”

The road to the NCS Championship was a roller coaster ride. The season reached a low point when the Cougars dropped consecutive matches to Acalanes and Miramonte in DFAL play. Everist was ejected from the double-overtime, sudden death loss to the Lady Dons, which meant missing the following match against Miramonte: the first absence of her 24-year coaching career.

In the semifinal, the Cougars found themselves in another thriller with the Dons. This time, it was the Cougars that came out on top in overtime, winning by a score of 6-5.

The Cougars graduate just two seniors, Tal Shoshan and Ellen Gerst, and a number of its key players – including junior attacker Olivia Price, who scored three of Campo’s four goals Saturday – will return to the pool next fall.

With both teams returning the bulk of their talent next season, the classic Miramonte-Campolindo rivalry has the potential to reach all-time heights in the coming years.

“North Coast always comes down to your rival games,” Everist said. “We’re always going to do our best to beat Miramonte and Acalanes, and I would expect nothing less from them.”



Miramonte head coach Noel Murphy

Photos Gint Federas

Orinda

Crossroads' Scene Changing

... continued from page A7

Asked about the inevitable comparison with La Piazza, his restaurant’s popular Italian cuisine neighbor down the street, Hadjian pointed to his successful North Beach restaurant, Piazza Pellegrini, as an indication that people seem to gravitate to places that offer several Italian eateries. He wishes La Piazza only the best, he says, and offers his regionally varied menu, which “puts the best of all of Italy” in one place, as the distinction between their approaches to food.

Whether these relatively small developments are a bellwether for the bigger changes some Orinda residents seek, only time will tell. But there is no doubt that change is in the wind. Skeptics might well remember that the storefront occupied by La Piazza

was previously home to a downscale burrito joint popular with weary soccer moms and dads and their young players, as Theatre Square was just opening its first-floor retail spaces. When the new owner spent a prodigious sum to remodel the space and add a wood-fired pizza oven, the word was that he was crazy, and would go broke within a year.

Try telling him that any Saturday night, if you can get in the door. And try finding a non-food retail space inside Theatre Square.

As reported elsewhere, it seems those little soccer players have grown up and returned to Orinda with their own families, and they aren’t looking for burritos.

Should your family follow you to Cal?



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Giving Dreams an Address

Lamorinda

District Wrestles with Retiree Healthcare Costs

By Cathy Tyson

Managing retiree health care costs is not easy. As health benefits get more costly and current teachers get older by the day, the Acalanes Union High School District, like many other school districts in California, is facing a daunting financial challenge. With pressure from teachers who don't want to see their benefits dwindle, along with concern from parents to continue to support a wide range of academic interests, the money for benefits has to come from somewhere.

"This District has been aggressive in addressing long-term liabilities," said Superintendent John Nickerson. "All employee groups have modest benefits upon their retirement – up to a five year health benefit that is intended to be a bridge to Medicare."

The AUHSD is funding Other Post-Employment Benefits or OPEB, specifically health care, dental and vision care for teachers and staff when they retire on a pay-as-you go basis, but at the same time, the district is chipping away at its staggering actuarial accrued liability of \$16 million – much like contributing extra money to pay down the mortgage. "The goal is to fully fund this liability," said Nickerson.

The pay-as-you-go cost is the price of benefits for current retirees. These increasingly expensive benefits are a form of deferred compensation that are incurred during working years, but paid for during retirement.

In a report prepared by chief business official Julie Bautista for a recent school board meeting, she estimated

the pay-as-you-go cost of providing retiree health benefits in the year beginning July 1, 2015 to be \$855,000. She explains that on top of that amount, the district will be contributing an additional \$800,000 to an irrevocable trust account to address the unfunded liability. Other contributions were made in 2013 and 2011; the trust account balance now stands at \$1.1 million. There are only so many resources to go around, but the AUHSD and the school board are in favor of taking ownership of the challenge and working toward a solution, she added.

While the district is meeting its obligations now, and is starting to address the longer-term problem, the numbers highlight the growing issue. Right now the AUHSD has 248 retirees and an estimated six or seven additional retirees each year, with a possible uptick due to a significant number of teachers that are currently over 50 years old.

At the Nov. 4 AUHSD School Board meeting a number of recommendations were made during a presentation of the required bi-annual Actuarial Study of OPEB. Suggestions included increasing the minimum years of service from 10 to 15 in order to qualify, and increasing the minimum age for eligibility from 55 to 60 as well as to "explore options and develop a shared goal to restructure existing premium contributions to retirees." Any changes will have to be negotiated with the teachers union.

Starting in fiscal year 2007–08 the GASB, or the Government Ac-

counting Standards Board, required public agencies to report their retiree healthcare benefits on an accrual basis, like pension liabilities, as a way to help taxpayers and government officials determine the ability to financially provide services and repay debt.

Before GASB 45, the only requirement was to report the annual amount that had actually been paid for benefits for current retirees.

Topping the list of California school districts with the largest per pupil unfunded OPEB liability, the Los Angeles Unified School District has a staggering liability of \$17,067 per pupil.

By comparison, with roughly 5,556 students in the district and an unfunded OPEB obligation of \$16 million, that translates to a liability of \$2,879 per student for the AUHSD. This unfunded liability represents the present day cost of the promised benefits that employees and retirees have already earned based on their service.

An independent third party consultant, Total Compensation Systems, Inc. was hired to analyze liabilities associated with the district's current retiree health program. Consultant Geoffrey Kischuk said, "Overall Acalanes is ahead of the curve in managing benefits."

As people live longer, and health care costs continue to rise, the status quo may become unsustainable at some point. With no support from state coffers, the AUHSD has to shoulder the burden alone, and will surely seek a way to rein in costs.

Moving Veteran's Day Celebration in Moraga



Dignitaries, Boy Scouts, veterans and approximately 100 Lamorinda residents turned out at Moraga Commons on Veteran's Day to honor those who served. The morning service opened with flag-bearing scouts flanking the town's memorial stone, and ended with a lone bugler's rendition of "Taps." As the crowd dispersed, a widow spontaneously placed a single red rose in the earth by the stone. "My husband landed on the beach the afternoon of D-Day," she said, wiping her tears. "He died three years ago. I always lose it when I hear 'Taps.'" – Cathy Dausman

Orinda

Story Poles

What planners have seen is that Computer Assisted Design software, long in use by architects and engineers, can be adapted to simulate and alter project designs for their use. Three-dimensional CAD images can be imported into modeling programs such as Google SketchUp to show what a proposed structure would look like from any desired location. If display screens are added to the city's meeting rooms, these models can be viewed and manipulated in real time, and can even provide video tours of proposed projects for planning commissioners and council members.

Mayank Patel, one of Orinda's two new young planners, is enthusiastic about the new technology, which

he encountered in his previous job as an urban designer in the private sector. The technology is expensive, and may only be available to large developers at present. For that reason, it is still an applicant's option to use computer modeling in lieu of erecting story poles, he says. But it is clearly the way of the future.

Story poles are expensive, too, according to comments received by the commissioners, sometimes costing \$5,000 or more. They are also prone to falling down, especially in windy locations such as Gateway Valley. If an applicant is required to install them at the beginning of the 10-day required notice period, as the commission is contemplating, they may be

... continued from page A6

nothing but a heap of sticks by the time a commissioner makes a site visit. The wood used for story poles is generally scrapped. Modeling may make a great deal more sense if it can be done at reasonable cost.

The matter came to a head recently because some of Orinda's planning commissioners were piqued by the absence of story poles at certain projects in Wilder. But they had not yet experienced the future. On Oct. 27 the commission directed staff to "bring back optional technologies that may be an appropriate replacement of story poles currently being used." Apparently, they did not have to wait long.

Learning by Making

Technology taught outside Lamorinda classrooms

By Diane Claytor



Jordan Hart of TechLX works with Lamorinda students Cyril Russell, Luke Schwartz, Zoya Acuna-Kapoor, Julia Waide and Finley Burrows. On the floor are Haelee Chung, Jenna Steele and Maya Schwartz. Photo Diane Claytor

If you were asked to build a cooler from recycled materials so you could transport Popsicles to your kids' soccer game, would you know what to do? The first step might be to ask one of the 9- to 12-year-olds sitting in a Lafayette home on Tuesday evenings, surrounded by laptops and working with Jordan Hart, co-founder of Oakland-based Tech LX. Considering that the "Otter Pop Challenge" is one of the projects they have worked on during their tech class, no doubt all 17 of the Lamorinda students would be able to help.

Like after-school music and dance classes, technology courses taught by private organizations are flourishing. And, according to Hart, they are a necessity. "We need to teach kids to be creative, to be collaborative, to think critically and to make things, not to sit impassively listening to lectures," he said. Hart co-founded TechLX (Technology Focused Learning Experiences) in 2014 after having spent several years working at summer tech camps. TechLX is designed to go beyond tech camps with the goal of providing year-round project-based technology education through classes as well as helping with technology

curriculum development and teacher recruiting. To increase their visibility, Hart said, TechLX partners with schools and other organizations to offer classes in programming, robotics and game development.

And that is how TechLX and Hart came to be in that Lafayette family room.

Robert Schwartz, of Moraga, a former middle school science teacher, high school principal, and educational company executive, started looking for after-school tech-related opportunities for his elementary school-aged twins. "I had seen so many schools that were teaching students how to make things and think creatively and I wanted my kids to experience that too."

Curiosity Hacked, a national nonprofit organization that focuses on STEAM (science, technology, engineering, art and math) education and skill building, had just started in Oakland. Schwartz met with the founder and, because he "likes starting things," partnered with Lafayette resident Jill Marek to form the only Lamorinda Guild of Curiosity Hacked. That first year they had 14 students; last year it grew and this year they have capped

the number at 17, with an almost equal number of boys and girls.

Schwartz developed the curriculum, which has included coding basics, sewing, laser cutting, jewelry making, soldering, circuitry, 3D design and prototyping projects. They have built an obstacle course and combat bots; they have had fun with that Otter Pop Challenge. "I know they're not going to remember everything," Schwartz said, "but it's really all about the skills they're getting, how they approach problems, think creatively and work together. Those are the significant values to this program." The guild began holding occasional weekend classes but now run the program weekly from October through May.

Both Schwartz and Marek have other jobs and "we were starting to run low on energy and bandwidth to lead the class every week," Schwartz explained. So he contacted Hart, who last month began teaching a 20-week Arduino Robotics class. For those who may not be quite that tech-savvy, Arduino is a microcontroller board that makes objects interactive. This involves building robots and the remote controls to operate them and includes basic programming, electronics and construction techniques. And it clearly illustrates the belief of both Hart and Schwartz that kids should make to learn.

Baker Sharp, a Miramonte sophomore, learned Arduino robotics from Hart; he also learned Minecraft modding, game design and Java programming and is assisting Hart in the Lamorinda class. His mom, Diane Dwyer, said she absolutely thinks "the classes made Baker far more prepared for the AP computer science class he's now taking."

With technology changing so rapidly, the more kids can learn and the earlier they can learn it, the more they will be prepared for whatever the future brings. Code.org states that "every student should have the opportunity to learn computer science. It helps nurture problem-solving skills, logic and creativity. By starting early, students will have a foundation for success in any 21st century career path."

... continued on page B3

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The Del Monicas: A Family of Hatters

By Moya Stone



Christine Del Monica and sister Dina

Photo Ohlen Alexander

You may have seen a white Mercedes zipping around Lamorinda with a memorable license plate: Hats4U. That's an apt message on behalf of Lafayette resident and hatter Christine Del Monica.

Christine and her younger sister, Dina, grew up around hats. In 1952 their father Herbert (Sonni) Del Monica and his wife Jean, opened Sonni's Hats on Lakeshore Avenue in Oakland after Sonni learned the ropes from

his father's San Francisco hat company. The couple designed and made women's hats in the back and sold their wares in the front of the shop. In those days, business was booming as every lady kept a wardrobe of hats.

From a young age both sisters spent time in the shop. Dina remembers, "When we were kids it was so fun to go into the shop ... we'd play with the trims."

Sonni's Hats sold locally and around the country to retailers such as Lord & Taylor. First Lady Mamie Eisenhower was one among many prominent women who relied on a Sonni's creations. The sisters proudly display article cuttings from the San Francisco Chronicle featuring their father, including mention in Herb Caen's popular column.

Success led the Del Monicas to build a house on St. Stephens Road in Orinda but they only stayed five years. "My mother hated it," says Dina. A very social and stylish lady, she found rural Orinda too far from the attractions of the city. Christine explains that their mother, who had a fondness for singing and entertaining, really belonged in Los Angeles. Instead the family moved to Piedmont, where the sisters finished school.

By the '80s Christine and Dina were grown and living their own lives, but then, as Christine recounts, their mother played a trick on her. "She called me and said, 'We're really busy. Can you come help out?'" Christine started with blocking hats on the assembly line. "One day the buyer for I. Magnin came in and said headbands (1920s style) were going to be big and could we make some for them?" Hav-

ing studied art, Christine wanted to give designing a try and enjoyed the process so much she became the company's primary designer. "I think that was Mom's plan all along," she says. Around the same time Dina also joined the business as sales manager and the family worked together for the next 25 years.

But like any family, there were conflicts. One being Christine's preference to bump up against deadlines. Dina remembers Sonni pacing the floor saying, "We have two weeks. Two weeks! And your sister has done nothing." He wondered why she did not design a hat a day or a hat a week. The sisters laugh with the memory and Christine adds, "I'd say, Dad it doesn't work that way."

Jean died in 1997, then Sonni, and finally the business closed. Dina went into real estate and Christine took a break. "That was a hard transition for me," says Christine. She thought about living in her parents' Piedmont home but decided to move to Lafayette from Alameda and now with her sister, she is remodeling a house they plan to share.

Recently Christine has ventured back into designing, creating whimsical holiday-themed headbands, fascinators, and hats using vintage trim like feathers and lace from the old shop. She is participating in art shows around the area, including the Orinda Holiday Bazaar coming up Nov. 21. She says she's happy to be back at it and finds her customers inspiring. "It makes it all worthwhile when I see how happy all this stuff makes people."

Hats off to the Del Monicas.

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Find Hats and Other Fun Items at the Orinda Holiday Bazaar Nov. 21

The Orinda Holiday Bazaar, which features over 50 exhibitors featuring home décor, specialty foods, holiday decorations, accessories and jewelry, will be held from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 21 at the Orinda Community Center. There will be over 20 new exhibitors this year featuring items like succulents, handmade cards, lotions, women's clothing, handmade bags, knitwear, decorative trays, candles and paper mache items. Several local nonprofit organizations will also be represented.

The Secret of Youth Through Movement

Growing popularity of senior fitness classes in Lamorinda

By Sophie Braccini



Fitness class at the Lafayette Community Center

Photo Sophie Braccini

The more active a person is, the better they will weather aging." This statement is Anne Randolph's professional mantra. A physical therapist with 38 years of experience specializing in geriatric physical therapy, Randolph sees every day what a difference regular physical activity makes in a senior's recovery – and how local seniors are taking charge of their health through movement. "It does not matter what you do, as long do it regularly," she says. "People can garden or walk or exercise: this is the secret of youth."

For Margaret Goglia, 64, Lucille Zammiti, 79, and Herb Wehmeyer, 85, an active and healthy lifestyle involves taking classes taught by Stuart Moore, the 24 Hour Fitness trainer and instructor who took over the senior fitness class a year ago. Since he came on board, numbers have exploded. "At some point we had 50 people in the class," says the super-fit trainer in his late 60s. "Something had to be done." The club added three more classes and the numbers of participating seniors continues to grow.

Fitness classes for seniors throughout Lamorinda are multiplying and diversifying. In addition to 24 Hour Fitness classes in Moraga, the Oakwood Athletic Club in Lafayette and the Lafayette Community Center offer senior classes, as well as Holy Shepherd Lutheran Church in Orinda.

Moore's class participants highlight the rigor and diversity of exercises that address the whole body from head to toe, including all muscle groups and joints. "Stuart is a real asset to the community," says Wehmeyer. "I like his business-like approach."

"He covers everything seamlessly without any strange music," adds

Goglia. Sue Funkhouser is another local senior fitness star. She is an independent trainer teaching classes at the Lafayette Community Center, at Merrill Gardens, Oakwood Athletic Club and Holy Shepherd. "She is fabulous, she keeps us laughing all the time," says 74-year-old Linda FitzGerald, who has been coming to Funkhouser's class at the community center for nearly four years. Ann Procella, in the same age group and fitness class, says that the arthritis in her hands is now gone, while Lisa Mac emphasizes that the core exercises have increased her confidence and the balancing exercises have helped her avoid falling a couple of times.

The American Academy of Family Physicians states that regular exercise provides a myriad of health benefits in older adults, including improvements in blood pressure, diabetes, lipid profile, osteoarthritis, osteoporosis, and neurocognitive function.

Not only do participants talk about the positive impact the classes have, they also talk about the social element. "When I'm gone and can't make the class, I really miss it," says FitzGerald.

"We care about each other," adds Zammiti.

While each class broadly addresses issues of balance, strength and flexibility, each has its specificity. Moore's class emphasizes neck strength and flexibility, ankle flexibility, as well as mobility. Funkhouser's class incorporates music and low-impact aerobics. At Oakwood, water aerobics and small group TRX classes for seniors is offered, as well as a chair yoga class. "Water aerobics is great for strength, and some people

may need to avoid weight-bearing exercise, but if you want to fight osteoporosis you need weight-bearing," says Oakwood instructor Maura Sheridan. She teaches a fee-based class for a small number of seniors (six maximum), who pursue specific strength, agility and balance goals at the Lafayette club. She is also a TRX expert and says that the device, which leverages gravity and bodyweight to perform exercises, can be used very successfully for seniors. "I have a 90-plus-year-old client training with TRX. She is such a role model," says the 45-year-old instructor.

The majority of participants in senior classes are women, but at 24 Hour Fitness and Oakwood about 20 percent of the class's regular participants are men.

While there is a wide range of classes offered in Lamorinda, Randolph would like to see more chair exercise classes. "This can be extremely useful for some people," she says. The physical therapist makes presentations once a month at the Lafayette Community Center about topics such as Therabands or osteoporosis. She also goes to people's homes when they need her services.

The Moraga 24 Hour Fitness at 351 Rheem Blvd. is the only Silver Sneaker site in Lamorinda where seniors 65 and older can have their membership paid by their medical insurance. To check for participating insurance companies, visit www.silversneakers.com/tools/eligibility. Funkhouser's Lafayette Recreation classes can be booked online at <http://www.ci.lafayette.ca.us/residents/parks-trails-recreation/recreation-programs>. Randolph can be reached at (925) 254-3300 or online at <http://www.randolphpt.com/>.

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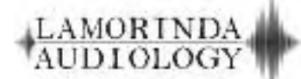
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Learning by Making

... continued from page B1

Aida Gimme, associate superintendent of the Acalanes Union High School District, reports that all four high schools offer computer programming and AP computer science classes, and she said they are looking to add a third level "which would be more accessible to kids without much coding experience."

Other tech classes are taught at one or more of the campuses. Currently, Campolindo also has a competitive Robotics team. Gimme noted that the district is considering adding

app development classes. "We want to produce well-rounded children that can be critical thinkers, problem solvers ... and work in teams on whatever challenges they may face," Gimme said.

TechLX, Curiosity Hacked and other similar organizations are augmenting the work of the schools. As parent Dwyer said, "Every high school graduate should have a working understanding of programming and coding given that technology is involved in every aspect of our lives."



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'Variations'

Innovative dance concert opens at SMC Nov. 19

By A.K. Carroll



Image provided

There comes a moment in the lives of most college seniors when they are asked to prove themselves, to put their skills to the test and evidence the result of four years of exploration, effort and learning. For 10 dance students at Saint Mary's College, that moment is now.

From Thursday, Nov. 19 to Saturday, Nov. 21, SMC dance majors and minors will share with the public the culmination of their efforts in "Variations," two distinct dance programs, and four total performances, that are entirely student-led.

"The students do all of the choreography, the PR, the advertising, costumes, lighting design, and set design," said Dana Lawton, director of the concert. "They arrange all of the tech schedules and the spacing of rehearsals. Essentially they're programming."

Though the senior recital – or "dance concert" as it is called – has been a tradition at SMC for quite some time, there is always room for innovation. This year the students have split the concert into an A and B performance, with half of the dances on Thursday and Saturday evening, the A program, and the other half on Friday evening and Saturday afternoon, the B program. Each program will include five to six performances, and run an hour long with no intermission.

"It's a new trending model in contemporary dance," said Lawton. "Rather than dragging on with an in-

termission, we hold them captive (with the performance)." The A and B programs are intended to create one cohesive concert, though it isn't always possible to make it to more than one performance.

"We found in the past that the students were getting exhausted and our concerts were getting incredibly long because of the amount of talent we had to showcase," said Lawton, who has nothing but praise for this year's slew of performers, deeming them "the most technically proficient students we've had in our 18 years."

"Our students are very vibrant and rhythmic, able to attack material in a way that is on level with professional dancers," said Lawton. "The maturity level in rehearsal and preparation is also at a deep professional level. They are very focused and committed to the process and to their choreographer. They come with the same energy they would for a guest (choreographer) or a faculty member."

This season's senior choreographers include Curtis Askew, Allegra Bautista, Coline Buencamino, Katy Fessler, Jessica Lim, Leslie Montano, Courtney Pfaff, Annamarie Santos and Jamie Seibert. Added to the crew is Andrew Merrell, the only one of SMC's 12 MFA students to take part in "Variations." The cast and crew are comprised of the 15 majors and minors in the program.

The title, "Variations," was chosen by the students and pays homage to the

historically famous dance piece by George Ballantine. "They all have very different personalities and variations and styles," said Lawton. "This particular group is really interested in individuality, which you'll see in the ways that dancers express themselves, even in group choreography, developing a sense of community within the work. It is a celebration of individuality."

The program is comprised of a solo, a duet, a quartet, and various ensembles. All dances fall under the modern category, with one piece leaning toward hip-hop. Because each piece uses its own set of gestures and vocabulary of movement, the dances look very different from one to the next. Still, there is a sense that they all belong together. "I would say the pieces as a whole evolve dramatically from start to finish," said Lawton.

In addition to unique selection of movement, this student concert also evidences deliberate musical choices, employing what Lawton describes as "ambient sound" and "austere soundscapes" more than songs. "Several (choreographers) have been searching and searching and have gone out and worked with composers to have sounds created for their dances," she shared. "Some don't sound like music you'd hear on a radio or put on during dinner." A few students used tools like Garage Band, while others worked hand-in-hand with individuals from SMC's music program.

"Often younger dancers will just go find a piece of music," said Lawton. "This group uses music almost as another dancer, as a part of their process."

The combination of organic sound and technical prowess should make for an evening that is well worth an hour of your time. "We're hoping people will come to both productions," said Lawton. "Though we understand that not everyone is able to."

All performances take place in LeFevre Theatre; general admission is \$5 and is free for SMC students.

Tickets can be purchased online at <http://stmarys-ca.edu/variations> or at the box office one hour before the performance. For more information, call (925) 631-4670.

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YOUR SMILE IS EVERYTHING

The Third Year of Local Arts Contest for Kids

By Charlie Keohane and Samantha Swan



The LYAS team, from left: Samantha Swan, Charlie Keohane, Uma Unni, Zoe Portnoff, Isabel Rurka and Sophia Benveniste
Photo provided

The third annual photography and writing contest hosted by the Lafayette Youth Arts Society (LYAS) to promote the fine arts of Lafayette youth began Nov. 16. The contest, which expanded internationally last year, is open to sixth- through eighth-graders living in Lafayette. This year, in addition to writing and photography, the contest will have a video portion. Hollywood director and scriptwriter Brian Horiuchi will be judging the video entries and Mary Guzmán, a San Francisco filmmaker, will teach a workshop held by the LYAS in January to help inspire kids who would like to enter the video portion of the contest.

This year, the chief writing judge will be Yiyun Li, a distinguished writer and recipient of the MacArthur Genius Grant. The additional writing judges include Alison Burke and

Martha Schimbor, two retired English teachers from Miramonte High School. The photography contest is still in place, though there have been slight alterations. This year, participants will submit three photos in response to the video prompts. The judges and prompts will be announced soon. During last year's contest the LYAS paired with the Tingstrup Skole, a school in Thisted, Denmark. Students in Denmark entered the photography portion, responding to the same prompts as the students in the U.S., though they were judged separately. This was a great opportunity to form bridges with Denmark and was an amazing success. For this year's international contest, the LYAS is in talks with an Israeli middle school that might participate.

Prizes range from \$100-250 and

there will be gift cards for the runners-up. In addition, participants can win fabulous books and, of course, the fame and glory that goes with winning. There are lists of prompts posted this month for those interested in competing. Writing and photography entries must be submitted by Jan. 31 either digitally or to the P.O. Box listed on the website, www.lyas.org.

The LYAS is a kid-run organization with teens organizing, planning and executing the contest and making sure that everything runs smoothly. LYAS is also fully supported by the community, including the Lafayette Chamber of Commerce, the Sunrise Rotary Club, the Lafayette Community Foundation, and Lori Legler of the Alain Pinel Realtors. For more information about the LYAS, visit www.lyas.org.

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Specialties of the House

Hunt for Happy Hour – Paxti’s

By A.K. Carroll



Photos A.K. Carroll



This week’s hunt for all premium small bites and discounted beverages landed at Paxti’s in Lafayette, deep-dish experts who specialize in hospitality.

It may not be sports-themed, underground, or in Boston. There may not be an irritating postal worker or an unemployed accountant at the end of the bar, but if Lafayette has an equivalent to Cheers, it almost certainly looks something like happy hour at Paxti’s. It may take a while before everybody knows your name, but you are likely to feel like you belong from the first time you step through the door. “We have quite a few regulars,” says manager John Ebert. “We also get strangers, but they don’t stay strangers long.”

It is easy to see why. Paxti’s combination of all-day coffee and pastries, family-friendly dining, and dimly-lit lounge space caters to crowds of all kinds – from a mid-day work break to a ladies’ night out, a 21st birthday to a sunset supper. No matter the size of your party, 20, two or anything in between, you’ll be treated like you’re something special as you pull up a chair or sink into a bar-side booth, where happy hour takes place from 3 to 6 pm, Monday through Friday, late enough to call it a day, and conveniently running right into dinner.

The quality of Paxti’s hospitality is only rivaled by that of their food and drink offerings, with sizable discounts on beer, wine, cocktails, and an ample array of appetizers offered in the bar and lounge. Bottles and drafts (regularly \$5-7) are all \$2 off with local favorites Racer 5, Stella Artois, Dog Fish Head, and Sierra Nevada’s Celebration brew on their six rotating taps. Glasses of wine (regularly \$8 & \$11) are discounted by \$3 and include a Lodi Zinfandel, Joel Gott Cabernet, and Russian River Chardonnay.

Standard wells come in at \$5, with signature cocktails (regularly \$9 a piece) discounted to \$6. Paxti’s has just changed over its cocktail menu and boasts the gin-based Aces and Eights – which also includes lime juice, Aperol, and Pamplemousse liqueur – as a new featured beverage. You’ll also find the Paxti’s tried and true Old Fashioned, made with Bulleit bourbon, bitters, Luxardo amarena cherries and sweetened with agave. On the more refreshing side is a Moscow Mule made with fresh ginger, premium pour vodka, and Cock ‘n bull gingerbeer and a Pomegranate Lemonade that blends pomegranate juice, sweet and sour, and house made lemonade in beautiful sour-sweet medley with or without the Hangar

One vodka and triple sec.

When you are in a place that feels like home, it is second-nature to crave comfort food – made-from-scratch meatballs, braised and swimming in homemade marinara and fresh basil leaves, oven-baked cheese and artichoke dip served with thin crisp crostini (regularly \$9-11 with a \$2 discount). They are standard Italian fare, but not your traditional bar food. “We try to create apps that are less conventional,” says Ebert. He might be referring to the burrata bruschetta – a large creamy lump situated on a bed of fresh cherry tomatoes and arugula and drizzled with fresh pesto – or he may just be referencing the blissful absence of fried food.

It comes as no surprise, though, that the best deal on the menu is the personal pizza inspired by expert pizzaiolo Francisco “Paxti” Azpiroz. Your choice of two toppings – I chose mushrooms and salami – cut into quarters and served steamy hot, happy hour’s pièce de résistance (regularly \$9) is devilishly delicious and only \$5 to boot. The double-zero crust boasts Neapolitan standards with a shiny brush of olive oil and a savory salty finish. Whole wheat and gluten free options are also available.

You are likely to catch snatches of local events between bites of bruschetta or sips of Chardonnay, musings on the latest political debate or most recent athletic upset. “There’s always a conversation going,” says Ebert, and it’s one to which you’d be a welcome addition. Whether you are making plans for a party or having an impromptu afternoon out, consider stopping by Paxti’s. You won’t be a stranger for long.



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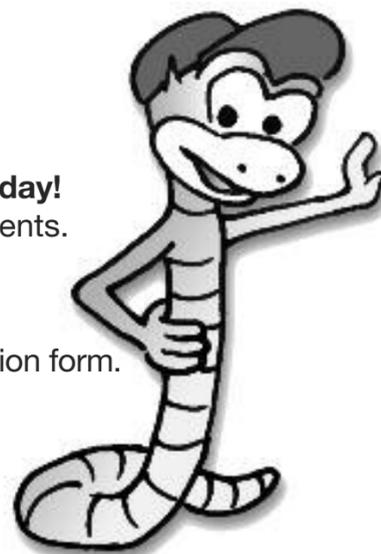
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Community Service

We are pleased to make space available whenever possible for some of Lamorinda's dedicated community service organizations to submit news and information about their activities. Submissions may be sent to storydesk@lamorindaweekly.com with the subject header In Service to the Community.

Lamorinda Youth Collect and Donate Basketball Shoes

Submitted by Mindy Plotkin



From left: Jake Myers and Chase Bennett at the East Oakland Youth Development Center

Photo provided

Jake Myers, an eighth-grade student at Stanley Middle School in Lafayette, recently completed a successful service project collecting and donating more than 150 pairs of new and gently-used basketball shoes to the East Oakland Youth Development Center. Jake, with the assistance of Chase Bennett of Moraga, collected shoes from local AAU, CYO and LMYA basketball teams. Jake received particular help from the Flight Elite AAU program and the St.

Perpetua and St. Monica CYO programs. EOYDC provides programs and opportunities so that underserved youth and young adults (ages 6-24) in East Oakland are prepared for employment, higher education and leadership opportunities. Jake and Chase brought the shoes to the youth development center and described their project to an assembly of EOYDC youth. More information about the center can be found at EOYDC.org.

'Operation Gratitude' a Sweet Success at Happy Valley

Submitted by Jane Smith



Photo provided

The students of Happy Valley Elementary School collected and donated 118 pounds of candy to "Operation Gratitude." Candy will be shared with U.S. troops around the world.

From left: Happy Valley Student Council Connor Faust, Miller Smith, Shane O'Reilly and Toby Schwing.

Moraga Country Club Raises More than \$35K for Contra Costa Food Bank

Submitted by Gary Irwin



Dick Callahan, Oakland A's stadium announcer, is flanked by MCC Turkey Shoot co-chairmen Doug Brown and Rich Larsen

Photo provided

The Third Annual Turkey Shoot charity golf tournament held recently at the Moraga Country Club raised more than \$35,000 to benefit the Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano, and the total will probably be higher once the accounting is complete. This amount is about a 60 percent increase over the \$22,000 raised in 2014. It was hosted by the Senior Men's Golf Association, led by originators and co-chairmen Doug Brown and Rich Larsen, and assisted by many SMGA members, spouses and friends.

The 90 participating golfers enjoyed a nice breakfast and lunch, and many participated in the live and silent auctions, entered the raffle, sponsored a hole, generally underwrote the event, or just donated to the cause. Local resident and Oakland A's stadium announcer Dick Callahan volunteered his skill as auctioneer, and donated two premium A's ticket packages which brought a very good price at auction.

Food Bank Executive Director Larry Sly thanked the donors, participants, and organizers

for their excellent work in raising so much money for the community. Sly, after he graduated from UC Berkeley, became the second employee of the Food Bank, and as executive director, he has directed its growth from 36,000 pounds of food distributed in its first year to 20 million pounds of food distributed in 2014. Sly also serves as director of several state and national organizations with similar interests, and is a past president of the Rotary Club of Concord.

This year marks the 40th anniversary of the Food Bank. It serves one out of every eight county residents, and 95 percent of its revenue goes to food distribution. It has paid staff of about 70 people, and averages about 1,000 volunteers each month, contributing more than 86,000 hours of time each year. The Food Bank works very hard to meet the increasing hunger problem in the two counties it serves, and co-partners with almost 300 different organizations and agencies to distribute food to needy families.

Donation Requests from the Community

'Tis the Season of Giving 

Lafayette Rotary Club Coat Drive
Every year the Lafayette Rotary Club collects gently used coats to donate to Shelter Inc. of Contra Costa. At a recent Rotary meeting, Executive Director Timothy O'Keefe noted how important the Rotary coat drive is for many homeless community members at this time of year when the weather turns colder. This year the club is inviting the community to bring gently used coats (adult or kids sizes) to the following locations in Lafayette: Blodgett's Abbey Carpet & Flooring, 3291 Mt Diablo Ct., Lafayette, and the Lafayette Chamber of Commerce, 100 Lafayette Circle, Ste. 103, Lafayette.

Toys for Tots Donation Locations in Lamorinda
There are several Toys for Tots donation locations in Lamorinda: The Moraga-Orinda Fire District will be collecting toys 24 hours a day through Dec. 21 at 1280 Moraga Way in Moraga; Better Homes and Gardens Mason-McDuffie Real Estate will accept toys from 8:30 to 5 p.m. at 89 Davis Road, Suite 160, in Orinda through Dec. 11; and Cub Scout Pack 225 will be gathering toys beginning Dec. 1 through Dec. 15 from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. at 15 Martha Road in Orinda. For information, visit toysfortots.org.

Community Concern for Cats Giving Tree
Community Concern for Cats, which serves Lamorinda residents, is hosting a Giving Tree through Dec. 24 at its upscale thrift store, Rescued Treasures, 1270 Newell Ave., in Walnut Creek. All the proceeds will go toward life-saving procedures for homeless cats and kittens in local neighborhoods.

"This is the first time in 29 years that we have had a Giving Tree and we hope that the public will come in to our thrift store to select one of our special 'Kitty' ornaments and donate the amount on the ornament," says president Gemma Osendorf. "All donations are welcomed, but we thought this would be a fun way to involve everyone and share the message that your neighborhood homeless cats and kittens still need your help." The boutique is filled with all kinds of collectibles like Steinbach Nutcrackers, Mood Dragons and The Lenox Legendary Princess Collection of figurines, designer clothes, jewelry, furniture, and all kinds of one-of-a-kind vintage items.

The donations will go toward vaccinations, micro chipping, healing antibiotics, flea protections, leukemia/FIV tests, veterinarian office visits, neutering of male cats, spaying of female cats, surgery and emergency medical procedures and special holiday treats. So far this year, CC4C has neutered 1,800 and found homes for 600 cats and kittens.

"Make your shopping budget do double duty this year: Get wonderful gifts from our thrift shop and give the gift of life to our kittens – all at the same time," says Candace Olsen, past president.

Thrift store hours are Monday through Saturday, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sundays from noon to 4 p.m. For information, call (925) 937-3201. Community Concern for Cats is the oldest cat rescue organization in Contra Costa County. CC4C has three Saturday and Sunday afternoon adoptions sites: Pet Food Express, Lafayette and Pleasant Hill, and Petco Walnut Creek. Lafayette hours are noon to 3 p.m., while the others are 1 to 4 p.m.



Need Donations?
During the holiday season, Lamorinda Weekly will accept and publish opportunities for local giving. Send up to approximately 250 words describing the cause, type of donation needed, and where to bring or to send it. The organization collecting the donations, or receiving the donations, should be within our extended community. Submissions must be sent to storydesk@lamorindaweekly.com by Dec. 10 for inclusion in our Dec. 16 issue. Include "Season of Giving" in the subject line.

Conversation of a Quieter Life Shared at LLC

By Lou Fancher

Imagining herself bereft of life's purpose, Diana Lorence found peace, passion and paradise in a tiny, 12-foot-square house. And then, after seven years spent living in the home lit only by a fire with her husband and soulmate, Michael Lorence, she made the marvelous decision to share it with the world.

Innermost House is a structure, an idea, an architectural manifestation of being lost, then found. It is a tale of search and self-rescue. For now, it is a website and a story that lives and breathes its essence most vividly in the physical bodies of the Lorences and the minds and memories of guests fortunate enough to have visited. Innermost House still exists on privately owned land; the couple now lives in Williamsburg, Virginia.

Which is why a rare, one-hour presentation Nov. 5 by Diana Lorence at the Lafayette Library and Learning Center was precious. Displaying poster-size photos, Lorence introduced an intimate audience of approximately 20 people to the 11-by-7 foot living room in which Lorence and her husband sat knee-to-knee, the 5-by-3 foot kitchen, the bedroom loft with its peaked, 12-foot-high fir plank ceiling. Lorence transformed fresh market vegetables and goods into stews, pottages and bread cooked in a cast iron pot over embers in their much-cherished fireplace. The home's coastal mountain clearing in Northern California was a crossroads long followed by animal wildlife, providing a constant parade.

With a wall of reference books that Lorence said had immense personality and were "covered in almost-white paper for the quietness," conversation was their primary activity. Without electricity, beeswax candles and light from the fire

illuminated their lives and provided heat. Firewood came from branches in the nearby orchard – wood that would otherwise have been discarded. A decision to install a conventional septic system provided the limited running water they used for cooking, sponge baths and to operate the toilet in the closet-size bathroom.

Innermost Home was designed with simple materials – plaster, yellow pine, redwood, cedar – by Lorence's husband, whose background includes architecture and textile design. By extension, he has turned his skills to an intriguing occupation that includes fashioning secret hideaways for high-powered executives in need of respite while conducting private conversations that ennoble their spirits. Built by the Lorences in 2004 with one assistant, Innermost House took nine months and one day to complete.

"We rarely left the property. We expected to live there the rest of our lives. It turned out that was not what happened but it was a wonderful way to live," Lorence said.

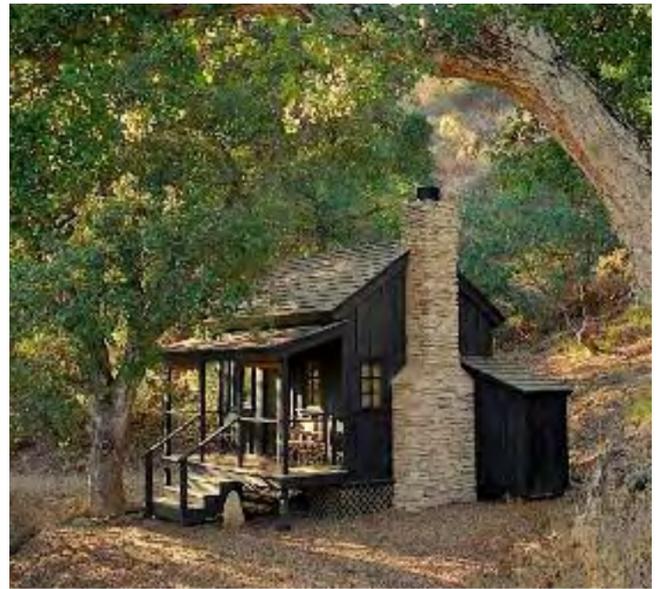
In rooms she said were designed to fit her body, Lorence created a life that fit her innermost needs. A work history of jobs lost when they failed to provide labor that she found meaningful and over 20 years of searching worldwide with her husband for a place of serenity resolved themselves in the 144-square-foot home. "The house taught me how to live. I was competent and that gave me confidence. I started having guests come because I loved my world. The funny thing is, they loved it too."

But like any worthwhile story, conflict entered. Four years after a generous friend had allowed them to build and live in Innermost House, he sold the property and the Lorences

were forced to depart. Back in the world, Lorence became physically ill and her husband desperately determined to regain the partner who "asked more questions than a 2-year-old, but with the insight of a mature, fascinating woman." They asked the new landowners if they could return. Granted a second period of three years in the home, they grew to treasure even the ashes in the fire. "They contained so much of our lives," Lorence said.

Mysteries are meant to be only imperfectly or partially understood. Innermost House and its effect on actual or virtual visitors is in some ways impossible for Lorence to define – yet its power emboldens her to speak publicly, something she never expected. "There was no thought of speaking about it. But once we lost the house, a woman persuaded me to talk about it. I found out there are people who identified with (my) answer to whatever is missing out there."

Ironically and poetically, the simplicity of their external lives – no room for accumulating possessions, plentiful time for face-to-face talking and side-by-side chores – caused their inner consciousness to bloom. "Traveling the distance" between her pinpoint detailed focus and her husband's broad-view perspective – a difference she demonstrated with pinched fingers, then a sunrise-to-sunset sweeping gesture – provided an endless landscape for intellectual exploration. "We both changed each other a lot," Lorence said. Her husband said 33 years observing "a very unusual woman" who has a vision of a world where everything and likely everyone are united, has perhaps been his rescue from what otherwise might have been an existence comprised of materiality and superficial relationships.



The Lorences' tiny 144-square-foot house



The 11-by-7 foot living room Photos provided, copyright Diana Lorence

At Innermost House, he said, "Night and day were more one thing than two things. Man and woman were more one person than two people."

Since publishing her first blog article, Lorence's story has appeared in "House Beautiful," "Fine Homebuilding," "Tiny House Blog," and other publications and websites. In-

nermost House will be featured in a published book in 2016. The Lorences recently founded the Innermost House Foundation with the goal of creating a living retreat where people can experience time well spent in a place not unlike paradise on earth.

To learn more, visit <http://www.innermosthouse.com/>.

Lynn's Top Five Year-End Tax Planning Ideas

By Lynn Ballou, CFP®

With the busy holiday season awaiting us, I thought it would be a good idea to share a few year-end tax strategies with you while you still have time to implement them. This was a very quiet year for new tax laws, but that should not lull you into a sense of complacency. There are still calls to action, and here are my favorites for you to ponder.

1) Are you withholding the right amount? For some of you, the question would be, "Have you paid enough estimated taxes so far this year?" Last year was a big tax year for many investors due to distributions of gain from investments. Despite the volatility in the equity markets this year, many investments will be distributing similar gains as last year. At the very least, it is worth the effort to be sure you and your tax advisor have a game plan in place to pay enough tax to avoid penalties and also to determine if you will owe next year, so it is not a surprise if you do.

2) If you need deductions, think about what you can prepay. For some, maybe you will prepay state income taxes you expect to owe. For others it might be slipping in that extra mortgage payment. But watch out for

the AMT (alternative minimum tax). Per Linda LaHonta, a CPA in Lafayette, "On the deduction side, the AMT is really the issue, so at least for a majority of my clients this planning tool of prepaying state and property taxes is somewhat irrelevant." The AMT is complex and too difficult to ballpark. I strongly advise having your tax advisor run the numbers to determine whether you can benefit from prepaying certain deductions or not before you do so.

3) Tax loss harvesting is still in style! Because we are anticipating another year of significant pass through gains, take a look at your portfolio and determine if harvesting tax losses could be helpful and sensible for you. You may sell securities for a capital loss to be used as an offset against gains, but you cannot repurchase that same security until after 30 days if you want to use that loss. You may, however, purchase something similar instead within that same 30 days if you are concerned about being out of a possible rising market.

4) Charitable gifting with appreciated assets instead of cash. You probably already know that you can gift appreciated assets such as stocks and mutual funds instead of cash to most qualified charities. But at year-end, with the clock ticking, we all tend to take the expedient path and just write a check. So this year, plan ahead! My suggestion is that if you are planning on giving at least \$1,000 to one or more charities, check with your advisor about gifting part of your appreciated portfolio holdings instead. Their back office will work directly with the organization's gifting department to facilitate a transfer. Qualified charities sell these assets without incurring taxable gain and you will report the full value of the security on the date of the gift as a deduction (check with your tax advisor about possible limitations). If you are thinking of gifting these types of assets, you might benefit by doing so before they pay out any year-end distributions, thus receiving a double tax benefit.

5) Fully fund retirement accounts! If you got a late start this year on

401(k) and other payroll retirement plan deductions, changed jobs, or are self-employed, know your contribution limits and be sure you will fully max out by year end. This is the time to do so while you still have at least one or two paychecks left this year. And if you turned 50 during the year, you can fund an additional \$6,000 into your retirement plan as a "catch

up" provision. Next year's contribution limits are the same as 2015, so don't forget to reset your payroll deductions in early January to reach your limits by the end of next year.

Linda shared another fun tax season fact with me: "In observance of Emancipation Day on Friday April 15, 2016, taxpayers will have until Monday April 18, 2016, to file their

2015 Individual Returns and make their first 2016 estimated tax payment." Fantastic news for taxpayers who like to procrastinate or just need a smidge extra time, but for Linda and my other CPA and tax advisor friends, my heart goes out to you! Happy Holidays everyone!



Lynn Ballou is a CERTIFIED FINANCIAL PLANNER™ professional and co-owner of Ballou Plum Wealth Advisors, LLC, a Registered Investment Advisory (RIA) firm in Lafayette. Lynn is also a Registered Principal and Branch Manager with LPL Financial (LPL). The opinions voiced in this material are for general information only and not intended to provide specific advice or recommendation for any individual. Financial Planning offered through Ballou Plum Wealth Advisors, A Registered Investment Advisor and a separate entity. Securities offered through LPL Financial, member FINRA/SIPC.

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www.willowsspringchurch.net

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9:45 a.m. Education for all ages
10:45 a.m. Contemporary Worship Service
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Teen Fellowship Sunday 6 pm

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mvpc

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www.christianscienceorinda.org

◆ Not to be missed ◆ Not to be missed ◆

ART

The Moraga Art Gallery's new exhibit, "Yellowstone: Beauty, Beasts, and Boneyards," features oil landscapes by Orinda's Lisa Gunn, whose imaginative palette captures the primitive character and timelessness of Yellowstone National Park and its environs. Also featured is a boldly-hued collection of one-of-a-kind etched tableware, handmade by guest artist Lisa Neimeth. The show will run through Jan. 9. For more info, visit www.moragaartgallery.com or call (925) 376-5407.

The Lafayette Art Gallery presents "Artful Gifting" and its holiday boutique, which runs through Dec. 26, with a free reception from 5:30 to 8 p.m. Friday, Nov. 20. For info, call (925) 284-2788 or visit www.lafayetteartgallery.com.

Saint Mary's College Museum of Art exhibit "The Axis Mundi/Open Portals" is currently on display through Dec. 6. Also on display are oil paintings by William Keith, artwork by Luis Gutierrez, and "The Dr. Maurice Alberti Print Collection of European and American Masters." The Saint Mary's College Museum of Art is open Wednesday through Sunday, 11 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. on the Saint Mary's College of California campus, 1928 Saint Mary's Road, Moraga. For more information, visit <http://www.stmarys-ca.edu/saintmarys-college-museum-of-art>.

The 50th Annual Holiday Collection for "Artful Giving" at the Valley Art Gallery from Nov. 21 to Dec. 23. The new gift exhibition includes a wide variety of beautifully crafted, ceramic, wood and glass pieces, original designer jewelry, holiday decorations, small paintings and many other unique, one-of-a-kind gift items. There will be a free Open House reception from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 21 at the Gallery. Stop by for a beverage and a snack, see the new show and meet the artists.

MUSIC

Voci Women's Vocal Ensemble looks to the heavens with "Celestial Bodies: The Beauty of Distant Things," the 14th in its annual "Voices in Peace" concert series at 2 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 21 at St. Perpetua Catholic Parish, 3445 Hamlin Rd., Lafayette. The Oakland-based chamber group performs a radiant selection of music that invokes the sun, moon, and stars, and that voices the longing, love, and other complex emotions they inspire.

Pacific Chamber Symphony begins the new Lamorinda Season at 7:30 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 21 at the Lafayette Library and Learning Center Community Hall. Tickets: \$10-35. Children with paying adults are free. Tickets are available at www.brownpapertickets.com or by calling 1-800-838-3006.

A sing-it-yourself Handel's Messiah will be held at 7:30 p.m. Friday, Dec. 4 at St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, 66 St. Stephens Drive, Orinda. The Messiah Sing will be directed by Minister of Music Robert Train Adams, and include the Festival Choir, soloists, chamber orchestra and audience participation. There will be music for all who wish to sing. Listeners are also very welcome. Admission: \$20 in advance or at the door. For more information visit www.ststephen-sorinda.org/messiah-sing.

Diablo Choral Artists invites you to "Once Upon A Starry Night" at 8 p.m. Friday, Dec. 4 at St. Paul's Episcopal Church, 1924 Trinity Ave., Walnut Creek, and at 3 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 6 at St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, 66 St. Stephen's Drive, Orinda. Mark Tuning, Music Director, John R.S. Walko, accompanist. Ticket details online at www.dcachorus.org. Discount on adult and senior tickets before Dec. 1.

The Diablo Women's Chorale invites you to join them for "Christmas Swings" at 2 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 5 at Saint Matthew Lutheran Church, 399 Wiget Lane, Walnut Creek. Advance

tickets: \$16 general admission; \$10 student; \$20 premium seating. Tickets at the door: \$20 adult; \$10 student. Tickets can be purchased at www.DiabloWomensChorale.org, or by calling 800-838-3006.

Emeritus at Diablo Valley College invites you to its fall fundraiser: A Conversation with Bach, a piano concert with award-winning pianist, Dr. Lino Rivera, from 2 to 3:30 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 12. Dr. Rivera engages his audience by playing beautiful music and telling a story about how the musical pieces are tied to one another. Tickets: \$25. For info, call (925) 969-4316.

Moraga Valley Presbyterian Church Christmas on the Hill Concert: Peace at 4 p.m. and 7 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 12 and at 4 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 13 at 1310 Moraga Valley Ln., Moraga. Experience a heart-warming presentation of new and traditional Christmas music. Sunday childcare available for 6 months to PreK/TK with reservation: kveitch@mvpctoday.org. For info, call (925) 376-4800 or visit www.mvpc.today.org.

THEATER

Variations, a brand new student-run production highlighting the Saint Mary's Dance Company, is a representation of each choreographer in the concert. This production will include two different evenings of concerts (Concert A and Concert B), presenting choreography by graduating seniors. "Variations" opens Nov. 19 for a one-weekend run in the intimate LeFevre Theatre at Saint Mary's College. Tickets: \$5 general; free for SMC students with ID. Purchase online at www.stmarys-ca.edu/variations or at box office, one hour to curtain. (See story page B4)

KIDS, PARENTS & TEENS

International Games Day will feature board games, cards, and other fun games out to celebrate International Games Day from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 21, and there will be Thanksgiving crafts for children from 4 to 5 p.m. Tuesday, Nov. 24 at the Moraga Library. Free.

Please join 5A Rent-A-Space for the 8th Annual "Free Photo with Santa" event from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 5, at 455 Moraga Rd, Moraga. Families will receive a free photo and frame. Cookies, fruit and hot cocoa and candy canes will be served and children will make a craft.

HOLIDAY EVENTS

Hospice Tree of Lights for Moraga and Lafayette from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. Sunday, Nov. 22 at the Moraga Country Club, 1600 St. Andrews Drive. Reception to follow.

Holiday Tree Lighting at Moraga Commons Park: 6:30 p.m. cookies and hot chocolate; 7 p.m. tree lighting on Thursday, Dec. 3.

Hospice of the East Bay Tree Lighting ceremony at 4:30 p.m. on Saturday Dec. 5 at the beautiful old oak tree in front of the Bank of America in the Village Square Shopping Center in Orinda. The festivities begin with school choirs performing traditional holiday music under the direction of their teachers. Following the performance, the tree will be lit to honor those we wish to remember and Santa Claus will arrive on a Moraga-Orinda Fire District engine with treats for the children. A contribution of \$25 will help support Hospice of the East Bay, which provides invaluable end-of-life care for terminally ill patients.

See the Christmas story come to life at the 11th annual viewing of the Live Nativity at Moraga Valley Presbyterian Church at 10 Moraga Valley Lane, Moraga. The MVPC courtyard will be transformed into a Bethlehem manger from 5:30 to 8 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 5. While the Courtyard will be a reverent scene, there will be additional activities, music and snacks in the fellowship hall. The sanctuary will be open for prayer and contemplation. Free.

Tree lighting and Santa at Orinda Theatre Square at 7 p.m. Saturday, Dec 5 kicks off with a performance by Lamorinda Theater Academy and then continues with a visit from Santa, horse and carriage rides, hot chocolate, an ornament workshop and the lighting of the tree. Free movie night "White Christmas" at 7 p.m. on Thursday, Dec. 10 at the Orinda Theatre, 4 Orinda Theatre Square in Orinda.

Celebrate "It's a Wonderful Life in Lafayette" and kick off the holiday season from 4 to 7 p.m. Friday, Dec. 4 in Lafayette's Plaza Park, located in downtown Lafayette. This free event will include visits with Santa, official holiday tree lighting ceremony, one-of-a-kind photo ops, live musical entertainment, crafts, holiday treats and a holiday sing-a-long. For information, visit www.lafayettechamber.org.

"Harvey" by Mary Chase presented by Town Hall Theatre from Dec. 3 through Dec. 19. Gather the whole family for the magic tale of Elwood P. Dowd and his best friend—a 6-foot, 3-and-a-half-inch tall invisible rabbit named Harvey. What better way to warm up your holiday season, than with this imaginative classic! For more details and to purchase tickets go to www.townhalltheatre.com.

Christmas concert and variety show at 4 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 13 at the Orinda Community Church, 10 Irwin Way, Orinda. The evening will feature the UC Berkeley Gospel Choir, the Campolindo High School Chamber Singers, Orinda Community Church soloists and musicians, spoken word and storytelling, a song from Santa, and many other surprises. Think Amazing Christmas Concert meets Prairie Home Companion, followed by treats in the fellowship hall.

OTHER

Shine A Light on Lung Cancer from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. Thursday, Nov. 19 at the Walnut Creek Library Oak Room, 1644 N. Broadway. Join an engaging panel of medical experts as they cover the most current information regarding screening recommendations, genomic profiling, immunotherapy, targeted therapy, radiation therapy and surgical techniques. Also included will be an inspiring lung cancer survivor's story. Q & A session will follow the presentation. Free. Reservation recommended; call (925) 677-5041.

Orinda Holiday Bazaar from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 21 at the Orinda Community Center with over 20 new exhibitors this year featuring succulents, handmade cards, lotions, women's clothing, handmade bags, knitwear, decorative trays, candles and paper-mache items.

One Bread Foundation Annual Benefit Fashion Show at 2 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 21. Support the fight against human trafficking and the victims with an afternoon full of food, fashion, and fun. See the latest winter/holiday looks from Francesca's Lafayette, participate in raffle prize giveaways, get started on your holiday shopping, and enjoy entertainment by Faith Alpher from KKIQ at Oak Park Christian Center, 2073 Oak Park Blvd., Pleasant Hill. For more info and to purchase tickets, visit <http://www.one-bread.org/events/>.

Holiday Boutique supporting New Day for Children from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 21 at Our Savior's Lutheran Church, 1035 Carol Lane in Lafayette. Start your holiday shopping while supporting a local faith-based Safe House for young girls who have been rescued from human trafficking. For info, visit www.newdayforchildren.com.

18th Cycle Recycle, held by Bobbie and Tom Preston, will be held throughout November. New and/or used bikes and trikes in working order or repairable, or useable bike parts, may be delivered to the side driveway of the Preston's home at 1307 Larch Avenue in Moraga. No skateboards or plastic bikes please; no need to call beforehand, but for more information contact Bobbie at (925) 376-8474.

... continued on next page

MOVIE REVIEW

'Suffragette'

By Derek Zemrak



Photo Focus Features

I have always enjoyed movies that make you think about our society and the development of human rights over the centuries. "Suffragette" is one of those films that deals with women focusing on their right to vote in England at the beginning of the 20th century. It should be noted that the film is based on actual events, but the characters are fictional.

The movie is centered around a young married laundry worker, Maud Watts, portrayed by Oscar nominee Carey Mulligan ("An Education"). Maud is at a crossroads in her life and is dealing with many issues: she is being sexually harassed by her boss, her husband verbally abuses her, and she is raising a young son. Watts soon discovers the growing suffragette movement and must decide if she should join the fight for women's rights or remain in her current sheltered and mostly abusive situation.

Sarah Gavron, an award winning British di-

rector (British Academy Film award Best New Director for "The Little Life") directed "Suffragette." This film will most likely be her first Academy Award nomination. The story at times seems to be repetitive and a bit slow-paced, but overall it is one of the best movies to be released so far this year.

If you are expecting to see a Meryl Streep film, "Suffragette" is not it. Streep has a total screen time of about five minutes. This is Carey Mulligan's film and her performance is Oscar-worthy and she is the current front-runner to win Best Actress.

"Suffragette" won the Audience Award at the 2015 Mill Valley Film Festival. The movie is rated PG-13 and has a total running time (TRT) of 1 hour and 46 minutes.

"Suffragette" made me realize that everyone believes in a cause and if you are not fighting for that cause, someone else already has.

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◆ Not to be missed ◆

OTHER ... continued

Join RecycleSmart at the Vermicomposting (Worms!) and Bin Building Workshop from 10 a.m. to noon Saturday, Dec. 5, at Heather Farm Community Center in Walnut Creek. This is a very hands-on workshop. You will build your bin, take it home with your worms and knowledge, and start composting right away. Cost: \$20; 20 household max capacity and registration required. Recyclesmart residents only. For info, visit <http://www.recyclesmart.org/workshops>.

Their first ever "Giving Tree" is being hosted by Community Concern for Cats' volunteers at their Rescued Treasures Thrift Shop in Walnut Creek, Nov. 18 through Dec. 24. Their goal is to give the gift of life to as many homeless street cats as they can by providing needed medicines and medical procedures. Come down, buy a special ornament, and put it in the holiday window display. Rescued Treasures Thrift Shop is located at 1270 Newell Ave., Walnut Creek. For info, call (925) 937-3201.

SENIORS

Mindful Aging at the Moraga Library presents Eat Smart,

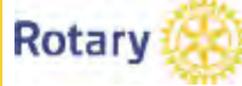
Live Strong – Nutritional Education for Older Adults at 1 p.m. Dec. 10. Cynthia Black will show how to keep healthy and strong by following the guidelines of the Eat Smart, Live Strong program developed by the USDA Food and Nutrition Services specifically for adults between the ages of 60-74.

GARDEN

The Moraga Garden Club will hold its general meeting at 9:30 a.m. Thursday, Nov. 19 at the Holy Trinity Church, 1700 School Street, Moraga. Guest speaker will be Rebecca Sweet, who will give a presentation entitled "Refresh Your Garden." Interested parties are welcome for the 9:30 a.m. social time and marketplace table, followed by the meeting at 10 a.m.

Montelindo Garden Club Meeting will be at 9 a.m. on Friday, Nov. 20 at St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, 66 St. Stephens Drive, Orinda. Visitors welcome. Topic: Bee Friendly Gardening. The speaker will be K. Ruby Blume, gardener, beekeeper and founder of The Institute of Urban Homesteading, who will be discussing the important roles of bees in our garden.

Service Clubs Announcements



Explore Lamorinda Rotary clubs 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.

A global volunteer organization working to improve the lives of women and girls through programs leading to social and economic empowerment.



We meet Friday mornings at 7:00 am at **The Lafayette Park Hotel & Spa**, 3666 Mt. Diablo Blvd, Lafayette. For more info, please email us at lamorindasunrise@gmail.com

November 20:
Speaker: **Louise Bourassa**, Executive Director, Contra Costa County Interfaith Housing

November 27:
DARK - Happy Thanksgiving Holiday!

Last opportunity to contribute to Cold Weather Coat and Clothing Drive partnering with the Monument Crisis Center. Bring items to Lamorinda Sunrise Rotary Meeting on November 20.

Lafayette Rotary Club

Step in on a Thursday and join us for our lunch meeting. Thursday at noon Oakwood Athletic Club, 4000 Mt. Diablo Blvd., Lafayette.

December 3:
Bob Gonser, attorney, will be speaking about investing for seniors.

December 10:
Ron Bachman MD, will be speaking about the Oakland History Museum.

www.rotarylafayette.org

SOROPTIMIST OF 24/680



"Improving the lives of women and girls through programs leading to social and economic empowerment"

Please join us for our next meeting:

WHEN: Wednesday, December 2nd
Social 5:30-6:00 p.m.
Meeting 6:00 – 8:00 p.m.

WHERE: The Buttercup Grill
660 Ygnacio Valley Road, Walnut Creek.

CONTACT US regarding our Crab Feed.
Saturday, January 23rd

For more information, contact:
Regina Englehart @925-876-9076
or go to: sorooptimist24-680.org

Anything Sound

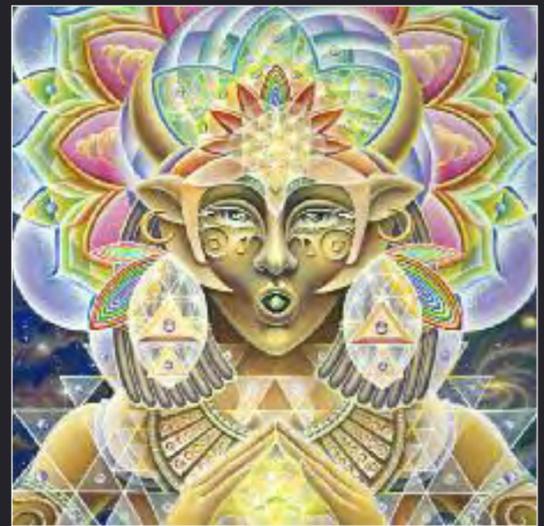


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Art of Transformation with Ishka Lha and Yurik Riegel Sunday, November 29, 2015

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Lamorinda Weekly

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Yam it Up with this Spicy Sweet Potato Dish

By Susie Iventosch



Sweet potatoes ("yams") with Mexican spice, peppers, toasted pumpkin seeds and baked skins
Photos Susie Iventosch



Susie Iventosch is the author of Tax Bites and Tasty Morsels, which can be found at Across the Way in Moraga, www.amazon.com, and www.taxbites.net. Susie can be reached at suziventosch@gmail.com. **This recipe can be found on our website:** www.lamorindaweekly.com. If you would like to share your favorite recipe with Susie please contact her by email or call our office at (925) 377-0977.



This dish has its inspiration from one I recently shared with my son in Austin, Texas at a restaurant named Odd Duck. The place specializes in small plates, and after we ordered this tasty dish, we wished we had more. So, naturally, we ordered a second one, but by the time it arrived, we realized we were going to have to save it for a leftover day. When you order three or four, those small dishes can really creep up on you.

The menu indicated that the dish was made with sweet potatoes, but in looking back, I realize that their "sweet potato" must have been a yam, because it was so orange in color. This prompted me to look into the difference between sweet potatoes and yams. I had always thought that a sweet potato was blond in color, while the yam was a more vibrant orange, but both were similar in shape. After all, this is how they are always labeled in the produce departments.

Well, it turns out that we have been fooled all along. Both of these root vegetables are actually sweet potatoes, but the USDA labels the orange sweet potatoes "yams" in order to differentiate between the two. In actuality, a yam is an African root vegetable, much larger in size, and with a rough, bark-like skin and starchy white, purple or reddish-colored flesh.

So, even though this dish is named after the sweet potato, be sure to pick the orange ones, or "yams" as we commonly refer to them! I made it the first time with the whiter sweet potato and it just wasn't as good as the second attempt, which was made with the "yam" sweet potato.

RECIPE

(Makes 6 for a side dish)

INGREDIENTS

2 "yams" (sweet potatoes)
2 tablespoons olive oil
1 teaspoon Mexican seasoning of your choice (you can make your own, recipe to follow)
Salt to taste
1 poblano pepper or Anaheim, seeded and thinly sliced and cut into small pieces

Garnish

2 tablespoons chopped fresh cilantro
2 tablespoons pumpkin seeds, toasted
Crunchy baked sweet potato skins
1 tablespoon crumbled goat or blue cheese (optional)
Plain yogurt
Lime wedges

DIRECTIONS

Scrub sweet potatoes well. Remove any bad spots with a paring knife. Peel and reserve skins. Cut sweet potatoes into bite-sized cubes. Place in a skillet and toss with olive oil, spices and salt. Cook, uncovered, over medium-high heat for about five minutes, until slightly browned on the edges. Cover, reduce heat to low and cook until tender when pierced with a knife. Remove from heat. Add peppers to sweet potatoes and toss.

Meanwhile, cut the skins into small pieces and toss with olive oil and sea salt. Bake at 350F for about 5 minutes, or until crispy. Remove from oven.

Serve sweet potatoes onto plates, and garnish with skins, toasted pumpkin seeds, cilantro, cheese crumbles, a dollop of plain yogurt and a sprinkle of fresh squeezed lime. (Or you can toss all but the yogurt in a large bowl and serve from there!)

Mexican Spice

(Adapt to your taste: hotter, milder, more garlic, less, etc.)

1-2 teaspoons paprika
1 teaspoon powdered cumin
½ teaspoon powdered coriander
¼ teaspoon cayenne pepper
¼ teaspoon chili powder
¼ teaspoon garlic powder
¼ teaspoon onion powder (or ½ teaspoon dried minced onion)
½ teaspoon oregano or thyme
½ teaspoon sea salt

Day Trippin'

Plan a Holiday 'Staycation' in San Francisco

By Fran Miller



Holiday decorations adorn the outside and inside of the InterContinental Mark Hopkins hotel in San Francisco

Photos courtesy InterContinental Mark Hopkins

If the suggestion of a day or night in San Francisco causes a "been there, done that" shrug of the shoulders, 'tis the season to head back over the bridge. This is a magical time in the city, and there is no better way to summon some holiday spirit than by wandering the streets among fellow revelers and partaking of the eclectic festivities. From breathtaking city views via a luxe vantage point, to holiday tea at a grand hotel, to time honored tourist attractions, give yourself 24 hours to explore, and you'll come home with a renewed sense of pride in being San Francisco's across-the-bridge neighbor.

A great home base is the InterContinental. Located at 5th and Howard streets, it is the newest, built from the ground up hotel in the city. It is modern and spacious with fantastic floor-to-ceiling window views, and, it is eco-conscious. Guests are invited to actively participate in sustainable practices via the 'LEED By Example' vacation package that can earn you discounts for reusing towels, taking public transportation, and opting for in-room Green Eco temperature control. (Tip: Treat yourself by paying a little extra per person for access to the 6th floor Club Lounge where an array of food and beverages are available for the taking, day and night.)

The InterContinental is just around the corner from some of

the city's best shopping and greatest public spaces. Check off everyone on your gift list with a trip to Westfield San Francisco Centre and then catch a movie at Metreon, or slip on your ice skates and glide around Yerba Buena Gardens' ice rink. Let the kids run free in the Yerba Buena Children's Garden play circle and maze while you sip an eggnog latte and take in the spectacular skyline view.

Just a 15-minute walk through Union Square and up Nob Hill is the InterContinental's sister hotel, the venerable Mark Hopkins and its celebrated Top of the Mark restaurant. This is where you will find old school holiday pleasures, such as a traditional Thanksgiving feast, served 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. Thanksgiving day and featuring piano entertainment and a Little Explorer petting zoo in the hotel's lobby. Starting Dec. 5, the Mark offers its Magical Holiday Tea, an amusing family-friendly event featuring a magician, a face painter, a cookie decorating station, a fire engine display in the courtyard, and visits from Santa. Those who bring a toy donation receive a \$4 discount. (The Mark also offers a special Christmas Eve dinner, Christmas day brunch, and a New Year's Eve party. See their website for details.)

If a consumer-free experience is more your style, head over to Pacific Heights and walk the Lyon Street Steps. Start at the

top at Broadway and Lyon and take in the sprawling bay view before making your way down toward the water. You will pass some of San Francisco's most spectacular homes, Letterman Digital Arts Center, and the Palace of Fine Arts – and you will wonder why you do not do this more often. On your way back up, stop at Sessions at the Presidio just inside the Presidio's Chestnut Gate for a thirst quencher. Sessions offers more than 100 beers; enjoy one on their heated patio overlooking Letterman's bucolic gardens.

If you plan to take public transportation and/or visit some of the city's museums, consider purchasing a CityPASS, which provides unlimited rides on all cable cars, Muni buses and Muni rail for seven consecutive days. CityPASS saves you 45 percent off of admission prices for The California Academy of Sciences, Aquarium of the Bay, The Exploratorium or the de Young Legion of Honor. And CityPASS holders get to skip entrance lines (except for cable cars). You can purchase the CityPASS at any of the featured venues, online at CityPASS.com, or at SanFrancisco.travel – a wonderful resource for anyone visiting the city.

For further details and reservation information, visit www.intercontinentalsanfrancisco.com, www.intercontinentalmarkhopkins.com, CityPass.com, SanFrancisco.travel.

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Campo Ends Drake's Bid for Perfect Season in NCS Final

By Emily Dugdale



Campolindo celebrates

Photos Gint Federas

It was a steal, a mad scramble for a loose ball, and the bleachers erupting as time expired that sealed the deal for the Campolindo Cougars, who beat No. 1 seed Sir Francis Drake (29-1) 5-4 in the North Coast Section Division I boys water polo finals on Saturday night.

The No. 6 seed Cougars (19-9) had to pull off a series of upsets to reach the finals. In the quarterfinals, they barely edged out rival No. 3 Miramonte 10-9 in overtime – the two

teams had met in each of the two previous NCS Division I title matches. Then, in the semifinals, they upset No. 2 seed San Ramon Valley, in San Ramon, 7-4, to reach the finals.

"I couldn't be prouder of them," head coach Miles Price said with a wide grin as he and his team were overwhelmed by cheering parents, friends and photographers at the conclusion of the match.

But the match wasn't an easy win. Cougar freshman Giorgio Alessandria

was quick to score in the first seconds of the game, but an early ejection gave Drake the power play they needed to tie the score up. Drake knotted things up again in the fourth quarter with a huge goal, but Campo came back quickly after a Drake ejection with senior Cullen Jacuzzi tipping the ball in for a 5-4 win.

"We've had a lot of ups and downs this season," Price said. "But this is a hell of a team," he continued, gesturing around at his players.

The crowd went wild multiple times throughout the game as Campolindo's goalie Nikhil Suri dazzled with one unbelievable save after another.

"We just went all out tonight," said Suri, proudly displaying his medal with his team after the match. "I'm feeling really great."

During the preseason, the Cougars lost to Drake 14-8. Heading into the final, the Pirates held a perfect 29-0 record.

"We just wanted to take it back from them," Suri said.

The senior goalie was quick to

credit his entire team, especially the seniors, for their big win. "It was a team effort all the way," he said.

The match was punctuated by a number of clock issues and unpopular referee calls, which at times had both the audience and coaches up in arms.

"Some of the calls on both sides were a little questionable, and yeah, they did throw me off a little bit," Suri admitted. "But we were able to recover and just play though."

And they did, all the way to the final buzzer.

"You just can't let the guys in white decide the game," Price said.

HEAD COACHES WANTED

Campolindo Girls' Lacrosse is looking for JV and Varsity head coaches for the spring season that begins in February 2016. Please email Jessica Hoffschneider for more information: jhoffschneider@acalanes.k12.ca.us



Nikhil Suri makes a spectacular early save



Giorgio Alessandria

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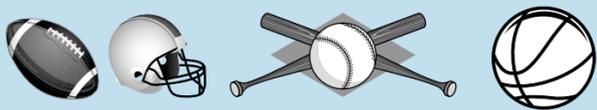
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Lamorinda Family Roots Run Deep in Local Pools

By Emily Dugdale



Tommy Fellner

If you went to a water polo match in Lamorinda this fall, there is a good chance one of the players in the water was a Fellner or a Murphy.

That's because the two families, united by marriage, have produced some of the best high school and collegiate water polo players in the area. The Murphys, in particular, also have a strong legacy of success at UC Berkeley's top-tier water polo program.

"We won four NCAA titles at Cal – so we were very successful," said Noel Murphy, former Cal player and current coach of the Miramonte girls' varsity water polo team.

But more than the glory of success, Murphy views the lessons instilled in water polo as building blocks for future success. As a coach and father to aspiring college players, he tries to draw the same parallels between water polo and life outside water polo.

"Great coaches are great life leaders," Murphy said. "I work for IBM now, and to win a deal is like winning a game – you can't do it by yourself. There's no lone wolf in corporate life or in water polo."

The Murphys boast a family of nine siblings with 13 children playing water polo over the years. High

school standouts include Miramonte senior Max Murphy and sophomore Kelly Murphy. Carondelet's Maddy Murphy is the California high school champion in the 50-yard butterfly as a junior, and she recently signed a letter to swim for Cal.

Noel Murphy credits his parents, who emigrated to the U.S. from Ireland in the 1950s, as the backbone of the family's water polo legacy. "There is some swimming history – I mean, Ireland's an island! If you get kicked off, you have to go and swim somewhere," he joked.

Noel Murphy's son, Max, was a dominating lefty for the Mats this season. During the Matadors Nov. 7 match against rival Campolindo, he scored two goals in a close match that saw the Cougars squeak by with a 10-9 sudden death win.

But despite his prowess at the sport, Max Murphy counts his friends as the greatest part of the game. "The forming of friendships throughout the years has been great as well as playing with the same players throughout the same time," he said.

The fact that so many Murphys are in the water is also inspiring, according to Max Murphy. "It's pretty funny to me because a lot of my uncles and cousins play, and it's cool to see – I've never gotten to play with any of them though."

On the Fellner side, in a family of 10 cousins, a whopping five Fellner kids play the sport, and they do it well. One currently plays water polo at top-ranked UCLA, and the others are key members of the teams at Acalanes High School.

Jack Fellner, a Fellner and Murphy, is a junior attacker at top-ranked UCLA. Fellner also played for Team USA this year at the World University Games in Gwangju, South Korea, a repeat of his 2013 appearance at the games in Kazan, Russia.

"Jack's success comes with no surprise," said his former Miramonte boys' head coach James Lathrop. "He is a very good passer, a capable defender, and is willing to do what he needed for the team to be successful."

His cousin Reilly Fellner, now a sophomore at UCLA, started her freshman year on the team but was

forced to sit out most of last season due to injury and recently decided to take a break from the sport.

"I think sports have a unique ability to bring people together, both as spectators and teammates," she said. "You create a special bond that goes beyond friendship – something that you create from suffering through long practices, hard sets and 5 a.m. workouts together."

Her younger brother, Tommy Fellner, a senior attacker and captain at Acalanes, first started playing water polo in seventh grade, after a somewhat involuntary start. "My dad forced me into trying water polo because he said it was like swimming and basketball mixed together," he said.

But he stuck with it, and found unprecedented success. "The sport has completely shaped the kind of person that I am today and I am very grateful for that."

Tommy Fellner is joined at Acalanes by cousin Lucy Fellner, a senior and team captain, and his younger sister Alex Fellner, a freshman; both are standouts on the Acalanes girls' teams.

While family competition could divide even the most tight-knit households, that's not the case with the Fellers. "I think it's awesome that most of our family plays water polo,"

Tommy said. "It kind of unites us because it's all something [we] share."

"It's fun having cousins as teammates," Lucy said. "It brings us closer together."

But living with these grandiose family legacies can also be taxing. Tommy Fellner highlighted the difficulty of trying to break out of the path set by his successful family members.

"It's definitely hard to live up to the extremely high expectations set by Jack," he said of his older cousin, who plays the same position as him. "Everyone expects me to be like and play like Jack but I have to create my own image and style as a player."

With kids playing at both Acalanes and Miramonte, the two families are closely entwined and supportive. "We love them, and we're excited for them and what they've done within their family – I take my hat off to them," said Noel Murphy.

Despite the inherent pressure, the two families embrace their dominance in the pool, and the names that carry respect in the sport.

"I like carrying on the legacy and having the family name to uphold. It's some added pressure, but I like being able to carry on the tradition," Tommy Fellner said.



Kelly Murphy #9



Reilly Fellner #6 in 2013

Photo Gint Federas

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Campolindo and Acalanes Girls' Volleyball Teams Set to Meet in NCS Semifinal

By Karl Buscheck



Kristen Sibley

Photo Jimmy Pak

The Campolindo and Acalanes girls' volleyball teams are headed for a showdown in the NCS Division III semifinals after both squads advanced through the opening rounds of the tournament.

Campo, who snagged the DFAL title by turning in a perfect 12-0 record in league play, earned a bye in the opening round of NCS before smashing past Albany (No. 8 seed) 25-19, 25-22, 25-16 on Nov. 14 in the quarterfinals in Moraga.

Junior middle hitter Sabrina Smith has been the biggest star for the top-seeded Lady Cougars, but the key to the team's success is that everyone on the roster has been chipping in.

"We have a pretty well-rounded team and everybody has really stepped up this year," head coach John Vuong said after Campo took down Albany. "And that's why, when you see the (news)paper, we don't have dominant players who get like 20 kills a night."

Before Saturday's match, Vuong and co-head coach Dave Chen were awarded the NCS Honor Coach Award.

As the Lady Cougars continue to pile up decisive wins, Vuong can't help but notice that his team just keeps getting stronger.

"They're improving at the right time," Vuong said. "So, I think we're on the right track of continuing to improve as a team."

Acalanes will be aiming to knock their local rivals off that track after landing in second place in the DFAL standings and earning the No. 4 seed in the postseason.

"Our goal is an NCS title," head coach Todd Travis said. "We're trying to win one. Obviously, one match at a time."

On the path to the semifinals, the Lady

Dons have already topped the reigning NCS champions, beating the No. 5 seed Sonoma Valley 25-20, 25-21, 25-13 in Lafayette on Nov. 14.

"They're the NCS champs from a year ago," Travis said. "They've been at the highest level."

In the opening round of the playoffs, Acalanes cruised past the No. 13 seed Moreau Catholic by a score of 24-14, 25-16, 25-18 at home.

Sophomore setter Maddie Kalil, junior outside hitter Parker Jones and senior middle blocker Mimi White have led the way for the Lady Dons, but like Campo, Acalanes will be relying on its entire squad to keep on advancing.

"Our depth is great. We've got 17 girls suiting up for us," Travis said. "We had one of our senior captains go down against Moreau and we didn't miss a beat. We still beat them in three—pretty soundly."

While Campo and Acalanes continue to roll along, Miramonte bowed out of NCS in the quarterfinals. On Nov. 14, the No. 7 seed Lady Mats lost 25-15, 25-17, 25-17 to the No. 2 seed Bishop O'Dowd.

"This team was a very close group and played with great chemistry," head coach Lisa Bachtold said. "Although we would have liked to go further it was great to host a home match during the first round against Petaluma."

In the opening round of NCS, the Lady Mats made quick work of the No. 10 seed Petaluma, winning 25-23, 25-11, 25-16.

"Our fans were a big part of our success this season and playing at home was definitely an advantage for us."

St. Perpetua American Girls Win MVP Fall Classic

Submitted by Jon Zuber



Photo provided

The St. Perpetua fifth grade American Girls basketball team won the MVP Flight Fall Classic with a 3-0 record. Every girl

scored during the three games. The girls played strong defense with great ball handling and movement.

Campo Sweeps DFAL Cross Country Championships

Submitted by Sherman Lee

At the DFAL Cross Country Championships on Nov. 7, the Campolindo cross country teams defended all six of their team titles and won five of six individual races.

In the girls' varsity race, Campo senior Hana Sun made a push up the final hill to beat Miramonte freshman phenom Cassidy Haskell and defending state champion, Chloe Hansel of Las Lomas. It was Sun's first varsity win.

Jared Yabu, a Campo junior, notched the first league victory of his career as he used a blistering final mile to beat Dublin's Anirudh Surapaneni by 17 seconds. Defending league champion Cameron Gaskell of Acalanes finished third.

Campo sophomore Jessie Foxworthy ran away from the field to win the girls' frosh-soph race. Teammates Kira Riegelhuth and Elizabeth Garcia also finished in the top five to help secure the team title.

In the boys' frosh-soph race, a tandem of Dublin runners finished first and second with Acalanes' Christian Lyons taking third. However, Campo runners Colin Lekki, Timothy Sams, Teddy Buckley, and Casey Chambers took the next four spots to lead their team to victory.

Campo senior Robin Powell repeated as the JV girls' champion as she led wire-to-wire to outdistance Las Lomas' Cassidy Powell and Campo's Maria Forest.

The Campo JV boys continued their league dominance as they won their ninth consecutive team title. Juniors Kyle Flett and Navid Boozarpour led the way finishing first and second.

The varsity teams will now move onto NCS in Hayward

this Saturday (Nov. 21), and if they qualify, would participate in the State Meet in Fresno on Nov. 28.



Campolindo's Hana Sun and Miramonte's Cassidy Haskell begin their ascent up "Finale Hill" Photo James Woidat



Campolindo's Jared Yabu leads Acalanes' Cameron Gaskell going into the final mile Photo Bruce Burns

Buffaloes Win MLO Super Bowl

Submitted by Chris Hession



Photo provided

The Colorado Buffaloes flag football team won the third- and fourth-grade MOL Super Bowl at Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School on Nov. 8, ending the season with a perfect 9-0 record.

U10 MVP Flight Win Fall League

Submitted by Jason Runckel

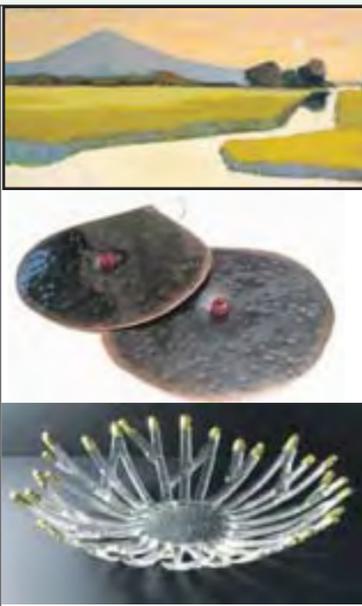


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Front, from left: Graham Volk, Finley Keeffe, Patrick O'Brien, Luke Isaak, Rylen Salvi, Luke Bonardi, Jason Runckel, Jayden Doty, Chris Fallgren, Luke Claussen. Back: Chase Johnson, coach Kenji McCrae

The MVP Flight Black U10 basketball team won the fourth grade MVP Fall League in stunning fashion, beating the previously undefeated Wildcats (San Ramon) in double overtime in front of a jam-packed crowd at Tice Valley Gymnasium on Nov. 15.

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Lamorinda OUR HOMES

Lamorinda Weekly Volume 09 Issue 19 Wednesday, November 18, 2015



Cynthia Brian's November Gardening Guide ...read on page D9

Walking to School

Age-old tradition alive and well

By Chris Lavin



Crossing guards help guarantee a safe crossing for Lamorinda students.

Photo Chris Lavin

We all heard the stories growing up: “Don’t complain about it! I had to walk 10 miles uphill both ways to get to school when I was your age, through 10 feet of snow!” For many Lamorinda parents, carpooling and hauling kids in the early morning hours is part of the routine, but for

some lucky parents, giving the kids a kiss on the forehead and shoving them out the door is a luxury they can’t beat.

“It’s why we moved here,” said Josh Charlton, dad to Cassie and Sophia, who walk to school together each morning in Moraga. “It’s a great neighborhood, and we can do that here.”

For almost all new families moving to Lamorinda, the proximity to good schools is not just one reason, but the main reason, they pick up roots they have planted elsewhere. And getting to walk to school is simply icing on the cake.

“Some real estate agents say get-

ting close to a school is the main reason that 98 percent of the people want to move here. Others say it’s 99 percent,” said Jason Evans, a Coldwell Banker agent. “They feel that their kids can go to public schools rather than private schools, which allows them to pay higher prices.”

While schools don’t keep statistics on how many students hoof it home, early morning and afternoon commuters see streams of students toting backpacks to and from school. And the commuters are something that one Moraga crossing guard is constantly concerned about.

“Some people just don’t pay any attention to me,” said a guard on Camino Pablo in Moraga who didn’t want his name in the paper. “Sometimes the kids are the same. It’s why they need us out here.” Another perk.

“The first thing people ask me is whether their kids can walk to school, or where the bus stops are,” Evans said. “That’s why it’s almost always the first thing described in the listing.” And while school buses don’t service the high schools, County Connection runs a multitude of special service buses in the mornings and afternoons to cover the gap.

... continued on page D4

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ORINDA	11	\$850,000	\$3,300,000

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6 Amanda Lane, \$1,300,000, 3 Bdrms, 1688 SqFt, 2006 YrBlt, 9-25-15;
Previous Sale: \$825,000, 07-13-07

1155 Camino Vallecito, \$3,825,000, 3 Bdrms, 3741 SqFt, 1951 YrBlt, 9-28-15;
Previous Sale: \$670,000, 04-02-87

371 Castello Road, \$1,370,000, 5 Bdrms, 2064 SqFt, 1960 YrBlt, 10-2-15;
Previous Sale: \$1,225,500, 05-10-13

10 Dianne Court, \$1,575,000, 4 Bdrms, 2497 SqFt, 1977 YrBlt, 9-30-15;
Previous Sale: \$467,000, 04-26-90

405 Donegal Way, \$889,000, 4 Bdrms, 2505 SqFt, 1967 YrBlt, 9-22-15;
Previous Sale: \$450,000, 02-08-13

1138 Garden Lane, \$970,000, 3 Bdrms, 1201 SqFt, 1957 YrBlt, 9-22-15;
Previous Sale: \$680,000, 09-05-03

3629 Happy Valley Lane, \$1,325,000, 3 Bdrms, 1645 SqFt, 1947 YrBlt, 9-23-15;
Previous Sale: \$499,500, 10-22-99

1000 Hawthorne Drive, \$937,500, 4 Bdrms, 1655 SqFt, 1941 YrBlt, 9-29-15

918 Hough Avenue, \$1,300,000, 3 Bdrms, 1596 SqFt, 1938 YrBlt, 10-1-15

3281 Isola Way, \$1,075,000, 3 Bdrms, 2719 SqFt, 1984 YrBlt, 9-23-15;
Previous Sale: \$1,050,000, 05-18-05

812 Mountain View Drive, \$1,755,000, 6 Bdrms, 3856 SqFt, 1977 YrBlt, 9-29-15

938 Old Hawthorne Road, \$1,931,000, 3 Bdrms, 2803 SqFt, 2008 YrBlt, 9-25-15;
Previous Sale: \$132,000, 12-27-82

3815 Palo Alto Drive, \$1,840,000, 4 Bdrms, 3010 SqFt, 1962 YrBlt, 10-2-15;
Previous Sale: \$533,000, 07-07-94

2584 Pebble Beach Loop, \$758,000, 4 Bdrms, 1604 SqFt, 1963 YrBlt, 9-24-15;
Previous Sale: \$370,000, 04-12-04

1493 Rancho View Drive, \$1,755,000, 3 Bdrms, 2413 SqFt, 1963 YrBlt, 9-24-15;
Previous Sale: \$1,660,000, 06-29-12

1047 Upper Happy Valley Road, \$600,000, 5 Bdrms, 1897 SqFt, 1895 YrBlt, 9-22-15

1218 Vacation Drive, \$889,000, 3 Bdrms, 1537 SqFt, 1957 YrBlt, 9-23-15;
Previous Sale: \$147,000, 06-29-84

1105 Via Roble, \$1,440,000, 4 Bdrms, 2672 SqFt, 1968 YrBlt, 9-25-15;
Previous Sale: \$1,375,000, 05-30-07

MORAGA

109 Ascot Court #E, \$385,000, 2 Bdrms, 1144 SqFt, 1973 YrBlt, 10-1-15;
Previous Sale: \$330,000, 06-20-03

2063 Ascot Drive #114, \$375,000, 2 Bdrms, 1068 SqFt, 1971 YrBlt, 9-28-15;
Previous Sale: \$270,000, 07-24-03

1986 Ascot Drive #C, \$498,000, 3 Bdrms, 1472 SqFt, 1970 YrBlt, 9-29-15;
Previous Sale: \$379,000, 08-08-02

1997 Ascot Drive #H, \$555,000, 3 Bdrms, 1728 SqFt, 1975 YrBlt, 9-29-15;
Previous Sale: \$250,000, 06-23-99

1944 Ascot Drive, \$429,000, 2 Bdrms, 1234 SqFt, 1972 YrBlt, 9-23-15;
Previous Sale: \$138,000, 08-31-95

1395 Camino Peral, \$678,000, 3 Bdrms, 1445 SqFt, 1972 YrBlt, 9-21-15;
Previous Sale: \$235,000, 06-03-97

806 Crossbrook Drive, \$1,303,000, 4 Bdrms, 2339 SqFt, 1966 YrBlt, 9-25-15

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Walking to School

... continued from page D1



Amy waits at a crosswalk with her walk-to-school children, Ava and Luke, at Camino Pablo Elementary School in Moraga.



Photos Chris Lavin

“People’s interests change,” Evans said. “Lots of people come from San Francisco because they have young families, or people come from the hills areas where they’re paying for private schools.”

Another agent, Michelle Holcenberg, agreed. “There are lots of reasons people move,” she said. “But yeah, many people are looking for good schools. It may not be necessarily whether the kids can walk to school, but they definitely want to be close to one,” she said.

Charlton, the dad in Moraga, likes nothing better than to watch his daughters head out the front door in the morning. “It’s a great neighborhood, a tight niche,” he said. “They’ll stop at their friends’ houses and pick them up, and go together. It’s a great tradition.”

He walked to school himself as a kid, but in an East Bay neighborhood that would not be as safe now. Sure, his daughters complain about having to walk. But someday, they will be telling their own kids that it was 10 miles uphill both ways, through pouring rain.

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Stylish Solutions

Tips for On-Trend Holiday Décor

By Ann McDonald



Gilded and jeweled deer are a big hit this season. Placed on the floor next to a signature tree, or in entry halls and dining rooms, not much else is needed. Photos courtesy Couture Chateau llc

If your mailbox is anything like mine, the holiday catalogs are starting to pile up. All sorts of non-essentials and beautiful gadgets, luxuries and luminaires – colorful trees and goodies. I love it. There is a wee bit of decorating stress, however, that comes with all those options. What is a stylish suburbanite to do?

This month, I wanted to share practical tips to help you navigate the holiday decorating season and all those options arriving in your mailbox and email.

Don't give up entirely. Sometimes when it is just too much, we throw in the towel. Or, because we can't quite get a handle on a "look" we are trying to create, we mumble something about having a natural family holiday and blame it on the kids – "My children decorated" – meanwhile, your kids are 20 and 22, away at college.

Even if your look this year is simple, there are ways to make the process fun and not overwhelming. Sometimes simple is hardest as every detail matters and is seen. Even my team and I can have moments of "oh, my goodness." When that happens, take a deep breath and step away. What do the experts say? Do 90 minutes of work and take a 15-minute break – then come back to it.

Here are my quick tips this month:

First, it may sound simple, but you must decide which rooms you are going to decorate. Now. It's often the basics we overlook because they are so simple, but I can't tell you how many well-meaning stylish folks haven't really decided how many trees or rooms they are going to tackle until they start. Big mistake. Make

the call on which rooms today. Write them down. Don't apologize if it is your whole house and your BFF is only doing her entry hall – variety is what makes life fun.

When you need a break you can go to her home and zen out. When she needs a break, she will be playing with your nutcrackers and sipping cider in your fully decorated living room.

How to decide? Take stock of what you want your home to handle this season. Empty nest? It could be as simple as a mantle with some decorations for a photo backdrop. Young children? There may be trees and decorations in each space. When my boys were little, I placed small simple childproof decorated trees in their rooms with white lights. It was magical.

Party central this season? It's all out, all over.

Second, consider the furniture placement. Are you going to move furniture? We often counsel clients who need to move furniture out of a space to use "the season" as a refinish, refurbish and re-upholstery time for pieces that can leave home to make room while the holidays are on.

... continued on page D8



Chandelier décor is very on trend this season, especially for people who may not be putting up trees or for those who want to go all out in the entire home.



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Lamorinda Home Sales recorded

...continued from Page D2

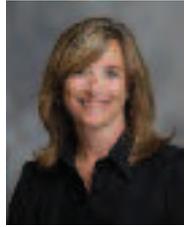
Moraga ... continued

- 50 Merrill Circle #N, \$2,200,000, 4 Bdrms, 4219 SqFt, 1992 YrBlt, 9-23-15;
Previous Sale: \$1,170,000, 05-29-98
- 1928 St. Andrews Drive, \$870,000, 4 Bdrms, 2238 SqFt, 1978 YrBlt, 9-25-15;
Previous Sale: \$435,000, 10-22-98
- 76 Sullivan Drive, \$1,380,000, 4 Bdrms, 2131 SqFt, 1963 YrBlt, 9-21-15;
Previous Sale: \$785,000, 06-05-03
- 801 Villa Lane #2, \$365,000, 2 Bdrms, 942 SqFt, 1968 YrBlt, 10-2-15;
Previous Sale: \$330,000, 09-23-04
- 5 Whiting Court, \$1,450,000, 3 Bdrms, 2469 SqFt, 1999 YrBlt, 9-25-15;
Previous Sale: \$928,000, 04-26-00
- 503 Woodminster Drive, \$602,000, 2 Bdrms, 1474 SqFt, 1975 YrBlt, 10-2-15;
Previous Sale: \$56,000, 04-02-76

ORINDA

- 412 Camino Sobrante, \$1,500,000, 2 Bdrms, 2448 SqFt, 1954 YrBlt, 9-25-15
- 2 Cedar Lane, \$1,275,000, 4 Bdrms, 2621 SqFt, 1966 YrBlt, 9-21-15
- 31 Charles Hill Road, \$1,550,000, 3 Bdrms, 1961 SqFt, 1940 YrBlt, 9-22-15;
Previous Sale: \$975,000, 02-14-14
- 17 Crescent Drive, \$740,000, 1 Bdrms, 924 SqFt, 1965 YrBlt, 9-23-15;
Previous Sale: \$38,500, 06-26-74
- 15 Dos Encinas, \$1,200,000, 4 Bdrms, 2033 SqFt, 1955 YrBlt, 9-25-15;
Previous Sale: \$48,000, 07-14-70
- 39 Dos Posos, \$1,150,000, 3 Bdrms, 2329 SqFt, 1975 YrBlt, 9-30-15
- 112 Fiesta Circle, \$1,700,000, 5 Bdrms, 2759 SqFt, 1959 YrBlt, 9-28-15;
Previous Sale: \$430,000, 12-11-92
- 8 Frogs Leap Way, \$1,900,000, 4 Bdrms, 3316 SqFt, 2014 YrBlt, 9-22-15;
Previous Sale: \$540,000, 11-15-13
- 17 La Encinal, \$940,000, 3 Bdrms, 2512 SqFt, 1984 YrBlt, 9-25-15;
Previous Sale: \$849,000, 08-02-02
- 94 Meadow View Road, \$1,065,000, 5 Bdrms, 1888 SqFt, 1951 YrBlt, 10-2-15;
Previous Sale: \$450,000, 07-15-99
- 9 North Lane, \$875,000, 2 Bdrms, 2143 SqFt, 1946 YrBlt, 9-30-15;
Previous Sale: \$179,000, 09-28-87
- 12 Overhill Road, \$2,050,000, 4 Bdrms, 3259 SqFt, 1941 YrBlt, 9-23-15
- 27 Ramona Drive, \$1,200,000, 5 Bdrms, 1652 SqFt, 1954 YrBlt, 9-22-15
- 138 Ravenhill Road, \$950,000, 2 Bdrms, 2216 SqFt, 1974 YrBlt, 9-29-15;
Previous Sale: \$731,500, 09-29-09
- 99 Via Floreado, \$1,420,000, 4 Bdrms, 2975 SqFt, 1958 YrBlt, 9-29-15;
Previous Sale: \$1,360,000, 06-21-06

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Stylish Solutions

Tips for On-Trend Holiday Décor

... continued from page D6

It is also nice in January or February (some re-upholstery or refinish work can take 6-12 weeks on fine pieces with local trades) to have fresh clean pieces come back home.

Third, create a story with your décor. Stories have openings, middles, “ta-da moments” and ends. You don’t have to use everything you have, especially if you own several collections. Consider how to vary the amount and type of décor throughout your home.



We are using a lot of drooping greenery, pinecones and large balls for the base of topiary this season.



There is always the family look and this season we are using whimsical ribbon for those types of décor.

Your story may be as simple as fresh flowers, a festive wreath on your door or some new coffee table books. Don’t try to tell too much.

Some questions to ask yourself and your family:

Do I have a personal need for this season? Am I introverted and need to carve out personal space? What will make me feel as if I have celebrated? Often times, having a simple party, even if it is for six to eight close friends, can change our perspective on a holiday. By creating a small event, you feel as if there is a reason to steward your homefront. A few extra decorations and a few special touches in the powder room or unexpected spaces like a patio, can go a long way to giving us a soulful experience. We create vignettes and places to visit, to read a book or have a cookie with tea.

My hope this holiday season is that your home holds you, your family, your friends and your season well. Take time to plan your spaces. For the perfect holiday home, join in on our Stress Free Holiday Workshop series. You can access it 24/7, 365 days a year and it includes the option of a printed workbook. I even include my infamous cookie bribery recipe, which works to keep family decorating help happy while hanging garland. For information, visit <http://cou->

[turechateau.com/holiday/](http://couturechateau.com/holiday/). The workshop gives a fresh perspective we don’t always get from magazine photographs. Take dominion over your spaces and places this season and fall in love with the holidays all over again.



Ann McDonald, IIDA, NAPO, is the Founder/CEO of Couture Chateau, a luxury interior design firm in Orinda. For a complete blog post including other design ideas, visit www.couturechateau.com/blog.

Cynthia Brian's Gardening Guide for November

By Cynthia Brian

"The small but intense pleasure of walking through dry leaves and kicking them up as you go ... they rustle, they brustle, they crackle."
 – Vita Sackville-West, "Walking through Leaves"



Falling leaves amongst the pansies Photos Cynthia Brian

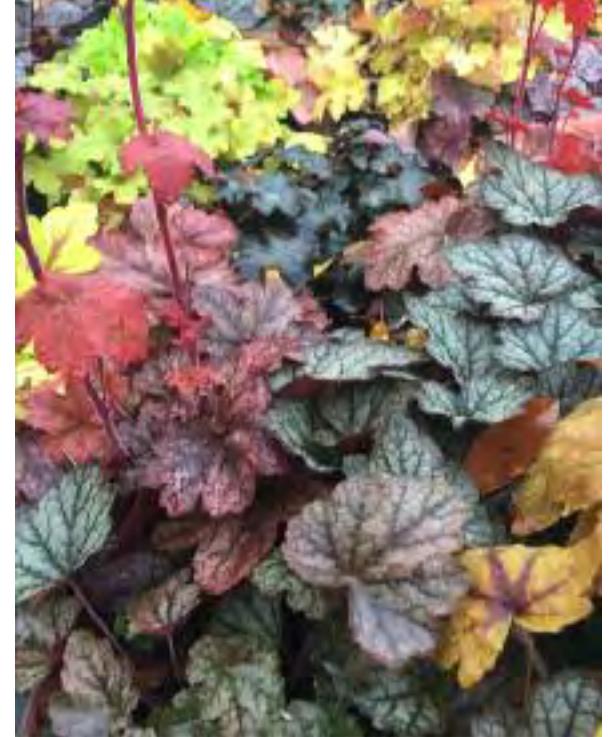
From the last rays of the autumn sun to the glowing embers of winter fires, November is a month of changing colors and softening light creating feasts for our eyes (and our Thanksgiving stomachs) while adding a warm glow to our hearts. The countryside is bathed with leaves turning gold, crimson, russet and orange. The harvest features a bounty of pumpkins, gourds and nuts. The crackle of the fallen leaves underfoot, the balmy days, chilly evenings and misty nights signal the



A view from the Tower of Sissinghurst gardens and across the Wealden countryside. A sensational spectacle of autumn. It is time to put our gardens to bed.

For the past few weeks I have had the pleasure of visiting a selection of the great chateaus, castles, palaces and gardens in France and England. Crossed off my bucket list was the romantic landscape of Sissinghurst Castle Garden in Kent designed by author Vita Sackville-West. It was interesting to note how many of the 22,000 annuals, perennials, and herbs grown in her garden have established themselves nicely here in California.

It is time to plant your bulbs, especially tulips. Having lived in Holland for 18 months, I truly understand and value the humble tulip. Found in the wilds of central Asia, the first tulip bulbs were planted at Holland's Hortus Botanicus Leiden in 1593. Tulips were so highly sought after that Dutch growers around Haarlem devoted every minute to hybridization and cultivation re-



Heucheras offer foliage in a variety of autumn colors, textures and shapes.

sulting in one tulip bulb being so valuable that it could buy an Amsterdam house on the canal or 25 acres of prime farmland. Besides cheese, gin and herring, tulips reigned as kings of exportation. Tulipmania speculation collapsed in 1637, but not before these gorgeous flowers called Rembrandt tulips were depicted on Delft tiles, old master paintings and historic tapestries. If only a grower at the time had a crystal ball.

... continued on page D10

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What to do in your November garden



These vegetable and herb beds are ready for rest.

- **PLANT** your bulbs now through January. By planting a dozen or so bulbs per week, you will have a continuous show of color for the spring. Crocus, daffodils, tulips, wood hyacinths and Dutch iris are favorites.
- **THROW** two or three matchsticks into each hold before planting bulbs. The sulphur kills insects and enriches the soil.
- **FERTILIZE** your bulbs with a composition of 4-10-6 right after planting to help grow strong roots. Do not mix fertilizer into the hole. Do not use chicken or horse manure, mushroom or household compost (could be a breeding ground for fungus), or any acidic soil amendment. Bulbs require soil with neutral pH to develop their root system.
- **RESEED** lawns with clover or Pearl's Premium (www.PearlsPremium.com) if you want grass without the guilt and the water surcharges. For tips on planting see <https://www.lamorindaweekly.com/archive/issue0918/Digging-Deep-Gardening-with-Cynthia-Brian.html>.
- **CLEAN** and store patio furniture. With an El Nino in the forecast, covering your outdoor furniture, pads, and pillows will not be enough. Give everything a good brushing, then put in the garage or watertight storage area.
- **CALL** an arborist to inspect your large limbs and trunks before the storms arrive.
- **HARVEST** walnuts, gourds and pumpkins.
- **DEADHEAD** your roses weekly to maintain blossoms and fragrance throughout November and December. If you prefer the red and orange colors of fall, allow the rose hips to form and harvest for additional vitamin C.
- **STAKE** young trees and prune dead or dried limbs from established mature trees.
- **STOP** by your local nurseries to choose deciduous trees with vibrant fall colors that will suit your landscape. A tree planted on the north side protects gardens from the blustery winter winds.
- **TIDY** your vegetable garden and potager. Add straw and mulch to enrich the soil over winter.
- **SHARPEN** garden shears and tools before storing.
- **SCATTER** ripe seeds of biennials and perennials, such as Foxglove and Echinacea, encouraging new plants in your garden. Hybrid varieties may not grow true from seed offering you a spring surprise.
- **PLANT** autumn showy ground covers, color spots, and shrubs as they are in their full fall riotous splendor. Heuchera is an especially pretty perennial in its autumn robes offering foliage in a variety of textures, shapes and colors.
- **SOW** winter crops of Swiss chard, broccoli, beets, carrots, cauliflower, lettuce, peas, turnips and spinach.
- **VISIT** a vineyard to witness the golden and amber hues post harvest.
- **RAKE** a pile of leaves. Let the kids frolic and kick, then add them to your compost pile. (Add the leaves, not the kids!)
- **ENJOY** the fall foliage. Persimmons, pomegranates, and guava trees showcase their precious fruits. Savor the colors in anticipation of the holiday harvest next month.
- **SHARE** your gratitude.



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Tidy your garden work area.

May you celebrate a healthy, happy, and mouth-watering Thanksgiving with family and friends. Thank you so much for being loyal readers. Your thoughts and opinions are greatly appreciated.

Happy Gardening and Happy Growing.



Cynthia Brian bundles up at Sissinghurst Castle Garden.

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Lamorinda's Leading Independent Real Estate Firm

ORINDA

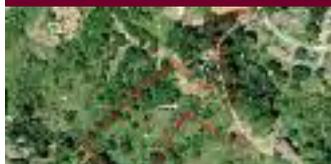


For Lease

115 Bacon Court Beautiful 5bd/3ba, 4092sf home with incredible views of Mount Diablo. Updated kitchen with 3 ovens, 2 dishwashers & 2 sinks. The house also offers game room, office & library.

\$6,000/month

ORINDA



46 Cedar Terrace Excellent 3.93 acre property located at the end of Cedar Terrace, off of Cedar Lane. Views and Privacy!

\$699,000

ORINDA



New Listing

135 Crestview Drive Beautiful 1 acre setting for this charming single level 1287sf, 2bd/2ba retreat. Vaulted ceiling, hardwood floors, lovely views. Updated kitchen/baths. 3 car garage. Expansion potential.

\$899,000

ORINDA



New Listing

407 Ridge Gate Road Rarely available detached 1 story in Orindawoods. Open floor plan with dramatic vaulted ceilings. Stunning outdoor space including generous decks for the ultimate privacy.

\$1,495,000

ORINDA



8 Camino Del Diablo Stunning Contemporary rebuilt in 2002 by MGHG Designs. Impeccable design & architectural finishes. Chef's kitchen w/top of the line appliances, Carrera marble counters, radiant flrs.

\$2,100,000

MORAGA



New Listing

589 Augusta Drive For Lease. Fabulous Moraga C.C. All member benefits. Single level detached home along 1st fairway. 3bd/2.5ba, 2687sf, family rm off spacious kitchen. Excellent schools.

\$6,000/month

LAFAYETTE



New Listing

593 Antonio Court Home for the Holidays! Stylishly remodeled 3 bedrooms, 3 bathrooms + office home. Wonderful Burton Valley cul-de-sac location with a large flat yard.

\$1,325,000

LAFAYETTE



1100 Rahara Drive Custom Upper Happy Valley home. 4 bedrooms, 2.5 baths, hardwood floors, resort-like yard, lush landscaping & beautiful views.

\$2,195,000

LAFAYETTE



23 Sessions Road Gated English Manor 12.18ac 5bd/6ba Estate. Grand foyer, living, family rms + "Club" rm, deluxe kitchen, dramatic solarium + executive office. Gorgeous grounds w/lap pool/lawns, views.

\$3,550,000

LAFAYETTE



5 Burton Vista Court Spectacular 7bd/9+ba, 8986sf Estate w/luxury amenities in grand oversized spaces. Premium 2.25ac parcel w/sport court, sun-drenched pool, pavilion w/kitchen, dressing rms & showers.

\$6,595,000

EL SOBRANTE



5050 Hilltop Drive NOT TO MISS! Great location. 2 bedrooms, 1 bath, 1088sf with views of Mt. Tamalpais from backyard. Spacious eat-in kitchen, hardwood floors & lots of storage. Probate sale, sold "as-is".

\$310,000

PLEASANT HILL



20 Whitfield Court Great 2.58 acre parcel at top of knoll w/views of Mount Diablo & ideal privacy. Truly special setting sites for development zoned R-10 & R-15. Wonderful opportunity for investment.

\$1,750,000

WALNUT CREEK



1501 Canyonwood Court #2 Fabulous Sonoma Wrap w/2bd/2ba + washer/dryer in unit. Cultured marble countertops in kitchen/baths. Elec. chair lift at stairs. Rear veranda enclosed, side veranda open. Views.

\$395,000

WALNUT CREEK



1315 Alma Avenue Unit #433 Penthouse Top Floor with Mt. Diablo Views. Light & Bright 1 bdrm with bonus office space + large laundry room with sink. Granite Kitchen w/bar. Close to shopping. Top schools!

\$525,000

WALNUT CREEK



3311 Rossmoor Pkwy #4 A rarity! Fantastic, level in (no steps) Cascade model on golf course w/views of hills & course from most living spaces. Granite kitchen w/breakfast nook, plantation shutters, view deck.

\$629,000

WALNUT CREEK



New Listing

898 Amberwood Court Beautiful New Construction Single Story Home (one of five) in desirable cul-de-sac ngrhrhd. 5 Beds/4.5 baths, formal dining rm, chef's kitchen, beautiful finishes, 3 car garage & more!

\$1,850,000



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