

Local residents call for DeSaulnier to stop funding weapons for Gaza war

By Sharon K. Sobotta



Photo Sharon K. Sobotta

Lamorinda residents were a part of some 300 people and a coalition of youth that greeted District 10 Congressman Mark DeSaulnier ahead of his 200th town hall meeting at Diablo Valley Community College earlier this month. In the center of the DVC plaza was an unmissable stack of children's shoes – collected and displayed by Jewish women in Contra Costa and Alameda Counties – covered with roses that surrounded a sign emblazoned with the words, "Killing kids is not self-defense," and many others with one central message: ceasefire.

Ann Young is a Jewish Lafayette resident and the mother of a Campolindo High School student as well as a college student. Young helped organize the visual shoe display. She handed out flowers in honor of those who've been killed in Gaza during DeSaulnier's visit. "The shoe memorial is such a powerful and impactful way to remind people about what is happening right now in Gaza," Young said.

For Young, a ceasefire cannot happen soon enough. And she says her critique of the military actions of the Israeli military with funding provided by the U.S. does not make her anti-semitic but rather a person that is standing tall in her Jewish beliefs. "I'm Jewish and I was raised in a Jewish family. We [Jews] were dehumanized, called animals and not seen as

actual people [in our history]. Today Palestinians are being pushed together into the tiniest corner of a walled-in area and then they're being targeted.

"For me, the part of Judaism that has always been rooted deep within me that I took from my childhood Rabbi were the lessons of fighting for social justice when we see anyone suffering. It is not antisemitic to call for freedom and the life of other people – and not just my own," Young said. "It's as supportive of Judaism as one can get."

Bissan Abusharar is a Palestinian-American mother of four who no longer lets her 13-year-old son wear his kufiya in public, for the sake of his safety. "I remind him that we don't live in a perfect world and we are going to live, work and go to school with people who hold different views and we need to be respectful of their perspectives."

Bissan Abusharar hopes that DeSaulnier will convince more of his democratic colleagues to join his call for a ceasefire. She also hopes DeSaulnier will back up his own ceasefire call by voting against additional military funding for the state of Israel. "We were very happy with the way he interacted with our children. We're happy that he is in support of a ceasefire."

... continued on Page 8

Local TeleCare volunteers

... continued from Page 1

And, TeleCare afforded her that opportunity with direct interactions with the clients it served.

Heightened sensitivity and greater listening, Scowley noted, are the order of the day during the holidays.

"I don't say the calls differ much in terms of subject matter," she said, but there is greater attentiveness to what clients are saying and thinking, including what they might have planned for the holidays.

"We are sensitive to knowing that individuals can find their loneliness is more acute during this time of the year," Scowley added, knowing some don't have family.

The invaluable connections made during the holidays are bolstered by an annual gathering that brings most of all of the clients and the program volunteers together for a joyous face-to-face encounter.

A long attendee of the holiday gathering, Mulcahy unfortunately was not able to attend. A recent accident occurred on a Saturday when a daily call was not expected. Yet, she acknowledged someone, in some form, must have been looking out for her. Still, she's hardly far from the hearts of the volunteers who make sure all the clients receive a holiday gift to brighten the season.

Planning to go back next year, Mulcahy recalled the way the room and tables are deco-

rated for the festive gathering. "It is just a nice touch," she said.

The arrival of COVID prevented Berryhill from initially meeting Mulcahy and others at the Christmas party when she first joined the TeleCare team. It wouldn't be until 2022 that the party, first held in 1994, resumed.

"It was the most special time," said Berryhill. "Sometimes we just held hands. It is the biggest trip."

No longer just voices, "they were a face and personality we could see," she recalled of the experience.

And, what's Christmas without some gifts from Santa and his helper. One such token of love that keeps giving all year round is a coffee mug bearing photos of all the volunteers for the clients to have when they answer the phone and see who's on the other end.

"It was fun for them to see our mug shots," Scowley said.

A further holiday treat for clients takes the form of hand painted potted succulents that included a snowman decoration, courtesy of AL's Assist-Teens group.

This holiday gift complements the other personal gestures of appreciation that the younger members take charge of during the course of the year, including distribution of cards on Valentine's Day and birthday cards for the clients.

"It's a nice personal communication with the clients," Scowley said.

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Lafayette Public Meetings

City Council

Regular Meeting
Monday, Jan. 8, 7 p.m.
Lafayette Library & Learning Center-Don Tatzin Community Hall

Planning Commission Meeting

Monday, Jan. 2, 7 p.m.
Lafayette Library & Learning Center-Don Tatzin Community Hall

Design Review

Monday, Jan. 8, 7 p.m.
Lafayette Library & Learning Center-Arts & Science Discovery Room