



THE ORINDA NEWS

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Local Residents and Community Groups Help North Bay Fire Victims

By KATHRYN G. MCCARTY
Staff Writer

A glimmer of hope rose from the ashes of the horrific fires, which destroyed thousands of acres in the San Francisco

North Bay, taking the lives of 43 people and displacing an estimated 15,000. In December, The Orinda Association (OA) and Orinda Junior Women's Club teamed with local community members to help one family, who escaped the fires with their

lives, but little else.

The Tubb's fires in Santa Rosa left the parents of four children and two internationally adopted children with medical conditions in desperate need of help to rebuild their lives.

Amy Stuffmann, president of Wagner Ranch Parents' Club and past president of Orinda Juniors, coordinated the efforts between the two groups. The local non-profits have individually supported adopt-a child and a variety of non-profit organizations every holiday.

In previous years, Orinda Juniors baked desserts for the Children's Hospital Oakland holiday party, but with current renovations, the hospital did not need baked goods. When Stuffmann asked if there was another way the Juniors could help, a hospital social worker shared the story of parents with six children displaced by the Tubb's fire.

"I knew as a community we could help them," says Stuffman. "Our Orinda Juniors had already committed to covering 30 children at Bay Area Crisis Nursery, so I extended my net to include not only Orinda Juniors members, but also other members of the Orinda community." One such group included the OA, who appealed to the Orinda community for donated toys. Stuffman says she was "highly touched with the outpouring of support."

"With such a big family, the mother noted a serious need for stock pots, pans and cooking utensils," Stuffman explains. She also learned how hard the family was working to rebuild, but they needed tools. "Their animals were thankfully spared from the fire," she notes, but "keeping up the coops and pens has been very difficult

[SEE FIRE page 3]



SALLY HOGARTY

Volunteers from **Orinda Junior Women's Club** and **Wagner Ranch Parents' Club** wrapped gifts for a family who lost everything in the Tubb's fire and for children at Bay Area Crisis Nursery.

Report on Roads and Drainage Sparks Division

By SALLY HOGARTY
Editor

Orinda has more than a freeway dividing it these days as a group of local citizens battles to have Orinda's 28 miles of private roads included in the city's road maintenance program. Currently, the city maintains 93 miles of public roads: 29 miles of arterials and collectors and 64 miles of

residential streets.

When Orinda incorporated in 1985, it inherited a plethora of deteriorating roads that has only worsened over the years. Since then, new developments such as Wilder, Orinda Grove and Orinda Oaks have added

[SEE ROADS page 4]



VALERIE COLBER

Charles Porges spoke in favor of private roads being included in Orinda's maintenance program at the Dec. 19 City Council meeting.

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Warm Winter Nights a Miracle for Those in Need



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Jasmyne and her son **Dejon** enjoyed the shelter provided by the Warm Winter Nights program at LOPC.

By BOBBIE DODSON
Staff Writer

The room was filled with chatter, laughter and, very occasionally, a crying child. One might think it was a huge dinner party, and truly it was. This

particular November night the Explorer group from Lafayette-Orinda Presbyterian Church (LOPC) was hosting a dinner for the homeless Winter Night (WN) families who were spending two weeks in LOPC's Fellowship Hall.

[SEE WINTER page 2]

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SALLY HOGARTY

Orinda Association members **Kate Wiley** (L) and **Cathy Goshorn** sort the many coats donated by local residents to the One Warm Coat drive. The coats will go to White Pony Express for distribution to those in need of a warm winter coat.

Organizations Still Need Help After the Holidays

By SALLY HOGARTY
Editor

While the holidays may be over, people throughout the Bay Area still need help as winter's cold weather continues. White Pony Express (WPE), headquartered in Pleasant Hill, has an on-going Cold Weather Clothing Program (CWCP) that always needs contributions. The Orinda Association recently donated the plethora of coats it received at its One Warm Coat donation box in the Library Plaza. White Pony Express' programs have also been the past recipient of the Orinda Woman's Club's major fundraising event – the Festival of Trees.

The CWCP program focuses on helping the homeless in Contra Costa County endure the cold and often wet winter. They hope to distribute at least 10,000 articles of clothing to the homeless including warm coats, pants, shirts, socks, hats, gloves, scarves, underwear and boots.

Monetary donations to help with pur-

chases of clothing can be sent to White Pony Express, 1966 Tice Valley Blvd., #101, Walnut Creek, CA 94595. Donations of new or like-new clothing can be delivered to 3380 Vincent Road, Suite 101, Pleasant Hill, Monday from 1-5 p.m. and 7 – 9 p.m., Tuesday - Friday from 1 – 5 p.m., and Saturday from 9 a.m. – 12 p.m. and 3 – 5 p.m.

Volunteers are also needed for WPE's Food Rescue program, which picks up 5,000 lb. of surplus fresh food (fruits, vegetables, meat, dairy/deli/dry goods, bread/pastries and eggs) every day and then delivers it to nonprofits that feed the hungry in our county — all free of charge. In just over four years, WPE has rescued more than 5,200,000 lb. of quality, nutritious food that would otherwise go to waste.

Those wishing to volunteer for WPE should contact Mandy Nakaya at 925-818-6361 or at Mandy@whiteponyexpress.org.

For more information about WPE, visit www.whiteponyexpress.org.


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AG REALTY

◆ WINTER from page 1

For the past 14 years, 107 church congregations have participated in the Winter Nights Homeless Family Rotating Shelter program, under the auspices of the Social Justice Alliance of the Interfaith Council of Contra Costa County. “The goal is to provide shelter in a clean, safe and warm environment and to help them break the homeless cycle by assisting them toward self-sufficiency and into stable housing,” says Program Director Judith Stillman. According to Stillman, 17 congregations are actually housing clients this year including five in the Orinda area. Besides LOPC, these include St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, Orinda Community Church, Santa Maria Catholic Church and Holy Shepherd Lutheran Church. “Right now, we are serving nine families with a total of 16 children, ages 1 year to 16, and one mom is pregnant. We have just purchased a new 15-passenger van, which LOPC helped finance,” Stillman explains.

During its two weeks hosting families in November, the LOPC Explorers group prepared and served the food, and then ate with the guests and listened to their stories. A proud mother named Jasmyne told how her son Dejon's first-grade teacher said he was the best student in her class while another guest explained that the rules helped her stabilize her life. “They give me

a schedule,” she said. “I feel much more confident now and more able to take care of my daughter.”

Participants staying at the various churches get up at 5:30 a.m. weekday mornings, eat their breakfast and leave at 7 a.m. The children travel to the school they regularly attend and the adults to their jobs or the Oasis Service Center at St. Vincent De Paul Society of Contra Costa County. There they are helped with job searches, learn how to access available services and how to find low income housing. Showering and laundry facilities are offered if the host church doesn't have them.

Volunteer Mary Welte of Orinda explains she's happy to be able to do this kind of “hands on” work: “You really get to know the people and the situations that have caused them to be homeless, often things beyond their control. For the most part, these are dear, kind people, down on their luck, and I hope the very best for them.”

The churches involved in WN provide more than meals and a warm place to stay. They help with many activities including tutoring. “If the child has homework, we help with that, but there are many little ones who can benefit from being read to,” says tutor Jo Kerner. This year the Traveling Tutors received the Making a Difference Award by the Interfaith Council for their devotion to the children of WN over the

[SEE NIGHTS page 14]



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- Providing transportation through Seniors Around Town
- Operating The Volunteer Center

- Hosting Community Forums
- Organizing the 4th of July Celebration

What's On Deck With Parks & Rec!

- January 1 & 15 – City Offices are Closed**
- January 18 – Lunch'n Learn: First Aid Awareness for Ages 50 and Over – Register Now!**
- January 29 – Regular Registration Opens for Orinda Youth Baseball**
- January 29 – Early Registration Opens for Orinda Youth Spring Soccer**
- Winter/Spring 2018 Class Registration is Going On Now!**

Help choose the movies for this summer's **Movies in the Park** program. Visit www.surveymonkey.com/r/Orindamovies2018 to vote!



Orinda Parks and Recreation Department
925-254-2445
www.OrindaParksandRec.org
OrindaParksandRec@CityofOrinda.org
28 Orinda Way – Orinda Community Center
Administrative Office Hours – Monday – Friday 8:30am-4:30pm

THE ORINDA ASSOCIATION

A Message From the OA President
Resolve is a good thing



Cindy Powell

We start the first day of the year with fireworks, kisses and cheers, and then move to the real good stuff . . . what will your **New Year Resolution** be in 2018? Most resolutions include a better you and your surroundings. Like your town! Make this the year to get involved in Orinda. If you traveled over the holidays, choosing something close to home to do would be fun. Remember, every Thursday night outside the Community Center and library, we still have the food trucks, games and live music. Get a bite to eat and introduce yourself to someone new. The food changes, and there is always a drink truck and a dessert truck.

Jan. 10 is **Bittersweet Chocolate Day** in case you didn't get enough chocolate and sweets over the holidays. Americans consume over 3.1 billion pounds of chocolate a year! There are some antioxidants in each bite, meaning that it may be healthy... in moderation. Is your resolution to get or remain healthy? Then **Take the Stairs Day**, also on Jan. 10, may be for you. Doing so helps tone muscles, lose weight and contributes to cardio-vascular health. Instead of using an elevator or escalator, hit the stairs for a low-impact activity that tones muscles. Most smartphones have an app that counts stairs. A 160-pound person who climbs for 3 minutes expends approximately 30 calories. Your resolution should become a daily habit.

Also in town, the **Orinda Theatre Free**

Movie on Jan. 11 is *How the West was Won*, one of only two movies ever shot in Cinerama mode. It appears as wide as it does because it was actually shot by three cameras all sitting in a row. Every frame of this movie is three shots, lined up side by side. The movie was nominated for eight Academy Awards, won three and features 24 famous actors and actresses.

Jan. 13 is **Make your Dreams Come True Day**. If you have been procrastinating fulfilling your dream, this is your chance to get started. This may even be your resolution.

Jan. 17 is **Kid Inventors' Day** to encourage children to think outside the box and invent something or to search for scientific and logical solutions to problems. The day is also the **Birthday of Benjamin Franklin**, one of the most prolific people in history. At the age of 11, he was responsible for inventing the precursor to the swimming flippers a year after he stopped going to school. His invention was made for the hands instead of the feet. The snowmobile, popsicles, and Braille, parenthetically, were all invented by children. But, children, unlike Ben, stay in school many years after they turn 11.

Okay, here it comes: Jan. 17 is **Ditch New Year's Resolution Day**. This day is popularly thought to be the day when the most people abandon their New Year's resolutions. After all, resolutions are meant to

[SEE PRESIDENT page 10]

◆ FIRE from page 1

without tools on hand."

A website was created to request donations for the family: clothes and shoes for girls ages 5, 6, 9 and 12 and their brothers, ages 7 and 9; comforters and bedding for the family; and children's toys that included "anything Star Wars" or "pink and sparkly." On Dec. 13, volunteers from Orinda Juniors and Wagner Ranch parents gathered at Stuffman's home to wrap gifts donated by the Orinda community.

The busy volunteers hoped that Orinda would give the family "a holiday to remember." That hope became reality when Stuffman delivered the donations of both new and gently used items to the family just in time for Christmas. Filling a van to

capacity, Stuffman watched the children's eyes fill with excitement as the van was unpacked.

"This family is extremely grateful as they lost everything in the Tubbs Fire," says Stuffman. "I would personally love to see an effort to get wish lists of what is needed for more families who are starting over. We could have their list of needs accessible to the greater community, especially since we have so many people in our area living with extra household goods that could definitely go to a good cause."

For more information about how to volunteer with The Orinda Association, visit orindaassociation.org For information on the Orinda Juniors Women's Club, visit orindajuniors.org.

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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Correction...

In the December issue of The Orinda News, the letter to the editor entitled "Orinda Must Chart Its Own Course," the authors were listed as "Tom Trowbridge

and Kirsten Larsen, on behalf of the Orinda Vision and What's Up Downtown Steering Committee." It should have been listed: Tom Trowbridge for the Orinda Vision Steering Committee and Kirsten Larsen for the What's Up Downtown Orinda Steering Committee.

Letters to the Editor...

Thank You Mayor Phillips

Mayor Eve Phillips' current term as Mayor ended in December. City accomplishments during her watch are worth noting.

Perhaps most visible has been the heavy lifting in shepherding the city through the unexpected Miner Road sinkhole crisis, seeing that critical roadway restored to full operating status within a matter of months, while Moraga struggled for more than two years to resolve a similar situation.

The retirements and replacement of the city's long-time City Manager, the city's Finance Director, and other key city staffers, have been seamlessly orchestrated.

The National Main Street Center recommendation to re-vitalize the commercial downtown with a focus on special events was augmented with such events as Food Truck Thursdays and the 75th anniversary celebration of the Orinda Theatre.

While past City Councils mis-fired on opportunities to re-vitalize the commercial downtown (Montessori/retail replacement of Phairs in 2013), Mayor Phillips' City

Council approved the Bella Oaks commercial development project at 25A Orinda Way, across from the library, where shovels will hit the ground during 2018.

It became safer for Orinda citizens to walk between BART and the Theatre District with the completion of more extensive lighting on the elevated walkway and connector stairs.

A lot more roads and storm drains got rehabilitated with much more transparent project management and without much aggravation.

Mayor Phillips gave articulate voice to many stifled Orinda citizens, demonstrating conviction and courage, and all too often, being on the short end of 4-1, business-as-usual Orinda City Council votes.

Ms. Phillips came to this mayoral position by earning the most votes in the 2014 City Council election. As one of those voters, I look forward to her continued public service on the City Council in the coming year and, hopefully, beyond.

[SEE LETTERS page 10]

◆ ROADS from page 1

to the private roads. In 2012, Orinda voters passed Measure L, a half-cent sales tax that generates approximately \$1 million per year to maintain city services including repairing failing roads and drains. Measure J, a \$20 million road and storm drain repair bond in 2014 and a \$25 million bond in 2016 allowed the City of Orinda to begin improving all public residential streets, an on-going process scheduled for completion in 2019. A Citizens Infrastructure Oversight Committee (CIOC) was set up to oversee that funds were spent appropriately.

"We are residents and taxpayers of Orinda. We deserve the same services as our neighbors. We are willing to pay for them but not over-pay as we have been," said Steve Cohn, spokesperson for the concerned residents. Cohn notes that residents living on private streets pay taxes to maintain the public residential streets as well as approximately \$750/annually to maintain their private roads.

"When the new taxes were being proposed, we were told that everyone used the publicly maintained residential streets," Cohn explained. "This is not true. Fifty percent of all privately maintained streets, like mine, feed directly into the common road system. The only time I use a publicly

maintained residential street is when I visit a friend."

The CIOC's report to the City Council on Dec. 19 projects that \$3.5 million per year will be needed to maintain the 93 miles of public streets and associated storm drains. It also estimates that the city will receive approximately \$1,050,000 from state and county sources for its 93 miles of roads. The short fall from current taxes will need to come from new sources.

Cohn projected that adding the additional 28 miles of private streets would increase the cost of maintenance by around \$1.1 million. According to Cohn, current formulas from gas and sales tax revenue could net Orinda another \$300,000 in funding for the additional 28 miles.

"The additional cost might be \$800,000," Cohn said. "There are, or will be when Wilder is built out, about 7,000 households in Orinda. This additional cost, spread across all Orinda, averages \$115 per household annually or 30 cents per day. For a community with a median household income of \$190,000, this is not unaffordable."

At the Dec. 19 City Council meeting, citizens living on the private roads asked the council to create a task force to evaluate the status of privately funded streets and consider adding them to the CIOC's Roads and Drainage Repair Plan. "We are



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urging the council to not approve this plan," said Melissa Roeder. "We need to form a problem-solving task force to evaluate funding ideas that includes private streets."

CIOC chairperson Terry Murphy stated that the CIOC is not allowed to spend public funds fixing private roads. "We did look at the problem of private roads, and the CIOC agreed that a survey of private roads is necessary so that citizens who live on those roads have some idea of what it would take to repair them." Mayor Amy Worth, however, didn't believe public monies could be used for such a survey.

Charles Porges concurred that the condition of the private roads needs to be measured. "Attempting to manage paving projects on a private street creates horrible

relationships among neighbors. What is the recourse if there is catastrophic damage?"

The City Council postponed approval of the CIOC report pending additional information, which they requested be brought back to the council as soon as possible.

"We need to address voter approved revenue, and private roads are germane to the plan," said Vice Mayor Inga Miller. Councilmember Darlene Gee agreed, adding that the council needs to look at funding, future maintenance and garbage impact fees.

"The most significant vehicle impacts on private roads are the garbage trucks," said Porges. Mayor Worth agreed saying that current garbage impact fees do not cover the full cost of truck damage.

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MOFD / AWARDS

Winnacker Named New Fire Chief

By DAVID DIERKS
Assistant Editor

On Nov. 2, the Moraga-Orinda Fire District (MOFD) selected Dave Winnacker as the new Fire Chief. Winnacker accepted the conditional offer, pending background and contract negotiations, and says he is looking forward to working with the MOFD and its talented staff.

Winnacker, a 23-year Marine Corps veteran and reservist, leaves Alameda County Fire District (ACFD) where he served as Fire Captain, Battalion Chief, Division Chief of Special Operations and Liaison Chief Officer for the City of Emeryville and Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory. Prior to starting with ACFD in 2010, Winnacker worked with the Fresno City and Newark Fire Departments. Winnacker grew up in Berkeley, graduated from UC Santa Barbara in 1997, and now lives in Albany with his wife and two daughters.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Dave Winnacker takes over as Orinda's new fire chief on Jan. 1, 2018.

Rather than hiring a recruiting firm to screen candidates, MOFD chose to use industry advertising, referrals and feedback from residents at public forums. Interviews were conducted by MOFD Board members. A panel of MOFD fire captains, including Interim Fire Chief Jerry Lee, assessed the final candidates.

For more information, visit www.mofd.org.

Orinda Resident Recognized as Influential Filipina Woman

Lily Torres-Samoranos, Esq. has been selected as one of the 100 Most Influential Filipina Woman in the World by the Filipina Women's Network (FWN). The Orinda resident received her award at the 14th Filipina Leadership Global Summit held in late October in Toronto, Canada.

"I am very excited and honored to receive this award, which is a validation of my body of work for years. It was also very exciting to meet my fellow awardees from 14 countries and find out more about the partnerships and collaborations we can create," says Torres-Samoranos. "I also thank

FWN for uniting all of us together to plan the future for our next generation of leaders in business and industry. Together we can accomplish many ways to strengthen our community and our make our presence known in the world."

Torres-Samoranos has 28 years of legal experience in trial litigation. Presently, she works at the Asian Pacific Islander Legal Outreach as an immigration attorney in the area of removal defense, deportation and both affirmative and defensive asylum.

— Sally Hogarty, Editor

Mayor's Award for Excellence



SALLY HOGARTY

In one of her last acts as mayor, **Eve Phillips** (far left) awarded the Mayor's Award of Excellence to the Miner Rd. Sink Hole "SWAT Team." Composed of (L-R) **Tod Fierner**, Public Works Inspector; **Cynthia Casey**, Senior Administrative Assistant; **Jason Chen**, Senior Civil Engineer; **Larry Theis**, Director of Public Works; **Osa Wolff**, City Attorney, and **Steve Ecklund**, Facilities & Parks Supervisor, the team worked long hours to ensure the sink hole was repaired as quickly as possible. Also shown are City Councilmembers (back row) incoming Mayor **Amy Worth**, incoming Vice Mayor **Inga Miller**, **Darlene Gee** and **Dean Orr**.

Outgoing Mayor Feted at City Council Meeting

Former Mayor Eve Phillips received many gifts and accolades at the Dec. 5 reorganization meeting of the Orinda City Council.

Her favorite gift, however, was a tiny gavel presented to her for her daughter Carrie, otherwise known as First Baby.

Amy Worth was selected as the new mayor with Inga Miller as Vice Mayor.



SALLY HOGARTY

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FIRST COFFEE: Thursday, January 11th, 2018
8:15 to 9:15 a.m.

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CARS / POLICE BLOTTER

CAR TIME

To Keep It or To Not Keep It?



By JOHN VANEK

Just about when the newness wears off your main family vehicle you find yourself having to spend money on it. It has given you almost 120,000 miles hauling the kids to baseball, scouts to camp and taking the family on many outings. It has been the unsung hero of your family and has not let you down to this point. It will be five more years before the youngest graduates high school so you still really need this vehicle.

Suddenly, the unthinkable happens: your transmission fails! It will cost major bucks to fix. Do you spend money fixing it, or do you replace it with a new vehicle? This is a common situation that arises all the time. The scenario may be different, but the situation is the same. You have a car you need to use but don't want to spend money on right now. Ultimately, replacing the vehicle is much more expensive, not just because of the staggering sticker price but also considering all of the other increasing expenses when replacing the family hauler.

When considering keeping your car, it is important to be aware of the general condition. The example I gave is pretty significant. What I am trying to establish is a thought process that involves the notion of spending a scary amount of money on your vehicle. Let's break it down and look at a comparison between repairing and replacing. Mr. and Mrs. Orinda have a 2006 Jeep Grand Cherokee that needs a transmission. The vehicle has approximately 95,000 miles on the odometer. They have maintained the car by the book and the 90K service was performed. The car has very little value with a blown transmission. With

a good transmission the value is restored. The real value is being able to use this car for another three to five years. The transmission job will cost about \$3500. Yikes!

Nonetheless, a new Grand Cherokee will cost you about \$42,000. Double Yikes! Tax alone is \$2650. Interest on payments: maybe \$1300. Insurance/DMV fees will rise about \$600 - \$800 per year. These additional expenses hit you immediately while the value of your new ride drops.

Okay, let's go back to fixing it. Will you get all your money back if you fix it and sell it tomorrow? No, you won't, but you will get the "value" out of it if by driving it for another three to five years. The new Jeep will depreciate several thousand dollars in the first few years. After years of ownership of the new Jeep, guess what happens? The wear and tear expenses start happening all over again. You are likely to need tires, battery and general maintenance just about when it is paid off. The vicious cycle continues, and we are all stuck in it.

Your vehicle may never require such a significant job as a transmission replacement, but there may be other repairs lurking. Spending \$1500 - \$2500 is significant enough for most of us. It is enough to make you consider buying new. If you keep up with the maintenance and repairs, you also keep the value of the vehicle up. Do your research. Could you even afford a new vehicle right now? Consult with your trusty car care provider about the condition of your existing car.

John Vanek can be reached at john@orindamotors.com.



POLICE BLOTTER

October 29 through December 9, 2017

Calls for Service

- 911 Hangup: 14 incidents.
- Abandoned Vehicle: 5 incidents.
- Accident Injury: 4 incidents.
- Accident Property: 19 incidents.
- Alarm, False: 135 incidents.
- Arson: 1 incident.
- Barking Dog: 2 incidents.
- Battery: 2 incidents.
- Beat Info: 1 incident.
- Burglary: 2 incidents.
- Burglary, Auto: 7 incidents.
- Burglary, Residential: 5 incidents.
- Civil Matter: 15 incidents.
- CVC Moving Violation: 159 incidents.
- CVC Non-Moving Violation: 126 incidents.
- Death Non Criminal: 3 incidents.
- Disturbance, Fighting: 1 incident.
- Disturbing the Peace: 1 incident.
- Drunk in Public: 1 incident.
- Fire/EMS Response Info: 3 incidents.
- Forgery: 2 incidents.
- Found Property: 1 incident.
- Fraud, Credit Card: 1 incident.
- Grand Theft: 1 incident.
- Grand Theft from Building: 2 incidents.
- Health & Safety Violation: 2 incidents.
- Hit & Run Misdemeanor: 2 incidents.
- Identity Theft: 3 incidents.
- Indecent Exposure: 2 incidents.
- Juvenile Disturbance: 4 incidents.
- Litter: 1 incident.
- Lost Property: 2 incidents.
- Loud Music: 2 incidents.
- Loud Noise: 3 incidents.
- Loud Party: 3 incidents.
- Medical Hospital: 7 incidents.
- Missing Adult: 4 incidents.
- Motorist Assist: 5 incidents.
- Occupied Stalled Vehicle: 5 incidents.
- Ordinance Violation: 12 incidents.
- Other Misdemeanor: 1 incident.
- Outside Assist: 46 incidents.
- Panhandling: 1 incident.
- Parking Detail: 144 incidents.
- Patrol Request: 51 incidents.

- Petty Theft: 4 incidents.
- Public Assembly Check: 3 incidents.
- Public Nuisance: 3 incidents.
- Reckless Driving: 19 incidents.
- Robbery, Strong Arm: 1 incident.
- School Check: 28 incidents.
- Security Check: 40 incidents.
- Service to Citizen: 133 incidents.
- Shoplift: 4 incidents.
- Shots Heard: 3 incidents.
- Suspicious Circumstances: 17 incidents.
- Suspicious Person Stop: 15 incidents.
- Suspicious Subject: 28 incidents.
- Suspicious Vehicle: 20 incidents.
- Suspicious Vehicle Stop: 36 incidents.
- Tow: 9 incidents.
- Traffic Collision/Property Damage: 1 incident.
- Traffic Hazard: 21 incidents.
- Traffic Stop: 2 incidents.
- Trespass: 4 incidents.
- Unwanted Guest: 3 incidents.
- Vacation House Check: 47 incidents.
- Vandalism: 8 incidents.
- Vehicle Blocking Driveway: 1 incident.
- Vehicle Theft: 1 incident.
- Vehicular Manslaughter: 1 incident.
- Verbal Dispute: 7 incidents.
- Walk Through: 4 incidents.
- Welfare Check: 16 incidents.

Arrest

- Drug Sales: 1 arrest.
- DUI Arrest: 2 arrests.
- Grand Theft: 1 arrest.
- Recovered Stolen Vehicle: 1 recovery.
- Warrant Arrest: 4 arrests.

BART Statistics

No incidents reported.

— Compiled by David Dierks
Assistant Editor

For more incident details, visit www.crimereports.com



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FIRST FRIDAY FORUM / FITNESS/ SCHOOLS

The Polar Night Comes to Orinda with Forum Talk



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Light shows like this one take place almost every night during the winter in polar regions.

By **BOBBIE DODSON**
Staff Writer

An unusual treat awaits attendees of the First Friday Forum on Jan. 5 – the Polar Night. It will be held at Lafayette-Orinda Presbyterian Church, 49 Knox Drive, Lafayette, with refreshments in the Fellowship Hall at 1 p.m. and the lecture in the sanctuary at 1:30 p.m. Dr. Stephen Mende, who has specialized in studying the aurora since 1965, titles his talk, “Spirits of the Polar Night.” He says there will be “movies, pictures, illustrations- you name it” in his PowerPoint presentation.

Mende says, “Auroras are often called the spirits of the polar night. As in the dark winter skies, in the polar regions, fascinating light shows take place almost every night. People have attributed fearsome properties

to these dancing luminosities in the sky,” Mende notes, “but now, after several hundred years of scientific research, we think we understand most aspects of the aurora.”

He further clarifies, “You might say it’s nature’s gigantic television display. Beams of electrons streaming down from space collide with the atmosphere, which acts as nature’s phosphor screen on which the multi-colored light show takes place.” His talk will specifically detail “why the aurora is colored the way it is, and why it only occurs in the polar regions. I’ll also explain why auroras occur preferentially in a circular region around the magnetic poles of the Earth. We know the aurora is part of a huge global electric current circuit, but how and where is the power generated? If we knew this could we use this gigantic

[SEE FORUM page 14]

SCHOOL CALENDAR

JANUARY

- 1 **All Schools Closed.** (Orinda Academy, closed through Jan. 7.)
- 8 **Miramonte High School**, 6 p.m. Sport Booster meeting. 7 p.m., Mindfulness meet-up.
- Orinda Unified School District**, 6 p.m., board meeting, 8 Altarinda Road, Orinda.
- 10 **Miramonte High School**, 7 p.m., Governing Board Meeting, AUHSD Community Room, 1212 Pleasant Hill Road, Lafayette.
- 13 **Holden High School**, 2 p.m. - 5 p.m. (stay as long as you’d like), Holden Zumbathon Charity Event, Zumba is a fun, aerobic fitness program featuring Latin American dance movement and music. No dance experience needed. All are welcome!
- 15 **All Schools Closed.**
- 17 **Miramonte High School**, 9:30 a.m. Parents Club meeting.
- 19 **Orinda Intermediate School**, 9 a.m., Parents Club Meeting.
- Del Rey Elementary School**, Parents Club Bingo Night.
- 25 **Miramonte High School**, 7 p.m., Public Speaking Showcase. Also, Jan 26.
- 27 **Miramonte High School**, 7 p.m., Winter Ball.
- 28 **Miramonte Boosters Club**, 5-8 p.m. Booster Mardi Gras Madness Fundraiser! at the Moraga Country Club.

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

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- Valerie Gong

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Magic Girls and Boys SoccerFest Champions



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Congratulations to the **California Magic 08 Girls** and **08 Boys** for a Magical Finals performance at the San Ramon Soccerfest! Both teams worked hard all tournament taking first place in their respective divisions. Boys Coach Jasko Begovic said, "Magic worked hard all season and showed amazing character, skill and determination throughout the four games in the tournament." Girls Coach Beto Zambrano noted, "The team did a great job meeting all their goals for the tournament, and I am very proud of the team."



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Donate Blood to Save a Life

By RUBY LOWE
Miramonte Student

The most important part of the holiday season is giving to others. This season, you can continue giving to others and help your community by donating blood at St. Mark's Methodist Church on Jan. 27. Did you know that many blood banks across the country don't receive enough donations to meet the demand of hospitals? This is because only 37 percent of the U.S. population is eligible to donate blood, but less than 10 percent do annually. Additionally, someone in the U.S. needs a blood transfusion every two seconds and approximately one out of every seven people entering a hospital will need blood.

When I learned about these staggering statistics, I decided to dedicate my Girl Scout Gold Award project to combatting the blood shortage crisis in America. The



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Campolindo senior **Ruby Lowe** (R), shown here with **Ashley Thomas**, is organizing her second annual blood drive at St. Mark's Church in Orinda.

Gold Award is the highest achievement a Senior or Ambassador Girl Scout can earn by completing an 80-hour community service project.

I hosted my first blood drive in August and was thrilled to see so much support

[SEE BLOOD DRIVE page 14]

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LIBRARY GALLERY

Gallery: “Art From Night Dreams,” Ceramics and Landscapes

By ELANA O’LOSKEY
Staff Writer

The Lamorinda Arts Council invites you to celebrate the New Year by visiting the Orinda Library Art Gallery to view “Art From Night Dreams” and dream art books by Diane Rusnak, *plein air* oil paintings by Lana Rak and Japanese inspired raku ceramics by Barbara Stevens Strauss. Meet them at their artist reception on Jan. 7 from 2:30 to 4:30 p.m. where light refreshments will be served.

Diane Rusnak of San Pablo has been making and showing art for 50 years. She taught art for over 40 years and is retired from Berkeley City College and Contra Costa College. Early on, she became interested in dream images; the mysterious dream is the one she is interested in painting.

She is showing about 20 acrylic paintings on canvas with the theme “Art From Night Dreams” and a number of dream art books. These are not dream journals per se, but fine art books exploring particular dream subjects. Their sizes vary from tiny books that fit into a metal box to larger books unfolding to 30 pages. Several of her dream art books unfold like an accordion.

Rusnak agrees with Langston Hughes who says, “Hold fast to dreams, / For if dreams die / Life is a broken-winged bird, / That cannot fly.” For the past 25 years, she has been holding fast to her dreams by participating in a small dream group that meets every other week. Personally, she has written down over 5,000 dreams and chooses to make art from those that are most puzzling and strong. That puts her on the learning edge, right where she wants to be. Look for *The Dreaming Chambers*, a 36” x 40” acrylic on canvas for a peek into her dream world. Visit www.dianerusnakart.com to see more of Rusnak’s artwork.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Among the pieces **Lana Rak** will exhibit during January is *Hello*, a 12” x 18” oil on linen board.

anerusnakart.com to see more of Rusnak’s artwork.

Lana Rak was born and raised in Kiev, Ukraine and now calls Danville home. She has been painting since she was 12 years old and won’t be stopping any time soon. The genres she paints include still life, cityscapes, *plein air* (paintings painted out of doors), abstract and figurative. Two of the works she is showing are large, *Tango* and *San Francisco*, both of which are 36” x 24” oil paintings. The rest are smaller works including *plein air* oil paintings.

Rak keeps her work fresh by participating in *plein air* events such as Plein Air Easton in Maryland, the Carmel Art Festival and Telluride Plein Air where she meets fellow artists, sees what they are doing and looks for new ideas that push her out of her comfort zone. “I like *plein air* painting because I have to work very fast, very quickly, so the conditions force me to be creative,” says Rak. For more of her artwork, visit www.lanarak.com.

lanarak.com.

Barbara Stevens Strauss of Berkeley lives in the midst of her passions: raku ceramics, ikebana, Japanese tea ceremony and Zen Buddhism. She has been working with ceramics for 20 years and has a studio in Berkeley. Her love of raku, a Japanese firing method, requires that when you pull the clay out of the kiln with tongs, you wave it around in order to get a crackle effect. Next, while the clay is glowing in the dark, you set it into a bucket of sand or water to cool - a very dramatic moment. No one knows what the raku will look like when it emerges so you have to be able to live with that lack of control if you like making raku ceramics.

The seven ceramic pieces she is showing are all different - high fire with oxides, pit fired and low fired raku. Look for *Utahime (Diva)*, a 20” x 10” x 9” raku fired ceramic with glazes on a koa wood base. The Japanese aesthetic, as Strauss understands it, engenders a minimalist expression of deep reverence for nature. Strauss says she owes

all of her knowledge about Japanese culture to her two teachers, Sensi Soho Sakai for ikebana at the Orinda Community Center and Yoshi Akiba for the Japanese tea ceremony. To learn more about Stevens Strauss’ ceramics, visit www.bstevensart.com.

Regarding the value of art to the community, Rusnak says, “Our life is full of visual chaos – traffic, advertising, the Internet – which can become abrasive. Art brings a path or order to that chaos and turns it into something you want to experience such as a painting, a dance or a piece of music.” Rak sounds equally positive: “When people create art and others experience it, it brings us together as humans.” Strauss says, “Art transports you from one era to another.”

Visit the gallery at 26 Orinda Way during normal library hours – Mon. through Thurs., 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.; Friday and Saturday, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.; and Sunday, 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. The library is closed on Jan. 1 and 15. Call 925-254-2184 for more information or visit <http://ccclib.org>.



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Tree of Lights

Victoria White and her family waited for over two hours to be the first in line to visit with Santa at the Hospice East Bay annual Orinda Tree of Lights ceremony on Dec. 2. The ceremony featured two choir performances by Orinda school children followed by Santa's arrival via Moraga-Orinda Fire District Fire Engine. The Orinda Chamber of Commerce arranged for Santa's special appearance during his busiest time of the year. Hospice East Bay provides compassionate end-of-life care for terminally ill patients while offering support for the entire family. Hospice East Bay has served over 28,000 patients and celebrated its 40th anniversary last year.



DAVID DIERKS

◆ **LETTERS** from page 4

Thank you, Mayor Phillips, for your public service and leadership.
— Owen Murphy

◆ **ORINDA DOES NOT NEED A DOWNTOWN SPECIFIC PLAN**

I disagree with Tom Trowbridge and Kirsten Larsen, who wrote on behalf of OrindaVision and What's Up Downtown Orinda, that the passage of Senate Bill 35 means that Orinda should create a Downtown Specific Plan because otherwise the State or developers will do it for us. This kind of scare argument is based on misunderstanding SB 35. In fact, SB 35 does not require Orinda to make any zoning changes. SB 35 does not allow the State or developers to change our zoning. All that SB 35 does is to speed the approval process for projects that comply with existing zoning. Existing zoning includes the height and density limits that most of us cherish. A Downtown Specific Plan would be a Trojan Horse that would ultimately undo those vital limits. Supporters of a Downtown Specific Plan want to raise the height limit and increase density. Don't be fooled or misled into supporting a Downtown Specific Plan.
— Nick Waranoff

◆ **PRESIDENT** from page 3

be broken so relax and stop feeling guilty. Almost 80 percent of all people who make New Year's resolutions abandon them sometime during the year. This is just the date to choose if you want to be part of the crowd.

Jan. 19 is **Popcorn Day**. Historians believe that corn, whose kernels could be popped, was first cultivated around the 5th millennium BC in Mexico. In Orinda, it is a popular movie munchie. Popcorn became popular in the U.S. around the early 1900s when it was sold on street corners under the name of Pearls. Before bubble wrap, we used popcorn as packaging material.

On Jan. 24, attend the **eReader workshop** and learn how to find, download and read eBooks from our library's large and growing collection. A working knowledge of your eReader is required. Register online at cclib.org or visit or call the library to register for this workshop.

Jan. 27 is Miramonte's **Winter Ball**. Thank you to the parents and staff who make this beautiful event so special. Or spend your time at the **Sci-Fi Film Festival at Orinda Theatre** and see some fantasy and classic sci-fi films. Stay in costume and attend the Miramonte **Booster Mardi Gras Madness Fundraiser!** on Jan. 28.

During the month, put on your jacket and take a walk to check on your neighbors, soak up some sunshine, and go to town!



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VISUAL ARTS / REAL ESTATE

Wayne Miller's Photos of Orinda Children at the Moraga Art Gallery

By ELANA O'LOSKEY
Staff Writer

Jeanette Miller, daughter of world-class photojournalist and Orinda resident Wayne Miller (1918 – 2013), is displaying 11 black and white photographs taken by her father between 1952 and 1958 at the Moraga Art Gallery between Jan. 9 and Mar. 19. The public is invited to meet Jeanette at the opening reception on Jan. 13 from 5 to 7 p.m. while enjoying art, wine, light refreshments and music. Jeanette's sister, Dana Blencowe of Ft. Bragg, is helping to organize the show.

All the photos are of children in Orinda because they are digital prints excerpted from Miller's 192-page book, *The World is Young* (1958). Miller's aim was to capture the universal truths of childhood. He did this by photographing not only his own four children but many other children in Orinda as they grew through childhood to adolescence between 1952 - 1958. Keeping with Miller's photojournalist style, most of the photos are candid rather than posed.

Jeanette Miller relates that, in the 1950s,

the Orinda Theatre was quite the center of local activity. Children under a certain age were invited to a Santa Party every year. The lobby was decked out with a huge Christmas tree and a spot for Santa. Children lined up and one by one Santa gave each child a present. In Miller's photograph of the children inside the theater, you can see the gifts from Santa clutched in their hands. After they received their gifts, they entered the theater and watched cartoons. "There were no grown-ups present; they were not invited, because it was just for kids," said Jeanette.

Having grown up in Chicago, Miller studied banking at the University of Illinois at Urbana while working as a photographer. In Urbana, he met Joan Baker (1921 – 2014), who was to become his wife of 70 years. His first task during his 30-year career as a photojournalist was to become a WWII combat photographer. Edward Steichen, a giant of 20th-century American photography, recruited him into the US Navy in 1942 as a Lieutenant. He was on the move continuously during the war, documenting

[SEE MILLER page 12]



WAYNE MILLER

Wayne Miller captured the children's joy in this scene from 1950's Santa Party held at the Orinda Theatre. After the children received their presents from Santa, they would go into the theater to watch cartoons.

Real Estate Reality

California home prices on track to hit a record high in 2018, Realtor forecast says



MAUREEN WILBUR

Realtor economist Leslie Appleton-Young predicts California's five-year run of rising home prices is expected to last another three to five years.

The California Association of Realtors forecast home prices will increase an additional 4.2 percent in 2018, rising to a median of \$561,020. If the forecast proves accurate, the existing single-family home prices will exceed the record high of \$560,270 set in 2007. Prices, however, will remain well below pre-recession records when taking inflation into account.

Single-family home sales also are projected to increase in the state next year, but at a much more modest pace, the Realtor forecast said. CAR projected 426,200 houses will change hands, up one percent from this year's level.

Overall, the gains in both house prices and sales are lower than in past years, perhaps signaling the California housing

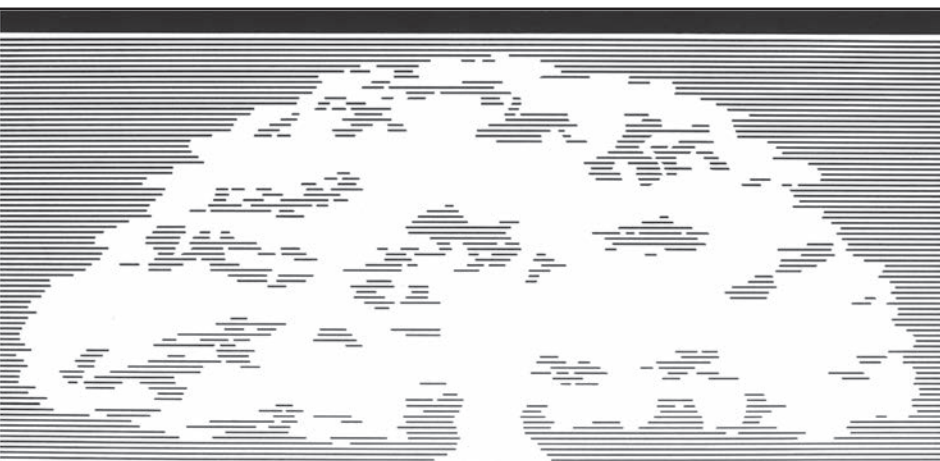
market's "rate of acceleration has been slowing," said Appleton-Young.

The big mystery in the housing market, however, is why the pace of sales and price growth isn't higher given that jobs and incomes have been rising. The answer lies in twin ills that have plagued the housing market for the past four years: Too few homes for sale and too few buyers able to afford those that are on the market at today's prices.

"It's so odd to look at this in an environment where you've seen such rapid job growth and income growth and low (mortgage interest) rates," Appleton-Young said. "A lack of inventory and affordability... are really keeping a lid on the California housing market. We have fewer transactions... today than when we had 10 million fewer people living in California."

Pulling out an old economics lesson,

[SEE REALTY page 12]



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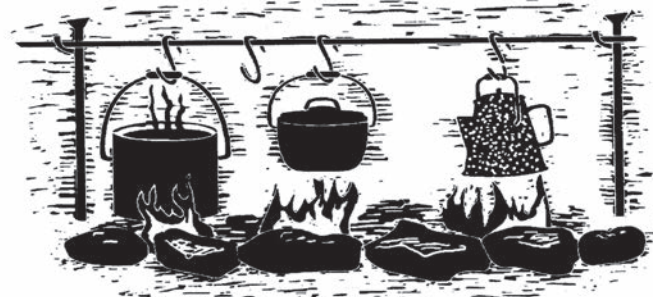
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OBITUARY

◆ REALTY from page 11

Appleton-Young noted that high home-price appreciation usually leads to “a supply response” – that is, more homeowners taking advantage of higher prices.

“We just haven’t seen that happening,” she said.

The reason, she said, is home sellers face possible consequences after big price gains. Not only do they lose their Prop. 13 tax advantages when they move, they also can face a capital gains tax on profits that exceed \$250,000 for individuals and \$500,000 for married couples.

Meanwhile, buyers are constrained as well, the economist noted. Rents have been rising so fast that few millennials can save up for a down payment to buy a home.

While half of Californians could afford the median-priced house when the market recovery started in 2012, only 26 percent will be able to afford a detached, single-family home next year, the forecast said.

A lack of homes for sale – due in part to under building – has become the new

norm, Appleton-Young said. But the scarcity is most pronounced for lower-priced, entry-level homes for first-time buyers.

“The low end is kind of disappearing,” she said. “It pushes people inland. It pushes people out of state.”

CAR also expects mortgage interest rates to rise slightly next year, but not enough to deter home buyers. Rates for traditional 30-year, fixed mortgages are forecast to rise to 4.3 percent in 2018. That’s still low compared with historical averages but up from 4 percent this year and 3.6 percent in 2016.

If rates were to go much higher, “housing will be hit hard,” Appleton-Young said. She doesn’t expect that to occur, however. Instead, Appleton-Young expects home prices to continue rising for the next few years.

“I know that this cycle will not last forever,” Appleton-Young said. “I would guess we’ve got maybe three to five more years where things can eke out the kind of increases that we’ve seen over the past couple of years.”

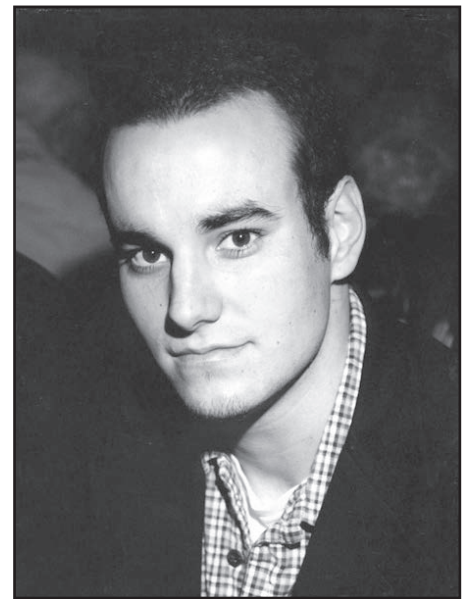
Obituary: Brenton N. Farmer (1979 – 2017)

It is with great sadness that the family of Brenton N. Farmer announced his unexpected death at the age of 37 this past summer. Brent will be forever remembered by his parents, Al and Sue Farmer, of Orinda, along with his five siblings and their spouses: Laura (Jim), Chris (Lisa), Steve (Adam), Patti (Dan) and Alan (Jessica). He will also be fondly remembered by his five nieces and nephews.

Brent was born in Pittsburgh, PA, but spent his early years in England with his family. At the age of five, he moved to Orinda and remained there for the rest of his life.

Brent had many friends who loved him for his honesty, sense of fun and kindness. He never seemed to have a quarter in his pocket because once he covered his needs, he always shared the remainder with his friends. Brent wanted to move forward with his life, but the severe mental illness that consumed him as a young adult prevented him from achieving independence.

When Brent was first diagnosed with schizoaffective disorder, his family was overwhelmed by the magnitude of the situation. The National Alliance for Mental Illness (NAMI) became a life-saving resource for his family – counseling, legal



Brenton N. Farmer.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

and medical guidance and invaluable emotional support. A Memorial Fund at NAMI has been set to honor Brent’s memory. All funds will go to support the Contra Costa chapter of NAMI. To contribute, please go to this website: www.namicontracosta.org/brent-farmer/ or mail a check to: NAMCC, c/o Brenton N. Farmer Memorial Fund, PO Box 21247, Concord, CA 94521.

◆ MILLER from page 11

WWII by land, by sea and by air. He produced some of the most compelling wartime images ever recorded. Wayne, his wife Joan and their three children – Jeanette, David and Dana - moved to Orinda in 1949 where their fourth child, Peter, was born. Inga Miller, Orinda Vice Mayor, is Miller’s granddaughter.

Steichen became director of photography at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City. He asked Miller to help curate an exhibit entitled, “The Family of Man.” It traveled worldwide and was seen by over nine million people. The photo Miller took of the birth of his son David, umbilical cord and all, was included in the show. It was also one of the photos Carl Sagan designated to be carried as an artifact into space aboard time capsules in two Voyager spacecraft. Miller continued working as a photojournalist by freelancing for *Life*, *Ebony*, and *National Geographic*. To view more of his work, visit www.magnumphotos.com/photographer/wayne-miller.

Lisa Gunn, who is a member of the Moraga Art Gallery, is the featured artist during the same time period. Gunn is showing large oil paintings with the theme “Garden Abstraction.” Get to know other art lovers and visit the Moraga Art Gallery in the Rheem Shopping Center, 522 Center Street, Moraga, 925-376-5407, www.moragaartgallery.com. Hours are Wed. – Sun., 12 noon to 5 p.m. It’s closed Monday and Tuesday.

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Acalanes Board Position

The Acalanes Union High School District is accepting applicants for a provisional board position until 4 p.m. on Jan. 8. The vacancy must be filled by Feb. 12 with the position up for election in November 2018. Applications are available at the district office, 1212 Pleasant Hill Road, in Lafayette, or online at www.acalanes.k12.ca.us. For more information, call 925-280-3902.

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CALENDAR

ON THE CALENDAR

JANUARY

- 4 **Orinda Books**, 10 a.m., Story Hour with Cathy G. 2-4 year olds and their grown-ups are invited for a lively hour of books and fun. Also Jan. 11, 18 and 25. 276 Village Square, Orinda, info@orindabooks.com, 925-254-7606.
- City of Orinda**, 5 p.m., The Taste of the World Market Street Feast food trucks Orinda Community Center. Also, Jan. 11, 18 and 25.
- 5 **First Friday Forum**, 1 p.m., Polar Night! Lafayette-Orinda Presbyterian Church, 49 Knox Drive, Lafayette. See article pg. 7.
- 7 **Orinda Library Art Gallery**, 2:30 - 4:30 p.m., artist reception from 2:30 - 4:30 p.m. with light refreshments. View paintings by Diane Rusnak and Lana Lak, also Barbara Stevens Strauss raku ceramics. See article p. 9.
- 13 **Moraga Art Gallery**, 5 - 7 p.m., reception for exhibit of Wayne Miller's photos of Orinda children circa 1952-58 presented by his daughter, Jeanette Miller. Enjoy wine, light refreshments and music. Also "Garden Abstractions," oil paintings by Lisa Gunn. 522 Center St., Moraga, 925-376-5407. See article p. 11.
- 16 **World Affairs Book Group**, 3 p.m. will discuss *MILLENIUM: From Religion to Revolution: How Civilization Has Changed Over a Thousand Years*, by Ian Mortimer. The discussion will be lead by Jim Sibbring. 276 Village Square, Orinda, 925-254-7606.
- 17 **Orinda Books**, 11:30 a.m., Literary Luncheon with Victoria Sweet (author of *God's Hotel*) discussing *Slow Medicine: The Way to Healing*. \$12, for reservation, call 925-254-7606.
- 27 **McDonnell Nursery**, 10 a.m., Winter Rose Pruning Workshop, call to register 925-254-3713.
- Red Cross Blood Drive**, 9 a.m., St. Mark's Church, 451 Moraga Way, Orinda. To schedule your appointment, or for more information, visit redcrossblood.org. See article pg. 6.
- 28 **Lamorinda Home Expo**, 10 a.m., Vetrans Memorial Building, 3780 Mt. Diablo Blvd. Lafayette, www.homeexpoevents.com.
- 31 **Orinda Books**, 7 p.m., Michael Benanav will discuss *Himalaya Bound*, a gripping story of a nomadic family's migration to the high Himalayan Plains. 276 Village Square, Orinda, 925-254-7606.

AT THE LIBRARY

All events are free unless otherwise specified. For more information, call 254-2184 or visit www.ccclib.org/locations/Orinda.html. The library will be closed on Jan. 1 and 15.

- 5 **Teen Coloring Club**, 4 p.m. Join the Orinda Library TAG to de-stress, relax and have fun. The library provides age appropriate coloring books and colored pencils; you provide the inspiration and creativity. Free and open to all. Also Jan. 12 and 26.
- 6 **Open Hearts Workshop: Where Compassion Meets Creativity**, 10:30 a.m., Join Mindful Littles and the Orinda Library for a fun workshop where families can explore creative ways to learn and practice compassion. Participants will leave with the warm fuzzies and more open hearts. Registration is required. Please sign up at <http://bit.ly/2C5DzBE>. Children must attend with a parent or guardian.
- 8 **Mindful Aging: Brain Chargers** – Registration 10 a.m., for Jan 22, 29, Feb. 5 and 12 at 10:30 a.m. Join us for an hour of brain stimulating activities - Elder Paws (reading aloud to a dog, solving puzzles, and coloring). Space is limited. Open to adults 55 years or older. Sign up for a session by telephone or in person at the Orinda Library.
- Orinda Library Writers Group**, 6:30 p.m. Meet with a friendly group of beginning writers in a supportive environment to motivate, critique and inspire one another. Share two pages of your writing (any genre) and get feedback from the group. Also, Jan. 22.
- 11 **ESL Conversation Circle**, 1 to 3 p.m. For adults, practice and improve English conversation skills in a small, informal group, Registration not required. Also Jan. 18 and 25.
- 19 **Mystery Book Club**, 3-4:30 p.m. Join the Orinda Mystery Book Club to uncover and discuss the new mystery book of the month. Meetings every third Friday of the month.
- Orinda Library TAG Meeting**, 4 p.m., Monthly meeting of the Orinda Library Teen Advisory Group.
- 25 **Introduction to Chair Yoga**, 1 p.m., Get an introduction to yoga in a chair from Atna Yoga Studio.

CLUB MEETINGS

- American Association of University Women (AAUW)** General meetings third Tues., <http://oml-ca.aauw.net> or email Marty Schimbor at mgschimbor@comcast.net. Jan. 16, 9:30 a.m. Kath Delaney, founder of Madera Group, a social impact agency dedicated to moving mission-minded leaders and organizations forward, will be the keynote speaker at the Orinda Community Church. She will address the three obstacles to empowerment and discuss best practices in fundraising and social media to better leverage your brand, preferred charity, cause or candidate.
- Diablo Star Chapter #214**, Order of the Eastern Star. Second Monday, 7:30 p.m. Orinda Masonic Center, Karen Seaborn, 925-689-0995.
- Friends of the Joaquin Moraga Adobe**. Third Monday, 7:30 p.m., Garden Room, Orinda Library, www.moragaadobe.org.
- Friends of the Orinda Creeks**. Fourth Wednesday, 8:30 a.m., May Room, Orinda Library, 925-253-1997.
- Guided Meditation**. Wednesdays, 9 a.m. St. Mark's United Methodist Church, 451 Moraga Way, Orinda, focuses on health, harmony and wholeness, 925-254-5965.
- Lamorinda Alcohol Policy Coalition**. Third Wednesday, 10 to 11:30 a.m., Orinda City Hall Sarge Littlehale Room, 925-687-8844, ext. 227.
- Lamorinda Nature Walk and Bird watching** for seniors. Wednesdays, 9 to 11 a.m., free. Call 925-254-2445 for weekly meeting place.
- Lamorinda Sirs** for retired men. Second Wednesday, 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., Holy Trinity Cultural Center, 1700 School St., Moraga, Pete Giers, 925-254-4667.
- Lamorinda Sunrise Rotary**. Every Friday, 7 a.m., Lafayette Park Hotel, 3287 Mt. Diablo Blvd., Lafayette, www.lamorindasunrise.com or 925-283-8288.
- Lamorinda Toastmasters**. Every Tuesday, 7:30 p.m., Temple Isaiah, 945 Risa Road, Lafayette, <http://lamorinda.toastmastersclubs.org>.
- Montelindo Garden Club**. Third Friday, 9 a.m., Sept. through May, St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, 66 St. Stephen's Drive, www.montelindogarden.com. Jan. 19, 9 a.m., Fresh Ideas for Your Front Yard, with Janet Sluis, Director of Sunset Western Garden Collection and a Berkeley-based horticulturist who will look at new trend-setting ideas for your California front yard. 925-284-8193.
- Orinda Association**. Second Monday, 7 p.m., Orinda Library, May Room, 925-254-0800.
- Orinda Garden Club**, 315 Camino Sobrante, Orinda 925-257-0668 or going to www.eventbrite.com.

“The Spirit of Sharing” Raises Funds for Children’s Health Guild



LIBBY DAFFERNER

(L-R) Orinda residents **Audrey Mao** and **Andrea Brown**, co-chairs of the Children's Health Guild (CHG) Spirit of Sharing fundraiser, are shown here with keynote speaker **Diane Dietz**, President and CEO of Rodan + Fields, and CHG President, **Michelle Berolzheimer**. The event, which was held on Dec. 1 at the Ritz Carlton, San Francisco, was attended by 389 guests and raised \$200K to benefit UCSF Benioff Children's Hospital of Oakland and George Mark Children's House in San Leandro. "These two life-changing organizations together provide the most advanced medical technology and compassionate care to children regardless of their family's ability to pay," said Berolzheimer. For more information about CHG and their beneficiaries, visit www.childrenshealthguild.org.

Orinda Hiking Club. Every weekend and first Wednesday, www.orindahiking.org or Ian at 925-254-1465.

Orinda Historical Society. Call 925-254-1353 for times and location of meetings.

Orinda Job's Daughters. First and third Monday, 7 p.m., 9 Altarinda Road, 925-283-7176.

Orinda Junior Women's Club community service group. First Tuesday, September through June, 7 p.m., www.orindajuniors.org.

Orinda Masonic Lodge #122 F&AM. First Thursday every month, except holidays, at 9 Altarinda Road, Orinda Masonic Center, Orinda. Family Dinner at 6:30 p.m., meeting at 8 p.m., 925-254-5211, www.orindalodge.org.

Orinda Rotary. Every Wednesday, noon, Orinda Community Center, 28 Orinda Way, 925-254-2222, www.orindarotary.org. Jan. 3: Our scribe will introduce the Rotarians to Volcanoes in California. Take a journey to the Fire Mountains of the Golden State, from Mount Shasta to the Berkeley Hills. Jan. 10, Sally Hogarty Live Theater in the East Bay: An Abundance of Artistic Riches. Jan. 20, 6 p.m. All You Can Eat Crab Feed, Masonic Hall, Orinda. Everyone will be served at their tables with wine included and we expect to have a sellout, so get your tickets early. Tickets are \$55 call 254-2222. Jan. 24: Ted Urban will speak about Art in Public Places. Jan. 31, Modern Riffs on the Bard: Translating Shakespeare for Today's Audiences. Cal Shakes Dramaturg, Phillipa Kelly, explains how Shakespeare's plays are made relevant in the 21st Century.

Orinda/Tábor (Czech Republic) Sister City Foundation. Fourth Thursday, 7 p.m., social, 7:30 p.m., meeting, call 925-254-8260 for location.

Orinda Teen Advisory Council. Second Wednesday, 4 p.m., Community Center, 28 Orinda Way, email orindateenadvisorycouncil@gmail.com.

Orinda Woman's Club. Second Tuesday, 9:30 a.m. to noon, call Jean Barnhart, 925-254-3881, or www.orindawomansclub.org.

CITY/FIRE/MEETING SCHEDULE

City Council. First and third Tuesdays, 7 p.m., Library Auditorium, www.cityoforinda.org.

Historic Landmarks Committee. Fourth Tuesday, 3 to 5 p.m., Library Garden Room. Call 925-788-7323.

Moraga-Orinda Fire District. First and third Wednesday of the month, 7 p.m. Visit www.mofd.org/board/meetings; meeting location will be posted on the agenda.

Planning Commission. Second and fourth Tuesdays, 7 p.m., Orinda Library Auditorium, www.cityoforinda.org.

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



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PETS / SCOUTS

Something to Howl About...
Animal Tales

What's New This Year



Jennifer Conroy

It's a new year, a good time to look at what's new in the companion animal world. There are many products that might interest you.

Growing in popularity are GPS collars that can track the whereabouts of a dog or cat. They range in price from about \$50 to nearly \$200, depending on the features that typically include loading a tracking app on your phone or tablet. Call me old-fashioned, but my favorite way to track my companion animals is by having them with me where I can interact directly with them. I do recommend reflective collars for cats and dogs, available at every pet supply store. And don't forget about microchipping, which is much cheaper (typically under \$20 and sometimes offered at free clinics) and readily available through your veterinarian. And, it won't fall off!

For cats who love to hang out under furniture, there's something called the Cat Crib that costs about \$20 and is essentially a small hammock you can string up under a chair. For small home dwellers, this could be a great space conserver, while affording your cat the privacy that some kitties crave.

Car seat covers that are waterproof and come with safety belts can help keep your car paw-print proof while protecting your dog. They are available in assorted sizes. They run about \$35.

If your stay-at-home cat gets fascinated by watching videos on your laptop, consider adding a laptop scratching pad that perches over the keyboard. That little gem costs under \$30.

One of my favorites is the pooch selfie stick that affixes to your phone and holds a tennis ball to capture your dog's attention. Personally, I prefer the selfies of me with a dog licking my face!

As far as catching your cat's attention, you might try the feline laser scratching post with the built-in laser light that will shine randomly on the floor, walls, etc.

To keep the year "new" every month, you can sign up for a subscription service

that delivers a variety of either dog or cat treats to your front door. Speaking of doors, there are now pet doors that open and close automatically by reading your animal's microchip. The flap automatically opens when your cat or dog approaches and then closes once the animal is clear. I'm not quite sure what the advantage of that is, although it may afford some sense of security for your home and can be helpful for senior animals.

These gadgets and products can be found easily through an internet search, and you will find that prices vary dramatically from vendor to vendor for similar products. Before choosing any of them, make sure to read reviews of other customers. Most importantly, remember that no gizmo can ever replace the attention you give your animal companion. If there is one thing that is old every new year, it's the fact that you are and always will be your animal's best friend.

◆ BUZZ from page 16

dent Jennifer Brophy, a Certified Ayurvedic Practitioner. "I completed over 2,000 program hours of academic and clinical training in classical Ayurveda to earn a Master of Arts degree from Mount Madonna Institute. Art of Ayurveda skin balms help keep the body and mind in balance," says Brophy. Mayana offers dark chocolate tasty treats in several distinctive flavors such as crispy coconut cookie, peanut butter and vanilla shortbread. You will also want to take advantage of the free gift wrapping available here.

Lina Shatara works out of her San Francisco studio and is committed to local and sustainable production. "My love of travel inspires my creativity and heavily influences my jewelry designs," says Shatara. Her most recent journeys have been to Istanbul, India, and Hong Kong.

Lina Shatara Jewelry Pop-up is open daily until Feb. 3 from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. For more information, visit the website at www.linashatara.com or pop an email to Lina at lina@linashatara.com.

Wagner Ranch Girl Scouts Troop

Getting into the spirit of helping Others, the Girl Scouts of Wagner Ranch Elementary School held their annual One Warm Coat drive the week before Thanksgiving. Troops made signs and held them up as students were dropped off/picked up at school on several mornings and afternoons to advertise the effort. They collected 92 coats, along with many hats, scarves and gloves. The coats were delivered to City Team in downtown Oakland and will be distributed to people in need over the coming months. Shown at right are Girl Scouts Agnes Swaney, Charlotte Sluis and Corrian Boonzaier.



VANESSA SMITH

– Sally Hogarty, Editor



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BUSINESS BUZZ

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Piccolo Napoli Accepts Bitcoin

It used to be tradition, tradition and now, my friends, it is transition, transition. Hail to Piccolo Napoli in Theatre Square, where customers may buy dinner using Bitcoin, a crypto currency created in 2009. Owners Maria and Peter Eberle were persuaded by one of their loyal customers, Matt Sitzman, about the value of accepting this form of digital currency.

“Essentially 97 percent of our customers use credit or debit cards, which incur a surcharge from two to four percent that our business must cover. The credit card companies justify this additional charge because of the prevalence of fraud transactions and the surcharge covers that. By comparison, a very small fee is charged to the individual at the outset when purchasing Bitcoin. Subsequently, when spending the

money there are very tiny transaction fees with each transaction, nothing even close to one percent,” says Peter Eberle.

The attraction for merchants is that payment is received immediately, compared with credit cards, which take 24 hours to process. A smart phone is necessary because users access the digital currency using a virtual wallet application, in this case “Bit Pay.” Eberle believes it will catch on for many money transactions, including sending money home and making purchases.

“Bitcoin must comply with the Patriot Act and IRS regulations, and it carries the advantage that it can be purchased in nearly every currency. There is no currency conversion fee,” points out Eberle.

After working in finance and traveling the globe, Peter established Piccolo Napoli with his wife Maria, incorporating her family recipes into the dishes served at the Orinda establishment. House specialties



DEB SITZMAN

Regular customer **Matt Sitzman** (L) convinced owner **Peter Eberle** (R) to accept Bitcoin at his restaurant Piccolo Napoli in Theatre Square.

such as Melanzane Da Napoli, Vegetariano Calzone and Carne Calzone are available, along with nine different pizza offerings, including the option of gluten free. You may build your own pizza, should you desire. A gluten free 10-inch pizza is on the menu and you will not want to miss the delicious gelato.

A native Orindan, Peter attended Sleepy Hollow School and has lived here on and off for the past 40 years. He and Maria have four adult children. They enjoy mountain biking and skiing whenever time allows. Peter sits on the Board of Directors of the Orinda Chamber of Commerce.

Piccolo Napoli is open Wednesday through Sunday from 11:30 a.m. to 9 p.m. and Monday and Tuesday from 4 p.m. to 9 p.m. Piccolo Napoli is a member of the Orinda Chamber of Commerce. For more information, visit the website at www.piccolo-napoli.com or call 925-253-1225.

have been doing events with local artists and designers for 11 years and decided to do a pop-up storefront for a limited period of time, in addition to the single events. Among our finds are metal and precious and semi-precious stone jewelry pieces, leather bracelets, beauty and home products,” says Shatara.

A tour of this boutique reveals a wide variety of gift items, all from Bay Area designers and small businesswomen, such as Silver and Bone, Elana Jovero Jewelry, Stable and Sea, Mayana Chocolates, Christy Natsumi Jewelry, Anecdote Candles, Art of Ayurveda, and leather goods from Timmy Mays.

Among this variety of presents, whether for you or somebody else, you will find soothing skin balms made by Moraga resi-

[SEE BUZZ page 15]

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Lina Shatara Jewelry Pop-up in Theatre Square

Designer Lina Shatara creates her own line of distinctive pieces of jewelry, each one a unique handmade original. As a result of her passion for supporting local handmade designers and women owned businesses, Shatara has opened her pop-up boutique in Theatre Square, on the street level across from Coldwell Banker. You must act fast for your Valentine, because Lina Shatara Jewelry Pop-up is here only until Feb. 3.

“I am excited to be in Orinda. We have received a warm reception from the community and appreciate our customers. I



VALERIE HOTZ

Artist and jewelry designer **Lina Shatara** hosts her boutique, Lina Shatara Pop Up, featuring a variety of unique handmade gifts, until Feb. 3.

HAPPY NEW YEAR BIG SALE%

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