

THE ORINDA NEWS

Gratis
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12 Issues Annually
April 2009

Play Ball! Orinda Baseball Association Begins Season



SALLY HOGARTY



BARBARA BOSTER

The Orinda Baseball Association celebrated its 25th anniversary recently at Wagner Ranch auditorium. A myriad of players, coaches, and enthusiastic supporters turned out to get the 2009 season off to a roaring start. **John Vanek** and **Jeff Joyce of Orinda Motors** (shown above with fast pitch winner **Adam Noble**) threw out the first pitch. In addition, the community-minded **Orinda Motors** was a major sponsor of the event and coordinated the fast pitch competition.

Clearing the Way For Emergency Equipment

By KATHERINE LEONARD
Contributing Writer

When you look at your street, can you picture a fire engine trying to get to you or a family member? Would a fire engine have a hard time getting there?

Fire department access is the ability for fire engines, ambulances and other emergency equipment to quickly and safely get to the emergency location. When access is blocked, narrowed or otherwise not adequate, a delay can occur for the emergency crews and equipment to arrive at the scene.

It can also mean that a fire engine or equipment may be damaged or can cause damage in the effort to get to where it needs to go. In either case, the delay can be costly, or cause a delay in mitigating the emergency.

Here's what you need to know to make sure you have taken the right steps to "clear the way" for emergency vehicles

[SEE FIRE page 6]



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

A fire at this **El Toyonal** home quickly consumed the structure, which was under construction. Narrow streets in this area can hamper fire equipment if not adequately cleared of vegetation and cars.

Passage of Parcel Tax Won't Solve All School District's Woes

By SALLY HOGARTY
and CHRIS LAVIN
Staff Writers

Supporters of Orinda schools sighed with relief last month when voters overwhelmingly supported Measure B to maintain school programs in the wide wake of budget cuts from the state. The new tax needed a difficult two-thirds majority to pass, but more than 70 percent voted yes. Orinda property tax bills will now increase by \$124 annually.

"This doesn't mean that the school board won't be making painful cuts," said Orinda City Councilmember Steve Glazer, who co-chaired the steering committee for the measure. He attributes the passage to Orindans' longtime support of public schools, as well as support from property owners who recognize that their property values maintain their value as long as the city is home to a strong school system.

Official election results showed that 5,384 voters approved the measure, or about 71 percent, while 2,226 voted no, or 29 percent. More than 80 percent of all voters cast their votes via mail before March 3. Rain and hail pounded Orinda throughout Election Day, but the 1,401 voters who braved the weather and voted in person broke down along the same percentage lines.

In a message to voters, Orinda Union School District (OUSD) Superintendent Joe Jaconette said, "I speak for our faculty, staff and administrators when I extend a heartfelt thank you to the voters of Orinda. The hard work necessary to pass Measure

B demonstrates a collaborative effort by our school board, teachers, staff, parents and community. I compliment everyone for the success."

The new tax is expected to raise about \$870,000 annually and will benefit Orinda's four elementary schools and Orinda Intermediate School. A \$385 tax for schools passed in 2003; the new tax, therefore, will bring the school's parcel tax to a total of \$509 – a 32 percent increase.

Because Measure B stood as the only item on the March 3 ballot, the OUSD must reimburse the Contra Costa County Department of Elections for conducting the election and counting the ballots – an estimated cost of \$50,000. School board members say that the special election was

[SEE TAX page 18]



SALLY HOGARTY

Barbara Denny, a Miramonte High School teacher, brought photos of the Wagner Ranch Nature Area when she asked the OUSD board not to cut funds for the environmental education position.

OA Members check page 3 for your April discounts!

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Theatre Square Offers Kids' Entertainment



SALLY HOGARTY

Spunky the Clown will be in front of Sweet Dreams at Theatre Square every other Saturday from 10:30 a.m. until noon doing face painting, making balloon animals, and more. Shown above are (L-R) **Natasha Robinson** of Sweet Dreams, **Spunky**, **Connie King** of Sweet Dreams and (in front) **Samantha**.


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Stalking the Wild Flower

By CINDA MACKINNON
Contributing Writer

What can be more enchanting after a cold, wet winter than to walk along a trail exploding in colors? The blooms are peaking now and will fade as the weather warms in May. We are lucky to live in California for many reasons – one of them is the best spring wildflower display in the country - and there are plenty of places to see wildflowers here in the Bay Area. Every year more flower fields are lost to development, so we are fortunate to have many local parks that preserve our wildflowers. The different biotic communities and microclimates in our small area result in a wonderful diversity.

Many books arrange wildflowers by color, and this is fine, but before the season is out you may want to delve a little deeper, because flower species can vary in color. Also, unrelated flowers can look alike. For example, a blue dick looks much like a blue gilia: both occur as a cluster of small flowers. To tell them apart you must look a little closer at clues like leaf form, number of petals, symmetry and petal and leaf arrangements. Blue dick has six petals, whereas the gilia has five, and the leaves are different.

Getting Started

Most readers will know the California poppy - *Eschscholzia californica* (named after botanist, J. Echsoltz). But how do you recognize it? You are categorizing it, even if you are unaware of the process. You note its form and color: silky, golden-orange petals, numerous stamen and lacy foliage. You may not have ever counted the petal number (there are four), but you subconsciously realize it doesn't have numerous petals like a rose or daisy.



CINDA MACKINNON

Chinese Houses (*Collinsea heterophylla*) are purple and white flowers that stack like a pagoda. They thrive in moist, shady spots.

What other flowers do you already know by sight? Perhaps blue dick (*Dichelostemma capitatum*) or blue-eyed grass (*Sisyrinchium bellum*). These are two good ones to know because they are found throughout the state in a wide number of habitats. Both have petals in groups of three, but there are a limited number of blue flowers with three or six petals – look for the flat, wheel of petals that form blue-eyed grass. (Note this three-petal group includes some of the most beautiful early bloomers: lilies, iris and amaryllis.)

Remember to take only pictures (a great identification tool) and minimize your footprints. Stay on the trails or look for the footprints of other wildflower hounds and step in their tracks. Every wildflower picked or trampled could mean dozens we will not see next year. For a treat, try the annual California Wildflower show on May 2 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the Oakland Museum.

As flower lover and Orindan author Toni Fauver used to say: Happy wildflower trails! For more information contact me at cinda.mackinnon@comcast.net.

The Buzz About Bees

By LYNDA LEONARD
Contributing Writer

Who doesn't love a butterfly? They're lovely beings and we plant flowers to attract them, wishing they will stay still a moment longer so we can get a better glimpse of its wings or record its beauty in a photograph. But they rarely do as we wish, and they flutter about the garden and then disappear. And who doesn't thrill to the elegant hummingbird drinking nectar from the columbine blossom outside the window, its wings a buzzing blur? We even hang feeders for them!

But bees are another matter. We know bees are hard at work in our gardens every day, pollinating our plants so that we have tomatoes for our salads and flowers in the

[SEE BEES page 14]



LYNDA LEONARD

Orinda beekeeper Steve Gentry transfers his bees to a demonstration hive at Tropical House in UC Berkeley's Botanical Gardens. The bees will forage outside Tropical House, leaving and entering through the clear plastic tube seen here.



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ORINDA ASSOCIATION

A Message From the OA President
Climate of Change



Barnaby Beck

I was at a funeral a few days ago for a mother of a good friend and got to thinking about my life, and I realized that there are certain times in our lives when we are more likely to ask those ultimate questions. You know the questions: Why am I here? What good am I doing? Does my life have worth or meaning? The first time we ask these questions is when we are in our early 20s – just heading out in life. We are aware of our gifts and talents, but they are largely untested. There's anxiety but there's also optimism and idealism. We figure that even if we screw up, there's still time to fix things. But, we wonder what our worth is determined by. Is it based upon what we can produce or how much we can earn or is it based on something else?

A few years pass and suddenly, we find ourselves in a midlife crisis, and those haunting questions return. Now, we have teenagers, and they're telling us that we're boring and that we need to "get a life." We answer: "I'd like to get a life but I have all these obligations." But we know they're right. We know we're sometimes stuck in a mundane rut and there's this hole in us – it's empty, and we need to fill it with something. We look back at our lives, and we see that we've reached some of our goals, but there are a lot of other goals that we thought we would have reached by now. Maybe one or in my case both of our parents have died, and we are painfully aware of our own mortality. For some, a panic sets in and they say, "I will never be young again." We may begin to do stupid things like buy a red sports car or look for joy in the wrong places and all the while, this hole in us is growing, and we hear the sad refrain from that U 2 song playing over and over again in our heads: "...but I still haven't found what I'm looking for..."

The next time we consider these questions is when disaster strikes. We lose a loved one or we read about a jetliner going down in a remote corner of the world. Church bells ring and long dormant cathedrals fill up suddenly with people all wondering the same things: "Who am I – really? Why am I here – really? Where am I going – really?"

I remember just after 9/11 watching a

guy interviewed on television. He was just standing on the streets of New York City – like someone who had nowhere to go. He had been an investment broker who had developed a successful business that had been located in one of the Twin Towers – on a floor that had taken a direct hit. He was late for work that day and escaped, but all of his life's work and all of his colleagues were gone. He was just standing there shaking his head saying, "All my life I pursued money and defined myself by the accumulation of wealth, and now I see it's meaningless." He then asked, "How am I going to define myself now?"

The last time that we ask those ultimate questions is at the end of our own lives. We may have a terminal illness or maybe we are 80 years old and healthy like my mother-in-law, but we know that life doesn't go on forever. Now those haunting questions are rephrased. Now we ask, "Who was I? Why was I here? Where will I be going?"

I would like to think that I have it all figured out, but I am realistic to know that we always need to ask those tough question and be ready for the truth in the answers. One way that has always helped me is "by giving back," "playing it forward," "doing the right thing," in short "do unto others as you would want them to do unto you." What I am asking you to do is to get involved in something bigger than yourself. I know you are busy but find an outlet to put your expertise and passion into. You will feel better for it and you may stop asking: "Who am I – really? Why am I here – really? Where am I going – really?"

Always strive to "be the person that your dog thinks you are."

Eighth Annual Wildlife Festival

Sunday, April 19 from 1 - 4 p.m.
at Wagner Ranch Nature Area

Learn about composting, take a hike, create a leaf T-shirt, enjoy an animal puppet show and much, much more. NBC television anchor Diane Dwyer will kick off the festival. The new bell and tower built by Eagle Scout Michael Schier will be dedicated at 2 p.m.

The Orinda Association

The Orinda Association is a nonprofit corporation dedicated to:

- Maintaining and improving the quality of life in Orinda;
- Promoting awareness and discussion of issues that are important to the community;
- Encouraging and recognizing volunteer efforts to enhance the beauty, character, and security of Orinda.

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Guest Editorial Three Cups of Tea

Editor's Note: The following was written by Orinda resident Margret Sloane's granddaughter. The 13-year-old's wisdom is appropriate to remember in these trying times.

A good philosophy is like a hot cup of tea: uniquely thought-provoking and always original. A selection of the best ideas creates a kind of three-tiered guidance councilor, a trinity advocate, a triad of wisdom – three cups of tea.

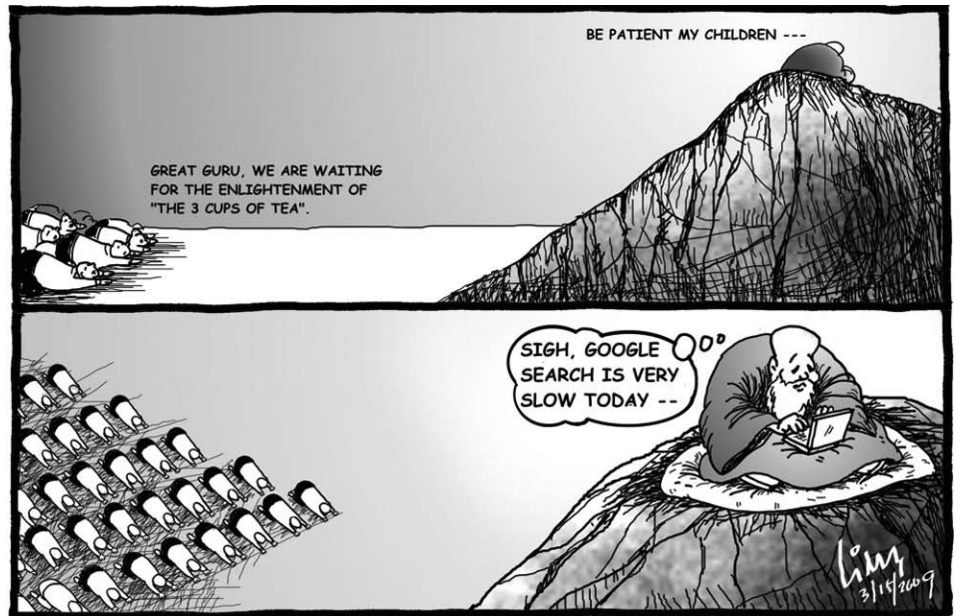
I believe that the best way to live is to be happy, to know what's important, and to be disciplined.

The first cup of tea: happiness. As Hugh Downs once said: "A happy person is not a person in a certain set of circumstances, but rather a person with a certain set of attitudes." People want to be around relaxed, happy people. Being happy isn't just having a smile on my face. Being happy is thinking positively about school, work, family, friends, little things, big things, and ap-

preciating what other people do. My little hint (of citrus): trying to be happier makes me happy. This invigorating cup of tea will always remind me to "be of good mind."

The second cup of tea: knowing what's important. Sometimes I just have to let it go: the tiniest pebble in my shoe can't be a reason for me to throw off my shoes and collapse on the curb crying. Sometimes I just have to let the sugar cube dissolve, let the crack in the cup be. "Next to knowing when to seize an opportunity, the most important thing in life is to know when to forgo an advantage," Benjamin Disraeli stated. In simple words, go with the flow. This soothing cup will remind me not to be petty and to always keep in mind the "big picture."

The third and last cup: be disciplined. Being disciplined is not knowing how to karate chop or having a black belt. Discipline is similar to the second cup of tea; it involves knowing when to trust my instincts, and when to resist them. Discipline can be more



a muscle than a skill. Discipline comes by exercising that muscle, instead of letting it disintegrate by following distractions and procrastinating. Discipline has a slightly bitter taste, and yet it is the most satisfying of all. Drink up!

Some people's beliefs about life can be stated this way: "The ends justify the means." But, I believe the best way to live

is to follow certain rules. Starting from a position of strength (happiness), identifying what gets me the most bang for my buck (knowing what is important), and executing it responsibly (being disciplined) are some rules to help me achieve my aspirations, whatever those may be. Just remember to keep the kettle boiling.

– Rachael Sloane

Letters to the Editor

Thanks for Support

We would like to express our appreciation to Orinda voters for their strong support for Measure B in last Tuesday's election.

Measure B will provide much needed resources to lessen the burden of significant state budget cuts to our schools. It will protect quality academic programs that have provided our children with an excellent education.

More than 70 percent of Orinda voters have agreed to pay higher taxes despite the difficult economic conditions. We are sincerely grateful.

– Riki Sorenson, Lynne Molloy, Steven Glazer, Co-Chairs, Yes on Measure B

Hike in Garbage Rates

By an astounding 24.3 percent, Orinda trash rates went up on March 1, 2009. In February 2008, the typical Orinda household paid \$66 for three months of trash pick-up. On March 1, 2009, the new rate became \$82.05. It is highly unlikely that the income of the average Orinda household has gone up 24.3 percent since February 2008. This rate increase took place without a vote of the people.

Orinda's garbage rates are set by a government body, the Central Contra Costa Solid Waste Authority. Two Orinda City Council members, Victoria Smith and Amy Worth, were on the authority's board of directors at the time of the rate increase. Both women voted, in January 2009, for the rate hike. Both Smith and Worth should be held accountable for their votes. Neither woman provided a town hall forum to discuss rais-

ing garbage rates.

Smith has plenty of explaining to do. In her 2008 re-election campaign, Smith took campaign contributions from garbage-collection companies and from the Teamsters Union. Garbage workers are members of that union.

If Orinda residents cannot vote on their garbage rates, then rubbish collection should be privatized. If a garbage company raised prices too much, the company could simply be fired.

– Richard S. Colman

City Needs to Obey The Law

For six years now, I have been trying to get a simple adjustment of the lot line between my two parcels in Orinda, to make them each about the same size. Orinda's planning director and city attorney and the city in general have asked me to surrender one of the lots for a scenic easement, get permits for sewer and water for both properties, get surveys, get soils reports, get reports on story pole placement if someone might someday build, and to indemnify Orinda for any lawsuit brought against Orinda by a bogus complaint against the city for granting this simple internal lot line adjustment.

This is a case of Orinda's intentionally breaking state law. That law says that a city is forbidden from requiring more than zoning conformity before granting a simple lot line adjustment.

In September 2008, Superior Court Judge Barry Baskin issued an order against the City of Orinda, vacating a city council resolution and requiring the city to obey state law. *Vogt v. Orinda*, Superior Court Case

No. 06-1494, tells the whole sorry story.

The judge found that the six giant volumes of administrative record, thousands of pages, "contains overwhelming evidence to support the Petitioner's contention" that

Orinda had violated state law. Judge Baskin found that Orinda's legal counter-arguments were "disingenuous at best," since Orinda had been repeatedly warned

[SEE LETTERS page 16]

Celebration of Life Planned for Dr. Art Amos

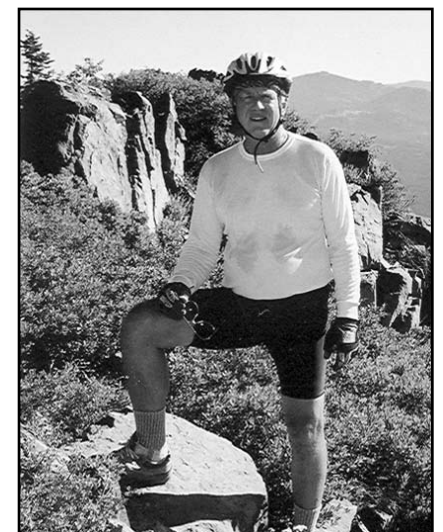
Arthur Allen Amos, 66, a well-known local dentist and Orinda resident, passed away peacefully on February 19 with his wife Nathalie by his side. He had been battling cancer for the past few years.

Known for his joy of living life to it's fullest, Dr. Amos' gracious smile, thirst for knowledge, and compassion for the earth, oceans and skies will be long remembered by his friends. An avid believer in exercise, Dr. Amos loved to bike, ski, fly his airplane, run, play racquetball, and swim. In fact, he continued swimming twice a week until his hospitalization on December 28.

Dr. Amos began his dental practice in Oakland in 1973, moving it to Orinda in 1998 when Dr. Pete Giers' retirement brought a welcome opportunity to have his practice in his hometown. Dr. Amos' staff remains in his former practice today, working with the dentists that he felt shared his philosophy of dentistry – Drs. Reza & Amir Koopah.

Dr. Amos is survived by his wife, two children, two stepchildren, and three grandchildren. "Luckily, Art was able to meet our newest grandchild, Tyler, who was born on January 15," says Nathalie.

A celebration of Dr. Amos' life will



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

take place on April 4 at 11 a.m. at the Brazilian Room in Tilden Park. Donations can be made in Dr. Amos' name to Caringbridge.com or Save Mt. Diablo. "Caringbridge is a wonderful organization that provides a great service to anyone going through a serious illness," says Nathalie. "It helped us keep friends informed of Art's illness and allowed them to communicate thoughts and stories to Art. I would read him the stories and good wishes from his friends every morning. It gave him much to be thankful for and also a welcome laugh or two."

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Letters to the Editor are printed on a space-available basis and should be no longer than 400 words. They must include the writer's first and last name, signature and telephone number.

Send letters to: Editor, *The Orinda News*, P.O. Box 97, Orinda, CA 94563, fax them to 254-8312, or email to news@orindaassociation.org. Letters to the Editor for the May issue are due April 5, 2008.

For display advertising rates, call Jill Gelster at 925-528-9225 or email to jill@aspenconsult.net. The deadline for the June issue is April 14, 2008.

FIRE

Kate Wiley Honored as Orinda's Citizen of the Year



SALLY HOGARTY

Kate Wiley was honored as Orinda's Citizen of the Year by the Orinda Rotary and the *Lamorinda Sun* at a festive dinner on March 13. Shown above are (L-R) Austin, Kate, Rich, and Travis Wiley.

MOFD Financing, Organization Under Scrutiny

By CHRIS LAVIN
Assistant Editor

Ever since the Orinda and Moraga fire departments joined forces under one umbrella department 12 years ago, some Orindans have complained that it's not fair they have to pay two-thirds of the cost to keep the department going, while Moraga pays one third. Recently, officials from Moraga, Orinda and the Moraga Orinda Fire Department (MOFD) have begun a series of tri-agency meetings to address those concerns.

Orinda foots 65 percent of the bill for MOFD, while Moraga pays 35 percent. Yet according to MOFD Fire Chief Pete Nowicki, joining the departments 12 years ago provided the opportunity for shared resources that allowed the district to upgrade stations, equipment, personnel and response times. Response times improved by a full 12 minutes after the departments

were combined, Nowicki said.

"Absolutely without a doubt" it would be a bad idea to break the department in two," Nowicki said. Even the Revenue Enhancement Task Force, a committee formed by the City of Orinda in 2007 but disbanded earlier this year, had been looking at possibilities to fix the disparity with Moraga by reducing the amount of Orinda's contribution. "We have such a superior service here," Nowicki said. "Many people just don't know how lucky they are." Five stations make up the MOFD, with three in Orinda and two in Moraga.

The MOFD is finalizing an analysis based on questions that came out of the tri-agency meeting, including where high-capacity hydrants are still needed; a long-range financial plan for the district that will include breakdowns of retirement obligations, other employment benefits and capital projects; and addressing questions

[SEE MOFD page 16]

Forum to Focus on Wildfire Danger

By REBECCA KUNZMAN
Contributing Writer

Because we live in a wildfire/urban interface zone, many Orinda residents are looking at their preparedness in the event of a major disaster.

Massive wildfires swept across northern and southern California last year and killer wildfires devastated Australia last month. This could happen here. Limited preparation and adverse weather conditions helped create what became the Oakland hills fire disasters of 1970 and 1991, when even massive fire response operations failed to protect lives and property.

What do you know about our risks? What are the emergency plans in our communities? What are the escape routes? What can we do to prepare?

The joint Lamorinda emergency preparedness committees will hold a workshop to provide information on these topics and more. Anyone is invited and encouraged. Attendees will learn about the threat to Lamorinda in the upcoming 2009 fire season, which will probably be very high after three years of drought.

The program will be held on April 29 from 7 to 9 p.m. at the Orinda Library Auditorium, 26 Orinda Way. Registration

will begin at 6:30 p.m. in the lobby. Local emergency preparedness and response groups will have tables to provide additional information.

Keynote speakers California State Assistant Fire Marshall Tonya Hoover and Cal Fire Battalion Chief Rob Van Wormer will be joined by representatives from local fire and police services along with local emergency preparedness group leaders.

Contact Jonathan Goodwin at Canyon-Fire@vfemail.net for more information.



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WAY TO GROW

◆ FIRE from page 1
and equipment.

Do not park in areas with red painted curbs. They are painted red because they are not wide enough for both parked cars and fire engines. Don't obstruct the roadway by parking there even if it is for a few minutes.

Trim overhead trees and branches – vertical clearance needs to be at least 15 feet. Low hanging tree branches can delay a response or damage fire equipment.

Clear the sides of the road – maintain clearance along the sides of the roadway by removing any branches, trees and shrubbery back three feet from the sides of the road. Overgrowth from vegetation narrows the roads and can make access difficult for fire vehicles. Keeping vegetation away from the sides of the road also

keeps the road as wide as possible and helps in case you need to evacuate.

All roads and streets serve as “ways out.” Just as you should know two ways out of your home during a fire, think about two possible routes you could use if you had to evacuate your neighborhood. Survey your area and make sure that a fire engine could get in as you are trying to get out.

Finally, always remember that if an emergency vehicle has red lights and sirens on, it is because someone is having an emergency. Please safely pull over to the right and stop. Let them pass before you continue.

Doing your part helps the fire district reach your home or your neighbor's in times of emergency. For more information, contact the Fire Prevention Office at 925-258-4599.

Way to Grow in Orinda
Budgeting Your Landscape



Steve & Cathy Lambert

Spring fever has hit and people are itching to get some work done in their yards. However, with the current economic situation they're also looking for ways to afford and budget for these home improvements. Several homeowners we've talked to are investing the money they would normally spend on an expensive family vacation on home improvements instead. This way ultimately they'll see a return for their R&R dollars.

When looking at investing in your home's landscape, be sure to look beyond the basics. While seasonal plantings such as flowers can help sell a house, it won't increase the selling price. Installing landscape features, like patios and outdoor kitchens, offer visual impact and provide more functional space, and that adds value to your home. So if you were planning a home addition but feel you can't afford it now, why not add a considerably less expensive outdoor room?

The key to stretching your landscape budget is in carefully planning and phasing your project. To match your dream yard to your real-life budget, start with a complete list of wants and needs, including your wildest desires. Be willing to trim back some things and wait for others.

It's critical to get professional input on proper phasing of your landscape project. It can be upsetting and costly to start a phased project without good planning. All too often portions of landscape need to be torn out, and other elements need to be added, so you get stuck paying for tear-out and re-installation costs.

A licensed landscape professional who does both design and installation will have the best understanding of installation phasing requirements. He or she should provide a design and phased installation plan that fills your needs while meeting your budget.

A comprehensive phasing plan should not only provide you with a detailed construction schedule, but it should clearly define your payment schedule. This way, you have the flexibility to put a hold on the project at defined intervals, should your budget requirements change. Life is full of unexpected expenses, and this type of installation plan will give you the peace of mind that, if your economic situation

changes, you're not stuck in a contract that you can no longer afford. Because a phased project can often be stretched out over several years, it's good advice to choose a contractor who is well-established in your area and has been in business for a while. You don't want to have someone else finish a job that may not have the same vision or style as your original contractor.

Ways to Phase: Besides the obvious front yard, backyard phases, we usually recommend a complete yard clean-up and rough grading as phase one. If you're planning to re-landscape your front and back yard in separate phases, it would be more cost-effective to do the demo and grading of both at the same time. Unless you have kids or dogs, then you wouldn't want to spend months with a flat dirt lot in your back yard.

For sloped lots, the next phase often includes adding retaining walls. These require large equipment that may damage other landscape elements such as hardscape, irrigation and plants, so it's best done early in the project. Before starting the hardscape phase (patios, driveways, and other hard surfaces), the mainline irrigation and landscape lighting wires should be run. Although landscape lighting is important for safety and the enjoyment of your yard, the majority of this expense can be deferred. However, planning ahead by including lighting in your design and installing the main wiring before adding hard surfaces will save you tear-out dollars later. You can start with a few minimal fixtures for safety purposes, then later add more lighting for ambiance and effect.

Subsequent phases are usually based on your priorities. Is a play space for your children a priority over the outdoor kitchen? Is a patio or pool remodel more important than a new lawn? The planting phase usually happens near the end of the project. However, we recommend putting in some trees and focal plants earlier, so you'll have some well-established plants when your job is complete.

By installing your landscape in phases, you'll be able to stretch the cost over a longer period. This method requires patience and planning but the end result, a beautiful new yard, will be achieved with much less stress.

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Orinda In Action – Get Involved!

Join fellow community members in a beautification day scheduled on Earth Day, Saturday, April 18. Co-sponsored by the City of Orinda and The Orinda Association, volunteers will work on various projects including Orinda Senior Village garden restoration, flower and tree planting, creeks restoration, trail clean up, and much more. There will also be electronic recycling, hazardous

waste collection, Goodwill clothing/household goods drop off, and a place to donate to the Contra Costa Food Bank. Volunteers should check in at Theatre Square Plaza between 8:30 and 9 a.m. Coffee, juice and other refreshments will be provided. Dress to work with sturdy shoes and bring work gloves and tools. For more information, email orindainaction@gmail.com.

Restoring Trout to Orinda Creeks



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

The EBMUD barrier dam on San Pablo Creek blocks trout from entering the creek.

By BRIAN WATERS
Contributing Writer

Today, rainbow trout can be found in Moraga Creek and its tributaries in southern Orinda but not in San Pablo Creek or its tributaries in northern Orinda, despite the similarities in the two stream systems. The reason for the difference is simple: an EBMUD barrier dam just upstream of Bear Creek Road blocks trout from coming upstream into Orinda. Rainbow trout are important to Orinda's creeks. Aside from the pleasure that children and adults feel at seeing these relatively large fish moving in our creeks, as native creek inhabitants they are one of the best indicators of creek health.

For more than 15 years, Friends of

Orinda Creeks (FOC) has been active with many efforts to clean up and restore habitats in the San Pablo and Moraga Creek watersheds. FOC has also worked with students and adults to engage them in these projects, and to inform them of the value of protecting our creeks to enhance habitat for fish and other desirable animal and plant species. In addition to its stream habitat protection and improvement efforts, FOC has undertaken a program to monitor water quality in our streams, and to map important stream habitat conditions, much of which has been done to improve actual or potential trout habitat.

The lower portion of the Moraga Creek watershed supports rainbow trout that come upstream from Upper San Leandro Reservoir. A 17-inch rainbow trout was

[SEE CREEKS page 16]

Plans for Teen Center Still Under Way

Plans for a proposed center for Orinda's teen-agers to do homework, play games, host bands and simply to hang out are still ongoing, although the idea to use the basement of the Europa restaurant on Moraga Way as the primary site has been cast into doubt. "We definitely need a sprinkler system," said Austin Controulis, a junior at Miramonte High School and the student leader of the project, regarding newly discovered criteria for the project. Besides coming up with the money to install sprinklers in case of fire, the entrance to the basement is in the back, and the manager of the BevMo store behind Europa is concerned about parking.

Therefore, members of the group are looking at alternative sites, as well as the possibility of creating a separate entrance to Europa's basement from the front. Because the teen center is meant to accommodate teens from the entire Lamorinda area, some participants at a public meeting March 10 suggested more attention be paid to possible sites in Moraga and Lafayette.

Anyone interested in participating in the project may contact Controulis at 925-639-1484.

– Chris Lavin

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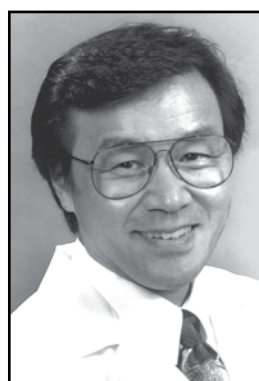
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HOME SWEET HOME

Local Chef Teaches Smart Food Choices, Techniques

By CHRIS LAVIN
Assistant Editor

Orinda is home to a local jewel in the cooking realm: Charles Vollmar, who is becoming a guru for parents hoping to cook in a more popular way for their kids, for groups that want to come together for some lessons on healthy, gourmet cooking, and simply for any home cook whom he encourages to buy locally, buy fresh, and within season.

"We're eating at the perimeter of the store," said Vollmar, describing the typical layout of a grocery store, from Safeway to Whole Foods, around which lie the fresh produce, the dairy sections, the cheese aisles. In short, he advocates avoiding most of the packaged stuff in between that periphery. If he stood at the door of a grocery store, he would shoo shoppers toward the outskirts, "the living things," as he calls them, and tell them to buy fruits.

Vollmar, the force behind Epicurean Exchange, has increasingly found himself drawn toward teaching and reaching out to businesses, schools, organizations, and



CHRIS LAVIN
Chef Charles Vollmar (C) demonstrates cooking techniques in his Orinda kitchen. Classes are regularly available to small groups.

learning more all the while – and he incorporates that into his tutoring and school sessions.

"It's an evolution," he said, adding that the more he learns, the more his teaching style and substance seems to change. "I teach differently this year than I did last year." At the heart of his metamorphosis is an increasing awareness throughout our society to focus on what we are putting nutritionally into our bodies, both in quantity and quality.

Vollmar, who writes the "Cooking Well" column for this newspaper, is often asked what it means to eat in a healthy way. That is an impossible question to answer, he says. "It depends on so many things. It means different things to different people. Everyone has different dietary or medical needs, and different preferences. The

[SEE CHEF page 18]

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HOME SWEET HOME

Making Your Home a Vacation Destination



Janice Gatlin

Though many of us may be cutting back on vacations and weekend getaways, we still want those days of relaxation and fun. There are a number of projects for your home that can create a warmer and more fun environment for everyone.

Just to make your home more spacious and your possessions more accessible, consider various storage ideas. Closet organization systems are great whether you hire a closet organizing company, a contractor to install a system, or do it yourself. You can add shelves, pull-out drawers, cabinets, multiple hanger rods, even tilt-out drawers for dirty clothes. Inside your cabinets, you can add pull-out drawers and shelving.

In the garage, adding shelves or cabinet provides organized storage space, or put tool and sports gear hangers on the wall. Install a work bench or, if your garage ceiling is high enough, you can add a full or half-loft storage area with a drop-down ladder.

You may want to convert an unused room or part of a room to a hobby area. You can add built-in shelving, cabinetry, a drop-down work table or desk and specialized lighting. You may want to add some additional electrical outlets.

If you're a reader, nothing is nicer than relaxing in a sunny window seat with a good book. A window seat can double as a storage area with a hinged top.

You may want to look at adding some entertainment space by enclosing a porch or patio area. Enclosures can range from simple to four-season and weather-tight, depending on your intended usage.

How about adding a mud room to one of your entry areas? These are simple and encourage outdoor activities by allowing everyone to leave their muddy or wet items

at the door. To create a formal mud room you can enclose a portion of a patio or deck. To create a simple mud room just use a portion of an existing entry. Mud rooms can be elegant or basic. Items to include are a bench for folks to sit on as they put on or remove shoes. The best benches have hinged tops for storage underneath. The bench can be a simple country-style affair, a beautiful piece of furniture or even a marble or other stone piece.

You'll also want a way to effectively hang coats and jackets. This can range from an attractive free-standing coat rack, to simple or elegant coat hooks or racks on the wall. You may also add closet space for hanging garments. An umbrella stand is also a must – and you can have shoe racks, cubbies, or cabinets, as well. Any and all of these items may be purchased or built, depending on how elaborate you want your mud room to be.

Movie night at home is fun, and you don't need an entire room to have a home theater. You can use a portion of a room to add a built-in screen, wire surround sound, then add some cabinetry, shelving or built-in shelving for all your CDs and DVDs.

If you're a wine lover, add some wine storage. There are many options. A wide variety of wine refrigerators are available, or add simple racks in the kitchen or dining room. You also may scout out a cool area in your basement or lower portion of your home to create a wine room. It can be simple, or include tables, a sink, and a refrigerator for a formal wine-tasting room.

Janice Gatlin is the owner of *Always the Best Home Repairs & Remodeling*, a local handyman and construction company. She can be reached at 254-9545. Her website is www.ATBremodel.com

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OAC 6th Annual Student Visual Art Competition Exhibit

By ELANA O'LOSKEY
Staff Writer

The Orinda Library Gallery is proud to announce an exhibition of local high school students' 3-D and 2-D art, and photography from April 10 to April 30. Sponsored by the Orinda Arts Council (OAC), the exhibit showcases submissions for the visual arts competition from all high school students who live or attend school in Orinda, Lafayette or Moraga.

Winners will be announced at the awards reception on Friday, April 10 between 5 p.m. and 6:30 p.m. Citations of merit and achievement will also be awarded by the judges. Criteria used for judging submissions includes creativity and originality, content and degree of expertise in the chosen medium.

There will be musical entertainment at the reception as well as a hands-on art activity designed for families and young children during the event in the Gallery Room. There will also be a children's Art Treasure Hunt, which sparks questions about what art is all about. Light refreshments will be served.

Founded in 1950, the OAC strives to stimulate, support and advocate for the visual and performing arts in the schools and the community. This particular competition takes the artwork out of the high schools and introduces it to the broader public to enjoy and celebrate.

In addition to the more traditional techniques and media, the OAC embraces new media including digital and mixed media artwork as well as encourage experimentation. "It's an opportunity for young artists to celebrate their work," says Nancy Daniels, OAC committee member. The event is an opportunity for teenagers to meet kids from other schools – which allows young people to create their own artistic community.

Beginning in 2008, young artists were given the opportunity to sell their art – or not. This has spurred some lively conversations between student artists and teachers, offering a glimpse into what it is like to exhibit and sell their work at a gallery. The



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Nick Kelly's "Skateboard City" took 3rd place in last year's 2-D category. Kelly was then a junior at Acalanes High School and used primarily acrylic paint on wood.

majority of the proceeds go to the artist, with a percentage retained to sustain and continue similar OAC programs. Student artwork can be purchased online at www.orindaartscouncil.org.

The OAC's committee for the annual student visual arts competition has been working for months on this ambitious competition exhibit. Committee members who deserve a round of applause include: Gwen McNeilus, Ann Mordine, Susan Garell, Natalie Wheeler, Myrna Witt, Petra Michel, Maggie Boscoe, CC Klevan and Nancy Daniels.

Coordinating student submissions from local high schools wouldn't be possible without generous help from local art teachers including: Gavin Kermodé-3D; Susan McCauley-Photography; Campolindo – Jill Langston-2D, Erica Amundson-2D, Justin Seligman-3-D. Debra Hovey-LaCour-Photography; Acalanes – Karen

[SEE GALLERY page 15]

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SCHOOLS / STUDENTS

Miramonte Graduate Plays in Major League Soccer Final

By JEREMY UNGER
Contributing Writer

Luke Sassano can definitely say that 2008 is a year he will remember. A 2004 Miramonte graduate, Sassano helped lead the New York Red Bulls of Major League Soccer (MLS) to their first MLS final in team history.

Before he was a rising star in the majors, Sassano was a powerhouse at Miramonte, leading the Matadors to NCS championships in 2001, 2003, and 2004 and earning All-League honors in all four years of high school as well as Diablo Football Athletic League (DFAL) MVP his senior year.

Sassano graduated from UC Berkeley last year, where he was captain of the Golden Bears and was subsequently drafted 32nd overall in the 2008 MLS SuperDraft.

"It felt really good to be drafted so high. I had been working all my life for this and to finally reach my goal was really special," said Sassano.

Sassano was a key player coming off the bench for the Red Bulls until the start of the playoffs, where he earned a starting spot on the team after an injury to defensive midfielder Seth Stammers.

"It was great to finally get a lot of playing time instead of sitting on the bench because it meant I could help make a real contribution to the team," said Sassano.

Sassano's excellent defense during the first round helped the Red Bulls upset the

2007 MLS champion Houston Dynamo 4-1 in aggregate play. New York continued their miracle run by defeating Real Salt Lake 1-0 to advance to the MLS Cup in Los Angeles.

"Everyone wrote us off at the beginning of the playoffs, but we came together as a team at the end of the season and that really paid off in the playoffs," said Sassano.

Sassano started for New York in the finals, one of only two rookies who started for the Red Bulls, and played for almost the entire game before being taken out in the 78th minute. Although New York lost to the first seeded Crew 3-1, Sassano's career as a professional soccer player seems quite promising.

"It was amazing playing in the finals. Being in my first year, I was happy just to get an opportunity to play, but getting to start in the finals as a rookie was a great experience," said Sassano.

As for the Red Bulls' future, Sassano believes they have a great shot at redemption. "The problem last year was that we didn't stay consistent," said Sassano. "If we can just come together like we did in the playoffs, then I think we can definitely be really successful." The Red Bulls began the 2009 season on March 19.


Luke has two brothers, Evan, who is currently a coach for Miramonte's men's soccer team and member of the Cal soccer team, and Eric, a junior at Miramonte and midfielder for the Matadors.



MATTHEW SASSANO

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iPod Nano Winner



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Barbara Boster (shown here with daughter Gabriella Kreutzelman) was the lucky winner of the iPod Nano drawing at the Orinda Christmas Tree Lot. The lot, run by **Mike Kang**, raised more than \$2,500 for the Educational Foundation of Orinda. "Thank you to everyone who purchased a tree and helped us raise this money for EFO and a special thank you to East Bay Tree Service for assisting with the disposal of our extra trees," says Kang.

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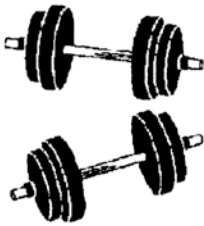
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◆ **BEES** from page 2

vase on our dinner table. But ... they sting. However, mostly they don't sting, but a watchful eye is always a good practice, and Orinda's bee man, Steve Gentry, who admits to being stung occasionally, is quick to note that bees are vegetarians.

Most of Gentry's beehives are leased to farmers this time of year, and the bees are currently at work in the Central Valley, pollinating the crops that will produce the food that will appear on our plates and in our lunch bags in just a few months. About a third of California's vegetable, fruit, and nut crops depend on the services of bees, including apples, pears, peaches, melons, plums, squashes, tomatoes and almonds.

Honeybees are social animals, with the colony ruled by the queen, who can live as long as five years – far longer than any of her subjects. Her worker bees live eight to 10 weeks and the drones four to five. And talk about weird sex: When the queen is about three days old, she leaves the hive to mate with drones – as many as five to 20 of them. The mating takes place about 500 feet above ground and is accomplished in-flight. The drones leave their sex organs inside the queen and die shortly thereafter. The queen returns home, where she stays, and begins laying eggs at a rate of 1,500 to 2,500 a day for a period of up to five years.

Newly "hatched" worker bees perform in-hive tasks, feeding and capping-over larva cells, storing both nectar and pollen collected from the foraging bees, and cleaning the hive. As the worker bee gets older, she moves closer to the hive's entrance, collecting the nectar and pollen from the foraging bee, guarding the hive, and fanning it for ventilation. Around the third week of life, she emerges from the hive and takes short orientation flights that serve to strengthen her wings. She then forages for



JENNIFER WALLACE

Cub Scout Den 7, Pack 212 (known as the Senior Webelos) from Wagner Ranch Elementary School recently earned their Craftsman Activity Badges by building Mason Bee nesting boxes in an effort to help reverse the decline of the bee population. The boxes were then installed around the Wagner Ranch Nature Area with the guidance and support of Toris Jaeger, O.U.S.D. Naturalist, and Steve Gentry, president of the Friends of Wagner Ranch Nature Area. (L-R) **Kyle McKeen, Alex Smith, Zachary Randall, Jack Jorgensen, Milad Koochakhani** (face in back), **Daniel Huston, Steven Lewis**. Not pictured are: **Kyle Wallace, Max McCulloch, Aidan O'Neill, Patrick Hanley, Daniel Davis, Mitch Brooks** and **Jonathon Date Chong**.

about two weeks, accumulating more than 400 flight-miles, literally wearing out her wings. She then leaves the hive and dies alone.

Drones don't forage for nectar and pollen, but they have the important role of contributing to the genetic diversity and thus the survival of the colony.

In contrast to the social honeybees, nearly 95 percent of native bees are solitary. A single female bee mates with a male and then goes about foraging and constructing a nest by herself to raise another generation. There are about 1,500 native bee species in California, 25,000 worldwide, and they are diverse in species and in habits. Like humans, bees have food preferences and will emerge when their favorite natives bloom. They will also explore nearby non-natives.

Honeybees have beekeepers to watch over them, but native bees are on their own. And here is where the home gardener steps into the realm of bee husbandry, helping these hard workers that serve us so well. Native bees need:

- Nest sites. Most prefer to build nests in the ground. Leave bare patches of soil or sand in the shade away from the rain so

that the nests don't get moldy. Some bees prefer nesting boxes.

- Food. Large patches of a single kind of plant allow bees to forage in one spot for a long period, whereas plants scattered around the garden require a lot of energy as they fly from plant to plant. Native bees are more likely to forage on native plants, so include them in the garden.

- Sustainable gardening practices. Use organic fertilizers and natural homemade remedies like soap to deal with pests. Don't use petrochemicals. Remember that wasps play an important role in the garden, feeding on caterpillars, hornworms and flies.

Gentry is passionate about bees and is on a mission to educate the public about these winged creatures. On a Friday in February, he finished installation of a six-foot-high observational beehive at Tropical House in UC Berkeley's Botanical Gardens, just one example of his life as a volunteer. He recently received the William Penn Mott, Jr., Environmental Award for his volunteer work with the Wagner Ranch Nature Area, dating back to 1990. He is a founding member of the Mount Diablo Beekeepers Association, a group of local beekeepers who meet once a month. The group is dedicated to educating communities about honeybees and the historic art of beekeeping. A wealth of information is available at their website at www.diablobees.org.

Gentry's bees produce local varietal honeys that are heavenly, and if you ascribe to eating locally grown food, you can't get much closer to ground zero. If it's not too cold, he brings a demonstration hive to the Farmers' Market and is always eager to talk about them. Don't miss opening day on May 2. Bring your bee questions, buy some honey, and look forward to a tasty treat.

Additional information about native bees can be found at <http://nature.berkeley.edu>. (Don't insert www.) The site was developed through the bee laboratory of Dr. Gordon Frankie of UC Berkeley.



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SCHOOLS / STUDENTS

Orinda Academy Forms Mountain Biking Team

By ELAINE HESTER
Contributing Writer

Orinda Academy has a new addition to its athletics program: the Orinda Academy Mountain Bike Racing Team. The seven-member team was founded in December by Orinda resident, student and seasoned racer, Austin Roberts, with myself, an Orinda Academy faculty advisor.

Roberts, a junior at Orinda Academy, has raced successfully under Miramonte, and will be advancing to the varsity category this year. First-time racers Kristopher Rasicot of Lafayette, and Oakland racers Dylan Markus, Aubrey Love, Alex Brown, and Mac Phillips will compete at the junior varsity level. And Tai Infante of Danville, another new racer, who is the sole female on the team and the team's youngest member, will compete in the freshman/sophomore category. The Orinda Academy Mountain

Bike Racing Team welcomes Steve Fong and Tim Gott as they offer their years of coaching expertise to the newly formed team.

The team will race under the Northern California High School Mountain Bike Racing League Series, also known as Nor-Cal. The first competition as part of the 2009 NorCal High School Mountain Bike Series opens at Fort Ord. The series opener is held on a fun course featuring lots of single track over rolling hills in mountain biking's classic Fort Ord venue. Riders will complete multiple laps of a circuit that is approximately six miles per lap. There are about 500 riders from 35 schools expected at the series opener. Any and all fans or supporters from the community are welcome.

Contact Elaine Hester at Orinda Academy, 254-7553, ext. 306, for more information.

Miramonte Puts on Rockin' Version of Grease



SALLY HOGARTY

Miramonte students wowed audiences in mid-March with a dynamite production of the musical Grease. Shown above, the ensemble performs "Greased Lightning." Musical director Sarah Downs, choreographer Cassandra Montgomery, acting coach Clive Worsley, and band arranger Steve Benjamins worked with the talented cast.

Special Needs Summer Camp

Andrew Verducci has announced a special needs summer camp running June 29 - August 21. The camp, for ages 5 - 18, offers half-day camps for children ages 5 - 8 and full-day camps for youth aged 9 - 18. "We have a wonderful staff with more than 55 years combined experience working with special needs youth," says Verducci. You can contact Verducci by emailing info@edsupports.com or go to the website www.mpfitness4life.com.

◆ GALLERY from page 12

Carbone-2D, Deb Taylor-2D & 3D, Susan Lane-Photography; Orinda Academy - Noel Williams-All Categories; Athenian School - Karen Sanford-All Categories; Bentley School - Marilyn MacGregor-2D, Sue Anderson-3D & Photography; The College Preparatory School - Gretchen Garlinghouse-All Categories; Head Royce School - Michelle Avery-2D & 3D; Holden High School - Kristin Lamoureux-All Categories.

Join the OAC in welcoming and celebrating these teenage artists at the awards reception on Friday, April 10, or stop by the Orinda Library Gallery during normal library hours - Monday through Thursday 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.; Friday and Saturday 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. and Sunday 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. at 23 Orinda Way. For questions about the exhibit, go to www.orindaartscouncil.org.



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SCHOOLS / STUDENTS

◆ MOFD from page 5

about the possibility of separating medical and fire response teams.

One of the issues at the heart of the contribution disparity is the condition of Orinda's infrastructure compared to Moraga's. Moraga is a newer town, with wider and newer roads, newer pipes and easier access to high-flow hydrants. Orinda sits on more vertical terrain, with generally narrower roads, and because of its many neighborhoods that abut wildfire zones, require more sophisticated fire fighting apparatus, and the staff requires additional training.

A concern expressed by some at a recent meeting concerned the fact that MOFD is more expensive than other nearby districts. Nowicki points out that some areas are

covered by volunteer fire departments, or contract with ambulance services to provide transport.

"Those ambulances are nothing more than a van that holds a cot and some aspirin," said Jonathan Goodwin, a Lamorinda area fire abatement volunteer who attends most area meetings and advocates for keeping the departments united.

Nowicki agreed. He said that each MOFD response unit now has a paramedic on board, and all ambulances carry two. Adding that 58 percent of his emergency response teams are emergency medical technicians, Nowicki said the equipment now owned by MOFD is fully life-support sustainable, so they can keep people alive on the way to the hospital, rather than just transporting an injured or ill person.

◆ LETTERS from page 4

of the violation, and state law is crystal clear. This is shameful conduct by a city government in a town otherwise known for its public-spirited and educated citizens.

The *Contra Costa Times* recently did such an investigative report. It can be found online on that paper's site or by entering a search term "Edward Vogt and *Contra Costa Times*."

But rather than promptly granting the lot line adjustment (which had been approved 7-0 by the planning commission years ago), the city attorney and planning director now want me to start all over again and re-apply for a lot line adjustment. That's a fool's errand. The city council has all it needs to make its decision. The city council should review the judge's order and follow it immediately. The council and its (private law firm) city attorney should end this six-year outrage and pledge to obey the law in the future.

— Edward Vogt

Holden High School's New Transition Program



CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

Casey McCarroll and Christina Crede Mellin coordinate Holden's Transition Program.

Orinda's Holden High School has instituted a new program that integrates into the curriculum various life experiences. Coordinated by Casey McCarroll, the program seeks to help students transition into a new life after high school and, possibly, discover a career path for those still undecided. Areas of interest that current students have

expressed include part-time volunteer opportunities at a veterinarian's office, animal groomer, boarding kennel, photographer, graphic designer, filmmaker and restaurant. The program could also use some laptops. If you have volunteer opportunities available, contact McCarroll at 254-0199.

— Sally Hogarty, Editor

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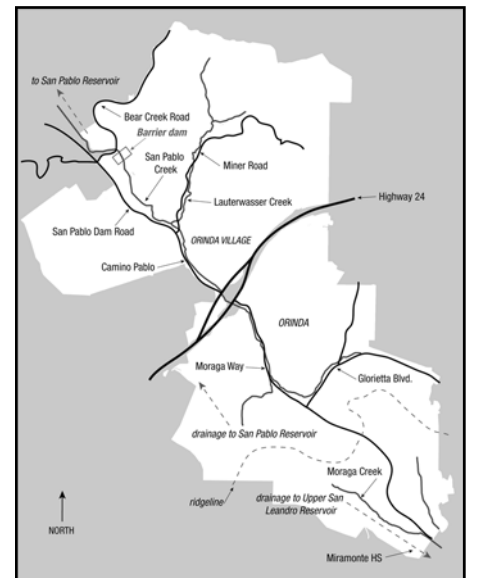
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◆ CREEKS from page 7

collected from a pool in Moraga Creek, next to Miramonte High School several years ago. Continued habitat improvement in Moraga Creek, as the FOC is doing with Del Rey Elementary School, will enhance trout populations in this watershed. When it comes to fish in the San Pablo Creek watershed, however, a 12-foot high dam just upstream of the Bear Creek Road crossing presents a barrier to rainbow trout that would normally migrate upstream from San Pablo Reservoir from around November through March to spawn in the upper reaches of San Pablo Creek. The dam was originally installed by EBMUD to capture debris and prevent it from entering San Pablo Reservoir. The dam has been damaged by floods over the past couple of decades and has not been utilized for its original purpose for even longer. The dam site is therefore a good candidate for a fish passage restoration project. If the barrier to upstream fish movement can be removed, either by direct removal or by the provision of a fish ladder or other mechanism, then rainbow trout runs could be restored into their original habitat in Orinda. Surveys in the early 1990's found hundreds of rainbow



ADRIANE BOSWORTH

This illustration shows the barrier in the upper left portion of San Pablo Creek.

trout spawning below the barrier dam each winter. If the dam were gone or adequate fish passage was provided, many of these trout would move upstream into Orinda as they did historically. FOC has asked EBMUD to evaluate these possibilities, but no significant progress or agreement has been forthcoming.

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CALENDAR

ON THE CALENDAR

APRIL

- 3 **First Friday Forum**, Prof. Glenn Robinson speaks on Israel and Palestine, 1:30 p.m., Lafayette-Orinda Presbyterian Church, 283-8722.
- 4 **Orinda Rotary's 60th Anniversary Gala Dinner Dance**, 6 p.m., Orinda Country Club. Music by Max Vax, an 18-piece big band. Public is invited. Event includes drawing for \$5,000 and new Prius. Call David Pierce for tickets, 253-5424.
Fountainhead Montessori School Open House, 10 a.m. to noon, 254-7110.
- 5 **WomenSing's Celestial Season Concert**, 4 p.m., Saint Mary's Chapel, 1928 Saint Mary's Road, Moraga. Tickets \$25 for reserved seating, \$20 general, \$18 seniors and students, and \$10 for youth 18 and under. Tickets at www.womensing.org, at the door, or by calling 925-974-9169.
Orinda Starlight Village Players auditions for the 2009 season, 4 p.m. at the amphitheater and Tuesday April 7 at 7 p.m. in the library. All are welcome. Shows include Agatha Christie's *Spider's Web*, Noel Coward's *Blithe Spirit* and a classic to be determined, 925-528-9225.
- 8 **Orinda Rotary**, opera performance, noon, Orinda Community Center, 254-2222.
- 9 **Annual Spring Egg Hunt**, sponsored by Orinda Rotary, 11 a.m., Community Center Park, 254-2222.
- 11 **Orinda Books**, Salma Arastu will discuss and sign copies of *The Lyrical Line*, a collection of her art and poetry, 1 p.m., 254-7606.
- 14 **Orinda Youth Association** Fall Soccer Registration. Girls and boys divisions for pre-school through 8th grades. Also 4/16 from 5-7 p.m. and 4/28 from 10 a.m. - noon at Community Center and 4/18 at Del Rey School, 10 a.m. to noon, Orinda Community Center. Season runs August through November, 253-4204.
- 15 **Orinda Rotary** discussion on surgical repair of cleft palates and lips, noon, Orinda Community Center. Dick Burkhalter and Becky Jenkins will discuss trip to Venezuela, 254-2222.
Orinda Academy Open House, 7 p.m., 254-7553.
- 17 **Montelindo Garden Club**, 9:30 a.m., speaker at 10:30 a.m., the Gardens of Heather Farms, 1540 Marchbanks Drive, Walnut Creek. (Address change for one time only.) Speaker is Brian the Orchid Guy, a KRON-TV regular guest on Henry's Garden program. Visit www.montelindogarden.com, or email montelindogarden@aol.com.
- 18 **Orinda in Action**, help with projects to beautify city, 8:30 - 9 a.m. register at Theatre Square, refreshments provided, email orindainaction@gmail.com.
- 19 **Wildlife Festival**. OUSD's Wagner Ranch Nature Area, fun activities and lots to explore, 1 - 4 p.m., email tjaeger@orinda.k12.ca.us
- 21 **Orinda Books**, Shawna Yang Ryan will discuss and sign copies of her new novel, *Water Ghosts*, 4 p.m., 254-7606.
- 22 **Orinda Rotary**, "What Do the Germans Think of the United States Today?" a discussion by Karsten Tietz, vice consul, Federal Republic of Germany, noon, Orinda Community Center, 254-2222.
- 23 **Orinda/Tabor Sister City Foundation**, 7 p.m. For location, 254-8260.
- 24 **Chamber of Commerce** Luncheon, Productivity coach Lee Ann Kleinfelter will speak on "Flying by the Seat of Your Pants - Is it Working for You?" Noon to 1:30 p.m., Orinda Country Club. Cost \$30. 254-3909.
- 25 **Wagner Ranch Elementary School Round-Up**, annual fundraiser, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Festivities, games and bouncing, 258-0016.
- 28 **Orinda Books** with Thrity Umrigar, author of *The Space Between Us*, discussing and signing copies of her new novel, *The Weight of Heaven*, 4 p.m., 254-7606.
- 29 **Wildfire Preparedness Seminar**, 7 p.m., Orinda Library Auditorium. Seating limited. Registration begins at 6:30 p.m. Call Jonathan Goodwin for reservations, 925-376-4668.
Orinda Rotary, Polio in India with slide show by Howard Robbins, noon, Orinda Community Center, 254-2222.

AT THE LIBRARY

All events are free unless otherwise specified.

Children's Events

- 1 **Paws to Read**, 3:30 p.m., with children in grades 1-5 reading to a friendly dog. Sign up at the library or call 254-2184. Repeats April 8, 15, 22.
- 7 **Peek-a-boo**, 11:30 a.m., with bounces, rhymes, and songs for pre-walkers (infants to 1-year-olds) and their caregivers. Those with older siblings are welcome to attend Toddler Lapsit. Repeats April 14, 21, 28.
- 14 **Toddler Lapsit**, 10 a.m., with stories, songs and finger plays for 1- to 3-year-olds and their caregivers. Drop in. Please attend no more than one Lapsit a week. Repeats at 10:30 a.m. Repeats April 15, 21, 22, 28, 29.
Fireside Chat, 7-8 p.m. "Confronting Napoleon," with George Hammond offering a sneak peak of their upcoming program, "Confronting Napoleon: European Culture at the Crossroads."
- 18 **Saturday Morning Live!** 11 a.m., family story time for 3- to 5 year-olds.
- 21 **Fireside Chat**, 7-8 p.m. "Natural Solutions to Allergies," with Dr. Jay Sordean discussing natural solutions to dealing with allergies.
- 29 **Berkeley Repertory Theatre Docent Talk**, 7-8 p.m. Discussion of production of *The Lieutenant of Inishmore* by Martin McDonagh.

For more information on library programs, call 254-2184.

MEETINGS:

CITY/FIRE/SCHOOL DISTRICT MEETING SCHEDULE

- Acalanes Union High School District, first and third Wednesdays, district office, 1212 Pleasant Hill Road, Lafayette, 7:30 p.m.
- City Council, first and third Tuesdays, 7 p.m., Library Auditorium, www.cityoforinda.org.
Historic Landmarks Committee, fourth Tuesday, 3 to 5 p.m., Library Garden Room, public is welcome, for information, call 925-788-7323.
- Friends of the Orinda Creeks, fourth Wednesday, 8:30 a.m., May Room, Orinda Library. Call 253-1997.
- Moraga-Orinda Fire District, third Wednesday, 7 p.m., Administration Building, 1280 Moraga Way, Moraga.
- Orinda Union School District Board of Trustees, OUSD Conference Room, 8 Altarinda Road, 4 p.m.
- Planning Commission, second and fourth Tuesdays, 7 p.m., Library Auditorium, 253-4210.
- Parks and Recreation Commission Second Wednesday, 7 p.m., Community Center, room 7, 254-2445.

CALENDAR BY CHRIS LAVIN

Send calendar items to chrislavin@earthlink.net

Wagner Ranch Round-Up on April 25



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Come on down and join in the fun at this year's **Wagner Ranch Round-Up** on Saturday, April 25, from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. There will be lots of delicious food, games, a cake walk, inflatable amusements, a bake sale, and much more.

Israel, Palestine Subject of Friday Forum

By BOBBIE DODSON
Staff Writer

"Israel and Palestine: Is it Too Late for Two States?" is the subject of Professor Glenn Robinson's presentation at First Friday Forum at 1:30 p.m. April 3, at the Lafayette-Orinda Presbyterian Church, 49 Knox Drive, Lafayette.

"All parties now agree that a two-state solution is the right formula for solving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. That is, there should be a Palestinian state created roughly equivalent to the 1967 borders in the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza Strip. However, nearly half a million Israelis have crossed the 'green line' and now live in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, making it extremely difficult for any Israeli government to withdraw from those occupied territories," Robinson says.

First Friday Forum is a monthly, free lecture featuring experts on current affairs.

Robinson continues, "The Palestinians, for their part, are weak and fragmented, and their leadership does not enjoy the legitimacy to strike a comprehensive deal. Does this combination of factors make a peace settlement impossible?"

This presentation will examine these issues and pose the question of whether the window of opportunity for a two-state solution has closed – and the consequences for everyone if it has.

Robinson, an expert on Middle East affairs and an award-winning teacher, serves as professor at the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey and affiliated faculty member at the Center for Middle East Studies at UC Berkeley. He has lived and studied in a number of countries and institutions in the Middle East: the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, the American University in Cairo, Yarmouk University in Jordan, and was a Fulbright scholar at the University of Jordan. He was an exchange student to Iran in 1978.

Professor Robinson has published three books and numerous articles on the Middle East and has undertaken USAID projects in Yemen, Jordan and the West-bank/Gaza. Robinson grew up in Lafayette, the son of Mardy and Ned Robinson. He received his doctorate from UC Berkeley in 1992.

Refreshments will be served at 1 p.m. For further information call 925-283-8722.

CLUB MEETINGS

- Diablo Star Chapter #214**, Order of the Eastern Star. Second Monday, 7:30 p.m., Orinda Masonic Center. Contact Karen Seaborn, 925-689-0995.
- Friends of Joaquin Moraga Adobe** meeting, April 13, 7:30 p.m. All interested in preservation of the landmark are invited to attend. For location, 254-8260.
- Lamorinda Sunrise Rotary**, Postino's in Lafayette, 7 a.m. every Friday, 254-0440, ext.463.
- Orinda Rotary**, Community Center, every Wednesday at noon, 254-2222.
- Orinda Association**, Orinda Library, May Room, second Monday, 7:30 p.m., 254-0800.
- Orinda Historical Society**, third Wednesday of the month, OHS Museum, 3 to 5 p.m., 254-1353.
- Orinda Job's Daughters**, first and third Monday, 7 p.m., 9 Altarinda Road, 925-283-7176.
- Orinda/Tabor (Czech Republic) Sister City Foundation**, Fourth Thursday of the month, 7 p.m. social, 7:30 p.m. meeting, call 254-8260 for location.
- Orinda Woman's Club**, Second Tuesday, 9:30 a.m. to noon; call Jean Barnhart, 254-3881.



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BUSINESS BUZZ

◆ BUZZ from page 20

was a graduate student at UC Berkeley. For the past seven years Lee offered tutoring in math, physics, chemistry, biology and writing to Orinda Intermediate School students. There was such a demand for his time that he hired additional tutors and added more subject areas to help meet the demand, and subsequently opened SmartLounge at a central Orinda Way location. Today, there are 10 tutors available.

"I have strict hiring standards and tell my students that high academic credentials do not always translate into that individual being a great teacher. Often high credentials mean that a person is an excellent researcher, which is a different skill set from teaching. We don't just look at a resume when we hire. The potential tutor must know middle school material and must be prepared to explain it at an in-depth level to our students," explains Lee, whose well-lit location at One Orinda way is informal, comfortable and conducive to learning.

While Lee points out that some of his students have struggled for a long time, at the same time he compliments them and encourages students to remain focused and realistic. "Many tutors out there teach the standardized tests, which really does not serve the growing student, who arrives at junior year in high school and suddenly wants to catch up on vocabulary. It does not work that way," adds Lee. "I feel like parents need to be careful of how they spend their educational dollars." As a result of this strong sentiment, Lee provides a delightful vocabulary building system on his web site, www.supremetutors.com. Click on Flash Cards for an effective vocabulary building exercise, which includes the word definition, as well as how the word is used and its connotation. "I thought this was a painless way of stretching one's vocabulary over time and of course the best way is to read literature and incorporate new words into your vocabulary routinely, over time," he adds.

Albert Lee is married to Jina Lee, a nurse practitioner at the Veteran's Hospital in Livermore. They are the proud parents of their 2-year-old daughter, Sophia.

SmartLounge is open all day Sunday and Monday through Thursday, 2 p.m. to 10:30 p.m. Group lessons of fewer than six students are \$35 and private one-hour individual lessons are \$65. Please contact Albert Lee for more information at 253-1996 or email him at albert@supremetutors.com. You may visit the web site, www.smartloungeorinda.com as well.

Jade Clinic Revitalizes

Native Lamorindans Laura Aguiar and Kristin Morganstern founded the Jade Acupuncture Clinic, at the Crossroads and upstairs at 43 Moraga Way. Lifelong friends beginning in kindergarten, both Aguiar and Morganstern studied acupuncture at Meiji College of Oriental Medicine, earning a master's of science degree in traditional Chinese medicine. Both women



(L-R) Kristin Morganstern, Laura Aguiar, and Gonzalo Villablanca of Jade Clinic.

are California licensed acupuncturists. The third member of Jade Clinic is Gonzalo Villablanca, who is trained and certified in Swedish massage, Shiatsu, lymphatic and deep tissue massage. Villablanca trained at the Swedish Massage Studio in Tulum, Mexico and became certified in California at the Acupressure Institute in Berkeley.

Step inside Jade Clinic and relaxation begins to set in once an herbal tea is chosen. This place is all about wellness. "Acupuncture is based on the concept that the human body knows how to heal itself. Twelve major meridians have been identified and each meridian intersects with major internal organs. Qi and blood flow through these meridians. With acupuncture, properly placed micro thin needles direct Qi flow and blood flow and by increasing blood flow, acupuncture helps the body heal itself more efficiently," explains Aguiar.

The State of California has its own acupuncture licensing board, which is regulated by the American Medical Association (AMA). The AMA also sets the standards for clinical hours required in order to obtain a license to practice. Acupuncture is considered a traditional Chinese medicine, the oldest documented medical system in the world. Considering acupuncture has been practiced by humans for more than 2,000 years, I put aside my (not entirely subconscious) fear of needles and accepted her invitation.

Aguiar and Morganstern use a Japanese needling technique, known for being gentle and virtually painless, which I found that to be exactly the case. In the first step, a thorough interview and health evaluation is conducted. In addition to providing treatment to increase general relaxation and stress management, acupuncture may be utilized to treat a variety of conditions including digestive problems, hormonal imbalances, low energy/chronic fatigue, headaches/migraines, allergies, sports injuries and a host of other physical ailments.

A thin, sterile needle, about the size of a human hair, is inserted into various acupuncture points. Anywhere from four to 20 needles may be used during a treatment. Needles are usually kept in for 20 to 30 minutes. As with any medical procedure, some risks are involved and patients must sign a release acknowledging the risks and

consent to treatment.

In this case, eight needles were used. I found the treatment extremely relaxing and enjoyed a feeling of general well-being both during and after the treatment. Many health insurance plans cover services at Jade Clinic.

An excellent combination treatment is acupuncture and then massage therapy with

Gonzalo Villablanca, CMT. "It is very complementary," says Villablanca, who trained and certified in Swedish massage, Shiatsu, lymphatic and deep tissue massage.

As soothing, nerve-calming music plays, Villablanca works on various muscle groups and one can literally feel the knots as he inches each one individually out of the muscle and ultimately out of the body as well. "I am very fortunate and happy. I found my destiny and enjoy what I do. Some people are not so lucky to find what they love to do," Villablanca explains. After a one-hour combination Swedish and lymphatic massage the patient will run, bike or swim faster and farther as a result.

Jade Clinic is a close-knit operation. In addition to Aguiar and Morganstern's lifelong friendship, Villablanca and Aguiar are married. The couple has a toddler. Speaking on the subject of working with his spouse, Villablanca says with a smile, "It is very good. She takes care of me and I take care of her." Let them start take care of you by calling for an appointment. For more information about Jade Clinic, please call Kristin, Laura or Gonzalo at 254-3148.

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Enchanting Planting

As the winter rains subside and we travel into glorious spring, attention wanders toward the state of the garden. With more hours of sunshine each day, families are finding themselves spending more time in their own back yards. Whether you are thinking of a complete design make-over or a creative infusion of fresh plantings, check out Orinda-based Enchanting Planting, owned and operated by Shari Bashin-Sullivan and Richard Sullivan.

This couple's garden design-and-build business handles all details from conceptual drawings in the design phase, including

computer modeling, to preparing the soil, installing irrigation, drainage, retaining walls and even low voltage lighting and outdoor kitchens.

"We spend a lot of time working on a strong theme for the garden, working up a design that incorporates the architecture of the client's home, as well as the particular client's lifestyle and personality," says Richard.

Both Shari and Richard come from a horticulture background. "We come at our work from that perspective, handling everything from a tiny 20 by 60 foot space to estate size gardens," says Shari, who was a Japanese studies major at UC Berkeley. She spent a junior year abroad studying and working with Japanese National Living

Treasure Kinsaku Nakane. "We restored long abandoned ancient gardens, working from design manuscripts that had been preserved but, of course, were written in ancient Japanese," explains Shari.

Richard, a native of Dublin, Ireland, is an encyclopedia of flora. He is extremely knowledgeable about which plantings work best in the multi-layers of climate zones we enjoy here in the Bay Area. Richard possesses a keen eye for design as he creatively melds recycled materials in order to create more texture and variation in the garden.

The couple met and immediately discovered each was giving a lecture on gardens the following week: He on gardens of

Ireland and she on gardens of Japan. The die was cast. Richard and Shari relocated to Orinda from Oakland 10 years ago and have a son, Brendan, who is a junior at Miramonte High School and a daughter, Lolo, a sixth grader at Orinda Intermediate School.

"Being mindful of the drought, it is important to incorporate low-water maintenance plantings. There are a wide variety of excellent selections such as olive trees, pacific coast irises, rosemary, manzanita, and succulents. We have even done a few gardens with artificial turf which works wonderfully for a children's play area. An example of this is at Redwood Day School in Oakland, which has artificial turf installed on its playground. It is a new generation of artificial turf," explains Richard. "We love to get unusual plants that people are not accustomed to seeing."

"Currently we are working with our neighbor, Eileen Fitz-Faulkner, on a mosaic sculpture for a client's garden. We enjoy working with our clients and local crafts people to get different art disciplines, such as ceramic art, installed in the garden. It adds dimension and more interest," explains Shari.

While Shari and Richard work collaboratively on design, they have 12 employees who are originally from Mexico, and have been with their firm for decades. "We provide three separate designs for a client to choose from. For example, some like a tailored garden, while others want it loose and don't want to see borders and boundaries. We provide a breakdown of costs such as drainage, paving and lighting, at the outset -- 90 percent of what we do is



Shari and Richard Sullivan of Enchanting Planting.

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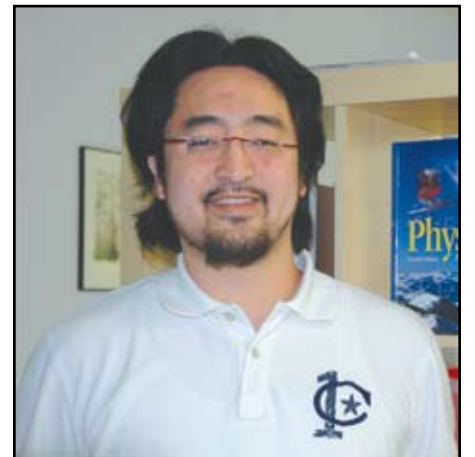
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Albert Lee of SmartLounge.

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all in-house. The advantage of Enchanting Planting is we are a one-stop design shop," adds Richard.

For more information about Enchanting Planting, please visit the web site at www.enchantingplanting.com or give Richard and Shari a call at 925-258-5500.

SmartLounge Opens In Orinda

In today's competitive academic world, parents and students alike who are striving to achieve the extra advantage should visit Albert Lee at SmartLounge, at 1 Orinda Way, Suite 5, near Hsiang's Restaurant.

Lee earned his bachelor's degree at Cal Tech and his master's of science in mechanical engineering at UC Berkeley. He originally established this enterprise as Supreme Educational Services while he

[SEE BUZZ page 19]

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