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A young e-bike user drives around downtown Orinda on Jan. 7.

Photo Jeff Heyman

New laws and new concerns about e-bike safety for kids

By Sora O'Doherty

Although California has new laws that came into effect on Jan. 1 designed to improve electric bicycle (e-bike) safety, there is growing concern among the law enforcement and medical communities about what is seen as a rapidly growing incidence of severe accidents involving children.

Andy Comly, Emergency Services Coordinator for the Lafayette Police Department, explained that e-bike incidents initially were classified with bicycles but are now being tracked separately. A hospital

in Marin County realized that e-bike injuries were different than bicycle injuries and started compiling statistics about the serious injuries they were treating after accidents involving children and e-bikes. One incident in Marin County, where some teens were "just fooling around" with an e-bike, resulted in a head injury to one teen that were so serious it was the subject of an article The New York Times.

As Comly points out, many parents view e-bikes as a win-win proposition for their kids, allowing

them the freedom to get around Lamorinda's hilly neighborhoods and to get some exercise at the same time. He is concerned that parents may be unaware that the danger of e-bikes is much greater than for conventional bicycles and that their kids may not have had any safety training on e-bike use.

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Local restaurant owners look for answers amid food truck competition

By Sharon K. Sobotta

For many, food trucks can be a fun way to grab a snack, try something new while in transit or, if located in the right spot, to grab some sustenance when other options are too far away. But when food trucks pull up on Mt. Diablo Boulevard and park in front of the dense lot where there are an assortment of businesses and eateries, as well as a half dozen restaurants just across the street, restaurant owners like Sonia Nawabi, owner of 365 Burrito, Maria Gastelumendi, owner of Rising Loafer Cafe & Bakery and Kimmeng Soeung, owner of Johnny's Donuts, say it's bad for their businesses.

California gives cities the authority to impose public safety regulations including vehicles that sell food, however such vehicles cannot be banned if they are lawfully parked on streets in residential districts. Moraga recently discussed adding regulations to food trucks at the Sept. 24 Town Council meeting and the Moraga Chamber of Commerce surveyed local businesses to express their thoughts concerning food truck policy. The Town planned to revisit policy proposals by the end of 2025, but there

have been no updates to date. The City of Lafayette has no specific food truck regulations currently in place.

Nawabi has worked in the restaurant industry her whole life, but her decision to buy the Lafayette branch of 360 Burrito 20 years ago was one she made with her heart. "I used to work in the San Ramon branch and I loved the Cajun burrito and the fresh ingredients and I craved it," Nawabi recalls with a smile, "so when this one was for sale in 2005, I purchased it."

As a healthy, fast option for burritos and tacos, Nawabi's restaurant has, at times, been a viable option for construction teams working on developments in town. However, as the taco trucks and other vendors on wheels have rolled into town, Nawabi has felt it.

"It was understandable when they had a truck down the street near the construction site, but now they're bringing them right here (to the busy section of Mt. Diablo Boulevard)," Nawabi says.

Nawabi estimates that her restaurant's earnings

have decreased by about 30% since the food trucks rolled in. Like other restaurant owners, Nawabi's biggest overhead cost is rent, but she also pays taxes and has long-time employees who count on 360 Burritos for their families' livelihoods.

Gastelumendi opened up the Rising Loafer Cafe and Bakery in Lafayette 25 years ago with the vision of bringing textures and flavors of sustainable and organic cuisine from the farm to the table while making a living in the process.

"I am an immigrant. I'm an indigenous person - Quechua of the Andes - our philosophy is that where we work, we put our roots and commit to the community," Gastelumendi says. "Making this kind of food is not just about making a living, but also about the lives and the diet of the community members - offering them something that is going to nurture their body."

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New mayor and vice mayor selected in Orinda — Page A6

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Drone use increasing with fire and police departments - Page A8

Life in Lamorinda

New dance studio opens in Lafayette — Page B1

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Keeping holiday houseplants alive after the holidays — Page OH1

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See public meetings schedule on these pages and check online for agendas, meeting notes and announcements
City of Lafayette:
www.lovelafayette.org
 Phone: (925) 284-1968
Chamber of Commerce:
www.lafayetechamber.org

Lafayette Public Meetings

City Council: Regular Meeting: Monday, Jan. 26, 7 p.m.
 Lafayette Library & Learning Center-Don Tatzin Community Hall
Planning Commission: Tuesday, Jan. 20, 7 p.m.
 Lafayette Library & Learning Center-Don Tatzin Community Hall
Design Review: Monday, Jan. 26, 7 p.m.
 Lafayette Library & Learning Center-Don Tatzin Community Hall

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Senior Services Commission updates council on Lafayette's Age Friendly Action Plan

By Gwyneth Lee

Senior Services Commission Chair Terry Black presented an annual update to the Lafayette City Council during its Dec. 8 meeting, thanking the council for adopting the Age Friendly Action Plan in February 2025, which consisted of nine domains, 35 goals, and over 200 action items.

The plan intends to improve livability for all older adults and persons of all ages in the Lafayette community. Because the scope of this project is too large for the city and commission to handle by themselves, the commission created a "Call to Action," inviting all community stakeholders to review the Age Friendly Action Plan Goals and Action Items and contribute to accomplishing the identified goals and action items.

The commission gave additional updates on each of the nine domains, starting with Outdoor Spaces and Buildings. The commission worked with groups such as the Parks, Trails, and Recreation Commission and created programs such as reservoir walking groups to keep older adults engaged with outdoor spaces.

"The impact of this shows expanded opportunities for safe, outdoor activity, social engagement, and physical mobility for older adults, while strengthening community presence in the local parks and outdoor spaces," Black said. Lamorinda Spirit

Van Coordinator Riki Juster then presented the Transportation and Housing domains. Juster reported that the Spirit Van is offering more rides to seniors than ever before, attributing the growth to their collaboration with Lamorinda Village and the classes and events they offer.

After Juster presented the Housing domain, Senior Services Coordinator Molly Cohen discussed Social Participation, Respect and Social Inclusion, and Work and Civic Engagement.

"Social participation opportunities have increased, thanks to the existing programs we've had and new offerings that we have partnering with Lamorinda Village," Cohen said. "These activities occur at the community center, at the library, on Zoom, and in local businesses."

Commissioner Carol Federighi explained how the Communication and Information domain is an ongoing area of focus of the commission, as they work to create age friendly content for the city's online newsletter, the Weekly Roundup. Federighi also discussed the popularity of wellness classes and how the commission is looking for more ways to connect seniors with resources as part of the Community and Health Services domain. Finally, Commissioner Dorothy Walker presented a bonus domain, Emergency Preparedness, which offered a series of classes in col-



Transportation offerings help seniors get around town.

Photo courtesy City of Lafayette

laboration with the Contra Costa County Fire Protection District, Police Department, and Emergency Preparedness Commission.

To end their presentation, the Senior Services Commission discussed their two-year collaboration with Lamorinda Village, funded by the City Council, and the effectiveness of all the community volunteers.

"Many of the city's commission and committee members are retired professionals utilizing their professional and learned experiences to improve the city," Cohen said. Interested volunteers are encouraged to review commission openings on the city website. The commission is in the early stages of

putting together a volunteer fair, which is an opportunity for nonprofits and organizations to connect with volunteers that are looking for ways to help the community, Cohen said.

For more information on the Age Friendly Action Plan, visit www.lovelafayette.org/agefriendly.

Lafayette receives Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting for 10th consecutive year

By Gwyneth Lee

Administrative Services Director Tracy Robinson presented the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting for the fiscal year, which ended June 30, 2025, to the Lafayette City Council during its Dec. 8 meeting.

Awarded by the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA), whose mission is to promote professional development of individual government's fiscal resources by identifying and advancing fiscal strategies and policies for public benefit, the Certificate of Achievement is the highest form of recognition in governmental accounting, and this is Lafayette's 10th year in a row receiving this award.

The GFOA created the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence program to promote state and local governments to go beyond

the minimum requirements of generally accepted accounting principles and to encourage transparency among local governments.

The city's annually audited report, the Annual Comprehensive Financial Report, provides detailed financial statements for the city of Lafayette. It is submitted to GFOA for review, where it then recognizes governments that succeed in going beyond minimum requirements.

"I think a lot of credit goes to the council for their good fiscal accountability and decisions, and then also the accounting staff who made sure everything is in order," Robinson said in the meeting. "There are quite a lot of what they call

[Governmental Accounting Standards Board] rules that need to be followed, and we do that very well with a small staff."

Key standards include mandating reporting on capital assets, infrastructure, and lease agreements, as well as providing useful information to taxpayers and investors.

"Back when I was in public finance, we would look at two things in the audit," Council Member Jim Cervantes said. "One was clean opinion, but the second was the certificate, which told us that the public agency was doing the right stuff in terms of financial management."

Please submit community stories/ pictures to: submit.lamorindaweekly@gmail.com

Serve Your Community Lafayette Seeks Citizen Representatives On Regional Boards



Central Contra Costa Transit Authority Advisory Committee (CCCTA): There is one representative for each city or town in the County Connection service area. Advisory Committee members review, analyze, and advise the County Connection Board of Directors on issues and policies relating to fixed-route and para-transit service. Meetings are held in Concord on the first Thursday of the month at 1:30pm.

Contra Costa Transportation Authority (CCTA) Citizens Advisory Committee: The focus of the Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) is to provide the Contra Costa County citizen perspective, participation and involvement in Authority policy development and implementation.

Contra Costa Mosquito & Vector Control District's Board of Trustees: Trustees serve on the Contra Costa Mosquito & Vector Control District's Board which is a tax funded special district of Contra Costa County responsible for the county wide control of mosquitoes, rats, skunks, and ground nesting yellow jackets. Meetings are held in Concord on the second Monday evening of every other month. Committees meet approximately twice a year or as needed.

Lafayette citizens interested in these volunteer opportunities and application go to: LoveLafayette.org/VolunteerApp or e-mail cityhall@lovelafayette.org

POSITIONS OPEN UNTIL FILLED

Sideboard owners, Erin and Ford Andrews, named Lafayette Business Persons of the Year

By Jennifer Wake



Ford and Erin Andrews

Photo provided

Family, friends and local dignitaries will gather on Jan. 29 at the Lafayette Park Hotel & Spa to honor Erin and Ford Andrews, owners of Sideboard Lafayette, who were recently named the 2026 Business Persons of the Year by the Lafayette Chamber of Commerce Selection Committee. The dinner will also include the introduction of the 2026 Lafayette Chamber board of directors.

Sideboard Neighborhood Kitchen and Coffee Bar, which opened in 2014 in the heart of downtown Lafayette, is known for its "rustic comfort food" and "ca-

sual unpretentious atmosphere" – as well as its sideboard where you can find everything to set your own table, much like you used to find at Grandma's house. The kitchen menu features natural, organic and sustainable ingredients "sourced from the farmers, ranchers and purveyors who share [the Andrews'] passion and vision," while the coffee bar boasts handmade pastries and specialty drinks.

Since moving to Lafayette in 1988, their fondest memories include raising their children in their neighbor-

hood. "Neighborhood" is part of the restaurant's name to honor "Our village within a village where we live and or work. The safe haven where the social network and community can realize common values."

One of the requirements of being named Business Person(s) of the Year involves having given time, money, or energy to make Lafayette a vibrant community where people live, work, and shop, and actively fostering collaboration within the business and community sectors. The Andrews are active supporters of many local nonprofit organizations, including: Lafayette Partners in Education (LPIE), Lamorinda Sunrise Rotary, The Park Theater Trust, Town Hall Theatre, Lafayette Library and Learning Center, Acalanes Parents Club, Acalanes Boosters, Sustainable Contra Costa, Assistance League, and more.

Nominees for the 2026 Business Person of the Year were submitted to an Independent Selection Committee, comprised of five voting members: the current Lafayette Chamber President, Vice-President, current recipient, and two selected Board Members, plus a staff liaison to facilitate and take notes.

More information and dinner registration link can be found at <https://lafayettechamber.org/bpoy>.

Food truck regulations



A food truck sells to customers on Jan. 8 while parked on Mt. Diablo Boulevard, near CVS.

..continued from Page A1

When Gastelumendi isn't in her restaurant which she runs with her husband, she's participating in Sustainable Lafayette, the Environmental Task Force, the Community Garden and Lafayette DEIB. "Every dollar spent at the food truck is a dollar not spent on a rent-and-dues paying business," Gastelumendi says. "Environmentally, the food trucks run their engines and generators as they idle all day long. The smell of the gas goes everywhere – even in the kitchen if we have our door open."

Soeung joined the Lafayette business community in 2020 when she took over Johnny's Donuts and feels for her business neighbors and is concerned with the aesthetic and the parking impact of food trucks. "Parking is already congested. These small businesses pay high rent (over \$5,000/month) and

it's affecting us." Gastelumendi and Nawabi have voiced their concerns with the Lafayette Chamber of Commerce about what might be at stake for mortar and brick eateries like theirs if restaurants on wheels continue to wheel in and out without paying their dues in the form of rent and taxes, but say they feel like they're at an impasse.

Sarah Regan, the executive director of the Lafayette Chamber of Commerce says the chamber has not yet taken a formal position on the issue of food trucks in town. "We do empathize with our brick-and-mortar restaurants, cafes and delis – particularly along Mt. Diablo Boulevard," Regan said. "We recognize this can be especially challenging for businesses that pay rent, local taxes and comply with long standing regulations to operate downtown." Regan added that the Chamber is in con-

tact with Contra Costa Environmental Health to ensure the food trucks are properly licensed and that they're not obstructing sidewalks.

Meanwhile, Sonia Nawabi believes in her heart there is a win-win compromise that could allow brick and mortars who are rooted in the community and food truck businesses to roll in from time to time. "Why not offer some regulations – maybe the trucks can come to town every Wednesday to give local residents the chance to try something new or maybe the city can designate an area and a time frame – two hours for operating," Nawabi says.

In the meantime, in the absence of city regulations, the three business owners say they hope that Lamorindans will consider voting with their dollars and frequenting their businesses so they can stay a part of the Lafayette community.

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Chamber of Commerce:
www.moragachamber.orgMoraga Citizens' Network:
www.moragacitizensnetwork.orgTown Council Meeting,
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Art in Public Places,
Tuesday, Jan. 20,
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Lamorinda wine growers 'raise a glass' to new tasting venue – Local Vines

By Vera Kochan

It's been several years in the making, but Local Vines, Lamorinda's new wine tasting venue, has finally opened its doors in Lafayette. Located in the former Napa Auto Parts location at 3393 Mt. Diablo Blvd., the inviting and classy ambiance is a far cry from the building's previous incarnation.

More than seven years ago, the Lamorinda Winegrowers Association (LWGA) wanted to open a place where the area's burgeoning industry could show off its wares at a local level. Having earned the moniker of American Viticulture Area, this seemed like the next

step. Current membership includes approximately 100 wine growers and associates (those who are interested in all things wine-related). LWGA co-founder Joao Magalhaes made certain that the dream of opening a tasting venue was written into the group's mission statement.

Taking it one step further, in a December 2016 proclamation to the LWGA, signed by Contra Costa County Supervisors Candace Andersen and John Gioia, the challenge was made for the group to come up with a tasting venue to show off the area's award-winning wines.

According to Local Vines owner, Lafayette's Larry Thal of Thal Vineyards, he and his wife Esther began developing the location just before COVID struck. "Getting permits during that time was a slow process. We didn't have to build a new building – it was originally built in 1948. We took what was here and remodeled it." While the tasting room is

on the first floor, the winery is in the basement and has the capacity to produce 2,500 cases. Right next door is the future location of Germinate Kitchen – a catering company co-owned by Amy Schofield and Marisa Swartz, who will eventually provide small bites to Local Vines customers.

"We also hope to have cooking classes, wine pairings, corporate events, and more," added Thal.

The Thals wanted to create an atmosphere where folks could taste outstanding wine, so any wines served had to pass muster by submitting their product to Local Vines' independent wine board for review. "We don't want to discourage any wineries from selling with us," stated Thal. "However, any wine on the premises must be licensed by the state and federal government."

At the moment, Local Vines has an impressive roster of labels to taste with nine wineries

and one cider. Featured are: Crane Terrace Winery, Deer Hill Vineyards, Los Arabis Vineyards, Meadow View Winery, Raisin d'Etre Vineyards, Rancho Del Hambre Vineyard, Reliez Valley Vineyards, Stag Hill Vineyards, Thal Vineyards, and Mount Diablo Cider Company.

The Local Vines Wine Board includes: Vlatka Stampar Bathgate, a Certified Sommelier whose family owned a vineyard in Croatia and who earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Enology (Wine Science); Jenny Fry a graduate of California Culinary Academy in San Francisco who decided to direct her interests to the field of wine sales with restaurants; Susan Winchester a Certified Specialist of Wine who combines her interests with food and wine after gaining experience

working for Napa wineries; Pietro Buttitta, a Certified Sommelier and Local Vines wine-maker with 25 years experience in the food and wine industry; and Bill English, an award-winning winemaker with 25 years in the industry.

A Local Vines press release stated, "The vision for Local Vines and Germinate Kitchen is to create a community space where people can learn about and enjoy wine, and to highlight Lamorinda AVA wines as a day trip destination for micro batch, urban wines and ciders. A highlight of the space is the separation of the tasting room and commercial kitchen by a glass divider, thus breaking down the fourth wall and demystifying artisan food production."

For more information visit:
www.Local-Vines.com
www.GerminateKitchen.com
www.LamorindaWinegrowers.com



Local Vines owners Larry and Esther Thal

Photo Vera Kochan

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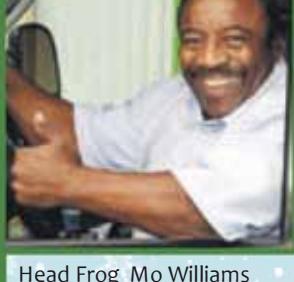
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Moraga receives yet another GFOA award

By Vera Kochan

The Town of Moraga has received its third consecutive Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) Distinguished Budget Presentation Award this past December. The honor was established in 1984.

"In public finance circles, this is sort of a big deal," stated Town Manager Scott Mitnick. "It reflects the Town's commitment to following 'Best Management Practices' with respect to how the local taxpayer's monies are budgeted, expended, managed, and documented. This recognition also helps the Town retain its AAA credit rating which, in turn, reduces the cost to capital, should the Town need to issue debt in the future."

According to GFOA, the award "reflects the

commitment of the governing body and staff to meeting the highest principles of governmental budgeting."

With over 1,900 participants in the program, each entity was required to meet four nationally recognized guidelines that include a policy document, a financial plan, an operations guide, and a communications device.

There are 14 mandatory criteria that fall under those guidelines. Among them, each entity must provide a coherent statement of organization-wide, strategic goals and strategies that address long-term concerns and issues. Also, a budget message must be provided that articulates priorities and issues for the upcoming year. The

message should describe significant changes in priorities from the current year and explain the factors that led to those changes. An overview of significant budgetary items and trends must be provided, and presented within the budget as a separate section (e.g., budget-in-brief).

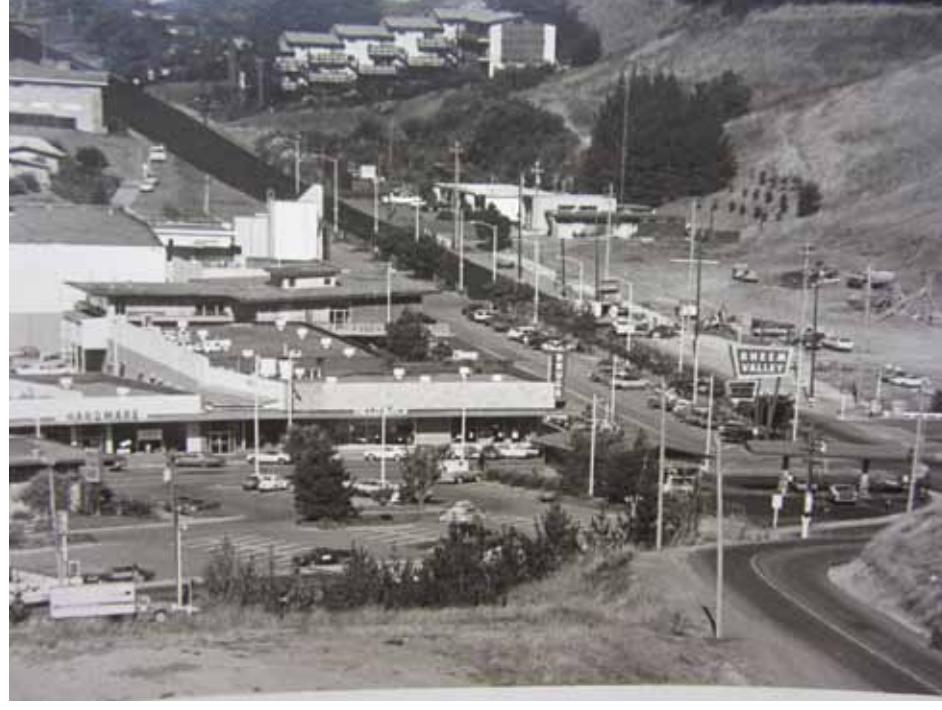
Additionally, entities must describe the process for preparing, reviewing, and adopting the budget for the coming fiscal year, and describe the procedures for amending the budget after adoption. Presenting a summary of major revenues and expenditures is essential, along with other financing sources and uses in order to provide an overview of the total resources budgeted by the

organization. It is also mandatory to provide objective measures of progress toward accomplishing the government's mission as well as goals and objectives for specific departments and programs.

"The receipt of the GFOA Distinguished Budget Presentation Award demonstrates the Town's commitment to transparency in budget and finance," said Administrative Services Director Katie Bruner. "I would like to thank the Administrative Services Department staff for their hard work in producing the budget book, the Executive Team for a collaborative budget development process, and the Town Manager and Town Council for their support."

A look back at Rheem Valley Shopping Center 60 years ago

By Vera Kochan



Rheem Valley Shopping Center (late 1960s)

Photo courtesy Moraga Historical Society

Now that a new Grocery Outlet is under construction at the Rheem Valley Shopping Center, it's safe to say that there hasn't been this type of retail development or construction in the area for decades.

When it comes to grocery stores, Rheem has seen five different markets come and go. The Saint Mary's College annex was once a Lucky Store. T.J. Maxx was a Safeway. At one point in time, Home Goods used to be Apple Market, and before that it was Petriini's (1986). The very first grocery store in Rheem was Clark's Market in 1954, when the shopping center first opened.

About the only business that hasn't changed (other than modern upgrades) is 1957's Rheem Theatre. In an area north of Park Street and Rheem Boulevard was the Carroll Ranch Club with a 9-hole golf course, an Olympic-sized swimming pool and Mr. B's Restaurant. It was located just south of what is now Campolindo High School. The 24 Hour Fitness gym once housed a Thrifty's Drug Store famous for their inexpensive and oddly-shaped scoops of ice cream.

There were several stores that specialized in

either women's, men's or children's clothing. A hardware store stood next to Charles Drugs which was a large store and has since been replaced with three businesses – Nation's, Subway, and the now closed pet shop. Beaubell's Real Estate currently houses Moraga Art Gallery, and Neldam's Bakery has become Dover Saddlery. Today's post office used to be Jo and Eve's Variety Store (that also sold donuts).

Blockbuster Video occupied the space before Dollar Store moved in around 2011. Longs Drugs opened in 1984, and eventually the chain was sold to CVS Pharmacy in 2008. There was a Fotomat kiosk in the parking lot where a Bank of America ATM machine now stands near Taco Bell (which used to be T-Bone Drive In). Also in the vicinity is Rheem Valley Automotive (1998), a stand-alone building formerly a Crocker Citizens Bank.

Across the street from Rheem Valley Shopping Center, on Moraga Road, is the Rheem Veterinary Hospital whose current employees are proud to boast that they've been in the same location since the 1960s.

Last, but certainly

not least, was the Rheem Valley Bowl. Built in 1960, by Donald L. Rheem, the venue played host to bowlers of all ages. Kids came out for bumper bowling, Saint Mary's College students took a break from studies there, and adults joined leagues inspiring local competition. The Fireside Lounge offered food and drink, and pinball machines occasionally coughed-up small prizes to anyone with quarters to spend. The bowling alley saw its last pin fall in July 1999. The building was demolished in April 2004. The lot stood dormant for eight years before medium density homes finally broke ground.

The Rheem Valley Shopping Center has gone through a revolving door of business changes over the last 60 years; most recently attributing closures to either COVID or online shopping. While there's no crystal ball that can predict the future of retail, it might be prudent for potential shopkeepers to follow the practice of "give the customer what they want," or at the very least, figure out what they want before they want it.

Special thanks to Moraga Historical Society President and longtime resident Susan Sperry.

Lamorinda faith, service communities show unyielding commitment to Winter Nights

By David Scholz

Strengthened by its collaboration with the Central Contra Costa County faith community and various community organizations, Winter Nights is the embodiment of the old adage "Many hands make light work."

Now in its 22nd year, the nonprofit's traveling shelter has continued to offer safe spaces from the elements, with countless volunteers stepping up to provide meals for homeless families and other invaluable services throughout the year.

The effort has been further bolstered by the increasing participation of local service organizations and groups that are recognizing the need in the region.

"[The] broader community and the faith-based community coming together is what makes the system work both effectively and efficiently," said Dan Swander, who began as a dish washer 10 years ago – and still does – as part of St. Stephen's Episcopal Church's involvement and now is president of

the Winter Nights board. "There is partnering at every location," he continued.

Winter Nights began in 2004 as a program of the Interfaith Council of Contra Costa County with local interfaith congregations providing facilities for temporary shelter, meals and services for homeless families with children during the winter months. Since 2020, Winter Nights Family Shelter Inc. has operated as an independent, public benefit nonprofit continuing the Family Shelter and expanding to include a year-round Safe Parking Program and Continued Success for alumni of the programs.

During the 2025-26 season that began in September and will wrap up in June, Lamorinda congregations are welcoming Winter Nights as shelter sites, including Lafayette United Methodist Church, Lafayette Orinda Presbyterian Church, Orinda Community Church, St. Anselm's Episcopal Church, and St. Perpetua's School in Lafayette.

Catholic Church. All have or will be opening their halls for two weeks.

Another 10 area congregations have stepped up in co-host roles, including Temple Isaiah, Lafayette Christian Church, Our Savior's Lutheran Church in Lafayette, First Church of Christ Scientist – Orinda, St. Mark's United Methodist Church – Orinda, Church of Santa Maria – Orinda, Holy Shepherd Lutheran Church – Orinda, St. Stephen's Episcopal Church – Orinda, Moraga Valley Presbyterian Church – Moraga, and St. Monica's Catholic Church – Moraga.

Lending their support to these co-hosts have been a plethora of service groups that include the Acalanes High School Service Club, Boy Scout/Girl Scout Troop No. 402, Boy Scout Troop No. 200, Girl Scout Troop No. 31487, Lafayette Juniors, Lamorinda National Charity League, and St. Perpetua's School in Lafayette.

...continued on Page A8



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Price Comparison Report for 2024 and 2025*

MORAGA

2024

Total Sold: 118
Avg. Days on Market: 22
Avg. Sale Price: \$1,952,000
Highest Sale Price: \$3,200,000
Lowest Sale Price: \$1,022,000

2025

Total sold: 89
Avg. Days on Market: 32
Avg. Sale Price: \$1,982,000
Highest Sale Price: \$3,400,000
Lowest Sale Price: \$1,161,000

ORINDA

2024

Total Sold: 204
Avg. Days on Market: 24
Avg. Sale Price: \$2,190,000
Highest Sale Price: \$6,400,000
Lowest Sale Price: \$877,000

2025

Total Sold: 241
Avg. Days on Market: 29
Avg. Sale Price: \$2,212,000
Highest Sale Price: \$7,300,000
Lowest Sale Price: \$595,000

LAFAYETTE

2024

Total Sold: 272
Avg. Days on Market: 21
Avg. Sale Price: \$2,340,000
Highest Sale Price: \$8,495,000
Lowest Sale Price: \$705,000

2025

Total Sold: 280
Avg. Days on Market: 24
Avg. Sale Price: \$2,401,000
Highest Sale Price: \$18,000,000
Lowest Sale Price: \$715,000

*Contra Costa Association of REALTORS® MLS. Market trends report for Orinda, Moraga and Lafayette. 2024 data obtained on 1/8/26. 2025 data obtained on 1/7/26.

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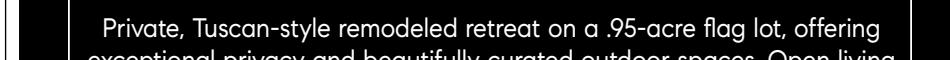
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Chamber of Commerce:
www.orindachamber.org
The Orinda Association:
www.orindaassociation.org

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Orinda Library Auditorium
Planning Commission:
Wednesday, Jan. 27, 7 p.m.
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Persian Café opens in Theatre Square

By Sora O'Doherty



Shemroon Café co-owners, from left: Mona Aghayan, Sara Konari, Dave Honarmand and Aydin Ameli. Missing, Chef Shabnam Ameli.

Photo Sora O'Doherty

Chef Shabnam Ameli has opened a Persian-style café in Theatre Square in Orinda and is making many people happy with her creative offerings. She is assisted in her endeavor by her husband, Aydin Ameli and several co-owners of Shemroon Café, which officially opened on Oct. 26 last year. The café is named after the neighborhood in Tehran where Aydin Ameli grew up.

Ameli came to the U.S. about 11 years ago and started a custom dessert business with his wife in Walnut Creek. They decided to expand and have opened their

café in Theatre Square, where Shabnam Ameli prepares a wide variety of foods to cater to all tastes.

Boxes of small cookies are offered, particularly popular for the Persian festival of Nowruz, which will fall on March 20 in 2026. A classic chocolate bibi cake is also popular, as well as the rosewater scented cream puffs. The café also offers an ice cream flavored with saffron and pistachios.

Other popular sweets include a gluten free almond cake, lemon-blueberry coffee cake, and baklava. Chef Ameli

also bakes custom cakes to order.

There are two choices for breakfast at the cafe, either sweet or savory, and the café makes their special Shemroon bread, a salty, soft and fluffy bread, originally Turkish. Among the many beverage offerings, Turkish coffee flavored with cinnamon, cardamom and rose water is popular.

When this reporter visited the café, two enthusiastic patrons were happy to share their experiences. Dorsh DeVoe of El Sobrante and E.Y. Kim of Moraga are two friends who like to meet

"in the middle." DeVoe was examining the offerings at the Orinda Theatre, thinking of future outings, when she found Shemroon Café. It was a warm day and people were sitting outside, while French music drifted out and drew DeVoe in. She was delighted with the feeling of a real café, not just another coffee place.

DeVoe and Kim raved about the food. DeVoe says she has come back for the lentil dish many times. DeVoe lived in India for five years, where lentils may be eaten more than once a day. She says that the lentils at Shemroon Café are different but delicious. She noted that the food at the café was neither overly salty nor overly sweet. The friends enjoyed the Persian bread and the Persian tea, mentioning a spinach and feta pastry as particularly good.

Working at the café is not Aydin Ameli's main job; he and his wife are assisted by co-owners, including Mona Aghayan, Sara Konari and Dave Honarmand. Shemroon Café is open Tuesdays through Saturdays from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. and on Sundays from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. It is closed on Mondays.

Orinda mayor gives awards of excellence before selection of new mayor, vice mayor

By Sora O'Doherty

The Orinda City Council selected a new mayor and vice mayor according to its custom on Dec. 16, 2025. Before the selection, outgoing Mayor Latika Malkani announced that she was giving Awards of Excellence to the Moraga-Orinda Fire District and to the Orinda Tabor Sister City Foundation.

Vice Mayor Brandyn Iverson was unanimously selected to serve as Mayor for 2026. Iverson was the second highest vote getter after Malkani when they were elected to the council in 2022. Prior to being elected to the city council, Iverson served two terms on the Orinda Planning Commission. Iverson's city council term will expire in December.

Council member Darlene Gee was unanimously selected as Vice Mayor. Gee, who has served as mayor in 2020 and 2024, was originally appointed to the council to fill the vacancy left by Steve Glazer in 2015 when he was elected to the State Senate. She was the top vote-getter when she was reelected to the council for the third time in 2024.

State and local officials praised outgoing mayor Malkani, and the

council honored her with a proclamation. Before leaving her post as mayor, Malkani announced her Mayor's Awards of Excellence for 2025. Malkani acknowledged that Orinda is home to many incredible organizations that contribute greatly to our community's vitality, each of which is deserving of this recognition.

In recognizing MOFD, Malkani noted, "This past year the collaboration between the city and MOFD has been particularly strong." She thanked City Manager Linda Smith, MOFD Chief Jeff Issacs, the entire board of MOFD, and all of MOFD's leadership for their dedication. "Our joint efforts in disaster readiness have reached new heights," she said.

The outgoing mayor added that the partnership now also extends to the training of new hires, with both Orinda Police Department and MOFD personnel receiving onboarding that enhances their understanding of operational roles during incidents and fosters inter-agency communication.

One feature of MOFD's commitment to readiness and professionalism specifically cited by Malkani was a

move to the dedicated and fully staffed ambulance service, no longer relying on fire-fighter emergency medical personnel. She also announced an upcoming project, OrindaReady.com, which will launch soon, she said.

Malkani also said that MOFD has exceeded expectations in the critical area of wildfire mitigation, including fuel and working with the city and local organizations such as Fire Safe Moraga Orinda.

Chief Issacs, directors, and other staff expressed their gratitude for the recognition, emphasizing the honor and privilege of serving and working with city staff and council members. They also highlighted the leadership of city manager Smith and the proactive efforts of the city, including spending real resources to make important improvements. Deputy Chief Lucas Lambert was also recognized for his contributions.

MOFD Directors Steve Danziger, Craig Jorgens, and Michael Romer each shared their appreciation for the collaborative relationship, the proactive nature of the city, and the im-

portance of continued efforts in education, home hardening, and defensible space.

Malkani then presented her second mayor's award of excellence to the Orinda Tabor Sister City Foundation. For 26 years, Orinda has been the sister city of Tabor, a city in the Czech Republic about an hour's train ride from Prague.

Over the years Orinda families have hosted many visiting students from Tabor who spend a semester attending Miramonte High School and experiencing American teenage life while living with a host family. The Tabor Sister City Foundation coordinates all aspects of this exchange, including overseeing a highly competitive selection process.

Other aspects of the Foundation that Malkani highlighted included partnering with the city to host the annual gingerbread house decorating contest at the Winterfest, and playing a key role in forming and sustaining the Sister Cities International Northern California chapter.

...continued on Page A7



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E-bike safety

..continued from Page A1

John Muir Hospital in Walnut Creek, which serves many families in Lamorinda, has issued a warning about electrical bicycle safety. John Muir notes that e-bikes and e-scooters are increasingly popular modes of transportation and recreation, especially in the Bay Area, but their popularity is leading to serious and sometimes fatal injuries.

Over the past year, the John Muir trauma team has treated double the number of injuries to e-bike and e-scooter riders, as well as pedestrians hit by them, compared to the previous year. The hospital concludes that "this is an alarming trend."

The John Muir press release goes on to point out that "The types of neurological and orthopedic injuries sustained are much closer to those often associated with motorcycle accidents than to those on non-motorized bicycles. Some e-bikes can travel up to 28 miles per hour and even faster with simple modifications that make it easy to exceed the manufacturer's speed restrictions. With faster speeds comes more severe collisions and the likelihood of serious or fatal injuries," and the rate of e-bike injuries is increasing annually.

John Muir noted that the most prominent age groups suffering these injuries are seniors and teenagers, primarily teenage boys. What John Muir Health's Trauma Center is seeing mirrors trends from around the country.

"According to the American College of Surgeons more than 20,000 people are injured annually while riding e-bikes with approximately 3,000 requiring hospitalization, and this is likely underreported. Statistics are showing that head injuries occur most frequently, and only a third of injured patients were wearing helmets."

Comly told the Lamorinda Weekly that

Danville has formed an E-Bike Safety Working Group for agencies and jurisdictions in the East Bay and that Lafayette, Orinda and Moraga are part of the group. Danville has created a Not-My-Kid campaign (see link below) and has shared that with everyone in the work group.

Comly added that Lafayette is taking an e-bike educational approach for parents and kids. "We have had to cite a few individuals, but only when the educational approach hasn't worked. For education, our officers are having conversations with kids that are stopped, including their parents on the phone, and explaining the risks and responsibilities of an e-bike rider. We also have presented at PTA meetings, put information out on social media and via email lists to school parents, and have distributed brochures at public events and whenever we get the chance," he said.

Lafayette will pursue a multi-pronged approach. Officers will start with education when they stop a kid for an e-bike offense. They will get the parents on the phone and have a conversation. Sometimes, if the offense was egregious, or conversations didn't go well, a citation will be issued.

When the infraction involves an electric dirt bicycle, it will be confiscated or impounded for 30 days. In such circumstances, the storage fees wind up equaling the cost of the electric dirt bicycle (\$3,000 to \$4,000).

Comly advises teens who are stopped by the police not to run from the cops. "When you run it is more unsafe for everyone. Running away can turn what might have been just a conversation into a misdemeanor or arrest for evading an officer. The last thing we want is for people to be riding so fast that they crash and either the rider or someone else gets hurt."

Owing to the growing popularity of e-bikes,



An electric dirt bike is confiscated by the Lafayette Police Department.

Photo courtesy Lafayette Police Department

especially among senior citizens and teens, the California legislature decided to revise the law covering e-bikes and adopted Senate Bill 1271, which addresses battery storage, classification and motor power. Most of the new requirements in SB 1271 went into effect on Jan. 1 of this year, although there are a couple of provisions that will not become effective until 2028.

The personal safety of e-bike riders is also addressed in SB 1271 as well as another new state law, Assembly Bill 544, which requires all electric bicycles to be equipped with a rear red reflector or a solid/lasting red light with a built-in reflector. This rear safety device must be visible at all times from a distance of 500 feet while riding, both during the day and at night.

Comly provided a summary of the requirements for various electric bikes and motorbikes. Class 1 e-bikes are pedal assist only, no throttle, with a maximum speed of 20 mph. Class 2 e-bikes can have pedal assist plus throttle, with a maximum speed of 20 mph. Class 3 e-bikes are pedal assist only, with a maximum speed of 28 mph and are limited to riders 16 and over, who must wear helmets.

An electric motorcycle is anything exceeding these specifications (no pedals, higher speeds) and such vehicles require registration, insurance, and a motorcycle

license for road use. Off-Highway Vehicles (OHV), which include models like Sur-Ron or Talaria electric motorcycles, are designed only for off-road use.

Moving forward, local authorities are working with legislators on e-bike laws. According to Comly, San Diego and Marin counties have age-restriction pilot laws that could become state laws in the future and may reduce injuries in the excluded age groups. Lafayette School District, particularly Stanley Middle School, requires e-bikes to be registered with the school and requires riders to take an online CHP class of safe riding skills.



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Meetings 3rd Wednesday of each month.

Crime Prevention Commission: Studies safety issues in the City and works to educate the public. Some activities of the Commission include coordinating the neighborhood watch and business alter programs, providing crime prevention tips to the local newspapers, supporting Community Events, and organizing a community safety day with the Emergency Preparedness Commission.

Meetings 4th Tuesday of each month.

Emergency Preparedness Commission: Coordinates preparation and planning efforts to mitigate the effects of natural and man-made disasters. The main focus of the Commission is to bring the Emergency Operations Center to a state of readiness by providing the necessary materials and resources for the assigned staff.

Meetings 1st Monday of each month.

Environmental Task Force (ETF): Develops and implements policies and programs that will enable the City and its residents to meet their present needs without sacrificing the ability of future generations to meet their needs.

Meetings 2nd Thursday of each month.

Planning Commission: Charged with the preparation and implementation of the General Plan, the Zoning Ordinance, and the review of development projects in the city.

Meetings 1st and 3rd Monday of each month.

Senior Services Commission: Enhances the well-being of Lafayette's older adults by identifying their concerns and needs and providing information about resources, programs and services.

Meetings 4th Thursday of each month.

Lafayette citizens interested in these volunteer opportunities and application go to: LoveLafayette.org/VolunteerApp or e-mail cityhall@lovelafayette.org

POSITIONS OPEN UNTIL FILLED

..continued from Page A6

Malkani visited Tabor as a part of the Orinda delegation to the annual Tabor meetings, an annual event honoring the history of the city. She recalled the warmth and friendship extended across the globe. Malkani thanked all the school administrators, volunteers, host families, and council members who

have hosted families for their contributions.

Cheryl Cechvala, the newest member of the organization, shared that it has been an honor to work with the foundation's leaders and praised the impressive students in the exchange program. She encouraged anyone interested in learning more to reach out, emphasizing that being a host family is a

rewarding experience.

Slavka Ruzicka, the foundation's vice chair, reflected on her years with the organization, describing the growth of the foundation and its participation in Tabor events. She invited anyone visiting Prague or nearby areas to visit Tabor, highlighting its historical significance and welcoming atmosphere.

Lamorinda CERT's drone presentation highlights usage within law enforcement and wildfire situations

By Vera Kochan

Drones have become a popular piece of surveillance equipment, not only in today's warfare to carry weapons, such as explosives, onto a battlefield or over civilian neighborhoods, but in law enforcement and for fighting fires as well.

Lamorinda CERT held a Nov. 10 Zoom meeting with a presentation by East Bay Regional Park District Police Officer John Cornell about drones in law enforcement, fire protection and response, military, and commercial use.

Cornell previously worked for the Lafayette Police Department as an Emergency Preparedness Coordinator and helped start the Contra Costa County Sheriff's drone team. He also enhanced the capabilities

of the Lamorinda Area Radio Interest Group and facilitated the installation of over 50 wildfire cameras throughout six counties. According to Cornell, almost every agency in law enforcement has drones. It's an easy tool to use for everything from mapping, making 3D models of buildings, finding criminals on the run, or people that are lost. Firefighters also use drones that are tethered to their trucks. All in all, "it's a safer alternative to send a drone into a building to assess the situation."

The Contra Costa County Sheriff's Office Drone Team was established in 2016, and has over 25 sworn and licensed pilots. Their current fleet of 30 drones see approximately 200

deployments per year. Currently CCCSO has at least one operator on duty 24/7, and that operator could be reporting from a far end of the county depending on where an emergency is located.

The drone of choice is DJI thanks to its superior camera quality, reliability, and price. Cornell noted that the Wingtra drone has vertical landing and takeoff capabilities, can perform high resolution mapping, is fully autonomous, and can stay aloft for one hour per 500 acres. "There are drones out there that will lift 100 pounds," explained Cornell.

When the Moraga-Orinda Fire District conducted its Wildland Fire Training Burn on Painted Rock in 2023, a

drone was used to map the controlled burn. Also, with the help of a Wildfire Camera System to detect fires on red flag days, a drone can be launched and flown over the fire saving on man hours by helping to determine the amount of man power that might be necessary.

The Federal Aviation Administration has adopted the term "If you fly, we can't." Flying recreational drones over or near wildfires could cause injury or death to firefighters and hamper the effectiveness of wildfire suppression operations. If recreational drones are detected over or near a wildfire, aerial firefighting aircraft may be grounded, causing wildfires to grow larger and unduly threaten lives, property, and nat-



Image courtesy John Cornell

ural and cultural resources. Individuals who interfere with wildfire suppression efforts may be subject to civil penalties and criminal prosecution.

The FAA reported

that "in 2019, at least 20

documented instances of

unauthorized drone

flights over or near

wildfires in eight states

(Arizona, California, Col-

orado, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah, Washington, and Minnesota) have resulted in aerial firefighting operations being temporarily shut down nine times."

Cornell summed it

up best by saying,

"Drones are a daily occurrence now."

Winter Nights

..continued from Page A5

St. Stephen's Episcopal originally served as a host site and over the years its support has transitioned to a co-host role as it did again this year when it handled a week at St. John Vianney Catholic Church in Walnut Creek. Swander's crack team of volunteers in a one-week period tallied 346.5 hours as they provided food preparation and serving, clean up, tutoring to the youngsters and overnight support among other assistance to the Winter Nights staff and their clients.

The emphasis is on being both emphatic and supportive to their situations. "They ask about

ourselves and we try to learn about them without being nosy," Swander said.

Judy Stillman has been involved with Winter Nights for 21 years, including serving as its executive director for seven years as well as helping to organize the Traveling Tutors and Reading Rewards in 2008. This year, Lafayette United Methodist Church's more than 50 volunteers undertook its 13th year supporting the work of Winter Nights in tandem with those in a co-host role during the last two weeks of November.

Like her peers who lead other congregations that have already or will host the Winter Nights caravan when it rolls

into their facilities in the new year, Stillman noted a shared takeaway they all hope for the families they meet and serve.

"To feel loved and cared for," said Stillman. "It gives them a chance to breathe and work on moving forward with their lives, be it work or housing."

Karen Rose, co-chair of St. Perpetua Church's efforts with Trina Audley, has been active in that capacity every year since the church initially started hosting in year two.

When the church site was deemed inadequate for the program, she used her talents to assist Orinda Community Church with its hosting of Winter Nights, and brought St. Perpetua

and Holy Shepherd Lutheran Church on board to lend their volunteer support. In addition, groups like the Girl Scouts, Lions Club, and Leo Club were also brought into the mix.

Winter Nights returned to St. Perpetua in 2022 when a new hall was opened, and this season between 150 to 200 volunteers are expected to be involved when it arrives in February.

"The St. Perpetua volunteers and staff have been extremely welcoming and supportive in serving the Winter Nights families," said Rose. "We pray that the families feel our loving support."

Winter Nights executive director Lenita



Pop-up tents set up in halls at various local churches and synagogues during Winter Nights provide privacy for un-housed families.

Photo David Scholz

to think through problems with the Winter Nights staff and come up with solutions, "They are true partners."

"We literally could not do Winter Nights without the support of our congregations," she added.

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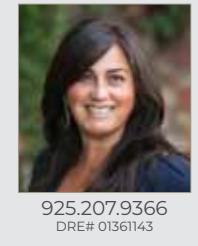


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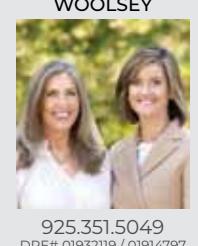


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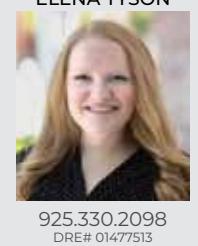


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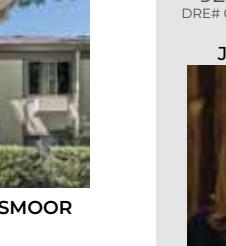
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~ Life in LAMORINDA ~

Liminal Dance Labs opens in Lafayette

By Jenn Freedman



Students rehearse at new Lafayette dance studio.

Photo Tenaya Garrett

Liminal Dance Labs is Lamorinda's newest dance studio, offering the chance for dancers to train for and participate in dance competitions. But perhaps what makes Liminal even more unique is its approach: blending high-level technical training with somatic awareness and creative exploration.

Founded by Artistic Director Bela Watson, Executive Director Laura Fegraus, and Managing Director Tenaya Garrett,

Liminal offers dance classes across all major styles for dancers of all ages (from parent and me, to seniors).

Liminal Dance Labs emerged during a natural turning point in Watson's career. After 30 years of teaching – from early childhood through seniors, including seven years in local studios, Saint Mary's College, and senior centers – she had become a trusted presence in Lamorinda's dance community.

As she stepped back to focus on long-planned creative work, completing her second book and launching a podcast featuring dance professionals across the field, Watson expected to spend the year working quietly behind the scenes. "I wanted young dancers to understand just how expansive a life in dance can be – far beyond the narrow paths we're often shown in traditional dance schools," Watson explains.

During that time, a group of local families reached out to share how meaningful her teaching had been and to ask whether she might consider creating a new kind of training space – one that would allow dancers to compete in a safe, authentic, and body-positive environment.

"Families wondered if there could be a place where my somatic-centered approach could continue – a studio that blended disciplined training, creativity, and deep personal development while supporting frequent participation in a variety of competitions, showcases, and community performances. Their belief in that vision is what made Liminal possible."

With community support and a clear artistic direction, Liminal Dance Labs opened its doors this past fall.

Liminal offers comprehensive training across all major styles, including ballet, contemporary, jazz, hip-hop, jazz funk, acrobatics, and dance-sport.

In addition to traditional dance classes, Liminal offers its signa-

ture Dance Labs, longer integrative sessions that include somatic principles, musicality, alignment, and creative problem-solving. The Labs are designed to give dancers a holistic foundation for long-term growth.

And finally, dancers seeking deeper commitment and more expansive performance opportunities may audition for Liminal's Competitive Ensembles, offered in three pathways: Ensemble A – Performing Arts, designed for competitive performance readiness;

Ensemble B – Industrial Arts, designed for an industry edge in commercial dance; and Ensemble C – Athletic Arts, which offers technical training in jazz fusion as preparation for middle or high school drill teams.

Beginning in January, Liminal plans to launch various adult dance classes and college preparation mentorship programs for students that are planning to continue dancing at the collegiate level.

While Liminal continues its search for a permanent home locally, classes and labs are cur-

rently offered at two locations in Lafayette through partnerships with community studios and local businesses like Lamorinda Music.

"Our multi-location model has allowed us to begin serving dancers immediately while we search for our forever home," said Executive Director Laura Fegraus. "The community support we've received with our unique, innovative approach has been extraordinary. We are excited to continue to expand our offerings and reach more dancers as we continue the search for our permanent home."

Liminal Dance Labs is currently enrolling dancers ages 3 through 17 for labs, classes, and ensembles (upon audition/evaluation). Liminal's Winter/Spring 2026 season began on Jan. 12.

Adult programming will offer a more flexible enrollment with class card packages and drop-in options. A New Family Launch Promotion offers free registration and a free class trial during January.

For more information, visit liminaldancelabs.org.

'An Officer and a Spy' – a historical thriller about prejudice, injustice and courage

By Sophie Braccini

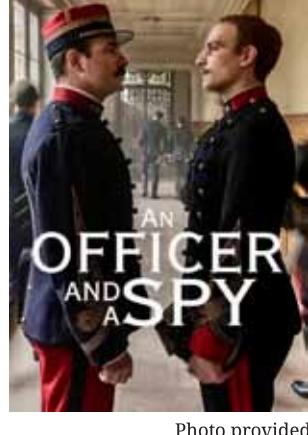


Photo provided

At the end of the 19th century, the French intelligence services learn that their current enemy, Germany, is being fed military intelligence from within their upper ranks. A quick inquiry led by French military officers leads to the accusation of the only Jewish officer in a senior position: Alfred Dreyfus. As a result, he is sentenced to life imprisonment on a remote island. Later, a new intelligence leader, a Capitaine Picquart, uncovers the truth and tries to bring it forth. Yet, the French army leadership with all

its power will derail all attempts to clear Dreyfus' name. Picquart, ends up in prison; famous French writer Emile Zola will also be sentenced to prison for accusing in the press the military hierarchy.

What has come to be known as the Dreyfus affair is one of the most famous and shameful antisemitic French true stories. In the 2019 historical thriller "An Officer and a Spy" (French title "J'accuse"), director Roman Polanski did not focus on the fierce social battle that raged in France at the time that led to increased antisemitism, political radicalism, fights between pro- and anti-Dreyfus families. Instead, the central figure is George-Marie Picquart, the captain who risked his career and reputation to uncover the truth and to serve justice.

The French drama with English subtitles demonstrates masterfully how a powerful French army, in the name of "the end justifies the means," will stop

at nothing to prevent the discovery of its initial mistake, let alone its initial crime.

The power of the French military at the time and the collusion at the higher levels of the state is most sobering. France had previously lost a war against Prussia in 1871, a large part of its Eastern provinces (Alsace and Lorraine) were annexed to the newly formed German state unifying around the powerful Prussian state. Antisemitism was not uniform but still deeply rooted in a part of the population who saw the Jewish people as a foreign cosmopolitan entity, with no loyalty to France. Picquart himself was an antisemite.

Capitaine Picquart is played by Jean Dujardin (Oscar winner for his role in "The Artist"), a role that fits him perfectly. He embodies a mix of stiffness, rightfulness, courage and panache that the real Picquart manifested 125 years ago. Louis Garrel, as Dreyfus, is very touching, almost heart-

breaking when he re-emerges, broken, from the solitary French Guyana island where he was mistreated for five years. Polanski used a remarkable group of actors to play the military hierarchy, with a special note for Gregory Gadebois who plays Hubert-Joseph Henry, one of the officers entangled in the forgeries that was used to dishonor the army. The crux of the movie might be the duel between Picquart and Henry, a tense and deadly fight between good and evil, where Henry tries desperately to shut down Picquart's voice.

There are many contemporary resonances to this movie. It shows how prejudices and hatred of any type lead to a distorted perception of reality and negate any semblance of critical thinking. But by focusing on Picquart, the film sends an optimistic message: that the rare person that is courageous enough to challenge the status quo within their own organi-

zation can change history. Without Picquart, and others that would follow, Dreyfus would have been forgotten on the Île du Diable (the Devil Island).

Whatever one might think about Polanski,

this movie is important. You can experience this masterfully directed historical thriller and drama at the Orinda Theatre starting on Jan. 16. Tickets at Orindamovies.com

Protestors gather at Lafayette Crosses on Jan. 6

Approximately 150 local protesters on Jan. 6 took to the streets of Lafayette to remember the Jan. 6, 2021 insurrection in Washington, D.C., to say 'no' to war, kings, autocracy and ICE and yes to human rights and health care. The group convened on Mt. Diablo Boulevard and made their way to the Hillside Memorial behind the Lafayette BART station.

"We're here with the people, the energy and the signage with the hope that what happened over 20 years ago doesn't happen again," Janet Thomas, organizer, said as she led the way. "I am outraged by what's happening. I'm also energized. We need to keep active and that's why we're here."

Lynn MacMichael brought two signs to the protest (pictured). "I think the Venezuelans and the people that were killed speak for themselves, but this Hillside Memorial is here as a reminder," MacMichael said.

What keeps MacMichael and her husband coming out week after week even as they're in their late 80s? "What

else can we do?"

– Sharon K. Sobotta



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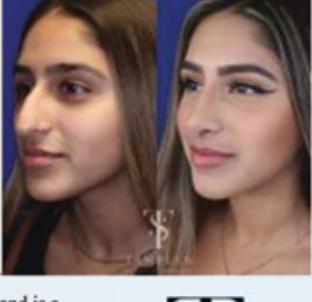
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Before



After



Dr. Matthew Tamplen, who grew up in Lafayette and is a nationally recognized Double Board-Certified Facial Plastic surgeon, opened a private practice in Downtown Orinda to better serve Lamorinda patients. Specializing entirely in the face, Dr. Tamplen's expertise is nationally recognized for providing patients with beautiful, elegant, and natural results.

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Not to be missed**Art**

The Moraga Art Gallery's new exhibit, "Let the Light In" is on view through March 15. Artwork will fill the gallery's elegant space with an enticing display of creativity, featuring landscape paintings by two member artists – Irene Needoba and Elizabeth Kennan. The exhibit also features other member artists and a celebrated guest artist, photographer Edgar Tumbaga, whose camera captures nature's wonders in jaw-dropping color. On Saturday, Jan. 17 from 5 to 7 p.m. the gallery will host a free reception for the public to view the exhibit, meet the artists

and chat with fellow art lovers while enjoying light snacks, wine, and congenial live music. The gallery is located at 432 Center Street in the Rheem Valley Shopping Center in Moraga and is open Wednesday to Sunday from noon to 5 p.m. For more information visit moragaartgallery.com or call (925)376-5407.

Lamorinda Arts Council presents an exhibition featuring assemblage sculpture by artist Dave Kwinter at the Art Gallery at the Orinda Library. Artist Reception on Saturday, Feb. 7 from 2:30 to 4:30 p.m. More information online at <https://tinyurl.com/LAC0226>

Not to be missed

Valley Art Gallery presents Color of Joy - Gouache Paintings by MaryLou Correia. Artists Reception and Demo: Saturday, Jan. 31, 1 to 3 p.m., Exhibition Jan. 13 through Feb. 21, at Valley Art Gallery, 1661 Botelho Drive, Ste 110, Walnut Creek. Reception & Painting Demo: Jan. 31, 1 to 3 p.m. Paintings of Garda & Venice, Italy; California and Oregon Coasts; and Ruth Bancroft Garden. Free. For more info see valleyartgallery.org/ or call (925) 935-4311 or email valleyartgallery@gmail.com.

Registration for the 23rd Annual High School Visual Arts Competition (VAC) is now open to high school students who live in or attend school in Orinda, Lafayette, Moraga, or any of the schools in the Acalanes Union High School District. VAC celebrates student artwork in four categories: 2D, 3D, Photography, and Digital Art and features cash awards, merit certificates, an in-person art exhibit in the Art Gallery at the Orinda Library, and an online public exhibit of entries on our website. Registration closes on Saturday, Feb. 21 at 11:59 p.m.

event is a cornerstone of the music program, bringing together the most dedicated young musicians and the teachers who mentor them.

Theatre

Lamorinda Improv Theater is offering expert-led, small group improv comedy classes for both adults and teens starting Jan. 14 at the Orinda Community Center. Learn the art of collaborative, unscripted storytelling and harness the power of your imagination. Classes will culminate in a student performance at the Orinda Theater on March 20. Register at <https://www.litimprov.com/>

East Bay Story Game at Town Hall Theatre. Step into a world where everyone helps create the story! Story Games blend improv theatre, imagination, and tabletop play—no scripts, no game master, just shared creativity. Together we'll dream up new worlds, surprising twists, and unforgettable characters—all in one evening. Perfect for writers, performers, gamers, and anyone who loves stories. No experience needed—just bring curiosity! Second Monday each month, 6:30 to 9:45 p.m. at Town Hall Theatre, 3535 School St, Lafayette. Upcoming dates are Feb. 9, March 9, and April 6. Free, with a suggested donation to the theatre.

"The Little Mermaid" will be performed Feb. 6 and 7 at the Lesher Center for the Arts, 1601 Civic Drive in Walnut Creek. Performances are Friday, Feb. 6 at 7:30 p.m. and Saturday, Feb. 7 at 2 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. Single tickets are on sale now (\$30 - \$59) with se-

Music

The Campolindo Wind and Percussion Student Command Performance Winners and the Campolindo String Student Command Performance Winners will be performing alongside with distinguished faculty. The Wind and Percussion students will perform on Monday Jan. 26 at 7 p.m. and the String Students will perform on Jan. 27 at 7 p.m. at the Campolindo High School Performing Arts Center. This annual

Not to be missed

niar and youth pricing available. Early Bird pricing is available through Jan. 7. For tickets, call 925-943-SHOW (7469) or visit www.lesherartscenter.org or www.diabloballet.org.

Literature

Join the Sweet Thursday Author Series on Thursday, Jan. 15 at 7 p.m. in the Don Tatzin CH at the Lafayette Library to hear author Terry Healy discuss his book, "The Resilience Mindset." This is a free event, but registration is required at tinyurl.com/sweet-Jan2026. The doors will open at 6:30 p.m. for coffee and treats.

PlayGround has announced and officially opened the submission window for their 18th annual Young Playwrights Contest, a showcase celebrating the best budding new voices for the stage. The Young Playwrights Contest will feature original short plays inspired by the prompt "Tales of the City." Four finalists will be selected from plays submitted by high schoolers from any of the nine Bay Area counties. For more information and the complete guidelines, visit <https://playground-sf.org/ypp-guidelines>.

Other

Community Conversation webinar "Shock & Awe: Rising Costs of California Fire Insurance!" from 1 to 2:30 p.m. on Jan. 15. The webinar will address how insurance rates are determined and strategies for fire mitigation. A panel of experts will discuss current state legislation impacting insurance rates and efforts by community groups to inform homeowners about ways to protect their property. Register for the webinar here: <https://ccclib.bibliocommons.com/events/694448ea8b29ea2800c4dd25>

The East Bay Regional Park District launched the 2026 Trails Challenge on Jan. 1—the program's 33rd annual edition—inviting the public to explore trails

that show off the region's stunning natural beauty. The guidebook can also be downloaded at www.ebparks.org/trailschallenge. For more information, visit www.ebparks.org/trailschallenge

Starting in February, free income tax preparation will again be offered by the AARP Foundation Tax-Aide Program. Service is provided by IRS certified tax counselors and is available to people of all ages. Appointments can be made by visiting tinyurl.com/tax-ccc or calling one of the phone numbers listed below. Concord Senior Center: (925) 671-3320, Ext 1; Pleasant Hill Hillcrest Congregational Church: (925) 289-9790. General information about the Tax-Aide program is available by calling (925) 726-3199 or emailing taxaideccc@gmail.com.

Garden

The "Joy of Photography" will be the topic of the guest presenter photographer Barbara Brady (with special emphasis on flowers and dogs) at the Moraga Garden Club's meeting on Jan. 15 at 9:30 a.m. Meetings are free and open to the public. The Moraga Garden Club meets every third Thursday of the month at the Holy Trinity Cultural Center, 1700 School Street in Moraga. www.moragagardenclub.org.

The Montelindo Garden Club's own Glenn Phillips, Executive Director of the Golden Gate Bird Alliance, on Friday, Jan. 16 will speak on "Manzanita: The world in a bush." If you could only plant one native shrub, manzanita is the perfect choice. Learn about the amazing ecosystem that manzanitas create and discover the many varieties and species. Free. Lafayette Library Meeting Hall. Social time: 9 a.m., business meeting: 9:30 a.m., Speaker: 10:15 to 11:30 a.m. See www.montelindogarden.com/2026-meetings.html for more information.

Learn about the amazing ecosystem that manzanitas create and discover the many varieties and species. Free. Lafayette Library Meeting Hall. Social time: 9 a.m., business meeting: 9:30 a.m., Speaker: 10:15 to 11:30 a.m. See www.montelindogarden.com/2026-meetings.html for more information.

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Crispy, flavorful Chicken Confit

By Susie Iventosch



Photo Susie Iventosch

In our Feb. 20, 2019 issue, we shared a recipe for duck confit — a dish we still adore. But my son Joel has since invented a different method, creating a new take that's even more irresistible and a wee bit healthier. His version calls for cooking the duck using only the fat rendered from the hindquarters (legs and thighs attached) themselves, rather than submerging them in extra fat as traditional recipes suggest. The result? Crispy, flavorful skin and meat so tender it practically falls off the bone. Honestly, we love this version even more than the original. Then, he took it to a new level and now uses chicken hindquarters instead of duck, but still using a little bit of extra duck fat.

What makes this

rendition especially appealing is its flexibility. Duck hindquarters can be tricky to find, often hit or miss at the butcher shop. Chicken hindquarters, on the other hand, are readily available at most markets. By adapting Joel's technique to chicken, you get the same luscious, flavorful results with more accessible ingredients.

The cooking process takes about two to two and a half hours on the stovetop, but the wait is part of the magic. As the chicken slowly cooks, the aroma fills the house with the comforting scent of rich, savory poultry and hints of seasoning. It's the kind of meal that draws everyone to the kitchen, promising both warmth and satisfaction. This method has become a beloved favorite in our

home — not just for the ease and accessibility, but for the sheer deliciousness of the results.

We usually serve two hindquarters to hungry eaters and one to those who have smaller appetites. This also depends upon how many side dishes you are serving. Also, please note that this recipe is not exact, as you may want a little more or a little less duck fat and the same with the herbs and spices.

For serving, we pair this confit-style chicken with potatoes, peeled and rubbed in olive oil and a little bit of duck fat, and then roasted until browned and crunchy on the outside and tender on the inside. Roasted root vegetables or squash also are great accompaniments to this dish. A drizzle of pan juices over the top ties everything together beautifully, and a squeeze of lemon brightens the richness of the dish. And, don't forget cranberry sauce ... it's so good with this chicken!

Whether it's a special occasion or a cozy weeknight dinner, this method transforms humble chicken into something extraordinary — and makes the house smell like a five-star restaurant while it's cooking.

Chicken Confit (Serves 4)

INGREDIENTS

6 chicken hindquarters (thigh and leg attached)
*see note on serving size in article
 2 duck bacon strips per person (optional — this can be hard to find. D'Artagnan sells this.)
 1/2 cup duck fat (you can usually find this frozen at the meat market and most grocery stores. I know for sure Diablo Foods carries it in the meat department.)
 Salt and pepper — season to desired amount
 Poultry Seasoning — season to desired amount

DIRECTIONS

If any of the chicken hindquarters have a significant amount of excess fat, then go ahead and trim that away and discard. If not, then leave as is. Most chicken hindquarters need minimal if any trimming.

Generously season both sides of each chicken hindquarter with lemon pepper, salt, and poultry seasoning. Run several grinds of pepper over each leg, too.

Place chicken hindquarters skin side up in one or more frying pans on the stove on low heat. The chicken hindquarters can be nestled together but should not overlap or stack. If so, use more frying pans as needed so they fit in without stacking.

After three to five minutes add 2 to 3 tablespoons of the rendered duck fat in each pan that you are using to cook the chicken. The duck fat can be frozen, cold, or room temperature — it doesn't matter much either way. Additionally, if you have duck bacon, place approximately two to three pieces of duck bacon in each pan that you are using to cook the chicken. Cut the duck bacon into about 1-inch chunks. These can just be scattered amongst the chicken thighs. This helps to add additional flavor and moisture to the cooking. The duck bacon in the pan will probably end up pretty crispy and might not be very edible. This is OK. The duck bacon is mostly to add flavor to the dish. Also, if you cannot find duck bacon, just disregard this portion of the recipe.

Cook chicken legs, covered, for about 15 minutes. Flip the chicken so it is now skin side down and cook, still covered, for 30 more minutes. Flip again and cook for an additional 60-75 minutes (with the lid either covered or slightly cracked) flipping the chicken every 15 minutes or so. Cook until the skin side is nice and crispy, and the meat is almost falling off the bone, yet still juicy and moist.

If at any point the pan is too dry, then add another tablespoon or two of the rendered duck fat to the pan. You don't want the chicken to be submerged in fat, but you want a nice pool of fat at the bottom of the pan for the meat to cook in. The reason for flipping the chicken periodically is to keep both sides moist while still developing nice crisp on the skin side. Because there is fat at the bottom of the pan, but not covering the meat completely, flipping the meat every 15-30 minutes helps achieve this balance.

If using duck bacon, we will often cook up an extra piece of duck bacon per person and serve the hindquarters with one piece of duck bacon on the side. Serve with roasted potatoes, your favorite green vegetable and salad. We also love cranberry sauce as condiment to go with this chicken.



Susie can be reached at suziventosch@gmail.com. This recipe can be found on our website: www.lamorindaweekly.com. If you would like to share your favorite recipe with Susie please contact her by email or call our office at (925) 377-0977. Or visit https://treksandbites.com

Rebecca Jane Anderson

Aug. 28, 1950 – Oct. 6, 2025

Rebecca Jane Anderson died peacefully on the morning of Oct. 6, 2025 with her children by her side. Becky passed due to complications from cancer treatment. She was 75.

Born to Edgar and Doris Van Scy on Aug. 28, 1950, Becky was raised in the Centerville District of Fremont, California with her older brother Schuyler. As a child, she loved her swim team, Campfire Girls group, and growing up alongside her extended Azorean Portuguese family.

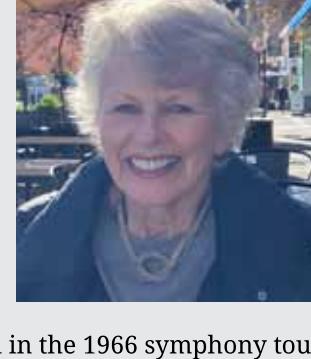
As a member of the California Youth Symphony, Becky played the cello and participated in the 1966 symphony tour to Mexico City. This experience helped foster her lifelong love of music and the arts. Becky attended Washington High in Fremont before moving to Menlo Atherton High for her senior year. She graduated in 1968 and went on to attend the University of California, Berkeley where she earned her degree in Arts and Humanities. Having had a natural gift with children, and a passion for learning, Becky followed in her mother's footsteps, obtaining her teaching degree at Hayward State University. She taught elementary school before transitioning to her role as a devoted mother.

In 1975, Becky married Ned Anderson. They settled in the Lamorinda Area and eventually to Orinda, California, where they lived together for over 40 years. Becky loved her family deeply, and as a mother, she was committed to providing her three children with a warm, loving, and cheerful environment. She enthusiastically supported her children's school, sports, and extracurricular activities.

In the last decade of her life, Becky moved to Lafayette, California, where she remained an active member of the Lamorinda community. As a lifelong learner, she took a deep interest in understanding the world around her, and always embraced new adventures. She was a tennis player turned golfer, a singer in the adult choir Cantare Con Vivo, an avid patron of the San Francisco Ballet, a member of Lamorinda CERT, and an enthusiastic Cal mom and fan. Additionally, she took singing lessons, art classes, attended community meetings, all while taking care of her children and grandchildren. Becky cared deeply about people, always showing up for her friends and family with kindness, compassion, and joy. She will be greatly missed.

Becky is survived by her brother Schuyler Van Scy (Andrea Van Scy), Son Scott Anderson (Jennifer Anderson), Son David Anderson (Kristi Bachman), Daughter Mary Anderson, grandchildren Jessica and Nathan (Scott and Jenny Anderson), ex-husband Ned Anderson and her many, many dear friends and family. Donations can be made to The Library Fund at UC Berkeley or the San Francisco Ballet. A celebration of life will be held in January.

In Memory



Letters to the Editor

Orinda and Lafayette should charge more fees to developers

Orinda and Lafayette are making resident taxpayers foot the bills for expenses that the cities could require developers to reimburse them for.

First, cities can charge impact fees to developers to maintain existing levels of service, if development would reduce the level of service. Orinda and Lafayette currently charge development impact fees for transportation, drainage and parks. But neither charges a fee to maintain their current levels of police services, although Morgan Hill does charge an impact fee for public safety (police). Obviously, the recent rezonings, and other rezoning actions under consideration, will significantly increase the population of Orinda and Lafayette. The increase could be as much as 33%, which will obviously reduce the level of police services. The development impact fee cannot cover the cost of salaries, but can include capital items such as vehicles and equipment.

Each city would first have to order a nexus study, which would determine the applicable maximum amount. Yet neither city is proceeding in that direction. Incredibly, the Orinda City

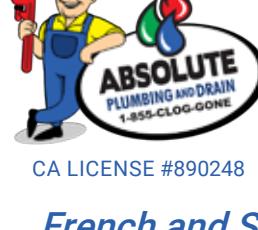
Council on December 16, 2025, rejected my request that it ask staff to prepare a report and place on a future agenda whether Orinda should adopt a public safety development impact fee.

Second, each city paid hundreds of thousands of dollars to consultants, and devoted a significant staff time, for preparation of the state mandated Housing Element, and for the Environmental Impact Report for same required by the California Environmental Quality Act. Under the California constitution, where as here there is a state mandated program, reimbursement of the cost can be obtained from the state unless a fee can be charged. The Commission on State Mandates determined that "the cities and counties have fee authority statutes to cover the cost of the Regional Housing Needs program." Regional Housing Needs Determination, 04-RL-3759-02, 04-RL-3760-03 and 04-RL-3916-04 Test Claim SOD (Adopted March 30, 2005)

Orinda and Lafayette should impose fees on developers for the added public safety capital costs caused by new developments, and for the cost of the cities' housing elements and EIRs.

Nick Waranoff
Orinda

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LAMORINDA SPORTS

Lamorinda basketball gets primed for league play

By Jon Kingdon



Campo's Noah Mesfin drives to the basket between Miramonte's Eli Logan (5) and Adam Houssami (1).

Photo Matthew Grenby

CAMPOLINDO

With the Cougars having graduated seven of their top eight scorers, the returning players averaged only a combined 10 points per game last season. With a number of new players on the roster and the returners elevating their games, Campolindo has won 11 of their first 17 games.

"This has been a fun group to work with, with players from four different classes and honestly it's most similar to my first-year coaching at Campolindo, with so much newness with so many of the players," head coach Steven Dyer said. "Obviously we've known that since the end of last season so we've put in the work and our guys have also worked hard," Dyer said. "Our first thing to do is to be good on defense and I've been pleased up to this point in terms of what the guys have done on that end." Campolindo is only giving up an average of 48.5 points per game.

Senior point guard Peyton Beld was really the only player back that played a lot last season (averaging 4.2 points), and is averaging 13.9 per game this year. "Beld knew that he was going to have to step up from his junior season and unfortunately he hurt his finger in the off-season," Dyer said. "Still, he really worked on his shot and it has gotten a lot better. As a third-year varsity player, he has done a really good job leading the group."

Sharing the back-court with Beld are two freshmen, Dominic Byra (6.5), the team's third leading scorer, and Dylan Moran, both of whom are good ball handlers. "We have a variety of guys who can play different roles but those are our three main guys in the backcourt," Dyer said.

The front court is led by 6'6" Noah Henry who is averaging 12.7 points and 10.6 rebounds per game. Another freshman in the front court, 6'7" Will Farrington is averaging 5.9 points and 2.4 rebounds per game. "Noah has been really good rebounding and is one of our most talented players offensively and

he only needs to become more consistent. Will is one of our better shooters and will get stronger as the year goes on. (Sophomore) Anish Kapur at 6'1" guards a lot of inside players and is the most physical player on the team and Aiden Wong has stepped up defensively. We kind of expected this team to have balanced scoring with Peyton and Noah scoring most of our points but Aiden, Will and Dom are all capable of scoring more than they are right now and our freshmen have done a pretty good job of adjusting to varsity basketball."

Dyer is not afraid to go deep on his bench with 13 players on the roster: "All 13 guys on the team can play but we're still trying to figure out our full rotation and none of the players on the team have been buried to this point. We need to be more connected and I'm looking for us to continue to get better on defense, cut down on our fouls and clean up on the little things to reach the next level."

ACALANES

Acalanes began the season with a particularly difficult non-league schedule, playing schools like St. Ignatius (6th in the state), University (S.F.) twice, California and Granada. With a roster of five seniors and eight juniors, it's still a team that is coming together. With six of their top eight scorers from last season having moved on, it's been a learning experience for the 8-8 Dons.

"We are putting this thing together on the fly with an inexperienced team, playing against the second toughest schedule in the section," Acalanes head coach Bill Powers said. "They've had to grow up and take their lumps against really good teams which has hurt our won-lost record. Our best 13 players are seniors and juniors. That's just the way it's worked out but I wouldn't trade the team for anything."

The leaders on the team are forward Gavin Dodge and point guard Cameron Hood, who were first and third in

scoring on last year's team. "I'm proud of how the team is coming along," Powers said. "All of the players, outside of Gavin, are playing different roles. Cameron is playing more minutes this year as are the rest of the team."

Though things can change, Powers has been going with an eight-man rotation with a starting line of Cameron and Julian Hood in the back-court along with Dodge, A.J. Hastings, and Preston Hilsabeck in the front court. "They are our leaders and as they're going, we're going."

Lacking some of the size of last year's team has not deterred Powers. "We're not as big as we were last year but they've all taken on this new opportunity and they're seizing it." Bryce Mansour, Jon MacLeod, and Shea Stahl have been the first ones off the bench.

Powers also is very positive about the way the team is playing defense: "We've held tough. There are games where we weren't that good in the first half and then we just started getting stops and rebounds."

Still, Powers is looking for more: "We've got to be a little bit better containing the ball because that helps us with rebounding. Offensively, just moving the ball better, getting possessions where the ball flips side to side and taking what the best shot is for us. We're coming along and I like what's forming with this team."

MIRAMONTE

In his second year at Miramonte, head coach Michael Shaughnessy has a team represented in all four classes with eight new players and began the season with a 9-6 record. "We're a very young team, with a freshman starting point guard (Jake Dibiase), a handful of juniors, some sophomores, and freshmen. Our guys are still trying to figure out how to buy into all the different things that we've been teaching them and taking on the culture that we're trying to establish here. I'm just looking for them to be a little more attentive to certain things that we teach in practice and seeing that translate to the games."

Shaughnessy is a coach that takes a lot of pride in his team's defense: "We've started to implement some more zone and full court defenses, giving different looks to our opponents to try and keep them out of rhythm. We're really starting to show a lot of toughness and grit playing team basketball and that's what I'm most proud of."

On offense the team has been working together more this season. "It's about a lot of reps and time," Shaughnessy said. "We're a big proponent of helping these guys make good decisions and good team plays, with good pace and tempo. We're still inconsistent with that, but it's gotten better. This year I've built a better relationship with all

the returners and I know better how to put them in better positions to have success, which has helped a lot."

Shaughnessy has been counting on the left-handed Dibiase leading the team: "Jake is very calm and poised on the court. He has a lot of confidence and that's something you can't necessarily teach and it allows everyone on the team to trust him with the ball and that's huge for us along with bringing a lot of toughness, which is contagious."

This is an offense that does not have a player that will consistently be the team's high scorer, according to Shaughnessy. "We have a next man up mentality and with 14 on the roster, we never know who is going to step up, either a starter or someone off the bench. We play a well-rounded game working on the little things like taking the charges, rebounding, crashing the offensive

glass, cutting, and diving for loose balls. We're becoming a much tougher team and that's the identity that we want to have in our program."

Senior Adam Housami, in his third year on the varsity, is setting the tone for the team. "Everything that Adam brings to the table is helping us. His leadership has been phenomenal and he's been willing to accept different roles, either in the backcourt or around the rim. He's really stepped up on defense and in rebounding. He's a slasher that attacks the basket and is someone that everyone looks up to."

Dibiase is not the only player that can take the ball up the court. "We've talked about getting the ball to our smaller guards like Osman Amiri and Mike Fa-

gundes but most of the players can bring the ball up the floor," Shaughnessy said.

There is also depth but a lack of a true big man in the front court. "We're using a number of players on the wings like Eli Logan, Rhys Sande, freshman Will Light, Santi Bossut-Ugarte and Darrian Mola and they do a good job in spacing the floor. Davi Freitas just got his eligibility to play with us and he's a guy that can play within the team game and can create his own shot and slash to the basket. We're doing a better job this year in closing out the close games, making our free throws, big stops and having someone make a big three."

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Lamorinda success at State Cross Country Championship led by Campolindo

By Jon Kingdon



Campolindo boys and girls cross country teams at the State Championship Tournament.

Photo Gregg De La Cruz

CAMPOLINDO

The Campolindo boys cross country team had a dominant performance at the state meet, finishing first in Division III at Woodwind Park 5000-meter course in Fresno, finishing 50 points ahead of the second place West Torrance High School.

The boys' team was led by Clark Gregory who finished in fourth-14:57.7 followed by Nikola Van Delft-11th-15:24.5, Caden Ehrhorn-29th, Jack Durden-40th and Samuel Hearn-48th with Gregory and Van Delft setting personal records with their times and all finishing under 16 minutes.

"This was our best team performance ever at the state championships having run the fastest overall time than another Campolindo boys team has ever run at the state championship, which includes our championship teams in 2019 and 2024," assistant coach Andy Lindquist said.

Lindquist added: "Clark set a school record for us at the Woodward Park Course and our fifth runner finished less than a minute

behind him. We never had a team that was so consistent from day one until the final day of the season in terms of their training, attitude, and the kind of support they had for us as a coaching staff and each other. I've struggled to find the words to describe just how awesome and incredible this team is, not only their race performances, but in the way they conducted themselves at practice. They've really been a coach's dream."

The Campolindo girls team finished in seventh in Division III, qualifying for state for the 30th straight year and finishing in the top 10 for the 28th time in the last 29 years.

The top five finishes were Amalia Contreras-40, Sophie Lechner-43, Jillian Randolph-58, Claire Andrzejek-65 and Kiona McCasland-73, with Andrzejek being the only senior in the group.

"The girls ran their best race of the season with Sophie and Claire improving by over a minute from their previous course best," Lindquist said. "My hats off to them as they really

improved quite a bit to become a really solid-state caliber team. The girls team had only two seniors in their top 10 runners so there's definitely a lot of potential there for them to move up and have another great season next year."

MIRAMONTE

Though not the first woman to coach the Miramonte boys cross country team, head coach Julia Hall was the first to take the boys to the state championship along with the girls team.

The boys team finished in 13th place in Division 4. "The biggest thing through the season was that in spite of some sickness and injuries, everybody put in the work despite all those setbacks," Hall said. "They stayed patient until we had a good day where it all clicked for us."

The team was led by senior Logan Letulle who was first team all-league and finished fourth at the state meet. Second team all-league sophomore William McMorran did not run at the state meet due to his being sick at the time.

"Logan came in as a freshman and from the very beginning showed a ton of talent," Hall said. "Through the years, he really figured out the mental side of running as well as putting in a ton of work every day. He figured out how to become a smart racer and to really use his talent."

This is the first time in 20 years that both the boys and girls team made it to the state tournament. The girls team had three all-league runners: freshman Marissa Dollard, and sophomores Isabel Mickel and Cameron Kuhns with each finishing in 35, 42, and 87 place, respectively, at the state meet. The other two finishers were sophomore Grace Kosla and junior Bridget Harwood.

With very few seniors, Hall sees a bright future with the younger runners: "When I took over, we had a very small girls' team so that has been building up the past two years and we have a ton of young talent."

As individual as running cross country can be, Hall saw the

team dedicated to making it to state at the start of the school year: "The girls put in a ton of work from the beginning and with a team culture, everyone was supporting and motivating each other to run more miles and work harder. Two runners, Sasha Bevacqua and Teia Adler helped us to qualify for state but they were both injured and could not run in the state meet."

During the season, Hall saw the team's confidence grow when they went to the Rough Rider Invitational and the girls won the small school race. "Logan individually won the small school race and we then won a sweepstakes award after being captured for having the best combined boys and girls finish."

Hall was able to handle both teams with the help of her assistant coaches, Karen Shopoff Rooff and Andrew Lewis, and Hall is looking forward to returning as the boys and girls head coach next year.

ACALANES

For the first time since 2019, the Acalanes boys team qualified for the state tournament and finished in 16th place in Division 4. The team was led by all-league senior Harry Zimmerman who finished in 26th place and was followed by freshman Dane Darby-97th place, sophomore David Ellerbrock-133rd place, junior Alexander Hagen-155th place and sophomore Theo Benmeziane-159th place.

In actuality, the Dons best race was in the NCS which qualified them to compete in the state tournament. When the team arrived at the meet, Morland and the team planned the way to handle difficult conditions on the course. "It was really a group effort," Morland said. "The kids knew that it was going to be a difference where they were best able to spend their energy, which enabled us

to qualify for the state meet."

Zimmerman was the clear leader of the team and earned it from the time he started running for the team as a freshman. "Harry wasn't the fastest freshman but he just continued to improve and was our number one runner his junior and senior years," head coach Bruno Morlan said. "His talents started to shine through with all the work that he put in that really started to accumulate. He would improve about 30 seconds for each race from year to year."

Zimmerman's leadership was also important to Morlan: "It was really good for all of these freshmen that we have to see that it wasn't just something that came from being talented. It kind of left them with the idea that they're going to have to work hard in order to continue to progress, and that's especially important because we do have a lot of talented freshmen."

Two freshmen that impressed were Darby and Jason Rosseter and both have been fantastic, according to Morlan: "Dane was pretty much the fastest freshman most of the year except for one or two races and was solidly our No. 2 runner most of the year."

Finishing 16th was not disappointing to Morlan, being in such a tough division, but the youth of the team allows him to be optimistic for the future: "I was really pleased to know that a lot of our runners are going to be back next year and they really just wanted to have some form of baseline that they could judge their future performances against."

LMYA SWIM TEAM

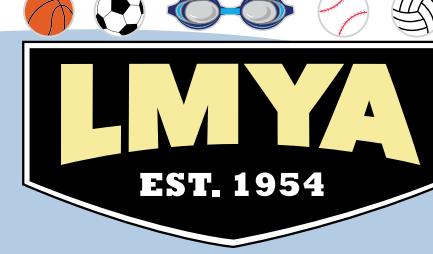
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Giancarlo Cereghino named to The Sporting News first team football all-American

By Jon Kingdom

When you go to a football game at any level, there is one player who absolutely wants to avoid attention and that's the team's long snapper.

As the long snapper for the last three years for the Campolindo varsity football team, Giancarlo "Coco" Cereghino, avoided being noticed by not having a single bad long snap. He was however noticed enough to be named the first team long snapper for The Sporting News' High School all-American team. "I learned that I made the All-American when my Athletic Director, Ray Meadows, showed me the email he received letting him know."

As a 110-pound freshman safety, Cereghino had been injured and had to wear a back brace, sitting out the first couple of games. "I saw someone long snapping, and I gave it a try and found I had

some raw talent to do it. Coach (Mike) Ahr saw me from across the way and we began working together on it and the rest is history."

Ahr became more than a coach to Cereghino: "Mike is the best coach I could ever ask for. He's helped me more than I could ever imagine and has been a role model and stable point for me."

Ahr appreciated how Cereghino was more than just an athlete: "Coco's a great kid on and off the field and in the community. He's a solid man of faith who has helped our players and other players away from Campo."

With the intention of eventually playing college football, Cereghino worked hard and got his weight up to 190 pounds as a defensive end on the JV team but was soon called up to the varsity to become the team's long snapper: "I felt I had the talent as a long snapper

and had a future with it if I worked hard at it. When I was brought up to the varsity, I wasn't going to play defensive end and I began snapping exclusively."

Cereghino did play defensive end on the scout team but not in any games. "My twin brother Dylan was a linebacker and also was a punter so I was able to snap to him."

Learning to deep snap is like shooting a free throw. You have to be willing to work on the form and master it. Cereghino took that to heart and saw that consistency was the key to being a good snapper: "If you can snap the ball once, that's great but let's see if you can do it 100 times over and over again and then being able to transition to blocking and holding your own at the line of scrimmage. Snap speed is very important and it all revolves around how many hours you can put

in and how disciplined you can be through high school."

Cereghino went to a number of special teams camps and the last two years he went to Kohl's Professional Kicking Camp and averaged 6.6 to 6.5 seconds on his snaps. Cereghino also learned how important the mental aspect of snapping is at the camps: "It encapsulates how well you can do when you don't have your best snap. If you overthink it and ponder about that bad snap, that next snap will also be bad because your mental game isn't on point. I was ranked number one in the nation on 24/7 sports and number two on Kohl's."

Though Campolindo head coach Kevin Macy was not his position coach, Cereghino spoke highly of their relationship: "[Coach Macy] always helped and supported me, understanding that I had a very specialized position, let-



Giancarlo Cereghino (44), with his family: father David, far left, brother Dylan (45), their mother Shannon (44) and sister Catelyn to his left.

Photo Kevin Zellmer

ting me do my thing. He made it a point to introduce me along with my teammates like Sean Parker, Micah Parker and Crosby Kelly to the visiting coaches who were recruiting for their colleges."

Cereghino had offers from Alabama, California, Tennessee, and Georgia but ultimately committed to accept a scholarship from UCLA.

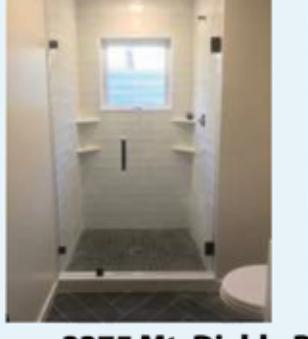
"I was able to graduate early from Campolindo and began at UCLA just after the new year. The school has great academics and I feel that the football team is going to be on the rise under our new head coach Bob Chesney. It's a great opportunity to go to the number one public university in the country and I can stay close to home."

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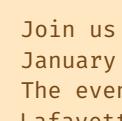
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