



# THE ORINDA NEWS

Gratis  
Volume 39, Number 5

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Issues Annually  
May 2024

## Residents Learn Ways to Deter Crime in Orinda at Town Hall Forum

By CHARLEEN EARLEY  
Editor-in-Chief  
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Dozens of concerned Orinda residents attended the Town Hall Forum on crime prevention, listening to a presentation and asking the five panel members about Orinda crime stats and safety issues.

Held April 18 at the Orinda Library Auditorium, the forum was hosted by The Orinda Association, where Co-President Chris Laszcz-Davis introduced Mayor Darlene Gee, City Manager David Biggs, Police Chief Ryan Sullivan, Sergeant Detective Anthony Rossi and Detective Daniel Marzilli.

Sullivan began with a PowerPoint presentation covering community outreach, statistics on crimes (against people, home and commercial properties and vehicles), license plate reader cameras, crime prevention, Neighborhood Watch, safety tips and more.

“If you see something suspicious, call immediately. We would like to at least go

out there and figure out what’s going on,” said Sullivan, referring to residents who are hesitant to make 9-1-1 calls.

He added that callers who are unsure about the emergency status of their situation should call the non-emergency line at 925.646.2441, because “it goes directly to the Sheriff’s dispatch office, and if you don’t know if it’s an emergency or not, they’ll know.”

### Crime Trends: Last Five Years

The presentation covered crime trends through the years 2019 – 2023. “In our property crimes, commercial and auto, the volume of crimes has basically been the same for the last five years,” said Sullivan.

Based on OPD’s statistics, 2020 had 76 arrests, 2021 had 66 arrests, 2022 had 164 arrests and 2023 had 151 arrests. Sullivan explained their theories for the significant uptick in arrests.

“The last two years, arrests are going way up, and we attribute that to more proactive policing, rather than reactive policing,” he

[SEE FORUM page 19]



### Miramonte Matadors Defeat Campolindo Cougars

Miramonte’s pitching phenom Abby Warren helps the Matadors take down the mighty Campolindo Cougars 24-7. See GAME ON sports column on page 16.

MARK BELL



JEFF HEYMAN

Police Chief Ryan Sullivan leads the discussion about crime prevention at the Town Hall Forum on April 18 at the Orinda Library Auditorium, with (L-R) Mayor Darlene Gee, City Manager David Biggs, Sergeant Detective Anthony Rossi and Detective Daniel Marzilli each adding information about crime stats, ways residents can protect their homes and property and more.

## The California FAIR Plan - Fire Insurance of Last Resort

By ALISON BURNS  
Staff Writer  
[alisonjburns@gmail.com](mailto:alisonjburns@gmail.com)

This month, *The Orinda News* begins a three-part series that explores the impact of wildfire threats on fire insurance options in California and in Orinda.

As many Orinda residents get notices their homeowner insurance policies will not be renewed by traditional insurance carriers, they are turning to the FAIR (Fair Access to Insurance Requirements) Plan. Part One of this series focuses on the FAIR Plan, which was originally conceived as a temporary safety net of last resort, but is now increasingly the only option for fire insurance in California.

Late one January evening, as Orinda resident Carol Bergren was about to turn in for the night, she noticed what appeared to be a hairline crack in the wall behind her bed. With growing fascination, Bergren watched as the gap slowly widened, the wall appeared to be moving and the air in her bedroom grew hazy.

In no time at all, smoke was pouring into the room and Bergren was dialing 911.

Within minutes, the full force of the Moraga Orinda Fire Department was at her house, fighting a two-alarm fire. She has nothing but high praise for the local fire department – they were professional, knowledgeable and remarkably kind.

As Bergren and her husband watched

[SEE INSURANCE page 2]

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FIRE INSURANCE / ROTARY EGG HUNT

◆ INSURANCE from page 1

flames – which ironically had nothing to do with wildfires – leap from their roof, their one small consolation was that they were insured.

Soon they would discover the limitations of their FAIR (Fair Access to Insurance Requirements) Plan – the only option available when Farmers Insurance Group had chosen not to renew their fire policy in 2022.

**The FAIR Plan**

Established in 1968 in response to the decade’s brush fires and riots, the California FAIR Plan was only ever intended to be a temporary safety net for high-risk areas until a traditional carrier became available.

The FAIR Plan is a group made up of all the insurers licensed to provide property/casualty insurance in the state. They are required to participate by law as a condition of doing business in California and share in the profits, losses and expenses of the Plan in direct proportion to their market share of their business in California. The plan is not a public entity and receives no taxpayer funding.

According to the Personal Insurance Federation of California, “The FAIR plan has historically insured approximately 123,000 policies. However, the number of homeowners in the FAIR Plan is rising in high fire risk areas, reaching 273,000 policies as of December 2022.

“For residents unable to find an admitted market policy, most likely those in the wildland urban interface (WUI), they will pay much higher premiums if forced to obtain coverage through the FAIR Plan. Allowing the FAIR Plan, ‘the expensive market of last resort,’ to grow too large can threaten the sustainability of the California admitted insurance market.”

**Proposition 103**

As well as the growing threat of wildfire in the state, Proposition 103, passed by voters in 1988, has added to the dire fire insurance situation in California, as it forces insurance companies to seek prior approval from the California Department of Insurance before raising premiums.

Although the intention of the law was to protect consumers from arbitrary rate hikes and to encourage a competitive marketplace, many insurers are citing it as a reason to drop out of the state, claiming that they can no longer be profitable if their rates are subject to the state insurance commissioner’s approval. They assert that California premiums have not kept up with the rate of inflation and the proposition has kept rates artificially low compared to other states.

**Increased Wildfires in California Impact Fire Insurance Options**

In 2017, after 9,560 California wildfires resulted in an unprecedented loss of life and property, followed by 8,527 equally destructive fires the following year, approximately 235,000 households suddenly found themselves with non-renewable policies – an increase of 42% over previous years.

A year ago, State Farm – California’s largest single provider of bundled home insurance policies – announced it would stop selling new policies in the state. This March the insurance giant decided not to renew 72,000 existing policies.

It has become increasingly difficult to find a traditional insurance carrier when so many companies are denying renewals or pulling out of California altogether.

Former Chief Deputy Commissioner for the California Department of Insurance, Orinda resident Joel Laucher, calls this “the most challenging insurance market”

**Rotary Egg Hunt**



JEFF HEYMAN

It was an exciting two minutes for many toddlers through second graders who gathered eggs at the Rotary Club of Orinda’s annual Spring Egg Hunt on March 30 at the Orinda Community Center Park. Kids with their parents enjoyed photos with the bunny, snacks and prizes.

he has seen in 40+ years as an underwriter, regulator and consumer advocate.

Although the California FAIR Plan Association admits that it is “the state’s insurer of last resort,” more and more homeowners are forced into the plan for lack of other alternatives.

At present, many insurance brokers and realtors warn against using the FAIR Plan. Its available timeframe and solvency are not guaranteed.

According to Independent Insurance Broker, Karl Susman, the Fair Plan Association currently has about \$300 billion in total exposure and \$200 million in the bank. A catastrophic event could wipe that out.

**One Homeowner’s Experience with the FAIR Plan Claims**

The Bergrens have found it exhausting to work with the California FAIR plan. Almost two months after the fire, the couple reported being “so disgusted, angry and discouraged that it’s hard to get through each day,” because the insurers were “slow to respond, slow to show up and have yet to come up with any financial relief.”

While the Bergrens acknowledge that insurance companies are notoriously slow to pay up, they spent almost \$100,000 in living expenses and clean-up in those first two months as they waited for a check that was continually promised “next week.”

“One end of our house is clearly destroyed,” Bergren said. “There are gaping

holes in the roof and laundry where the firefighters had to cut through, and tremendous water damage that warped the floors and flooded the basement.”

FAIR Plan adjustors advised the Bergrens to get rid of all mattresses, pillows, upholstered beds, couches and rugs – even their beloved 1941 Steinway piano. Despite being without gas, electricity, a kitchen or laundry, and with just one functional half-bath, the two seniors were told that they could live in the house. They chose instead to buy a used RV and park it on their front drive. It was over two months before a check arrived from the FAIR Plan to help cover the cost.

“It has been really hard to understand the poor communication, impossible ultimatums and complete disregard for our safety and living conditions from a company whose mission is to provide assistance to people in crisis,” said Bergren.

In March, Insurance Commissioner Richard Lara unveiled the first wave of his proposed regulatory reforms which he hopes to have in place by December 2024. Intended to address “decades-long neglected issues,” the reforms will require property insurers to adopt “catastrophic modeling” when calculating insurance rates, in the form of forward-looking risk from climate change, rather than basing them on previous trends.

“We can no longer look solely to the past as a guide to the future,” said Lara.

Coming Next: The impact of the insurance crisis on new home sales. ■

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THE ORINDA ASSOCIATION / CARTOON

A Message From the Co-President  
Ask the OA ... and We'll Try to Deliver

CHRIS LASZCZ-DAVIS  
president@orindaassociation.org



Let me offer up two thoughts ...  
Thought # 1: Charles Darwin said, "It is not the strongest of the species that survive, nor the most intelligent, but the one most responsive to change."

Thought # 2: When I got out of graduate school, I was convinced that leadership revolved around knowing what to do, how to do it and getting people on board. By the time I became a senior executive in a major global organization, my years in the saddle and range of experience (not to mention getting kicked in the butt every now and again) taught me the best leadership style combines a bottom-up and top-down approach.

In short, I found the organization's best ideas and operational know-how resided at the grassroots level. Senior management's role was to observe, listen, take the most robust grassroots ideas, refine them and repackage them for a "top-down initiative." Listening to our employees and stakeholders was the smartest, and at times, the most difficult thing to do. But the organization thrived when we understood the blueprint.

So how does that apply to The Orinda Association (OA)? As you know, the OA is a non-profit volunteer organization dedicated to maintaining and improving the quality of life in Orinda. We encourage dialogue amongst our Orinda residents on critical issues and help mobilize volunteer efforts to enhance the beauty, character and security of our lovely town.

The Orinda News, social media, July 4

Celebration, Classic Car Show and Seniors Around Town meet two of the three objectives very well – beauty and character. Our community has recently voiced concerns about security, so The OA listened and recently hosted a Town Hall on the third issue – security and crime prevention - to support existing security crime prevention efforts.

While Orinda is fortunate to have a superb police department, and community efforts and statistics that suggest we are a "safe town," it's important (especially with all the challenges the Bay Area faces societally) that our residents become keenly aware of opportunities to strengthen the police-community partnership to mitigate future crimes and near misses.

The OA, supported by the City of Orinda, and in concert with our police department, hosted a two-hour Town Hall Forum on "Crime Prevention – a Community Partnership" April 18, in the Library Auditorium.

While we are post-Town Hall at this time, the dialogue continues, so bring us your solutions and vision as to how we strengthen our families' and community's efforts to continue to enjoy the serenity this town is known for! Email us at president@orindaassociation.org.

Darwin cautioned us that "resilience" is at the heart of a species' survival. Let's explore ways Orinda can be more resilient! Let's connect, protect and thrive! ■

The Orinda Association

The Orinda Association is a not-for-profit 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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MY EXPERIENCE

# Our Mission Trip to Israel

By MICHAEL PEISER  
Contributing Writer  
rubiesq2048@gmail.com

My wife and I joined a Solidarity Mission to Israel in March from Temple Isaiah in Lafayette, led by our Rabbi Jill Perlman following the Oct. 7, 2023, terrorist attacks. We were in Israel for five days meeting with journalists, rabbis, professors and businesspeople, touring volunteer organizations and doing volunteer projects.

Our Mission motto was “Bring them home NOW.”

One of the towns we visited was Netiv Ha’Asarah, where we met Micah Shmilowitz. The following includes his account of the day of the attacks.

### The Morning of Oct 7

Micah Shmilowitz awakened early Sat-



MICHAEL PEISER

At the entrance of the Tel Aviv Museum of Art, in which the Museum staff created an empty dining table representing those who lost their lives on Oct. 7, 2023.

urday morning, Oct. 7, 2023, hearing automatic gunfire coming from an AK-47, widely used by Hamas. He gathered his family into the safe room in his home, constructed of reinforced concrete and steel and designed as a bomb shelter. He grabbed his automatic pistol and realized that his neighbors were being shot. His Moshav (town) sits literally on the Gaza border in Southern Israel.

Three Hamas hang gliders sailed over the walls separating Gaza from Israel carrying automatic weapons and explosives. Shmilowitz and his neighbors killed two terrorists, but not before 20 neighbors were slaughtered, including an 80-year-old grandmother shot in a community bomb shelter at point-blank range with an AK-47. I saw the spot where she was killed. It was unforgettable. Shmilowitz’s family and many neighbors relocated from the Gaza strip in 2005 when Israel turned it over to the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). Hamas and the PLO fought for control of Gaza, with Hamas prevailing in the election and the bloody fighting. Shmilowitz told us his neighbors hired the Gazans to work nearby and paid them far more than they could have earned in Gaza. I asked him, “What now?”

His answer was anguished: “How can I trust my neighbors from Gaza again?”

### The Site of the Music Festival

That same day we visited the gut-wrenching site of the Nova Music Festival near Gaza. Almost 364 young festival patrons were murdered, tortured and raped, and another 40 were kidnapped and brought to Gaza as hostages.

We met a 20-year-old concert survivor who recounted the sounds of automatic



MICHAEL PEISER

The site of the Nova Music Festival where 364 young Israelis were kidnapped, raped and murdered by Hama terrorists.

weapons and people screaming. The festival site now displays photos of the murdered and kidnapped victims. Our group recited Kaddish for the murdered and “lit memorial candles to honor our commitment to not forget” per Rabbi Perlman.

### Demonstrations to Bring Hostages Home

We visited Hostage Square in Tel Aviv, where the main hostage demonstrations take place to “BRING THEM HOME.”

One memorable display was a massive, empty table with photos of the hostages at each place setting. We also met with evacuees who were still in a state of shock. The Israel government relocated over 200,000 people away from Israel’s borders with Lebanon, Syria and around the Gaza Strip. The evacuee mothers were most concerned about keeping their

families and communities together while in transition, including schooling for their children.

### Our History and Why We Went

Why did we join this Mission to Israel? My mother was born in Kassel, Germany, in the late 1920s. My family prospered until the mid-1930s when the Nazi’s began adopting discriminatory laws against the Jews.

My grandfather, Max, announced in 1936 that his immediate family was relocating to the U.S. However, many family members stayed in Germany thinking that the “political winds” would change. Surely, Hitler was not serious! Many family members were later sent to concentration camps and perished. A few survived and finally immigrated to the United

[SEE MISSION page 5]

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STUDENTS

# Miramonte's Alice Zhou Honored for Closing Financial Literacy Gaps

By CHARLEY MATTHEWS  
Staff Writer  
charley.matthews2008@gmail.com

Alice Zhou, a junior at Miramonte High School, was awarded the Youth Hall of Fame Award for founding Finclusion, an impact investment education nonprofit, during the 30th Annual César E. Chávez Commemorative Celebration on March 26 in Martinez.

Finclusion offers fellowships, courses and competitions to high school students. Its mission is to equip individuals with the skills and knowledge to contribute to positive global change through socially responsible investment initiatives.

Zhou's fellowship programs offer low-income students economic mobility through cash grants that high schoolers can invest in a stock of their choice.

Just 14 years old, Zhou began outreach to schools in hopes of partnering. While many declined, she didn't take "no" for an answer.

With the help of a passionate team she built, Zhou secured partnerships with T1 high schools – schools that are eligible to receive funding from the Department of Education – because they are located in underserved areas.

Zhou's mother, Jessie Zhou, said her daughter had done everything on her own.

"From navigating the process of filing for Finclusion's 501(c)(3) status to obtaining grant funding for Finclusion's various programs," she said. "I am proud to see her take on new challenges every day to serve students nationwide."

Today, more than 326 students have



MICHELLE ZHOU  
Alice Zhou was recognized by the Contra Costa County's Board of Supervisors with the Innovation and Empowerment Youth Hall of Fame Award on March 26 at the Annual César E. Chávez Commemorative Celebration.

completed Finclusion's online courses that teach Foundations of Investing, Stocks and Bonds, Investment Strategies, Financial Statements and Advanced Portfolio Management.

Finclusion now has 13 promising partnerships and staff from England, India, Canada, Hong Kong, and Australia, as well as Texas, Arizona, Florida, North Carolina,

New York, Connecticut, Kentucky and more.

Zhou looks forward to continuing to lead and scale the organization while she pursues a career in asset management.

Concurrently, the young inventor was awarded for her work at the César E. Chávez Celebration.

The annual event recognizes Chávez's commitment to advocacy for labor rights with youth awards, performances and speakers.

Deputy Chief of Staff for county Supervisor, Ken Carlson, and a committee planner for the event, Lia Bristol, looked over more

than 50 nominations.

Bristol said Zhou's nomination stood out.

"When we read Alice Zhou's nomination and learned about the non-profit she founded, we knew we had to recognize her in a way that hasn't been done before," said Bristol. "We created a new category this year to honor Alice and others who will come after her."

Zhou was awarded in the "Innovation and Empowerment" category and talks about her goals to continue Chavez's legacy.

"This award motivates me to continue serving and inspiring students within my community to change the landscape of access to financial literacy education."

For more information about impact investing, visit Finclusion at finclusionall.org or contact Zhou at alice@finclusionlearn.org. To nominate someone for next year's award ceremony, go to contracosta.ca.gov. ■



The Orinda News begins a "My Experience" feature in which readers are invited to submit for publication, their firsthand accounts of unique, impactful experiences. Send 500 words (max) inquiries to editor@theorindanews.com for consideration.

◆ MISSION from page 4

States.

We lost six million Jews in the Holocaust, including one-and-a-half million children. On Oct. 7, 2023, Hamas terrorists murdered 1,163 mostly young or defenseless Israelis, including 30 Americans. Another 240 Israelis, including children, were abducted

(some have been released).

If the U.S. were attacked by terrorists losing the equivalent percentage of our population, over 40,000 people, what would we have done? This day was the worst for Jews since the Holocaust! "Never Again" was why we went to Israel. ■

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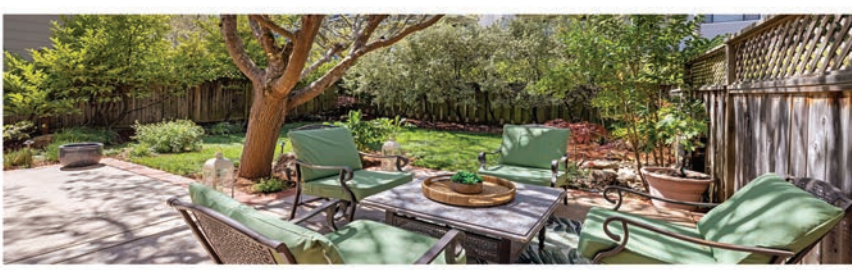


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OBITUARY / POLICE / EDITORIAL

# Jack Ray Bontemps

## May 25, 1938 – Feb. 27, 2024

Longtime Orinda resident and community benefactor, Jack Ray Bontemps, passed away on Feb. 27 after a lengthy battle with Alzheimer’s disease. He was 85.

Jack was born on May 25, 1938, in Seattle, WA, to Ray J. Bontemps and Ruth L. Bontemps (née Grant). During his youth, he lived throughout the Northwest, attending the University of Washington and obtaining a bachelor’s of science in chemical engineering.

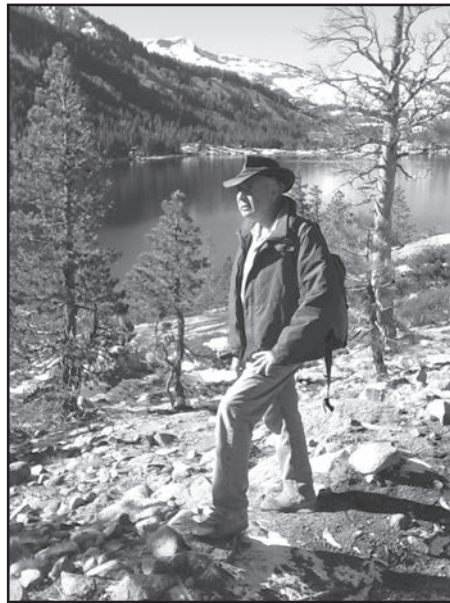
He was recruited by Standard Oil of California (Chevron) in 1961 and moved his young family to the San Francisco Bay Area, where he spent his career in a variety of executive positions in manufacturing, facilities planning, recruitment, IT and supply logistics.

An active community member, Jack volunteered with many local organizations, serving on the board of the Mount Diablo Silverado Council of the Boy Scouts of America, as a member of the Dad’s Club for local Scout Troops 204 and 237 and as a leader of Orinda’s Cub Scout Pack 52.

He served as president of the Orinda Parks and Recreation Foundation and was instrumental in helping establish the 12-acre Orinda Oaks Park and the 110-acre Orinda Open Space Preserve. As President of the Rotary Club of Orinda, Jack led the effort to bring much-needed lights to the Wilder Playfields, enabling local teams a greater opportunity to play recreational sports.

He also participated on the Advisory Board for the Lawrence Hall of Science and was elected to serve from 2006-2010 on the Board of Directors for the Orinda Union School District.

Jack loved jazz and was an accomplished saxophone player, establishing his own bands in high school and college, where he played for school dances and fraternity



COURTESY OF BONTEMPS FAMILY

Jack Ray Bontemps passed away on Feb. 27, 2024. Beloved and devoted husband, father and grandfather, he contributed to the Orinda community in countless ways.

socials. He was an avid tennis player as well as an outdoorsman who loved spending his spare time hiking the Sierras or enjoying the north coast and the beautiful home he built at The Sea Ranch.

Family and friends loved his quick wit, his positive outlook, his debonair style and, above all, his willingness to lend a hand when needed. He was a man of great faith and integrity, and he loved his family fiercely.

He is survived by his beloved wife and partner of 43 years, Barbara; three sons of whom he was immensely proud: Doug Bontemps (Stephanie) of Lafayette, Todd Bontemps of Pleasanton; Jackson Evan Bontemps (Anna) of Oakland; and by his treasured grandchildren: Andrew Bontemps (Alena) of Denver, CO, Greg Bontemps (Claudia)

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5A Rent-A-Space	20	Zamboni’s Pizza Company 5
Algar Home Remodel & Repair	22	<b>Retail</b>
Alice Home Care	10	Angelica Wolfe Book 16
		McCaulou’s 19

of Emeryville, Sondrine Bontemps of New York, NY and Austin Bontemps of Minneapolis, MN.

A Celebration of Life will be held on May 11. For information email

jackbontempscelebration@gmail.com. Gifts in Memoriam can be made to The Rotary Club of Orinda Endowment Fund, P.O. Box 44, Orinda, CA, 94563 or Alzheimer’s Association of Northern CA. ■

## Letters to the Editor

### OUSD Social Media Lawsuit is a Mistake

In The Orinda News (April 2024) an article states that the Orinda Union School District “makes students’ mental health a priority” by deciding to join a to-be-filed lawsuit against social media companies, seeking damages on the theory that such companies cause mental health harm to students, which the District spent money to address.

The causation premise has been persuasively disputed by Candice Odgers in Nature. <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-024-00902-2>. And in the same edition of The Orinda News, an article asserted “the harmful impact that grade culture has on teenage mental health.”

Filing a lawsuit like this exposes parents and students to disclosure of their emails and to examination of the mental health of students. The “grade culture” article identi-

fies possible defense witnesses to prove an alternative cause.

Is the school district a victim or is it a contributor to the problem, by its incessant insistence that its students are oppressors based on their skin color, and by its celebration of gender dysphoria?

Lack of personal responsibility and failure to limit screen time is a defense. It is time for people to accept personal responsibility and to stop blaming others, and to stop blaming systems and institutions.

The District should not expose parents and students to intrusive examination of students’ mental health in the hope of “financial gain” to the District.

Three things can be true: social media should change; this lawsuit should not be filed; and many things affect students’ mental health.

- Nick Waranoff  
[SEE LETTERS page 7]



## POLICE BLOTTER

March 17 through April 16

### Calls for Service

- Accident, Property Damage: 1
- Burglary, Auto: 2: Bates Blvd., Theatre Sq.
- Burglary, Residential: 2: Miner Rd., Martha Rd.
- Death, Non-Criminal: 2
- Grand Theft, Vehicle Parts: 1: Irwin Way
- Hit & Run Misdemeanor: 1
- Identity Theft: 2
- Medical Hospital: 1
- Property Found: 1

- Shoplifting: 5
- Stolen Vehicle: 1
- Theft: 2
- Vandalism: 2

### Arrests

- Drugs, Possession of Dangerous: 1
- Probation Violation: 2
- Warrant Arrest: 2

- Compiled by David Dierks  
Assistant Editor

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Letters to the Editor are printed on a space-available basis and should be no longer than 250 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, or email to [editor@theorindanews.com](mailto:editor@theorindanews.com). The next deadline to receive Letters to the Editor is May 8.

For advertising rates, contact Carson Cordova at 650.646.1357 ([carson@theorindanews.com](mailto:carson@theorindanews.com)), Kathy Enzerink at 252.626.2109 ([kathy@theorindanews.com](mailto:kathy@theorindanews.com)) or Jill Gelster at 925.528.9225 ([jill@aspenconsult.net](mailto:jill@aspenconsult.net)). The deadline for the June issue is May 8.

CAR TIME

CAR TIME

General Motors Caught Selling Driving Data to Insurance Companies

XAVIER ESTRADA  
xavier.estrada.freelance@gmail.com



General Motors' (GM) OnStar Smart Driver feature is advertised as giving insights on how one can become a safer driver. But it was not fully disclosed that this feature hands your driving information to a data broker who sells it to LexisNexis and Verisk -- data analytics companies that happen to have a risk and solutions divisions.

These analytics businesses then supply this information to insurance companies.

In early March, The New York Times published an article about this issue. An owner of a Cadillac XT6 was stunned to find his insurance rate had increased by over 20%. The owner was unsuccessful in finding a better quote elsewhere, as his information had been already widely shared. When questioning the reason for the rate increase, an insurance agent told him his LexisNexis report was a variable.

The owner of the Cadillac XT6 reached out to LexisNexis and requested his report, which it must do under the Fair Credit Reporting Act. The 258-page "consumer disclosure report" was sent to the owner and completely shocked him.

The report had information about his driving, including his speed, how hard he braked and how fast he accelerated. LexisNexis described this as its way of analyzing driver data to formulate a risk score. This score is used to personalize an individual's insurance coverage. About eight insurance companies requested this individual's driving information a month prior to him finding out, as told by the spokesman for LexisNexis.

This isn't the first time insurance companies had access to driving data. In the past, incentives were advertised to "help" drivers lower their insurance premiums by installing a dongle to their OBDII (On Board Diagnostic II) to collect safe driving data.

Progressive Insurance advertised this as its "snapshot" savings. But the company could also use the information to raise premiums if unsafe driving behavior was detected instead.

Insurance companies are now obtaining driving data without direct consent through internet connected vehicles -- ranging across multiple brands.

Many of these vehicles are connected by way of a brand's built-in application program, in GM's instance their OnStar Smart Driver feature. These are primarily optional features that give driver feedback based on their telemetry. On the surface, it does not seem to have any ties with insurance companies, but that data is sold to the analytics companies. It's similar to accepting website marketing cookies that track activities and history to sell an individual's information.

Some GM owners stated they do not recall signing up for the OnStar Smart Driver and discovered their dealership signed them up without their consent. It was also found that dealers were paid bonuses for signing up customers. Since news broke out, a spokesperson for GM has stated OnStar Smart Driver data is no longer being shared with LexisNexis or Verisk.

In this modern world, privacy is a blurred line, unfortunately found in the fine print. ■

◆ LETTERS from page 6

Orinda Discriminates Against Some of its Citizens

The City of Orinda is non-inclusive and discriminates against some of its citizens. That is because Orinda labels some roads "private" that are not private.

The definition of private is: the use for one particular person or groups of people only, exclusive, non-public, restricted. None of these words apply to Orinda's private roads.

Since 1968, I have been a responsible tax-paying citizen. Part of my taxes go to repair Orinda roads. However, only people who own homes on misnomered "private" roads must pay for those roads. Over time, I have paid \$21,000 for my "private" road repair and repaving; a road that

anyone has the right to use.

Why must I pay more to live in Orinda than my neighbor across the street? I believe that is what the phrase "discriminated against" means.

The recycle truck firms repay a percentage of monies to the city for use of its streets. Private roads get none of the refunds for heavy truck damages. Again, we are discriminated against.

I ended my 31-year teaching career with 22 years in the Orinda Union School District. Our schools teach inclusion and non-discrimination.

Now is the moment the current City Council corrects the ills of their predecessors. Vote to drop the word "private" from selected roads. Assume the same responsibility for all Orinda roads. Only then will we finally be included and not discriminated against.

- Lois Daulman

News Briefs – Orinda Around Town

Native Plants of the Bay Area

May 11, 11:30 a.m.  
Orinda Library Gallery Room  
26 Orinda Way

Growing native plants is a great way to help the environment, but what can we do after they grow? Cook with them of course. Come learn about native plants and how to cook with them. Attendees will receive a free Native Plant Cooking Kit while supplies last.

26 Orinda Way  
925.254.2184

Explore San Francisco's long-standing tradition of self-expression through fashion. Docent Maureen Murray Fox gives a presentation on the de Young Museum's extensive costume collection, showcasing designs from French courtiers, Japanese avant-garde designers and other pillars of the fashion industry, including Christian Dior, Alexander McQueen, Christopher John Rogers, Comme De Garcons and Rodart. Seating is available on a first come first serve basis. Sponsored by Friends of the Orinda Library.

Fashioning San Francisco: A Century of Style

May 23, 2 – 3 p.m.  
Orinda Library Auditorium

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FIRST FRIDAY FORUM

# Forum: Opening Doors to a Wider World for Incarcerated Students

By Alison Burns  
Staff Writer  
alisonjburns@gmail.com

The First Friday Forum speaker series, sponsored by the Lafayette-Orinda Presbyterian Church (LOPC), continues with a presentation from Dr. Laura Beth Nielsen, professor of sociology and director of the Center for Legal Studies at Northwestern University.

Her May 3 lecture, “Northwestern University’s Prison Education Program,” will describe the path to a university education for men and women currently serving time in prison.

For many decades, all across the country, elite universities have endeavored to provide incarcerated people with access to the kind of high-quality education that would empower them and, consequently, reduce recidivism.

Under this standard model, students in jails and prisons have been able to earn course credits that can be applied to degrees from partner institutions. The downside, however, has generally been that most of the country’s top schools stop short of directly conferring their own degrees on these students.

But that all changed last November, when 20 students – all “lifers” – made history by becoming the first cohort of incarcerated students to graduate with a solid bachelor’s degree. The launch of this program, conferred through Northwestern University’s School of Professional Studies, represents a milestone for prison education programs at elite institutions, and a significant step toward greater equity in higher education.

The Northwestern Prison Education Program (NPEP) is the only bachelor’s degree program in the United States offered to incarcerated students by a top 10



NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY

Graduation caps fly into the air as 20 incarcerated students make history at the country’s first top 10 university to award bachelor degrees to incarcerated students. Lamorinda native, Dr. Laura Beth Nielsen will be speaking about Northwestern’s Prison Education Program at the First Friday Forum speaker series on Friday, May 3.

university. As the architects of the program see it, by expanding access to college-level courses toward what they consider the “systematically disadvantaged population,” their updated program will open doors to a wider world and a “transformation through education.”

“Universities have a moral obligation to make this a more just society,” said Dr.

Jennifer Lackey, the university’s Wayne & Elizabeth Jones professor of philosophy, and founder of the Northwestern Prison Education Program. “And none is better placed to do this than a world-class institution like Northwestern.”

According to the university, anyone equipped with the necessary tools to succeed through prison education programs

has an increased ability to break the cycle of poverty and incarceration and lead a fuller life.

Data shows that while the overall recidivism rate for incarcerated people is about 67%, it drops to 14% for those who earn associate degrees, and even further for higher degrees – to 5.6% for those who

[SEE FRIDAY page 10]

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MHS '98

4 GENERATIONS IN ORINDA



BUSINESS BUZZ

# College Planning Business Focuses On Student-Centered Philosophy

BY Tristan Shaughnessy  
Staff Writer  
tristan.c.shaughnessy@gmail.com

Last October, Advantage College Planning – a college consulting company with more than 15 years of experience and locations across the East Coast – opened its first California branch. The new team, led by Orindan Sunny Grewal, has a mission: guide students through the increasingly competitive college application process without sacrificing personal growth.

Over the past few years, the number of first-year students applying to college has risen dramatically. Across the University of California (UC) system’s nine campuses, there was an uptick in applicants from 2020 to 2021 – from around 170,000 to more than 200,000 – a trend that has continued into 2023.

According to Common App (an undergraduate college admission application used to apply to over 1,000 member colleges and universities) data published in March, there has been a seven percent increase in applications nationwide this year.

These developments are noteworthy because as the number of college applications rises, acceptance rates tend to fall. At UC Berkeley and UC Los Angeles, two of California’s flagship schools, the relationship is clear.

In 2019, the colleges accepted around 16% and 12% of first-year students, respectively. By 2023, with thousands of new applications flooding in, those numbers dropped to less than 12% and 9%.

Despite the evolving landscape, for Grewal and his team, their outlook on college consulting remains the same – the student comes first.

“Instead of focusing on what UC Berkeley or what UCLA wants, why don’t we



JEFF HEYMAN

Sunny Grewal (right), owner of Advantage College Planning East Bay, and Cole Filipek, one of the team’s consultants, are finishing up the 2023-2024 college admission cycle and are already gearing up for next year.

focus on what the student wants? Why not find ways to empower and also to challenge them, so they get a better sense of who they are,” said Grewal.

Grewal, who had worked in the healthcare industry for more than a decade before starting Advantage College Planning’s East Bay branch, was inspired to make the pivot to college counseling after working on projects related to mental health. Observ-

ing how much stress teenagers attribute to college admissions, he thought there had to be a way to help students successfully navigate the process while not forgoing their personal well-being, hence his team’s emphasis on self-discovery.

The self-discovery process, Grewal explained, involves setting age-appropriate goals. If his team is working with a freshman, their emphasis is helping the

student adapt to high school, create good study habits and explore extracurricular interests.

For sophomores, it’s about having them keep up with tougher course loads, understand the SAT and ACT, and make the most of their summers. Only by junior and senior years do discussions finally pivot to choosing colleges and preparing applications.

One of the company’s consultants, Cole Filipek, who was a private-college counselor for nine years before joining Advantage College Planning, further elaborated on why helping students pursue their passions is the surest way of guiding them toward the right college decision.

“Just doing things for the sake of college doesn’t help students get into college,” he said. “What they need to do [are] activities they love. Then they will be able to talk about them with joy and exuberance and write about those experiences. That’s what colleges want, and that’s what I want – I want my students to be happy.”

Beyond one-on-one sessions, Advantage College Planning’s East Bay team has also been sharing their insights via free webinars and in-person community events, such as career panels that expose students to different post-graduation opportunities.

Currently, the group offers both virtual consultations and in-person appointments at its Moraga and Walnut Creek offices. To learn more about their services, visit [advcp.com/eastbay](http://advcp.com/eastbay).

“For me this has been the best job I’ve had,” Grewal noted, reflecting on the work he and his team have done over the past year. “When you talk to a parent and that parent tells you that your consultant has changed their daughter’s study habits, or that your consultant is part of their son’s decision support, that is what fills our cup.” ■

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LIVE AT THE ORINDA!

# Delve into the World of Kurt Weill with Vocalist Vladimir Kornéev

By SALLY HOGARTY  
Staff Writer  
sallyhogarty@gmail.com

Live at the Orinda! closes its concert season with a journey into the remarkable world of Kurt Weill and his love story with the legendary Lotte Lenya. The journey, courtesy of the consummate acting and singing talents of Vladimir Kornéev, takes place May 19 at 5 p.m.

Kornéev will share anecdotes from Weill's life in Berlin, Paris and New York, while interpreting the composer's diverse repertoire, including songs from "The Threepenny Opera." A special addition includes French chansons by Weill, in particular the iconic "Youkali" (idyllic island), composed during Weill's exile from Germany during the Nazi Regime.

"I decided to call my Kurt Weill concert 'Youkali' for very personal reasons," said Kornéev. "When I was five years old, my parents and I were forced to leave my home country, Georgia, because of war. When we arrived at the refugee camp in Berlin, the only things my mother brought were some clothes, photos, two candlestick holders my father gave her on her wedding day and a small oil painting showing a little sailboat floating off the coast of Georgia. We leaned the painting against our mattress and later took it with us to the various refugee centers in Augsburg, a little town next to Munich."

Kornéev remembers the painting vividly



ELENA ZAUCKE

Vladimir Kornéev brings his Kurt Weill concert "Youkali" to Orinda for the final concert in the Live at Orinda! season. Scheduled for May 15, the concert includes many of Weill's songs, as well as stories of his legendary love story with actress/singer Lotte Lenya.

as the family moved from place to place looking for safety.

"Until this day, I remember how I would sit in the kitchen while my mother cooked Georgian Kchinkali, these huge, tasty, Georgian dumplings, and I would look at the painting and daydream of myself on that little sailboat floating along the beautiful coast of Georgia. A peaceful coast where I could forget the violence and fear for my life I experienced as a child," recalled Kornéev.

The painting, which today sits in his home in Berlin, became the young Kornéev's "personal island" until music and acting turned into his "youkali."

Trained at the prestigious Bavarian State University of Theatre and Music in Munich, the versatile performer brings the richness of the European chanson to Orinda. The French art song, originally from the Middle Ages, is a highly sophisticated art form often dealing with courtly love.

"I find great satisfaction performing repertoire that allows ample room and freedom to experiment on stage, and I especially derive pleasure from the artistic liberty I feel when I delve into chanson repertoire," said Kornéev. "I focus on narrating the stories within the songs just as an actor delivers a monologue, employing various rhythms and volume levels to authentically embody the role or situation being portrayed. This demand for vocal flexibility in sound and color and devotion to the text and scene is what truly excites me about singing, and it is a huge pleasure to share this experience with my audience."

Kornéev travels around the world sharing such experiences in sought-after concerts and producing numerous albums as he effortlessly performs vocal gymnastics. At his first concert in 2022 in North America, he was lauded by the Canadian press as "one of the greatest voices of Europe."

In addition to his singing career, Kornéev has made his mark as a television and movie actor. In 2022, he portrayed the Russian Tzar Alexander Romanov II in the Netflix

series "The Empress," which won the 2023 International Emmy Award for Best International Series.

He's also worked with Oscar winner and "La La Land" director Damien Chazelle as the lead in Chazelle's short film "Life is the Greatest Odyssey."

"I am deeply passionate about both filming and singing, and I have never been willing to choose between the two," said Kornéev.

At his Orinda concert, Kornéev will blend his many talents together for a special evening of music. In addition to performing works by Kurt Weill, Kornéev will include classics such as "Speak Low," "Lonely House," and a Bossa Nova rendition of "September Song."

He will also include a little-known song by Weill, arranged during Weill's visit to Palestine at the conclusion of World War II, entitled "Ba'a M'nucha" (Peace Will Come), a song full of relevance for our current time. Kornéev, who has also done specials on Edith Piaf, may include some of Piaf's work at the conclusion of the concert.

Accompanying him for the evening will be Montreal pianist Stephane Aubin.

"His exceptional talent allows him to effortlessly recreate the diverse range of sounds one would typically associate with a full orchestra," Kornéev said.

Live at the Orinda! is a concert series featuring world-class performers from around the globe in specially curated musical evenings at the iconic Orinda Theatre.

Vladimir Kornéev performs May 19 at 5 p.m. at the Orinda Theatre, 4 Orinda Theatre Square, Orinda. For tickets and additional information, call 925.254.9060 or go to [orindamovies.com](http://orindamovies.com). ■

◆ FRIDAY from page 8

earn bachelor's degrees and zero percent for those who earn master's degrees.

Nielsen agrees with Lackey's assertion that education has a unique power to transform people's lives for the better and said, "Nobody should be forever reduced to the worst moment of their life. My students are amazing people living in squalid conditions and they still do all their homework."

This month's First Friday Forum takes place at 1:30 p.m. on May 3 in the sanctuary of the Lafayette-Orinda Presbyterian Church at 49 Knox Drive, Lafayette. Contact [lopc.org/first-friday-forum/](http://lopc.org/first-friday-forum/) to sign up for in-person attendance, to register to stream Zoom or to enjoy previous presentations. ■

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PERFORMING ARTS

# Cal Shakes Celebrates 50th Anniversary and Change of Programming

By ANDREA MADISON  
Staff Writer  
drea.madison.05@gmail.com

For Orinda's California Shakespeare Theater, this year marks both its 50th anniversary and a reorganization of its operation.

"We are reimagining ourselves from being purely an organization that produces theater, and other classical theater pieces, to being a multidisciplinary performing arts and cultural center," said Cal Shakes Executive Director Clive Worsely.

The theater's roots date back to 1974, initially forming as the Berkeley Shakespeare Festival, performing at churches in Emeryville and Berkeley and eventually taking up residence at John Hinkel Park in Berkeley and remaining there through the 1980s. A capital campaign for a new facility started in the '80s.

"We were filling it every weekend," said Worsely, of those early days in the park.

The organization began to overwhelm the parking and facilities available with its events and summer camps, breaking ground in its current location in the Siesta Valley area in 1989.

The Bruns amphitheater opened in 1991, and in the early 2000s another capital campaign raised funds for a renovation that included the Sharon Simpson Center. The center offered an updated café, offices, public restrooms, actor dressing rooms, storage and technical facilities.

"Most of our history, at this point, is here in Orinda," said Worsely, emphasizing the unique experiences and effects offered by the outdoor stage and its surroundings, such as the howling of coyotes and fog rolling in.

Award-winning actors that have appeared on the Cal Shakes stage include Mahershala Ali, Annette Bening, Colman Domingo and Zendaya, who honed her craft through Cal Shakes's educational programs as a child.

While Cal Shakes will produce fewer theatrical productions moving forward, the organization looks forward to hosting other art forms, such as dance, comedy, family programming and a variety of live music. Civic, corporate and private events will also have a home at Cal Shakes.

The organization has been experimenting with alternate uses for its facilities and stage for a number of years, said Worsely, with the first live music event hitting the Bruns stage back in 2014.

The restrictions on indoor performances during COVID-19, coupled with difficulties faced by Cal Shakes when it came to producing its own work, led to an opening



CRAIG ISAACS

Musician Michael Franti played onstage at California Shakespeare Theater's Bruns Memorial Amphitheater on Oct. 6, 2023. The performance was a part of Notes4Hope's annual Breast Cancer Awareness benefit concert.

of the outdoor stage to other organizations who couldn't perform indoors.

"That furthered this idea that our stage can be used for more than just one thing," said Worsely, "and that in so doing, we are welcoming more than just one audience."

A season opening community picnic is scheduled for May 18, featuring student performances from Cal Shakes' educational partners, activities for children and adults and a sneak peek of the upcoming September production of Shakespeare's "As You Like It."

The 50th anniversary production of "As You Like It" is directed by Elizabeth Carter, who also directed "Sign My Name to Freedom: The Unheard Songs of Betty Reid Soskin" for the San Francisco Bay Area Theatre Company.

The picnic grounds will be open for the event, and attendees can purchase food and beverages from the café.

"It should be a really sweet afternoon to welcome in our friends and family from our immediate community," said Worsely.

Summertime at Cal Shakes will feature a little something for everyone, including the musical act Terrapin Roadshow, the San Francisco Mime Troupe, a symphony or-

[SEE CAL SHAKES page 13]

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SCHOOLS

**Glorietta's First Norouz Celebration**

The first Norouz celebration at Glorietta Elementary School showcased Iranian culture with musicians Nariman Asadi and Negin Bastani, who filled the air with captivating Iranian classical melodies, while dancer Tina Asadi enchanted attendees with graceful movements. Rasteen Meshkin (fourth grader) and Arteen Meshkin (second grader) entertained as the beloved character, Haji Firooz, spreading joy. Neda Meshkin's artful set-up of the Haft-Seen spread captured the essence of Norouz, symbolizing renewal and hope with its seven elements representing blessings for the new year. Norouz, the Persian New Year, marks the beginning of spring and celebrates the spirit of rebirth and rejuvenation. (L-R) Nariman Asadi, Tina Asadi, Rasteen Meshkin, Arteen Meshkin, Neda Meshkin and Negin Bastani.



CAMELOTTE SHERPA

**Miramonte Implements Stress and Anxiety Program from Stanford**

By CHARLEY MATTHEWS  
Staff Writer  
charley.matthews2008@gmail.com

The Challenge Success Team (CST) program is a student stress analytic program established by Stanford University in 2007. It supports student well-being by surveying students' stressors to gain awareness and understanding so they can be productively addressed. Based on the program's successful outcomes, it has since expanded to more than 700 U.S. schools. Miramonte High School launched CST in 2022 to meet the increase in student stress and anxiety.

Ben Campopiano, Miramonte principal

and CST director, wanted to make a difference by taking advantage of the CST program's known success.

"One of my main goals as principal is to support student and staff wellness, so this has been a top priority for me and my administration team since I started at Miramonte," he said.

Senior Sienna Keene is a student lead in the program. She has participated in coaching sessions, attended conferences, panels, monthly CST meetings and studied students' viewpoints on various approaches to tackling student mental health issues.

She feels CST is vitally important for Miramonte students.

"Far too many students are struggling

with well-being, belonging and engagement in high school," said Keene. "As societal expectations of teenagers heighten, students claim to be sleep-deprived, show physical symptoms of stress and struggle with a sense of belonging in their high school careers. In times like these, elevating student voices and making positive changes is necessary to a student's mental and physical health."

Both Campopiano and Keene are optimistic in looking ahead to the future, by

comparing Miramonte's survey results with nationwide data. This will better position the school to pinpoint trends and unique issues, examine them and then employ research-based and wellness-focused strategies to make positive changes.

Campopiano's intent is to ensure diverse perspectives feel recognized. He works with a group of diverse staff, teachers and parents to establish big objectives.

"Our Challenge Success Team is working [SEE CST page 16]



DR. DENISE POPE

(L-R) Miramonte student Sienna Keene with founder of Challenge Success Team, Dr. Denise Pope, and keynote speaker Dr. Lisa Damour at the Challenge Success winter fundraiser luncheon.

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HELPING SENIORS

# Staying Safe and Comfortable in Your Home with Rotary Home Team

By ALISON BURNS  
Staff Writer  
alisonjburns@gmail.com

How many mothers-in-law does it take to change a lightbulb?

None, they just wait until their sons-in-law come round.

But what if you don't have a handy son-in-law? And you're not too steady on your feet? At least not when it comes to balancing atop a wobbly ladder.

And even if you know how to navigate the internet to hire help, do you really want some stranger in your home for just one or two small jobs that will quickly eat into your limited resources?

So who you gonna call? The Rotary Home Team, that's who.

Brainchild of Lamorinda Sunrise Rotary member, Hays Engelhart, the Rotary Home Team has been going strong since its inception in 2010. The goal is to help seniors feel safe, secure and comfortable in their own homes by getting trusted volunteers to replace smoke alarm batteries, fix leaky faucets, reset circuit breakers and perform a whole host of other niggling household repairs.

All at no charge.

Lamorinda Sunrise Rotary President Scott Parsons calls the program "Rotary at its best" and, while admitting to being "not at all handy" himself, is proud of the fact that he actually once managed to fix one woman's vacuum cleaner.

Gary Satterfield, the Home Team's current director, joined the project about six years ago when he was winding down his work life and looking for a "retirement hobby." Likewise, most of what he calls this "get up and get it done group" have come from a variety of careers. Half are lawyers.

Senior homeowners interested in using this service begin by leaving a description of the maintenance issue on the Home Team's voicemail. The teams work Saturdays from 9 a.m. to noon, but since this is only every other month, it could be another three weeks before a request is fulfilled. In which case, said Satterfield, he often visits that person long before the available date rolls around.

Team members generally work in groups of two, although Satterfield said, "you really only need one handy person."

The other is to hold the flashlight in awkward places, perhaps steady that wobbly ladder or even simply reassure the homeowner – who is often a widow. According to the calculations of estate planning attorney Matthew Miner, 64% of men die before their wives. This leaves

a lot of female seniors who live alone requesting assistance from the Rotary Home Team.

The team of two, said Satterfield, "are like a couple of neighbors lending you a hand" and, to that end, will discreetly keep an eye out for any potentially dangerous situations – be it loneliness, illness, hoarding, mold, anything where they suspect a senior might be struggling.

Sunrise Rotary has a very good working relationship with the community-based network, Lamorinda Village, and will always try to connect anyone they consider at-risk with the right professionals.

"Basically, we're all just homeowners who've been to the hardware store a couple of thousand times," said Satterfield.

For more information, visit rotaryhometeam.com, or call 888.204.5573. Call Lamorinda Village at 925.283.3500 or email info@LamorindaVillage.org. ■



Lights turn on, doors open smoothly and faucets no longer drip after a visit from the Lamorinda Sunrise Rotary Team. Here, Gary Satterfield, program director, listens as homeowner Joyce Skrak explains a pesky plumbing problem.

### ◆ CAL SHAKES from page 11

chestra, Native American stand-up comedy and a hip-hop festival, among other events still in the works.

"The idea is variety," said Worsely.

While the format of their productions and their offerings are changing, the organization still hosts its summer education programs. Daytime matinees of "As You Like It" will be held for local public and private school students in September.

Worsely spoke of musician Michael Franti's onstage comments about Cal Shakes being the best-kept secret in the Bay Area last October. He expressed the necessity of changing that view.

"So that we are not the best-kept secret anywhere," he said. "So that we're the best-known little venue in the Bay Area. That's our job." ■

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PERFORMING ARTS

# What a Tangled Web the Orinda Starlight Village Players Weave

By DAVID DIERKS

Assistant Editor

david@theorindanews.com

The Orinda Starlight Village Players (OrSVP) start their 41st season with Agatha Christie's "Spider's Web" on May 31.

The play involves a diplomat's wife, Clarissa, discovering a murdered body in the drawing room while preparing for her husband's return home with an important diplomat. Clarissa enlists the aid of house-guests to dispose of the body before her husband comes home, but is interrupted by the arrival of Detective Inspector Lord.

OrSVP has produced this play several times over its 41-year history.

"This show is tricky because it requires

a young girl, Pippa, in a key part," said Director Jill Gelster.

The first production in 1993 starred Susan Chapple as Clarissa and her daughter Claire Stevenson as Pippa. OrSVP regular, Laura Martin-Chapin, also performed in that initial production. Several years later, Martin-Chapin starred as Clarissa with her daughter Natalie Chapin as Pippa. The last production came full circle as Claire Stevenson played Clarissa with her daughter Genevieve Di Natale as Pippa.

This year, OrSVP is breaking with tradition and won't have a mother/daughter team playing Clarissa/Pippa.

"Last year we had a very talented young girl, Kayly Veliz, in 'Carlo Collodi's Pinocchio,'" said Gelster. "We decided that she would be perfect as Pippa and asked if she

would be interested in playing the part this year."

This production marks the fourth show for fifth-grader Veliz.

"Since I was young, I've been passionate about acting and modeling, often dressing up and role-playing with my dolls and my older sister and younger brother," said Veliz. "I am delighted that my parents have supported this passion by enrolling me in acting and modeling classes."

Veliz got the "Spider's Web" script early.

"With my mother's help, I read the script to understand the story so I could focus on the character's personality, pronunciation and British accent," said Veliz. "I put a lot of attention into rehearsals and advice."

Veliz is involved with modeling as well as acting. "I enjoy engaging with people and performing different characters, adding a personal flair to stand out while maintaining the original concept," said Veliz. "I delight in working with other actors and learning tips and having new experiences."

She acquired a modeling agent in March and is currently working on several modeling projects.

Performances of "Spider's Web" run Friday and Saturday nights at 8:30 p.m., May 31 - June 29. There is a Sunday performance on June 23 at 4 p.m. and one



COURTESY OF KARLA VELIZ

Kayly Veliz will perform as Pippa in Agatha Christie's "Spider's Web" starting May 31.

Thursday performance, June 27 at 8 p.m.

OrSVP is completely volunteer-run and no one at the theater is paid. Anyone interested in any aspect of theater, who would like to help, is encouraged to contact the group at info@orsvp.org or 925.528.9225.

For more information, visit orsvp.org. Follow on Instagram at orindastarlightvp. ■

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May you find all the beauty when you soar down life's street.  
May you land upon the flowers and dream to the sky blue, may you know how much you're loved and how proud we are of you!  
Love Mommy, Daddy, Milla, Tamara and Zane!

**Spring Production: "Alice in Wonderland"**

PATRICIA TOMLINSON

Ballet students are excited to perform in the spring production of "Alice in Wonderland," choreographed by Artistic Director Patricia Tomlinson. "Many of the students have been studying with Orinda Ballet since they began their training in the pre-ballet division since four-years-old, and have entered into a higher level of their training and studies to dance in roles partnered by professional guest artists, such as Bailey Brothers, Maya Elkind, Emily Charo and Sadie Elkind, "Queen of Hearts" and the "Caterpillar / Butterfly" Pas de deux. All very exciting for the girls. There are so many colorful and fun roles and scenes in our production that the whole family will enjoy," said Tomlinson. Held at the Orinda Library Auditorium, show dates are Friday, May 17 at 7 p.m., Saturday, May 18 at 4 p.m. and Sunday, May 19 at 11:30 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. Tickets may be purchased in advance on Eventbrite.com or in person at the box office, 45 minutes before show times.

ORINDA BALLET ACADEMY PATRICIA TOMLINSON

PRESENTS

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ORINDA ART SCENE

# May in the Art Galleries at the Orinda Library and Wilder

By ELANA O'LOSKEY  
Staff Writer  
business.orinda@gmail.com

## Art Gallery at the Orinda Library: Ekphrasis Exhibition 2024 Stretches the Art

May and June are all about the Ekphrasis Exhibit 2024 in the Art Gallery at the Orinda Library. The term “ekphrasis” began in Greece in Plato’s time – a literary description of visual art. Literary devices you will encounter at the exhibit include poetry (rhymed or unrhymed), free verse, stories, fables and essays.

Each visual artwork is displayed next to its written counterpart. Some of the best authors and artists in the area are contributing 100 total works – 50 artworks and 50 writings side by side.

This collaborative exhibit is created by team members from three area arts groups: Bill Carmel, board member and curator at Lamorinda Arts Council (LAC), Linda Hartmann, immediate past president and Ekphrasis chair, California Writers Club Mt. Diablo Branch (CWC) and Ruth Stanton, board member and vice president of exhibitions, Lamorinda Arts Alliance (LAA).

The Grand Opening on May 4 begins at 1:30 p.m. when LAC Executive Director Ali Kozoll introduces Moraga Mayor Teresa Onoda, who will welcome guests to the event. Recitations and slideshows in the Library Auditorium immediately follow, featuring paired artists and authors from all three organizations. The public is invited to

meet and mingle with artists and authors at their reception from 2:30 to 5:30 p.m. Light refreshments will be served on the terrace.

“In 2023 we heard from many people that they needed more than one visit to either read and enjoy the show or finish taking in the entire show. Since we have even more paired pieces in 2024, we decided to keep the show up for two months,” said Carmel, with Stanton and Hartmann in agreement. To learn more about these organizations, go to LamorindaArts.org, cwcmtdiablo.org/ and laa4art.org.

View artwork in the Art Gallery at the Orinda Library, 26 Orinda Way, April 29 - June 29. Hours are Monday – Thursday, 10 a.m. to 8 p.m., Friday – Saturday 10 a.m. - 6 p.m.; closed Saturdays, Sundays and May 27 for Memorial Day. Call 925.254.2184 for more Library information or visit ccclib.org/. For more information about the exhibit, email gallery@LamorindaArts.org, visit LamorindaArts.org or call 925.359.4490.

## Art Gallery at Wilder: Ania Lesela “Contemplations”

The Lamorinda Arts Council invites you to meet featured artist Ania Lesela of Orinda in the Art Gallery at Wilder on May 5 at a reception in her honor. Light refreshments will be served from 2:30 to 4:30 p.m. A lifelong artist, she’s been working in acrylic and mixed media for four years. You’ll find portraits that speak of a life lived fully. See “Becoming,” a 20” x 16” acrylic and mixed media portrait on canvas – see if you can ignore the enigmatic gaze of the subject.

Lesela said, “As a physician and neuroscientist, part of my creative process involves my brain taking bits of ambiguous information and constructing a comprehensible whole. My creative endeavors and scientific work are synergistic. I enjoy exploring the boundary between the physical and spiritual, and how emotions color our experiences.”

Some of Lesela’s favorite artists include Egon Schiele, Marc Chagall, Pablo Picasso and Mel McCuddin. For more about Lesela’s artwork, visit instagram.com/agaphd/.

Her exhibit runs May 5 - June 2. Visit the Art Gallery at Wilder Monday – Friday from 3 - 5 p.m., closed Saturdays, Sundays and May 27 for Memorial Day.

View or purchase Lesela’s artwork online with one click at

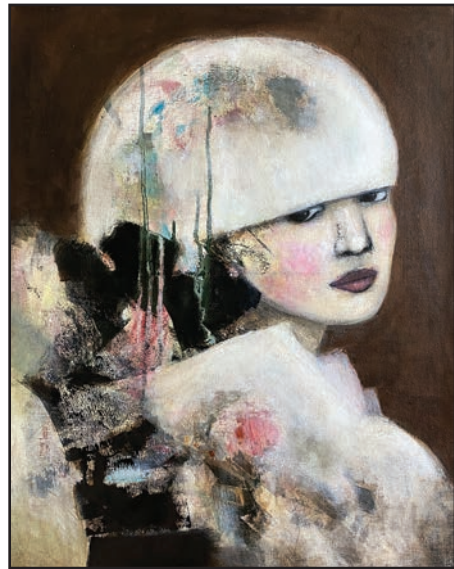


COURTESY OF LAMORINDA ARTS COUNCIL

If you’ve ever participated in a PRIDE parade, you may have encountered the Verasphere entourage. Mrs. Vera is an avatar created by Michael Johnstone and his partner David Faulk to celebrate “fragments of a drag memory tornado,” according to Johnstone. For more information about Mrs. Vera, go to verasphere.com. This piece, and more, at the Orinda Library May – June.

lamorindaarts.org/current-exhibits-wilder/. For more information, email wilder-gallery@LamorindaArts.org or call

925.359.9940. If you plan on visiting, please download the directions from lamorindaarts.org/current-exhibits-wilder/.




COURTESY OF ANIA LESELA

With a cryptic sideways glance, the subject in Ania Lesela’s painting “Becoming” entices us to look twice at her countenance. Displayed at Wilder Gallery this month.


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SPORTS



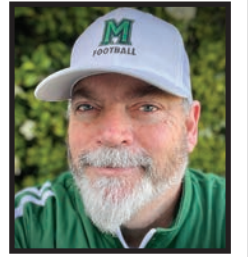
MARK BELL

Miramonte's second basemen Maddie McKim helped the Matadors turn a 4-0 deficit into a 24-7 victory on April 18, against the Campolindo Cougars.

**GAME ON**

**Crosstown Rivals Take to the Field**

MARK BELL  
mark@omegalightingdesign.com



The matchup has always been a benchmark of any season. Sixty-two years of competition between the Miramonte Matadors and the Campolindo Cougars. Even if all other games on the schedule are losses, this is the one game for which both high schools really want to see that "W" next to their name.

So late Thursday afternoon on April 18, the Matadors girls varsity softball team seemed perhaps a little more resolute as they geared up to take on their historic rivals. Division 3 is an extra tough arena to walk away with a winning record, much less a run at an NCS title.

The surrounding hills, fresh with mustard blossoms, mimicked the colorful rallying chatter from supporters just outside the caged fence. The girl's pre-game "Mats!" rallying cry could be heard all the way up Moraga Canyon, I imagine, as the Matadors took to the diamond to defend their 10-5 record.

Star Abby Warren, #12, just a sophomore, was on the mound, having struck out over 100 batters thus far this season, with an incredibly low 1.97 ERA against her.

Behind the plate was the highly polished catcher Talia Kardon, #8. Some may remember her recent heroics on the soccer field during the NCS shoot-out victory.

In short, there is no shortage of talent, or heart, on this team.

Head Coach OC Schott has done an unbelievable job of turning this team around since last season. In 2023, we were outscored 263 points to 63 with just a 2-15 record. This year, although still not finished, we're now the ones out-scoring those same opponents 121-23.

The team also has two shut-outs under their belt now, which hasn't happened since 2013.

Schott credits starting his focus on the pitcher's circle first, then working out-

2024  
**Miramonte High School Varsity Softball Team**

- #1 -- Gianna Granzella-9th
- #2 -- Alexis Sandstrom-10th
- #5 -- Pateel Horoupian-11th
- #8 -- Talia Kardon-9th
- #10 -- Julia Quinn-Ferguson-11th
- #11 -- Antonia Lawrence-12th
- #12 -- Abby Warren-10th
- #14 -- Reid Thompson-10th
- #15 -- Maddie McKim-9th
- #18 -- Penelope Hagan-10th
- #21 -- Madilyn Roesner-12th
- #22 -- Avery Haynes-10th
- #24 -- Kimberly Alvarado-10th
- #99 -- Molly Stout-10th

Head Coach:  
OC Schott  
Assistant Coach:  
Tiffany Palmberg



ward, early match-up scheduling and, of course, his 14-deep roster of star players who can fill in for each other at the drop of a hat, should academics ever require an absence.

As the high-stakes rivalry game played out, seniors like #11 Antonia Lawrence and #21 Madilyn Roesner put their experience into play executing Schott's "Pinball Softball" offensive strategy: Keep the ball in play and let the other team make the mistakes.

[SEE SPORTS page 20]

needs, concerns and experiences.

"Although it is difficult to determine how much our work is helping or positively impacting our students, we are hearing that students, staff and parents are greatly benefiting from the work," said Campopiano.

Ultimately, by working on projects like daily wellness exercises in classrooms, and hosting panel discussions and Q&As, CST looks forward to opportunities to create tangible change for the Miramonte student community. ■

◆ CST from page 12

on various goals we want to achieve this year, but generally speaking, our goal is to decrease the stress and anxiety our students feel from school and academic pressures," said Campopiano. "We are looking at a variety of different ways to achieve this goal and, just like last year, [we] will roll out different initiatives to take action."

He went on to talk about how, by empowering students to actively contribute to their well-being, they will help make sure that their surveys are tailored to their unique

**Congratulations, Lauren!**

We are so excited for your next step in life - college!! Always keep your passion for the things you love. We know that you will succeed in anything that you do. Keep reaching for those stars! We love you - Mom, Dad & Nolan

Leo, you did it! It's done. Thank goodness. Congratulations!

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*Mom, Dad, Leo and Zane.*



TEEN CORNER

# TEEN CORNER

BODY IMAGE AND SOCIAL MEDIA:  
A DANGEROUS DUO

EMMA WONG  
emma.wong25@auhsdschools.org



“You gonna walk that sandwich off? LOL.” “Why bread makes you fat.” “How to lose weight in 10 days!”

I found these comments and headlines after five minutes scrolling through Instagram. Social media’s effects on body image are real – and frightening.

Negative body image is closely tied to eating disorders (EDs), wherein individuals display extreme dieting, overexercise and self-induced vomiting to reach an “ideal weight.”

EDs disproportionately affect females, and studies published in the National Library of Medicine reveal their increasing frequency, regardless of gender (see bit.ly/445fgS5, bit.ly/3TQxmlO).

But what’s causing this disturbing trend? The answer may lie in social media.

Per a survey by Gallup Familial and Adolescent Health, teens spend an average of 4.8 hours on screens daily (see bit.ly/3U8iFvZ). During those hours, they encounter content that can mold their thoughts into an ED minefield: research published in the International Journal of Eating Disorders shows that adolescents with social media accounts, especially Snapchat and Tumblr, possess greater risk for developing EDs (see bit.ly/4aleG4I).

Social media amplifies the ideal of unhealthy thinness through distortive filters.

“With camera angles and lighting appearing realistic online, teens desire to change their image,” said Miramonte High School junior Eliani Kim.

Misinformation surrounding “good” or “bad” diets infiltrates the online world, often spread by unlicensed nutritionists. Compounding that with the judgmental comments polluting every platform, social media makes the “perfect body” an impossible ideal.

“Social media created an ED and exercise habits to fix my ‘problems,’” Kim said. “Sometimes, I still struggle to prioritize health over physical attributes.”

Beyond bodily wellness, EDs alter all aspects of teen health.

“EDs can negatively impact social and cognitive ability, athletic performance and growth,” said Registered Dietitian Jill Daniels.

But the good news? Students and educators are taking action to combat ED culture.

Wellness Intake Specialist Ellen Zapalac oversees student mental health at Miramonte. Thanks to her efforts, the school has reported a decrease in ED referrals over three years.

Last month, Miramonte hosted a Healthy Body Image “tabling,” where students glanced in a mirror before writing on a sticky note something they loved about what they saw.

“Teens expressed gratitude to a body part that helps them, like their eyes for seeing the green hills or their legs to run track,” said Zapalac.

Outside school, teens are working to transform social media from a forum of deception to a supportive, body-positive space. The Instagram hashtag (#intuitive eating), which counters ED restriction and emphasizes food freedom, contains two million posts.

Users can also avoid misinformation by following reputable sources.

“Seek out registered dietitians who are weight-neutral, non-diet and who utilize Health At Every Size principles (asdah.org),” said Daniels.

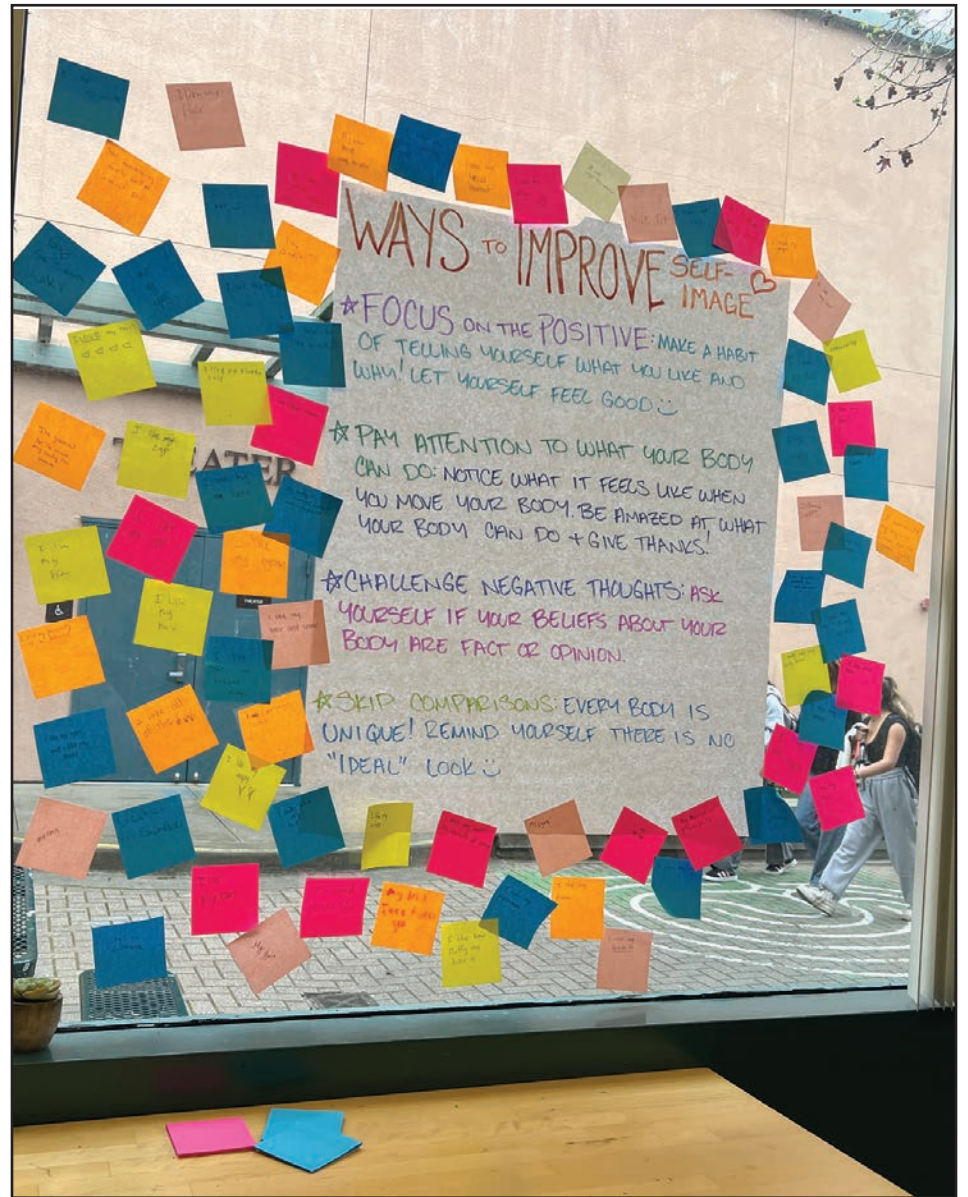
Other times, shutting off the screen is the best way to go.

A recent study by the American Psychological Association showed that teens who reduce their screen time by 50% improved their perceived body image (see bit.ly/3vEt1dB).

The fight against ED culture isn’t over, but awareness is the first step.

“We have to flip the whole way we think about body image,” said Zapalac. “Having that ongoing conversation of inclusivity can foster immense change.”



The National Eating Disorder Helpline can be reached at 866.662.1235. ■



EMMA WONG

Miramonte’s Healthy Body Image tabling features a mirror, an informational poster and a sticky note collection.


## Teen Tunes Spotify Playlist

# Congratulations Hadley!



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xo, Mom, Dad, Harper, Nana, Papa and Grammie



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CLASSIFIEDS / CALENDAR

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# On the Calendar in May

- Miramonte High School** presents Matador Showcase with Panel Discussion and Q & A and Miramonte Sports Fair May 7, 5 p.m. RSVP by May 4. <https://bit.ly/4b0vUoB>.
- Orinda Library** Toddler Storytime. Stories, songs and rhymes for 1 to 3 year olds and their caregivers, 10 and 10:30 a.m.
- Orinda Books** Literary Luncheon with Elizabeth McKenzie, author of "Dog of the North," noon. \$25 admission includes lunch and a copy of the book. Register at [bit.ly/49yWjbg](http://bit.ly/49yWjbg).
- Taste of the World** food trucks Orinda Community Center parking lot, 5 - 8 p.m. Also May 9, 16, 23 and 30.
- Lamorinda Sunrise Rotary** presents Dan Hanel - "Historical Mysteries of Contra Costa County," 7 a.m. Veterans Memorial Center, 3780 Mount Diablo Blvd., Lafayette, [lamorindasunrise.org](http://lamorindasunrise.org). or [lamorindasunrise@gmail.com](mailto:lamorindasunrise@gmail.com).
- First Friday Forum** presents Dr. Laura Beth Nielsen, professor of sociology and director of the Center for Legal Studies at Northwestern University "Northwestern University's Prison Education Program," 1:30 p.m. Simultaneously livestreamed and in-person at LOPC. See article p. 8.
- Orinda Farmers' Market**, 9 a.m. Orinda Way in front of Rite Aid and the Community Center Park. Visit [cccfm.org](http://cccfm.org) or 925.431.8361. Also May 11, 18 and 25. See article p. 22.
- Art Gallery at the Orinda Library** - Ekphrasis Exhibition 2024. Moraga Mayor Teresa Onoda opens the recitations and slide show in the Auditorium on May 4 at 1:30 p.m. Meet the artists and authors at a reception 2:30 to 5:30 p.m. on the patio. See article p. 15.
- Miramonte High School** Spring Play Senior Honors Projects, 7 p.m.
- Art Gallery at Wilder** showing Contemplations. The Lamorinda Arts Council invites you to meet featured artist Ania Lesela of Orinda and view her artwork at a reception in her honor, 2:30 p.m. Wilder is open Mon. - Fri., 3-5 p.m. See article p. 15.
- Orinda Library** Painting with Pauline Tsui - AAPI Workshop 3-session series. Registration required, 10:30 a.m.
- Miramonte High School** Girls varsity softball vs. Campo, 4:30 p.m.
- Orinda Books** presents Meredith Walters, author of "This Animal Body," 2 p.m. Free. Register at: <https://bit.ly/3J9zT5V>.
- Miramonte High School Theater Collage and Career** presents CCC-State of College Admissions presentation 6:30 p.m.
- Lamorinda Idol** - In person auditions held at Orinda Intermediate School through May 11. Email [idol@LamorindaArts.org](mailto:idol@LamorindaArts.org) or visit [lamorindaarts.org/idol-2/](http://lamorindaarts.org/idol-2/).
- Lamorinda Sunrise Rotary** presents "How to Pitch a Rotary Idea!"(or any idea), 7 a.m., Veterans Memorial Center, 3780 Mount Diablo Blvd., Lafayette, visit [lamorindasunrise.org](http://lamorindasunrise.org) or [lamorindasunrise@gmail.com](mailto:lamorindasunrise@gmail.com).
- Orinda Intermediate School** presents "Bye Bye Birdie," 4:30 and 7:30 p.m. Also April 11 at 2 and 5 p.m. OIS Bulldog Theater.
- Miramonte High School** Spring Band Concert. 7 p.m.
- International Film Showcase** presents "Bonjour Switzerland." Visit [internationalshowcase.org](http://internationalshowcase.org). See article p. 19.
- Orinda Library** Native Plants of the Bay Area. Learn how to grow and cook with native plants. No registration. 11:30 a.m.
- Orinda Books** presents Cindy Rasicot, author of "This Fresh Existence," 3 p.m. Free. Register at: <https://bit.ly/3vAnipf>.
- Miramonte High School** Junior Prom 4:30 p.m.
- Miramonte High School Parents Club** Casa Orinda Chicken Dinner Fundraiser. Visit [miramonteparents.com/class-of-2026](http://miramonteparents.com/class-of-2026) to order.
- Miramonte High School** Financial Aid presentation for college. 6:30 p.m. Virtual. Register at <https://bit.ly/4cSfJL6>
- Holden High School** - last day of school.
- Orinda Theatre Free Movie Night** presents "Rear Window." 8:30 p.m. See article p. 19.
- Lamorinda Sunrise Rotary** presents Dr. Po Chi Wu talk on "Promise and Peril of Generative Artificial Intelligence," 7 a.m. Veterans Memo-

- rial Center, 3780 Mount Diablo Blvd., Lafayette. Visit [lamorindasunrise.org](http://lamorindasunrise.org) or [lamorindasunrise@gmail.com](mailto:lamorindasunrise@gmail.com).
- Miramonte High School** Broadway Showcase. 7 p.m.
- Summer Movie in the Park** presents "Moana," Orinda Community Center Park at Sunset. Free.
- Orinda Rotary** Frank Isola Rotary Field Day for Orinda 3-5 graders, in partnership with the Miramonte High School Track Team, 8 a.m. at the Miramonte Stadium.
- Orinda Books** presents Jude Berman, author of "The Die," 2 p.m. Free. Register at <https://bit.ly/4arp4bg>.
- Lamorinda Arts Council's** Art Embraces Words - emerging writers read their work surrounded by original artwork at the free program, 2 p.m. Lafayette Library & Learning Center Arts & Science Room; reception follows on patio. Visit [LamorindaArts.org/art-embraces-words](http://LamorindaArts.org/art-embraces-words) or call 925.359.9940 to find out more.
- Advisory Council On Aging** presents Senior Pasta Making Class, 5 p.m. Orinda Community Center kitchen area.
- Miramonte High School** Drama awards night, 6 p.m.
- Cal Shakes** community picnic, noon. Tickets at [bit.ly/3W9K8in](http://bit.ly/3W9K8in). See article p. 11.

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**REAR WINDOW**

COURTESY OF ORINDA THEATRE  
Alfred Hitchcock's "Rear Window" shows May 16 for Free Movie Night at the Orinda Theatre

- Live at the Orinda!** presents Vladimir Kornéev. Call 925.254.9060 or go to [orindamovies.com/events/](http://orindamovies.com/events/). See article p. 10.
- Orinda Library** "Fashioning San Francisco: A Century of Style." A de Young Museum docent discusses the current exhibition. [SEE CALENDAR page 22]

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FILM

◆ FORUM from page 1

said. “Most of these are warrant arrests. For the most part they’re not Orinda residents.” Most warrant arrests are not for crimes committed in Orinda.

**Neighborhood Watch Groups**

Orinda Police Officer Johnson (not in attendance) is assigned to Neighborhood Watch and Sullivan suggested attendees call the Orinda Police Department (OPD) at 925.254.6820 to either join or start a watch group.

“Officer Johnson is very familiar with how the program works and can come out and assist with organization,” Sullivan added.

Attendees Julie and Jim Fulford, Orinda residents for 30 years, were comforted by the information they gleaned from the forum.

“It is reassuring that the crime rate in Orinda is fairly low and the police are responding to problems promptly,” said Julie. “It’s nice to be reminded that knowing your neighbors is probably the best protection against robberies.”

**Automated License Plate Readers**

Sullivan said Automated License Plate Readers (ALPR) installations have increased both through the city and via private citizen purchases, although he could not divulge how many cameras the city has purchased and installed so far.

“We are purchasing additional cameras to get better coverage of exits and entrances to the city,” he said. “We have a large area of the city covered. Currently we’re looking to have cameras installed on both sides of the tunnel.”

Sullivan added, “They’re a great tool for officer safety, to get notified if there’s a hot-listed vehicle, and they allow officers to have that information before they stop the vehicle or before they walk up to it. It’s primarily an investigative tool.”

ALPR’s, Sullivan said, also help officers locate missing persons.

“We get a lot of notifications on silver alerts – [for example] someone who has dementia – we can hot-list that vehicle if it triggers that camera,” he said.

He also stressed ALPR’s do not replace police work and do not prevent crime; however, the cameras help identify a vehicle so police have somewhere to start if there are no witnesses.

**Ways to Keep Property Safe**

The final portion of the forum covered safety tips for residents, including installing flood lamps, audible house alarms and doorbell cameras; placing clothing rods in window sills; getting a dog with a thick growl; installing locked gates; bolting garage doors when on vacation; placing valuables in a home safe rather than dresser drawers; setting up vacation house checks with OPD and not posting on social media

“I’ll be gone from my unsecured house!”

“You can email us and request a vacation house check, leave a contact number and a secondary contact,” said Sullivan. “And please keep valuables out of your window – like those Fabergé eggs!”

Attendees Roger and Linda Pettey left the forum with useful information.

“[We have] a better awareness of the police business model, its limitations and advantages ... and to use timed lighting around homes when away,” said Roger.

Rossi, who is also vice president of the Sheriff’s Association, stressed the importance of creating friendships with neighbors.

“Know your neighbor and if you see something that’s out of place, call us,” he said. “I’ve seen some reservations about making that phone call. People don’t want to seem like they’re bothering us. We want that phone call – if it is nothing, then great.”

Marzilli added that residents should take the extra time to learn how to operate their surveillance cameras, lock their mailboxes and, if possible, try not to leave packages on the porch.

For videos and information on how to prevent stolen packages, Sullivan suggested residents visit the National Neighborhood Watch website at [nnw.org](http://nnw.org).

**OPD Contract or Independent**

The forum ended with questions by residents, one of which concerned the city considering moving from a police department contract with the Contra Costa County Sheriff’s Department toward an independent police department.

“It’s a question that comes up periodically,” said Gee, who has been on the city council for the last nine years. “We have not had a serious look at changing anything – we’re very happy with the model and costs and benefits that come with it.”

Sullivan explained that with an independent police department when an officer is injured and possibly off for months, that officer cannot be replaced, leaving the department short-staffed. In contrast, with the county contract, “the Sheriff’s office just provides another [officer].”

Gee added, “Overall, there are a lot of benefits to the contract model; the last few years it’s been very hard recruiting police officers and staffing them. [The model] is very effective for us, it’s a small city.”

Board members of The Orinda Association, in partnership with the City Council and OPD, plan to organize future forums on crime prevention related topics. Email The OA at [oa@orindaassociation.org](mailto:oa@orindaassociation.org) on what topics you’d like more information about. Video to this forum will be available after May 15. Visit [orindaassociation.org](http://orindaassociation.org) and choose “Forums” under the “Program & Events” tab. ■

There is a sense of urgency present that threatens to spoil a month that has the reputation for being merry, namely the increasingly dire situation the Orinda Theatre finds itself in.

Due to the ever-increasing cost it takes to just keep the lights on, this Grand Lady has been forced to shutter her doors on Mondays and Tuesdays, with more dark days to follow should things not improve.

It is therefore of great importance that we band together and attend as many movies as we can, as often as we can. Fortunately, there is a trio of special showings that will motivate all serious cinephiles to hie their way to this premier movie palace and keep the wolves at bay.

We start out with the International Film Showcase gifting us with a much-needed farce. “Bonjour Switzerland” (“Bon Schuur Ticnio”) is a film that pokes fun at a nonsensical edict that comes down from on-high and the equally nonsensical reactions to it.

Thanks to the No Bilangue referendum, it is decreed that there should be only one language spoken, and that language should be French. As one might guess, this does not go over well, especially for one police officer whose job it is to make sure this law is actively put into action.

This film gives a new meaning to the term French Resistance. Never has the language barrier been funnier. It runs May 10 - 16. For more info and trailers, visit [internationalshowcase.org](http://internationalshowcase.org).

Then no sooner does that farce leave us than it’s replaced with an entirely different sort of film. “Rear Window” often gets short shrift mainly because many movie buffs single out “Vertigo” as quintessential Hitchcock, but to my mind, this film is better constructed with a stronger, more grounded and plausible premise. Are invalid Jimmy Stewart’s suspicions correct? Will the lovely Grace Kelly survive, confirming said suspicions? Find out on May 16 and admission is free.

Another thing the Orinda Theatre is doing to increase revenue is the welcome return of the matinee. They’re kicking that program off with another suspenseful masterpiece. Though he has been crowned the Master of Suspense, not many people realize Hitchcock, in many ways, is also the originator of the modern action film.

One need look no further than “North by Northwest” as proof. It has everything: chase scenes, intrigue, romance, betrayal, explosions, Cary Grant – and all directed by Sir Alfred himself. It shows at 1 p.m. on May 28. For more information on these two classics, visit [orindamovies.com](http://orindamovies.com).

So, I leave you once more, hoping that I’ve provided enough encouragement for you to wend your merry way to the Orinda Theatre. Derek Zemrak and crew would really appreciate it, and also remember to veer toward those wonderful images made out of sound and light – for that’s where the reel magic lies. ■

OH, THE PLACES YOU'LL GO! / EVERYDAY ORINDA

Oh, The Places You'll Go!



COURTESY OF SUNDER JOSHI

Rupa and Sunder Joshi outside the Basilica of Our Lady of the Mount in their hometown Bandra, Mumbai. The current structure is 100 years old, with history going back to the 16th century. Mount Mary attracts people from all faiths, and hundreds of thousands of pilgrims and devotees come every year to celebrate Holy Marymas on Sept. 8, followed by a weeklong Bandra Fair. Pope Pius XII granted a decree of canonical coronation to the shrine's reverend Marian icon on Oct. 21, 1954.

Everyday 😊 Orinda

Life Hacks Orinda Style



MIMI BOMMARITO  
editor@theorindanews.com

What a life hack I've discovered: No longer must I spend money on costly, exhilarating activities like zip-lining, white-water rafting or parasailing. I have adrenaline-rich moments galore simply crossing Moraga Way on foot, to walk my dogs at Wilder.

As an automobile driver, I'm grateful Moraga Way has relatively few stoplights. When traffic flows, it is pleasant cruising indeed. However, should a human body need to cross this road on foot, the thoroughfare becomes a death trap. Seriously, I have renewed gratitude for an extra day on this planet every single time I make a successful transfer.

My dreams came true the day a pedestrian crosswalk was installed at the blind intersection with Brookside Road, near McDonnell Nursery. However, a pedestrian crosswalk is merely an enhanced level of safety, not a guarantee you won't be squashed like a possum. One must still make eye contact with oncoming drivers to confirm a mutual agreement they will obey the law and stop for the flashing lights.

If I had a dollar for every time a driver simply blew right through the crosswalk – yellow warning lights twinkling away like a tacky Christmas display – I wouldn't be thinking about retiring somewhere with a lower cost of living. Here I vacillate between anger and anxiety.

Anger at the audacity to blatantly ignore established traffic laws (followed by a humorous vision of chasing them Gomer Pyle-style, shouting "citizen's arrest!") and anxiety over the fact that the absentminded, or partially blind, driver may not have even seen the warning lights at all.

I should add that I am very careful and considerate as to when I actually press the button to activate the crosswalk. As opposed to my grown daughters, who view this as a "God Button" – meaning once pressed, you possess the ability to control the surrounding universe, all obstacles freezing to accommodate your demand – I wait patiently until the thoroughfare is relatively free from oncoming traffic. Even though it is quite a power trip to force traffic to a grinding halt, I don't want that much attention, nor do I wish to cause a pile-up.

But here's where even well-intentioned plans go afoul.

Because for every distracted driver that blazes through an activated crosswalk without a twinge of worry about the bad karma they invite, there are an equal number of super-considerate, attentive drivers who remember the facts they learned in Driver's Ed. They will stop at the crosswalk for me even if I have yet to press the button.

Now we have a dilemma: Just because a driver in the near lane stops, this does not mean the drivers in the far lane stop. So now I feel people-pleasing pressure – compelled to press the button and wander halfway out into what now feels like the freeway, and hope that traffic in the far lane will stop for me. Meanwhile, traffic in the near lane accumulates. And I can feel them cursing me, because, you know, they've got places to go and people to see and I'm just a lady walking her dogs.

My solution requires acting skills.

Without standing near the crosswalk, I take out my phone and pretend to scroll, all while keeping a secretive eye on when the traffic is due to clear. This way, considerate drivers won't feel compelled to stop. They are simply being helpful, but the truth of the matter is, it takes a united front just to cross the street.

Sigh. If only Wilder weren't so breathtakingly beautiful. ■

◆ SPORTS from page 16

The result was an incredibly exciting game to watch. High energy and high action. Julia Quin-Ferguson, #10, hit the ball so high at one point I thought it was another solar eclipse. Gianna Granzella, #3, stole so many bases there were dust clouds the size of buffalo stampeding across the infield.

A true "dust up."

Post-game, the girls gathered for a team ritual. Physics teacher and Assistant Coach Tiff's send-off words of wisdom: "...Your bats were a battle and y'all were staring adversity in the face — down 4-0, and then 7-4. But you kept your head in the game and figured out how to hit the starting pitcher and show them who we are."

Final score Mats 24, Cougars 7. ■

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Thursday Night Food Truck events with Taste of the World Market, 5-8 p.m., Community Center.

Filoli Historic House and Garden Senior Trip. Wednesday, May 8, 9:30 a.m. - 5 p.m. \$86. Registration required.

Go to [www.OrindaParksandRec.org](http://www.OrindaParksandRec.org) or call 925-254-2445 for questions and registration.



Orinda Parks and Recreation Department  
925-254-2445

[www.OrindaParksandRec.org](http://www.OrindaParksandRec.org)  
OrindaParksandRec@CityofOrinda.org  
28 Orinda Way – Orinda Community Center

LOCAL RESIDENT / PET OF THE MONTH

# Longtime Resident and Library Volunteer Bids Farewell to Orinda

By NATASHA KAYE  
Staff Writer

[natashakaye@berkeley.edu](mailto:natashakaye@berkeley.edu)

Every Orindan knows the Orinda Library is a crown jewel of the city. From the eye-catching art installations to the monthly art galleries, and of course, the vast selection of books – the library is a true community hub.

Though not many are aware of the volunteer work that drives support for the library. Friends of the Orinda Library (FOL), a volunteer-run, local non-profit, owns the building and funds much of the daily operations.



JEFF HEYMAN

Connie Miller moved to Orinda in 1973 and made history, becoming the first female faculty member in the mechanical engineering department at UC Berkeley.

Connie Miller is one of those volunteers who has put in hours of behind-the-scenes work to ensure the library's success.

Miller began volunteering for the library after retiring in 2001 because she "needed something to do." It's clear from her background that she's always kept busy.

After receiving her doctorate in mechanical aerospace engineering from Cornell, Miller went on to teach as an assistant professor at UC Berkeley, becoming the first female faculty member in their mechanical engineering department.

After making history there, she pivoted to doing research on geothermal flow patterns at the Lawrence Berkeley and Lawrence Livermore National Laboratories.

Miller first arrived in California in 1973 after landing the job at UC Berkeley. She and her husband, Jim Miller, packed up their lives and drove across the country from their native New Jersey. They settled on a house in Orinda, as it seemed like a healthy distance between Miller's job at Berkeley and her husband's job in Livermore at the lab.

The couple have two children, a son, 41, and a daughter, 43. Six months ago, Miller became a grandmother for the first time.

Miller is moving to the Washington, D.C. area in the coming months to be closer to her children, though she admits she'll miss the close community feel of Orinda – a feeling she has undoubtedly contributed to, especially through her volunteer work at the Friends of the Orinda Library.

Miller's greatest contribution to the library is her work selling books online through the FOL bookstore, a small bookshop of used and donated books that are sold to support the library.

Linda Landau, the FOL treasurer, recalls

**Pets of the Month**

ANDREW HERINGER

"Penelope (L) and Roxy (R) have been begging us to send in their picture for a potential pet of the month feature in The Orinda News since we moved to Orinda in 2022," said Andrew Heringer and Carmen Bush. "Penelope loves cuddles and stealing tomatoes from the countertop. Roxy loves brief moments in the side yard to roll in the dirt and chase anything that flies by. They are both very suspicious of the Amazon delivery driver."

Miller deciding to try her hand at online book sales on eBay and Amazon in the early 2000s after someone had graciously donated a computer to the FOL. The endeavor was instantly successful and once she saw how much money she could bring into the library selling online, she began to do it nearly every day of the week.

"It feels like a treasure hunt, looking

around for good books and finding ones that will sell," said Miller.

Miller said the ability to reach buyers from around the world who were interested in specific niche books is what allowed some of the rarest books to get into the right hands, for the right price, of course.

Miller remembers getting her hands on [SEE MILLER page 22]

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With or without? Depending on variety, peas are eaten with or without their pods. I look forward to the arrival of edible pod peas when they begin their season in spring and continue my indulgence a little later when a new crop of shelling peas arrives.

Snow peas (or Chinese pea pods or sugar peas) are one type of edible pod pea with tiny flat seeds inside a flat, tender, three-to-four-inch pod. At this stage, the taste is refreshing and mild. If left to mature on the vines too long, the pods become too tough to eat – the peas are still edible, but tend to taste starchy.

Sugar snap peas are another version

of pod peas. They resemble small garden peas and are a cross between green garden peas and snow peas. Thicker pod walls and plumper peas make them perfect partners with salads and stir fries.

Edible pod peas are completely fit to eat, but I prefer to remove any “strings” running along the edges. Remove the end stems with a sharp knife or pinch them off with your fingers and pull the strings off. The string on the inward curve of the pea is likely a little thicker than the string on the other edge of the pea.

Briefly cook snow peas for about 30 seconds and sugar snap peas for about one minute in boiling water to cover. Drain and rinse under cold water to use in salads. Do not pre-cook if tossing into stir fries or sauteing.

Shelling peas are the common garden peas referred to as English or green peas.



Nelsie de Jesus is the familiar face behind the Ibarra stand selling her fresh picked peas, greens, peppers, tomatoes and root vegetables.

JEFF HEYMAN

The shell is popped open along the seam and the peas removed. Very young peas are sweet and tender and perfect to toss raw into salads. Or cook them for two minutes in boiling water to enjoy as a side vegetable.

Choose crisp peas with glossy, bright green, smooth skins. Garden pea pods are plump but should not actually show the shape of the pea inside the pod. At this point, the peas are too mature, starchy and tough. If necessary, store peas in a plastic bag in the refrigerator for two to three days.

How much to buy? One pound of edible pod peas yields four servings and one pound of shelling peas yields two servings.

**Garden Pea Bruschetta**

1 1/2 cups shelled garden peas, blanched for 1 minute and drained

- 3/4 cup grated parmigiano (reserve 1/4 cup for topping)
- 3 tablespoons olive oil plus more for brushing baguette
- 1 teaspoon lemon juice
- Salt and Pepper
- 1 garlic clove, cut in half
- 16 - 18 quarter slices of baguette

Place all ingredients (except garlic and baguette) in a food processor. Pulse to combine ingredients to a coarse paste. Brush both sides of bread slices with olive oil and place under the grill for 1 to 2 minutes per side until golden brown. Use the cut side of the garlic to rub one side of the toasted baguette and then spread with the pea topping. Top with parmigiano and an extra drizzle of olive oil if you like. ■

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◆ **CALENDAR** from page 18

- hibition. First come, first served seating. 2 p.m.
- 24 **Lamorinda Sunrise Rotary** presents Prez Scott Parson's "Special Club Assembly," 7 a.m. Veterans Memorial Center, 3780 Mount Diablo Blvd., Lafayette. Visit lamorindasunrise.org or lamorindasunrise@gmail.com.
- 25 **Lamorinda Arts Council** Mocktails & Cocktails. 4 p.m. at Tutu's, 35 Lafayette Circle, Lafayette. No host bar. Call 925.359.9940.
- 28 **Orinda Theatre** presents Matias Bombal's Hollywood Orinda Classic Movie Matinees with "North By Northwest" (1959). 1 p.m.
- 31 **Lamorinda Sunrise Rotary** presents "Don Dupont Brings us Sam Sperry," 7 a.m. Veterans Memorial Center, 3780 Mount Diablo Blvd., Lafayette. Visit lamorindasunrise.org or lamorindasunrise@gmail.com.

- Miramonte High School** Graduation 5:30 p.m.
- Orinda Academy** Graduation.
- Orinda Starlight Village Players** presents Agatha Christie's "Spiders Web," 8:30 p.m. Orinda Community Center Park Amphitheater. See article p. 14.

Send calendar items to Jill Gelster at calendar@aspenconsult.net.

◆ **MILLER** from page 21

a first edition copy of "A Streetcar Named Desire" shortly after actor Marlon Brando's death and selling it for an impressive \$1,300 – the proceeds of which all went back to the library. "Connie's been so dedicated to the library and the bookshop customers," said Landau. "She will be missed." ■

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MEET YOUR NEIGHBOR

# Health and Longevity Expert Maddy Dychtwald Has a Message for Women: It's Never Too Late

By KATHY CORDOVA  
Executive Editor  
cordova@theorindanews.com

Maddy Dychtwald is on a mission to help women live longer, healthier lives.

Her new book, "Ageless Aging: A Woman's Guide to Increasing Healthspan, Brainspan, and Lifespan" combines cutting edge science, advice from world renowned health and wellness experts, lively personal anecdotes and easy-to-follow tips for a roadmap to improving health at any age.

Dychtwald is the co-founder of Age Wave – a leading think tank and consultancy on aging, longevity and retirement issues – and she is recognized by Forbes Magazine as one of the top global female futurists. Published by the Mayo Clinic Press, "Ageless Aging" is meticulously researched with 17 pages of footnotes, but it's no stuffy tome. Instead, the author keeps it real – and relatable.

In the introduction, she chronicles her double hip surgery and notes, "The experience reinforced what I already knew – you don't get to your seventies without experiencing some real Sh#%."

Today, Dychtwald says she feels stronger and more resilient than she did a decade ago. Slim and vibrant, she has celebrated 74 birthdays, but tests show her biological age clocks in at 51. Whatever her secrets are, we're listening.

### How long have you lived in Orinda and what do you like most about living here?

We moved to Orinda 34 years ago. I love the fact that we have these absolutely gorgeous views and that it's suburban, like a hidden gem that not that many people know about. We moved here originally because of the awesome schools and we wanted to have the public school experience for our kids. They went on to great colleges and

have great careers and great lives, so I feel very grateful for that.

### Why did you want to write this book?

I've been on this beat of aging, longevity and retirement for close to 40 years – since I was in my 30's. As part of our research at Age Wave, we got a chance to talk to other leaders in the fields of aging and longevity: academicians and scientists who all were very forthcoming, sharing with us not only their academic concepts, but what they did themselves.

I've recognized two things: One, while there are a lot of books out there on aging and longevity, there's nothing I could find specifically designed for women. Most of the books are written by men.

Women live, on average, six years longer than men. Yet all the books are written by guys. So I wanted to correct that.

Two: There are a lot of books out there about exercise, sleep, eating healthy diets, purpose and positivity. But from the research, I quickly saw that it's not just about one thing. It's about a host of things. I wanted to come up with a holistic recipe that includes sleep, exercise, what to eat and the healthcare system and how to interact with it. The book also covers women's hormones, attitudes and expectations – even finances.

There is so much confusion around health and wellness, because everyone on Tiktok or Instagram, or wherever you happen to get your wellness information, have some very specific perspectives that may not work for you. They may not be based in science. And I wanted to come up with things that we're cutting edge, but also that we're science-based.

### What are the three different types of aging?

The first is emotional/psychological aging, which is the kind of aging we all want.

As we gain experience, we gain wisdom and resilience.

The second is the obvious, chronological aging. And that's how many birthdays we've had.

Then there's biological aging, which measures health on a cellular level.

We're not going to be able to hold back the hands of time. That's not possible. But we can either prevent or delay some of the decay and health issues that can come along with physical aging, while growing psychologically and emotionally.

We want to have as many birthdays as [SEE NEIGHBOR page 24]



LISA KEATING

Maddy Dychtwald, the co-founder of Orinda-based Age Wave – a global leading think tank and consultancy on aging, longevity and retirement issues – has penned a new book, "Ageless Aging" with cutting-edge advice for women about healthy aging.



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MEET YOUR NEIGHBOR

◆ NEIGHBOR from page 23

possible. But we don't want cognitive decline and the aches, pains and potentially chronic conditions we can prevent.

**What's the difference between lifespan, healthspan and brainspan?**

Lifespan is the number of years that you live.

Healthspan is a number of years that you live with health and vitality.

Brainspan is the number of years your brain stays healthy.

If we had our way, we would want both our healthspan and brainspan to be exactly the same length as our lifespan. Ideally we'd be perfectly healthy until the day we die.

**How much of living a long, healthy life is genetic?**

We used to think that our genes were our destiny. That concept really would freak me out because I don't have very good genetic history. My dad died at age 61 with a lot of health conditions. My mom ultimately got Alzheimer's disease.

But now science tells us that up to 90% of our health and wellness is within our control. That's amazing news – that we really are in charge of our own health and well-being.

I think that's particularly important for

women. Because we're killing it when it comes to longevity. We live six years longer than men, but our healthspans are an average of 12 to 14 years less than our lifespans.

**Why do you think that is?**

I'll tell you what I think, although it's not necessarily scientifically proven. I think women are so busy taking care of other people that we sometimes ignore the obvious in our own well-being.

*“Science tells us that up to 90% of our health and wellness is within our control.” – Maddy Dychtwald*

**What role does purpose play in healthy aging?**

I always knew that purpose was an important thing. We emphasize it all the time in the studies we do at AgeWave. But I didn't realize there was actual science behind it that showed having a sense of purpose can actually add years to your life, and of course make those years healthier.

What was interesting was that purpose doesn't have to be something big like starting a non-profit or going back to work or starting your second or third or fourth career. It could be walking your dog, tak-

ing care of the grandchildren, anything that makes you feel needed.

**What effect do our thoughts have on aging?**

I want to say two things. The first is that ageism is very real. It's actually the last kind of acceptable “ism” that's out there. And that's something we need to change.

One of the women I interviewed for the book is a black, lesbian older woman. She said that ageism was far worse for her than discrimination [based on her sexual orientation] or racial discrimination. I thought that that was kind of an amazing statement. Agism is very pervasive and it's in the workforce impacting women far more than men.

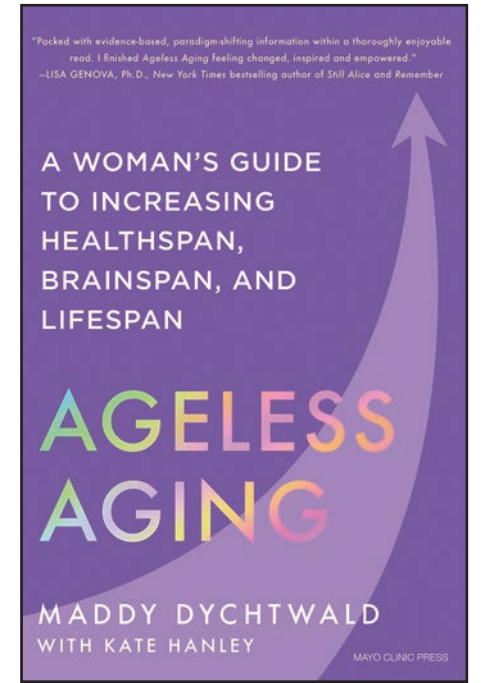
The second thing is there's a “positivity effect” that's been studied in both Korea and the United States. They looked at women's brains, and what they discovered is that the attitude that you bring to your own aging and the aging of people around you, can actually impact your healthspan and your lifespan. It can add up to an extra seven years of life if you have a positive attitude about your own aging. That's pretty remarkable.

**If you had one best piece of advice for women, what would it be?**

Exercise. It's a silver bullet. You can see changes and feel differently within weeks.

Then you might be inspired and motivated in other areas. You might eat a little healthier and your sleep will be positively affected. You might start to take other steps to improve your health. It's a process.

There's a recent study that said that women gain more benefit from exercise than men, and they don't need to exercise quite as long or as hard to get that same benefit. And I thought, that's pretty awesome – because we know that exercise not only is good for our physi-



COURTESY OF MAYO CLINIC PRESS  
Pre-order “Ageless Aging” at maddydychtwald.com to receive exclusive bonus gifts to accompany the book.

cal health, but it's also great for our brain health.

**You write that you're entering your third stage of your life. What have you learned?**

That chronological age is really just a number. If you take steps to improve your healthspan and your brainspan, you can actually be energetic, vital and full of purpose in your third stage of life. Wherever you are in your journey, it's never too late to invest in your well-being, or to reinvent yourself.

People are continuously sending me examples of their friends and family that are doing things that are amazing. It used to be that they'd send me pictures of people in their 70's and 80's. Now, it's people in their 90's and their 100's still working, still being vital and purposeful. ■

**Women Living Longer, but Not Healthier**

In the last century the average American life expectancy has skyrocketed from 47 to 79. The increase in lifespan is even greater for women who live an average of six years longer than men.

Although women are living longer, their healthspan – the number of years living in good health and vitality – are not keeping up with lifespans. Women, in particular, tend to spend the last years of their lives in poor health, battling not only aches and pains, but degenerative diseases like cancer, heart disease and diabetes. “Ageless Aging: A Woman's Guide to Increasing Healthspan, Brainspan, and Lifespan.”

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