



Bounce houses drew long lines of little ones at the Sept. 26 Pear & Wine Festival in Moraga. Photo Vera Kochan

Pear & Wine Festival kicks off fall season in Lamorinda

By Vera Kochan

On a beautiful sunny day with activities galore, hundreds of local residents celebrated the beginning of fall on Sept. 26 during Moraga’s annual Pear & Wine Festival at Commons Park.

Held between 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., things kicked off a bit earlier with a ribbon-cutting ceremony to honor the placement of Moraga’s newest sculpture – a giant pear – located at the intersection of Moraga Road and St. Mary’s Road.

There were inflatable bounce houses, a petting zoo, face painting, and craft activity booths for the

kids. The Moraga-Orinda Fire District brought a fire truck for festival-goers to enjoy up-close and handed out red plastic helmets to the little ones.

Food and drink included barbecue, wine, beer, pear lemonade, and pear pies for sale. Community vendors sold specialty food items, and artisan merchants displayed a variety of wares for sale. Local businesses, nonprofit organizations, and Town departments had informational booths, while the Parks & Recreation Department’s “Pear Necessities” stall sold Moraga apparel and specialty pear items.

Taped music could be heard all around the park in addition to “The Houserockers” performing live at the bandshell. Quite possibly the biggest crowd-pleasing entertainment was when dozens of Donald L. Rheem Elementary School’s youngest students dressed in monarch butterfly wings accompanied by three of Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School’s Lamorinda Idol contestants all sang the 60-year-old song, “The Hills of Moraga.”

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Winter Nights' shuttered sheltering program may have a second act after all

By David Scholz

Weeks after Winter Nights Family Shelter Inc. announced the abrupt closure of its homeless sheltering program in early September, bringing with it a harsh rebuke by the local faith community who felt blindsided, its board may have a willing suitor to carry on the nonprofit’s mission.

Winter Nights, as it’s now known, initially started in 2004 by the Interfaith Council of Contra Costa as a grassroots effort and was spearheaded by Gwen Watson, a JustFaith Ministries graduate at Christ the King Parish in Pleasant Hill, in partnership with other faith community members. It subsequently evolved into Winter Nights Family Shelter, Inc., a public benefit 501(c)(3) nonprofit, to better take on the homeless challenge.

A staple for serving homeless families and individuals from late summer through spring when the coldest and wettest periods normally descend on the area, the joint effort of congregations, volunteers, donors and Winter Nights staff has provided shelter, meals, safe parking, case management and housing

support and sheltered more than 1,263 people, including more than 758 children in parish halls and church community centers and rooms throughout central Contra Costa County.

As Winter Nights programs expanded, however, the financial, administrative, operational and staffing resources required to sustain them also grew. And eventually rubber hit the road and the group’s leadership were faced with the hard and difficult decision.

“After a careful review, the board concluded that Winter Nights no longer has the combination of reliable revenue, organizational infrastructure, governance capacity, staffing capacity and administrative support necessary to operate independently in a responsible and sustainable manner,” the board wrote in an early September statement announcing the sad and difficult decision.

The board emphasized that long-term, interconnected challenges developed over time and they could not be resolved through an emergency

fundraising campaign or a single infusion of funds.

Identification of a “mission aligned” entity will be essential when Winter Nights is ready to submit its filing with the California Attorney General’s office to begin dissolving it as a nonprofit.

Board member Emily Hanson noted the filing must state what group is willing to be the recipients for any remaining assets and agree to restrict them for a sheltering program.

The Winter Nights board has passed along its recommendation to the Winter Nights Summit, which represents churches and congregations who through the years have supported the traveling sheltering caravan as it moved from one central Contra Costa County site to another, and has invited it to provide non-binding feedback. A deadline of Oct. 26 has been set for the Summit to offer its thoughts to the board.

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Our Homes

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Avoiding poisonous plants in your garden — Page OH1





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City of Lafayette:
www.lovelafayette.org
Phone: (925) 284-1968
Chamber of Commerce:
www.lafayettechamber.org

Lafayette Public Meetings
City Council: Regular Meeting: Monday, Oct. 26, 7 p.m.
Lafayette Library & Learning Center-Don Tatzin Community Hall
Planning Commission: Monday, Oct. 19, 7 p.m.
Lafayette Library & Learning Center-Don Tatzin Community Hall
Design Review: Monday, Oct. 26, 7 p.m.
Lafayette Library & Learning Center-Arts & Science Discovery Room

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Wine retailers committed to serving local demands amid looming tariffs

By David Scholz



Gennie and Daniel Gorback, pictured, took ownership of the Wine Thieves on Mt. Diablo Boulevard in May from Jim Meyers, who opened the shop 27 years ago.

Photo David Scholz

“There are a lot ebbs and flows in the wine industry,” said Joe Mulcahy, wine buyer for Jackson’s Wine and Spirits, 3524 Mt. Diablo Blvd. in Lafayette, as well as Moraga Wine and Spirits, so time will tell how tariffs might impact price. He noted too the plethora of pre-tariff stock in the current marketplace that’s causing downward pressures on prices. To help maintain shelf prices there is a willingness of some distributors and producers to even absorb potential price hikes rather than pass them along to the retailers. But as Mulcahy learned from one small importer who planned to impose a 25% increase, change is coming. So, seeking out other brands offering similar quality wine to keep store foot traffic through the door remains the name of the wine game. He was quick to note that it’s not just tariffs presenting new challenges to smaller retailers like their shops. Mulcahy cited an existing trend of younger consumers shifting away from wines purchases for other options as already impacting sales. Tariffs are just the latest factor being added to the mix that local retailers are juggling in an already competitive marketplace.

tomers even amid the looming effect that tariffs may have at the cash register going forward. For now, the price points Dan and Gennie Gorback are determined to maintain on desirable labels are holding firm at the 3401 Mt. Diablo Blvd. wine shop. “There’s a glut of wine in the industry so I know that would be a downward pressure,” Dan Gorback said of one factor helping keep prices at current levels. But, just when the potential threat of tariffs is nullified for the moment, Gorback was quick to acknowledge there are issues co-mingled into the mix that can increase costs such as transportation and staffing. “As I am doing the orders, there are other variables impacting so it’s hard to know how the tariffs will impact price,” said Gorback. “There is a lot of wine in the country already so that (supply) is not impacted by the tariffs.” While a hike from \$25 to \$28 per bottle is one thing, affordability for their customers over time remains paramount and Gorback knows there is a limit to what customers will pay. That said, he cited identifying other wines in the same category that are less expensive while still being appealing will be at the forefront of the buying thought process.



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‘Trick or Treat Street’ returns to downtown Lafayette, Oct. 30

Costumed kids, ages 9 and under, and their parents or guardians are invited to downtown Lafayette from 4 to 6 p.m. Friday, Oct. 30 for the Lafayette Chamber’s annual “Trick or Treat Street.” This fun, free, safe Halloween event invites children and their parents to Trick-or-Treat at participating merchants along Mt. Diablo Boulevard from Lafayette Plaza to Dewing Ave., Lafayette Circle and La Fiesta Square. More than 50 merchants including Five Little Monkeys, Lafayette Scoop, Postino, Sideboard, Lamorinda Music, Zoonie’s Candy, Toy and Gelato, and Town Hall Theatre participated in last year’s “Trick or Treat Street” festivities. Children should bring their own bag to collect the free treats!



Children and parents traveled to different merchants at last year’s “Trick or Treat Street” event.

– J. Wake

Photo courtesy Lafayette Chamber of Commerce

New longer-duration metering coming to downtown Lafayette

By Gwyneth Lee



The city-owned Gazebo parking lot boasts nearly 40 spaces.

Photo J. Wake

The Lafayette City Council unanimously voted to introduce Ordinance 704 during its Sept. 14 meeting to update downtown parking meter zones and establish new rates for longer-duration parking. The ordinance aims to provide additional parking opportunities, particularly for downtown employees, while also addressing changes to existing parking locations required by the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), according to a staff report presented by Transportation and Circulation Program Manager Patrick Golier.

The ordinance amends two sections of the Lafayette Municipal Code, which establishes parking meter zones and applicable parking fees. The changes are part of the city's implementation of its 2026 Downtown Parking Management Study, which identified a need for more longer-duration parking opportunities and greater consistency in parking management.

One of the changes expands the existing parking meter zone on Oak Hill Road. Previously, the designated zone covered only the east side of the street between Mt. Diablo Boulevard and Deer Hill Road. Under the ordinance, both sides of Oak Hill Road will be included. The city-owned parking lots at 3299 Mt. Diablo Boulevard, commonly known as the "Ace" lot, and the city-owned Gazebo lot at 3429 Mt. Di-

ablo Boulevard will also be added as a designated parking meter zones.

The ordinance also establishes a graduated parking rate for five locations: Happy Valley Road, Oak Hill Road, Dolores Drive, the Gazebo lot and the Ace lot. The proposed rate is \$2 for up to one hour, \$4 for up to two hours, \$4.50 for up to three hours and \$5 for four hours or more. The daily maximum will be \$5.

The designated spaces will remain available to employees, customers, visitors and other members of the public. They will not be reserved exclusively for downtown employees or any individual business or property.

The city's Downtown Parking Management Study found that downtown parking challenges were connected to inconsistent management and the distribution of parking demand. The study identified opportunities to make better use of existing parking spaces, including providing more practical options for employees who may need to leave their vehicles parked for several hours.

The ordinance also addresses the removal of on-street parking on First Street between Mt. Diablo Boulevard and Deer Hill Road. Caltrans required the city to remove parking along this segment. Ordinance 704 removes the affected section of First Street from the city's designated parking meter zones and associated parking-rate

provisions to reflect the change.

Alongside the ordinance, the council considered Resolution 2026-51, which establishes the days and hours when parking fees will be enforced at the designated locations. Under the proposed resolution, the Ace and Gazebo lots will be metered Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., with parking free during evenings and weekends. On-street parking on Dolores Drive, Happy Valley Road, and Oak Hill Road will be metered Monday through Saturday during the same hours, with parking free during evenings and Sundays. Existing unmetered two-hour parking spaces on Happy Valley Road will remain unchanged.

The resolution also authorizes the City Manager Niroop Srivatsa or a designee to implement necessary changes to meters, payment systems, signage and other operations. Staff will monitor parking utilization and availability following implementation to evaluate how the changes affect parking in downtown Lafayette.

During its Sept. 28 meeting, council members read the second waiver and adopted the ordinance. Staff will coordinate the operational changes needed to implement the updated parking zones and rates.

Class of 1956 celebrates its 70th Acalanes High School Reunion

Submitted by Marilyn Montgomery Finn



Some of the Acalanes Class of 1956 and 1957 laugh together.

Photo Marilyn Finn

Thirty-five proud older Acalanes High School graduates gathered on Friday, Sept. 25 at Wise-Girl Restaurant in Pleasant Hill for their 70th Class Reunion. These spry attendees were 88 and 87 years old. Many of them started at Lafayette Grammar School, then attended Acalanes together.

As per usual, the Class of 1957 was invited to join in and they filled two tables of eight. The

1956 graduating class was 248 grads strong; they have sadly lost 77 of those graduates. Forty-one have never communicated with the Reunion Committee.

Having 35 in attendance was a great point of pride. Once again Fred Arbogast put the celebration together with Sandy Planz Arbogast hosting. The Marlow Boyds set up the "Gone but not Forgotten" display, filling the stage.

The dining room walls boasted the years in pictures of graduates' high school time.

During their working lives, graduates went on to become doctors, lawyers, therapists. Today they are artists, writers, musicians, photographers, travelers, parents, grandparents and great grandparents. Some of the graduates have done astonishing things with their lives to be sure, but everyone present was cherished and amazing. The noise of friends reuniting was deafening. Those celebrating noted that during high school, television in their homes was only a couple of years old, the Korean War was on going and BART was years away, not to mention computers and cell phones.



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MORAGA

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Phone: (925) 888-7022

Chamber of Commerce:
www.moragachamber.org

Moraga Citizens' Network:
www.moragacitizensnetwork.org

Town Council Meeting,
Wednesday, Oct. 14, 5:30 p.m.

Wednesday, Oct. 28, 5:30 p.m.

Planning Commission Meeting,
Tuesday, Oct. 20, 6:30 p.m.



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DIAMOND CERTIFIED

Town Council receives Moraga Library redwood tree removal update

By Vera Kochan



Moraga Library redwood trees pose an unacceptable risk to foundations and utilities.

Photos courtesy Moraga Public Works Dept.

When the Moraga Town Council approved an April 8 Town Facilities Energy Reliability Project involving solar improvements at Town-owned facilities, it included the Moraga Library. While deciding where the solar im-

provements and generators could best be placed there, it was discovered that dozens of redwood trees encompassing the library needed to be removed.

A Tree Risk Assessment was done by arborist Hamilton Tree

Service, which determined that of the 43 existing redwood trees on the property several posed a risk not only to the building itself, but to the foundation, utilities, walkways, drainage facilities, and parking lot pavement.

An Aug. 26 project update report to Council by Public Works Director/Town Engineer Nate Levine noted, "The redwoods are generally in good biological condition and have a low-risk rating for whole-tree failure. However, the primary issue identified is not tree collapse, but ongoing mechanical damage from expanding trunks, root flares, and root systems affecting existing Town facilities and infrastructure."

Levine also cited problems with cracked and lifted walkways, displaced drainage grates, issues near utility equipment/gas lines, parking lot impacts, and close proximity to the library building itself.

The Tree Risk Assessment recommended the removal of 24 redwoods; however, staff has evaluated the report and determine that, for

now, up to 10 trees would be removed while monitoring the remainder. The bulk, if not all of the redwoods expected to be removed are located behind the library.

"Staff is committed to evaluating replacement redwood planting at a 3:1 ratio for removed redwoods at other locations in Town, subject to suitable planting locations, irrigation availability, and funding," Levine stated. "This effort may include exploring a community planting program that would offer trees to residents who agree to plant and maintain them on private property. Staff also plans to plank/recycle removed redwoods for use as picnic tables at Rancho Laguna Park."

Council Member Steve Woehleke posed the idea of replacing the redwoods with a less invasive tree which Levine said could be a possibility. In the meantime, staff will finalize the proposed tree removal process. Costs will be funded through the previously authorized Town Facilities Energy Reliability Project budget.

Two local freshmen turn their love of cats into a community mission

Submitted by Marie Austin

When most students think about summer projects, they might picture sports, travel, or preparing for high school. For two freshmen at Campolindo High School, the spring and summer became an opportunity to address a growing local problem: the increasing population of stray and feral cats.

Teagan Devinger and Marie Austin, members of Girl Scout Troop 31735, partnered with Community Concern for Cats for their Girl Scout Silver Award project. Their goal is to educate Contra Costa County residents about stray and feral cats and provide practical ways to help.

The project was a natural choice for Teagan and Marie. Both girls and their families have fostered cats and kittens and adopted stray cats into their homes. These experiences gave them firsthand insight into animal overpopulation and the important work of local rescue organizations.

"We've seen how

many cats and kittens need help," they explained. "Many people want to help but don't always know what to do when they find a stray cat or kitten."

Their awareness campaign focuses on prevention, responsible pet ownership, and community involvement. Through educational posters and outreach, they highlight the importance of spaying and neutering, explain what to do when someone finds a stray cat or kitten, and encourage residents to foster, volunteer, and support local rescue organizations.

Fostering is an important part of their message. Foster families provide temporary homes where cats and kittens receive care, become socialized, and prepare for adoption. Without foster volunteers, rescue organizations cannot help as many animals in need.

Through their partnership with Community Concern for Cats, Teagan and Marie have also



Teagan Devinger and Marie Austin Photo provided

learned more about the volunteers who care for, foster, and find homes for cats throughout the community.

As they begin their freshman year at Campolindo, they hope their project has a lasting impact. Their message is simple: small actions can make a big difference

and help more cats and kittens find safe, loving homes.

For more information about fostering, volunteering, or supporting local rescue efforts, visit Community Concern for Cats, <https://www.communityconcernforcats.org/>.

Moraga Pear Festival

...continued from Page A1

More fall events in Lamorinda are happening in October, including the annual "Res Run for Education" co-presented by the Lafayette Chamber and City of Lafayette on Sunday Oct. 18 in downtown Lafayette (5k: 8 a.m., 10k certified race: 8:15 a.m., 2-mile run/walk for fun: 8:45 a.m.). According to the

Lafayette Chamber, last year's Res Run for Education brought together just under 2,200 runners and raised \$37,611 benefiting local public schools (info at <https://lafayettechamber.org/resrun/>).

Halloween-themed events include Orinda Parks and Rec's "Trunk & Treat" event offered in three 45-minute blocks between 4:30 p.m. and

6:45 p.m. at the Orinda Library parking garage and plaza (see story, Page A7). And the Lafayette Chamber will hold two events – the "Witch Way to Mocktails" event will be held from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 24, where attendees wear witch hats or Halloween costumes and sample signature mocktails at participating stores (lafayet-

techamber.org), and the free "Trick or Treat Street" event from 4 to 6 p.m. Friday, Oct. 30 in downtown Lafayette where children and their parents are invited to Trick-or-Treat at participating merchants along Mt. Diablo Blvd. from Lafayette Plaza to Dewing Ave, Lafayette Circle and La Fiesta Square (see story, Page A2).

A deep-dive into the meaning of the word “moraga”

By Vera Kochan



Moraga family coat of arms

Image courtesy Moraga Historical Society

Moraga means many things to its residents -- great schools, open spaces, the home of Saint Mary’s College, a good place to raise a family, and so much more.

According to the Moraga Historical Society, the Town of Moraga was named after Joaquin Moraga, who in 1835, along with his cousin, Juan Bernal, requested a land grant from the independent Mexican State of Alta California. His request was granted, and he became the owner of over 13,000 acres.

Pear orchards were far from Moraga’s mind

at that time. His interests was in ranching which grew to approximately 1,000 head of cattle and 4,000 horses. He eventually built a two-room adobe house along a spring on a hill overlooking what is now the home of Miramonte High School.

The Moraga family held fandangos (parties) with music, dancing, and plenty of food. Extended families and neighbors were invited to join in the festivities. No doubt there was plenty of barbecuing going on to feed the masses.

Taking a deeper dive

into the meaning of the word “moraga,” it would seem that Joaquin took his name to heart when he threw his fandangos for the neighborhood as the word itself basically means “barbecue” in Spanish. Although it is not associated with beef consumption, “moraga” translates to “a coastal beach bonfire used for grilling sardines or fish.” In some regional Spanish dialects, it can also mean “a bundle of sticks or harvested brush.”

Whether intentional or not, there is no trace of a Weber Grill on the Moraga family’s coat of arms. “The crest above the wreath consists of gold horns with a single green clover and a gold helmet with a green and gold twisted wreath,” states the Moraga Historical Society’s website. “The shield has a gold field with a green mulberry tree (Mora of Moraga means mulberry tree in Spanish) and is surrounded by a silver border decorated with ermine tails. Two gold streamers (banderoles) decorate the lower part of the coat of arms. The colors gold and silver represent the metal weapons used in battle; green represents the symbol of freedom, beauty, joy, health, and hope.”

Moraga Lions Annual Achievement Awards presented to six students

Submitted by Tony Grosso



Stanley Middle School students Hudson Bartelt and Ella Roth, with Moraga Lions member Tony Grosso (center).

The Moraga Lions Club honored six outstanding middle school students from Lamorinda with its Annual Achievement Award. The award recognizes students who ex-

participating school, teachers and counselors select two students whose character and accomplishments reflect these values.

This year’s recipients were: Stanley Middle School eighth-graders Ella Roth and Hudson Bartelt; Orinda Intermediate School eighth-grader Shira Weiss and seventh-grader Natalie Olle; St. Perpetua School eighth-graders Charlotte Harter and Quentin Jones.

The Moraga Lions Club congratulates these remarkable students for their achievements and the positive example they set for their school communities. Their dedication, resilience, character, and positive contributions make them exemplary representatives of their schools and bright examples for their peers.

MPD receives CHP Cannabis Grant

By Vera Kochan

The Moraga Police Department (MPD) was awarded a California Highway Patrol Cannabis Grant in the amount of \$165,998 for Fiscal Year 2026-27. The funds will be used toward the purchase and equipping of a patrol vehicle in addition to providing training and overtime for particular enforcement of driving under the influence-related laws.

In 2016, California voters passed Proposition 64: The Control, Regulate, and Tax Adult Use of Marijuana Act. This legalizes specific personal use and cultivation of marijuana for adults 21 years of age and older; reduces criminal penalties for specific marijuana-related offenses; and authorizes re-sentencing or dismissal and sealing of prior, eligible marijuana-related convictions.

MPD Chief Jon King’s Aug. 26 staff report noted that Prop 64 “established the Cannabis Tax Fund Grant Program (CTFGP), which allocates funds to local governments for use in reducing impaired driving crashes, increasing public awareness, and improving enforcement of alcohol and drug-related traffic laws, including cannabis. The CTFGP, which is administered by the California Highway Patrol, awarded over \$41 million to agencies across the state in 2026.”

King also stated, “The number of DUI arrests in Moraga nearly doubled between 2022 and 2025. Additionally, while there were no reported accidents involving DUI drivers in 2022, there were eight DUI-related accidents in 2025.”

With this in mind,

MPD’s Lieutenant Steve Borbely undertook the task of securing the grant that would fund officer overtime for specific DUI enforcement and regular patrol shifts, provide for enforcement training courses, and the purchase of a new patrol vehicle with the proper DUI enforcement equipment and signage that will appear on the vehicle’s exterior. MPD was awarded the full grant amount that it requested.



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Key Objectives

- ✓ **Sustain the Gains:** Maintain and improve community wildfire readiness in collaboration with local governments.
- ✓ **Protect the House:** Implement effective Home Hardening and local Zone Zero policies to reduce risk.
- ✓ **Strengthen our Networks:** Improve coordination with partner agencies to ensure our safety standards are met.
- ✓ **Retain the Best:** Ensure that the District is fully staffed with qualified personnel.
- ✓ **Control fiscal resources:** Ensure that district finances are managed with accountability and transparency.

Endorsed by

Steven Danziger, MOFD Director

Lynda Deschambault, EBRPD Director

Joyce Hawkins, former Orinda Mayor

Kerry Hillis, Moraga Mayor

Latika Malkani, Orinda City Council

Dick Olsen, co-founder, MOFD

Janet Riley, Orinda City Council

Amy Worth, former Orinda Mayor

Marguerite Young, EBMUD Director

For more information: johnd4mofd.com

Paid for by Donnelly for Moraga Orinda Fire District Director 2026 – FPPC # Pending



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CC County School Boards Association

2025-2026

Paid for by Sarah Butler for Contra Costa Board of Education, 2026 FPPC #1492690



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

Parks & Rec Commission:
Wednesday, Oct. 14, 7 p.m.
Community Center Room 7
Planning Commission
Regular Meeting:
Tuesday, Oct. 27, 7 p.m.
Orinda Library Auditorium
Supplemental Sales Tax
Oversight Commission
Wednesday, Oct. 14, 6:30 p.m.
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Orinda and Brentwood educators named 2026-27 Contra Costa County Teachers of the Year



Stephanie Sado works with students on literacy.

Photo courtesy CCCOE

The Contra Costa County Office of Education (CCCOE) recently announced that Stephanie Sado, a literacy intervention teacher in the Orinda Union School District, and Rebecca St. Michel, a fifth-grade teacher at Brentwood Elementary School in the Brentwood Union School District have been named the 2026-27 Contra Costa County Teachers of the Year.

The educators were recognized during the 54th Annual Contra Costa County Teachers of the Year Celebration on Sept. 17 at the Hilton Concord. As county win-

ners, St. Michel and Sado will advance to the California State Teachers of the Year competition.

Sado holds a Master of Arts in Teaching Leadership from Saint Mary's College and a Bachelor of Science in General Studies with a Spanish concentration from the University of Southern California, along with a CLAD Multiple Subject Teaching Credential.

Her passion for education began in childhood and was reaffirmed during her college years when she enrolled in her first education course and discovered her calling to teach.

Over the past 12 years, Sado has focused on helping students develop strong literacy skills while ensuring they experience reading as a source of confidence and enjoyment.

Drawing from her own struggles with literacy as a child, Sado is committed to providing early intervention and ensuring students receive the support they need before frustration or self-doubt takes hold. Beyond working directly with students, she has led professional development, helped establish districtwide literacy systems, and played a key

role in developing a comprehensive K-5 reading intervention program across Orinda Union School District elementary schools.

St. Michel is a fourth-generation educator with more than 27 years of classroom experience. She has spent her entire teaching career serving students at Brentwood Elementary School. She earned a Bachelor of Arts in Liberal Studies and Sciences from San Diego State University and her California teaching credential from California State University, East Bay.

Sado and St. Michel were selected from a group of four finalists. The other finalists were Evette Evers-Threatt of Martin Luther King Jr. Junior High School in the Pittsburg Unified School District and Julee Henderson of Acalanes High School in the Acalanes Union High School District.

The Contra Costa County Teachers of the Year program is coordinated annually by the Contra Costa County Office of Education.

— J. Wake

Candidates vie for OUSD and Board of Education seats

By Sora O'Doherty

Voters in Orinda on Nov. 3 will select from four candidates to fill three seats on the Orinda Union School District governing board. Incumbent Eve Phillips decided not to run again, but incumbents Katie Shogan and Edda Collins Coleman are running, joined by John Chabalko and Chloe AfteI on the ballot.

Shogan, currently board president, and Collins Coleman were both elected to the board in 2022. Coleman was named Assemblymember Rebecca Bauer-Kahan's 2026 Woman of the Year.

Shogan has worked as a California public school teacher and administrator. She is an experienced board member, having previously served on the boards of both a public school district and a private school. Shogan holds an Ed.M. in education policy and management. As a parent, she has volunteered in the Orinda community and schools in numerous capacities. Shogan promises to maintain OUSD's academic excellence by strengthening core academic curriculum for all students and offering elective and signature programming in the areas of STEM, art, music and athletics. She also

commits to attracting and retaining top teachers and staff.

Collins Coleman has served as board president and vice president during her tenure on the OUSD board. She identifies her priorities as including strengthening curriculum, fostering a safe school environment that prioritizes mental health and social-emotional wellbeing, improving staff recruitment and retention, and advocating for a responsible budget. Beyond the boardroom, she has also served as a field trip driver at Del Rey Elementary, Girl Scout Troop Leader, library volunteer at Del Rey and Wagner Ranch Elementary, and board member of the Parents' Club at Orinda Intermediate School.

John Chabalko says that he is running for the school board because he believes that thoughtful, long-term leadership is essential to preserving what makes Orinda's schools exceptional. As the parent of two children in OUSD, Chabalko says he has become deeply involved in Orinda's schools, most recently serving as president of the Wagner Ranch Parents Club. He says working alongside parents, teachers, staff, administrators, and dis-

trict leadership has strengthened his appreciation for what makes OUSD exceptional. He relies on his professional career leading large organizations for teaching him the importance of strategic planning, responsible financial stewardship, and making decisions with transparency and integrity.

Chloe AfteI has not filed a candidate's statement with Contra Costa County Elections, but instead has posted her campaign material on several sites on the internet. She advocates for keeping student electronic devices out of daily instructions in TK through fifth grade. She promises to communicate with families through a monthly newsletter, polling and other methods. AfteI says that she is not running against anyone's record. "I'm offering a different set of priorities: transparency about how and why decisions get made, real two-way communication with families, and a commitment to protecting the early years for hands-on learning. That's it."

Also on the ballot is Governing Board Member of the Contra Costa County Board of Education, Area 2. Candidate Pamela West is challenging incumbent Sarah

Butler. In Butler's candidate statement she says that she is honored that her fellow trustees recently elected her President of the Contra Costa County Board of Education for 2026. Butler was first elected in 2018 and was reelected in 2022. She also serves as the second vice-president of legislation for the Contra Costa County School Boards Association. She is a former OUSD board member.

West has lived in Contra Costa County for over 40 years. She is a small business owner and has four children who have graduated from local public schools through college graduation. She was also on the OUSD board for eight years. She says that her goal on the County Board of Education would be to help ensure that every student receives an excellent education, and a chance to reach their highest potential. and promises to bring a collaborative, results-focused approach to building strong schools and communities where every child can succeed.

Ballot measures aim to avert closure of Orinda BART, reduction in high school programs

By Sora O’Doherty

Both the Acalanes Union High School District and the Public Transit Revenue Measure District are trying again to convince voters to pass measures providing more funds to County transportation and to local high schools. Both measures have been before voters in the past, but failed to reach the required majority for passage.

Measure W would permit Acalanes Union High School District to levy a \$168 parcel tax for eight years. In order to pass, the measure must win 66.67% voter approval. Measure W will appear on ballots for each of the five AUHSD trustee areas.

In May 2025, AUHSD ran a similar parcel tax measure, Measure T, in a special election. Measure T would have provided for an eight-year parcel tax of \$130. Although the measure did win over 60% of the vote, it fell short by a little over 3%.

Measure W aims at attracting and retaining highly qualified teachers; continuing advanced academic programs in science, technology, engineering, math, and arts that prepare students for success in college and careers; and maintaining manageable class sizes and restoring positions lost to budget cuts, especially teachers, counselors and school librarians.

According to County Counsel’s impartial analysis, there are currently two existing AUHSD parcel taxes totaling \$301 per parcel annually. If this measure passes, the total amount of annual parcel taxes would be \$469 per parcel. Although Measure W would expire after eight years, the previous parcel taxes will not expire.

Property owners who are residents in the district may apply for an exemption for the parcel

tax, if passed. Those who would qualify for the exemption include those 65 years of age or older; those receiving Supplemental Security Income for a disability; and those receiving Social Security Disability Insurance benefits, whose yearly income does not exceed 250% of the 2012 federal poverty guidelines issued by the United States Department of Health and Human Services. Property that is otherwise exempt from property taxes will also be exempt from the parcel tax.

Arguments in favor of Measure W state that while AUHSD’s four public high schools, Acalanes, Campolindo, Miramonte and Las Lomas, rate among the top 5% of high schools nationally, the district has had to cut \$4.2 million from its budget in the past two years. The parcel tax will not fund administrators’ salaries and a Citizen’s Oversight as well as independent audits will ensure proper spending, according to proponents.

Arguments against Measure W say that “the money is there. The priorities are wrong.” In support of that proposition, the opponents cite spending on Wellness Centers on each high-school campus; costly Central Administration; and non-academic diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging programming. Opponents also argue that AUHSD teaches seniors an elective Deconstructing Race course that could put federal funding at risk, AUHSD voluntarily requires Ethnic Studies for graduation, though it is neither funded nor required by the state.

Also on the ballot is Measure RTM. This regional measure would impose a tax of 0.5% in the counties of Alameda, Contra Costa, San Mateo, and Santa Clara and

1.0% in the City and County of San Francisco. The tax would be in effect for 14 years and would not count toward the statutory limit on combined local sales tax rates.

Because Measure RTM is a regional measure, all that is required for it to pass is a simple majority of the total combined votes across all five participating counties, that is 50% plus one. The stated purpose of the measure is “to generate approximately \$980 million per year for 14 years to prevent catastrophic transit service cuts, preserve essential lifeline routes, maintain safety and cleanliness standards, and support the coordinated, reliable transit riders depend on.”

Advocates of the measure warn that without this injection of funds, “we will experience significant and deep cuts to public transit systems including BART, AC Transit, Muni, and Caltrain — setting us back decades.” Last February, BART announced that if the measure fails up to 15 stations might be closed, including the BART station in Orinda.

Proponents also state that “the consequences would impact everyone. Failure of the measure would force thousands of people every single day onto our already congested roads and freeways- worsening air pollution, making traffic jams start earlier and last longer, and resulting in most of us spending more time behind the wheel and less time home with our families.” The Regional Transit Measure would invest

money directly into Contra Costa County communities, providing funding for transit improvements and road repaving.

However, opponents of the measure warn that a no vote doesn’t have to shut down transit. They point to Grand Jury and Inspector General recommendations and urge transit agencies “to correct their history of mismanagement, control rapidly growing costs ... and pursue alternatives before demanding nearly \$17 billion more.”

Opponents of the measure include former State Senator from Orinda Steve Glazer and Susan Candell, former Mayor of Lafayette.

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Paid for by Steve Cohn for MOFD Director. No campaign donations accepted.

Trunk & Treat event returns to Orinda, Oct. 22

One trunk decorated for Halloween at last year’s “Trunk & Treat” event.

Photo Sora O’Doherty

The Orinda Library Parking Garage and Plaza will be spookily transformed for the third annual Orinda Parks and Recreation “Trunk & Treat” event on Thursday, Oct. 22, with car trunks festively decorated for Halloween, as well as fun games, displays and candy for the kids, of course! Three 45-minute sessions will be offered from 4:30 to 5:15 p.m., 5:15 to 6 p.m., and 6 to 6:45 p.m. (registration is required for all participating children, ages 1 to

11 years old). There is a non-refundable fee of \$7 for residents and \$8.05 for non-residents, plus an additional 3% Facility Preservation Fee. After the kids collect their candy, Taste of the World Market Food Trucks will be there for the last food truck evening of the year. To register, visit <https://www.city-oforinda.gov/m/news-flash/home/detail/310> and choose your preferred session.

– S. O’Doherty

Janet Riley

For Orinda City Council



JANET'S PRIORITIES

Prepare Before the Emergency

Strengthen wildfire readiness and emergency preparedness in our schools and throughout our community so Orinda is ready when it matters most.

Preserve What Makes Orinda Special

Protect our small-town character, peaceful neighborhoods, and healthy environment—while pursuing practical solutions like electric-powered leaf blowers.

Make E-Bike Safety a Priority

Keep students, families, and drivers safe with better education, safer routes to school, and effective regional e-bike policies.

Bring New Energy to Downtown

Support more great restaurants, local businesses, and thoughtful investment while preserving the character that makes downtown Orinda unique.

Listen, Lead & Spend Wisely

Give residents a meaningful voice, bring people together around practical solutions, and protect our financial strength through responsible budgeting and careful use of taxpayer dollars.

www.JanetRileyforOrinda.com

As President of the Educational Foundation of Orinda (now ONE), Janet worked tirelessly to advance the high quality of public schools in Orinda and to broaden EFO's funding base to insure its long-term financial stability. She brings that same commitment and passion to the City Council. Janet addresses challenges directly and dives into the details, and her voice and viewpoint improve the policy results. We strongly recommend Janet's re-election to the Orinda City Council.

Steve Harwood, Alison Holland, Karen Derr Gilbert, Joan Kiekhaefer, Yosh Neugebauer, Cara Hoxie, Dean Burnick, Past Presidents of the Educational Foundation of Orinda



Re-elect Janet Riley

janet@janetrileyfororinda.com (925) 257-2372

PAID FOR BY JANET RILEY FOR ORINDA CITY COUNCIL 2026 COMMITTEE FPPC #1453079

Letters to the Editor

Campolindo Needs Our Support — Vote Yes on Measure W

As president of the Campolindo Parents Club, I see every day what our school means to this community, and I also see, up close, what happens when funding doesn't keep pace with what our students need.

Let me be clear about something: this is not a spending problem. It's a revenue problem. The Acalanes Union High School District has already tightened its budget significantly, cutting \$4.2 million over the past two years. At Campolindo, that has meant reduced course offerings, a librarian now shared across all four district campuses instead of dedicated to our students, and thinner academic counseling at exactly the time our students need more guidance, not less. Even after absorbing those cuts, the district remains one of the lowest-funded in California per student. Our schools haven't been careless with money. They've been squeezed by a funding structure that simply doesn't provide enough to begin with.

At \$168 a year, Measure W is a modest price to pay for keeping our schools exceptional. All funds stay local, seniors can receive a full exemption, and independent audits are required.

Our school has given so much to our families. Now it's our turn to give back.

Please join me in voting Yes on Measure W.

Ann de Villiers
President, Campolindo Parents Club
Moraga

Three Generations of Acalanes Dons support Measure W

There aren't many places where three generations of one family can say they attended the same high school. In our family, five of us can.

Katrina Neblett Silvani was a Don first. Years later, her daughter, Danielle Silvani Gallagher, walked the same halls, as did Danielle's future husband, Sean Gallagher. Today, their daughters, Grace and Lauren, are Dons themselves.

Ask Katrina about Acalanes and you'll hear about teachers who saw something in their students before the students saw it themselves: Mr. Hansen in choral, Mr. Oberg in French, Mr. Dessler in English and Mr. Diehl in Spanish. She'll tell you about homecoming projects, four years of choral music and French, and counselors who helped her navigate college applications and find scholarships she didn't know existed.

Ask Sean and he'll say electronics, architectural drafting and four years of soccer. Danielle remembers traveling to New York with Ms. Linford and the Acalanes choir, countless hours on the basketball court, and dissecting a cat in AP Biology alongside a lab partner who loved every minute and became a trauma surgeon. Danielle had the opposite reaction and quickly realized medicine wasn't for her.

Grace will tell you about finding her place in drama and English teachers who encouraged her passion for writing. Lauren will tell you about Leadership and the incredible Ms. Walton, who has already made an impact on her high school experience. Katrina can look back on the teachers and experiences that shaped her more than fifty years ago. Danielle and Sean can now do the same. Grace and Lauren are still living it.

Acalanes has changed, but much of what our family values has remained: great teachers, manageable class sizes, the arts, a wide range of courses and counselors who support individual students. Measure W would provide locally controlled funding for eight years to support teachers, manageable class sizes, academic programs, counseling and career services, technology and other instructional needs.

For our family, those aren't just items on a list. They're woven into three generations of our Acalanes story.

Our family is voting Yes on Measure W.

Katrina Neblett Silvani & Rick Silvani
Danielle Silvani Gallagher & Sean Gallagher
Grace & Lauren Gallagher
Lafayette

Measure W is for every student — including ours

As special education parents and leaders from Lafayette, Orinda, Walnut Creek, and Moraga, we are proud to stand with our community in full support of Measure W. Our four AUHSD high schools — Acalanes, Campolindo, Las Lomas, and

Miramonte — are extraordinary places. They rank among the top schools in the nation because of the teachers who show up every day for every kind of learner, counselors who know our kids by name, and programs that range from AP Physics to woodshop to adaptive PE. We have watched our own children — some of whom learn differently, communicate differently, or need more support to thrive — be welcomed, included, and genuinely educated in these schools. That is not a small thing. It is the result of years of intentional investment by a community that believes every student belongs.

Measure W protects the teachers, the class sizes, the counselors, and the programs that serve our highest-achieving students and our most vulnerable students alike. There is no "us and them" in a great public school district — there is only "our kids," and Measure W is how we keep showing up for all of them.

We want to address something directly, because we believe our community deserves honesty, not spin. The opposition singled out the cost of a single special education student's placement - turning a child into a line item - and used it to cast doubt on this measure. Using a vulnerable child's education as a talking point in a political argument crosses a line.

Following the law and ensuring that eligible students with disabilities receive a Free and Appropriate Public Education is not a drain on our schools — it is one of the clearest expressions of what makes AUHSD responsible, reliable, and excellent.

We are proud families of AUHSD. We have seen what these schools can do for a child who learns differently, and we have seen what they can do for a child heading to a top university. Measure W protects both of those futures.

We are voting yes on Measure W, and we hope you will join us. Alicia Keenan, Miramonte Special Education Parent

Samantha Okazaki, Las Lomas Special Education Parent
Anna Tague, Former Del Valle Special Education Parent
Subadhra Seetharaman, Acalanes Special Education Parent
Suzie Souza, Campolindo Special Education Parent
Emily Waterbury, Orinda resident, co-Director POISE
Julie Schindler, Walnut Creek resident
Hillary Sucker SEED Lafayette Vice President
Jen Ripley, Lafayette resident, SEED Lafayette board member
Samantha Okazaki, Las Lomas Special Education Parent
Kate Munding, Orinda resident, co-Director POISE

A dollars and sense case for Measure W

There is a moral imperative to invest in our public schools. Our children deserve an excellent education and many move to Lamorinda for that reason. But for homeowners considering Measure W, there is also an immensely compelling dollars-and-cents case.

Consider an actual and representative Happy Valley home. Purchased in 2014 for \$1.935 million, Zillow now estimates its value at approximately \$2.974 million, an increase of more than \$1 million.

Of course, our schools did not cause the full appreciation. Many factors determine home values. But decades of economic research demonstrate that school quality is meaningfully capitalized into housing prices. Studies on school-boundary changes and changes in school ratings have found significant effects on home values. California research has likewise found substantial premiums associated with higher-performing schools. And research suggests that strong schools can also help sustain those premiums even during housing downturns.

The relevant question, then, isn't solely how much of that Happy Valley home's \$1 million gain was created by our schools. It is how much of the nearly \$3 million value today depends upon Lafayette continuing to be a community where families are willing to pay a premium for excellent public schools.

Now consider the scale of the investment. Measure W would cost \$168 per parcel annually for eight years, just \$14 per month. That's \$1,344 over the measure's entire life. For that \$2.974 million home, a decline of just one-tenth of one percent in value equals nearly \$3,000, more than twice the entire eight-year Measure W assessment. A 1% difference is almost \$30,000.

The comparison is striking. We in-

sure our homes. We maintain them. We replace roofs and furnaces to protect their value. Excellent schools are also part of the infrastructure and investment supporting the value of every home in this community.

Supporting our schools is fundamentally about our children. But preserving school excellence is also an investment in the community, and in the extraordinary value homeowners have accumulated by living here.

Rob Sturm
Lafayette

Join me in voting Yes on Measure W

As the parent of three kids who've come through the Acalanes Union High School District, I've witnessed the difference great electives can make — and that's why I'm voting Yes on Measure W.

Two of my kids graduated from Miramonte, and my youngest is now a junior at Campolindo. At Miramonte, my older kids took public speaking, Spanish, digital photography, anatomy and physiology, and psychology. At Campolindo, my daughter has taken choir, sports medicine, and an incredible biotechnology elective that genuinely shaped how she thinks about her future. These aren't just "extra" classes. They're often where kids discover what they're passionate about and what they might want to pursue after high school.

It isn't just the electives; it's the great teachers and manageable class sizes as well. Because of that quality, my kids and their classmates are able to succeed in their classes, including a long list of available Advanced Placement classes. AUHSD students do well on AP exams, and walk into college with credits and core requirements already satisfied. These credits give students flexibility in college: the ability to advance into higher-level coursework sooner, explore other interests, take a lighter caseload while studying abroad, or even graduate early.

That kind of opportunity exists because of sustained local investment. When budgets tighten, electives are often the first things cut, and class sizes grow. Measure W would provide locally controlled funding for eight years to support teachers, manageable class sizes, advanced academic programs including the arts and sciences, counseling and career services, and other instructional needs. For families like mine, that funding isn't abstract — it helps preserve the quality of education that draws us to this area to raise our children.

Hollie Hire
Orinda

Why Parents of Younger Kids Should Care About Measure W

As a mom with a 4th grader and a 7th grader, I don't have a high schooler yet, but I'm voting Yes on Measure W because my kids absolutely will be affected by this election, maybe more than anyone else.

It's easy for parents of younger kids to feel like Measure W is someone else's issue, something for high school parents to worry about. I'd push back on that. Measure W would provide eight years of locally controlled funding, which means it will still be in effect when my seventh-grader starts high school and well into my fifth-grader's high school years too. The decision we make this election is the decision that determines what high school looks like for our kids when they actually get there.

That's what worries me most about this measure failing. The teachers, programs, and class sizes that make our high schools exceptional right now don't just bounce back once they're cut. Experienced teachers who are let go often don't come back. Programs that get eliminated take years, sometimes far longer, to rebuild, if they're rebuilt at all. If Measure W doesn't pass, our younger students won't be walking into the same high schools their older siblings and neighbors did. They'll be entering schools that look fundamentally different, with fewer electives, larger classes, and less support, right at the moment they need it most.

My kids are still years away from high school, but their high school experience is being decided right now. I want my fourth- and seventh-graders to walk onto those campuses one day and find the same strong teachers, manageable class sizes, and breadth of programs that have made these schools what they are. That only happens if we fund it today.

Kelly Lathrop
Lafayette Resident
Springhill and Stanley Parent

Why Seniors Should Vote Yes on Measure W

As two kindred community-minded souls, we've been privileged to wear a lot of different hats in Moraga — teacher, President of the Moraga Historical Society, founding Board member of the Moraga Education Foundation and the Moraga Community Foundation, and (together) former Moraga Citizens of the Year. As confirmed by this mix of community involvement, we firmly believe that the health of our schools and the health of our communities are inseparable. That's why we're voting Yes on Measure W, and why we urge our fellow seniors to join us.

We understand why some longtime residents, especially those whose children and grandchildren have long since graduated, might wonder what a high school funding measure has to do with us seniors. We'd ask you to consider it from a different angle. Strong schools, including elementary, intermediate and high schools, are among the biggest reasons family-minded and community-oriented people choose to put down roots here in the first place; and those strong schools are a major reason property values in our Lamorinda communities have remained strong for decades. When our schools thrive, our communities thrive with them — our neighborhoods stay desirable, our cities and town remain vibrant, and the next generation of families continues to choose Lafayette, Orinda and Moraga the way we did many years ago.

We've also seen, through decades of volunteer work in this community, that steady funding is vital to our valued local institutions. Measure W would provide eight years of needed and locally-controlled funding for our high schools to support teachers, manageable class sizes, advanced academic programs, and counseling and career services, controlled by us, not by Sacramento.

As longtime residents of Lamorinda, we embrace the view that the best investments are the ones that strengthen whole communities by strengthening vital parts of them, such as our schools. Measure W is that kind of investment.

Susan and Sam Sperry
Moraga

Measure W is worth it

I am a 16-year-old junior at Acalanes High School, and I have seen what budget cuts look like from a student's desk. That is why I urge Lamorinda voters to support Measure W this November.

My classmates and I have felt the effects of tighter budgets in ways adults might not notice. Scheduling has become harder. With limited staffing and fewer course sections, students sometimes can't fit in the classes they want or need. Many students, myself included, have been placed in classes we aren't passionate about and have struggled to switch out.

Over the past two years, our librarian gave practical presentations on AI use and research skills, and created resource guides for class projects. After recent budget cuts, Acalanes, Miramonte, Campolindo, and Las Lomas now share a single full-time librarian. That kind of hands-on support is much harder to offer, and students at every school feel the difference.

Measure W is a local parcel tax that would give the Acalanes Union High School District dedicated funding to protect excellent teachers, exceptional academic programs, and the unique offerings that help students discover their passions. Because the money stays in our district, it goes directly to our classrooms. Measure W would cost \$168 per parcel per year for 8 years, with exemptions for senior citizens.

Strong schools build strong communities and sustain home values for everyone, whether or not they have children enrolled. But great schools don't sustain themselves; they depend on a community willing to invest in them.

I understand that no one loves new taxes, and I don't ask anyone to take this decision lightly. I ask you to consider what this investment means for a teenager who needs a schedule that works, a teacher with time to help, or a librarian to guide a project. Students like me can't vote yet, but you can.

Please vote yes on Measure W.

Campbell Deane
Junior, Acalanes High School, Lafayette

...continued on Page A10



In this turbulent mid-term election, vote for something you can be proud of.

EXERCISE YOUR LAMORINDA PRIDE!



ACALANES HIGH SCHOOL • CAMPOLINDO HIGH SCHOOL • LAS LOMAS HIGH SCHOOL
MIRAMONTE HIGH SCHOOL • ACALANES CENTER FOR INDEPENDENT STUDY

SUPPORT Our Award-Winning High Schools

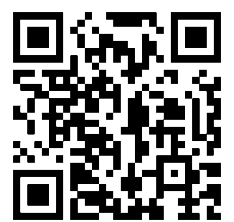
Our local public high schools rank among the top 5% of all high schools nationwide, but competition for high quality teachers in the Bay Area is a growing challenge. We need to pay our teachers a competitive salary. However, years of inadequate state funding have taken a toll on AUHSD high schools. The District has cut \$4.2 million in the last two years alone as educational costs continue to rise! Without Measure W, drastic cuts will continue.

- ▶ **PROTECT** advanced science, technology, engineering, and math programs that help students get into college.
- ▶ **RETAIN/ATTRACT** highly-qualified teachers.
- ▶ **MAINTAIN** manageable class sizes.
- ▶ **PRESERVE** high-quality music, visual, and performing arts programs.
- ▶ **CONTINUE** Career Technical Education for in-demand fields like auto mechanics, fabrication, skilled trades, biotech, medical and health sciences.
- ▶ **KEEP** classroom technology/instructional materials current.
- ▶ **PROVIDE** academic intervention for students in need.
- ▶ **RESTORE** positions lost to budget cuts—especially teachers, counselors, and school librarians.

Senior Citizens are eligible for exemption.

ALL Measure W funds STAY LOCAL.

Measure W is endorsed by:



LEARN MORE

YES^{ON} W



For Our Local High Schools

www.YesForOurHighSchools.com

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VOTE!

**Election Day
is Tuesday
November 3rd**

Your ballot should have
arrived in your mail.

Letters to the Editor

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Support Measure W

We both teach at Campolindo High School and live in Orinda, so we care about this community as teachers, parents, and neighbors. We've watched budget cuts reach our classrooms first-hand, and that's why we're urging you to vote Yes on Measure W.

Every cut means a student misses out of an exciting course or sits in a more crowded classroom. Behind every cut are real kids, and we see their disappointment when they cannot take the classes they want.

Teachers will always give their all, but we cannot do it alone. Great schools need the resources to back up the people in front of the classroom.

We also know that voters want to be sure their money is spent wisely. From our perspective, our school district has done what it can to be responsible with limited dollars. It has made hard choices and kept spending disciplined. That discipline is reflected in the district's strong bond rating, an independent signal that outside financial experts see it as well managed and a sound steward of public funds.

Measure W is not about waste or new bureaucracy. It's about protecting what already makes our schools exceptional: the courses students love, the teachers who make them come alive, and the opportunities that prepare kids for college and beyond. Local funding stays local, and it gives our schools stability when state funding falls short.

Lamorinda has always invested in its young people, and it shows in our schools and in our community. Please join us in continuing that tradition. Vote Yes on Measure W!

Paul and Stephanie Verbanszky
Orinda

A student's request for Measure W success

I am currently in eighth grade and go to middle school in Lafayette. Next year, I will be going to a school in the AUHSD school district and I am looking forward to participating in Academic Decathlon, Band, and Theatre Tech. It has come to my attention that there is not enough funding for the high schools. Measure W will implement a parcel tax, to make Lamorinda have great high schools. In recent years. Measure T was a parcel tax that intended to provide funding to the AUHSD district, but unfortunately it didn't pass. If Measure W doesn't pass the district may be in a predicament in how to fund school programs like Academic Decathlon, Band, and Theatre. I hope Measure W passes so I can participate in these programs in high school.

Please Vote Yes for Measure W!

Kiran Shu
Student

Vote Yes on Measure W

As a married couple who have spent a combined 48 years teaching in Lamorinda schools, we have had the privilege of seeing firsthand what makes a school community exceptional. We have also seen that great teaching requires more than dedicated teachers—it requires the resources to meet students' academic, social, and emotional needs.

Small class sizes, up-to-date instructional materials, timely intervention, and meaningful enrichment opportunities all make a difference in a child's education. These are not extras; they are tools that allow teachers to reach students more effectively and give every child the opportunity to thrive.

WaLamorinda's strong schools are one of the things that make this such a special place to live. That reputation did not happen by accident. It reflects decades of teachers, families, and community members choosing to invest in our children and in the schools they attend.

Measure W continues that commitment by providing stable, local funding for our high schools. It will help our schools attract and retain excellent educators and provide the resources teachers need to give their students the best possible education.

After nearly three decades in Lamorinda classrooms, we know how much a strong school system means—not only to our students, but to the entire community. We are proud to teach here, and we hope you will join us in supporting the students, teachers, and schools that make Walamorinda such a wonderful place to call home.

Brett and Amanda Lorie
Moraga

Measure W matters

I'm not usually one to step into the political arena or suggest where your hard-earned dollars should go. That said, it's boggling that a quality, well-rounded education in our community is yet again on the chopping block.

Born and raised in Lamorinda, and now a Happy Valley resident, I'm raising my own four kids through these same schools. I'm voting Yes on Measure W, both as a parent and as a local business owner for the last 27 years.

I currently have a seventh-grader at Stanley, a freshman at Campolindo, and a senior at Acalanes. I also have a student at De La Salle, which gives me a unique vantage point: I see our public high schools and a well-regarded private school side by side. Our public schools match that same quality and care, with outstanding, engaged teachers, extraordinary rigor, phenomenal counseling, and a wide range of offerings for all. That consistency requires sustained investment, which I know is a tough ask, but I assure you is worth it.

As broker of Dudum Real Estate Group, I see this community through a dual lens, personal and professional. Families searching for homes here commonly ask about our schools before almost anything else. Strong schools are one of the biggest drivers of home values, whether you have kids in the district or not. Our district has been among the top rated for decades, a significant draw with huge value add well beyond the home itself.

It would be detrimental to see that go away without Measure W.

Measure W would provide local funding for eight years so to continue supporting our teachers, allow manageable class sizes, and provide advanced academic programs including the arts, science, music, counseling and career services, and other instructional needs.

This isn't about politics. It's about community. It's about our children. It's about our property values, your property values. This is our future.

Julie Del Santo
Lafayette

Community comes together to slow down drivers

I wanted to share a story about how city government can really help a community.

I live on a very busy street where there were always cars driving way too fast. This was not only dangerous for the drivers, but it also put people like me and my friends in danger. My dad started a petition asking the city to put a speed bump on the road where people were speeding. We got a lot of support from people in the neighborhood and brought the petition to the city. We explained how fast people were driving, how dangerous it was, and why something needed to be done.

A few months later, the city put two speed bumps on our road. They significantly slowed down drivers and made the road safer for everyone. Later, the city also put speed bumps on another nearby road because people were using it as a shortcut to speed through the neighborhood.

Thanks to the Lafayette city government and the people who supported our petition, our roads are now safer and less dangerous. This experience showed me how people in a community can work with their local government to make a real difference.

Luke Van Veen
Lafayette

Flock Cameras and Other ALPRs

I am writing to raise awareness about the Flock cameras present in both Moraga and Orinda. They are advertised as automated license plate readers (ALPRs), but they track more than just license plates, and their presence raises concerns over the privacy of everyday citizens.

Unlike regular traffic cameras, Flock cameras can track numerous pieces of unique information – like bumper stickers, dents, and scratches – to create a “vehicle fingerprint” of a particular car and its movements. On top of this, many police departments that employ the use of Flock cameras, such as the Moraga Police Department, can share their data and access other agencies’ data through Flock’s network. Furthermore, WIRED has recently gained information regarding a new software Flock is testing called OS Investigate (originally called Night-watch). The program comes with a list of prewritten prompts, but law enforcement are also able to create their own prompts entirely from scratch. This al-

lows for broad, warrantless access to people’s movements and even routines, regardless of probable cause or whether they’ve committed a crime or not, ultimately undermining the privacy of the general public.

A recent joint analysis by WIRED and 404 Media has also revealed that “software running on the [Flock] device explicitly detects people as well as vehicles, license plates, and bicycles.” <https://www.wired.com/story/hackers-flock-camera-data-shows-how-system-works/>

The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) has a page dedicated to ALPRs and how to advocate against their implementation here: <https://www.aclu.org/campaigns-initiatives/get-the-flock-out>

Additionally, a Community Control Over Police Surveillance (CCOPS) ordinance is a legislative framework that can be adopted, if not already in place. CCOPS requires police departments to get broader public approval before purchasing and installing surveillance equipment, as well as requiring PDs to explain the equipment’s purpose and reason for adoption. This serves as an additional avenue for advocacy and community involvement.

I encourage the residents of Lamorinda to do research into modern-day ALPRs (Flock, Axon, etc.) and to look into other Californian cities and towns that have successfully ended their contracts with Flock.

Trey Harkavy
Moraga

Steve Cohn for MOFD Director, Division 3

I have known Steve Cohn for 37 years and have witnessed his longstanding commitment to Orinda and its community. He has consistently sought to improve the local environment and has developed a strong understanding of financial matters involving public tax dollars.

I taught a graduate course at UC Berkeley focused on wildfires in the wildland-urban interface. Because of Steve's interest in improving wildfire safety in Orinda, I invited him to participate. The course featured 15 experts discussing wildfire behavior, mitigation, planning, and community resilience.

Steve immersed himself in the subject, engaged thoughtfully with the experts, asked probing questions, and expanded his understanding of wildfire preparedness. He connected the research and professional expertise presented in the course to issues facing Orinda, including questions surrounding the potential use of MOFD reserves for wildfire mitigation strategies supported by research and practical planning.

What stands out to me is Steve's willingness to listen, ask difficult questions, seek reliable information, learn from experts, and work toward practical solutions. In my experience, he approaches these responsibilities with intelligence, experience, common sense, and integrity.

I believe these qualities are important considerations for anyone evaluating candidates for MOFD Director, Division 3.

John Radke
Orinda

John Donnelly for MOFD

It has been an honor and privilege to serve as your Moraga-Orinda Fire District (MOFD) Director, Division 3 since 2018. I intended to run for reelection unless I could ensure there was a candidate who would represent the community with the commitment, dedication and understanding of the issues that I aspired to bring to this role every day. With that said, I wholeheartedly endorse John Donnelly to succeed me as Director. John is a retired Army Medical Corps Brigadier General, has a PhD in immunology, coordinated global vaccine programs, and has volunteer experience with Orinda Rotary. He possesses the integrity, intelligence and leadership skills to support the men and women of MOFD while acting in the best interests of our community.

I could not imagine a better candidate to be your next Director. I have full confidence that John hits the ground running, rises to challenges and continues to build upon the progress we have made. With all my heart and hope I urge you to join me in

electing John Donnelly to the MOFD Board. I promise, you will not be disappointed. For more info go to: johnd4mofd.com

Steven Michael Danziger
Orinda

Linda Stevens for MOFD District 4 Director

Voters in MOFD District 4 have the opportunity to elect Linda Stevens as Director. Linda's experience and background will upend the status quo. She has worked in geographic Information systems (GIS) for decades, predominantly providing support for Fire Agencies. She served not only as a CEO but as the only woman on various boards during her career in the male dominated technology industry. She will be the second woman to serve the MOFD Board in its 29-year existence.

Linda pledges to stay engaged, attend meetings in person and be responsive to the residents. Her priorities include: ensure financial accountability, monitoring of the new Station 41 in Moraga, comprehensive and fair policies supporting the state's Zone Zero regulations, oversight of the new single role EMS delivery service, working however possible to address the ongoing property insurance crisis, strengthening outreach regarding defensible space and home hardening programs and building stronger relationships with other public agencies.

These are critical times for Fire agencies and high risk communities throughout the State. Linda will provide a new fresh and needed perspective to the Board. She is up to the challenges ahead. On Nov. 3 cast your vote for Linda Stevens, MOFD District 4.

Leesa A. Evans
Orinda

Endorsement for Steve Cohn, MOFD Director, Division 3

Steve Cohn is the quintessential candidate for MOFD Director. Why? Steve has over 20 plus years of volunteer work experience with both the MOFD operational & administrative staff and the various MOFD Boards. I have known Steve for 18 years primarily from his decades-long volunteer work with MOFD. Practically speaking, Steve's technical competence regarding EMT training, fire standards of service/experience, and fiscal analysis skills exceed that of most of the current MOFD Directors.

As MOFD Division 3 Director, Steve will be a refreshingly experienced, fiscally prudent, and forthright voice for his community.

Stephen Anderson
Former MOFD Director, Div 3
Orinda

Vote for John Donnelly to MOFD Board

This November, Division 3 voters in the Moraga-Orinda Fire District face an important choice. I urge my neighbors to elect John Donnelly to the Moraga-Orinda Fire District board of directors, Division 3. Given our wildfire risk, we need board members with real-world emergency operations experience. John has it.

John has lived in Division 3, which straddles Orinda and Moraga, for 28 years. A retired Brigadier General of the U.S. Army Medical Service Corps with 30 years of active and reserve service, he brings deep expertise in emergency operations and managing the essential resources a fire district depends on.

John's priorities are on point: strengthen wildfire readiness; implement home hardening and local Zone Zero policies; improve coordination with Cal Fire, EBMUD, and PG&E; keep the district fully staffed with qualified personnel; and manage finances with accountability and transparency. He knows MOFD's strong position reflects years of hard work, and sustaining it requires continued commitment.

If you want a board member who knows emergency operations, has his priorities straight, and will get the job done well, please join me in voting for John Donnelly for the MOFD Board of Directors, Division 3.

Jane Rutledge
Orinda

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Letters to the Editor

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Elect John Donnelly to MOFD Board, District 3

District 3 voters must elect John Donnelly to the MOFD Board. A retired Brigadier General, John served 30 years in the Army's Medical Corps. He commanded major medical combat units in Iraq. John will bring his extraordinary expertise in emergency medical services to MOFD. He fully recognizes that Moraga-based paramedic ambulance service should never be cut back. Donnelly's opponent is Orindan Steve Cohn. For years, Cohn has falsely claimed that Moragans are not paying their "fair share" of property and fire flow taxes to the MOFD. His claims were analyzed and rejected twice by a tri-agencies committee of Moraga Town Council, Orinda City Council and MOFD Board members.

Every May, the MOFD Board rejects Cohn's bogus claim when it sets equal Fire Flow Tax rates for both Moraga and Orinda. Cohn continually proposes a five time increase in the Fire Flow Tax for Moraga Zone residents. That translates to a tax hike of several hundred dollars per year for the typical Moraga family.

Cohn's election is contrary to the public interest. He would not be a reliable steward of the MOFD's mission to protect and serve the Moraga-Orinda community.

John Donnelly is the ONLY choice for MOFD District 3.

Dick Olsen, former MOFD Board Member
Dave Trotter, former Moraga Mayor and Councilmember

Elect Mike Roemer for MOFD Board

As a 10-year MOFD Board member and current president, I believe Mike Roemer is the best MOFD Board candidate. As a 34-year Orinda resident, Mike served as an MOFD Support Unit volunteer, licensed HAM radio operator, and logistics supporter to firefighters for 5 years before being elected to the MOFD Board. As an MOFD Board member, Mike has voted to fund and expand all of MOFD's fire prevention efforts including the free chipper program, free gutter guards and vent screens and expanding MODF's preventative burning program. Mike has personally walked every block of his district to connect with residents and listen to their concerns and preferences. He thoroughly and thoughtfully reads the Board packets, vigorously participates in discussions and then votes for what he believes will be best for the community. His legal expertise has helped guide MOFD in its litigation and labor negotiations. He is fully dedicated to his Board job and consistently represents the best interest of the community.

Craig Jorgens
Orinda

Steve Cohn for MOFD board

Moraga-Orinda Fire District (MOFD) elections are important and one candidate from Orinda for District 3 stands out. Steve Cohn is exceptionally qualified for the position and he deserves to be elected. I have worked with Steve for close to two decades and observed his dedication, analytical capability, and selfless commitment to making real improvements in our community. In particular, Steve has advocated and presented viable plans for realistic and effective solutions to our fire hazard risks and MOFD budgetary issues. There is no doubt in my mind that Steve can accelerate the needed programs to maintain the excellence of the services provided by MOFD and advance the programs to mitigate risk of catastrophic fire damage to our community. Orinda needs dedicated and capable public servants Like Steve.

Bill Abriel
Orinda

Vote for John Donnelly, MOFD, Division 3

I enthusiastically endorse John Donnelly for Director, Division 3, MOFD (Moraga-Orinda Fire District). John understands the big picture when it comes to fire prevention, mitigation, life and property-saving concerns. He is also a compassionate leader who prioritizes community health and well-being.

John is past President of the Rotary Club of Orinda, currently serves as the Club's Treasurer and is the Assistant Governor for the five Rotary Clubs in our area. As a fellow Rotarian, I find John's dedication to community service unparalleled. John also served 30 years in the US Army Medical Service Corps, retiring as a Brigadier General. Additionally, he had a very successful career directing discovery and

development of vaccines, both in the US and in developing countries. We are very fortunate to have a leader of John's caliber so committed to applying his skills and experience to delivering the highest level of services and responsiveness to our community.

John's demonstrated leadership skills, his exceptional expertise in budget development and fiscal oversight, and his broad and deep experience in setting and managing strategic direction, as well as his profound integrity all combine to make John an exceptional choice for MOFD Director.

Patricia Parke Hudson
Orinda

Steve Cohn for MOFD Director, Division 3

I strongly endorse Steve Cohn for Director, Division 3 of MOFD.

I have known Steve for years and have seen how seriously he takes the safety of this community. Steve brings integrity, independence, persistence and the courage to take unpopular positions when the facts support them. In 2020, he warned Orindans that Measure R was committing too little of its revenue to wildfire prevention. Subsequent City reports supported that concern by calling for more funds to support wildfire-risk reduction and emergency preparedness.

Steve wants MOFD to take a stronger role in wildfire-risk modeling, fuel mitigation and coordinated evacuation planning across Orinda and Moraga. He also believes the district should preserve its strong emergency medical response while using more of its substantial reserves for wildfire prevention.

Steve is an engineer by background and has decades of experience in financial analysis. He digs into budgets, plans and assumptions. He asks hard questions and pushes when needed to promote public safety.

Steve has put enormous time and energy into making Orinda safer and more resilient. He cares deeply about this community and approaches public issues with independence, preparation and integrity. For Orindans concerned about losing fire insurance and protecting public safety, Steve deserves their support.

Chuck Brotman
Orinda

Woehleke for Town Council

For more than 30 years, Steve Woehleke has had an ongoing commitment and has done the work that keeps our town running while also building very broad volunteer experiences.

A partial list of his volunteer activities for our town includes a 6-year representative for Moraga Town Council on the Association of Bay Area Governments, participated in three comprehensive updates to the Moraga General Plan in 1990, 2002 and 2024, Town mayor twice, Planning Commission, Hacienda Foundation Board of Directors, including leadership roles in each organization.

What also sets Steve apart has been his approach in his volunteer roles – he shows up every time by reading the reports, asking the hard questions, and listening to residents and his fellow constituents before forming viewpoints and making decisions.

We need a Town Council who works together as a unit, who understands how the budget, infrastructure, the key governance issues and a town government that works, and who can get things done from day one. Steve is that person. We hope you'll join us in voting for Steve on Nov. 3rd.

Edward and Denise Silicani
Moraga

Re-elect Steve Woekleke

I strongly recommend Steve Woehleke for reelection to Moraga's Town Council. As a 39-year resident of Moraga, Steve has demonstrated a deep commitment to the community through nearly three decades of volunteer service, including leadership roles on the Design Review Board, Hacienda Foundation Board, Planning Commission, and Town Council. And he is a strong supporter of our schools.

Steve, quietly and competently, focuses on making quality decisions representing the citizens of Moraga. During his public service tenure, he has worked for significant community accomplishments, including improvements to road infrastructure, strengthening the Town's financial position, updating land use plans and zoning, achieving timely approval of the Housing Element, and completing a comprehensive General Plan update.

Professionally, Steve spent 33

years with Chevron in technical, project management, and organizational development roles, building expertise in leadership, mentoring, and decision making. His educational background in engineering and finance further complements his public service experience.

Steve's proven leadership, extensive experience, and longstanding dedication to all of Moraga's citizens make him exceptionally well qualified to continue to serve the community. If you have any questions, just reach out and talk to Steve, as I have done many times.

Fred Weil
Moraga

Re-elect Kerry Hillis for Moraga Town Council

As a gay man renting in a very affluent, traditional community, there have been times when I have wondered whether my voice and experience truly mattered. Kerry Hillis made me feel seen.

During Pride Month, Kerry was extremely supportive and helpful in getting the city to fly the Pride flag. What stood out to me was not simply the flag itself, but the compassion and willingness to listen that Kerry demonstrated throughout the process. He understood that this gesture had meaning to members of the LGBTQ+ community and treated our concerns with respect and dignity.

Kerry listened. He was compassionate. And he made me feel that I belonged in this community.

I believe those qualities – listening to people, showing compassion, and making everyone feel included – are important qualities in a mayor. I am grateful for the way Kerry Hillis represented and supported our community, and I hope Moraga voters will support him for re-election.

Michael Gaffney
Moraga

Re-elect Steve Woehleke to the Moraga Town Council

As a 30-year resident of Moraga, I understand what makes our community such a special place to live. This is why I am writing to strongly and enthusiastically recommend that all Moragans cast their vote to re-elect Steve Woehleke to the Moraga Town Council.

Over the past decades Steve has demonstrated an unwavering commitment to serve in the best interests of our community through his participation and leadership on the Design Review Board, Moraga Planning Commission, Kiwanis Club, and currently his service on the Town Council, including his years as Town Mayor.

We can count on Steve to listen and represent all members of our community, always putting town interests and needs front and center. Steve uniquely understands what should remain unchanged in our community and how we need to evolve to address both the current and future challenges our town faces.

As a past Trustee on the Moraga School District Board, I understand what it takes to be a successful public servant serving our unique community. Steve has shown he has the commitment, leadership, passion and skills needed of Town Council members. Please join me in re-electing Steve to the Town Council.

Steve Hirsch
Moraga

Re-elect Steve Woehleke for Moraga Town Council

I strongly recommend Steve Woehleke for reelection to the Moraga Town Council. I first worked with Steve during my tenure as president of the Moraga Park Foundation. He thoughtfully listened and spent time addressing my questions about Moraga Parks and open space.

Steve brings a unique combination of sound judgment, extensive project management experience, and a proven commitment to serving the Moraga community. He just ended his second stint as President of Kiwanis of Moraga Valley, and I watched him work collaboratively with many of the other service organizations to the benefit of the local schools and agencies serving the children of the world.

Throughout his almost 30 years of public service, Steve has consistently demonstrated thoughtful decision-making, focusing on solutions that

serve the long-term interests of each Moraga resident. In 2019, due to a fiscal crisis in the town, the council voted down a \$100k funding request from JMLT to Save Painted Rock. As an alternative to using town funds, Steve organized other town council members to knock on doors to raise the necessary funds to Save Painted Rock.

Steve's experience, integrity, and dedication make him deserving of your vote.

John Greenblatt
Moraga

Endorsing Alexis Mapel & Steve Woehleke for Moraga Town Council

It is my pleasure to endorse these two very qualified leaders to represent our community, promote our values and realize our potential opportunities!

Alexis Mapel brings a wealth of business talent, Town Planning Committee leadership experience including being the current Chairperson, and is deeply intertwined into our community and schools. She seeks to represent our community preserving its values and leading change for our residents.

Steve Woehleke, a two-time former Mayor, brings leadership experience, historical perspective, a balanced approach with a focus on making good decisions based on data and judgment. He has represented the community as a champion for listening and engaging all of our residents.

While I feel there are four very good candidates, to me, these two provide the best leadership to protect/enhance the values of the community; represent, engage and listen to our residents while pioneering future improvements for this Town representing all generations of this wonderful community.

Please do your own research, review material, talk to others; then VOTE and please VOTE for whomever you choose, that's our democratic process!

Mike McCluer
Former Mayor of Moraga

Alexis Mapel and Steve Woehleke for Moraga Town Council

As sitting members of the Town Council, we do not ordinarily endorse candidates for Council. We understand that our decision to do so now is unusual. Neither of us expected to take this step, but we believe we have a responsibility to share our judgment about what will best serve Moraga. We are speaking for ourselves, not on behalf of the Town or the Council.

We endorse Council Member Steve Woehleke and Planning Commission Chair Alexis Mapel. Steve brings years of service on the Council and on Town commissions and committees. Alexis has led the Planning Commission with a people-first approach. Both have shown qualities that matter greatly in local government: they listen carefully, work constructively with others, treat staff with respect, and understand the distinct roles of the Council and the Town Manager.

Moraga needs Council members who can exercise independent judgment, work with colleagues even when they disagree, and keep the Town's interests ahead of personal or political ambitions. We believe Steve and Alexis will do that. Our decision to speak publicly reflects the importance we place on those qualities and on the Town's future.

Brian Dolan, Moraga Vice-Mayor
Lisa Maglio, Moraga Town Councilmember

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Letters to the Editor

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Steve Woehleke for Moraga Town Council

I enthusiastically support Steve Woehleke for re-election to the Moraga Town Council.

I have known Steve for more than 30 years. Throughout this time, he has demonstrated a deep and sincere commitment to the Moraga community.

His involvement is broad ranging, as he has served with distinction as a leader on the Town Council, the Design Review Board, Planning Commission, the Hacienda Foundation, and other community organizations.

By working collaboratively with his other colleagues, Steve has had a positive impact in each of these roles. His knowledge of and experience with planned developments, the Town’s infrastructure, the new Housing Element, zoning issues, and the Town’s fiscal condition, among other issues, is unparalleled.

Steve brings to his role a passion for preserving and enhancing Moraga’s treasured character. Steve takes a disciplined approach to decision-making; he respectfully listens to others, considers all pertinent information, and makes informed decisions that genuinely reflect the best interests of all Moragans.

Acknowledging his long-standing leadership and many accomplishments, dozens of local, non-partisan Moraga citizen leaders, past and present, have endorsed his candidacy. Along with them, I urge you to re-elect Steve.

Richard Severy
Moraga

Re-Elect Hillis for Moraga Town Council

Wildfire safety isn’t just about fighting fires; it’s about whether families can get out and first responders can get in. Last year, a fast-moving grass fire burned half an acre of our 11-acre Rheem Boulevard farm. Fortunately, firefighters arrived in under five minutes.

Mayor Kerry Hillis knows fire firsthand too. In 2017 and 2018, fires broke out beside his family’s Painted Rock home while his wife was pregnant. And we all remember 2020’s orange skies.

As a planning commissioner in 2021, Kerry asked whether Lamorinda’s roads could handle a worst-case evacuation. On the council, he prioritized emergency preparedness: vegetation management, returning cattle to Painted Rock, and partnering with the Contra Costa Transportation Authority on the Countywide Evacuation Study.

As mayor, he backed a \$508,000 federally funded study of a Moraga Way path doubling as an evacuation route, and he alone on the council has lobbied regional allies to fund the projected \$34 million project.

A town our size can’t solve evacuation alone, especially with the same risk factors as Pacific Palisades. That’s

one of many reasons I’m voting to re-elect Kerry Hillis to the Moraga Town Council, and you should too.

Kevin Frankel
Moraga

Vote for Kerry Hillis

Kerry Hillis has been a solid supporter of our Town’s parks, working to make them better for everyone: using land we already own and sharing facilities among stakeholders. He recently joined me at Rancho Laguna Park to hear from attendees about protecting and expanding dog hours that work for residents and their furry friends.

That Moraga is engaging in an update our of Parks, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan owes much to Kerry’s advocacy throughout his first term to prioritize it and fund it. Now it needs to move toward action, and I respect his energy and passion to see it through. I’m voting to re-elect Kerry Hillis, and I encourage you to do the same.

Rob Pierson
Moraga

Regional representation matters

When local officials actively represent their constituents at regional meetings, their time and involvement are often called into question. Such criticisms are unwarranted.

In fact, without small town voices at the table, our needs can be easily overlooked. Low wealth cities like Moraga must leverage dollars and resources from regional, state and federal agencies. In the transportation sector alone, a service area vital for small suburban communities, many governmental agencies including Bay Area Rapid Transit, Central Contra Costa Transit Authority, Metropolitan Transit Commission, the California State Transportation Agency, and U.S. Department of Transportation Administrations, sit down with cities and counties to plan, finance and coordinate projects that improve the movement of people and goods within the region.

Thankfully, Moraga has a representative with professional knowledge of these systems and the relationships necessary to provide expanded options for our community.

With four more years on the Town Council, Kerry Hillis will prioritize Wildfire safety and improved evacuation routes; Transportation options into, around and out of town; and Maintaining Moraga’s semi-rural character while enhancing quality of life opportunities and meeting its housing, economic, infrastructure needs.

For these reasons, let’s re-elect Kerry Hillis for Moraga Town Council.

Renee Zeimer
Moraga

Pam West for CCC Board of Education

I’m voting for Pam West for the Contra Costa County Board of Education. Pam and I served on the Orinda Union School Board of trustees together, so I know her well. Pam is diligent about researching issues and is good at finding new approaches to solve problems. Her highest priority is educating every child. I know she will work to implement policies that will accomplish that goal. Pam works well with other board members, and would bring a clear, fresh perspective to the County board.

Also, I’m voting for John Chabalko for the Orinda school board. He’s been heavily involved as a parent volunteer, and is currently President of the Wagner Ranch Parents’ Club. That’s a solid training ground for the school board. Please join me in supporting these two great candidates.

Linda Landau
Orinda

Pam West for CCC Board of Education

As long-term County residents, my wife and I heartily support Pam West for Contra Costa County Board of Education Area 2. Having known and worked with Pam for many years, we have observed her thoughtful leadership in action.

As a former Orinda School District trustee, longtime county resident, community volunteer and small business owner, Pam possesses a rare combination of intelligence and hands-on discipline. A hard worker who is collaborative and fair, Pam prepares well for meetings and makes decisions based on substantial research. Our students deserve Pam West’s commitment to excellence and responsible governance.

Tom Eggertsen
Miramonte graduate and retired
Acalanes High School teacher
Orinda

Support Pam West for CCC Board of Education

As residents of Lamorinda for 45 years, we support Pam West for County Board of Education. We are parents and grandparents of 24 children, and we recognize the imperative need for proactive and hard-working leadership in our educational system. Our decades of personal experience with Pam confirm that she is the best candidate and will bring the greatest benefits to our wonderful schools. We urge your readers to learn more about her candidacy and make their voices heard in the election. Please join us and the many residents, friends, and colleagues in voting for Pam.

Tom and Cheryl
Lafayette

Chanukah in the Commons

Late September and the start of the fall season always make me think of the coming holidays, and today I am remembering fondly the first menorah lighting that we had last year in the Commons. It felt amazing to be celebrating Chanukah in the park. It gave me a sense of community that I had never before experienced in Moraga. At that time, I assumed that it would be the first of an annual celebration, and could be tied to the annual “holiday” tree lighting event. I hope that this will be true.

Over the years I had made pleas to other mayors to recognize celebrating Chanukah in the Commons. That is why I would like to thank and recognize Mayor Hillis for his great efforts to finally make this happen. I’d like for this to be a Moraga tradition, and that the funds and donations set aside for the tree lighting can be shared for the menorah lighting as well. We need to have celebrations that recognize all Moragans, when possible. I wouldn’t want to think that this was a one and done event; the Jewish community was so delighted to be recognized, it would be a shame to have it be only that one joyous time.

Phyllis Bloom
A 40-year Moraga resident

Vote for Riley, West, and Coleman

I’ve had the distinct pleasure of working with several of the candidates running for local office: Janet Riley for City Council, Edda Coleman for Orinda school board, and Pamela West for Contra Costa County Board of Education Each brings experience and proven results to their roles. Serving on the Orinda school board alongside Pam, I saw someone who always puts the needs of children and families first. Moreover, she is a thoughtful, patient leader who listens with an open mind. And strives to build consensus. I have no doubt that her skills and experience will be an asset to the county board. Similarly, Janet Riley leads with conviction and a belief that Orinda is, and will continue to be, a great place to live. As the city faces a range of challenges, Janet has always married her concern for hearing all sides with a pragmatic approach to getting things done. Likewise, Edda Coleman, is a principled, hard-working mother of three with a long-standing record of working for the betterment of children and families. We’d be fortunate to be represented by these three women, which is why I urge people to vote for Riley, West, and Coleman.

Pat Rudebusch
Orinda



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STEVENS



Linda Stevens
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I also understand the **power of community**. As a former board member of the SCMF, I saw firsthand how local organizations and engaged citizens can expand what our firefighters are able to do. Strong partnerships and open communication make our whole District safer. As a **full-time** Orinda resident, I’m committed to representing you on the MOFD Board.

Endorsed by

Steve Danziger, MOFD Director
Michael Donner, Former MOFD Director
Kerry Hillis, Moraga Mayor

Sarah Butler, Contra Costa County Board of Education
Russ Johnson, Former Fire Chief for the San Bernardino National Forest

MOFD fills one board vacancy; two contested spots go to general election

By Sora O'Doherty

The Moraga-Orinda Fire District held a special public board meeting on Oct. 8 to select a replacement on the board for John Jex, who recently retired. After interviewing three candidates, the board voted to appoint Greg Andrews. The other two candidates were James Duff and Max Sherman.

Andrews is a 14-year resident of Moraga and is currently a Chief Financial Officer for a \$3.5 billion business and manages about \$1.7 million. He has served on three nonprofit boards and one for-profit board. In his application, Andrews recounted an experience that he had with MOFD when one of his children was injured and he “saw firsthand the professionalism, compassion, and importance of having outstanding emergency services available when we need them most.”

Several of the voting board members expressed their favorable impression of Andrews’ financial background, his experience as a board member and his community involvement. The appointment was effective immediately, and he was sworn in by MOFD Clerk Marcia Holbrook. Andrews will represent MOFD District 2.

Two of the five MOFD districts will appear on the November general election ballot. In District 4, incumbent Mike Roemer is being challenged by Linda Stevens. Because District 4 has only Orinda residents, the candidates were not invited to speak at the Candidates’ Night, held on Oct. 6 at Saint Mary’s College in Moraga. In District 3, which represents residents of both Moraga and Orinda, incumbent Steve Danziger decided not to run for reelection and two candidates are competing for his open position: Steve Cohn and John Donnelly.

During the discussion at Saint Mary’s, MOFD candidates Donnelly and Cohn fielded a number of questions about MOFD. The candidates appeared to be in general agreement on

several issues, including the use of single-role paramedics and emergency medical technicians, and the role of the MOFD over evacuation routes. On the question of who should bear the burden of fuel mitigation costs, Donnelly expressed his belief that “the buck stops with the homeowner,” while Cohn believes that MOFD could use some of its reserve funds to reduce fire fuel such as eucalyptus and pine trees.

Although the candidates did not disagree on the question of the fire flow tax, Cohn’s response was surprising because for many years he has been campaigning to have the annual fire flow tax rate of Moraga citizens raised. When the matter arose in 2023, Cohn asked the Moraga-Orinda Fire District board to raise the fire flow tax on Moraga residents from 6 cents to 30 cents. Cohn was unhappy that the board adopted the same 6-cent fire flow tax rate for both Orinda and Moraga that has been in effect since 2013.

However, during Candidate’s Night, Cohn said that the fire flow tax was “not a big deal.” He explained, “The fire flow tax right now generates about a million dollars a year. Regular property taxes generate about \$36 million a year. So the parcel tax is really a very minor, minor part. If it disappeared, it wouldn’t affect MOFD.”

In their campaign materials, candidates for MOFD District 4 emphasized their experience and accomplishments. Incumbent Mike Roemer, a former District Attorney for Alameda County, cited the improvements to MOFD during his tenure. He mentioned his efforts to put science and technology to work for our safety: hands-on home-hardening assessments, and expanded defensible-space education so homes are prepared before the next Diablo wind event – not after. He published free, step-by-step ember-protection guides on roemerwise.com.

During Roemer’s tenure, MOFD expanded

ambulance service with an innovative single role paramedic program that increased service availability while reducing the pressure on district pension obligations. The district also acquired a new administration building, paying cash with no interest expenses, for essential staff offices.

“Fiscal stewardship is essential,” Roemer says, adding. “MOFD is a public trust, and every dollar the district spends belongs to the taxpayers of Moraga and Orinda. I worked to bring discipline and transparency to our budgeting, and I am a consistent voice for addressing long-term pension obligations honestly — not deferring hard decisions to future boards and residents. We invested tax revenue in safe Treasury bills that increase our returns, and hired new investment advisors to manage investments to protect post-employment benefits for our firefighters.”

Linda Stevens, a Geospatial Technology Consultant, focused on her experience, noting that for more than 40 years she worked in the geospatial industry, building technology that supports firefighters and first responders. She spent 28 years as an executive at ESRI, the world’s leading Geographic Information Systems (GIS) company. Stevens says that smart planning and modern tools can help firefighters work faster, safer, and more efficiently and she believe that she can help make that happen.

Stevens’ campaign erroneously reported to Contra Costa County Elections a donation of \$45,000 from the International Association of Firefighters out of Sacramento. The amount of that donation was reduced to \$4,500 on Oct. 5. Romer has not reported any campaign donations, as the regulations only require reporting after a candidate has received over \$2,000 in donations, which Romer has not.

Winter Nights

..continued from Page A1

After that, the board will formally act to select the suitor. By early to mid-November, Hanson anticipated Winter Nights would submit its filing with the state Attorney General’s office. A three- to six-month unwinding process will take place, just like the extensive vetting an organization undergoes when it seeks a 501(c)(3) designation.

“It is the Attorney General that is the big boss – they ultimately approve or disapprove of the recommended recipient,” she said.

If it gives a thumbs up, the matter eventually will go to the California Secretary of State’s office to formally dissolve Winter Nights as a nonprofit.

So, for the moment, it is all about timing.

The abrupt closure of Winter Nights a month ago came just days before the start of its 22nd season. A Zoom meeting held Sept. 11, dubbed a listening session for the Winter Nights board, followed, during which time information about the fate of the organization and its way forward

was spelled out to attendees.

Area faith community representatives lambasted the Pleasant Hill-based nonprofit for its failing to offer any warnings of the impending action to its stakeholders and not communicating about the financial dire straits of the organization.

“This is where our heart is and we can’t see it slip through our fingers,” said Ann Lawrence, a longtime supporter of Winter Nights who was there in its infancy.

What emerged from that heated meeting was a core group of 13 representing the faith community who have been actively meeting to devise a way forward to resurrect the sheltering service. This included deciding in early October to pursue formation of its own 501(c)(3), according to Judy Stillman, who has been active with Winter Nights for 21 years and part of Lafayette United Methodist Church’s involvement for more than a decade.

As the core group’s efforts move forward, it is believed the best pro-

gram to launch first is a Safe Parking Program, similar to what Winter Nights had provided to its clients.

Stillman noted her group has since heard from the Winter Nights board of directors who expressed that they may be able to find mutual solutions that serve each of their interests.

St. Anselm’s Rev. Will Scott, who voiced the disappointment of many of his peers and volunteers who have long and tirelessly supported the Winter Nights mission, was among those advocating for a new way forward.

“Although the umbrella organization may cease to exist, the commitment, compassion, and desire to serve among our faith communities remain strong,” said Father Paulson Mundaamani, of Christ the King. “Together, we hope to identify a responsible and sustainable path forward that preserves the heart and mission of Winter Nights.”

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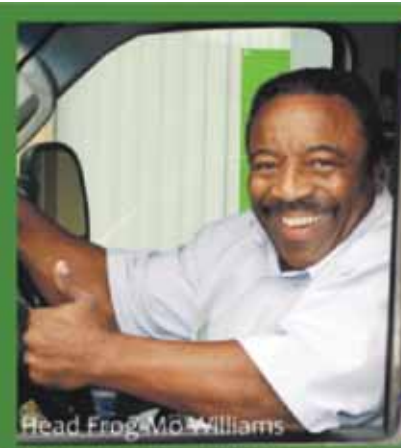


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MOFD has its first all-female paramedic/EMT team call out

By Sora O’Doherty

Paramedic Frances (Frankie) Borden, left, and Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) Alicia Babson, right, were the Moraga-Orinda Fire District’s first all-female ambulance crew for two days in August. MOFD switched away from having only dual-purpose firefighter/medical staff and recently hired more paramedics and EMTs to staff the district’s ambulances, leaving more firefighters free to answer calls in fire engines, if necessary, at the

same time as medical call outs. According to MOFD Ambulance Supervisor Niels Tangherlini, Bordon has been a paramedic for about three years, and came to MOFD a few months ago. Babson, a third generation Moragan, came to MOFD about a year ago. Both, Tangherlini said, are highly interested in connection to the community, and recently taught all the freshmen at Miramonte High School hands-only car-

diopulmonary resuscitation, how to use an automated external defibrillator (AED), and basic first aid techniques such as how to stop bleeding and choking. MOFD is currently onboarding another female paramedic and a male EMT.



Photo courtesy MOFD

Longtime public safety figure retires, looks to future involvement in wildfire safety

By Sora O’Doherty



Dennis Rein
Photo provided

Dennis Rein, who has been with the Moraga-Orinda Fire District since 2013, is stepping down to spend more time with his 7-month-old granddaughter and to find new ways to promote wildfire safety. Rein, who started with MOFD as emergency preparedness coordinator and later moved to Prescribed Fire Program Manager, has been a familiar face of MOFD to the public. Born and raised in Lafayette, Rein was em-

ployed by the East Bay Regional Park District for 23 years, as a police officer, firefighter, fire captain and fire chief. He has also worked for the Suisun Fire Protection District, The East Bay Municipal Utility District, the U.S. Department of the Interior, and as a Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Consultant.

In an interview with The Lamorinda Weekly, Rein said that his interest moving forward is to stay involved in wildfire mitigation and prescribed burns as an advocate and a facilitator, perhaps in the private sector. In a number of California counties, landowners have experienced the devastating effects of wildfires and are interested in reducing the risks of property loss. Rein says that his goal is to promote prescribed fire as a land management tool. He believes that currently

there are plenty of people who are interested in TELSA (Tool for Exploratory Landscape Scenario Analyses), a spatially explicit, strategic planning tool developed by ESSA Technologies Ltd. A group of friends and supporters from a variety of organizations honored Rein at an informal gathering at Canyon Club in Moraga on Oct. 6. Those in attendance included members of MOFD and MOFD volunteers as well as others including Lamorinda CERT, the Lamorinda Area Radio Interest Group, Rescue One, and the Moraga Orinda Firewise Network. Bruce Macler, a volunteer in the Lamorinda emergency preparedness community said, “I appreciate all that Dennis has done for the community, in terms of his leadership in emergency preparedness, both as a volunteer and as a profes-

sional. He has advanced where we stand in preparedness, especially in communications and wildfire mitigation.” Macler added, “I hope that he stays involved in the Lamorinda Emergency Preparedness community because his knowledge of our area and fire behavior is so vast.” Macler noted that Rein has often served on incident management teams around the state. “His skills as a liaison officer and a public information officer are incomparable.” Fire Safe Moraga-Orinda Executive Director Rob Schroeder said, “I will really miss working with Dennis. Not only is he incredibly knowledgeable, but he is a really nice person. He embodies the best of what a public safety professional should be.”

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~ Life in LAMORINDA ~

‘Mr. Burton’ at the Orinda Theatre

By Sophie Braccini

What is left in our collective memory of the Welsh American actor Richard Burton? Maybe his tumultuous relationship with Liz Taylor, some great films – and few remember that he was a Shakespearean actor. The movie “Mr. Burton,” presented in Orinda beginning Oct. 23, however, is about the youth and upbringing of the young man. Beyond his specific story, it is a wonderful reflection on what fatherhood and mentorship mean, on transmission, and on how much of a person’s destiny hinges on the people they meet and sheer luck.

One hundred years ago, Richard Jenkins was born into a large Welsh family, the last of six children. His mother died when he was 2, his worthless father was a drunk, and when we meet the young man in high school, he lives in the home of his older sis-

ter and her husband. A bright student, he is well liked by his English teacher, Mr. Burton, but his sister’s husband takes him out of school and puts him to work as a clerk so he can contribute to the family’s well-being. The story could have ended there, and Jenkins would have taken a very different route from the one that led to stardom.

But Mr. Burton had noticed the young man’s quite unique love of literature. Having suffered some significant setbacks in his own career, he starts supporting the young man’s desire to become more than is expected of him and gradually invests more in his development.

The British actor Harry Lawtey plays Jenkins. He transforms very credibly from a fun-loving teenage boy into an inspired Shakespearean actor. Toby Jones plays Mr. Burton,

the aging teacher who is a theater director and writer himself, even if his career has not flourished as he had hoped. He lodges with a widowed landlady who is also a supportive and nonsensical character in the life of young Jenkins. The young man’s biological father is painted in the bleakest light. A greedy drunk, he has more or less abandoned his son. The movie hypothesizes that the father’s betrayal and scorn toward his son were at the root of Burton’s own drunkenness.

The young, future Burton is shown at the center of a whirlpool of influences and relationships. The positive forces are Mr. Burton, his older sister, who also believes in him, the landlady, and the first director who works with him in London; the negative influence is mostly his father, whose nefarious effect runs so deep, as well as

the young man’s humble social origins. It is said that when Richard Burton was told of his father’s death with the words “Your father died,” he asked, “Which father?” The movie definitely takes the position that Richard Burton’s father was Mr. Burton, who saw his talent, pushed him to work hard, and put some real skin in the game.

As far as cinematography goes, the movie is solid, but not terribly creative. This does not detract, though, from having a wonderful time as a spectator.

The movie will open at the Orinda Theatre on Oct. 23 for at least one week. It is brought to Lamorinda by the local nonprofit the International Film Showcase. Tickets at <https://www.orindamovies.com/movies/>



Image provided

Paranormal activity at Moraga’s Rancho Laguna Park?

By Vera Kochan



Mysterious orb floats through Rancho Laguna Park in Moraga.

Photo Vera Kochan

Just in time for Halloween, another ghost stakeout in Lamorinda yielded interesting results. This time the location was Moraga’s Rancho Laguna Park.

Recalling a stakeout that this reporter experienced in 2023, for an Oct. 25 article, “MPD officers experience odd noises at the station in ‘the dead of night,’” I was left with the feeling that there was more to the park at night than just nocturnal critters.

Part of the research for the MPD article involved a ride-along with a member of Moraga Police Department’s finest. One of the officer’s duties was to lock up the

park’s bathrooms for the evening. As I sat in the squad car waiting for him to return, I decided to take a picture from my passenger side through the car and into the expanse of the park (with the windows rolled down). When I checked the camera’s screen for the results, a massive orb (white ball of light) the size of a head appeared in the driver’s seat. Additionally, I smelled cigarette smoke to which the officer assured me no one was allowed to smoke in the vehicle.

That experience has, pardon the pun, haunted me for the past three years, and while I swore

I would never return to the park at night, a brave friend of mine, “Anne,” offered to accompany me to see if the 2023 adventure wasn’t a fluke.

We drove to Rancho Laguna early enough to park and observe an abundance of owners and their off-leash dogs utilizing the grounds as the sun began to set and the “witching hour” drew near. We chose this dormant opportunity to form our game plan while agreeing that all of our picture-taking would take place from the parking lot side of the fence to avoid stepping into possible gopher holes.

According to a blog

by Lellalee, author of “The Ghosts of Pendle Hill: A Paranormal Investigation,” orbs quite often are perceived as balls of light. “Dust and moisture particles usually appear in multiples, whereas orbs tend to be alone in the shot,” Lellalee said in a recent post, “and orbs can sometimes be seen with the naked eye, they might pulsate or you may see them traveling.”

According to Lellalee, an orb is a ball of energy. “People are made up of energy. Energy itself cannot be destroyed. Energy is in essence our life force. Since little is known (scientifically) regarding what happens to us after death, I (and many others) suggest that perhaps released from our human bodies, spirits can take a variety of forms,” Lellalee explained. “Most commonly, orbs are circular in shape. A

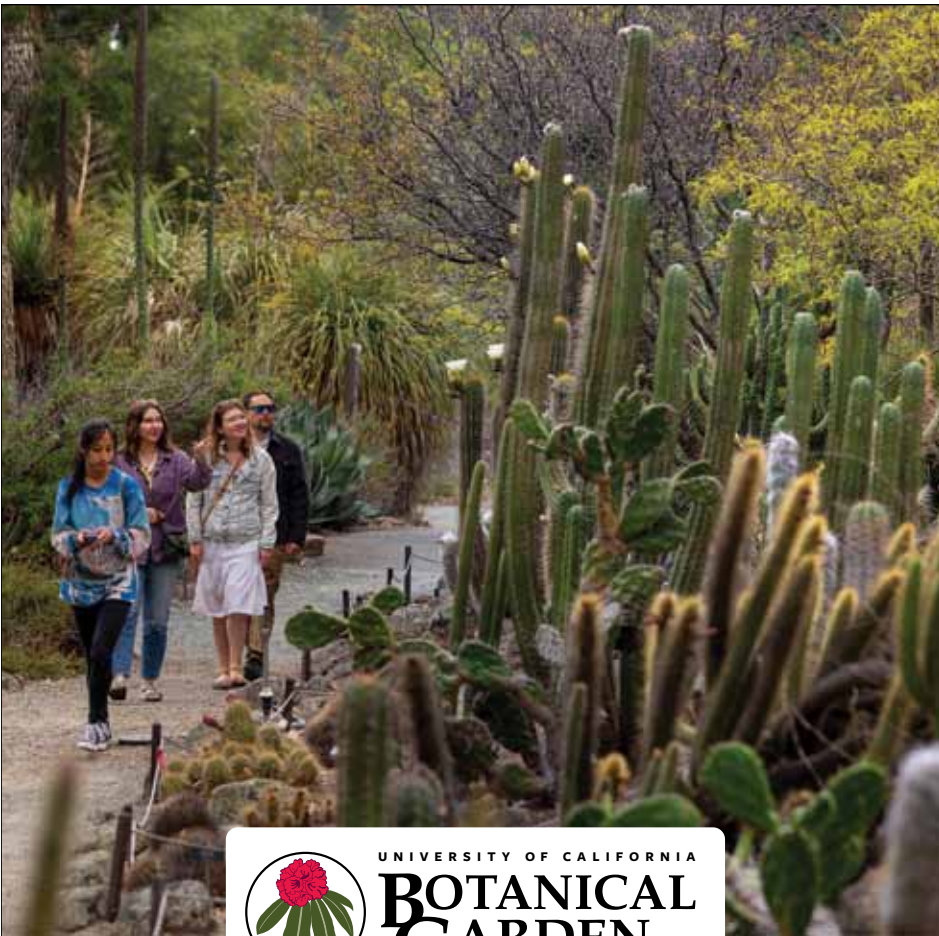
circle is the simplest of shapes; it is also symbolic representing the ‘circle of life.’ Travel and time likely differ in the spirit world, nevertheless a circle is likely the simplest way for a spirit to contain its energy and to travel from place to place.”

During the hour that we stood in the darkness, Anne used her iPhone’s camera to take photos while I used my Canon Digital Camera. As much as we expected her phone to achieve better results, my camera was the consistent one in capturing orb photos. In order to debunk anything that was captured on our screens, we took another photo immediately after, and in all cases, either the orb was gone or it had moved, possibly disturbed by our camera flashes. While nothing showed up as big as my 2023 experience, we

were pleased with our results nonetheless.

The land that Rancho Laguna Park sits on has seen many family-owned ranches through the years. Nearly 200 years ago, it was part of the Mexican land grant given to Joaquin Moraga. Before that, the Saklan Native American tribe inhabited the area. Could any of them be out for an evening stroll?

Anne admitted that she was a little nervous heading into the park after dark, and she’d never done anything like that before. “There’s something genuinely eerie about standing in total darkness waiting to see what shows up,” she said. “When the orbs started appearing in the photos, one after another, it definitely sent a chill down my spine. Skeptic or not, it was an experience I won’t forget.”



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Art

UGANDA ART: A Group Exhibition at the Art Gallery at the Orinda Library, 26 Orinda Way in Orinda will be on view through Oct. 28. The exhibition features the work of eight participating artists: The Gallery is open Monday through Saturday and is closed on Sundays. The exhibit is presented by The Lamorinda Arts Council; www.lamorindaarts.org.

Lamorinda Arts Council announces a “Call for Writers” to present spoken word readings and a “Call for Artists” to display original artwork, all with a Halloween theme. Held in the Lafayette Community Center - Jennifer Russell Building, the free program runs from 2 to 3:30 p.m. on Oct. 31. We ask all presenters and guests to appear as their most inspired literary or artistic character for our Cosplay Contest. Contact elanao@mac.com, visit <https://LamorindaArts.org/art-embraces-words> or call 925-359-9940. Deadline Oct. 19.

Theater

Saint Mary’s College Theatre presents “The Moors,” written by Jen Silverman and directed by Dr. Javier Hurtado from Oct. 28 to Nov. 1. “The Moors” is a dark, surreal comedy that brilliantly subverts classic 19th-century Gothic literature, drawing inspiration from the works of the Brontë sisters. It explores themes of loneliness, power, and visibility through a bizarre, sometimes violent, but darkly hilarious lens. E-tickets: \$10 SMC students; \$15 SMC faculty and staff, non-SMC students; \$20 at <https://www.stmarys-ca.edu/moors>. A limited number of tickets are

available at the Box Office 30 minutes before curtain.

One day screening of “Loving Karma” at the Rheem Theater in Moraga on Oct.18 at 3 p.m. This award-winning documentary follows a former monk who built a children’s community in the Himalayas and examines what happens when suffering meets compassion. It’s a powerful story of resilience, healing, and the impact of compassion in action. Includes Q&A with producers (in person) and community founder (via zoom). Tickets found here: <https://jhamtse.org/loving-karma/>.

Submissions are now open for the 7th Annual Young Playwrights Festival (YPF). Part of Town Hall Education’s Young Playwrights Program, YPF showcases the talents of rising teen playwrights from across the East Bay, bringing their original 10-minute plays to the stage with professional Bay Area actors and directors. Submissions will remain open through Dec. 31, for teen playwrights in Contra Costa and Alameda counties. For details see TownHallTheatre.com/young-playwrights

Literature

Join the Sweet Thursday Author Series on Thursday, Oct. 22 at 7 p.m. at the Lafayette Library to hear author Vanessa Hua discuss her book, “Coyoteland.” This is a free event, but registration is required at www.tinyurl.com/sweet-Oct2026. The doors will open at 6:30 p.m. for coffee and treats. This program is sponsored by Friends of the Lafayette Library.

Orinda Community Center presents a spe-

cial “Pop Up” edition of The Story Shuffle, featuring internationally renowned storyteller Ingrid Nixon on Saturday, Oct. 17, 3 to 5 p.m. Plus an Open Mic segment. You can either sign up to tell a 5-minute story or a 1-minute story. Your story can be ANY GENRE! A true, personal story, a tall tale, a braided tale, a myth, a folktale, a fractured fairy tale, etc. No theme; sign up at the door. Tickets: <https://shuffleoct17.eventbrite.com/>

Music

Ensemble for These Times presents Call for Score: Solo Piano, Vol.3 on Sunday, Oct. 25, from 3 to 5 p.m. at Berkeley Piano Club, 2724 Haste Street, Berkeley. What does the future of piano music sound like? Find out when E4TT emerita pianist Dale Tsang performs works selected from the latest Call for Scores. Cost: 0-\$30. For more info see <https://e4tt.org/piano3.html> or call 510-845-8488 or email info@e4tt.org.

The Diablo Symphony opens its 2026–2027 season, “Breathe,” on Sunday, Oct. 25, at 2 p.m. at the Leshner Center for the Arts. The program includes Jean Sibelius’s triumphant Symphony No. 2 and Sergei Prokofiev’s powerful Piano Concerto No. 1 with award-winning pianist Leyla Kabuli (also a PhD candidate in electrical engineering and computer sciences at UC Berkeley). In contrast, Carlos Simon’s meditative piece “Breathe” (composed to encourage listeners to simply reflect and breathe) opens the concert. Adult tickets are \$45, youth 13-17 are \$15, and children 12 and under are free. \$35 tick-

ets are available for senior groups of 10 or more. Visit www.dia-blosymphony.org for details and a ticketing link.

The Campolindo High School alumni choir will be performing a free show at the Campo Performing Art Center on Sunday Oct. 18 at 3 p.m. “Mr. Hall’s Opus,” a tribute to Campolindo’s former choral director, will feature a combination of choral music and musical numbers, including favorites from Phantom of the Opera, Grease and more.

Chromatica invites you to “Our Journey Home”, with captivating music celebrating home in all its forms. The Orinda concert will be at 3 p.m. on Nov. 7 at Holy Shepherd Lutheran Church, 433 Moraga Way. Chromatica has sung music from the 12th to the 21st centuries, in many different languages and genres. For more details and tickets, visit www.chromaticachorale.org.

Other

Lafayette Res Run for Education: 5k, 10k (around the Lafayette Reservoir), or 2 mile fun walk/run in downtown Lafayette on Sunday, Oct. 18 with the Reservoir Challenge “running” Oct. 11-17. Price varies per race. 5k: 8am, 10k: 8:15am, 2 mile: 8:45 a.m. register at <https://runsignup.com/Race/CA/Lafayette/LafayetteReservoirRun>.

Moraga E-Waste and Shredding Fundraiser Oct. 17, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at 1355 Moraga Way in Moraga. Ink jet cartridges and cell phones are free of charge, but there is a \$14 charge per banker box of documents and \$20-\$30 on up for larger electronic items.

Animal Day, UC Botanical Garden’s annual celebration of all things fauna, will be held on Sunday, Oct. 25 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. with drop-in experiences, music, educational displays, crafts, community partners, live animals to see and touch, and more. Rain or shine. Free with regular admission. UC Botanical Garden at Berkeley. All ages welcome.

Remember when voting meant seeing your neighbors? AAUW-OML brings that back with -TOGETHER. WE VOTE. on Saturday, Oct. 24, 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., at Moraga’s Official Ballot Drop Box, 1500 Saint Mary’s Road (Moraga Library). Cast your ballot, cheer on first-time and Saint Mary’s College voters, and celebrate with treats. Wherever you call home, any California ballot box takes your ballot. Bring family and friends. Need a ride? policy@oml-aauw.org

Canes Annual Gala family-friendly Halloween fundraiser for the Jackson Orthopedic Foundation takes place Sunday, Oct. 25, 3 to 5 p.m. at Creekside Commons in Lafayette. Kids are welcome, costumes are encouraged, and tickets are pay what you can. Proceeds support healthcare education and scholarships. <https://bit.ly/4x9WCFr>

Trick or Treat Street in Downtown Lafayette. on Friday, Oct. 30, from 4 tp 6 p.m. For a fun, safe Halloween event, children and their parents are invited to Trick-or-Treat at participating merchants along Mt. Diablo Blvd. from Lafayette Plaza to Dewing Ave, Lafayette Circle and La Fiesta Square. This is a free community event.

Celebrate Orinda’s Naturalist Toris Jaeger on Sunday, Nov. 1 from 1 to 3 p.m. at the Orinda Community Center, Founders Auditorium. Open to all, activities for children, speakers, hors d’oeuvres by Diane Eames of Genuine Goodness.

Unite for Bleeding Disorders Walk, Saturday, Nov. 7, Heather Farm Park, 301 N. San Carlos Dr., Walnut Creek. Check-in 8 a.m., walk starts at 9 a.m. and ends at noon. Choose a 30- or 60-minute route. Live music, prizes and a finish-line dance party, island attire encour-

aged. Strollers and leashed dogs welcome. Registration is by donation, any amount. Benefits Northern California families living with hemophilia and other bleeding disorders. Register at secure.ggiv.com/event/norcal-unite

Moraga Historical Society presents Grant Din, a descendant of four Angel Island immigrants and a former board member of the California Genealogical Society. He will discuss the island’s estimated one million processed Asian and European immigrants from 80 countries between 1910 and 1940 and the Chinese Exclusion Acts. Additionally, Jewish refugees escaping Germany spent time on the island. Learn about their stories. Sunday, Nov. 8, from 1-3 pm, Casita building of Hacienda de las Flores, 2100 Donald Dr., Moraga. RSVP: ranchusan@aol.com by Nov. 1. MHS members free, Guests \$5 (cash or check). No children under 12 years. Limited seating.

AARP Tax-Aide is looking for volunteers to become members of a team providing free tax preparation service in Contra Costa County. To learn more and apply online, visit www.aarp-foundation.org/taxaide-volunteer or call (925) 726-3199 for additional information.

Garden

Moraga Garden Club welcomes guests for Horticulturist and UC Master Gardener Shawna Anderson’s presentation of “Autumn Garden Prep: Tips for a Flourishing Fall” on Oct. 15, 9:30 a.m. at Holy Trinity Cultural Center, 1700 School Street, in Moraga. Free and open to the public. www.moragagardenclub.org.

The Montelindo Garden Club meets Friday, Oct.16, featuring Getsugu Ikebana experts Susan and Tony diStefano, always crowd-pleasers. There will also be a bake sale. Lafayette Library Auditorium, social time: 9 to 9:30 a.m., business meeting: 9:30 to 10 a.m., speaker: 10:15 to 11:30 a.m. 3491 Mt Diablo Blvd, Lafayette. See www.montelindogarden.com/2026-meetings.html

Please submit community events to: calendar.lamorindaweekly@gmail.com

Lamorinda’s Religious Services



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433 Moraga Way, Orinda, 254-3422
www.holyshepherd.org

ONLINE WORSHIP SCHEDULE
Facebook Premiere Community Worship every Sunday at 9:30 a.m. Go to facebook.com/HSLCOrinda/
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Sunday Services and Sunday School 10-11 am
Informal Wednesday Meeting 7:30 – 8:30 pm
All are welcome
www.christianscienceorinda.org

Roasted mushrooms, caramelized shallots, and Gruyère give spinach a deliciously melty makeover

By Susie Iventosch

This spinach melt brings together four ingredients that are simply amazing together. As they say, the sum of the parts is greater than the whole, even though all these parts are all wonderful on their own. The spinach is tender, the mushrooms are earthy and savory, the shallots lend a mellow sweetness when roasted to golden-brown, and the Gruyère ties everything together with its delightful, nutty flavor. It's a vegetable dish with a little comfort-food personality – simple enough for a weeknight, but equally welcome at a dinner party. And much of the work can be done ahead of time, which is great news for busy cooks. The mushrooms and shallots can be prepared and roasted a day or even two ahead.

The roasted mushrooms and shallots are a big part of what makes the dish so delicious. Rather than adding them directly to the spinach, roasting them separately gives them a chance to develop browned edges and a deeper flavor. Give



Photos Susie Iventosch

them a little breathing room on the baking sheet so they can roast rather than sit crowded together in their own juices, making them soggy and not browned. You can also brown the shallots on the same tray, but I like to keep them separated, since one may cook faster than the other. You want both to be nicely browned but not burned.

Then there's the spinach, which performs its usual disappearing act in the skillet. What begins as a rather voluminous mound of green leaves quickly shrinks once you start cooking it.

You will want to use all of it, trust me. The Gruyère is what makes this a “spinach melt.” Its savory, nutty flavor complements the mushrooms and shallots without burying the spinach, and melted over the top, it gives every bite a little taste of France!

Serve this spinach melt alongside roasted chicken, grilled fish, or your favorite steak. For a lighter meal, I like to spoon it onto thick slices of toasted sourdough and let the bread catch all the good bits. It is also delicious as a flavorful topping for a baked potato.

INGREDIENTS

- 1/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 lb. cremini mushrooms, cleaned and sliced
- 2 large shallots, thinly sliced
- 1 lb. fresh spinach leaves
- 1 1/2 cups grated Gruyere cheese
- 1/2 tsp. lemon pepper

DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 425 F. Cover a large baking sheet with parchment paper.

Clean mushrooms and slice into 1/4-inch slices. Clean shallots and thinly slice. Toss each with olive oil and season with lemon pepper. Spread out on prepared baking sheet, keeping mushrooms and shallots separated. They may cook for different lengths of time, so it's nice to be able to separate them.

Roast for about 20 minutes, or until both mushrooms and onions are browned and very aromatic and beginning to caramelize. Remove from oven and set aside. This step can be done several hours or even a couple of days ahead of time.

Heat a large sauté pan with a little bit of olive oil in the bottom. Slowly add spinach until you've got about 3/4 of it wilting in the pan. Toss in mushrooms and shallots and stir. Continue adding the rest of the spinach, a little bit at a time, until you've used up all the spinach. Sprinkle the grated Gruyere over the top and heat until cheese is melted and bubbly. Serve hot.



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

Frances Louise Smith

June 15, 1926 - Aug. 14, 2026

Frances Louise Quillen was born in Pueblo, Colorado 10 minutes after her brother Bill. She attended Denver University, earning a BA in nursing. The day after she graduated, she married Victor Dwayne Smith on June 12, 1949. They immediately moved to California, eventually settling in Orinda in 1957, where they raised their three children.

She and Vic were founding members of St. Marks Methodist Church in Orinda. They had a life dedicated to service-being Scout leaders, leading back-pack trips for the youth, building houses for Habitat for Humanity and in Colonet Mexico, and packing boxes at the Food Bank, just to name a few.

When St. Marks Nursery School opened, she became a teacher there and then the director. She loved working with pre-school children. After retiring in 1996, she and Vic traveled and back-packed. At the age of 72, they back-packed through the Sierra Nevada with their daughter Melanie.

She was predeceased by Victor who died in 2022. She is survived by Ann Gimbel (Frank), David (Cindy), and Melanie Ruesch (Scott), 6 grandchildren, and 10 great-grandchildren.

A memorial service will be held at Lafayette United Methodist Church on Saturday, Nov. 14, at 11 a.m., followed by a reception in the Fellowship Hall. If you wish, donations may be made to Lafayette United Methodist Church or the Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano.

We are so appreciative of the members of LUMC, the staff at Moraga Royale, and the caregivers of Alameda Care Hospice who enriched her life so much.



James (Jimmie) Odell Collins

Aug. 26, 1934 – Sept. 10, 2026

Longtime Moraga resident James (Jimmie) Odell Collins, 92, finished his race and met his Lord on Sept. 10, 2026 in Walnut Creek, California, following complications from a fall. Jim spent his final days with his wife, daughters, and grandchildren, sharing his three top priorities in life: God, family, and a relationship with Jesus Christ.

The only child of Jesse Odell Collins and Emma Bernice Collins (née Seymoure), Jim was born Aug. 26, 1934 in Fort Mill, South Carolina. His parents instilled in him enduring values of hard work, family, and faith, and he learned generosity early on watching his mother share food from her garden with others in need – a generosity he later demonstrated by funding post-secondary education for numerous young adults. Growing up in a mill village, he played baseball, chased the ice truck, and contributed scrap metal and newspapers to the World War II effort. He began working at age 9 and by 16 was working the night shift in the textile mill full-time alongside his parents while finishing high school.

Jim graduated from Rock Hill High School in 1952 and chose college over the car his father offered him, enrolling at Georgia Tech and joining the Navy ROTC program to cover tuition. He earned his electrical engineering degree in three years, then served in the Navy, where he became a pilot, and – during his Midshipman cruise – serendipitously met Ernest Hemingway in Havana.

After discharge, Jim accepted a top-security-clearance job at General Electric in Schenectady, New York, where he met his future wife, Lynne Nichols. Encouraged by senior staff, he attended Harvard Business School, with Lynne following him to Boston. After his first year at HBS, they married on June 9, 1962 in Swannanoa, North Carolina. Jim forwent his graduation ceremony to fulfill a promise to his bride, touring Europe for three months. When they returned to the States, they settled in Los Angeles, where Jim worked as senior project engineer on the Minuteman missile program at North American Aviation.

Following his passion, Jim later moved into finance as a technology stock analyst and, in 1967, entered money management, eventually earning his CFA and managing institutional and private portfolios across California and Oregon. In 1984, following the & breakup, he launched Pacific Basin Telecommunications, Ltd. in Moraga, a venture he later called a gift from God. In 1988, he founded Insight Capital Management and its newsletter OTC Insight, along with the money management firm Insight Capital Research & Management. His three-point stock selection method earned him coverage in The Wall Street Journal and on Wall Street Week with Louis Rukeyser. He continued trading daily until the day before his death.

An avid traveler and lifelong learner, Jim visited all seven continents, took mission trips to Africa with Cru, rode horses across the Tetons, Sierras, and Argentina, fly-fished with friends in remote locations, sailed the San Juan Islands, and gathered with family each Thanksgiving at Zion National Park. He shared his love of literature, opera, symphony, and theater with Lynne and later his children and grandchildren. A man of wit and imagination, he delighted friends and family with antics involving an invisible dog and a cane-as-air-guitar routine, and charmed everyone with his southern warmth.

A Moraga resident for nearly 50 years, Jim served as an Elder and taught the Bethel Bible Series as well as children's Sunday School at Moraga Valley Presbyterian Church. His legacy of intellect, adventure, faith, and humor will be profoundly missed by all who knew him.

He is survived by his wife of 64 years Lynne; his daughters Christy Camille Collins, Ashley Collins (Douglas Crowell), and Leslie Trautwein (Victor Trautwein); and his grandchildren Seymoure, Alma, Chase (Luke Edgren), Luke, Micah, and Samuel. In lieu of flowers, the family asks that donations be made to Seed to Sower Ministries (seedtosowerministries.org), P.O. Box 548, Winfield, IL 60190.



Rich Avanzino

Sept. 16, 1942 – Sept. 20, 2026

Rich Avanzino, widely credited as the father of the no-kill animal sheltering movement, was born in Alameda, California, on Sept. 16, 1942, and died peacefully shortly after celebrating his 84th birthday.

Rich served as president of the San Francisco SPCA from 1976 to 1999, transforming it from the city's dog catcher, which euthanized nearly 29,000 animals a year, into the nation's first no-kill city shelter. Along the way, Rich fought and won a widely publicized legal and legislative battle to save a dog named Sido from a will that called for her death. The case captured national attention and helped establish Rich as one of the no-kill movement's most visible and influential advocates.

In 1999, Rich became the founding president of Maddie's Fund, where he directed the family foundation and distributed more than \$150 million in grants supporting animal shelters, veterinary shelter medicine programs, and community lifesaving efforts nationwide. He retired in 2015 but remained with the organization as a strategic advisor. He also served as mayor of Moraga, California, the community where he made his home and raised his children. Friends remember Rich as quick-witted, generous, and always willing to give others the credit. An avid tennis player who cherished his role as a grandfather. He spent his final three years in Granite Bay, California, cheering from the sidelines as his grandchildren played football, baseball, and volleyball.

Rich was preceded in death by his devoted wife of 30 years, Susan Avanzino, brother Tony, and parents August and Frances Avanzino. He is survived by his three children, Lisa Jupille, Amy Dupree, and Scott Avanzino; 8 grandchildren; 2 great-grandchildren; and a nephew.



Frank Rhodes Frisch

Jan. 27, 1942 – Sept. 11, 2026

Frank Rhodes Frisch, 84, of Orinda, passed away peacefully in his sleep after struggling with declining health on Sept. 11, 2026. He was with his loved ones until his passing.

Frank was born on Jan. 27, 1942, to Frank O. and Juanita E. Frisch in San Francisco. Much of Frank's childhood was spent in San Carlos, where he was active in the Boy Scouts and excelled in water polo and swimming at Carlmont High School. He continued to play water polo and studied political science at the University of California, Davis. After graduation, he attended UC Hastings College of the Law. For over 40 years, Frank practiced family law in Contra Costa County with an office in Concord.

In 1966, Frank married Shelley Reinhardt. They had two kids together, Matthew and Nora. In 1993, he married Kathleen Zuehlsdorf. Frank and Kathy lived life to the fullest. They were fans of the Oakland A's and often attended Spring Training. They could be found traveling to the coast, various wineries, as well as taking cruises around Europe. But their biggest joy was spending time with their grandchildren.

Frank is survived by his stepdaughter, Shaun Paul and her sons, Aidan and Nolan, son, Matt, stepson, Ryan Zuehlsdorf (Tracy) and their daughters, Mia and Shay and daughter, Nora Yanez (Jay), and their son, Xander. Finally, he is survived by his brother, Fletcher, and sister, Julia. He was preceded in death by his wife, Kathy.

The family is grateful for the loving care he received at the Moraga Retreat Care Home. In lieu of flowers the family is asking for donations to be made to Hospice of the East Bay or John Muir Land Trust. No public services are planned.



LAMORINDA SPORTS

Lamorinda girls water polo maintains area excellence

By Jon Kingdon

With Miramonte, Acalanes, and Campolindo being ranked nationally 1, 5 and 8 respectively, once again it's hell-bent for leather for these schools with a combined 38 and 10 record.

MIRAMONTE

Coming into this season, on the surface, there were some serious questions about the Miramonte team. One was that their pool was undergoing a major overhaul and would not be in use until much later in the season. This forced the team to practice in the evening from 7:30 to 9:30 p.m. at Acalanes but head coach John Roemer felt it necessary to adjust those times. "That was just too late to practice because it was going to prove unhealthy for the girls so we have been playing with 25% practice time."

With a roster of 14 freshmen and sophomores and only eight juniors and seniors, it was a question as to whether youth would be served. With a 16-2 record against top competition and ranked first nationally, the results speak for themselves. "I didn't expect to win with this team as quickly as we have," Roemer said. "Our strength is in our freshmen, sophomores, and a couple of juniors. In practice, our younger players are pushing the upper ones to be better so we are scrimmaging in practice like we're playing in a game. However, a lot of the freshmen are still tentative of stepping on toes. They have the talent and speed but they had never been taught things like body positions and certain defenses, so they will only get better."

Roemer took particular satisfaction with the team's victories over Carondelet 8-7 and Soquel 13-1, ranked 2 and 3 nationally: "The close victories over those teams are the types of games that we play for. The 22-6 games are no fun."

The leading goal scorers have been juniors Hannah Gardner-45 and Madison Chong-23, sophomores Ana Shogan-33, Elisabeth Hassett-15, and Sylvie Portet-14, senior co-captains Bella Beaver-20, Samantha Lurie-6 and Grayson Menard-5, and freshman Carmel

Golan-21.

Gardner and Shogan have been the leaders in the water and Golan has been a top player as well. "Carmel has been a particular standout in her first season. She is super-fast and won the county in the 50 free and has not lost a single sprint, has learned to be physical and is showing how good she can be," Roemer said.

Miramonte has shown great depth on their roster. "In our tournament in Clovis, we went with three lines – six in and six out and then another six in and six out," Roemer said.

Miramonte is scoring two more goals per game over last season as Roemer has built on his motion offense. "We evolved it into a motion offense but if the 4-2 doesn't work, we go right into a 3-3 into a weakside drive and then that puts us back into a 4-2 and we've been going through that seamlessly. We can get four solid attacks in one possession, allowing us to get at least one good shot on goal. The players are still learning to not take a good shot when they have a teammate who may have a better shot and yet we are still scoring more goals than last year."

Defensively, Miramonte has been giving up only 7.5 goals per game with junior Joslyn Cox being very solid in the goal and backed up by senior Avery Schilling. "Joslyn has been very good at communicating and has shown great anticipation and is more explosive this year and just needs to be more consistent," Roemer said. "Shelby Salling who is the National Goalkeeper coach for the USA Water Polo women's program has been invaluable in the improved play of our goalies."

CAMPOLINDO

Despite having graduated 10 seniors, Campolindo has not missed a beat with a 10-5 record, a victory over Miramonte and being ranked eighth nationally – even having defeated the third and fourth ranked Carondelet and Soquel.

Second year head coach Savannah Rose has a youngish team with nine sophomores and seven juniors and seniors. "We have been

able to pick up on what we're working for offensively and defensively last season and that's made the start of the season a little easier. We've got a really good group of young girls that have come in and filled the roles of those who have graduated."

For Rose, it did not start when school began. "It began with having really good club play throughout the summer which has enabled us to have a really good start to the season."

Rose puts a lot of stock in the intangibles of the game. "Last year, we were able to work out the kinks of the mental game and stick together. This year's team has picked up where we left off and we're in a good spot where the team is working really hard, where they're happy but still not satisfied. That continues to keep the focus on getting better and everybody's energy is on the same page."

Campolindo has increased their scoring average from 10.4 last season to 11.6 this year. "Our offense has opened up this season. Our body positioning is much better and our outside shooting has improved which starts with our counterattack. We have a group that are extremely fast, and the other girls come along with them. Everything starts from the counter which puts us in a really good position to be a threat in the center and on the outside so it's definitely been unlocked in that sense."

One of the keys to their offense has been the center position. "Caity DeFrancisci has done an amazing job in drawing a lot of attention which takes a lot of pressure off of everybody else, making them all better," Rose said. "Our lead attackers have been Lily Holloway and Louise Walls, who is also a key defender. Eloise Gaffney on the 1-2 side has a great sense of getting her legs up and moves really well in the water and is getting opportunities to show her skills."

The defense has been rotating through Lane Kish, Lyla Mediano and Walls. "This frees up Louise to be up top and an attacker," Rose said. "We pride ourselves on having a tough defense.



Campolindo's Lily Holloway (17) shoots over Miramonte's Hannah Gardner (3) with Campolindo's Tovah Haroutunian (11) looking on.

Photo Shirley DeFrancisci

We press hard and we try not to let our opponents get into their offense unless they truly earn it."

Along with the superlative play of sophomore goalie Brooklyn Michlitsch who has seamlessly replaced all-league Sydney Kring, the defense has been giving up only 8.5 goals per game. "Brooklyn plays bigger than her height, covering the cage side to side," Rose said. "She is a great leader and communicator and is one of the best things we've seen so far this season with her work ethic and she will only get better."

As they head into league play, Rose is still looking for more from the team: "We still have room for improvement on our offense. We've made a lot of strides in our defense and that should lead to more offensive possessions and getting up on the counters and opening up certain layers to that as well."

ACALANES

Acalanes has been growing from within these past two seasons. Last year, the team had four sophomores and five freshmen and this year, the team has six juniors, five sophomores, two seniors and one freshman. With a 14-3 record, the strategy has been working.

"It's kind of hard to describe what we are," coach Misha Buchel said. "We have two all-American seniors, (Adelyn Horciza and Finley Graff), and a couple of

inexperienced juniors and then it's all sophomores who got some significant playing time last year. We're still learning what it takes for us to be successful in the highest-level games. Despite losing by a total of five goals against Campolindo, Carondelet and San Ramon, it was the execution at the end of the quarters and the end of the game that let us down and that's just going to be part of our growth going forward."

The losses to those top teams were addressed by Buchel: "We made some mistakes that either gave us a chance to get a goal or gave away a goal at the end because of misunderstanding the situation and what we should be doing so we really emphasized those points in practice. We just needed to live it and experience it to have a tangible example of how we can handle those situations better in the future." Acalanes would come back to defeat Campolindo on Oct. 7, 9-6.

Acalanes is averaging 11.5 goals per game led by first team all-league Finley Graff who will be playing for Michigan next year. "Besides Finley, we have a great deal of depth," Buchel said. "Malin Stone (2nd team all-league), Elinor Chen, a lefty, and Maddie Maurer have all shown well. Maddie is our second center and she has been showing a lot of growth along with Anika Rehn and Jayna Guiro, our

fastest swimmers."

The defense has been led by center defender Lily Briones, a priority position for Acalanes. "Lily has been fantastic. We do everything we can making sure we protect that area and Lily is the latest in a long line of strong players that we had had at that position."

Lucy Kerr brings a great understanding to her role on defense. "Lucy knows when she needs to extend the defense into a press and when she needs to drop back and help while communicating to the players on her side of the pool along with being able to defend on the interior should the need arise," Buchel said. "Althea Topp, our lone freshman has been a real contributor as a smart, team defender who does not defer when she shouldn't, having played a lot of club water polo."

There is an embarrassment of riches in the goalie position with all-league senior Adelyn Horciza and junior Lucy McShane, sharing time and being both recruited by top colleges. "When you have two incredible goalies it makes our practices so much better. Adelyn really knows how to use her voice and her communication from the goal has been spectacular. Our hope is that with time and experience, playing so many young players, we are looking for improvement over the course of the year."

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Saint Mary's Water Polo attacking their inaugural season

By Jon Kingdon

When James Lathrop took the job as head coach of the Saint Mary's men's water polo team for their inaugural season, he put together a roster of 13 freshmen, two sophomores, five juniors and one graduate student. "We wanted to make sure that we represent Saint Mary's in a great way so the most important thing was that we established a great culture, and these guys have been awesome. They've really stepped up in terms of responding to the challenges we've given them and as a group they have really connected."

In establishing the

culture Lathrop is looking for, the roster brings a varied culture with players from the United States, Australia, New Zealand, Italy, South Africa, and Canada. "I thought it would just be a great opportunity to bring in all these different cultures and the best from everybody, and that's what it's been. These guys are coming in and they're just enjoying getting to know and play water polo with each other and it's been a really special."

The team jumped right into the season when they competed at the Triton Invitational in San Diego at the end of



Freshman Leo Hachem, Saint Mary's leading scorer takes a shot on goal.

Photo Tod Fierner

August, playing six games in three days, four against ranked teams – UCLA-1, USC-2, Long Beach State-7, and UC Santa Barbara-15th. Despite losing three close

matches, Saint Mary's came away with their first two wins over Bucknell and Mercyhurst.

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Lamorinda volleyball teams are each competitive in their own way

By Jon Kingdon

CAMPOLINDO

As is his wont, Campolindo head coach David Chen wanted to challenge his team from the start and they have gone to tournaments in Stockton, Folsom, Bishop O'Dowd, Albany, and Redondo, amassing a 22-7 record.

"We wanted to see how we compared with the other top teams," Chen said. "We're learning to compete consistently and limiting consecutive negative plays. We have 16 different needs and they're all fighting for playing time and as they believe in themselves, they also have to believe that their teammates can do it too. As a team sport, you have to build the ability to trust someone else and be able to pass the baton."

This is a well-balanced roster with nine seniors and juniors and seven freshmen and sophomores. "We have a lot of depth on our team and we have a lot of confidence in being able to use everyone because they're so talented," coach John Vuong said. "Practice is a joy to watch because everyone's competing."

There is a lot of size and versatility on this team. Hanna Raczyńska is first on the team in kills and digs, Dior Duru is second in kills and digs, Aven Brusco third in kills and blocks, Talia Rosenblat is fourth in kills, Olivia Britton is fifth in kills and first in blocks, Mariam Pachulia sixth in scoring and second in blocks and Sophia Wilson, seventh in scoring, fourth in blocks, fifth in assists and sixth in digs.

There was similar performance with the libero's Grace Thiel third in assists and digs, Katherine Deng fourth in assists and fifth in digs and the setters Amelia Knutson first in assists (323) and fourth in digs and Angeline Mu second in assists. "Amelia had an injury early in the season and Angeline stepped in and did a great job and the older kids took her in and embraced her," coach John Vuong said. "Grace and Katherine have been splitting time at libero and are playing really well."

Raczyński is getting a number of her kills from the back row. "It's really important to have that outlook," Chen said. "Mariam really started to connect proving it to herself and to the team

which is really big. Talia has been a very efficient high caliber player with a high hitting percentage. Dior is a quiet threat that is cool under pressure but very competitive and Lexi has shown a lot of range. Olivia has been an anchor on defense, getting a lot of solo blocks and big blocks at important times."

As they find playing time, players like Brusco, Wilson, Maddy Carpenter, and Cielle Stone have been taking advantage of their opportunities. "Aven had a breakout performance at the O'Dowd Tournament; Sophia has really thrived as a left hander on the right side as well as Maddy and Cielle." Chen said. "This season we are really pushing the narrative that with the depth that we have, we really need to give each other the opportunity how they can help contribute to the team regardless of the situation."

Having so much depth has required Chen to really strategize. "It's a process of getting the team to understand the approach to buy in. It has not been an easy process but we're hoping it will help to build experience for those that don't have a chance to start much. They have the hardest job, perhaps coming off the bench with their team needing them to contribute and be productive when things are on the line. It's all the little things and us finding a way to be a team and not just individuals."

MIRAMONTE

After a 1-3 start last season, Miramonte went on a 12-game winning streak. This year, after a 1-5 start, the Matadors have won their last 14 games and are 9-0 in league play. "This year is a result of having a fairly young team," head coach Leslie Ray said. "Last year, we had more seniors in positions that could cause a little confusion but we are starting to mesh and are gelling."

Miramonte had five freshmen on the roster that saw a lot of playing time. "Last year, our players got a lot of experience and are working very hard this season," Ray said. "Our philosophy this season is to train harder than we play and we have amped up our practices, having our players put in situations where they face adversity and it has shown in our matches with the

team coming together very nicely."

Ray intentionally signed up for tougher tournaments and tough competitions. "We needed to see teams that could battle us out and it showed us that we can come back collectively and become better."

For Ray, it starts with the back row. "We are a defensive team first and that means the back row is everything. Our libero, Sena Hens, has shown that she can handle it. I will also swing her to get our younger players out there to get their experience and be prepared for when their time comes."

The key players on the offense are the team's setters, sophomore Lucy Targonski and senior co-captain, setter Maddie Yun. "We will play a modified 6-2 offense where Lucy will hit from the front row and then become a setter in the back row," Ray said. "She and Maddie are doing a phenomenal job, holding on with Maddie's leadership as our senior captain, it makes everything flow a lot easier and she has had a huge impact guiding Lucy into that role as well."

Freshman outside hitter Stella Krimmel has been a most pleasant surprise for Ray. "Stella was a real eye opener at tryouts and has been getting her moments in the matches. She has been a designated server and has been racking up points on the board for us so she definitely plays."

The defensive specialists are Gianna Caspari, Chelsea Dao and Ella Cleghorn who will also be used as a hitters and defensive players. "They have all played well and Chelsea has really stepped up her game this season."

Playing in a tough league, Ray sees the need for the team to play their best game to be effective. "It's just a matter of being a team, collectively coming together and playing as one. As long as they have each other's backs, the sky's the limit for this team. They have the personality, the heart and the will to work hard. As they keep coming to practice, putting out 110%, there's no doubt in my mind we'll make a run in the NCS. It's remarkable to see our team grow as the season has progressed."



Campolindo's Grace Thiel (17) making a dig against Acalanes.

Photo Josh Uziel

ACALANES

"We really challenged ourselves this year with our non-league schedule in playing a lot of open level and Division 1 teams right off the bat to really test ourselves as a team and I think it is going to show in the second half of play," head coach Haley Walsh said. "So far, it has worked in terms of us learning dynamics and chemistry and gameplay so we're really excited in starting league play and finding our groove."

And they found that groove defeating a 10-4 College Park team with a 3-1 victory and currently sporting a 4-2 record in league play.

"The players have faced a lot of adversity with the schedule and really accepted the challenges of playing against high level teams. We looked at each game as an opportunity to get better and challenge ourselves. We have been playing a lot of fun volleyball and the girls are having a blast so it's fun to see that in practice and have it translated into the games."

The leaders in the front line for Acalanes have been their middies, seniors Sydney Scovic and Devyn Murphy and outside hitter, co-captain Ella Chong. "Sydney and Devyn have had pretty

high hitting percentages and have gotten a lot of reps in games, and Ella, one of our captains, has been leading as well on the outside."

Senior co-captain Amelia Easley has been doing very well as the team's setter and is backed up by the team's lone sophomore Kaia Copen. "Amelia has been running the majority of the 5-1 offense. Kaia has been playing well but it has been a bit of a tough transition going on to varsity. She has been really working to learn what it's like to play at the varsity level with the different dynamics that are involved."

Chong and has also been one of the team's defensive specialists along with senior Lourdes Smith who has been getting a lot of playing time in the middle back and has been helping to solidify the service team. Francesca Barbano has been the main libero and is backed up by senior co-captain Sahar Noroozi.

With a strong start in league play, confidence has been building in the team. "This team is really settling in with an attitude of 'All right, we've got challenges but we're going to take what we've learned from those early games and we're going to apply it moving forward in terms

of being more confident attackers, really homing in on our serving capabilities,'" Coach Walsh said. "We're a very strong serving team, so we really try to make sure that we capitalize on that anytime we get the ball to be ultimately successful."

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Saint Mary's Water Polo

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Saint Mary's would go on to play four more ranked teams, Princeton-12, California-4, San Jose State-9, and Santa Barbara again, and headed into conference play ranked 20th by the 2026 Collegiate Water Polo Association.

Lathrop took great pride in the team's victory in their first home match against Whitter 20-11 in front of a sold-out crowd at the Soda Aquatics Center. "The energy and atmosphere was awesome," said Lathrop. "That's what this community is about, celebrating the local teams. This team is going to represent the school in a really special way."

Without a pool to compete in, the team has been practicing at the Saint Mary's Rec Center and at Campolindo and the team has not had any

issues with the arrangement. "This is a group that really wanted the opportunity to play," Lathrop said. "When I told them about how we want to have a great culture, their eyes lit up and saw it as an opportunity for them and that's what they're here for. We're still young and learning a lot, and we're challenging them to be better every day and these guys are all about trying to get better."

The offense has been led by freshman Leo Hachem-30 goals, graduate Mason Black-21 goals, junior Noah Bigara-15 goals, freshman Domenico Barilla-9 goals/16 assists and junior Andrew Donlin-12 goals and 12 assists.

Lathrop wants to get everyone involved in the scoring. "Leo's had some great games but we're playing a system that's set up to be where every-

one's ready to take a shot when it's time to do it. We've had some great leadership from the transfers and the older guys."

Freshman Federico Castrucci has been very solid in goal and has shared some time with sophomore Griffin Lagsdin and freshman Jake Nielsen. "Federico came in as an accomplished goalie having playing on the under 20 national team for Italy," Lathrop said. "He's very smooth and moves to the ball well. Mason Black and Harry Irwin have been the key players guarding the center on defense."

Lathrop is still looking for improved play from the team. "Most of our opponents have been together for years, having played a lot of water polo together. So, we need to catch up, and we're doing that."

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