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## Free carwash in Moraga helps chase away the COVID blues

By Vera Kochan



A free car wash and service with a smile Photo Vera Kochan

On a recent Saturday, at the intersection of Moraga Road and Via Granada in Moraga, several young adults with hand-painted signs advertising a "Free Car Wash" were enthusiastically waving at all passing vehicles. Was this a joke? Was there a catch? Nope. It was just that; a free car wash with no strings attached.

Drivers were directed to the parking lot of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Lafayette, Orinda Ward) at 3776 Via Granada. There, cars waited in a queue for their turn to experience service with a smile. First the cars were hosed down, followed by a lathery brushing and sponging; hosed down again and finished with a soft towel wipe and squeegeed windows.

The car washers are all missionaries from various cities across the Untied States. When asked whether they would accept a donation, the response was a polite "No." According to Sister Pitovao Wong, "We are doing this to

make people happy. Everybody has been through so much because of COVID. It's our way of bringing some joy into people's lives."

The idea began with a group of missionaries based in San Francisco. When the East Bay missionaries heard of the success, they began their car wash this past February concentrating in the areas of Berkeley and Moraga.

"Washing cars is fun, especially after being in quarantine for so long," said Sister Nellie Kendell. "Everybody asks if they can donate. We only want to make everyone a little bit happier."

With approximately 20-25 young men and women working all aspects of the process, the entire experience is done in a matter of minutes with nary a grumpy face in sight. The duties are distributed on a rotational basis. "When the sign holders are tired of dancing in the street," explained Kendell, "they can come over here to wash cars."

While water use restrictions due to California's dry winter and expanding drought conditions may change plans for organizers, the free car wash is expected to last through the summer either in Berkeley or the Moraga location. The hours are 11:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. every Saturday (depending on weather). Call (510) 599-1470 to confirm days and times. Or, just look for the happy faces holding signs on Moraga Road at the Lafayette/Moraga border.

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[back](#)

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