

# THE ORINDA NEWS

Gratis  
Volume 27, Number 3

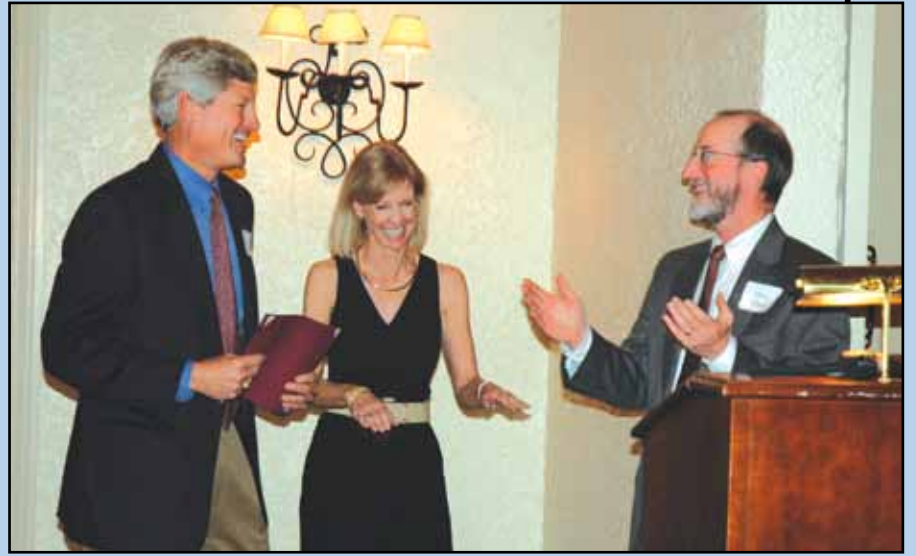
Published by The Orinda Association  
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12 Issues Annually  
March 2012

## Orinda Association Honors Local Volunteers at Gala Awards Banquet



SALLY HOGARTY  
Barbara Denny (R), the 2011 William Penn Mott, Jr. Environmental Award recipient is congratulated by Toris Yeager (L) and Linda Mizes (C).



SALLY HOGARTY  
Chip and Carolyn Herman, 2011 Volunteers of the Year, react to Mayor Steve Glazer's suggestion that their next project be Orinda's roads.

### Enter Pet of the Month Contest



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Meet Milo (top) and Bing, two domestic short hairs, raised by Orinda resident Justin Kader and his family. Justin is currently at UC Santa Cruz studying astrophysics, but still found time to send us this shot of his favorite pets. To have your pet considered for "Pet of the Month," email a high resolution photo to [news@orindaassociation.org](mailto:news@orindaassociation.org). Submissions are due by the 5th of each month and winners will appear on the same page as our pet column "Something to Howl About."

## Public Survey on Roads and Funding Favors Increased Sales Tax

By HEATHER WILSON  
Contributing Writer

David Metz, co-owner of the Public Opinion Research & Strategy firm FM3 (Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates) presented the results of the 2012 Voter Survey at the February 7 City Council meeting.

The survey assessed the feasibility of passing a finance measure in either June or November 2012 and to determine which street and drain repair projects residents see as most important as well as assessing impressions of city government compared to the previous four surveys over the past six years. Whether voters preferred a sales tax increase, bond, or parcel tax in order to fund the ever failing road conditions in Orinda captured most attendees' interest.

The results began with voters' opinions on the different city agencies. Top ratings went to the Orinda Library, Police Department, and Parks and Recreation. Approval ratings ranging from 83 percent to 92 percent compared to the previous survey ratings of 74 percent to 86 percent. According to the survey, the majority of voters feel the city does a good job providing basic

services with the results showing the highest approval ratings of the four previous surveys. The survey also showed that 98 percent of Orinda residents polled felt Orinda was a great place to live.

Ballot measures topped the list of importance as Orinda addresses the failing road

[SEE SURVEY page 8]

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## It's Comedy Tonight at the Orinda Theatre

By SALLY HOGARTY  
Editor

The Orinda Chamber of Commerce has a great night in store for attendees of its third annual Comedy Night slated for March 2 at the Orinda Theatre. "We really wanted to keep things fresh for people who have attended our first Comedy Nights, and with the addition of music to this year's event, I think we've accomplished that," says Chamber president Keith Miller.

The music includes standards and pop songs performed by master of ceremonies and vocalist/guitarist Michael Fender. His musical director Gary Douglas will join the Orinda resident. "Our music is a little like a ride in a musical time machine," says Fender. "We play everything from Sinatra to the Black Eyed Peas and Lady Gaga." Fender, who lists *The Wizard of Oz* Tin Man Jack Haley as his mentor, grew up in Orinda and bases his very busy company, Michael Fender Entertainment, in Orinda as well. "We try to appeal to all different ages with our music," Fender adds. "A big part of our show is interaction with the audience and with state-of-the-art wireless technology, we can be anywhere in

the audience." In between the comedy acts and their classic rock and country music, Fender and Douglas will do their version of the Rat Pack featuring Douglas as Sinatra and Fender as Tony Bennett. "I became acquainted with Tony years ago, and he told me never to change my nose, that he had considered reducing his at one point in his career until he realized it might affect his vocals. I can't believe I sat around talking with Tony Bennett about our noses!"

[SEE COMEDY page 8]



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Comedian Will Durst headlines the Chamber of Commerce Comedy Night on March 2.



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## THE REEL LESS TRAVELED

OF MOONLIGHTING  
CAPTAINS AND COMPULSIVE LIARS

Tom Westlake



With the CAIFF still fresh in their minds, not to mention the exhaustion that goes along with it, Jo Alice Canterbury and Efi Lubliner have apparently decided to use the month of March as a chance to take a breath. Therefore, this month will be without their well-lauded International Showcase. Film buffs, however should not shed a tear, mainly because they'll be back next month with an offering that will more than make up for it. (To say more would give it away but, suffice it to say, if you think that heartbreak, sold souls, and comedy don't go together, then April will have you rethinking that conjecture.) How's that for tantalizing?

There's still much to keep us cineophiles busy, the least of which being this month's

offering at "The Queen's Slumber Party." Continuing on in the fine tradition of showing films that don't require much in the way of intellect – always on the third Friday of the month – will be the 1977 masterpiece *Kingdom of the Spiders*. Notable for, at least trying to deliver a stern message about our reliance on chemicals and the effect they have on our environment, the films real attempt at legitimacy is that it stars William Shatner...as a veterinarian no less! Made a year or two after the original *Star Trek* went off the air, he plays the lead with – if one believes the reviews – an uncharacteristic restraint.

But it's the spiders (in this case tarantulas...lots and lots of tarantulas!) that steal [SEE REEL page 22]

## Hollywood...And Oscar Comes To Orinda



(L-R) CAIFF board members Derek Zemrak and Joanne Foy, Mayor Steve Glazer, Margaret O'Brien, and CAIFF program director Beau Behan.

By TOM WESTLAKE  
Staff Writer

Though the rain threatened to dampen the proceedings, nothing could diminish the spirit and enthusiasm present at the opening of the 14th Annual California Independent Film Festival. Beau Behan and his tireless volunteers descended upon the Rheem Theatre with every intention of making sure everything was in place

and that all was in order for that night's festivities. Well before any of the guests arrived, tables were set up, brimming with information on the events to follow, cordons were placed, and the marquis out front brightly and boldly proclaimed that this was not going to be just another ordinary night at the cinema. The lobby was abuzz with anticipation.

The festival, which ran from February [SEE CAIFF page 20]

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ORINDA ASSOCIATION

A Message From the OA President  
*Volunteerism Is Alive and Well in Orinda*

Bill Waterman



In her article discussing the City of Orinda's recent poll results (Page 1 of this issue), Heather Wilson notes the rather amazing finding that 98 percent of our fair city's residents feel Orinda is a great place to live. Despite our city's budgetary challenges and the fact that our roads are in a grave state of disrepair, residents still prefer Orinda. What can we attribute this nearly unanimous opinion to? The residents polled said they were generally quite happy with the level of basic services the city provides, especially the Orinda Library, and our city's Police and Parks and Recreation Departments. Overall, the poll found that there is a trend toward higher satisfaction with the city's services. Good job, City of Orinda!

But I believe that our city is such a pleasant place to live for another significant reason – the contributions so many of our



SALLY HOGARTY  
**Barbara Denny**, 2011 William Penn Mott, Jr. Environmental Award winner, and City Councilmember **Amy Worth**.

fellow citizens make as volunteers in our community. Here are just two examples of the contributions made by some of the volunteers I have had the privilege of working with:

- The Neighborhood Preparedness groups: there are over 60 neighborhood groups that meet on a regular basis in Orinda, and they address how to be prepared for disasters, how to minimize crime in their neighborhoods, and how we can support each other in meeting these challenges.

- Orinda in Action: For several years on a Saturday in April, hundreds of volunteers come out to re-plant public areas, to clean up and spruce up the surroundings and, generally, to "pitch in" to make Orinda look and feel better.

The Orinda Association recently honored two families for their contributions as volunteers: Barbara Denny (with an assist



SALLY HOGARTY  
**Karen Gilbert** has fun preparing to introduce Volunteer of the Year **Chip Herman**.

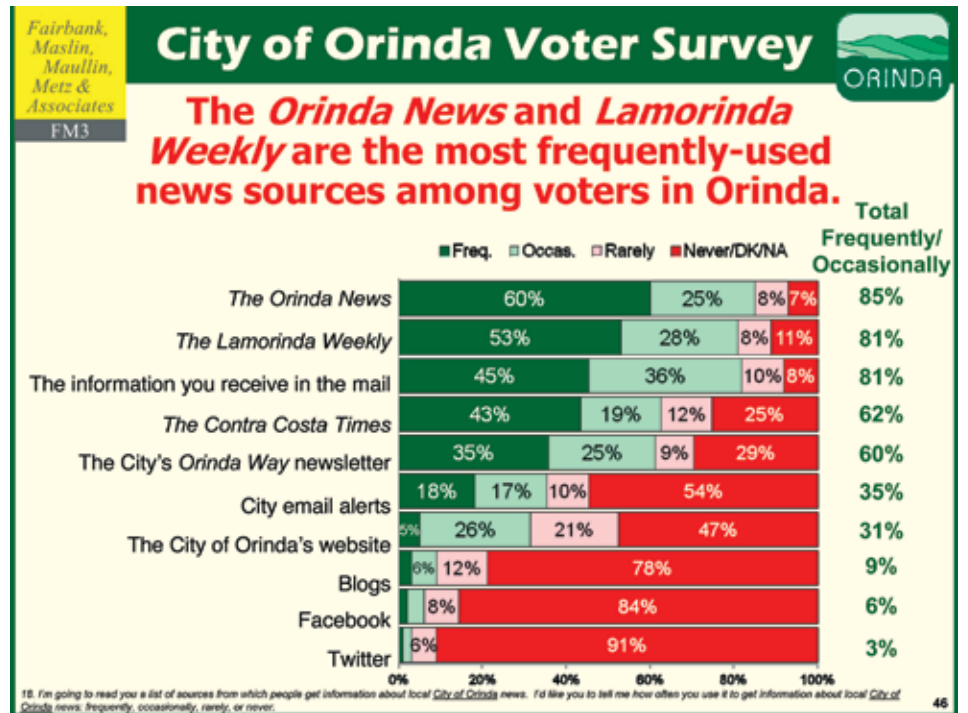
from her husband Bill) received the 2011 William Penn Mott, Jr. Environmental Award for her work as a Miramonte High School teacher and mentor; and Chip and Carolyn Herman, the Orinda Association's 2011 Volunteers of the Year, were honored for their tireless efforts in creating and continuing the Orinda Classic Car Show. Barbara, Chip and Carolyn have each made tangible contributions to the quality of life here, and on behalf of the Orinda Association's membership and board I thank them for their efforts.

But the Dennys and Hermans weren't the only ones receiving awards in February. *The Orinda News*, which the OA publishes, was also recognized in the City of Orinda's poll. It turns out that when the 400 residents were asked where they get most of their information *The Orinda News* was the number one source, with 85 percent saying this is where they went to learn about local activities.

The Orinda Association is honored to list so many wonderful, dedicated volunteers among its members. With their help, we can continue to offer such services/events as the Fourth of July Parade and Celebration, Seniors Around Town ride program, the Volunteer Center, and of course, *The Orinda News* – all of which make Orinda a great place to live!



SALLY HOGARTY  
**John and Barbara Vanek** along with **Eartha Newsong** (R) enjoy the cocktail reception before the awards dinner.



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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Czech Classic Movie  
Scheduled March 15

If you love movies, check out the free presentation of *The Good Soldier Schweik*. This 1957 classic Czech movie with English subtitles will be shown at the Orinda/Tabor Sister City Foundation meeting at 7:30 p.m. at the Orinda Library Auditorium on March 15.

Based on the legendary novel by Czech humorist Jaroslav Hasek, *The Good Soldier Schweik* mixes slapstick and satire to attack the absurdity of war. Acclaimed Czech actor Rudolf Hrusinsky stars as the cheerful Schweik, a good-natured buffoon with a story for every occasion. After getting drafted into the Czech army during WWI, Schweik becomes an assistant to high-ranking military officials, and unwittingly wreaks havoc on the leaders of the 91st infantry. For further information, call 254-8260.



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# Thank You to Orinda Residents

Every month a very small staff here at *The Orinda News* works to bring residents news about local groups and community members as well as a variety of items that affect life in our rural enclave. When we put out the paper, we always hope people are reading it and receiving the information they need. So, it was very gratifying to see the results of the City

of Orinda's survey listing our monthly paper as the number one news source for Orindans.

From all of us here at *The Orinda News* thank you so much for supporting your local newspaper. We've been around for 25 years and hope to continue serving you for another 25 years!

– Sally Hogarty, Editor

# Letters to the Editor

## Orinda Not Subsidizing Moraga

Recent letters from members of FAIR continue to repeat the misleading claim that Orinda is subsidizing Moraga's fire service. If it is true that Orinda subsidizes Moraga's fire service, then it is equally true that Moraga subsidizes Orinda's County services!

Fact: Orinda is not paying more than its fair share of taxes for anything. Since Prop 13, every California homeowner pays the same tax rate, or 1 percent of assessed valuation, plus any additional taxes we have voted for like parcel taxes. How that 1 percent tax is divided up changes from neighborhood to neighborhood.

In Orinda north of Ivy Drive, about 23 cents of the tax dollar is allocated to fire protection. In Moraga (plus South Orinda which used to be in the Moraga Fire District) about 19 cents is allocated. However, in Moraga, 14 cents is allocated to County services while in Orinda the allocation is 10 cents.

Therefore, if FAIR's way of analyzing property taxes is correct, Moraga has been subsidizing Orinda's County services since Orinda incorporated in 1985! Following FAIR's logic, Moragans should be asking for their money back from Orinda to use to repair Moraga's roads.

Our fear is that FAIR will once again use this misleading claim to destroy any chance of passing a tax measure in Orinda to help pay for much-needed road repairs. We call on all Orindans to repudiate this false logic! It is time to move on and invest in our roads.

– Ellen Dale

## Liabilities Higher Than Stated

The Moraga-Orinda Fire District (MOFD) states that they have \$18 million in pension liabilities. In reality, footnote 8 of their audited financial statements shows that they have liabilities with an accounting value of \$143 million and offsetting assets of \$125 million. The market value of these assets is less; about \$117 million. But what is the \$143 million of liabilities? It is the present value, using a 7.75 percent discount rate, of a 60-year stream of future liabilities. What is their undiscounted value? No one seems to know or will tell but one person has estimated that they add up to over \$600 million. If you discount them at a lower

rate, let's say 6 percent, the present value would be \$185 million and our "net liability" would then be closer to \$70 million just for pensions. A \$70 million pension obligation is a far cry from the \$18 million MOFD projection.

–Vince Maiorana

## It's time to fix our roads

I am pleased to see that the City of Orinda is going to poll its residents to measure the level of support for taking action to fix our roads. I have been a resident of Orinda for 32 years. We moved here because Orinda was one of the premier communities in the Bay Area. While that hasn't changed, it is disheartening to see the continuing deterioration of our roads.

As a civil engineer and a transportation planner, I know what level of effort it takes over time to maintain roads. Besides the annoyance of maneuvering around the potholes, cracks and bumps, the poor road conditions pose a threat to bicyclists and pedestrians of all ages. Year after year, the amount of money available has fallen way short of what is needed. Now our wonderful community is known as having some of the poorest pavement conditions in the Bay Area.

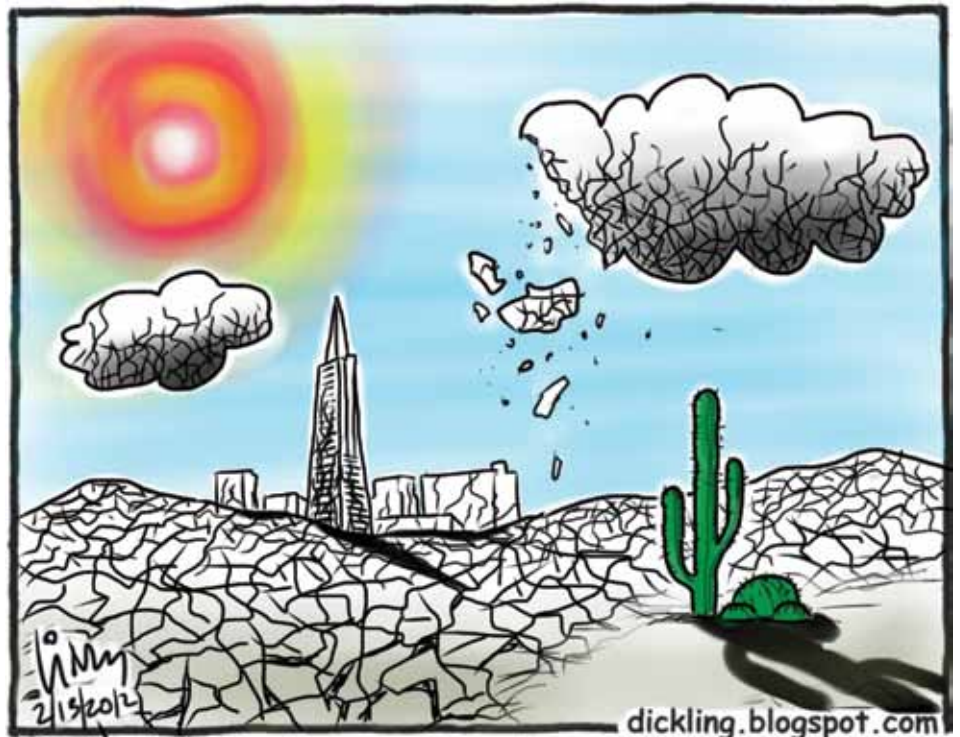
It is not a matter of saving money by reducing city expenditures to put more into road maintenance. In order to put our roads in good repair, we will need something in the range of \$60 million. The total annual budget for the city is only \$10 - \$11 million. The day is gone when we can rely on outside help at the state or federal level to address these problems. Pointing fingers and debating about who should have done what is not going to get our roads fixed. It is time for us to step forward as a united community and do the right thing to solve this problem.

– Bill Hurrell

## Help Solve City's Most Pressing Issue

Having worked with the city and my neighbors over the past two years to successfully repave a large portion of Crestview Drive, I have come to some realizations about Orinda's infrastructure problems.

There is not nearly enough money in the



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city budget to address the problem. Nobody likes the idea of increased taxes, but frankly, I would rather that we raise the money and spend it right here where we can all keep an eye on it. We cannot expect anyone to effectively and efficiently solve this city's most pressing issue without resources, but

those resources must be spent wisely.

I suspect it will be very difficult to get two-thirds of voters to approve such a tax, especially when half of Orindans live on reasonably sound roads. People give a myriad of reasons why they would not ap-

[SEE LETTERS page 16]

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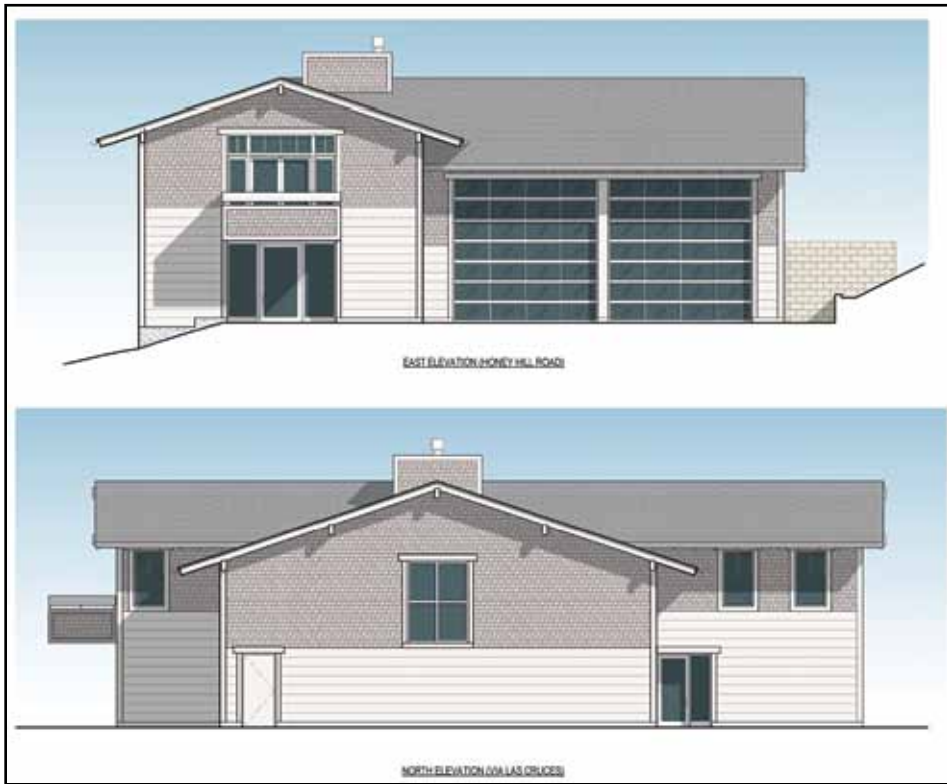
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MOFD / ROAD SIGNS / REALTORS



Elevation drawings for the proposed remodel of Station 43.

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## MOFD Gets Public Input on Remodel of Station 43

By HEATHER WILSON  
Contributing Writer

Moraga-Orinda Fire District (MOFD) hosted the second open house held on February 9, 2012 at 20 Via Las Cruces (Station 43) in Orinda. The event discussed the plans for a new firehouse that will replace the current structure. Presenters were Fire Chief Randy Bradley, Division Chief Darrell Lee, architect Alan Kawasaki, and Project Manager Keith Anderson.

Having fire stations nestled inside neighborhoods has resulted in quick, needed protection when disaster strikes. But these stations must be in good working order. The station at 20 Via Las Cruces currently faces several challenges, which have prompted the planning of a completely new structure and design.

Some of the major problems that face the current Station 43 include: outdated seismic standards in the nearly 60-year-old

[SEE STATION 43 page 10]

## Whitehall Drive Petitions for No Left Turn Sign

By DAVID DIERKS  
Assistant Editor

Whitehall Drive residents are concerned about the safety of pedestrians using their street and have approached the Traffic Safety Advisory Committee (TSAC) with proposals to allay their fears. At the January 23 TSAC meeting, Laurie Brady, Cheryl Schwartz and Kelly DeMar presented a letter signed by 14 households

on Whitehall urging the TSAC to help. The residents are concerned about heavy traffic during the morning commute when many children use Whitehall as a "walking street" to get to Del Rey Elementary, Orinda Intermediate School (OIS), and Miramonte High School. One solution to the problem is to install a No Left Turn sign on southbound Moraga Way at Whitehall Drive effective Monday through Friday 7 a.m. to 8 a.m.

[SEE WHITEHALL page 10]

## Local Realtors Offer Unique Services

By DAVID DIERKS  
Assistant Editor

Paul Ratto and Virginia Varni-Ratto, real estate agents with Pacific Union International of Orinda, offer a unique service to their clients when selling their homes. In addition to their 26 years of real estate experience, service and marketing skills, Paul is able to assist sellers with miscellaneous repairs and finish work necessary to maximize the selling potential of their home. "Paul does his labor at no cost. So all they pay for is the actual cost of materials," said Virginia.

For the past nine years, Paul has rejuvenated over 50 of their listings, putting in one to two weeks of labor at no cost. "Our clients have been extremely happy with the results and each home has sold in a short amount of time. Pricing is the most important factor, but when a house looks and shows well, it attracts more buyers, especially now in this market," Virginia explained.

The Rattos start with a complete evaluation of the property and determine what can be done to help it sell faster. "The first thing you see is the curb appeal," Paul said. "How does the front of the house look? The garden, the paint on the house, is it in good shape or not? Can we simply do some touch up work that's fairly inexpensive or do we

need to paint the whole house? We like to put a little color in the house; feature walls. Sometimes we'll add baseboard, door trim, crown molding, light fixtures, hardware and drawer pulls. We want to get the biggest bang for the buck." Virginia added, "Paul puts together a spreadsheet of the costs involved and considers the sellers budget in trying to do the least expensive work for the most return. There are certain things that just make a difference, such as painting, carpeting, new flooring, and sprucing up the landscaping."

Paul noted that, "We've done seven remodels on properties that we have owned over the years. We have a very good idea of what will get a return on your investment." Paul works with the homeowners and often they help him perform some of the work. "I'll give them lists of things to do, and we'll do a lot of these things together," he added. This is what the Rattos call their Home Enhancement Plan.

For larger jobs that require a contractor, Paul has several contractors he can recommend. "We have a list of contractors that we use, for everything from house cleaners to painters, flooring people, window-washers, roofers, and landscaping," Virginia agreed, "We have people that we have relationships with, and we can get them in to do the work in a timely fashion."

[SEE RATTO page 8]



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Have you ever learned something new about an Orinda resident, or a local event because you read it in *The Orinda News*? Have you ever enjoyed the fun and excitement of our hometown July 4th parade where it seems like most of the town is in the parade? Have you ever wondered how so many Orinda Seniors are able to remain independent in their homes long after they had to give up driving? These services, events, programs and more are

what your membership supports. Renew or join today- it's easy!

Mail your check today in the envelope enclosed in this newspaper, or go to [www.orindaassociation.org](http://www.orindaassociation.org), click "membership" and use your favorite Visa or MasterCard.

You can also opt to designate a portion of your payment to support your favorite OA program, such as *The Orinda News*, the **July 4th parade**, the **Volunteer Center**, or the **Seniors Around Town** program. Your annual membership makes the difference in providing the little extra funding needed for each of these programs. So, put down the paper and renew or join now, it's easy and every membership dollar is so much appreciated. The Orinda Association is 501 (c) (3) nonprofit, serving Orinda since 1946.



2011 Volunteers of the Year, Carolyn (L) and Chip (R) Herman shown with Barbara Denny, the 2011 William Penn Mott, Jr. Environmental Award winner.

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[SEE MEMBERS page 7]

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SALLY HOGARTY

Seniors Around Town is a popular OA program. **Eartha Newsong**, former program coordinator, rides in last year's July 4th parade.



SALLY HOGARTY

Activities in the park are almost as popular as the 4th of July parade. Shown above a group of lucky young girls visit with Cinderella.

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## WAY TO GROW

## ◆ SURVEY from page 1

conditions and an estimated cost of \$60 million to repair them. The ballot measures surveyed included: a half cent sales tax funding general city services but with an emphasis on street and road repair; a \$60 million, \$20 million, or \$10 million bond; or a \$200 annual parcel tax. A sales tax increase only needs a majority to pass however, the bonds and parcel tax options need a two-thirds voter approval to pass. Of the three measures, the sales tax generated the most support with 61 percent of voters polled saying yes to a half cent sales tax increase.

The survey also posed the question of three different bonds to repair the roads – \$60 million, \$20 million or \$10 million. Only 39 percent of voters would vote for the \$60 million, 55 percent would vote for the \$20 million, and 67 percent would vote for the \$10 million bond. With a two-thirds majority required to pass any of the bond amounts, survey results concluded that the most viable option would be the smaller \$10 million bond. The final option surveyed was the \$200 parcel tax that received a 46 percent approval.

If a half cent sales tax is adopted on the November ballot, the City of Orinda can expect to raise \$600,000 annually of the \$60 million needed to complete the project. Although this falls far short of the amount needed, the buzz word heard from Orinda citizens and City Council members Orr, Severson, Worth and Mayor Glazer was “progress.” The survey revealed that a “Do Nothing” approach worried 78 percent of voters who see inaction as only worsening

roads and increasing repair cost.

According to survey results, Orinda residents place a high priority on street and road conditions, but a parcel tax or significant bond would not meet voter approval. Residents would, however, support funding a half cent sales tax increase and a \$10 million bond.

To review the complete survey, go to [www.cityoforinda.org](http://www.cityoforinda.org).

## ◆ COMEDY from page 1

Fender and Douglas will open the show with their music and play in between the various comedians which include Kabir Sinh, Dan St. Paul, Johnny Steele and headliner political satirist Will Durst.

With the presidential election on the horizon, Durst certainly has plenty of material at his disposal. “The Republicans have really been sweet this year,” says Durst. “They’ve provided me with a cornucopia of delight. Politicians usually give me lots of material, especially during elections, but nothing before has approached this magnitude.”

Durst, who also performs at the Town Hall Theatre in Lafayette on April 14, has played the Orinda Theatre before and looks forward to the audience there. “I’ll do my usually craziness and, hopefully, taunting with good taste.”

The Orinda Chamber of Commerce Comedy Night begins at 7:30 p.m. with the doors opening at 6:45 p.m. Proceeds from the event will benefit the Educational Foundation of Orinda among other local nonprofits.

Tickets are available through the Chamber’s website at [www.orindachamber.org](http://www.orindachamber.org) or by calling 254-3909. For information on Michael Fender (who does weddings and corporate events as well as a public entertainment events), go to [www.michaelfender.com](http://www.michaelfender.com), and for a taste of Durst’s satirical humor, go to [www.willdurst.com](http://www.willdurst.com).

## ◆ RATTO from page 5

When representing buyers, Paul recommends that clients “obtain any and all inspections. We try to keep people out of homes that we feel have a lot of problems. We assess our clients-needs and work closely with them.”

Virginia has been a realtor in the Lamorinda area for over 26 years. She has been with Pacific Union International for the past 12 years. Paul joined her nine years ago in 2003. “He offers a wealth of information and personal services to our clients,” said Virginia. “Most people know what needs to be done, they just don’t know where to start!”

## Way to Grow

### The Dirt on Dirt

by Steve & Cathy Lambert



Getting good dirt is the secret to a successful garden (and a good party – but that would be the gossip column). Many homeowners are not aware of the importance of establishing and maintaining superior soil structure and fertility.

The majority of us are stuck with very high clay content. The soil in our own yard could practically be used on a potter’s wheel. On the upside, clay soil has a high mineral content and a great capacity for holding nutrients.

**The Science of Superior Soil:** A soil’s fertility is determined by a combination of essential nutrients and pH that makes these nutrients available to plants. The basic nutrients required by plants are (n) nitrogen, (p) phosphorous and (k) potassium. Nitrogen is responsible for healthy growth of plants leaves and stems. Phosphorous is important for root growth, while potassium is required for the overall health of the plant by keeping it growing and boosting its immune system.

The problem with clay soil is that its particles are very small in comparison to other components found in soil. For perspective, if a clay particle were the size of a baseball, the average grain of sand would be, relatively speaking, the size of a Greyhound bus. Because clay particles are so tiny they pack together easily and become very dense, making them virtually impermeable to water and air, which are essential for healthy soil.

**Simple Soil Solutions:** Whether your soil has more or less clay than ours, there are many things that can be done to improve and manage its structure.

Enriching your soil with fertilizer and organic material is one of the best ways to ensure your gardens health. Organic materials include many forms of compost from self-made to commercial planting mixes. A few amendment mixes that we’ve used successfully include; Clod Breaker and Multi Purpose Mix from American Soil Products, and Diablo Mix from Sloat Garden Center. These have a blend of composts, including Scoria, a small ground lava rock that helps to keep soil loose and open.

Amendments should be incorporated into the top 8-to 10-inches of soil by ripping or tilling. Avoid over tilling clay soil, as that will destroy the structure you’re looking for. Strive for the consistency of dry oatmeal, not fine flour.

In healthy soil, there are literally hundreds of species of bacteria, fungi and many other microscopic soil critters. A fungus that’s very important to a plant’s

roots, called Mycorrhizae, has occurred naturally in soil for 400 million years. Under the right conditions, they form a close symbiotic relationship with the plant roots. Sadly, most of the soils in our own yard and in many of those we’ve tested locally have a very low population of these valuable soil microbes. The good news is that it’s now possible to replenish your soil with these soil “stimulants” that encourage healthy plant growth. These products are available in either a powder or liquid form, which contain dozens of the most important soil microbes including Mycorrhizae. The one we’ve found to be incredibly successful is Bolster. It can be used at planting time or scratched into the surface during maintenance. We’ve used Bolster to save plants and trees that were in extremely poor condition and likely otherwise would not have survived.

The last step for good soil management is keeping your soil mulched. If you’ve ever taken a hike through an undisturbed forest, or stopped to really look at what’s going on under that “messy” tree of yours in the fall, you’ll get a better understanding of what mulch is meant to do. This blanket of spent leaves, twigs and branches, also referred to as “duff” serves as nature’s mulch, which is a necessary and welcome part of the ecosystem.

In a more controlled environment with a broad array of plant material, such as a residential garden or landscape, attempting to let everything naturally mulch itself is insufficient. Allowing duff to build up where it doesn’t cause an unaesthetic appearance, for example in a vegetable garden, is a great idea but it will not be enough. You’ll need to add quality mulch too.

Many consider mulching as an aesthetic tool, to improve the look of their landscape and often choose larger scale mulch blends so they’ll stay put longer. Using mulch for this purpose alone is counterproductive for the long-term health of your landscape. The best mulch materials are smaller and break down quickly and easily into the soil. Be prepared to reapply your mulch layers at least once every couple years. After several applications, you’ll need to add less mulch each time.

If you have any questions about improving your soil feel free to shoot us an email at [Office@GardenLightsLandscape.com](mailto:Office@GardenLightsLandscape.com). We are planning to write an article about vegetable gardening in Orinda soon and would love to hear from other veggie farmers about what they have and haven’t had success with. Email us any feedback.



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CAR TIME / MOFD

# CAR TIME

Neglecting Your Vehicle Is Not A Good Idea

by JOHN VANEK



The vast majority of vehicle failures are due to abuse or lack of maintenance. In our busy lives, we always have something that gets our attention before the car does, and something more financially important than investing in your family hauler.

There does come a time when you are putting yourself and your family at risk, both physically and monetarily, by ignoring the needs of your vehicle. Nobody needs an unwanted break down; it just ruins your day. On top of that, a failure on the road could put you and your family in a potentially dangerous situation. Sometimes components will fail, and there is nothing you can do about it. However, when you ignore the warning signs you become a part of the problem.

For instance, if you have trouble starting your car for a few days in a row it is likely that at some point it won't start at all. If you see green fluid drips in your parking spot, it is a warning sign. Paying attention to the warning signs and making your vehicle a priority can make it possible to avoid a bad day. Your vehicle is actually very important in your life. It gets you to work or to the BART station on time. It will take you on a family road trip to skiing or vacation. It may also transport your kids to school, baseball, scouts, swimming, karate, dancing, etc.

Our family is the most important thing in our lives. Why wouldn't we want to make sure that they have reliable and safe transportation? In many cases, preventive measures can avoid breakdowns by recognizing issues before they become problems.

We are likely to get a yearly physical at which point our doctor may recognize a problem that needs attention. It could be something like high cholesterol or something more serious. Your daily driver is the same way. There is a maintenance schedule that includes a list of important items that need to be checked. It could be a battery getting weak or a radiator starting to leak.

Many local motorists begin to lose faith in their cars and stop taking care of them altogether, but they don't stop driving them. I hear many excuses for neglecting their vehicle such as, "we only drive around town" or "we are not going to have that car much longer." The truth is when a breakdown occurs it does not matter where you are, it can ruin your day. If you are planning on forgoing repairs because you are selling your older car, you should follow through with it. My Dad finally learned his lesson after trading in a couple cars that were on the end of a tow truck for pennies on the dollar.

Almost all modern cars are more than capable of being driven over 200,000 miles with few, if any, major failures.

Today's technology requires specific attention. Oil changes and transmission maintenance is crucial. High tech internal engine components can be affected by lack of oil changes. I have seen many cases when low and dirty oil caused a check engine light. I have also seen many cases where under inflated tires, worn struts or poor wheel alignment will cause premature tire

[SEE CAR TIME page 10]

## Orinda Woman's Club Presents Checks to Major Recipients



HEATHER WILSON

On Valentine's Day, the Orinda Woman's Club (OWC) presented \$15,000 each to the Child Abuse Prevention Council and the Independent Living Skills Program. The donations were made possible by the club's annual Festival of Trees. Shown above are: (L-R) OWC members **Susan Domingos** and **Barbara Rogan**, **Don Grave** of the Independent Living Skills Program, and OWC members **Alison Kling** and **Kathleen Kerr-Schochet**.

## MOFD Reverses Decision on Buying Building

By DAVID DIERKS  
Assistant Editor

On December 28, 2011, the Moraga-Orinda Fire District board of directors voted with a 3-2 majority controlled by directors Fred Weil, Frank Sperling and John Wyro, to purchase an office building at 1150 Moraga Way to use as administrative offices. At their January 18 meeting, the MOFD board reversed this plan. Weil changed his position as did Sperling, taking the rest of the directors by surprise, resulting in the decision not to buy the building at 1150 Moraga Way.

"I believed then and now that the purchase of 1150 Moraga Way presents the best long term solution to reduce total costs," said Weil. "However, over a period of several weeks, in my opinion, the issue

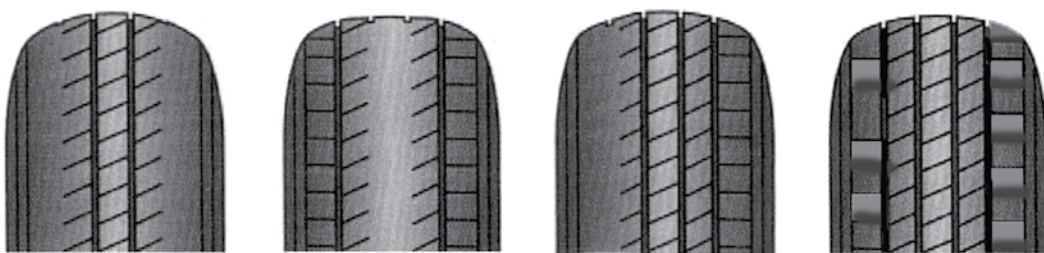
of the purchase of the building became one of emotion rather than reason. It became obvious to me that there was a risk that the Orinda City Council might be pressed to detach from the district."

Weil further explained his decision to reverse his vote "The district was formed to provide better, faster emergency service, particularly to Orinda, than was being provided by the old Orinda fire district and private ambulance service. In medical emergencies and fires, minutes — even seconds — count. Therefore, the long-term economic benefits of the purchase of 1150 Moraga Way no longer mattered to me. I could not allow the district to be torn apart by my vote on the building issue, and accordingly, in the public meeting, I announced that I would change my vote,

[SEE BUILDING page 18]

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## BETWEEN THE LINES

## ◆ WHITEHALL from page 5

Currently, similar No Left Turn signs exist on southbound Moraga Way at Ivy Drive and at Southwaite Court, which Whitehall Drive residents state caused part of the problem. "We are dealing with all the overflow traffic from the Ivy Drive No Left Turn sign as well as Southwaite Court," said Cheryl Schwartz. "All of that traffic is now on Whitehall Drive. There are a lot of children, and we are afraid a child is going to get hit. In fairness, we should have a No Left Turn sign as well to ensure the safety of the children. We believe that is the most cost effective and viable solution," she added. "The day after the No Left Turn sign went up on Southwaite, the number of cars on Whitehall exploded," said Laurie Brady. "Whitehall was designated as a walking path quite a few years ago, because there are kids not only walking down to Del Rey, but kids walking up to OIS. The traffic we get is going to Del Rey, OIS and Miramonte as a cut through around the traffic on Moraga Way."

The city did traffic counts on Whitehall Drive, one during the Christmas break and a second in January, so they could compare data during non-school and school times. Counts were done for vehicles traveling both directions. City Engineer Janice Cary reported, "During Christmas, the combined total was 84 cars. During school time, it was 196 cars."

Police Chief Jeffrey Jennings added, "My position is that there should be no left hand turns on Moraga Way. Whitehall is the only street that doesn't have a sign. They should be on all the streets, so no one can make a left turn on Moraga Way during that time period."

Vehicle speeds along Whitehall present another issue. As a residential street, the speed limit is 25 mph. There is a speed cushion on Whitehall, but residents feel it is insufficient. Brady said, "Whitehall is a very short street with two blind curves on it. The speed cushion gives great lift to those cars. They don't even pretend to slow down. You have so many kids walking down Whitehall, because it's a cut through to get to both schools. Most of them are unaccompanied because they are second grade and up and their parents feel they're okay to walk on their own. They're walking in the street while these cars are coming around the curves, also in the middle of the street, going 40-50 mph at times."

Residents feel both directions on Whitehall cause problems because of the blind curves. "The safety issue is the morning commute because you have people absolutely not paying attention, and there are lots of children in the street. It's breathtak-

ing seeing how fast these people are going and totally oblivious," said Brady. "We are so concerned that a child [teenage driver] will kill another child," added Schwartz. "Something needs to be done," concluded DeMar.

The TSAC sent out notices to the neighborhood about the proposed No Left Turn sign and invited them to the February 27 TSAC meeting. The results of that meeting were not available at press time. Following the meeting, the TSAC will send a poll to the Whitehall Drive neighborhood, including Chelton Court, to determine if there is a majority in the neighborhood in favor of the proposal. If so, then the proposal will be taken to the City Council.

For more information, visit [www.cityoforinda.org](http://www.cityoforinda.org), click on City Meetings and then click on Traffic Safety Advisory Committee (TSAC).

## ◆ STATION 43 from page 5

structure; inadequate size of apparatus bays to house modern fire apparatus safely; and living quarters that do not adequately accommodate mixed gender staffing.

The current structure is approximately 3,000 square feet; whereas, the new planned structure would be almost 5,500 square feet with a second floor for living space.

The estimated cost of \$3 million was one of the issues residents attending the meeting questioned. Chief Randy Bradley considers the cost to be a fair price for all that goes into a modern firehouse. Chief Bradley and Orinda architect Alan Kawasaki both have experience building modern fire houses in surrounding communities. They assured the public that they were working to keep the budget to the lowest possible amount for a new modest firehouse.

The MOFD wants local residents to be involved in the exterior design. Since the firehouse is located in a neighborhood, it will be modeled to match the surrounding home styles. Division Chief Lee and Fire Chief Bradley encourage residents to tour the current facility and offer any opinions on the new design.

During construction, which project manager Keith Anderson with Harris Associates estimated to be about 12 months, Station 43 personnel and equipment will need to be relocated. Fire Chief Bradley is looking for a possible home in the immediate area to lease, which will keep costs down and fire personnel in the neighborhood. The home would need to store a temporary tent structure housing the two fire trucks as well as living space for the three on-duty fire staff. Anyone with a property available or general questions and comments may contact Division Chief Darrell Lee at 925-258-4513.

## Between the Lines

### The Wearing of the Green and other March Options

Marian Nielsen, Orinda Books



It always amazes us at Orinda Books when we gather material for a St. Patrick's Day display to see how many superb Irish writers are represented on our shelves. Of course, giants like James Joyce, Oscar Wilde, William Butler Yeats, and George Bernard Shaw give our selections a slightly egghead look but there is never a dearth of superbly entertaining reading being created by contemporary Irish writers today. The Celtic tiger may be diminished monetarily but it continues to roar in the literary world.

Readers everywhere, as well as at Orinda Books, have responded to the mystery novels of Tana French, who studied drama at Trinity College before turning her hand to writing riveting thrillers. Working class Dublin comes vividly to life in her loosely linked novels, *In the Woods*, *The Likeness*, and *Faithful Place*. A fourth Dublin novel, *Broken Harbor*, will be published in July.

Last fall, Dubliner Sebastian Barry's very moving *On Canaan's Side*, made new friends for the author at Orinda Books, though a number of local book groups had previously embraced his novels *The Secret Scripture* and *The Whereabouts of Eneas McNulty* — both stories of strong women who survived during the Troubles. And, speaking of notable women, Frank McCourt's *Angela's Ashes* has become a classic in our time.

John Banville, born in County Wexford, continues to amaze the literary world with his multi-faceted approach to writing. He won the Booker Prize in 2005 for *The Sea*, an intensely atmospheric and very literary novel while, under the name of Benjamin Black, he writes mystery thrillers — *Christine Falls*, *Elegy for April*, *Silver Swan*, and *A Death in Summer* (due in paperback this month). These tightly plotted investigations take the reader to the dank streets of 1950s Dublin in the footsteps of Black's protagonists, consulting pathologist Garret Quirke and Detective Inspector Hackett. Dark but extremely satisfactory reading!

Many contemporary Irish novelists, however, do leave *noir* behind and warm our hearts with their appealing narratives. Maeve Binchy never fails to garner new fans with each novel she writes, and she has written 16! *Minding Frankie* was recently released in paperback and is an engaging story for our time — unconventional families and relationships that are not what they seem. Another Irish writer, Patrick Taylor, a doctor himself who emigrated from Ireland to British Columbia 40 years ago, has returned to his roots with his fictional series set in Northern Ireland; *An Irish Country Doctor*, *An Irish Country Courtship*, *An Irish Country Village*, and more. One of my bookstore colleagues compares them with the beloved James Herriot Yorkshire novels as Taylor develops the relationship between young apprentice medic, Barry Laverty, and curmudgeonly, crusty, and quirky Fingal

Flaherty O'Reilly, a boxer turned doctor.

So, in March, put a CD on the player—the Chieftains, Enya, the Clancys, and other Celtic voices are all available at Orinda Books — sit down before a mythical peat fire, take another look at Thomas Cahill's classic, *How the Irish Saved Civilization*, sip an Irish coffee or break open a Guinness and celebrate the written word with a Gaelic flavor!

Leaving Ireland behind, among the new titles we are looking forward to in March, from one of our favorite authors, Ann Lamott, is *Some Assembly Required: A Journal of My Son's First Son* (March 20). We treasured Lamott's incredible honesty as well as her quirky turns of phrase when we read *Operating Instructions: A Journal of My Son's First Year* back in 1993. Now Sam is a father. The parents and grandparents among us will embrace this new chapter in Lamott's life with delighted understanding.

Two more eagerly anticipated March novels from Orinda Books' favorite authors are the newest mysteries from Cara Black, *Murder at the Lanterne Rouge: an Aimee Leduc Investigation*, and Jacqueline Winspear, *Elegy for Eddie: A Maisie Dobbs Mystery*. These talented "Sisters in Crime" will be at Orinda Books to talk about their work in late March.

And, our younger readers won't be left out this spring. Popular favorites like Jane O'Connor, whose "Fancy Nancy" series has delighted little girls, makes a chapter book debut with *Fancy Nancy: Nancy Clancy, Super Sleuth*, and for young boys, Big Nate (Lincoln Pierce's young hero) goes on a power trip in *Big Nate Goes for Broke*. Fans of the impressively popular "Mysterious Benedict Society" series will look forward to a new juvenile novel, *The Extraordinary Education of Nicholas Benedict* (out in April) in which readers explore the back story of the Mysterious Benedict Society when 9-year-old Nicholas is placed with other orphans in an isolated country mansion. Carl Hiaasen continues his very funny series of juvenile eco-adventures in the Florida Everglades with *Chomp*. Wahoo Cray, our young hero, and his father, an animal wrangler, become part of a reality TV show "Expedition Survival." Great fun!


Whether you're in the mood for a touch of Ireland, new mysteries, or Big Nate... there's always something for everyone in the world of books.

## ◆ CAR TIME from page 9


wear. One thing we don't want is a high repair bill due to neglect. There does come a time when replacing your vehicle may be a better choice for you. Taking the time to make that choice is important. Consulting your car care provider is the first step. When it comes to car care, you need to commit to investing in maintaining or invest in replacing.

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STUDENTS

# Local Figure Skater Follows Her Dream

By BOBBIE DODSON  
Staff Writer

Figure skater, AnnaMarie Pearce, practices three to four hours a day on the ice and spends another two to three hours doing cardio exercise, Pilates and yoga, six days a week, sometimes seven. That means up at 6 a.m. to be at the rink by 7 a.m. This dedication paid off when she and her partner, Craig Norris, placed seventh overall in the junior pairs division at the U.S. Figure Skating Championships held January 22 - 29 in San Jose.

Pearce says, "We were delighted with the results. We went out on the ice with the attitude 'This is going to be fun.' It was. I



SANDY PEARCE

AnnaMarie Pearce and Craig Norris performing at the National Competition in San Jose,

can't believe how well our short program went when we placed sixth. I scored my first triple toe loop."

Raised in Orinda, Pearce had early coaching from her aunt, who was a figure skater. "She would dress me up in little outfits when I was seven and take me to the rink in Dublin. I loved it. I still like all the costumes, but it was the excitement of being on the ice, learning new skills, and always trying to be better that started me on this path," Pearce says.

Her mother Sandy remembers AnnaMarie's first competition at age 7 1/2. "There was a spotlight on her; it seemed rather scary to me. But she came off and said, 'I want to do it again. I need to because it was fun, and I'm sure I can do it better.' I think this is the way she's looked at skating ever since."

Sandy says that her daughter "has no fear. Jumping was her favorite thing when skat-

ing singles, but now in pairs, it's the lifts. That means a lot of falls while perfecting the elements, but AnnaMarie has never complained about the hurts. We do have a favorite chiropractor, and the staff at Kaiser knows her by name."

The 18 year old says the skaters at the Dublin rink are like family to her.

This close camaraderie took a different turn when Craig asked AnnaMarie to be his partner a year and a half ago. They now train at Aliso Viejo in Orange County. Mother and daughter have a condo there, which means family separation. "I really miss my dad," the young skater admits. "He's great to give me this opportunity and comes to watch me whenever he can."

While it takes great commitment for AnnaMarie to focus on skating, it takes the same for her mother. Sandy stays at the rink every day with AnnaMarie. "She is an only child, and we feel fortunate to be able to support her in this sport which she loves. We've found being separated from her dad makes us all appreciate each other all the more and, we come home to Orinda whenever possible."

Pearce began high school at Carondelet, but after a year she realized that traveling to Dublin to practice and back to Concord for classes was just too much. She found courses through Brigham Young University, which gave the flexibility her life style demands. She's making straight A's and will graduate in June. She explains, "I definitely plan to attend college, but I will probably put it off for a while to concentrate on skating. I want to give it my best shot now and hope to compete in Nationals with Craig many times. I love to travel, so going on the international circuit is a dream. Someday I want a life other than skating, but I'm sure I'll always be involved."

## Miramonte Presents *Once Upon A Mattress*



PETRA MICHEL

Michael Severson (Prince Dauntless) and Amrita Newton (Princess Winnifred) are featured in Miramonte High School's spring musical. The show performs March 15, 16, 22, and 23 at 7:30 p.m. and March 17 and 18 at 4 p.m. at the high school. Thirty-two actors, 23 tech/crew, 15 orchestra students, and countless parent volunteers and teachers make the show possible. Purchase tickets online at [www.showtix4u.com](http://www.showtix4u.com).



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LIVING LEAN

# Move of the Month

## Leaning Tricep



To begin, stand up with a dumbbell held in one hand. Your feet should be about shoulder width apart. Now fully extend the arm with the dumbbell over your head. This will be your starting position. Keeping your upper arm close to your head (elbows in) and perpendicular to the floor, lower the resistance in a semi-circular motion behind your head until your forearm touches your bicep.

Simultaneously lean to the left if you start with your right arm. Breathe in as you perform this step. Go back to the starting position by using the triceps to raise the dumbbell. Simultaneously return to an upright position. Breathe out as you perform this step. Switch arms and repeat the exercise. Maintaining that posture return to start position. Perform 3 sets of 10-12 reps.



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## Table 24 Setting for Living Lean



PHOTOS BY SALLY HOGARTY

(L-R) Trainer Mike Lawler, Living Lean founder Sheena Lakhotia, and members David Valva and Coralyn Paulos enjoy the specially-created "thin" Lemon Drops at Theatre Square's Table 24.



Living Lean members above and below took time out from exercising to feast on Living Lean cuisine featured at Table 24. The restaurant is one of several throughout Orinda who include the lower calorie, carefully balanced food items to help members stay on plan even while enjoying a night out. Other Orinda restaurants who offer Living Lean menu items include: Baan Thai, Bonfire Pizzeria, Café Teatro, Geppetto's Caffe, and Village Inn Cafe.




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VISUAL ARTS/GIRL SCOUTS

# Ninth Annual Visual Arts Competition for Lamorinda Teens

By ELANA O'LOSKEY  
Staff Writer

The Orinda Arts Council (OAC) is pleased to announce its Ninth Annual Visual Arts Competition (VAC) open to all high school students residing or attending schools in Orinda, Lafayette or Moraga. The exhibit showcasing all entries runs March 1-28 at the Orinda Library Gallery. An artist and awards reception will be held on March 7 from 4-6 p.m. where light refreshments will be served. Cash prizes totaling up to \$2,550 will be announced at the reception for: First (\$300), Second (\$200), Third Place (\$100), Honorable Mention (\$25) and the popular Best in Show voters' choice award. There are three categories of works accepted: 2D (paintings, drawings, print making, mixed media, collage), 3D (sculptures, ceramics, jewelry, construction) and photography (black and white and color, film and digital mediums). Up to

three Honorable Mention awards will also be announced in each category.

Each year, the VAC receives and exhibits between 150-200 entries from students attending local high schools including Miramonte, Acalanes, Campolindo, Las Lomas, the Athenian School, the Bentley School, College Prep High School, Head Royce, Holden High, and Orinda Academy. Students submitted one entry in each of three categories listed above between February 1-17. They were also required to mount or frame all work for public exhibition, an important educational element of the program. Judging is done by local professional artists early in March. Criteria used for judging are: creativity and originality, content, and degree of expertise in the chosen medium.

Local art teachers promote the competition and assist students in preparing their entries. Making this competition possible are: Susan Lane, Deb Taylor, Robert Porter

[SEE GALLERY page 22]



DAVID DIERKS

Sarah Manley of Campolindo High School won Best of Show Voter's Choice Award for her photograph "The Surgeon's Hand" in last year's competition.

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# Local Author Celebrates 100th Anniversary of Girl Scouts with a New Book

By SALLY HOGARTY  
Editor

Well-respected author Ginger Wadsworth couldn't let the 100th anniversary of the Girl Scouts go by without doing something special. A former Brownie and Girl Scout herself, Wadsworth decided to write about the founder of the American Girl Scouts, Juliette "Daisy" Gordon Low. The result is *The First Girl Scout*, an entertaining and enlightening account of this charming, petite woman, who in 1912 shocked some by establishing an organization that encouraged young girls to develop their interests and abilities beyond the traditional homemaking.

"It was really fun getting to know Daisy through my research for the book," says Wadsworth. "Her life crossed three wars. She saw the invention of planes and cars and saw women get the vote. And, she was 75 percent deaf. But she never let that handicap stop her."

Low's personality comes to life in the pages of Wadsworth's book, where archival photos and humorous stories mix with Low's many accomplishments. Geared for readers 9 years of age and up, the book begins in 1853 when Low's parents met and concludes with her death in 1927.

During the years in between, Wadsworth



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Ginger Wadsworth, circa 1950s, in her Girl Scout uniform.

chronicles the fascinating life of a petite young woman who dared to encourage young women to become self-reliant, which included skills that would help them both in careers and at home.

Low discovered the predecessor to the Girl Scouts while living in England in 1911. A chance meeting with General Sir Robert Baden-Powell, who started the Boy Scouts in England, led to a meeting with his sister Agnes, who had started the female version

[SEE AUTHOR page 22]

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Market Opens In March



BARBARA KOBSAR

Good news – the farmers’ market is open for the season on Saturday, March 3. The Orinda market is a member of the longest running market association in Contra Costa County. Thirty years ago a group of volunteers made up of dedicated growers and community members created Contra Costa Certified Farmers’ Market Association to re-establish the traditional link between farmers and consumers. This very successful idea led to the opening of dozens of other Bay Area markets over the past three decades.



The Farmers’ Market opens in March this year with delicious artichokes.

[SEE SHOPPER page 20]

# Girl Scout Troop Creates “Peaceful Playground” at Glorietta

By FRAN MILLER  
Staff Writer

Navigating a large elementary school playground can be a challenge for even the most outgoing of children. Long handball lines, student cliques, and a lack of structured activities can add up to an intimidating experience. But at Glorietta Elementary School, recess has become a whole lot friendlier due to the efforts of Megan Tom, Alex Shandalov, Lynn Wilder, Lynnette Voong, Karina Ting, Julia Smith, Serena Meadows, Ivy Langston, Sarah Bonapour and Rachel Hee, all former Glorietta students themselves, now OIS students and Cadette members of Orinda Girl Scout

ries and bullying. The Scouts installed 20 scattered circle areas, foot crossover motor skills activities, an alpha grid, a number grid, three four-square areas, a circle activity, and hopscotch. The program utilizes fifth grade monitors who check-out equipment, help resolve conflict, and encourage kids to join activities. Non-competitive play is promoted, allowing students to join physical activities without having to stand in line or be on teams, and conflict resolution is encouraged through the hand game of “rock-paper-scissors.”

“Peaceful Playgrounds is a nationwide program that offers students a variety of stenciled blacktop activities that have transformed our primary playground into a

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SUZANNE TOM

Members of Girl Scout Troop 30622 raised money for the Peaceful Playground program at Glorietta Elementary School.

Troop 30622.

The 10 energetic, enterprising and empathetic Scouts have created, for their Junior Bronze Project, a Peaceful Playground at Glorietta – equipping the school’s blacktop with nearly 100 new games which, in addition to helping promote physical activity, are also intended to reduce conflict, inju-

vibrant, colorful play area which is intended to maximize student involvement and interaction,” explains Glorietta principal Ron Langer. “With minimal wait time and prescribed rules and expectations, recess play is positive, productive and enjoyed by all. Students, staff and parent volunteers

[SEE TROOP page 18]



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## Xenophon Therapeutic Riding Center Enchanted Fundraiser



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Lily (above) enjoys her therapeutic ride at Xenophon accompanied by "side walkers." The group's annual gala dinner and auction, "An Enchanted Emerald Eve," takes place March 17 at 6 p.m. at the Round Hill Country Club of Alamo. The evening will include silent and live auctions, dinner, dancing, wine toss, raffles, music by Sound Rays, and more! Xenophon Therapeutic Riding Center's mission is to improve the bodies, minds and spirits of children with disabilities, through the use of the horse. Students benefit from weekly therapeutic horseback riding lessons and "hippotherapy" serviced. For tickets and more information, go to [www.xenophontrc.org](http://www.xenophontrc.org) or call 925-377-0871.

## Documentary Film Shows Disparity in Public Education

By BILL O'BRIAN  
Staff Writer

On January 19, Trish Striglos and her husband, Paul Scanlan, hosted a screening and wine reception fundraising event at the Orinda Library Theater in Orinda to benefit Loudspeaker Films which created the film shown, *TEACHED Vol. 1*, an independent documentary film about public education in America. According to Striglos, "the audience after the film was very energized with comments, discussions and a desire to help. They seemed inspired and motivated to be pro-active."

The film is a trilogy of short films called *The Path to Prison*, *The Blame Game: Teachers Speak Out*, and *Uncharted Territory*. The director/producer is Kelly Amis, a former teacher with the Teach for America program, a federal program that gives recent college graduates the opportunity to teach in lower socioeconomic elementary schools. Amis taught in South Central, Los Angeles. She next went to Stanford University to earn her MA in Educational Policy Analysis, as did Striglos.

Amis credits her teaching experience "for her ongoing determination to shed light on how the education system in America treats certain populations of students differently than others." After many years doing research and advocacy work in Washington, DC, she moved to Northern California to launch Loudspeaker Films, an independent film production company committed to social justice issues. *Teached Vol. 1* is the first film her company has produced.

Regarding her teaching experience, Amis states, "I was very angered at what I saw," which motivated her to pursue her graduate school, research and advocacy work. She says of the school where she taught, "most surprising, teachers at the school did not want to be there. They were detrimental to the students and had no expectations for them. A surprising number of teachers did not care about the students." Amis believes that if those parents have a choice, they will choose a charter school for their children's education. She also thinks there is a generation gap between older and younger teachers regarding teacher unions, with

older teachers more supportive of them, and younger teachers not as convinced of their value. She says that some younger teachers at her school asked, "why does the union representative have more power than the principal?"

The Teached.org website provides more information about the film and the efforts of Amis and her co-workers at Loudspeaker films to make people aware of the disparities in education in America. The site gives synopses of the three short films. The website summarizes the film as a "candid assessment of our nation's race-based 'achievement gap', taking you into those communities where its effects are most severe to hear what solutions the students, parents, teachers and others living this reality every day have to offer."

Teached is a non-profit project and relies on sponsorship and contributions to achieve its mission.



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## Orinda Academy Celebrates 30th Anniversary

By MIRIAM SHAFFER  
Contributing Writer

Orinda Academy celebrates its 30th anniversary with a crab feed on March 3 at 6 – 9 p.m. at the Orinda Masonic Hall on Altarinda Road. The private, nonprofit school offers co-ed instruction for students in grades 6 through 12.

Ron Graydon, founder and current head of Orinda Academy, opened the school as North Bay Orinda School in 1982. In the early 1990s, the school moved to its current site at 19 Altarinda Road, Orinda. The site provides ample classrooms, science and computer labs, office space, and sports fields. Its convenience to Orinda BART helped to expand enrollment beyond Lamorinda and provided transportation access for students from throughout the San Francisco East Bay.

"For the past 30 years, Orinda Academy has continued to provide a challenging, college prep curriculum with small class sizes and individualized attention for smart, creative students, including those with some learning differences," says Graydon.

In 2003, the school changed its name to Orinda Academy. The following year the school once again expanded with the addition of two buildings housing a fitness center with a weight room, dance studio, music room, art room and a science lab. In addition, a learning center and learning specialist have been added. The school has also formed a relationship with Student Organizational Services, which has provided academic coaching for students, and Coyote Coast, which has provided counseling.

The success of Orinda Academy's students is best exemplified by their achievements in higher education and their careers.

The school's graduates attend top public and private universities nationwide, as well as University of California and California state schools.



SALLY HOGARTY

Mariya Motorina describes her home in Russia to Orinda Academy students as part of the school's nuclear summit conference.

The March 3 crab feed is open to the public. For more information on the event, go to <http://tinyurl.com/7ye34tq>. For information on Orinda Academy, go to [www.orindaacademy.org](http://www.orindaacademy.org).

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## Something to Howl About...

### Animal Tales

My Kingdom for a Horse

Jennifer Conroy



A friend's daughter was about to celebrate her eighth birthday. I asked Celia what she wanted for her birthday and she said without hesitation, "A horse." My reply got a raised eyebrow by Celia's mother because I said, "What about a miniature horse?"

Now, before I go any further, I will jump to the conclusion of the above story by sharing that, no, Celia is not getting a miniature horse, and, even after opening a Pandora's box, I remain friends with Celia's mom. However, the possibility of a miniature horse as a pet is one that is intriguing.

The most important information to know is that a miniature horse can live for 30 years and, therefore, requires a significant commitment on the part of its owner. It differs from a pony in a number of ways, including bone structure and size. A typical pony is under 58" tall, whereas a miniature horse is typically between 32" to 38" inches in height.

Miniature horses have appeared throughout history and in more recent times, along with ponies, became popular for use in mines in Europe in the 19th century. Today, while they may be viewed as more of a "boutique pet," they do have a genuine standing in competitions and, even, racing. The American Miniature Horse Association ([www.amha.org](http://www.amha.org)), established in 1978, is a resource offering information on breeders and publishes the magazine *Miniature Horse World*. In the interest

of full disclosure, the association is not registered with GuideStar ([www.guidestar.org](http://www.guidestar.org)), a registry of nonprofit organizations. In addition, more information can be found at the website of The Miniature Horse ([www.theminaturehorse.com](http://www.theminaturehorse.com)).

Here in the Bay Area, particularly in Sonoma County, there are a number of small ranches that breed and sell miniature horses. A Google search will lead you to some of them and most will accommodate visitors, even those not interested in making a purchase. There are also horse rescue organizations, such as California Horse Rescue, that may have minis available for adoption.

While miniature horses can be pretty darn cute, keep in mind that a horse is a horse and along with it comes all the feeding, grooming, mucking out, shoeing, exercising routines, and veterinary care that are necessary with a full-size animal. Local animal ordinances may impact ownership, although a quick look at Contra Costa County ordinances do not appear to indicate prohibitions against miniature horses. If you seriously want to consider a mini, do check carefully with county and city ordinances.

More importantly, consider the lifetime commitment. A miniature horse is not an alternative to a dog. You won't be able to housebreak a horse. For those of us looking for animal companionship, there really are no substitutes for cats and dogs. But, if you are a horse lover, a mini might be right for you.

## ◆ LETTERS from page 4

prove additional taxes, often reaching back into our short history to point out various expenditures that were not necessary, or to raise concerns about the negative aspects of higher taxes, or simply not trusting our government leaders to do the right thing.

How can we move past discussing the problems and towards a working solution? Consider the comments you hear when discussing this topic with friends and neighbors. Consider your own personal skill set and what you can do to help the community. To give you an example, while the city was looking into the idea of benefit assessment districts, I polled my neighbors about their

feelings on the subject. Some respondents felt additional taxes would have a negative impact on property values, so together with two neighbors in the real estate industry, Lisa Geary and Jeannie Anderson, we polled Realtors. We found that generally local Realtors felt a moderate tax increase would not negatively affect home values or sales but continued deferment of road maintenance would.

I also recently spoke against MOFD's proposed commercial purchase because I understood that any perceived misuse of funds by a local public entity would fuel a negative response to any future spending, and Orinda's roads are more important to me than MOFD's administrative staff hav-

## How to Choose Between ACT and SAT

By JEANIE LERNER  
Contributing Writer

By junior year in high school, students start thinking about college. Most students are aware of SAT, but ACT is now also universally recognized and can be used instead. These test scores can make the difference between receiving college acceptance or rejection letters in the mail. But which test is right for you?

SAT includes writing, reading, and math tested in 10 sections: seven of 25 minutes, two of 20 minutes, and one of 10 minutes. Subjects of sections are random, except the first, which is always an essay, and the last, which is always multiple-choice writing. The test lasts three hours 45 minutes, plus breaks.

ACT comprises one section each for English (45 minutes), math (60 minutes), reading, and science (35 minutes each). The sections are always in this order, followed by an optional 30-minute essay. To determine if a specific school requires the ACT essay, see <https://actapps.act.org/writPrefRM/goSearchInst.do>. The test (with the essay) lasts two hours 55 minutes, plus breaks.

Both tests primarily use a multiple-choice format. SAT requires write-in answers for half of one math section. All SAT multiple-choice questions offer five choices, while ACT offers only four (except math, which is five), giving guessers better odds with ACT. In addition, ACT does not penalize wrong answers, while SAT deducts 1/4 point for each wrong answer.

The SAT "Writing" section is called "English" on ACT. While both include grammar questions, SAT also tests idiomatic expressions and knowledge of forbidden constructions, such as passive and misplaced modifiers. ACT assesses punctuation usage more heavily than SAT and also tests the student's knowledge of rhetorical strategies in the context of a passage, e.g., "If the writer's goal was X, did he achieve that goal?"

The math sections are the most similar: both test geometry and algebra. ACT includes a few trigonometry questions, while SAT only goes through algebra II. SAT questions can be tricky, and some require no math skills or knowledge to solve. ACT's math questions are more straightforward.

Both tests' reading sections include interesting comfortable digs.

We are all familiar with the arguments for a bond measure having to do with safety, fewer car repairs, increased property values, community pride, and peace of mind, but I suggest that the more involved you are, the more you will want to see Orinda succeed in its efforts to repair its infrastructure. Be a part of the solution.

— Diana Stephens

tions on passages. SAT has both short and long passages; in addition, the student must compare double passages (of both lengths). Additionally, SAT reading sections all begin with sentence completions, which primarily test vocabulary. SAT questions tend to be abstract and require analogous thinking and interpretation: how might the author respond to X? ACT does not test vocabulary at all, and all four passages are roughly the same length, each with exactly 10 questions. ACT passage topics are prose fiction, social science, humanities and natural science. Questions tend to be straightforward and content-based, e.g., what happened to the character?

Finally, ACT has a seven-passage science section, which has no SAT equivalent. While this section may scare some students who find science challenging, it's really just another reading section, focusing primarily on the student's ability to interpret charts, tables, graphs and figures. The science section subject matter is from many different fields, including some rarely offered in high school, such as meteorology, astronomy or zoology. However, all information needed to answer the questions is in the passage, so no prior scientific knowledge is necessary.

The essay prompts differ considerably. SAT tends to ask large, philosophical questions on which a typical high schooler may have never reflected, such as, "Does every achievement bring with it new challenges?" An advantage to SAT's questions is their over-arching themes. Diligent students can be ready to respond by preparing specific examples in advance. ACT essay prompts are more oriented toward average high school experience, such as, "Should high school be extended to five years?" The basic scoring is the same for both tests; however, the SAT essay score comprises one third of the writing score. Students who write the ACT essay get two additional scores: the essay score itself plus a combination score, essay plus English.

How does a student decide? If you like to finish each subject as you go, prefer straightforward questions, and are good at applying and interpreting data and concepts, ACT is the test for you. If you prefer shorter individual sections in a slightly longer test, and you excel in vocabulary and test-taking strategies, take SAT. Many students don't decide until they've had a "taste" of each test. You can do this online: [www.actstudent.org/sampletest/index.html](http://www.actstudent.org/sampletest/index.html) for ACT and [sat.collegeboard.org/practice/sat-practice-test](http://sat.collegeboard.org/practice/sat-practice-test) for SAT. If you decide to take a real test of each, you can then compare the scores (and experience), choose one, and then focus on raising the scores on that test. Regardless of the test, every student can excel with preparation.

Jeanie Lerner can be reached at [wordwizard@sbcglobal.net](mailto:wordwizard@sbcglobal.net) or 925-997-9642.



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## SCHOOLS

## OIS Increases Awareness of Problems Facing Those With Disabilities

By DAVID DIERKS  
Assistant Editor

From February 6 through 10, Orinda Intermediate School (OIS) held its annual Diverse Abilities Awareness Week (DAAW) to increase the awareness of the struggles those with disabilities face. Anna Tague, the DAAW parent chairperson, said "The goal of the week is to have the kids begin to understand what a person might be challenged by, whether it's a visible or invisible challenge, and to experience that. During the week, they see what it might be like to read aloud by seeing print as a person with dyslexia sees it, or to look in a mirror and try to trace something as if you had a disconnect between your brain and motor ability similar to cerebral palsy. It helps them see how frustrating that is. What would it be like if eight hours a day at school you were like that? What would it be like if your friends weren't accepting or respecting that challenge, or you weren't comfortable sharing that challenge?"

On February 8, OIS held an open house with interactive educational booths and information tables so that the community could see what DAAW was all about. One of the parent volunteers, Robyn Bowen said, "We have information tables which not only educate the kids, but also educate the parents who might come here looking for resources for their children or other family members. So it's almost like a Diverse

Abilities Fair."

Classroom discussions and activities included sensory, auditory and visual processing challenges. Physical education classes during the week were focused on wheelchair basketball, which culminated in a wheelchair basketball game, OIS vs. the Bay Cruisers, a youth wheelchair team from the Bay Area Outreach and Recreation Program. Bowen said "On top of the interactive curriculum that the volunteers do, the PE program is also involved. We have a program where we have the kids do their sports in wheelchairs and some of the 8th graders were recruited to play the basketball game against an established wheelchair basketball team. That's one of the really unique things. It's so fun, and it really speaks to the kids. They all come to see that!"

DAAW is a collaboration between OIS staff and the parents club. "I believe that's what makes this such a successful event. Every staff member is involved in some way or another in promoting this to the kids. Our principal is so supportive," Bowen said.

DAAW has been an annual event for close to 10 years. "It predates the majority of the people who attend the school," Tague explains. "As the program developed, the teachers became more and more enthusiastic. They're really an integral part of getting the word out." Bowen added, "I feel very strongly that this is an event that makes a positive difference in our community."



DAVID DIERKS

OIS students found out how difficult it is playing basketball in wheelchairs in a game against the Bay Cruisers during Diverse Abilities Awareness Week.

## Orinda Academy Students Help Keep Orinda Creeks Clean and Healthy

By KATHRYN G. MCCARTY  
Staff Writer

Orinda Academy students are joining the ranks of the Friends of Orinda Creeks (FOC) on March 23 from 9 a.m. - 12:30 p.m., volunteering to pull non-native invasive plants from a portion of the San Pablo Creek that runs through Orinda.

Jim Luini, president of the Friends says that having such a large group (83 students) is a big help to the FOC. Senior Jeremy Hansen explained, "Our schools' goal is for us to become good citizens by giving back and serving our community. This provides a connection between the school and the community."

According to Luini, the students will learn to identify and remove "invasive plants like English Ivy and Himalayan Blackberry and replant natives." The group believes that this educates students on how healthy creeks mean a healthy water supply.

"It's very important to get the kids interested in the environment, get them involved with the environment," Luini, a 40-year Orinda resident said. Since 1972, "Orinda has changed quite a bit," chuckles Luini. The group enjoys working with a diversity of volunteers from Girl Scouts and high school students to adults who Luini finds, "So full of energy. It's a delight to see that in a community like Orinda."

Luini, a retired engineer (CA-Berkeley 1957) is enthusiastic about the growth of the group. He has been involved with FOC for the last five years.

According to Luini, the creek includes stretches "from behind the Chevron station where it comes out from under the freeway flowing north, to the area behind

the Bank of America where the creek goes back underground, under the business community." Luini explained the long term goal is to make the creek area much more accessible to residents. "The idea is to get rid of the invasive plants and do some work in creating, eventually, a pathway around the creek bank."

Orinda Academy (OA) founder Ron Graydon said the school has included community service as part of its program since the school's inception. Celebrating its 30th anniversary this year, he says the school has always believed "students need to give back to the community, help those less fortunate, and experience working environments, as well as helping to preserve the natural environment."

OA sophomore Elie Portnoy, who also volunteers at the George Marks Children's Center said, "Volunteer work gives you a unique perspective." Fellow 10th grader Megan Pulkownik adds, "Doing community service makes me a better person. I feel good when I am doing good."

The FOC believes protection of the city's creeks, including the removal of invasive non-native plants and trash, is important. Like the students, the group's members are volunteers concerned with the health of the Bay Area's water supply, and believe "the health of the creek habitat is closely connected to the health of that watershed." According to the group's website, the water in the creeks in Orinda flows "into two reservoirs, San Pablo to the northwest and Upper San Leandro to the southeast." The site also explains that the group encourages composting.

For more information, visit [www.orindacreeks.org](http://www.orindacreeks.org).

### Miramonte Wrestlers Hit the Mat



TOM SPALDING

Miramonte's Micah Spalding (L) works a cradle for a pin in a match against Dublin High School. The Matadors have been rising in the standings, recently coming in 5th out of 19 teams at a February tournament of the NCS (North Coast Section) of the California Interscholastic Federation.



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## ◆ TROOP from page 14

are trained to ensure that consistent rules are followed.”

Langer goes on to describe how this year's Student Leader Program has morphed into Peaceful Playground Coaches (PPC) who initiate and help facilitate the Peaceful Playground Program. “Our 36 fifth grade student leaders have received training in Peaceful Playground activities as well as in how to support and guide first and second graders during recess play,” says Langer. “And, if there happens to be a conflict, the PPCs help to peacefully resolve conflicts.”

“The Peaceful Playground has given our children more activities during recess time,” says Glorietta first grade teacher Adriana Ayala. “It has helped children be a part of a group activity, and it teaches children conflict resolution strategies to use on the playground. The children have enjoyed using the new activities and get very excited when they learn a new game.”

Former Glorietta principal Wendy Sparks gave the Junior Scouts the idea for their Bronze Project. When Sparks retired unexpectedly, the girls then sought support from principal Ron Langer. They created student surveys to assess recess problems and needs; they researched the costs, planned fundraising activities, and wrote grant letters to local organizations seeking donations. Total project costs were \$4,545, which they raised through garage sales, magazine sales, cookie sales, grants from community organizations, and private donations (Rachel Hee sold over 1,000 boxes of cookies). Then 10 girls and their families spent a fall Saturday installing the Peaceful Playground activities on the upper playground. At the request of Glorietta administration, they will install another set of activities onto the kindergarten playground this spring.

“When I go to Glorietta on weekends, I feel proud that my troop could do something to help the school,” says 11-year-old Julia Smith, who joined Troop 30622 in the third grade after moving to Orinda from Massachusetts. “The most rewarding part of working on the Peaceful Playground is that pride and sense of achievement. The hardest part was raising all of the money.”

Troop member Lynette Voong concurs, “The hardest part was definitely raising money,” says Voong. “We raised money from garage sales and writing letters to organizations for their support. The most rewarding aspect of working on the Peaceful Playground was seeing the Glorietta students playing the games.”

“It took them a year and countless hours to complete this wonderful project,” says Suzanne Tom, proud troop co-leader with Betsy Shandalov. “The first Monday after

the Peaceful Playground was installed, the Glorietta students were thrilled and so excited!” According to Tom, all the colors added enthusiasm for the children, who enjoyed running around and playing - even without knowing exactly how to play some of the games.

“These girls worked tremendously hard to earn their Bronze Award, the highest honor a Junior Girl Scout can achieve,” continues Tom. “We hope all of the children at Glorietta are enjoying the Peaceful Playground as much as our girls enjoyed creating it.”

## ◆ BUILDING from page 9

which resulted in the reversal of the board's decision.”

During the January 18 meeting, Sperling said, “I think this is one issue in which the district had thoroughly vetted all of our options. I fully supported the purchase of 1150. There are individuals and organizations in our district and neighboring communities that have created a perceived reality through purposeful misinformation. That perceived reality has become reality and, at this point, it's virtually impossible to try to change that. I can no longer support the purchase of 1150.” Director Dick Olsen, who had opposed the plan, added, “I think, as you've both said, this has gotten out of control. I don't see any alternative other than to do what you both suggest.”

As a result, the MOFD has forfeited the deposit of \$25,000 that had been placed on the building at 1150 Moraga Way and is currently exploring other options for housing their administrative offices. Weil said, “The board has made no decision on administrative space and has asked the Chief to come back with a list of options.”

Local resident Steve Cohn, an outspoken opponent to the planned purchase was astonished at the decision. “I wasn't at the meeting because this issue wasn't even on the agenda. It was the weirdest decision I have ever seen. There were no new facts that came up between the meetings. People stood up on the 28th and said it was a bad idea.” Cohn said he and other residents “were trying to figure out how to continue fighting it, and now we don't have to!”

Orinda City Hall has space that has been offered to the MOFD. Weil commented “It was one of several possible options previously considered and presumably will be included in the list of options.”

*Editor's Note: At the February 15 MOFD meeting, directors Brook Mancinelli and Dick Olsen resigned. At the same meeting, the board voted three to two to extend Chief Randy Bradley's contract. The dissenting votes were Mancinelli and Olsen.*

## Everyday Changes

## How Cleopatra and Helen of Troy Achieved More “Face-a-Peel”!

Bonnie Waters



Most everyone wants to look younger and more radiant. With today's advances in skincare cosmeceuticals (the marriage of cosmetic preparations and pharmaceuticals), achieving “face-a-peel” is easily accessible. A peel is a skincare treatment in which an acid solution is applied topically to the skin to remove the damaged outer layers exposing fresher, healthier layers of skin beneath.

Although facial peels are a fast growing trend in skincare, the peel is one of the oldest cosmetic procedures in the world. Archeological findings indicate that peels were performed in ancient Egypt, Greece and Rome and were no doubt the secret of beauty for the likes of ancient Egyptian diva Cleopatra and the Grecian siren Helen of Troy.

Peels were once the domain of the “rich and famous” and necessitated weeks of recovery. Mild to medium strength peels do not necessitate any “down-time” and can produce a broad spectrum of desirable results. The popularity of facial peels is growing rapidly because they offer nearly immediate results and can be performed in a series of short visits to your local skincare professional. Results include reduction or elimination of the appearance of fine lines, wrinkles, acne scarring, and uneven pigmentation.

A series of properly applied professional peels administered by a well trained skincare professional together with the appropriate homecare can “turn back the clock” and dramatically increase “face-a-peel.” In an eight-week clinical test, CosMedix (a renowned skincare company) matched 13 women from ages 27 to 70 with a professional peel series and homecare regimen tailored to their needs. Over 95 percent of participants experienced the following:

- saw brighter-looking, more even skin tone with a softer, smoother texture
- noticed their lines and wrinkles were less apparent
- reported their skin looked and felt firmer and reported their pores were less noticeable
- experienced visibly less redness and skin irritation
- saw a reduction in brown spots and skin discoloration.

Would you like younger looking skin, fewer wrinkles, fine lines and brown spots? Would enjoying brighter-looking, smoother textured skin give you more “face-a-peel”? If so, visit a skincare professional and inquire into which peel protocol would be best for your skin type. If facial peels rejuvenated the “face that launched a thousand ships,” imagine what it could do for you!

## Dr. Smith DDS Adds Oral Cancer Detector

By DAVID DIERKS  
Assistant Editor

Dr. Mary Smith DDS has added an early oral cancer detector, the Velscope Vx, to her tools. The Velscope Vx is a new, non-invasive tool that uses a bright blue light to reveal any changes in the mouth that a dentist might not normally see.

Dr. Smith's team started using the Velscope Vx 18 months ago. The system was designed by the British Columbia Cancer Agency in collaboration with MD Anderson Cancer Center and works by “fluorescing the tissues so a lesion stands out,” said dental assistant Laura Mullet. If a lesion is found, then Dr. Smith's team can take a tissue sample for a biopsy or have an oral surgeon take the sample. The Velscope Vx can be interfaced with a digital camera and computer for storage of photos.

Dr. Smith said the development of the device “stemmed from Michael Douglas' throat cancer, that's how it all began.”

An estimated 37,000 Americans develop oral cancer every year. Oral cancer kills one person in the United States roughly every hour. Of those diagnosed with oral



DAVID DIERKS  
Dr. Thompson uses the Velscope Vx on Dr. Smith.

cancer, 57 percent will die within five years. The death rate is high, not because oral cancer is hard to discover, but because it is usually revealed late in development. Often oral cancer is only discovered when it has moved into other areas like the lymph nodes. Early discovery increases the chances of survival to 80 percent. Dr. Smith encourages everyone to have a Velscope examination done and advises her patients to have it done every six months with their normal teeth cleaning.



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## LOCAL FAMILIES

## Au Pair from Sweden A Perfect Match for Busy Family

By KATHRYN G. MCCARTY  
Staff Writer

Karen DePaepe hired live-out nannies to help her when her sons were babies, but soon understood there had to be a better way for her family. “I realized that live-in child care was substantially more affordable and enabled us to have some tax benefits. Additionally, I thought with having live-in child care, there would be more flexibility with schedules and reliability.”

She contacted Julia Brewer, area director for AuPairCare, an agency that places foreign *au pairs* with American families. Brewer believes services like hers have advantages for families and *au pairs* alike. “The *au pairs* work as live-in childcare providers while experiencing life in the United States,” says Brewer.

Through the years, the single mom and her sons had female *Au Pairs* from Sweden, Russia and Germany. But, with her sons entering Glorietta Elementary and “getting so involved in sports” she began “thinking it would be a great idea to have a male *au pair*.”

Male *au pairs* are frequently referred to as “mannies” and DePaepe’s sons, David and Andrew (7 and 9 respectively), were receptive to the idea.

A series of Skype and email conversa-

tions with mannie Jakob Carlbo Gustafsson netted what Gustafsson calls “a perfect match for me.” The sentiment seems to be mutual.

DePaepe praises the young man, who plans to become a police officer when he returns to Sweden, for his “calm manner and enthusiasm.”

“While Andrew and David have had many great memories over the years with their other *au pairs*, they have told me that they like Jakob the best so far because “he’s a guy, playful and helps us with our homework.”

Gustafsson came to the United States last year from Sweden as part of the AuPairCare program. According to Brewer, the cultural exchange program is one of several sponsoring agencies authorized by the U.S. Department of State.

The program, founded in 1986, requires *au pairs* to be high school graduates between the ages of 18 and 26, speak conversational English and have experience caring for children. *Au pairs* can work up to 45 hours per week, and the program requires students maintain at least six credits of college coursework.

As Online Sales and Strategy Manager for Wellsfargo.com, DePaepe sometimes has an erratic schedule. “Having an *au pair* gives me a lot of flexibility and peace of



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

*Au pair* Jakob Gustafsson with Andrew (L) and David (on shoulders) DePaepe.

mind because I have someone taking care of my children while I am working whom I trust and can rely on.”

The boys keep a busy schedule as well, DePaepe said, adding that Gustafsson “helps my sons practice their sports (soccer, basketball, baseball) and get their homework done.” The *au pair* also ensures that Andrew and David get to multiple activities including Tae Kwon Do, Kids Rock, the Lafayette Orinda Presbyterian Church program, and Cub Scouts.

Gustafsson said his job entails acting like “an extra parent. Basically as an *au pair* you step in to do the daily work that concerns the children. Such as helping them to clean their rooms, making them dinner,

helping them with homework, doing their laundry, coordinating play dates, arts and crafts, and sports.”

Gustafsson notes the differences between America and Sweden are mainly “political – how to raise kids, the amount of time a person works, and how little time they get off for actually working so hard.” He says he’s enjoyed learning about American culture and lifestyle, including language skills, how to get along with people from another country and culture and other religions, and how to adapt to a different lifestyle. “I’ve learned lots about myself, other people, and caring for children. I’ve also met tons of new friends and traveled to places that I always dreamed of seeing,” he says.

## Memo to Boomers: The Kids are All Right, and They’re Coming Back Home!

By APRIL WISE  
Contributing Writer

I’ll never forget that bright September day when I drove my daughter to the University of Southern California to begin college. I tried to look brave upon leaving but worried all the way back to the Bay Area.

I felt lonely at first, and tried not to call her or wonder how she was faring. As the days and weeks progressed, I began to wake up to a new life for myself. I joined a garden club, reunited with friends, and started doing yoga. I even had a new, exciting romance – something I’d never had time for during my years of post-divorce, single parenting.

Four years passed quickly. She’d completed college already. We Boomer parents now had 20-something kids looking the job market squarely in the eye and making the fateful call: “Mom, Dad I may need to live at home for awhile.”

My daughters’ friends had graduated on time and completed impressive degrees, but the job market was unimpressed. My daughter, a musician, entered a master’s program, hoping that her opportunities would expand when she completed an advanced degree.

An estimated 55 percent of all college

graduates are currently living at home with their parents again. In our community, that figure approaches 75 percent.

In the first few months, a few of us put our graying heads together and commiserated. Marianne’s mother was affected by her daughter’s moods after she left her boyfriend in L.A. Gail’s parents said that our returnees did not share the same hours of operation as the rest of us.

And then there’s the house cleaning issue. Steve’s mom said, “I thought Steve would have acquired a sense of responsibility about keeping things neat, but considering how his college apartment looked, I have to admit that the bar was set pretty low.”

In all fairness, this isn’t a picnic on the beach for our kids, either. My daughter reminds me that she can’t have friends over spontaneously to crash after a fun night of clubbing. She also says I am much too concerned about how she spends her money and how much time she isn’t engaged in career planning. True enough, and, in my work as a family therapist I often see parents of kids who have become seriously derailed from the transition of youth to adulthood. They’re involved with drugs or alcohol, and they are dealing with complicated emotional problems. Aside from my professional role, once a parent, always a

parent. No matter how hard we try simply to be cohabitating adults, we see these roommates as our kids, and they see us as their parents. As long as we have the money advantage, we also have the privileges. Although young adults feel entitled to make their own decisions, they are limited financially. And maybe, if we reach back into our own history, we can recall that we didn’t know what we didn’t know, either. Despite a very different economic climate, I have to admit that I was ill prepared for life’s challenges when I finished college. But as my daughter likes to remind me, I was married by the time I was 22, and my husband had a steady income – definitely not the norm for our Boomer kids.

Now, as we mark almost a year of the kids being home again, I reflect on the three core lessons I’ve learned:

1. Don’t use your child’s time at home as an opportunity to teach them all the things they didn’t learn before. The learning curve has passed. It’s their world now.

2. Communicate clear expectations about contributing to the household and a clear understanding of the goals of their living at home.

3. For those of us fortunate enough to have kids only temporarily stuck in a challenging economy, keeping the faith helps. The need for individuation in one’s 20s is usually strong enough to make moving out a priority.

Just as the hills are becoming green, and we are turning the corner on a year since graduation, my daughter and I have fallen into a comfortable rhythm in the household. She recently announced brightly that a residence-assistant job was available at school and if she got it, she could live in San Francisco next year. I felt unaccountably sad. The kids are all right... and they’re leaving again.

*April Wise, MFT, currently runs an informational/ support group for parents of young adults who are failing to launch. She can be reached at [www.aprilwisemft.com](http://www.aprilwisemft.com).*

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## CALIFORNIA SHAKESPEARE

## ◆ SHOPPER from page 14

Orinda market this season comes on the request of many local shoppers ready to buy fresh, in-season produce at their local market. Asparagus and strawberries are spring time treats, salad greens love the cooler weather, citrus still looks great and cauliflower, cabbages, carrots and celery are plentiful.

Cilantro is available almost year round but the early months of the year are a good time to make the most of this love-it-or-hate-it herb. It's much more aromatic than its look-alike cousin parsley and prized in the cuisines of Mexico, China, India and Thailand (think salsas, burritos, curry dishes and soups).

Cilantro is generally sold by the bunch and sports an overall green color free of any yellowing. It's very perishable, but when the leaves are covered with a damp paper towel and placed in a plastic bag in the refrigerator they'll last for three to four days.

In addition to cilantro, you'll find all the other ingredients you'll need for a delicious tasting guacamole. Depending on when you plan to make the dish, the grower can help you pick out the best avocado – it needs to be perfectly ripe for the best flavor. Some avocados may take up to three or four days at room temperature to yield to gentle palm pressure – an indication that the avocado is ripe-and-ready to go.

Ripe avocados reach full maturity only after they are off the tree. This ability to remain on the tree without affecting the quality conveniently extends the season – lucky for us! Once the yellowish green flesh is exposed to air it darkens quickly, so cut just before serving in a salad or eating fresh.

For a classic guacamole recipe, peel, pit and mash three avocados, two tablespoons lime juice, one half cup diced onion, three tablespoons chopped cilantro, one minced Serrano or jalapeno pepper (stems and seeds removed), and salt and pepper to taste. To prevent the guacamole from browning, cover the surface directly with plastic wrap and refrigerate until ready to serve. Add a little chopped tomato just before serving if desired.

California provides nearly 100 percent of the nation's artichokes; 75 percent of all the artichoke acreage is located in Monterey County. Castroville is the self-proclaimed "Artichoke Center of the World" where the Green Globe variety reigns supreme.

Artichokes are actually flower buds that form along the stalks of a three to four foot high, silver-green, fountain shaped plant. The large terminal buds form at the end of the long central stem, medium buds

grow from side shoots and the dwarf or baby artichokes grow at the juncture from leaf to stem. During peak season (March through May), the same fields of artichokes are harvested at seven-day intervals, since artichokes on the same plant mature at different times. If left uncut, they blossom into impressive looking violet colored flowers, but growers discourage this practice because it weakens the plant.

Medium or large size artichokes develop a fuzzy "choke" that needs to be discarded after cooking. Baby or dwarf sizes only need the stem and a few outer leaves trimmed off before grilling or sautéing.

Here are a few quick dips to use with your next pot of cooked artichoke. My favorite is simply a couple spoonfuls of mayo with curry powder to taste. For an easy ranch dip, combine one quarter cup nonfat plain yogurt and one quarter cup low fat Ranch salad dressing.

The Orinda Farmers' Market is open every Saturday beginning March 3 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Orinda Way in front of the Community Park and Rite Aid. For more information, visit the website at [www.cccfm.org](http://www.cccfm.org) or call the market hotline at 925-431-8361.

Barbara Kobsar, *The Seasoned Shopper*, can be reached at [cotkitchen@aol.com](mailto:cotkitchen@aol.com).

## ◆ CAIFF from page 2



SALLY HOGARTY  
Diane Sawyer of NBC News kicked off the festival on Feb. 10.

10 – 16 at both the Rheem Theatre and the Orinda Theatre, had something for everyone, from feature films to documentaries to short films to seminars. Celebrities were also on hand to add even more sparkle to the proceedings.

The opening night reception alone would have been enough to convince even the most skeptical that they were party to something special. The main theater, usually reserved for first run feature films, was turned into a place where film enthusiasts could mingle, drink wine, and nibble on hor d'oeuvres provided by local restaurants such as Terzetto's, Peninni's and Shish Kabob Show, among others. The seats themselves were

## "One Great Party" at California Shakespeare Theater

By KATHRYN G. MCCARTY  
Staff Writer

Ready for a weekend getaway? How about a game of golf at one of the nation's top golf courses? A trip to Italy? Mexico?

Or perhaps you're intrigued by literary genius and want to be one of the first to sleep over in Dashiell Hammett's newly restored San Francisco apartment? Or visit vaults and indulge in reading rare works by Mark Twain?

Attend the auction at California Shakespeare Theater Company's 17th annual fundraising gala, One Great Party, on Saturday, March 17 at 6 p.m. and in addition to supporting Cal Shakes' educational and artistic programming, you might find yourself with the opportunity to bid for one of these great auction prizes.

Proceeds from the gala, to be held at San Francisco's Four Seasons, will benefit Cal Shakes' work on stage, in classrooms and throughout Bay Area communities. Cal Shakes' Gala is at the core of the company's annual fundraising campaigns and over the years has garnered more than \$3.8 million to support the theater.

The 2012 season opens May 30 with Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, directed by Jonathan Moscone and starring Michael Winters. Winters, a long time favorite at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, is a regular on television's *Gilmore Girls*, and will make his Cal Shakes debut as Prospero from May 30 – June 24.

Other shows in this year's line-up include: *Spunk*, adapted by George C. Wolfe from three vignettes by Harlem Renaissance writer Zora Neale Hurston, with music by Chic Street Man, directed by Patricia McGregor running July 4 – 29; and the Noël Coward favorite *Blithe Spirit*, directed by Mark Rucker playing August 8 – September 1.

Closing Cal Shakes 38th season is



DREW ALTIZER PHOTOGRAPHY  
Last year's fundraiser was a great success. Organizers are confident this year's will be even better.

Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, last produced at Cal Shakes over a decade ago, directed by Liesl Tommy running September 19 – October 14.

Cal Shakes continues several popular complimentary enrichment programs including "Inside Scoop" where audience members have a chance to hear directors and designers discuss their work in the production process. Production dramaturges host informal discussions in "Insight Matinees" and audience members can meet cast members following performances in the scheduled "Meet the Artists Matinees."

Season packages and group tickets for parties of 10 or more are available now; single tickets go on sale in May. For theater ticket or audience enrichment programming information, call the Cal Shakes' box office at 510-548-9666 or visit on the web at [www.calshakes.org](http://www.calshakes.org). For tickets to the Cal Shakes' Gala, One Great Party, call 510-809-3291 or visit [www.calshakes.org/gala](http://www.calshakes.org/gala).

soon bedecked with coats and scarves for it was no secret that that night's show had been sold out for quite some time, and many wanted to ensure prime seating.

In the lobby, noted actor and special guest, Burt Young (*Rocky*) was also on hand and every opportunity was taken to immortalize this. Cameras (and phones) of every shape and size abounded.

The evening's official kick-off came as

the lights dimmed and host Diane Sawyer of NBC News welcomed guests and introduced the feature film of the evening – *Monsieur Lazhar*. This Canadian film has already garnered three Slate Award nominations (Best Picture, Best Director – Philippe Falardeau and best actor – Mohamed Fellag) not to mention that it is one of this year's nominations for best foreign film by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

The evening did not end there as *Five Time Champion* showed afterwards, with one of the actors in that film, Jon Gries, making a personal appearance.

In the days to follow, everything was offered for the film buff and/or those wanting to break into the biz. Seminars on acting were offered by Joie Landeaux, and many of the people responsible for the films shown at this festival were also on hand for a behind-the-scenes look at all the challenges of bringing a film to fruition.

All in all, the CAIFF screened 11 feature films, seven documentaries, and 23 short films. Many of these were from local talent as part of the Iron Filmmaker challenge where filmmakers are given a scant 24 hours to start and finish a short film.

Saving the best for last, the festival also included the classic films *Little Women* and *Meet Me In St. Louis*, both featuring another luminary of the silver screen, Margaret O'Brien, who was in attendance to reminisce and answer questions.

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## CALENDAR

## ON THE CALENDAR

## MARCH

- 1 **Ninth Annual High School Visual Arts Competition** winners on display through March 28 at Orinda Library Art Gallery, 24 Orinda Way. An artist and awards reception will be on March 7. Visit [www.OrindaArtsCouncil.org](http://www.OrindaArtsCouncil.org).
- 2 **First Friday Forum**, Leslie Baroody, 1:30 p.m. Lafayette-Orinda Presbyterian Church. Call 925-283-8722.  
**Orinda Chamber of Commerce** presents Night at the Orinda, an evening of comedy, champagne and no-host bar at Orinda Theatre, featuring comics Will Durst, Dan St. Paul and Johnny Steele, 6:45 p.m. Tickets (for 17 and older) are \$35 in advance, \$40 at the door. Visit [www.orindachamber.org/LiveAtTheOrinda2012](http://www.orindachamber.org/LiveAtTheOrinda2012).
- 3 **53rd Annual White Elephant Sale**, benefit for the Oakland Museum, 333 Lancaster St., Oakland, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Free shuttle from Fruitvale BART and free admission. Visit [www.WhiteElephantSale.org](http://www.WhiteElephantSale.org) or call 510-536-6800.
- 10 **Orinda Books** hosts Ginger Wadsworth discussing *The First Girl Scout: The Life of Juliette Gordon Low*, 276 Village Square, 1 p.m. Call 254-7606.
- 15 **Orinda Books** hosts sisters-in-crime Jacqueline Winspear and Cara Black discussing *Elegy for Eddie* (a Maisie Dobbs Mystery by Winspear) and *Murder in Passy* (an Aimee Leduc Investigation by Black), 276 Village Square, 3 p.m.  
**Orinda/Tabor Sister City Foundation** presents *The Good Soldier Schweik*, a Czech movie about the absurdity of war, Orinda Library Auditorium, 7:30 p.m. In Czech with English subtitles. Call 254-8260.
- 16 **Miramonte High School** presents a spring musical *Once Upon a Mistress*, 750 Moraga Way, 7:30 p.m. Also March 16, 17, 22 and 23 at 7:30 p.m. and March 18 at 2 p.m. For tickets visit [www.showtix4u.com](http://www.showtix4u.com).
- 17 **Orinda Books** hosts Susan Strong discussing *Move Our Message: How to Get America's Ear*, 276 Village Square, 2 p.m. Call 254-7606.  
**Xenophon Therapeutic Riding Center** hosts An Enchanted Emerald Eve, a gala dinner and auction at Round Hill Country Club, Alamo, benefitting the riding program for children with disabilities, 6 p.m. Visit [www.xenophontrc.org](http://www.xenophontrc.org).
- 23 **Sleepy Hollow Elementary School** presents *Alice in Wonderland*, 20 Washington Lane, 7 p.m. Also March 24 at 4 p.m. Call 254-8711.
- 24 **Holden High School** hosts its Annual Art Show at Remedy Salon, 1195 65th St., Emeryville, 7 to 9 p.m. Visit [www.holdenhigh.org](http://www.holdenhigh.org).

## AT THE LIBRARY

All events are free unless otherwise specified. For more information, call the library at 254-2184 or visit [www.ccclib.org/locations/Orinda.html](http://www.ccclib.org/locations/Orinda.html).

- 1 **Friends of the Library** Book Sale, bookshop and sorting room, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.
- 2 **Computer Help** for adults and seniors, learn basic skills in one-on-one hour-long sessions, 10 a.m. to noon. Also March 9, 16, 23 and 30, same hours, and March 4, 11, 18 and 25 from 1 to 3 p.m.
- 5 **Sensory Storytime** for 3- to 5-year-olds with Sensory Processing Disorder and other developmental disabilities, 1:30 to 2:30 p.m. Also March 12, 19 and 26.
- 7 **Paws to Read**, children in grades 1 through 5 practice reading skills with a friendly dog, 3:30 to 4:30 p.m. Call the library to sign up for a 25-minute session.
- 10 **Weekend Paws to Read**, children in grades 1 through 5 practice reading skills with a friendly dog, 2:30 to 3:30 p.m. Call the library to sign up for a 15-minute session.
- 13 **Toddler Lapsit**, stories, songs and fingerplays for infants to 3-year-olds and their caregivers, 10 to 10:30 a.m. and 10:30 to 10:55 a.m. Drop-ins welcome, but limit attendance to once per week. Also March 14, 20, 21, 27 and 28.  
**Peek-A-Boo Time** with songs, stories, rhymes and rhythm for newborns through 1-year-olds and their caregivers, 11:30 to 11:55 a.m. Also March 20 and 27.
- 16 **Mystery Book Club** members discuss *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy* by John Le Carre, Tutoring Room, 3 to 4:30 p.m. Adult program, drop-ins welcome.
- 22 **Talespinners of Contra Costa**, storytelling for adults, Garden Room, 7 p.m.
- 27 **Berkeley Repertory Theater** docent talks about the theatre's latest production, *Red*, Fire-side Room, 7 to 7:55 p.m. Adult program, drop-ins welcome.

## CLUB MEETINGS

- American Association of University Women**, Feb. 21, 9:30 a.m., Assemblymember Nancy Skinner to discuss state budget, Holy Trinity Serbian Orthodox Church Cultural Center, 1700 School Street, Moraga.
- Diablo Star Chapter #214**, Order of the Eastern Star. Second Monday, 7:30 p.m., Orinda Masonic Center. Contact Karen Seaborn, 689-0995.
- Friends of the Joaquin Moraga Adobe**. Third Monday, 7:30 p.m., Moraga-Orinda Fire District Conference Room, 1280 Moraga Way, Moraga, [www.moragaadobe.org](http://www.moragaadobe.org).
- Friends of the Orinda Creeks**. Fourth Wednesday, 8:30 a.m., May Room, Orinda Library, 253-1997.
- Lamorinda Alcohol Policy Coalition**, every second Wednesday, 10 to 11:30 a.m. at Orinda City Hall, Sarge Littlehale Room. Call 687-8844, ext. 227.
- Lamorinda Sirs for retired men**. Second Wednesday, 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., Holy Trinity Cultural Center, 1700 School St., Moraga. Luncheon speakers plus golf, tennis, bocce, bridge and astronomy. Call Pete Giers, 254-4667.
- Lamorinda Sunrise Rotary**. Every Friday, 7 a.m., Postino, Lafayette, 254-0440, ext. 463.
- Lamorinda Toastmasters**. Every Tuesday, 7:30 p.m., Temple Isaiah, 3800 Mt. Diablo Blvd., Lafayette, [www.lamorinda.freetoasthost.net](http://www.lamorinda.freetoasthost.net).
- Montelindo Garden Club**. Third Friday, September through May, Orinda Community Church, 10 Irwin Way, 9 a.m., [www.montelindogarden.com](http://www.montelindogarden.com).
- Orinda Junior Women's Club** community service group. First Tuesday, September to June, 7 p.m. Contact Julie Mercer or Charlene Robinson at [info@orindajuniors.org](mailto:info@orindajuniors.org) or [www.orindajuniors.org](http://www.orindajuniors.org).
- Orinda Rotary**. Every Wednesday, noon, Community Center, 28 Orinda Way, 254-2222.
- Orinda Association**. Second Monday, 7:15 p.m., Orinda Library, May Room, 254-0800.
- Orinda Hiking Club**. Hike every Wednesday, 9 a.m., old library parking lot on Irwin Way. Call Steve at 253-0131 or visit [www.orindahiking.org](http://www.orindahiking.org).
- Orinda Historical Society**. Third Wednesday, 7 p.m., Orinda Community Church, 10 Irwin Way, 254-1353.
- Orinda Job's Daughters**. First and third Monday, 7 p.m., 9 Altarinda Road, 283-7176.
- Orinda/Tabor (Czech Republic) Sister City Foundation**. Fourth Thursday, 7 p.m. social, 7:30 p.m. meeting, call 254-8260 for location.
- Orinda Teen Advisory Council**. Second Wednesday, 4 p.m., Community Center, 28 Orinda Way. For information, email [orindateenadvisorycouncil@gmail.com](mailto:orindateenadvisorycouncil@gmail.com).
- Orinda Woman's Club**. Second Tuesday, 9:30 a.m. to noon, call Jean Barnhart, 254-3881.

Send calendar items to Maggie Sharpe at [m.sharpe66@gmail.com](mailto:m.sharpe66@gmail.com)

## Orinda Resident Will Perform With Symphony

By ROBERT REZAK  
Contributing Writer

Denis Winter will perform March 24 with the Contra Costa Wind Symphony in a concert of music inspired by works of renowned authors, including Mark Twain and Shakespeare.

Winter will play Ennio Morricone's "Gabriel's Oboe" from the film version of *The Mission* by Robert Bolt.

The program will begin at 3 p.m. in the



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Orinda resident Denis Winter will perform with the Contra Costa Wind Symphony on March 24.

Leshner Center for the Arts, 1601 Civic Drive in Walnut Creek.

Winter recently retired as professor of low brass in the music department at the University of Central Arkansas. He was also the principal trombonist with the Little Rock Wind Symphony.

Under the baton of Duane Carroll, the Contra Costa Wind Symphony will play selections by Johan de Meij based on Kenneth Grahame's classic children's story *The Wind in the Willows* and Franco Cesarini's *Tom Sawyer Suite*, based on Mark Twain's story of the adventures of Sawyer, Huckleberry Finn, and Becky Thatcher.

Shakespeare will be represented in *Suite Francaise*, written by Guy Woolfenden for a Royal Shakespeare Company production of *Love's Labour's Lost*, and music written by Lars-Erik Larsson for a Swedish production of *The Winter's Tale*.

Other selections include Soren Hyldgaard's *Hans Christian Andersen Suite*, with musical references to *The Little Match Girl* and the author's other characters and adventures, and dances from Leonard Bernstein's *West Side Story*.

Call 925-943-SHOW (7469) for tickets or go to [www.lesherartscenter.org](http://www.lesherartscenter.org). Tickets are priced \$6 – \$22.

## Orinda Starlight Announces New Season and Auditions

The Orinda Starlight Village Players (OrSVP) season will start on June 1 with Agatha Christie's *And Then There Were None* directed by longtime OrSVP actor Malcolm Cowler. The show will run through June 23. In the second slot (running July 20 through August 11) will be Allen Boretz's *Room Service* directed by Chris Constantouros. The last show of the season (running September 7 through 29) will be

a Sherlock Holmes mystery by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Speckled Band*, directed by Charles Guitron.

Auditions for the season will be held on April 1 (no joke) at 4 p.m. at the Community Center Amphitheater, and April 3 at 7 p.m. at the Community Center Carpentry Room. For more information, visit [www.orsvp.org](http://www.orsvp.org).

– David Dierks, Assistant Editor

## Leslie Baroody at First Friday Forum

"Electric Cars Are Here!" is Leslie Baroody's subject for First Friday Forum on March 2 in the Sanctuary of Lafayette-Orinda Presbyterian Church, 49 Knox Drive, Lafayette at 1:30 p.m.

Baroody will discuss the history of electric vehicles (EVs) plus the new plug-in hybrid and better-electric vehicles now on the market and those soon to arrive in California. She says, "I will summarize the legislative and regulatory mandates and what consumers should know about the environmental benefits, life-cycle costs, and advantages of ownership."

For the past 18 months, Baroody has served as the Electric Vehicle Team Leader for the California Energy Commission. Prior to that she worked at the California Energy Commission in the Emerging Fuels and Technologies Office of the Fuels and Transportation Division in Sacramento. She was project manager for the Alternative and Renewable Fuel and Vehicle Technology Program's \$100 million 2010-2011 Investment Plan.

Her many publications include "Lessons from California's Electricity Crisis" co-authored with her father, economist



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Leslie Baroody discusses electric vehicles at the First Friday Forum on March 2.

and LOPC member, Dr. Tapan Munroe of Moraga. Baroody and her husband live in Davis and are the parents of two sons, both attending UC Davis.

For further information on the Forum, call 925-283-8722 or go to [www.lopc.org](http://www.lopc.org).

## CITY/FIRE/SCHOOL DISTRICT MEETING SCHEDULE

- Acalanes Union High School District**. First and third Wednesdays, 7:30 p.m., district office, 1212 Pleasant Hill Road, Lafayette.
- City Council**. First and third Tuesdays, 7 p.m., Library Auditorium, [www.cityoforinda.org](http://www.cityoforinda.org).
- Historic Landmarks Committee**. Fourth Tuesday, 3 to 5 p.m., Library Garden Room. Call 925-788-7323.
- Moraga-Orinda Fire District**. Third Wednesday, 7 p.m., Administration Building, 1280 Moraga Way, Moraga.
- Orinda Union School District Board of Trustees**. Second Monday, 4 p.m., OUSD Conference Room, 8 Altarinda Road. For the latest listing of dates, please check the website at [www.orindaschools.org](http://www.orindaschools.org).
- Planning Commission**. Second and Fourth Tuesdays, 7 p.m., Library Auditorium, [www.cityoforinda.org](http://www.cityoforinda.org).



BUSINESS BUZZ

◆ BUZZ from page 20

With a special interest in ocular nutrition, Lee points out a healthy diet and regular exercise can help prevent other conditions that may arise. "A healthy body keeps eyes healthy too. So, whatever you do to keep your body in good health, will also keep your eyes healthy," adds Lee. A good routine exercise program includes 15-20 minutes of cardio and interval strength training three to four times a week. In order to keep abreast of developments, Lee participates in an ocular nutrition fellowship program through the Ocular Nutrition Society.

Dr. Lee invites the public to drop by this month and have their carotenoid level measured by the Pharmanex scanner. This new laser technology measures carotenoids in the skin simply by placing one's hand on the scanner. Carotenoids are antioxidants found naturally in red and orange vegetables. "Antioxidants break down free radicals that cause oxidative damage and the oxidative damage destroys cells. Some carotenoids offer protection against some cancers and also cardiovascular protection. Plant based antioxidants help protect the retina from destructive free radical damage," explains Lee.

The certified optician at Visual Entrée Optometry, Jessica Lee, ABOC, (she is Dr. Lee's sister) provides superior customer service by taking the time to expertly fit frames for each customer. A member of the Orinda Chamber of Commerce, a ribbon cutting ceremony will take place this month to officially welcome this new business. Dr. Lee is participating in the American Diabetes Association efforts to raise awareness by promoting healthy lifestyle choices and encouraging eye exams to monitor overall health. When diagnosed early enough, one can avoid diabetes by altering lifestyle choices. "This is especially important when a family history of diabetes exists," adds Lee. She also supports the Lions Club of Berkeley by collecting discarded old frames for the non-profit organization.

When not caring for clients' needs, Dr. Lee enjoys exercising and hiking in the East Bay, as well as spending time with friends and family. One favored pastime is watching "Extreme Couponing" shows on cable television's TLC channel.

Visual Entrée Optometry is open Monday through Friday, 10:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. and Saturday, 10:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. For more information, please visit the website, [www.visualentreeoptometry.com](http://www.visualentreeoptometry.com) or call 925-386-0258 for an appointment.

**Asian Cooking for Kids and Buddha Belly Parties are in Demand**

Orinda resident Nancy Perches has offered her fun and educational Asian Cooking for Kids classes during the after-school programs at Glorietta and Del Rey Schools for the past four years. Now you can participate in the Buddha Belly Parties that Perches hosts in your own home or at



VALERIE HOTZ  
Nancy Perches teaches Asian cooking to youngsters.

the Orinda Community Center. Designed for ages 7 to 11 (2nd to 5th grade) children learn three new recipes during the 2-½ hour long party.

Growing up with parents who were in the restaurant business, Perches recalls her childhood spent at the kitchen table making Zong and other delicious Asian dishes with her mother and sisters. "We had a family tradition of making Zong, which are wraps with lotus or banana leaves filled with sticky rice and a variety of other fillings such as mushroom, pork, chicken, chestnuts and salty egg. Friends and relatives had their own fillings and they passed the tradition down to their children," says Perches. She decided to teach Asian cooking to children because everyone can get involved simultaneously. There is always something to do, whether making pot stickers or wrapping sushi, it is a group effort and everyone enjoys working together.

Safety is observed throughout every class. The students use special choppers that conceal the blades. If a sharper knife is necessary for older children, they are guided with close supervision. While Perches handles all the stove-top details, students are provided materials for another project such as designing a recipe book cover. Popular dishes include chow mein, Vietnamese spring rolls, beef broccoli, fried rice, sushi and pot stickers. At the conclusion of the class, everyone eats their various concoctions together.

Perches is married to George Perches,

proprietor of Candor Financial Solutions. The couple moved to Orinda in 1995 and has two sons, Jarrett, a 9th grader at Miramonte High School and Tyler, who attends the 6th grade at Orinda Intermediate School. An active community volunteer, Perches previously served as coordinator of the after-school program at Glorietta School. She continues to volunteer at Orinda Intermediate School. In her spare time, she enjoys playing tennis, spending time with her family and walking her dog, Montay.

For more information about Buddha Belly Parties and Asian Cooking for Kids, call Nancy Perches directly at 253-8518 or send an email at [n.perches@comcast.net](mailto:n.perches@comcast.net).

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## Business Buzz

### Putting a Personal Face on Local Business

Valerie Hotz



To send items for consideration, email Hotz at v.hotz@att.net.

#### A Lifetime of Healthy Walking Patterns Begins at Tiny Feet

Moraga residents Milena and Marko Mitkin have established a long overdue sensible, trendy children's shoe boutique in Theatre Square, between Starbucks and Serika. The shop is evocative of a children's nursery, complete with charming old world wooden toys on display and comfortable seating for sizing those adorable little feet. A World War I bi-plane hangs from the ceiling and the traditional wood bead maze sits in a corner begging for attention from inquiring minds.

Offering higher end and seasonal selec-

tions from infant to age seven, Tiny Feet stocks over 100 styles from 20 different European and domestic shoe companies, making for an exotic shoe shopping experience. "Growing feet must be properly sized and given the best fit. A lot of people come in and try several styles before achieving the proper fit for their child. We offer the ability to try several different pair before making a purchase," says Marko Mitkin. Tiny Feet was the couple's brainchild after they experienced difficulties finding shoes for their two young boys, Filip, age 2 1/2 and Luka, age 4 1/2.



VALERIE HOTZ

Marko Mitkin (above) and his wife Milena recently opened Tiny Feet in Theatre Square.

Parents and kids can choose from selections by Chooze, Kickers, JoyFolie, Garvalin, Agatha Ruiz De La Prada, Biomechanics, Birki (Birkenstocks for kids), Tsukishochi, Livie & Luca, Kid Express and more. Shoppers will find a veritable rainbow of comfortable and stylish children's shoes at Tiny Feet, offering a tremendous variety of quality, reasonably priced shoes. Youngsters just learning to walk need stability in their footwear and Marko Mitkin will ensure proper fit.

"We wanted to cater to people in this family oriented neighborhood. We wanted to bring shoes to them so they can touch them, bend them, see the variety of styles available, and see how they fit their child's growing feet," adds Mitkin. The most important feature for the Mitkins is the special personal attention shown each customer, their ability to examine the shoes and the customer's shopping convenience. One happy customer who bought some fashionable Velcro close shoes for her granddaughter reports the 2 year old dresses herself now with great pride.

Originally from Croatia, Milena and Marko Mitkin have been together 22 years. They celebrate their 18th wedding anniversary this year. When not at Tiny Feet, Marko enjoys spending time with the couple's two children and riding a road bike. "We enjoy serving this community of families and addressing their children's shoe needs on a quick basis by providing excellent customer service," says Mitkin.

Tiny Feet is located on the street level of Theatre Square at #112. Open Monday through Friday, 11 a.m. to 6 p.m., Saturday and Sunday from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. For more information, please call 925-317-3062. After March 15, visit the website at www.tinyfeetshoes.com.

#### Visual Entrée Optometry

Stephanie Lee, O.D. has established Visual Entrée Optometry on the street level of Theatre Square adjacent to Tiny Feet.




VALERIE HOTZ

Stephanie Lee (L) and her sister Jessica Lee operate Visual Entrée Optometry in Theatre Square.

A graduate of the New England School of Optometry in Boston, this Bay Area native carries a full selection of independent frame-lines of women's, men's and children's eyewear. The comprehensive eye exam includes full dilation, the use of a retinal camera to photograph the eye and special equipment for detecting peripheral conditions. "The ocular health is of course very crucial and other diseases, such as diabetes, may show symptoms in the eyes early on, so an annual eye exam is very important," says Lee.

[SEE BUZZ page 23]

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