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Students gather outside Miramonte High School as part of a joint protest on Feb. 4, organized by Acalanes High School students.

Photo Jeff Heyman

## Lamorinda high school students take to streets to protest ICE actions

By Sharon K. Sobotta

Many older community members have been at the forefront of periodic "No Kings" protests in downtown Lafayette, as well as in Concord and Walnut Creek and elsewhere since President Donald Trump began serving his second term in January 2025, but seeing younger folks at these types of events was reportedly rare. That changed on Feb. 4 when hundreds of high school students from Acalanes, Cam-

polindo, Miramonte, Los Lomas, and Carondelet as well as students from Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School and others walked out of class a half-hour before the end of school to protest Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE) actions in Minnesota and honor the lives of Renee Good and Alex Pretti.

Evelyn Hollenberg, 16, who was one of the student organizers of the high school protest, says she's

grateful to the older community members for protesting even when youth are sometimes preoccupied with school and extracurricular activities. Hollenberg says she is counting down the days until she can vote, but until then, she feels an obligation to do what she can do and join in the protests.

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## New Mayor demands improvements to Moraga Shopping Center

By Vera Kochan

For several years, Moraga residents have complained about the dilapidated condition of the Moraga Shopping Center calling it a dump, a blight, tacky, unwelcoming, and an embarrassment to a community that considers itself affluent. While past town councils have felt that their hands were tied, because the property owners chose to operate in a status quo manner, new Moraga Mayor Kerry Hillis is demanding significant changes and improvements.

During the Town Council's Jan. 14 meeting, a staff report was presented by Planning Director Sonia Urzua outlining a proposed Professional Services Agreement with Kosmont Companies for on-call real estate and economic development advisory services. The initial payment is a not-to-exceed amount of \$60,000. There is enough funding in the General Fund Budget Fiscal Year 2025-2026 to cover the cost of a one-year agreement.

According to Urzua's staff report, "On February 26, 2025, the Town Council approved a top priority to develop and implement a plan to encourage com-

mercial landowners and business owners to develop their underutilized properties. Kosmont would begin with an in-person kickoff meeting with Town staff and a review of background materials (including prior studies and available market data), and coordinate with Town staff to engage private property owners and better understand near-term and long-term objectives and development constraints, including challenges associated with underutilized properties."

Kosmont has been a real estate advisory firm for 39 years "working with cities and public agencies on over 1,000 economic development strategies, real estate market analyses, and public and private projects."

Both Vice Mayor Brian Dolan and Town Manager Scott Mitnick have worked with Kosmont during their tenures at other cities and highly recommend their services for the Town's purposes. All council members agreed that something must be done with the Moraga Shopping Center.



Mayor focuses ire on state of Moraga Shopping Center, flanked by multi-million dollar homes.

Photo J. Wake

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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](http://www.lovelafayette.org)  
 Phone: (925) 284-1968  
**Chamber of Commerce:**  
[www.lafayetechamber.org](http://www.lafayetechamber.org)

## Lafayette Public Meetings

**City Council:** Regular Meeting: Monday, Jan. 23, 7 p.m.  
 Lafayette Library & Learning Center-Don Tatzin Community Hall  
**Planning Commission:** Tuesday, Jan. 17, 7 p.m.  
 Lafayette Library & Learning Center-Don Tatzin Community Hall  
**Design Review:** Monday, Jan. 23, 7 p.m.  
 Lafayette Library & Learning Center-Arts & Science Discovery Room

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Village

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Just one citation has been issued in response to the City of Lafayette's ban on gas powered leaf blowers since it went into effect July 1, 2024 – a sign that voluntary compliance is taking hold.

And, such is the trend that Gerardo Jiminez, the city's lone Code Enforcement Officer tasked with following up on complaints made by residents in response to scofflaws, hopes will persist in the year ahead.

Jiminez noted an uptick in complaints from 2024 to 2025 made to his office as calls rose from 487 to 571.

Issuing a citation is the last thing Jiminez says he wishes to do, with educating the ap-

parent violators the preferred course of action.

"Regardless of who they hire, it is the responsibility of the homeowner to provide the (landscape crews) with the resources and requirements, at the very least, to stay in compliance," he said.

To that end, he emphasized that "a very friendly letter" informing a resident that they are in violation is the first step in the process after a complaint has been logged, to which Jiminez hopes the individual self-polices their behavior and no further complaints result.

But, if it comes to it, a notice of violation could follow. The ulti-

mate hope is that violators comply, and after 30 days, the matter is closed. But a report about the specific residence will remain on file just in case a new complaint is made.

The hardest part of Jimenez's job is getting complaining residents to sign a Disclosure Form. Doing so means complainants may have to testify against the offending party if the matter goes to court.

Jiminez encourages photos of the alleged violation be taken when residents make a complaint. Otherwise, he noted, it takes a lot more time for him to investigate and see firsthand when a violation is taking place.

## Residents embrace gas leaf blower ban

By David Scholz



Lafayette resident Dorothy Walker tries out a hand-held electric leaf blower.

Photo David Scholz

"It is lengthy process, but I try to give the residents a chance to comply," he said. "My goal is not to write citations; the goal is always voluntary compliance."

A common situation Jiminez finds is that the violations at times involve a property where its owner doesn't reside there, and there is either a lack of awareness about the gas-powered ban or they have taken it on good faith that the landscaping crew who was hired had been following the law.

Just as before the gas-powered leaf blower ban took effect in mid-2024, the City of Lafayette is continuing to offer its free loaner program for residents to borrow either a commercial backpack electric leaf blower or a smaller hand-held model. The leaf blowers are available for homeowners to try out the equipment and understand how much of a charge batteries carry for the equipment before making a financial investment for their residence.

For details about the loaner program, visit: <https://www.lovelafayette.org/city-hall/commissions-committees/environmental-task-force/electric-leaf-blower-lending-program>

## High school students protest ICE



Acalanes High School students protest along the sidewalks surrounding the school parking lot on Feb. 4.

Photo Margaux Stone

## LAFAYETTE

Get Involved  
 Lafayette City Council  
 Seeks Citizen Volunteers

**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.

**Environmental Task Force (ETF):** develops and implements policies and programs that will enable the City and its residents to meet their needs 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.

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

**POSITIONS OPEN UNTIL FILLED**

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indifferent.

"People tend to have a perception that teenagers just don't really care about what's happening in their society, in their world, and are kind of just disconnected trying to get by," Deepak said. "But we do care. The things that are happening now are what we're going to grow up into and going to live in. We need to show that we do care and stand in solidarity."

For those who feel a little too disheartened or overwhelmed by the current state of politics in the country, Deepak urges them to push through and stand up for

others. "If it's not you or your group that's being targeted, it'll be some other marginalized person or group that they will try and deport from this country, and then it'll be people who even just disagree with them, where people have different ideas and it'll just keep going; it's a very slippery slope. We can't just allow this to happen. We have to show up."

Participating high school students walked out of class precisely at 2:30 p.m. on Feb. 4 and then took to the peripheries of their respective schools.

## Lafayette council discusses new objective design standards

By Gwyneth Lee



Flat roofs like this one at 210 Lafayette Circle were a point of contention for the Lafayette City Council during its Jan. 12 meeting.

Photo J. Wake

Lafayette Senior Planner Alry Cassidy introduced Objective Design Standards (ODS) to the City Council during its Jan. 12 meeting, before turning the presentation over to Monica Szydlik, Senior Associate for Lisa Wise Consulting. Design standards regulate the design, architecture, and layout of a site and building. Recent state law now requires that certain development applications be reviewed using only objective standards.

Lafayette's ODS Phase 1, adopted in 2019, created priority standards to address the building height, scale, and design, pedestrian access, and outdoor space, among other priorities, and was implemented through the ODS form. In December 2024, Lafayette's 6th Cycle Housing Element was adopted, and in January 2025, the city adopted Ordinance 696. Ordinance 696 approved a Zoning Text Amendment and a Zoning Map Amendment to rezone certain areas, though this did not include modifications to the ODS form, focusing on objective development standards, rather than design.

The purpose of Cassidy's presentation was to present the new draft of ODS Phase 2 for the City Council to review and offer their feedback. ODS Phase 2 plans to create detailed, predictable design standards, which will apply to multi-family, commercial, and mixed-use residential development.

"After the council and public make feedback to staff, staff will make updates as directed and return to council with an adoptable draft," Cassidy said in the meeting. "No action is required to adopt this ODS draft, as it is an implementation step of the

housing element, which has already been fully analyzed by CEQA (California Environmental Quality Act)."

The council and several members of the public provided feedback about ODS Phase 2, with a significant portion of the discussion focusing on the roof forms and height. The council pushed for stronger requirements mandating pitched roofs on buildings over two stories, which could include a mansard-style roof that mimics a pitched roof at the building's edges, but hides the flat roof behind it where equipment can be placed.

The council also had concerns that the draft standards would allow for too much low-quality material usage. They objected to the standard allowing up to 70 percent of a façade to be stucco and concrete, and requested the standards be capped at the combined total of stucco, concrete, and concrete block at a lower percentage.

There were also some concerns about the building massing and articulation, which is the three-dimensional, detailed design of a building's exterior surface. Council Member Susan Candell argued that the articulation options need to be "substantial," as it allowed for elements that were temporary or lacked architectural heft. Candell also requested that one item previously removed from the Planning Commission draft be added back to avoid boxy, massive, and flat homogenous structures.

The council requested that staff emphasize the city's mission statement and purpose, and asked staff to include a topic sentence that mirrored the mission statement, to underscore what they are looking for. They also requested that staff de-

velop a booklet or web page containing visual examples of design standards for developers to view.

Many of the public comments were critical of the draft ODS, largely stemming from fears that the new standards would destroy Lafayette's character. A majority of the feedback focused on preserving the city's semi-rural character, with residents worrying that the draft standards failed to uphold the city's mission statement to make Lafayette a "small-town community with a semi-rural ambiance." Specifically, many addressed a desire to not look like Walnut Creek.

One resident, Eliot Hudson, submitted a video presentation, which several other residents supported, with a detailed revision of the draft standards. The video included specific technical demands, including banning flat roofs, arguing against the allowance of 60% glass coverage, and the use of 70% stucco or concrete materials.

While a large majority of the public pushed for stricter aesthetic standards, Chair of the Design Review Commission Glenn Cass spoke as a resident to offer a counter-perspective. Cass warned that for six-story buildings, there was no "semi-rural" style, and that completely restricting flat roofs would lead to developers requesting waivers, and noted that the strict mandates would increase costs, considering the affordability aspect of the mandates.

Staff will proceed with revising the draft standards based on the council and public's feedback, before returning to the Planning Commission and then the council for a final review.

## LARIG participates in Winter Radio Field Day



The Lamorinda Area Radio Interest Group participated in Winter Field Day on Jan. 24. Al Archangel and Jeff Pea-

cock set up on the ridge overlooking the ball fields in the Lafayette Community Park. As transmission was less than optimal at that site, they moved to the Lafayette Reservoir. — S. O'Doherty



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<b>Burrata with prosciutto and arugula</b>	<b>12.00</b>
<b>Polpettine</b>	<b>14.00</b>
4 Neapolitan style home made meatballs in spicy marinara sauce with mozzarella and grilled bread	
<b>Cotoletta</b>	<b>14.00</b>
Chicken strips served with French fries	
<b>Calamaritti Fritti with spicy marinari</b>	<b>16.00</b>
<b>Farfallette Villa Borghese</b>	<b>16.00</b>
Bowtie pasta with free-range chicken, peas, mushrooms, prosciutto and cream	
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Phone: (925) 888-7022  
**Chamber of Commerce:**  
www.moragachamber.org  
**Moraga Citizens' Network:**  
www.moragacitizensnetwork.org  
**Town Council Meeting,**  
Wednesday, Feb. 11, 5:30 p.m.,  
Council Chamber  
**Planning Commission ,**  
Tuesday, Feb. 17,

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submit.lamorindaweekly@gmail.com

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## EBMUD undertakes Carter and Arroyo Reservoir Improvement Project

By Vera Kochan

East Bay Municipal Utility District has begun the Carter and Arroyo Reservoir Improvement Project with the intention of enhancing water quality, renewing aging infrastructure, and improving operational flexibility and resiliency for the Carter Pressure Zone located at the end of Alta Mesa Drive in Moraga. The project also includes replacing the Town's existing Arroyo Reservoir with two new tanks located at the end of Shannon Court.

EBMUD held a community Zoom meeting on Jan. 29 to discuss their plans and answer any questions from the public. The utility's representatives included:

EBMUD Board Director Marguerite Young, Community Affairs Representative Joe Voelker, Associate Civil Engineer Construction Division Michael Reid, Manager of Water Distribution Planning Dave Rehnstrom, Manager of Construction Division Michael Hartlaub, Director of Operations and Maintenance Dave Briggs, and Senior Civil Engineer Ben Townley.

Besides the aforementioned objectives, additional goals include maintaining fire flow capacity for emergency response readiness and improving site safety by incorporating the latest safety standards at Carter Reservoir.

Until recently, Arroyo Reservoir was the only facility in service. It holds 1 million gallons of water. The Carter Reservoir had been out of service since 2011 and was not contributing to the system. Both pumping plants worked together to move water to its destinations with a total pumping capacity of 1.1 million gallons per day. With that combined capacity, only Arroyo Reservoir has been the sole operational storage facility for the past 14 years. Even though Carter Reservoir had been out of service for over a decade, its water



Old Arroyo Reservoir tank to be replaced by two new smaller tanks.

distribution system was still operational to maintain existing fire flow requirements to protect the Town.

Phase 1 of the Project took place between April and December 2025 with the rehabilitation of Carter Reservoir and its return to service with a new protective coating and roof replacement to ensure long-term reliability. During this time Arroyo Reservoir remained functional.

January 2026 to December 2027 will see the replacement of Arroyo Reservoir which will entail substituting it with two smaller tanks, each with a 0.29-million-gallon capacity, for a total of 0.58 million gallons. The replacement will serve to modernize the water distribution system and improve flexibility during seasonal demands.

be performed that might cause sparking to dry grasses. There will be a dedicated fire watch during all hot work, and any areas around hot work will be wetted before and during construction.

Additionally, water service will continue throughout the construction process with reliable pressure during the Project. EBMUD addressed Moraga-Orinda Fire District concerns by adding an on-site generator.

Sign up for alerts at: [ebmud.com/alerts](http://ebmud.com/alerts). For any questions send emails to: [construction-east@ebmud.com](mailto:construction-east@ebmud.com).

EBMUD wants to reassure residents that no "hot work" will be done during Red Flag Warning days. This means that no electrical work will

## Moraga Shopping Center improvements



RVs parked off of School Street behind Safeway.

Photo J. Wake

..continued from Page A1

Prior to Hillis giving his comments on the matter, he warned his fellow council members that his thoughts would not be brief, calling what he had to say as "tough love," and describing

Moraga as "a scenic and uniquely isolated cul de sac community with eye-popping property values and fantastic schools, yet with no downtown, few recreational amenities other than largely unimproved open spaces and decaying relics of another age's idea for commercial districts.

"Through it all we have largely ignored one asset that Moraga has, that no one else in our county can claim, the only traditional 4-year university in all of Contra Costa County – Saint Mary's College – a small school with one of the

available to rent as the landowner is using them to store decades worth of accumulated who-knows-what, and acres and acres of land that has never been developed in human history – and I'm not over-stating that."

Hillis reminded everyone that for approximately the past three years, since Mittnick was hired as town manager, a major focus of his energies was directed toward building a rapport with the Moraga Shopping Center property owners. The town has even upzoned the area, virtually increasing the value by "tens of millions of dollars. Potentially hundreds of millions of dollars" to no avail.

"We are all tired of beating our heads against the wall," Hillis continued, "and begging the owners to participate in capitalism and making multiple future generations of their family extravagantly wealthy. That is not our job."

Hillis pointed out that Rheem Valley Shopping Center's property owners are more than happy to work with the Town. A case in point, the recent upgrade to CVS's exterior and the incoming Grocery Outlet. He also noted other ways that Rheem has out-shined Moraga's

downtown with the only post office, the Town Offices and Chambers and two gyms located on that side of the Town.

"We need to make the entirety of Moraga, not just the part by the country club, look like a place that merits our \$2 million property values," said Hillis, "and to that, we must double-down on vigorous code enforcement to compel errant landowners and business owners to not treat our scenic corridors as their private junk heaps, or a place to illegally store an RV encampment, which as I've already pointed out, is a public health threat. What was allowed in the past will not be tolerated anymore – period. End of story!"

Hillis proposed the idea of a vacant storefront tax as incentive to bring businesses into downtown. He also stressed that Moraga needs to aid SMC with whatever progress they require in building new college facilities. And, by improving the shopping center, the Town will help to increase student enrollment.

Before a unanimous council vote to retain Kosmont's services, Hillis concluded, "With the aid of Kosmont we will finally have the safe, beautiful, and engaging community we all want."

# Moraga and Orinda awarded \$508K grant for Moraga Way Safety Study

By Vera Kochan



**Moraga Way heading toward Orinda (in front of MOFD Station 41, near School Street)**

Photo Vera Kochan

The Town of Moraga and the City of Orinda are joining forces for the Moraga Way Safety and Connectivity Planning Study. To that end, both municipalities are sharing a \$508,000 federal Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) Planning and Development grant.

The study is meant to evaluate the 4.7-mile Moraga Way corridor that stretches from Moraga Road to the Orinda BART Station to develop a community-informed corridor concept meant to improve safety and connectivity for walking, cycling, driving and transit. It is a planning study only. It does not include final design or construction.

The architect of this plan, retired Moraga Public Works Director/Town Engineer Shawn Knapp, intended this shared-use path to also function as an emergency access lane during disasters, allowing emergency responders to reach affected areas when regular roadways are congested.

"I was very happy to receive the news that the joint Town of Moraga

and City of Orinda had been awarded the SS4A planning grant for analyzing feasibility to construct multi-use regional trails along Moraga Way," stated Knapp. "In times of emergency, the regional trails could be used for emergency vehicle access (EVA). An example of EVA in Moraga is that portion of the Lafayette-Moraga Regional Trail between the Canyon Road Bridge and Westchester Street in the Moraga Country Club (MCC). It was designed as an EVA because of the MCC singular public access along St. Andrews Drive."

Knapp first began developing the concept in 2018, after completing the Moraga Way Improvement Project which provided a myriad of safety improvements including new street pavement, bike lanes and sidewalk/pathways within the project's budget limits. However, he felt that "more Moraga Way safety improvements were greatly needed in consideration of wildfire and other emergency evacuations, transit, localized conges-

tion, safety for school children using the roadway to get to and from schools, alternative methods for commuting, and viable and safe trails for general recreation for families. To get there, I had envisioned interconnecting the existing Lafayette-Moraga Regional Trail with the construction of additional trails to criss-cross Moraga. The Moraga Way Regional Trail project would be the starting point with Camino Pablo and Moraga Road as possible next candidates for trails."

"Resident safety is our top priority," said Moraga Mayor Kerry Hillis, "and this funding is a critical first step toward a safer Moraga Way for everyone, whether you walk, bike, drive, or take transit. This study will help us evaluate a protected shared-use path and other practical safety improvements along a key connection to BART, while also exploring how the corridor can better support emergency response and evacuation when it matters most. Just as important, this work reflects the strong partnership between Moraga and Orinda, as meaningful progress on Moraga Way depends on planning together across city boundaries."

Orinda Mayor Brandy Iverson stated, "This project reflects a forward-thinking approach to how Orinda and Moraga plan for the future. It addresses congestion and safety on a road that cannot be widened, by giving residents more ways to move within their com-

munity that are safe and easy to use. Moraga and Orinda are closely linked by our shared dependence on this corridor, and meaningful progress means reimagining it as a place that works better for everyone, supporting everyday mobility, strengthening resilience, and enhancing quality of life."

Iverson added, "Both congestion on Moraga Way (and its safety issues for people walking or biking) and evacuation concerns are two of the biggest challenges we face. Getting a grant that is meaningful enough to do a feasibility

study means we can get started right away on what is going to be a long process, but one that could make a real difference to our residents."

"The success of obtaining the Moraga Way SS4A Study Grant was based on the extensive partnership and collaboration of the Lamorinda City and Town agencies, as well as the great technical support from Contra Costa Transportation Authority," explained Knapp. "Additionally, a number of agencies wrote supporting letters for the project including

Moraga-Orinda Fire District, District 2 Supervisor Candace Andersen, United States Congressman Mark DeSaulnier, and State Assemblyperson Rebecca Bauer-Kahan."

Added Knapp, "I have completed so many different projects in Moraga during my engineering career. I look back proudly and feel that I have made a difference. Now, if the Moraga Way Regional Trail project is one day constructed, it would be my pinnacle of conceived safety projects for the community."

## Academy Cadet awarded post-graduate Marshall Scholarship

Submitted by Jeffrey Troth, U.S. Air Force Academy

U.S. Air Force Academy Cadet 1st Class Mark Tang, Class of 2026, has been awarded the highly competitive Marshall Scholarship. Upon his graduation this May, Tang will commission into the U.S. Space Force, making him the Academy's first Space Force Marshall Scholar.

A political science and management major, Tang has conducted research on nuclear non-proliferation with the Institute for National Security Studies in the Republic of Korea and Japan. Tang also interned at the Joint Staff Strategic Deterrence and Nuclear Planning Division at the Pentagon and the Nevada Test Site. He was a member of the Academy's Men's Colle-

giate Lacrosse Association team and has served in many leadership positions where he oversaw policy reform and implementation for the 4,000-person cadet wing.

"Being named a Marshall Scholar is an incredible honor and opportunity to represent the Air Force Academy and the U.S. Space Force internationally. It is an incredible honor to be the Academy's first Space Force officer-candidate to be named a Marshall Scholar," said Tang, a native of Moraga and graduate of Miramonte High School. "The Air Force Academy prepared me for this scholarship and beyond by combining academic rigor with real military leadership experience



**Mark Tang** Photo provided and athletic training. The demands of balancing academics, research, military training and service forced me to develop discipline and resilience."



## 86 years ago, LAFAYETTE'S ICONIC PARK THEATER brought arts, culture, entertainment — and community — to downtown Lafayette. Now, it's COMMUNITY, working together to bring this historic cinema back to life.

The building permit has been received! The renovation has begun! The Park WILL REOPEN in 2027! It is with deep gratitude that the Board of Directors of the all-volunteer Park Theater Trust acknowledges the following businesses and civic partners for their **generous contributions in 2025** to The Park Theater Renovation Capital Campaign.

Arcsine Architecture & Design  
Bali Construction  
BlueGoo Photography  
Bowles & Verna, LLP  
Boy Scout Troop 204  
City of Lafayette  
Community Foundation of Lafayette  
Compass Marketing  
Contra Costa County Livable Communities Trust  
Cresco Equipment Rentals  
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Visit [parktheatertrust.org](http://parktheatertrust.org) to learn how you can contribute to this exciting region-wide effort.

Donations are cumulative toward exciting perks and final on-site recognition once The Park reopens.

Our **2025 Honor Roll** of Park Theater Supporters is now posted on-site at the cinema.

### With sincere thanks,

The Park Theater Trust Board of Directors — Peter Berkowitz, Kathy Bowles, Jana Corey Tracey Karsten Farrell, Angie Ferris, John McCormick

The Park Theater Trust (TPTT) successfully purchased the Park Theater cinema for the community in 2021. TPTT's mission is to restore and operate Lafayette's iconic Park Theater building and revitalize it into an accessible and inclusive, community-centered cinema, arts, and culture hub with programming that includes Hollywood new releases and classics, critically acclaimed independent and foreign films, live music, and engaging non-film events. The anticipated reopening date for The Park Theater is first quarter 2027.

The Park Theater Trust is a proud member of The League of Historic American Theaters, Arthouse Convergence, and the Lafayette Chamber of Commerce.





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Phone (925) 253-4200  
**Chamber of Commerce:**  
www.orindachamber.org  
**The Orinda Association:**  
www.orindaassociation.org

**City Council Reg. Meeting:**  
Tuesday, Feb. 17, 7 p.m.  
Orinda Library Auditorium  
**Planning Commission:**  
Tuesday, Feb. 24, 7 p.m.  
Orinda Library Auditorium  
**Supplemental Sales Tax  
Oversight Commission**  
Wednesday, Feb. 11, 6:30 p.m.  
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COMPASS

## Orinda moves to approve multifamily housing on Altarinda Road

By Sora O'Doherty

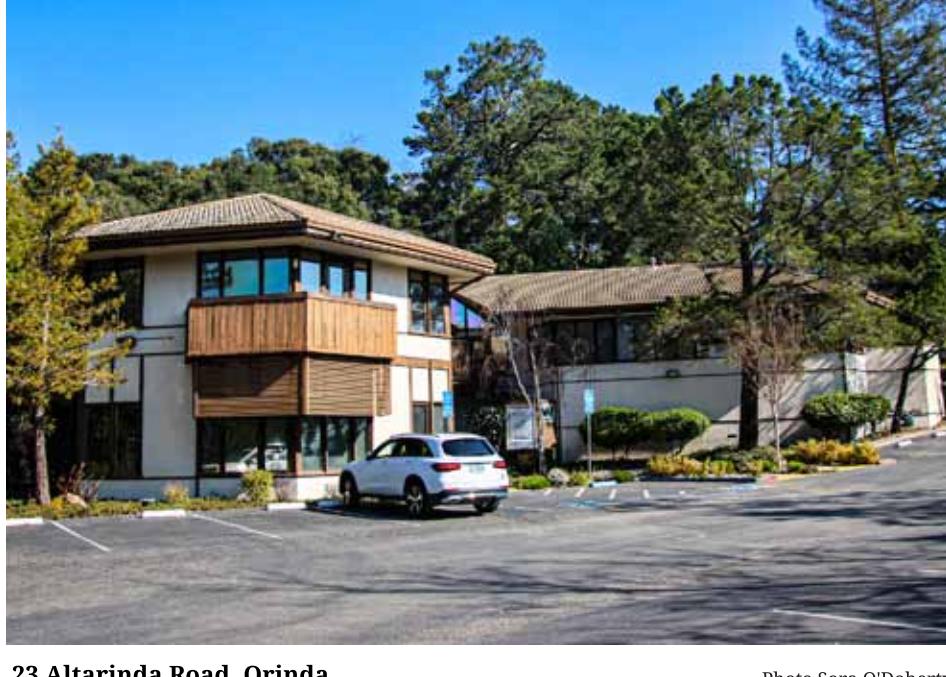
Despite objections, the Orinda City Council on Feb. 3 voted unanimously to move forward with approval of a project that could eventually lead to the existing medical office building located at 23 Altarinda Road being replaced with a multifamily housing development. Objections to the plan were voiced by Michele Jacobson on behalf of Orindians for Safe Emergency Evacuation (OSEE) and retired attorney Nick Waranoff.

The council received a presentation by Orinda Principal Planner Christine Thompson. The applicant, Brian Griggs, asked the council to take two actions: 1) to amend Orinda's General Plan land use designation from "Business and Professional Offices" to "Downtown – General" and 2) a zoning map amendment to change the zoning district from "DO (Downtown Office)" to "DG (Downtown General)".

If adopted, the new general plan land use designation and new zoning designation would continue to allow office uses but would expand the allowed land uses of 23 Altarinda Road to include multifamily residential uses at a minimum density of 20 units per acre and a maximum density of 25 units per acre. No project is proposed at the current time.

The 0.6-acre parcel is located on the north side of Altarinda Road, beside the campus of the Orinda Academy and close to the housing developments Orindawoods and Orinda Grove. It is currently occupied by an underutilized two-story medical office building.

OSEE had previously sued the city, maintaining that the addition of housing in downtown Orinda under the city's Plan Orinda would hamper emergency evacuation and endanger Orinda residents in the event of a wildfire. They succeeded partially, with the court issuing a writ requiring the city to rescind its certification of the original Plan Orinda final environmental impact report, revise the EIR in part, certify the revised EIR, and adopt revised Findings and Statement of Overriding Considerations under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) in support of its 2023 approval of the Housing Element and Safety Element update components



23 Altarinda Road, Orinda

Photo Sora O'Doherty

of Plan Orinda. All of these actions have been taken by the city.

In written comments, Jacobson opined that the proposed rezoning of 23 Altarinda Road would increase the allowed density of downtown beyond what is already allowed by the final Housing Element, which she claimed would directly contradict the court's orders. "To avoid defying the court, the council could balance the rezoning of Altarinda Road with a simultaneous and equivalent reduction of density on another parcel(s) in the existing Plan Orinda Housing Element. Otherwise, the city would be exposing itself to the exact same legal challenge that they have already lost," she concluded.

In defense of his application, Griggs said that he respected the opinions of Waranoff and Jacobson and takes wildfire safety very seriously. However, he said, "wildfire concerns should not create a moratorium on sites which are appropriate for redevelopment into housing." Griggs, a longtime Lafayette resident, added that he and his partners have "balanced the need for housing with respect for the communities we live in." Griggs also said that there is no guarantee that they will be applying for a new project on the site.

In his public comments, Waranoff noted that, since the fire in Pacific Palisades a little over a year ago, Orinda is now the community in California most at risk of wildfire. He suggested that the city should not approve development at the risk of a loss of life, and suggested that the staff report confirmed

that if a housing project were built at Altarinda Road it would add as much as 24 to 33 minutes to evacuation time.

Staff relied on data from the Ladris application, which the city was required to subscribe to as part of the decision in the OSEE case. Based on that data, it was the opinion of staff that evacuation times would not be substantially increased by the presence of a multi-family housing unit at 23 Altarinda Road, if one were ever built. In fact, it was suggested by a council member that the amount of traffic and cars could even be less than at a medical office building.

In the staff report, it was explained that "the city is committed to added evacuation measures to improve safety despite the unavoidable impacts which are deemed acceptable under CEQA guidelines. The city is using evacuation modeling software from Ladris AI and has made a public portal available for use by the public. The evacuation modeling tool is housed on the city's new OrindaReady.com website and is pre-populated with more than 100 evacuation scenarios, including large scale evacuation efforts for North and South Orinda with new housing development for housing element sites and current baseline amounts."

After public comments, Waranoff noted that, since the fire in Pacific Palisades a little over a year ago, Orinda is now the community in California most at risk of wildfire. He suggested that the city should not approve development at the risk of a loss of life, and suggested that the staff report confirmed

the sites already adopted in the housing element will not be developed. "I think 23 Altarinda Road is a perfect site for housing in the city. I think it will give us momentum," he concluded, noting that he believes that any impact from the development would be minimal.

Council Member Latika Malkani said this project sounds like it will be in a location where there are other homes, so it won't change the look and feel of Orinda in a material way. Council member Janet Riley agreed, saying. "I think this is a good opportunity to rezone this one property," citing its small size and locations near other residential developments.

Mayor Bandon Iverson brought the discussion to a close, telling the council, "I think you all articulated a really good rationale. I would just remind ourselves and the public that this is everything that the state laws have been aiming at. It's within a half mile of BART. One of the comments in the initial review was that this site should have been zoned to 75 units an acre. and they were disappointed that it wasn't more dense. It's walkable. It's an infill project. We should do this. And so, I really agree with what sounds like a consensus."

There will be training sessions for the public on the use of Ladris. Training webinars will take place on Feb. 18, at 2 p.m. and on Feb. 24, at 6 p.m. via Zoom. For more information, go to the Orinda Ready website, [www.orindaready.com](http://www.orindaready.com)

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## FSMO receives \$40K grant to help low-income residents with vegetation removal

By Sora O'Doherty

Local nonprofit group Fire Safe Moraga-Orinda (FSMO) has been granted \$40,000 by Contra Costa County Supervisor Candace Andersen. The grant is intended to identify and help vulnerable/low-income residents prepare their properties for wildfire and plan for evacuation – neighbors helping neighbors.

The application for the grant was submitted to the county by Marc Evans, FSMO president. The program for which he sought the funding is the FSMO Wildfire Prevention Defensible Space Project for Individual Vulnerable Residents. The project will provide funding to selected vulnerable residents, who live within the Moraga-Orinda Fire District boundary.

The funds will be used to pay for Hazardous Vegetation Removal Contractors to cut

grasses, limb trees, remove dead wood and dry vegetation material on private property. In addition, the grant will cover removal of all material, such as branches, leaves, and needles, from the roof and gutters. Completed work will comply with the MOFD Exterior Wildfire Hazards Abatement Requirements (e.g., the MOFD exterior fire code).

Evans explained that vulnerable residents are typically elderly, with limited ability to perform the necessary defensible space work on their homes. These vulnerable residents are also the least likely to survive or recover from a significant wildfire event. This project is aligned with the FSMO mission to help residents prepare for and respond to the effects of wildfire.

In applying for the grant, Evans said that it

was assumed that each vulnerable resident would require an average of \$2,000 of hazardous vegetation removal from their private property. A \$50,000 grant would support 25 vulnerable residents.

Although the grant of the county is only \$40,000, FSMO has an additional \$10,000 available from its fundraising efforts. The Orinda Community Foundation has donated \$2,500 to FSMO for each of the past three years, for example.

FSMO, in conjunction with the Moraga Orinda Firesafe Network and MOFD, will be implementing outreach efforts to identify and assist those who qualify for this special assistance.

Last year, the Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors indicated its desire to allocate \$1 million per District from the COVID 19 FEMA Reserve funds for direction by

each District Supervisor. The amount in question was \$37,544,395.

The grant funds originally came from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds. In July, the Board allocated \$15,000 per District to fund the costs of a community engagement process to help inform the allocation of the \$1 million per District.

Supervisor Andersen allocated a number of grants in District 2. In addition to the FSMO grant, other grants went to, among others, Lamorinda Village, Meals on Wheels, Moraga Education Foundation, Orinda Network of Education, Lafayette Partners in Education, and the Orinda Association's Seniors Around Town program.

## AUHSD moves ahead with Miramonte Pool Restoration

By Sora O'Doherty

The Acalanes Union High School District board decided in January to move ahead with the restoration of the swimming pool at Miramonte High School by breaking the project down into two separate parts. Previously the board had considered restoring the swimming pool as well as the locker room, but owing to rising prices, they chose to move ahead with the swimming pool part of the project only for now, leaving the locker room for later action.

The contract for the pool plaster and lights was awarded to Waterworks Industries, Inc. Waterworks was the lowest bidder for the project at \$2,522,473. Three additional bids were received, but all

were higher.

At the January meeting of the board, Superintendent John Nickerson said that with the award of the contract, work of the pool will take place during the summer of 2026. The district will plan to renovate the locker room in a separate project in the future. While the locker room remains functional, the disrepair of the pool was critical.

Nickerson noted that just that morning he had received a report concerning a portion of the cantilever deck. Apparently, a good size chunk of the deck had fallen into the pool. "We are working to patch it together," he reported, so that hopefully it will last through one more swim season. Nickerson also

said that there was enough cash flow to afford the project through Fund 35 and Fund 21.

AUHSD, which includes six school properties in Orinda, Moraga, Lafayette and Walnut Creek, has six pools, four of which were out of service over the winter break, according to Nickerson. "Keeping our pools up and operational is a challenge and making sure that we can have them open is a priority," he concluded.

The locker room project is mostly about making it accessible to individuals with disabilities by fixing the existing ramp. That project is also estimated to require about \$2 million to complete.

In other AUHSD news, the district held its

annual board reorganization on Dec. 17, 2025. Wendy Reicher was elected Board President for the 2026 calendar year. Nancy Kendzierski was elected to serve as Board Clerk. Superintendent John Nickerson was elected to serve as Secretary to the Governing Board for the 2026 calendar year, in accordance with the terms of his employment contract.

## Orinda Library tile replacement to begin



Eric F. Anderson, Inc. has been awarded a \$163,569 contract to replace missing accent tiles on the Orinda Library. There was a com-

petitive bid process and the city of Orinda opened five bids on Dec. 9, 2025. Four bids were found to be non-responsive, leaving EFA

as the lowest responsive bidder. Photo shows one example of the missing or damaged tiles.

– S. O'Doherty

Photo Sora O'Doherty

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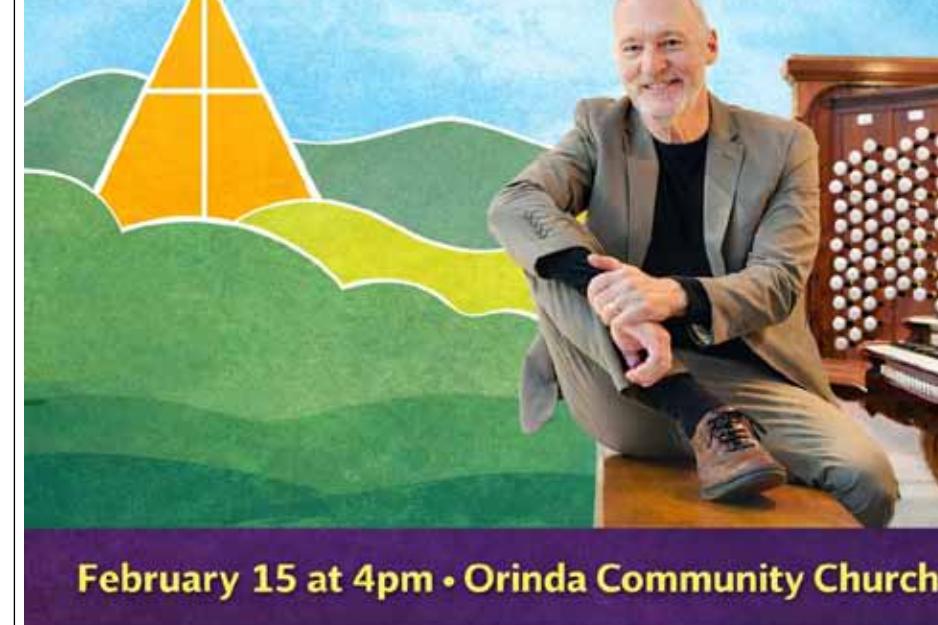
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# Give your Valentine the gift of crispy, buttery cookie goodness

By Susie Iventosch

## Valentine Cookies

### INGREDIENTS

3/4 cup unsalted butter (at room temperature)

1/4 cup granulated sugar

1/2 cup light brown sugar

1 large egg

2 tsp. pure vanilla extract

2 1/2 cups all-purpose flour

1/2 tsp. baking powder

1/2 tsp. salt

Icing and Decorating Ingredients

4 cups powdered sugar (sifted)

2 +/- tbsp. milk

1 tsp. vanilla powder (can use vanilla extract, but it will change the color of the icing.)

food coloring gels for decorating (Red and Pink)

sprinkles (to match the occasion)



Photo Susie Iventosch

### DIRECTIONS

Sift flour, baking powder, and salt into a medium sized bowl.

Cream together butter and both sugars until light and fluffy, scraping down the bowl with a rubber spatula as needed. Add egg and beat well. Stir in vanilla.

Add flour mixture and beat into butter mixture on low speed. Gather the dough into two balls.

Prepare two pieces of parchment paper with a dusting of flour and roll out half of the dough onto each parchment. Place the parchment paper with the dough on a baking sheet and completely cover with plastic wrap. Refrigerate for at least 2 hours, or overnight.

When ready to cut the cookie shapes and bake them, preheat the oven to 350 F. Remove one sheet of the rolled-out dough on the parchment paper from the baking sheet and place it on the counter or a cutting board. Place a new piece of parchment paper on the baking sheet.

Cut out the cookie shapes and place them onto the prepared pan. Gather up any extra dough and re-roll to continue to cut as many cookies as possible. With the last bit of dough, I usually just make a flat round cookie.

Bake the for about 10-12 minutes, or until golden brown and dough is set. (While the first batch is baking, you can start to cut out the second batch of dough.) Remove the cookies from the oven and cool for about 10 minutes before placing them on a rack for decorating. Repeat the process with the second batch of dough. Be sure cookies are completely cool before decorating.

Whisk together powdered sugar and vanilla powder. Slowly add milk until you get to a good icing consistency. You can always add more powdered sugar or more milk to get to a good consistency – not too runny, but not too thick. Add whatever food coloring you have selected. I used plain white and pink. I put the pink icing in a pastry bag fitted with small a plain round pastry tip.

Frost the cookies with your base color, (in my case the white) and allow to sit for few minutes. Then, using the second color in the pastry bag, pipe designs onto the frosted cookie. Using a toothpick, swirl the pink icing to make fun designs. Decorate with the sprinkles at once, before the icing gets hard. Allow decorated cookies to sit for about an hour before packing them into storage containers or bags.

These cookies store well in an airtight container in the refrigerator for about a week, and in the freezer for up to a month.

## Letter from the Publisher

Dear Lamorinda readers,

As we enter our 20th year of publishing Lamorinda Weekly, I thought a note to all of you would be helpful.

Many of you are aware that 15 months ago our publisher, Andy Scheck, had an accident. He fell through our second-story window while replacing it and was medevac'd to a trauma hospital, where he received excellent care and recovered remarkably well. However, he has not been able to return to work at the paper and has now retired.

After the accident, our daughter Jaya added production layout to her editing duties, I took on many other details, and we scaled back to just 13 issues in 2025. We received heartfelt notes, emails, and calls from many readers and friends that truly kept us going—thank you all.

Our reporters, columnists, printer, and carrier continued to write, print, and deliver the paper to your driveways, despite the many emotional and technical challenges we encountered.

Our advertisers were supportive of our need to pivot to a new production schedule, and their marketing dollars have kept this paper publishing.

Jaya and I were completely exhausted under the workload, but our long-time editor, Jennifer Wake, came out of retirement in September 2025 to return as our editor and saved our sanity.

During all this time, we were unable to upload issues to our website, and our website and email were often not working at all. Andy had written

all the code for our site and managed every part of that process before his accident.

I am happy to report that this problem has now been solved! Our website was rescued and rebuilt by Orinda resident Jeremy Conescu, who reached out to help and redesigned the site.

Our two most recent issues are now online; we will be uploading missing issues and updating the archive in the months to come.

Please check out the new website (lamorindaweekly.com) and look for your printed paper on the second Wednesday of each month.

Lastly, we could use your help to help keep the paper printing, delivering, and archiving. Please consider becoming a supporter by mailing a check to:

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Inside this Issue (January 14, 2026)

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

Local restaurant owners look for answers amid food truck competition

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

Lafayette receives Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting for 12th consecutive year

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

Lamorinda wine growers value a 'grace' to new tasting venue – Local Wines

Moraga receives yet another GFGA award

A look back at Rutherford Valley Shopping Center 60 years ago

Lamorinda faith, service communities close



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

By Sean O'Leary — January 14, 2026 — Page 1 — View as PDF

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...

Valentine's Day is a free pass to go all out on sweets, especially cookies covered in icing and sprinkles! These brown sugar Valentine's cookies fully embrace the moment. Crispy and buttery, with a hint of caramel flavor, they're the kind of cookies that disappear quickly from the counter (usually "just one more" at a time).

There's something extra special about baking for Valentine's Day — maybe it's the heart-shaped cutters, or the simple joy of making something sweet for the people you love. I love baking with light brown sugar and these brown sugar Valentine's Day sugar cookies are delicious with just the right texture. Once you try them, I'm pretty sure you'll fall in love with them.

Brown sugar gives them a richness while keeping them tender enough to melt in your mouth. The dough rolls out beautifully, bakes evenly, and holds its

shape, making it ideal for cutting into hearts, scallops, or any festive Valentine shape you can dream up.

Once the cookies are cool, the real fun begins. A smooth layer of white icing turns each cookie into a tiny canvas, and pink icing adds flair while the sprinkles add sparkle. Mini hearts, colorful sugars, and cheerful pops of color make every cookie feel like a mini celebration. There's no wrong way to decorate them — messy, playful designs are half the fun.

I used an offset spatula to spread the white icing on the cookies first. Then, I made the pink designs from pink icing I had put into a pastry bag



Susie can be reached at [suziventosch@gmail.com](mailto:suziventosch@gmail.com). This recipe can be found on our website: [www.lamorindaweekly.com](http://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>

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**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. Meetings: 4th Wednesday of the month at 6:00 p.m., in Walnut Creek

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

By Sean O'Leary — January 14, 2026 — Page 1 — View as PDF

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...

# ~ Life in LAMORINDA ~

## 'Mary Me' - a twist on V-Day

By Sharon K. Sobotta



From left: April Garro (Blue), Peter Dunn (Matteo) and Gaby Rose (playwright).

Photo Sharon K. Sobotta

Valentine's Day is not a rosy time of the year for everyone. For those who are on a quest to find love but have so far fallen short, for those

who've recently experienced break-ups, it can be particularly hard. A survey in Better Help suggests that some 15 million young American

adults say the day negatively impacts their mental health for some of those exact reasons.

Debut Playwright Gaby Rose believes that

love should be for everyone and that it could be found anywhere – even in a psychiatric center during a 72-hour involuntary hold. Rose's play, "Mary Me," will be on stage Feb. 13 and 14 at the Town Hall Theatre in Lafayette with a cast full of local artists and actors.

"The play centers around several patients and the connections they make inside and outside the psychiatric center in a short period of time," Rose said. "It explores the way that people can connect with each other in sad and unfortunate circumstances, as well as the ways that people choose to work on themselves – or choose not to."

Rose says she can see pieces of her own life and her own struggles reflected back at her with many of the characters. Her mother has a

schizophrenia diagnosis. "I hope this play helps people see the humanity in each other."

April Garro, who is also a teaching artist at Town Hall Theatre plays the part of Blue.

"Blue is a trans woman who's gone through a lot of struggles and has been kind of ostracized by society, by her family, and is struggling with dark impulses and self-harm," Garro said. "She has lots of anger, but underneath that anger is like a soft, squishy core."

It's not a stretch for Garro, who also identifies as a trans woman, to relate to the character she's playing on stage.

"I feel really connected to Blue, because sometimes we have these defense mechanisms that are up that kind of push people away, because we're not able to really recognize what our actual needs

are," Garro said. "That means we sometimes push people away, when what we actually really want is connection."

If play attendees leave remembering that everyone is struggling with something, Garro says she'll feel satisfied.

Peter Dunn plays the part of Matteo, who has a schizophrenia diagnosis. Dunn says even if Matteo is quirky and talks about non-existent people, he still is worthy of love. "If the audience takes away something, it would be that people, no matter (what diagnosis they have), still might have a heart of gold and might even be trying to get better."

To get tickets for the forthcoming show, visit [townhalltheatre.com](http://townhalltheatre.com). There are always 'pay what you can' options available to ensure that the play is accessible to everyone.

## A gem from Morocco: 'Calle Malaga' at Orinda Theatre

By Sophie Braccini

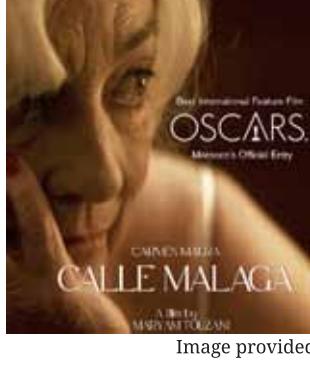


Image provided

You may have known that the city of Tangier, at the northern tip of Morocco, was a place of escape in the 1930s for Spaniards fleeing Franco's brutal dictatorship. Over the years, and even after democracy was restored in Spain, some stayed and had children who were raised in Tangier in a mixed Spanish/Moroc-

can culture. This is the backdrop of the delightful Moroccan movie, "Calle Malaga," brought to Orinda this month by the local nonprofit The International Film Showcase. It centers on Maria Angeles, a woman in her late 70s, and her fight to maintain her dignity. This beautiful film, at times funny, at times tragic, is a lesson in resilience. It changes the way we look at aging.

The film is set in the present time. Maria Angeles lives on Calle Malaga, a street in a neighborhood of Tangier with a strong Spanish influence. That language is spoken everywhere; the food bears a mix of Moroccan and Spanish influences. Maria was born in this town. Her apartment, bought by

her late husband, is full of prized objects and antiques. Among them a phonograph where she plays her favorite record, "Toda Una Vida" by Maria Dolores Pradera, a romantic ballad that reminds her of her late husband and their love. Everyone in the neighborhood, young and old, knows and loves her.

One day her daughter, Clara – a mother herself and in the middle of a harsh divorce compounded by financial issues – comes for a short visit and announces to her mother that she is going to sell the Tangier apartment because she needs the money to establish herself and her children in Madrid. It appears that the deceased father had put

the apartment in the daughter's name. Clara gives her mother a choice: come back with her to Madrid or go to a local retirement home. She quickly sells all her mother's prized antiques to a dealer, appoints a real estate broker, drops her mother in a local old folks' home, and goes back to Madrid.

From desperation to resurrection, the vanquished Maria Angeles is going to make a comeback. Grit, astuteness, community, and a passionate desire to live will bring her back to her feet.

The film, directed by Maryam Touzani, is competing in the Oscar International Film category for Morocco. This acclaimed movie is a tour de force by Spanish

actress Carmen Maura. Those of you who appreciate Spanish director Pedro Almodóvar and loved "Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown" will remember the beautiful Maura in her prime – her power, her expressiveness. Now at 80 years old, looking her age with grace and pride, she radiates

strength and passion. She is at times full of humor and provocation, daring and determined; she also has moments of doubt and sadness. She is a force to be reckoned with.

This wonderful movie will be presented at the Orinda Theatre for at least one week, starting on Feb. 20. Tickets at [Orindamovies.com](http://Orindamovies.com)

## Miramonte student helps transform regional public policy for the Bay Area

Submitted by Rick Vierra

For the first time ever, the Metropolitan Transportation Commission approved a \$22 million funding policy under MTC's CARE Program in November 2025 with additional funding in January 2026 to include and benefit youth that advances the expansion of housing choices and affordability, and reduce car dependency.

According to the MTC, the \$22 million program is funded by a mix of local, state and federal sources to support a mix of community-based transportation initiatives that have been identified as a high priority by local communities and through community power-building and engagement efforts.

Freida Vierra, a Miramonte High School sophomore and change agent motivated by ensuring all youth have the supports needed to reach their full potential, presented her policy proposal during MTC's competitive high school summer program. Her interest areas include regional transportation, environment, and housing policy solutions. What started as a cu-

riosity around youth well-being grew to an examination of built-environment, infrastructure barriers young people can face to become healthy, productive young adults who contribute to their communities.

"(This) matters deeply to me and young people because many of us rely on public transit every single day," stated Vierra, who rides public transit five days a week. "Whether we are traveling to school, jobs, internships, sports, or after-school activities, reliable and accessible transportation directly affects our opportunities. When transit works well, it helps us stay connected, involved, and safe. When it doesn't, it limits where we can go and what we are able to do. That is why including youth voices in this process is so important – we understand these challenges from daily, lived experience."

MTC's Community Action Resource and Empowerment (CARE) Program was co-created by the Community Advisory Working Group and community representatives. The Program funds



Freida Vierra

three categories: Community Power-building and Engagement (Pb+E) Grant and Learning Action Lab, Project Development Technical Assistance for Community-Based Transportation Projects, and Participatory Budgeting Process and Project Implementation. MTC provided grants to 16 community-based organization applicants totaling \$1.5 million for Pb+E in November 2025. MTC received 143 grant applications totaling \$18.9 million in requests. The program anticipates funding an additional \$1 million in January 2026 for Pb+E to accommodate more communities. Total Pb+E grants awarded will be up to \$2.5 million.

Photo provided

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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**

**Call for Art**, Slopes of Diablo 2026. The subject is the artist's perspective and interpretation of the awe-inspiring East Bay landmark Mount Diablo. Jurors are Paul Kratter and Tia Kratter, acclaimed instructors and painters of the California landscape. Artists residing in the San Francisco Bay Area are eligible to submit with a deadline of Thursday, May 7. Exhibition dates are June 6 through Aug. 1. First Place Award \$350, Second Place Award \$250, Third Place Award \$150. Apply at <https://app.entrythingy.com/valleyartgallery/slopes-of-diablo-2026/>

**Music**

**Diablo Symphony** presents "Mariachi Valentine" concert with Oscar Garibay and UC Davis Mariachi Ensemble on Sunday, Feb. 15, from 2 to 4:20 p.m., at Lesher Center for the Arts, 1601 Civic Dr., Walnut Creek. Cost: Adults \$45, Youth 13-17 \$15, Children 12 and under free; discount of \$35 each for groups of 10+ Seniors. For more info see <https://www.diablosymphony.org/events/sounds-of-the-americas-a-mariachi-valentine/> or call (559) 300-4409 or email [president@diablosymphony.org](mailto:president@diablosymphony.org).

**Orinda Community Church** is proud to present a free organ recital by the world-renowned organist Jonathan Dimmock, Sunday, Feb. 15, 4 p.m. at Orinda Community Church, 10 Irwin Way, Orinda. Jonathan Dimmock is principal organist at the Legion of Honor, organist for the San Francisco Symphony, and director of music at Congregation Sherith Israel. No tickets needed.

**Young People's Symphony Orchestra's** upcoming Winter Concert, "Echoes of the Northern Lights," Saturday, Feb. 21, 7:30 p.m. at First Church Berkeley. The program centers on Jean Sibelius's Symphony No. 1, alongside William Grant Still's Threnody: In Memory of Jean Sibelius, and features performances by YPSO's 2025-2026 Concerto Competition winners Emma You (Bruch Violin Concerto No. 1, Mvt. I) and Catherine Shin (Zigeunerweisen by Sarasate).

**Local Chamber Orchestra** Presents "Romancing the Classics" Sunday, Feb. 21, at 4 p.m., Walnut Creek Presbyterian Church, 1801 Lacassie Avenue, Walnut Creek. The orchestra, whose members range from teens to octogenarians, will present selections that depict the many facets of love: jubilation, conflict and pain, tenderness

**Not to be missed**

and magnificence. Mozart: Three Marches, K.408; Mendelssohn: The Beautiful Melusine; Haydn: Symphony No. 104 "London." \$25 General Admission, \$20 Seniors (62+), and \$10 Students. At the door or [www.ContraCostaChamberOrchestra.org](http://www.ContraCostaChamberOrchestra.org)

**Join the Campolindo Instrumental Music Program** for their Annual Jazz Dinner Dance on Feb. 27 from 6:30 to 10 p.m. for an evening of live music, great food, and community. Enjoy performances by Campolindo jazz ensembles, a delicious dinner from Havana Catering, and a lively night of dancing at the Don Tatzin Community Hall in the Lafayette Library, 3491 Mount Diablo Blvd. Admission \$75 (dinner + drink ticket) More info: [Campomusic.org](http://Campomusic.org)

**St. Paul's Concert Series'** next concert features Rebecca Rust, cellist and Friedrich Edelmann, bassoonist in a spectacular duet performance on Saturday, Feb. 28 at 7 p.m. at 1924 Trinity Avenue, Walnut Creek. Rust and Edelmann will present classical duet pieces by Bach, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven and other compositions especially created for them by Max Stern and Lawrence Sherr. No tickets necessary. Optional donations accepted. The performance will be simultaneously broadcast online. To obtain the online link and review the full concert program, visit St. Paul's website at [stpaulswc.org/concert-series](http://stpaulswc.org/concert-series).

**SonoMusette presents** Music of 20th Century Paris on Feb. 28, 7 p.m. at Town Hall Theatre, 3535 School Street, Lafayette. Audiences will be transported to

the heart of mid-20th century Paris as they enjoy the romance, drama, and melancholic beauty of the city's golden age of music. With a repertoire dedicated to the timeless works of Edith Piaf, Jacques Brel, and their contemporaries, this exceptional group revives the intimate atmosphere of a Montmartre cabaret. Tickets are \$30. Ticket Link: <https://www.townhalltheatre.com/sonomusette>

**Literature**

**Join the Sweet Thursday Author Series** on Thursday, Feb. 19 at 7 p.m. in the DTCH at the Lafayette Library to hear author, Charlotte Biltekoff. Register to attend in person at <https://tinyurl.com/sweet-feb2026>. The doors will open at 6:30 p.m. for coffee and sweets, and books will be available for purchase. This program is presented by The Friends of the Lafayette Library.

**Storytellers and story lovers**, enjoy a rare Bay Area appearance by storyteller Paul Strickland on March 4, at the Orinda Community Center. Paul will conduct an interactive storytelling workshop at 4:30 p.m. and a storytelling concert at 7 p.m. Paul's award-winning solo and collaborative performances have been featured at the National Storytelling Festival, comedy clubs, and Fringe Festival across the United States and Canada. Please go to [www.storysaac.org](http://www.storysaac.org) for more information.

**Other**

**Moraga Adobe Tours** - Starting in February, you can step inside Contra Costa County's oldest surviving home, and ex-

perience over 180 years of East Bay history. Each tour lasts about 60-90 minutes and is limited to 15 guests. Reservations are required at least 24 hours in advance for each person and can be made at <https://mora-gaAdobe.org/> where the available dates and times are also listed.

**Connections Academy**

at Gateway, a tuition-free online charter school within Community Collaborative Charter School and part of Gateway Community Charters, is now enrolling students in grades K-12 across Northern California for the 2026-27 school year. The virtual school offers a curriculum emphasizing academics and fundamental life skills, giving students the confidence they need to excel inside and beyond the virtual classroom and serves students in many Northern California areas including Contra Costa County.

**Snuggles & Struggles** — a Postpartum Support Group is open to all new moms. This is a free, supportive space for postpartum moms with babies in their first year to connect, feel heard, and navigate the real ups and downs of the postpartum season together. Facilitated by Dr. Katelyn Simons, Psy.D. on Thursdays, 1:30-2:30 p.m. at East Bay Health, 911 Moraga Rd., Ste 103, Lafayette. Questions? (925) 744-7600; [info@eastbayhealthcare.org](mailto:info@eastbayhealthcare.org).

**Contra Costa County Office of Education** will host its Spring Job Fair on Saturday, Feb. 28 at Pleasant Hill Middle School from 9 to 11:30 a.m. Attendees are encouraged to bring printed resumes and dress professionally for onsite interviews. For additional details about this free event, contact Morgan Broshar at (925) 942-3489.

**Join Mindful Littles** in assembling hygiene care kits for families in our community on Sunday Feb. 22 at Lamorinda Music for a delightful, hands-on, family-friendly experience! Together, we will assemble hygiene care kits, personalize and decorate each kit with love, learn about the communities we are supporting and why this work matters and connect with other families who value compassion and service. This event is free. Lamorinda Music is located at 81 Lafayette Circle, Lafayette. More info at <https://mindfullittles.org/>

**Join the Orinda Garden Club** for a free engaging community program with Douglas Kent, author of "Firescaping: Protecting Your Home with a Fire-Resistant Landscape," at the Orinda Library Auditorium March 26 from 10 to 11:30 a.m. Doug will share regenerative landscaping strategies that reduce fire risk and help homeowners prepare before, during, and after a firestorm. Doug's presentations are known for being educational, dynamic, and inspiring. In addition, Orinda City Manager Linda Smith will present a brief State of Orinda. Seating is limited and registration is required at <https://www.orindagc.org/community-events>

## Lamorinda's Religious Services



10 Irwin Way, Orinda | 925.254.4906 | [www.orindachurch.org](http://www.orindachurch.org)  
"No matter who you are, wherever you are on life's journey, you are welcome here!"

Sunday Service 10 am or join us online.  
Mondays 9:30 am Centering Prayer in the Chapel  
Wednesday 10 am Contemplative Worship in the Chapel

### Lafayette United Methodist Church

955 Moraga Road 925.284.4765 [thelumc.org](http://thelumc.org)

#### Sunday 10am in person worship

We are a church that strives to love as Jesus loves. Our congregation welcomes, includes, and affirms everyone on their journey of faith regardless of race, ethnicity, age, economic status, physical and mental ability, sexual orientation or gender identity.

### Holy Shepherd Lutheran Church

433 Moraga Way, Orinda, 254-3422

[www.holyshepherd.org](http://www.holyshepherd.org)

ONLINE WORSHIP SCHEDULE  
Facebook Premiere Community Worship every Sunday at 9:30 a.m. Go to [facebook.com/HSLCOrinda/](http://facebook.com/HSLCOrinda/)  
WORSHIP SCHEDULE In person worship at 9:30 a.m. Live stream on [facebook.com/HSLCOrinda/](http://facebook.com/HSLCOrinda/)

Visit our website to access the current and recent sermons.

### St. Anselm's Episcopal Church

682 Michael Lane, Lafayette

#### Sundays at 10 a.m.

Serving Lamorinda since 1960

[www.stanselms.us](http://www.stanselms.us)

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Lafayette, Ca 94549

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School office 925.284.1640

[www.stperpetua.org](http://www.stperpetua.org)

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### ORINDA CHRISTIAN SCIENCE CHURCH

24 Orinda Way (next to the Library)-925-254-4212

Sunday Services and Sunday School 10-11 am

Informal Wednesday Meeting 7:30 - 8:30 pm

All are welcome

[www.christianscienceorinda.org](http://www.christianscienceorinda.org)

**Not to be missed****Our Changing Election Landscape**

—AAUW-OML (American Association of University Women, Orinda-Moraga-Lafayette) hosts Janet Hoy of the League of Women Voters Diablo Valley, who will speak on how new federal voting laws and Supreme Court cases may affect voters in 2026 and beyond. Open to the community. Tuesday, March 17. Doors Open 9:30 a.m., program 10 to 11:30 a.m. Orinda Community Church, Fellowship Hall, 10 Irwin Way.

**Moraga Historical Society**

Presents a discussion about prohibition in Lamorinda by local history author Leslie Crenna. Topics include saloon culture and local "wets," temperance crusaders and local "drys," the county enforcement campaign of 1923, clever bootlegger tricks, and rebounding post-repeal businesses. Sunday, Feb. 22, from 1 to 3 p.m. at the Hacienda de las Flores' Casita building, 2100 Donald Drive, Moraga. RSVP to [ranch-susan@aol.com](mailto:ranch-susan@aol.com) by Feb. 13. MHS members free, guests \$5 (cash or check). No children under 12 years. Reservations only. Limited seating.

**Garden**

**Montelindo Garden Club** presents "Protecting the places that make the East Bay special," with Linus Eukel, Executive Director of John Muir Land Trust on Friday, Feb. 20. An exciting look forward to what the land trust will be doing in the years ahead. This meeting is also Bring a Friend month – 9 a. m. social time, 9:30 a.m. business meeting, 10:15 a.m. speaker. Free. Lafayette Library Meeting, 3491 Mt Diablo Blvd, Lafayette. <https://www.montelindogarden.com/2026-meetings.html>

**Join Mindful Littles**

in assembling hygiene care kits for families in our community on Sunday Feb. 22 at Lamorinda Music for a delightful, hands-on, family-friendly experience! Together, we will assemble hygiene care kits, personalize and decorate each kit with love, learn about the communities we are supporting and why this work matters and connect with other families who value compassion and service.

This event is free. Lamorinda Music is located at 81 Lafayette Circle, Lafayette. More info at <https://mindfullittles.org/>

## Lamorinda Weekly

**Contact us:**

Letters to the editor (max 350 words): [submit.lamorindaweekly@gmail.com](mailto:submit.lamorindaweekly@gmail.com)

Event listings: [calendar.lamorindaweekly@gmail.com](mailto:calendar.lamorindaweekly@gmail.com)

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website: [www.lamorindaweekly.com](http://www.lamorindaweekly.com)

## 'The coolest times of your life' – Lamorinda college students reflect on traveling abroad

By Emma Wong

Ordering food in a foreign language. Navigating unfamiliar streets. Living thousands of miles from home. For three Lamorinda high school graduates, studying abroad transformed these initial uncertainties into some of the most meaningful experiences of their year—and even their lives.

Three recent alumnae of Miramonte High School embarked on immersive academic and cultural experiences abroad, spending anywhere from a quarter to an entire school year in other countries. Leila Maboudian (graduated 2024) spent five weeks in Cholula, a city in Mexico's Puebla county. Annabelle Ryan (graduated 2025) spent her fall semester in Paris, France. Selma Ahmed (graduated 2024) studied in Rabat, Morocco, for eight months. Each student returned with strengthened language skills, a deeper appreciation for cultural diversity, and memories that will remain long after their time overseas.

For many students, the opportunity to travel abroad arises through a university's study abroad program. Maboudian, now a sophomore at the University of California, Berkeley, discovered her cultural immersion program at a club fair. "I've been thinking about studying abroad for a while, and this offered a lot I was excited about," Maboudian said. Others, like Ryan, chose to travel abroad during their very first semester of college. A freshman at the University of Southern California, Ryan saw the opportunity to go to France when she opened her acceptance letter. "I learned that I could spend my first semester either at a community college or one of USC's partner schools abroad," Ryan said. "I'd never considered studying abroad as a freshman, but I decided to take a leap of faith."

Ahmed took a gap year to participate in the National Security Language Initiative for

Youth (NSLI-Y), a U.S. government program that provides students with full-year cultural immersion experiences. Following her time in Morocco, Ahmed is now attending Stanford University.

Leaving home came with challenges. For any college student, departing from friends and family sparks nervousness – a feeling that is amplified when traveling abroad. Still, every student retained their optimism and curiosity. "I didn't want to let fear be my driving feeling going into study abroad," Ryan said.

Once abroad, each student faced unique challenges. In Paris, communication became tough at busy train stations, where few people spoke English. "I'd ask for directions and realize that security guards, and even police, aren't typically English speakers," Ryan said. "I saw this early, and I ended up using Google Translate to talk to a lot of people."

In Morocco, Ahmed lived with a host family, which required navigating both cultural differences and language barriers. Although Ahmed spoke modern standard Arabic, her host mother spoke Darija – a different Arabic dialect – and was illiterate, motivating Ahmed to adapt her communication style. "It was tough in the beginning, but we figured it out. I'd practice Darija with her every day, and instead of texting, I'd send her voice messages," Ahmed said.

Language learning became a crucial part of each student's experience, offering deeper insight into local culture. In Mexico, Maboudian lived in a community where many residents spoke Nahuatl, an indigenous language, alongside Spanish. "I started hearing these off-the-cuff phrases at marketplaces and little shops. They became a part of my Mexico-specific vocabulary, which really helped me hold a conversation," Maboudian said.

For Ahmed, Arabic was the primary focus of her program. Each day included a four-hour Arabic class, taught entirely without English. The coursework aligned closely with the interests she'd pursue at Stanford. "I'm really interested in the literary and artistic history of Arab regions, and this class resonated with that; we'd read complex poetry and political documents that are hard to articulate even in English," Ahmed said.

Beyond the classroom, students experienced history and art woven into daily life. "I took Introduction to the History of Art, and we studied art during the French Renaissance," Ryan said. "Paris is one of the few places where you can learn about a famous artwork and walk to a museum to see it."

As the students settled into daily life abroad, they fully immersed themselves in their cities. "I'd walk around Paris for hours," Ryan said. "I would find myself wandering into the most beautiful churches, or somehow ending up at the Seine and having a view of the Eiffel Tower."

"Cholula has this incredible, massive artisan market, and it runs all week," Maboudian said. "We'd go together and get gifts for our families, and we'd learn how to bargain. It was magical." Another defining element of studying abroad was the community built among fellow students. "My classmates in Mexico came from different parts of the world. We had different life experiences, academic interests, and ethnic backgrounds," Maboudian said. "Hearing about their experiences was eye-opening, and they're some of my close friends now."

Whenever homesickness resurfaced, the students relied on their newfound friendships for support. "When it got hard to stay motivated, reaching out to my cohort helped a lot; we leaned on each other,"



During her months spent abroad, Selma Ahmed (far right) often spent weekends on trips to scenic places around Morocco.

Photo provided

Ahmed said. "By springtime, my spirits were a lot higher. I even felt like I wasn't ready to leave."

As their programs came to an end, the students reflected on the lasting impact of their experiences. "I call Morocco my second home," Ahmed said. "I love the culture and the food, and I want to keep practicing the local dialect. I'm sure I'll come back." Beyond language acquisition, traveling abroad offered valuable life lessons shaped by local perspectives. "A lot of the Moroccans I'd meet were well-versed in

global politics and cultures because they spoke so many languages," Ahmed said. "I've learned not to keep myself in a bubble – to learn about new countries and learn new dialects."

"By meeting so many different people in Mexico, I began thinking about the layers we have to our identity," Maboudian said. "In a politically fraught time like today, we have to realize how these backgrounds are incredibly strong."

Ultimately, each student encourages peers to

consider studying abroad. "There's incredible value in spending time in another country," Ahmed said. "Don't be afraid to go abroad. You learn the most about yourself when you're away from home."

"I will never forget the months I spent in France. It was such an incredible, unique way to begin my college experience," Ryan said. "If you're considering study abroad, do it – you're going to look back on it and see some of the coolest times of your life."

## Two local Library events on Valentine's Day



This year's Lunar New Year performance will feature a martial arts demonstration and lion dance by Tomizaki's Champions Kung Fu Institute to welcome in the Year of the Horse from 2 to 2:45 p.m. on Saturday, Feb. 14 at the Orinda Library. Seating will be limited, and tickets will be given out 20 minutes before the performance. Generously sponsored by the Eng family. For special accommodations,

please contact the library at least 72 hours before the event.

Also on Feb. 14, the Moraga Library will host a free Chalk a Haiku for Moraga and Poetry Reading event from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Sponsored by the Moraga Art in Public Spaces Committee, participants can create haikus, drawings, or chalk messages about their love for Moraga on the veranda in front of the library. Free chalk

will be provided, and no experience is needed. Inside the library, there will be a live poetry reading by Saint Mary's College poets, and community members can share their own poetry as well. This event offers a creative space for all ages to connect and celebrate Moraga. For special accommodations, please contact the library with 72 hours notice. – S. O'Doherty

## Campo student writes children's book to benefit Jelly's Place Animal Rescue

Submitted by Eloise Gafni

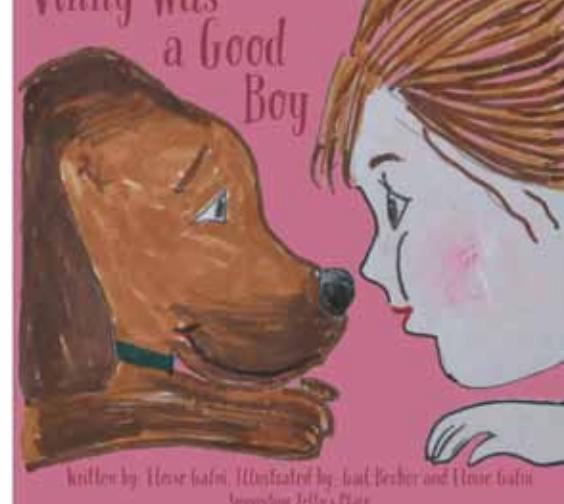
For her Girl Scout Gold Award, Campolindo junior Eloise Gafni wrote and published a children's book supporting Jelly's Place Animal Rescue. Her book, "Vinny Was a Good Boy," is about a dog named Vinny who spent his life at the shelter, and Delilah, a little girl who looked for a family to call her own.

"When they met, they realized their home was each other – together," Gafni said. "Proceeds from my book will go to Jelly's Place. I've been volunteering at Jelly's Place and have also done some fundraising for them by making T-shirts for my project ("Paws for Rescue"), and a calendar highlighting the available dogs at Jelly's." Gafni has also raised enough funds to replace the old play yard couch with a new one suitable for outdoors. Gafni's book is available on Amazon.com.



Eloise Gafni

Photos provided



Written by Eloise Gafni, Illustrated by Leah Berber and Eloise Gafni Supporting Jelly's Place

## Kendall ("Kenny") Tuckerman

1971 – 2026

Kendall ("Kenny") Tuckerman passed peacefully on Jan. 15, 2026, at EvergreenHealth Hospice in Kirkland, Washington, at age 55, following a battle with metastatic melanoma.

Kenny is survived by his husband, David; their adult children Lowell, Whitney Trexel (Eric), Carter, and Jacob; and grandchildren Emma and Max Trexel. He was predeceased by his parents, Wallace ("Ken") and Barbara Woolley of Opelika, Alabama.

Before moving to Lake Stevens, Washington, in 2021, Kenny and David were long-time residents of Lamorinda, first in Orinda and later in Lafayette. Kenny was an active volunteer in the Lafayette School District and had an interest in supporting and advocating for students with special needs, including serving on the Board of the SEED Foundation. He subsequently served for more than two years as a member of the Lafayette School District Governing Board. He was a dedicated volunteer with Canine Companions, having helped and raised five litters of puppies for service dog training.

A memorial service is planned for spring 2026, with the location TBD. To receive notification of the event, please contact Jean Follmer at [jeanfollmer@yahoo.com](mailto:jeanfollmer@yahoo.com).

In lieu of flowers, please consider a charitable donation in Kenny's memory to the Melanoma Research Alliance.

In Memory



# LAMORINDA SPORTS

## Lamorinda soccer teams come on after slow starts to the season

By Jon Kingdon



Campolindo's Avery Corey (11) and Stella McLeod (right) battle Miramonte's Eve Copeland (3).

Photo Mark Bell

### MIRAMONTE

Once again, head coach Taylor Abbott has a team represented in all four classes with nine seniors, six juniors, three sophomores and three freshmen. "There are a lot of pieces that we're trying to get to mesh together," Abbott said. "We've learned that we're a very athletic group."

The team started the season winning only one of their first four games but after the nearly month-long holiday break, Abbott made it a point to address the lack of productivity in the team's offense. "We made tactical adjustments to get more goals and threw some twists in with each game. The offense had not been our strength so far and we're being more strategic, putting the players in different positions to score higher up the field."

Abbott was optimistic about the team's fortunes, "We were looking forward to starting the year over, figuring out an identity that we didn't have in December and hit the ground running."

Hit the ground running they did. After the slow start, Miramonte has gone 7-0-2, outscoring their opponents 22 to 6 with four shutouts.

The offense has been led by senior Inara Inesi (7 goals and 7 assists) sophomore Jordan Mathews (5 goals) and

with their first four wins all shutouts. "We're a hard-working team that likes a challenge and is very resilient," head coach Alex Avelar said. "We started off against some really tough Division 1 schools and we more than held our own. The girls want to work hard and they want to win."

With a combined 22 juniors and seniors and five freshmen and sophomores, this is a veteran team with some talented underclassmen. "I'm happy with the veteran leadership on the team," Avelar said. "We have a lot of seniors and most of my backline are returners and they've really taken the younger players under their wings and I'm pretty happy about that."

The team has suffered a fair number of injuries but has not allowed that to keep them from competing. "With the injuries, we've developed a next player up mentality, and they've been filling in the gaps and they've been doing well," Avelar said.

On offense, the Dons are led by juniors Stella Beuchotte (6 goals), Caroline Tumilty (3 goals), Grace Eppinger (3 goals) and freshman Avery Ammerman (2 goals).

"Caroline has had some nice shots outside the 18 and Avery has been an absolute baller that loves a challenge and puts in the work and extra training," Avelar said. "We just need to shoot the ball. We do a good job in getting up the field and just need somebody that wants it."

The defense has been a strength of the team, led by senior co-captains Cathryn McCormick, Edie Berzansky, Tatum Keely, Reese Tierney, and Tori Hiatt. "All my captains have been great leaders and have done well on defense but I'm looking for somebody to take over up top as well," Avelar said.

Sophomores Alexa Bantique and Maria Statnikova have both seen time in the goal, but with Bantique missing time with an ankle injury, Statnikova has been the primary goalie. "Maria has good size and range," Avelar said.

"She's vocal and physical. Alexa has also done well and is someone who

### ACALANES

It was a unique start to the Acalanes season

is very calm under pressure."

The team is coming together having won their last three league games. "Our non-league games were pretty hard against the big schools so hopefully during league games it comes together and we have a good chance of winning every game, and that's our goal. The strength of our team is obviously on defense and it's just a matter of the chemistry coming together."

### CAMPOLINDO

After graduating 12 seniors, Campolindo has a well-balanced class of seven seniors, four juniors, six sophomores and five freshmen with only two senior starters.

Coming into the season, head coach Luis Pinto knew that it was going to take time for the team to come together. "We're a very young team that just needs more games and experience. They've been practicing really hard and the Christmas break was good for us. It really brought us all together, and we were able to work on the things that needed work."

The leaders on offense have been senior Carina Trento who is leading the team with four assists, junior Zoe Lehrman, and freshmen Emma Jensen and Mackinsey Lee, who has scored 5 goals, and junior Maya Barrett on the left wing. "Carina is a very dynamic player that can play defense, midfield, and center forward. She has good speed and is very technical. As a four-year player and a captain of the team, she's working

with that pressure and it makes her compete and set the tone and energy for everybody else," Pinto said. "Mackinsey is also playing on the basketball team. She is very athletic and we do our best to help her out in playing two sports to avoid burnout as she is very competitive and a key part for each team. Maya is a left wing and also very athletic who is strong on the one-on-ones. She is a lefty so is a natural left winger."

It's a young midfield with freshmen Greta Welcome, Avery Corey, and Ava Sytz, who is leading the team with 6 goals. "With so many young players, our offense is still a work in progress," Pinto said. "We've got to get them the experience to start breaking through the years as we generally have a small tryout team. I'm proud of this team and we just have got to work and keep coming together."

The backline is very young with Ella Harris, a co-captain at right back and Isabella Domingo at left back. "They both bring game maturity and discipline, knowing when to stop and not stop, giving me a lot of security. Their experience helps the freshman center back Maddie Powell, left back Emma Jensen, and Greta Welcome."

Junior Lindsay Foster is the starting goalie. "Lindsay has done really well adapting to what we demand. I think for the

goalkeeper every year is a little different because the back line is changing. She's a great shot blocker and reads the game really well."

Despite a 4-8-2 record, Pinto has seen improvement as the season has evolved. "With so many young players, the challenge every year is to bring together our players that come from different club teams and coaches within those teams. It's a matter of just getting them to understand what we are doing so we have to start from zero and it's getting the girls to learn a new system and to play a strong role on the team. They can be role players or impact players, though we're always looking for everybody to be an impact player."

The team has come together, winning their last three games with two more league games to play.

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## Adjustments on and off the mat for Lamorinda wrestling

By Jon Kingdon

### MIRAMONTE AND CAMPOLINDO

With the departure of Campolindo's wrestling coach, Athletic Director Ray Meadows was unable to find a suitable replacement so he called upon Louis Suba, Miramonte's head wrestling coach and a former wrestling coach at Campolindo to see if he would be willing to coach both the Miramonte and Campolindo wrestling teams.

Suba saw the positives to coaching both teams: "It's nice to have the extra practice partners in the room. Even though we're big rivals, our wrestlers were positive about it as were the Campolindo wrestlers. Our wrestling community is unified in wanting to grow the sport so it's more inclusive with a nurturing attitude in getting more kids interested in wrestling."

The arrangement still took some adjusting for Suba and the assistant coaches: "During tournaments and other matches, we compete as two separate teams so it can be a little awkward when it's Campolindo against Miramonte on the mat."

There have been zero pushbacks from the wrestlers and a lot of positive comments about the improved communication with the Campolindo parents and the administration about what is going on with the team.

### MIRAMONTE

The Miramonte program came into the season with a roster of 50

wrestlers. "Our program has been getting more popular and I'm really proud of it," Suba said. "When I first started at Miramonte five years ago, I only had nine wrestlers on the team. There has been great word of mouth by the wrestlers that helped to grow our program."

The leading wrestlers for Miramonte are seniors Elliot Orr (175/165) and Brody Suba (151/144). "Elliot was our only wrestler that placed at NCS last year and has gotten stronger and faster," Suba said. "He is very tough and absolutely loves wrestling. Brody also got bigger, stronger, and faster in the offseason."

Two juniors, Finn Hura (144) and Jaxon Ziehn (138/132) are both top wrestlers, though Hura is currently out with an injury. "Finn took third in a very tough tournament, going against the Nevada State champion and Fargo All-American," Suba said. "He worked very hard in the off season. Jaxon looks very strong and recently took first place at a tournament at Vintage High School. Cael Suba is one of our lightweights at 120/115 and Oskar Orr are both showing great potential."

Miramonte does not have any wrestlers to compete at 215 or 285 but are able to compete in 11 weight classes. Their two heaviest wrestlers are Owen Beidelman (180), who was an NCS qualifier last year, and Geoff White (190).

The girls team for Miramonte is limited in numbers, Suba said. "Senior Claire Casado has been looking very good along with junior Cayleigh Farrar. Freshman Ashley Silverman, a product of Chris Herrick's Lamorinda wrestling program, has been great, having taken first place in two novice JV tournaments."

### CAMPOLINDO

With a roster size of 22, Campolindo is led by senior heavyweight Luke Hansen. "Luke came in a little late from football but he has been a standout and has been looking very strong in his tournaments," Suba said. "Luke is a great athlete and we've been teaching him to use his athleticism to his advantage."

There are two other wrestlers that have come over from the football team but both are currently on the sidelines with ankle injuries – Soroushians Bahramifar and Demitri Drury. Demitri wrestled at Vintage High School and after winning his first two matches, he was injured and has been out since and is looking to return toward the end of January.

There are a group of freshmen that have been coming to practices consistently, competing in tournaments, and showing a lot of promise – Jacob Wah, Colton Kao, Andy Ostling, and Henry Hansen.

The leading wrestler on the girls team has been Maya Shu. "Maya has come to practice every day and has been

looking very good," Suba said. "Charlie Somi is another young woman who has shown a lot of potential."

It's been a season of adjustments for Campolindo. The team has had to organize carpools to head over to Miramonte every day for practice. Every coach has their favorite moves and special way of teaching things and running drills so the more exposure to different ways to wrestle the better, since everyone does not learn the same way and the coaches can adapt to the different ways that people wrestle. "The Campolindo wrestlers have had to adapt to a different coaching style as well as different ways of doing things and so far, things have gone very smoothly," Suba said. "The future looks bright for Campolindo wrestling."

### ACALANES

Coming into his third year at Acalanes, head coach Steve Nelson once again has a really young team with only three seniors. "A number of our wrestlers opted to go with the rugby team which limited our numbers along with the tragic loss of Amin Noroozi who would have been my top wrestler," Nelson said.

Nelson is essentially starting from scratch: "I have a lot of new, young, first year wrestlers that have never been in a varsity match and have to get started quickly before they get thrown into a match when we start



Brody Suba locks up a pin against Granada.

Photo Mark Bell

the dual season, but we should be able to fill 13 of the weight classes."

Leading the boys team are Marley Oh (134) and Kirian Gracie (128). "They are my two best wrestlers," Nelson said.

"They both have the potential to have good seasons depending on how much time and effort they want to put into it. Kirian can be an absolutely phenomenal wrestler but just needs to show more commitment so we'll see how he does. Marley is also a top wrestler but is in a tough weight class, going against very strong

wrestlers. Junior Ryan Crane (159) is coming off a broken collarbone suffered last year. Ryan

went two and two at NCS last year so we've got some pretty high expectations for him this year."

Gabriel Van Houten (167), Jake Hammons (140), and Nova Hedlund

(152) have shown potential but just need more experience and mat time.

The girls team has doubled their numbers from last year to six, which is a step in the right direction. The girls are led by sophomore Lilah Kring (127), Gwyneth Lee (105), and Jill Pierce (140).

"Lilah is going to become one of my best wrestlers," Nelson said. "She has had a lot of success in the tournaments at Albany, Castro Valley, and San Leandro. She and Gwyneth put the time and effort in the camps and off-season wrestling so I'm excited to see where both of them end up this season and Jill can be a helluva wrestler for the first timer. We also have three other first-year wrestlers on the team, including Marley Oh's sister, Isabel (102)."

## McConnell, Rahon and Sheets named to Silver Waves Media 100 Most Impactful Mid-Major Assistant Coaches

By Jon Kingdon



Photo Tod Fierner

### Dan Sheets, Joe Rahon and Mickey McConnell

Since 2020, Silver Waves Media has in their words "helped shine a light on the coaches, at all levels, across the country." They just released their top 100 Most Impactful Mid-Major Assistant Coaches list.

On that list are three Saint Mary's assistant coaches and former players, associate head coach Mickey McConnell in his 17th season, associate head coach Joe Rahon in his fifth season and Dan Sheets in his third season as an assistant coach after two seasons as the Director of Basketball Operations.

"We have 10 people on the committee that are familiar with the coaches throughout college basketball and we are listing people that have good chances down the road to become head coaches," said Ryan Silver, the founder of Silver Waves Media. "(Head Coach) Randy Bennett has a coaching tree that is in the top three nationally."

Bennett has always

placed great stock in his assistant coaches. "You hire a good staff and they'll take good players and make them better. They have to have great attitudes for us to do it the way we're doing it and that's why they're good."

Also on the staff are former player E.J. Rowland in his second year as an assistant coach after a 20-year career having played on four different continents.

Though Trey Touchet did not play for Saint Mary's, prior to being named an assistant coach, he spent two years at Saint Mary's as a recruiting coordinator and two years as a graduate assistant for Bennett.

"The big advantage that most of our assistants have had coming into this program is that they have played in it. Those that have not played for me, it takes them a year or two to know how we do things. It's a matter of figuring out how you are able to recruit a player that fits

here and once they get here, how you mold them into a player and leader in this program."

These guys who have played for me are really good guys and it's just a matter of giving them reps. After that, it's a matter of giving them responsibility and letting them get it. They coach a lot and Mickey, Joe and Dan have been on very successful teams and that's what coaching is – being able to find a way to help your team win and they get that and none of it is about them."

Most recently, former Gael Todd Golden won the National Championship at the University of Florida. "I've never even thought about that (his coaching tree) and I don't know how they stat it but we've had some great assistant coaches that have gone on to become great head coaches and I've been very fortunate," Bennett concluded.

## Acalanes flag footballers Ines Coyne and Isabelle Agnost named to the S.F. Chronicle All-Metro team

By Jon Kingdon

With the exponential growth of girls football, there has also been a greater interest in the high school teams, highlighted by San Francisco choosing its first all-Metro flag football team. With 22 players chosen from areas as far south as San Jose and as far north as Santa Rosa, Acalanes had two players, Ines Coyne and Isabelle Agnost, both in their second seasons, with a team that finished the season with a 17-3 record and played in the NCS championship game.

Coyne, a junior, played quarterback, completing 155 passes for 1,544 yards and 23 touchdowns. She also ran for 1,016 yards and scored 13 touchdowns. She also played linebacker and was second on the team with 76 tackles, with two sacks and five interceptions.

Coyne, who is also an equestrian, did not play football as a freshman and was strictly a defensive player as a sophomore and in an unexpected way became the Acalanes quarterback. "We had a scrimmage on a Saturday and none of our quarterbacks could be there so we put Ines in and she played great and ended up taking most of the snaps the rest of the year," co-head coach Mike Ivankovich said. "Ivankovich is already looking forward to next season: "We're just really grateful that Ines and Isabelle are returning next season but all together, we are returning 22 of the 27 players that were on our team last season."



Acalanes' Isabelle Agnost (30) and Ines Coyne (48)

Photo Jim Clark

reads over the summer

as she was playing wide receiver and outside linebacker. What Ines had was a will to win and a desire to dominate and more than once would put the team on her back and just willed our way to victory. Besides her natural ability, Ines is super smart, clever, tricky, and so competitive on the field."

Agnost, a sophomore in her second year of flag football played running back and cornerback, finishing the season rushing for 1,468 yards, caught 25 passes, scored 19 touchdowns, threw two touchdown passes, returned a punt for a touchdown, and had 15 tackles and was chosen first team all-league as well.

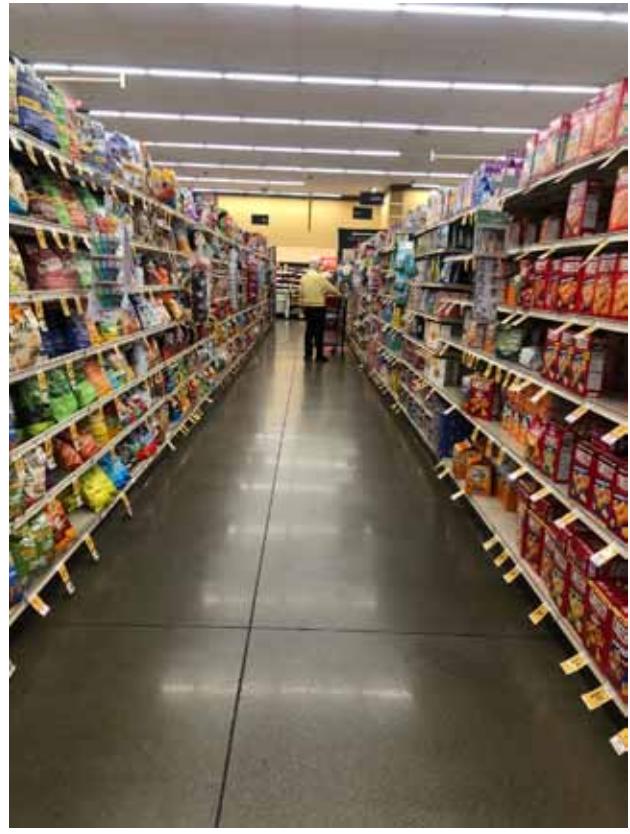
"Isabelle is just a great kid who is fun to coach," Ivankovich said. "It's rare to have a player that has all the physical attributes, mental toughness, and high-level competitiveness and yet with all of these attributes, she

is so unselfish. There has not been one time when she went high maintenance, selfish or pouted if she wasn't getting the ball. She just goes out and plays hard and loves her teammates. By the end of the year Isabelle was also starting as a cornerback and she did a great job there as well. Isabelle works just as hard as a sprinter on the track team and she set a freshman record in the 100 meters."

Ivankovich is already looking forward to next season: "We're just really grateful that Ines and Isabelle are returning next season but all together, we are returning 22 of the 27 players that were on our team last season."

## The skinny on getting 'skinny'

By Steve Mitchell, Certified Personal Trainer / Fitness Nutrition Specialist



Avoiding processed snacks is a key element to curbing an appetite.

Photo J. Wake

If losing weight were simply about eating less, most people wouldn't be stuck losing the same pounds over and over again. They wouldn't feel like their body is working against them. And as usual blaming themselves when the weight comes back.

First off, you don't want to be "skinny" – you want to be lean. They are very different species. So let's talk about doing it right this year, so you can come up with a different New

Year's resolution in 2027. The truth is, modern food and modern dieting have stacked the deck, and not in your favor.

Highly processed foods are designed to make you hungry. They digest quickly, spike blood sugar, and barely activate the hormones that tell your brain you're full. You can eat plenty of calories and still not feel satisfied – not because you lack discipline, but because your body didn't get what it actually needed.

This is why two people can eat the same number of calories and have completely different experiences. One may feel energized and satisfied (the whole foods eater) while the other is rummaging through the pantry an hour later.

Metabolism plays a major role here – specifically your basal metabolic rate. That's the energy your body uses just to keep you alive: breathing, thinking, repairing tissue. A large driver of that number is how much lean muscle you carry.

Here's the deal: Muscle is metabolically active tissue. Fat is not.

When we diet (we'll call it reducing calories) we'll all lose weight, but (and this is the big "but" here, pun intended), somewhere around 40-50% of that weight will be muscle. When muscle diminishes, metabolism quietly slows down. Fat loss becomes harder. Maintenance becomes exhausting.

Losing muscle is like downsizing your engine to make your car lighter – it works briefly, then makes everything harder.

To be successful here the real goal shouldn't be just weight loss; it's losing fat while building and preserving muscle.

This is where hypertrophic (muscle-

building) training changes the game – not to turn you into a bodybuilder or Olympic weightlifter, but to build healthy, functional lean muscle – the kind that supports joints, improves movement, and raises your metabolic floor. More muscle means more mitochondria, and more mitochondria means a body that's better at using energy.

Think not of dieting your way to a faster metabolism but building your way there.

Protein is the cornerstone of that process. To support muscle while training, most people need approximately 0.8 to 1 gram of protein per pound of target body weight. This helps preserve lean tissue during fat loss, supports muscle growth, keeps you fuller longer, and even increases calorie burn during digestion compared to carbs or fat.

No extremes. Just intention and consistency.

GLP-1 medications have changed the weight-loss landscape by reducing appetite and improving blood sugar control. For many people, they finally quiet the constant food noise that made fat loss feel impossible. But appetite reduction alone doesn't protect muscle. Without strength training and adequate protein, weight

loss – on or off GLP-1s – can still come at the expense of metabolism.

The most successful, sustainable results pair these tools with resistance training and protein so the weight coming off is primarily fat, not muscle.

And here's the part people rarely talk about: how this feels.

When fat loss is paired with muscle gain, you don't just look different – you move better. Your joints feel supported. Energy is more stable. Sleep improves. Food feels less obsessive. Your body starts working with you instead of against you.

You may feel smaller. But more importantly you feel capable, a well-tuned, lean machine.

### The Solution

1. Do some type of resistance exercise 2-3 times per week (don't be afraid, I'm talking about 20-30 minutes only to begin, make it something you love). Perhaps join a gym that feels good to you, research exercises, or hire a trainer to get you on the right path.

2. Walk, smell the flowers. "10,000 steps" is

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