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Moraga cul de sac cocktail gatherings continue post pandemic

By Diane Claytor



Neighbors gather for another Friday evening "Cul de Sac Cocktails" gathering in Moraga. Photo Diane Claytor

It started out as a group of neighbors in Moraga's Rheem Valley Manor getting together outside on a Friday evening in mid-2020 when California was literally shut down due to COVID-19. They were attempting to combat the isolation, loneliness and boredom being felt by so many. They brought their own chairs, placing them in a circle, six feet away from one another. They brought their own refreshments. Some wore masks, no one touched anyone or anything. While most knew each other, at least to wave when driving down the street, the majority were acquaintances at best.

□ That one gathering, dubbed Cul de Sac Cocktails because the location was at the top end of the neighbors' street, continued week after week, bringing together people hungry for socialization. More than three years later, Cul de Sac Cocktails is still taking place every Friday evening. (Full disclosure: this reporter was one of the initiators of this get-together.)

□ Chairs are no longer socially-distanced. There are handshakes and hugs. There is a pot-luck dinner once a

month, where food and drinks are shared. Acquaintances are now good friends, almost like family. Birthdays are observed, accomplishments are celebrated, and support, when needed, is given lovingly. A caring community has been formed.

□ A fire pit is lit, staving off the chill of a Moraga evening and allowing participants to linger even as darkness falls. Laughter fills the air as everyone shares their stories, both past and present.

□ Some who participated in those first cul de sac gatherings no longer come; some show up occasionally. Neighbors out for an evening stroll stop by to chat; friends, adult children and grandchildren sometimes join in. But there remains a core group of about 15 people (plus dogs) - ranging in age from 4 to 80-something - who show up almost every week. And every one of them agrees that Cul de Sac Cocktails is, without a doubt, the best thing to come from the pandemic.

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