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Saint Mary's grad, class of 2020, Matalyn Ament is all smiles in the sunroof of her decorated car.

Photo Vera Kochan

SMC organizes a 'CARmencement' for both 2020 and 2021 grads

By Vera Kochan

In an effort to honor its graduates who studied through an abnormal education experience hindered by COVID-19 restrictions, Saint Mary's College rallied to create a "CARmencement" ceremony that followed all of the protocols of social distancing.

So as not to leave out last year's Class of 2020, SMC scheduled the event to take place over a three-day period: last year's grads, of which 125 students returned for the ceremony from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. on May 21; undergrads from the Class of 2021 from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. on May 22; and graduate and professional studies students (a combined two-day total of 731 students) from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on May 23.

The unexpected rainstorm that occurred the Thursday before, put a bit of a scare into SMC's Assistant Vice President of Alumni & Community Engagement (and this year's Coordinator of Com-

mencement 2021), Mary Poppingo, who said, "You can't rain on our parade!"

Typically commencement planning at SMC always begins in October, but with COVID restrictions looming over the college, it wasn't until January of this year that it appeared there could be hope for some form of graduation recognition.

The Commencement Committee was made up of approximately 40 members and volunteers that were broken up into subcommittees: Steering; Program; Communications; and Logistics, in addition to student representatives. All of the college's departments pitched in to help make the most of an unusual situation. "This is a very special time," stated Dean of the School of Economics and Business Administration Elizabeth Davis, PhD. "To be able to achieve this in an unusual way speaks to the adaptability of the school to make this a significant event for the graduates."

SMC Program Director of the Department of Business Administration Mary Alice McNeil added, "I appreciate that we're honoring the 2020 graduates."

This year's Commencement speaker was Angelica Garcia, EdD. An SMC alumna, Class of 1998, she is currently the president of Berkeley City College and the first person in her family to attend college.

In 2019, she was awarded the Saint Mary's Signum Fidei Award for exceptional participation in the goals of higher education, and was the first woman of color so honored.


Running like a well-oiled machine, each grad's car was required to enter a check-in zone just prior to getting into the official "CARmencement" line on the Saint Mary's Parkway.

... continued on Page A5


Advertising

LAMORINDA WEEKLY	
Letters to the Editor	A9
Not to be missed	B4
How to contact us	B4
Community Service	B3
Obituaries	A10
Classified	C1
Love Lafayette	C3

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Vaccination age drops to 12; clinic opens at Acalanes High School

By Sora O'Doherty

People as young as 12 years old are now eligible to receive COVID-19 vaccinations, and will be able to do so at many sites in Contra Costa County, including public schools. Acalanes High School in Lafayette will offer vaccine clinics from June 1-5, and June 22-26. The clinics will be open from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. No appointment is required, but appointments may be made, if desired, on-

line or by telephone. The vaccine is free.

According to the Contra Costa County Health Department, while not every school will host a clinic, all campuses that host clinics will welcome anyone eligible for the vaccine – including students from other schools, family and community members. People need not live or work in the county to receive vaccinations here.

People under the age of 18 must be accompanied by a

parent or guardian, or have either a written consent from a parent or guardian or have a parent or guardian who can be contacted by phone during the vaccination.

Contra Costa County beat its goal to vaccinate a million people by the end of May. By mid-May 1,261,758 doses had been administered in the county, and over 71% of the county population over the age of 12 was partially vaccinated, with over 60% being fully vaccinated.



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For more information about how to get the COVID-19 vaccine, see <https://www.coronavirus.cchealth.org/get-vaccinated>

Civic News	A1-A10	Life in Lamorinda	B1-B5	Sports	C1-C4	Our Homes	D1-D16
Fire district merger talks spark outrage in Moraga and Orinda – Page A4		High school graduation festivities planned to meet current guidelines – Page B1		Local girls volleyball teams build on foundation for success – Page C1		Wildfire protection through landscaping – Page D1	
Public Safety	A8						
Special meeting on wildfire preparedness - Page A8							