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Schools and communities try to cheer up locked-down seniors



Photo Sora O'Doherty



Photo Pippa Fisher



Photo Sora O'Doherty

By Sora O'Doherty

For most Americans, senior year of high school is fun and memorable.

For the class of 2020, there is no doubt it will be a memorable year, but likely not a fun one. In Lamorinda, the high schools and communities are teaming up to deliver

some fun to the homes of seniors who cannot go to sporting events, dances, senior outings, or even to school.

In Moraga, red is beginning to appear around town as Campolindo High School is running a campaign called "Red 'C' Rising" to support its students and increase hope and spirit in the community. Starting on April 20, the community was urged to decorate homes, mailboxes and driveways with red "C"s. In addition, graduating seniors found signs planted on their lawns congratulating them.

While Moraga is dressing up in red, Lafayette is painting the town blue. Acalanes High School and the Lafayette community are also distributing congratulatory lawn signs, with additional community activities rolling out each week. In addition to decorating their homes and dressing in blue, Acalanes students have been encouraged to participate in a variety of volunteer activities to help the community as well as to keep their spirits up. For example, students can sew face masks, donate blood or make no-

sew fleece blankets for foster youth.

Miramonte seniors are getting regular "gifts" sent to their homes, according to Miramonte High School Principal Julie Parks. Congratulations yard signs were the first of a series. Seniors also had T-shirts delivered to their homes, and further gifts were planned. In addition, Parks said, there will be green ribbons going up around Orinda in the upcoming weeks and many other spirit activities.

Parks added, "While we support our athletes 100%, we are very interested in supporting all students." Miramonte is making a variety of things accessible to students, like spirit week from leadership with different themes and lunch time activities (in Zoom rooms) to keep kids connected. Parks cited activities such as Mats Fit workouts and Zoom workouts to help kids stay active, and Lunch Room drop-ins hosted by teachers to bring together clubs and create opportunities to get students engaged.

Lamorinda elected officials continue to serve without compensation

By Nick Marnell

On April 14, the Concord City Council members voted to immediately cut their own salaries 10% to help ease financial pressure on the city caused by the coronavirus pandemic. Each council member's compensation dropped from \$1,352 to \$1,217 monthly.

A motion like that could not be proposed by any Lamorinda-based public agency because the elected officials of the Lafayette, Moraga and Orinda municipal councils, the four Lamorinda school districts and the Moraga-Orinda Fire District do not earn one cent for their service.

"We began as a city dedicated to small government," Lafayette

Mayor Mike Anderson said. "It's been the tradition, yet a lot of people don't realize that we do not get paid."

A Contra Costa County grand jury realized that elected officials were getting paid, sometimes excessively. "There are a large number of boards and councils that are being compensated amounts which may be viewed as exorbitant," read the 2011 grand jury report that carried the telling title, "Elected Board Membership – Public Service or Public Employment?" The report ordered 16 of the 19 county municipalities to conduct a public review of the compensation given to their elected officials.

Exempt from the grand jury order: Lafayette, Moraga and Orinda, whose elected officials

earned nothing then, nothing now and nothing since the formation of their municipalities.

"Orinda was incorporated as a volunteer community. It's always been like that. People volunteer for commissions and committees, and the community wants to keep us a volunteer city," Orinda Vice Mayor Amy Worth said.

Moraga has also maintained a minimal government philosophy since the town was formed in 1974. "We have an enormous network of community service groups, which add to our small-town feel, and we rely on those groups for fundraising" Mayor Kymberleigh Korpus said. "There's no extra money in our budget to pay council members."

Serving on a volunteer basis

are not only the Lamorinda municipal council members but also the trustees of the four Lamorinda school districts. "They receive no salary, no stipend, no health benefits, no life insurance. Full volunteers," said John Nickerson, superintendent of the Acalanes Union High School District.

That same compensation plan is awarded all five MOFD directors: nothing, which was recognized in the Special Districts section of the grand jury report.

Unless they start paying for their seats, Lamorinda elected officials will not be able to ease the public financial burden resulting from the coronavirus pandemic via their own salary adjustments.

Local businesses weather the difficult storm

By Sophie Braccini

Tom Frainier, Moraga businessman and co-owner of Semifreddis bakery, continues to radiate his usual upbeat energy around town, talking, at a distance, with his friends and neighbors. The business he has been managing and led to a profitable growth over the last 32 years, Semifreddis, has experienced a 23% loss in sales over the last five weeks, but he hopes to weather the storm. Frainier notes that his business model, selling

more than half of the breads and bakery specialties to retail stores over restaurants, has insulated the company somewhat better than other bakers who relied mostly on restaurants for their revenue.

Frainier and a majority of his workers continue to come normally to the Alameda production unit where the baking happens every day. Because he was concerned about disruption in the supply chain extra flour, salt and yeast were ordered.

On the factory floor, workers

stay at least 6 feet apart and a friend of one of the managers sewed masks for everyone. Now not only do people wear gloves and hairnets but also face masks as they work all day. The safety of his workers is paramount to Frainier.

The resilient business owner has been able to avoid layoffs for now, but he is quite concerned for the survival of the whole fresh food industry and the restaurants. On the professional bakery's meeting room white board,

Frainier has inscribed a quote from Winston Churchill during World War II: "When you are going through hell, keep going."

He is not quite sure of what Semifreddis will look like once the crisis subsides. Downsizing might be unavoidable down the road. Frainier hopes that the economy rebounds and that people go back to restaurants and consume the way they used to, in a not too distant future.