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## Local Rotarian exemplifies 'Service Above Self'



**Roberto Alvarez del Blanco** Photo provided

### Submitted by Tom Guyette

Roberto Alvarez del Blanco was recently honored with the Rotary International "Service Above Self" award. Presented by Rotary International Board Member Vicki Puliz, this prestigious accolade is given to individual Rotarians who exemplify an unwavering dedication to serving others through their volunteer work. It is recognized as Rotary's highest honor.

Out of the 1.4 million members spanning 180 nations within Rotary International, only a select few individuals are chosen to receive the "Service Above Self" award. This year, a mere 101 recipients were recognized worldwide.

Ms. Puliz acknowledged Roberto's exceptional volunteer efforts, "In response to the scarcity of Spanish-language information during the

COVID-19 pandemic, he initiated Hope Initiative, offering vital scientific information to Latin American doctors and healthcare workers." These efforts often provided the only information these professionals received, allowing them to save many lives.

Through Hope Initiative COVID-19, Roberto spearheaded the distribution of weekly publications via email and a dedicated website (hopeinitiative-covid.com) by leveraging the vast Rotary network. Over the course of 88 editions, his efforts reached more than 250,000 people, dedicating close to 5,000 hours towards this life-saving endeavor. Roberto humbly stated, "Even if it saved only one life, it was worth it."

A dedicated member of Rotary for nearly four decades, Alvarez del Blanco's journey with the organization began in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Later, he founded a Rotary club in Barcelona, Spain, before joining Lamorinda Sunrise Rotary.

Alvarez del Blanco's story demonstrates the profound impact one person can make by leveraging local and international connections.

Lamorinda Sunrise Rotary hosts a weekly program over breakfast, Friday at 7 a.m. at the Lafayette Veterans Memorial Building, 3780 Mt. Diablo Blvd. in Lafayette. Guests are always welcome. Visit: lamorindasunrise.org

## Enjoy this zany farce

... continued from Page B1

"Cooney has written some of the best and audiences always leave with huge grins."

Gelster added, "I cannot wait. Both Suzan and I are very excited about this show and are so lucky to have this cast. It is going to be a blast."

Farces present a unique set of difficulties for the stage. "It translates into a fast-paced series of comic situations that happen to real people," Gelster said. "With a farce, the characters are not trying to be funny. Their lives are just pushed into comic situations."

"Farce can't drag or it becomes too real rather than funny," added Lorraine. "Farce is at the top of my list of favorite genres. There's so much good energy."

Lorraine and Gelster are longtime volunteers with OrSVP and other community theaters in the Bay Area.

"I've directed over 60 shows during

the last 30 years and this is the first time I've worked with a co-director," Lorraine said. "I couldn't ask for a better partner than Jill Gelster."

The all-volunteer Orinda Starlight Village Players is the city's only non-profit community theater and has performed at the park for 40 years.

"We are very grateful for our sponsors, the Orinda Community Foundation, Zamboni's Pizza, Casa Orinda and Geppetto's Café, as well as our program advertisers," Gelster said. "Without their support, we would not be able to continue to be part of the fabric of Orinda."

"This entire theater community is one of the best and a great place for newbies, directors and actors, to get their feet on the boards," Lorraine said.

Performances through Aug. 12 are Friday and Saturday (8:30 p.m.), Sunday, Aug. 6 (4 p.m.) and Thursday, Aug. 10 at 8 p.m. For more information, visit [www.orsp.org](http://www.orsp.org).

## Moraga woman awarded scholarship at Oxford, England, provided by Moraga Rotary Club



Photo provided

**Oxford-bound Moraga Regina Kong speaks to Moraga Rotary about her interests and future aspirations.**

### Submitted by Gary Irwin

Moragan Regina Kong, a recent graduate of Stanford University, will attend University of Oxford, England, to study for a Master of Science degree in Nature, Society, and Environmental Governance with a \$69,000 scholarship provided by various Rotary sources arranged by Rotary Club of Moraga. Kong's focus is sustainable livelihoods with smaller ecological footprints that can maintain people's social well-being. After Oxford, she plans to work with a non-government organization in environmental conservation.

Kong, who grew up attending Moraga schools, has already been pursuing

her goal through several extracurricular field studies. Last spring, she joined a 35-day voyage to Palmyra atoll in the Pacific Ocean to study the pristine coral reefs there. In over two months in 2019, she interviewed local fishermen in small Alaskan villages to gather data about how their livelihood is marginalized by changes in the industry. While at Stanford, she attended a field research seminar in the Galapagos Islands, and interviewed local educators and conservationists for future publication.

The scholarship was sponsored by Moraga Rotary and was partially funded by a Global Grant of \$24,000 from The Rotary Foundation; \$30,000 was funded by the 72-club Rotary District 5160 (from San Ramon to the Oregon border), and the balance came from several Rotary Clubs and individuals. Moraga Rotarians Frank May and Debbie Koo were the leaders in obtaining funding from their District and in applying and receiving the Global Grant. Regina will be hosted in England by the Rotary Club of Beaconsfield, which is located near Oxford in District 1090. Clubs there are well experienced in providing extracurricular cultural and social services to visiting Rotary scholars.

In 2015, Moraga Rotary provided a scholarship to another Moraga woman, Venetia Baker, who attended and graduated from the London School of Tropical Medicine, and is now working in that field.

Moraga Rotary is a 56-year-old service club within Rotary International, and meets most Tuesdays at noon at La Finestra restaurant. To inquire about membership, or for further information, check out the website: [moragarotary.org](http://moragarotary.org)

**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](mailto:storydesk@lamorindaweekly.com) with the subject header In Service to the Community.

### Share Your Celebrations and Remembrances

If you would like to share an announcement about a special event or achievement, such as a wedding, engagement, scholarship or graduation of a local resident, or about a special person from Lamorinda who has passed, send a photo along with your text (up to 200 words) to [storydesk@lamorindaweekly.com](mailto:storydesk@lamorindaweekly.com), and include "Celebrations or Remembrances" in the subject line.

## In Memory

### Violet Mei Chen Ann Yeager

Feb. 27, 2014 – July 14, 2023



Violet Mei Chen Ann Yeager was born on Feb. 27, 2014 in Jiyuan, China and died peacefully at home on July 14, 2023 in Orinda, California. She is survived by her parents Ryan and Shauna Yeager, brother Emmett Yeager, her grand/godmothers Jeanne "Nie Nie" Yeager of Denver, Colorado, and Linda "Lao Lao" Riehl of Brookfield, Connecticut, great grandparents Anna and Armando DeMarco of Rye Brook, New York as well as numerous loving aunts, uncles and cousins from Colorado and Connecticut.

Violet was adopted on May 25, 2015 in Zhengzhou, China, emigrated via New York City and became a U.S. Citizen on June 6, 2015 simultaneously with her brother. She had

significant special needs and was cared for lovingly by a wide range of doctors, nurses, teachers, social workers, aides, au pairs, friends and family. Violet loved to be tickled by her brother, listen to Disney songs, go in the pool and most of all to be held, to hold your hand, and to feel kisses on her round cheeks. Her family is grateful for the love and support of the community, which contributed so positively to Violet during her lifetime and beyond.

Funeral services were held on Tuesday, July 25 at St Monica's Catholic Church in Moraga. In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to Chinese Children Adoption International in Centennial, Colorado <https://public.ccaifamily.org/charity/donate> with "in memory of Violet Yeager" in the comments field. Funds will be distributed to her foster home in Jiyuan to care for other children with special needs.

## In Memory

### Thomas Mac Preston

April 28, 1942 - May 10, 2023



Tom Preston passed away at a Fitness retreat in Utah, doing what he loved ... exercising to the max.

A Moraga resident, Tom was married to Bobbie Preston for 26 great years, her partner in crime in many Moraga community activities: the Cycle Recycle, the Rancho Laguna Monarch Garden, pear pruning at JM, Moraga Library Seed Library, Moraga Garden Farms, and the Pear, July Fourth and Community Fairs. Tom and Bobbie traveled extensively collecting friends, beer steins and memories along the way. While the joints still allowed, they enjoyed kayaking, rollerblading and biking, settling ultimately on bocce and park strolls at Rancho Laguna.

Born in Richmond California, where dad Lloyd was building Liberty ships ... after the war Lloyd moved the family back to Morenci, Arizona (pop 3,311) because "California wasn't going anywhere." Tom graduated from Northern Arizona University and from Thunderbird Graduate School of International Business. He joined J&J and quickly became Director of International Marketing and Acquisitions which took him and new wife Terri to San Jose, Kansas, Seattle, Puerto Rico, New Jersey, Mexico, and Minneapolis, Lake Forest Ill, and Westchester, Pennsylvania. Along the way daughters Cari and Portia and son Ty joined them. Subsequently he joined American Critical Care in Lake Forest, Illinois, then Dupont in Pennsylvania as Director of International Marketing. Recruited by Ribogene, Tom and Terri moved to Hayward. Terri died in September 1994.

Predeceased by son Ty, Tom is survived by his adoring wife and soulmate Bobbie, daughters Cari Miller and Portia Preston and stepdaughter Liesl Peterson.

Bobbie is endeavoring to partner with the Town to provide a donation of outdoor fitness equipment for Rancho Laguna Park in Tom's name; if you wish to be included in this tribute, you may mail a tax-deductible donation annotated "Preston Memorial", to Lamorinda Lions Foundation, 17 El Camino Flores, Moraga CA 94556. A Celebration of Tom's life will be held at the Canyon Club 1558 Canyon Road, Moraga, August 27, 2:30-5 p.m. Please RSVP: [barbampreston@comcast.net](mailto:barbampreston@comcast.net)