

THE ORINDA NEWS

Gratis
Volume 22, Number 4

The Orinda Association, Publisher
Delivered to 9,000 Households and Businesses in Orinda

12 Issues Annually
May 2007

Orinda Schools Superintendent to Retire

■ Frank Brunetti led district to the top of the state in academic performance

By PAT RUDEBUSCH
Assistant Editor

Retirement won't come easy to Orinda Union School District Superintendent Frank Brunetti. After a 42-year career in education – one that began as a middle school science teacher and traversed administrative positions in Plumas County, Cupertino, and Berkeley – he feels that it's time to leave the school district he has led for the past seven years in order to pursue other interests. "There's so much that I want to do that's very important to me," Brunetti says. "I want to maintain a high quality of life, both physical and mental, and I want to build even more meaningful connections with my family and friends."

Still, Brunetti concedes that it will be hard to leave his position at the helm of Orinda's schools. "Ending my career here in Orinda has been exhilarating and very



PAT RUDEBUSCH

OUSD's Frank Brunetti caps a 42-year career in education when he retires next month as Orinda's superintendent of schools.

satisfying," Brunetti says. "Before I came to Orinda, I always wondered whether I'd be satisfied... whether all of the effort really made a difference. Working in Orinda is different. It's been unbelievable for me personally. It's been a test, but something I had to do."

Brunetti leaves the district when it is at the top in terms of academic performance and achievement. This past year, OUSD earned the highest score in California on the state's academic performance measures and the district was honored last month with a California Award for Performance Excellence silver award from the California Council for Excellence. While Brunetti is justifiably proud of the district's accomplishments, he's quick to point out that the awards and recognition just reaffirm that the schools are doing what's best for kids.

Orinda's schools traditionally have been among the top performing schools in the state, and many young families for that reason covet an Orinda address. When Brunetti came to Orinda, he saw good schools that could get even better, but doing so would mean aligning the district's resources to priorities for learning. His first order of business was to make some sense

[SEE BRUNETTI page 6]



RICK KONLON

The Crossroads were in bloom this spring with colorful blossoms accenting the historic Orinda Theatre sign and making the potholes almost look good.

Clock Ticks Down Toward Orinda's Big Vote in June

By CHRIS LAVIN
Staff Writer

The campaign to fix roads and water pipes has gone into its full official swing in the lead-up to next month's special election for Measure E, a bond measure that, if approved, could bring long-awaited repair crews into Orinda as soon as the end of the year.

"I certainly am very optimistic," said councilmember Sue Severson about the possibility of the measure's passing this time around. "I've been talking to a lot of community members, and over 100 have already volunteered to help with the campaign."

The measure, which calls for selling a \$58.6 million general obligation bond, requires two-thirds of the voters to approve it on June 5.

A new seven-member Citizens' Infrastructure Oversight Commission recently has been selected – names were not available by press time – to advise the city council and city staff on how the city should spend not only the bond money but other monies on the road, drain, and water pipe repairs. During public hearings on both the old Measure Q and the current Measure E, concern was expressed by many residents that priorities for certain roads or highly traveled roads might be missed, or that some residents might receive preferential treatment.

In a letter to all Orinda residents, Mayor

Steve Glazer addressed main concerns by old and current opponents to the measure by explaining that the bond measure will not fix all of Orinda's infrastructure problems – the council believes that cost is closer to \$95 million – and will help pay for only part of them. He outlined six additional sources for funds, including:

- Cuts in city expenditures
- Realignment of city spending priorities
- Tapping the city's reserve funds
- Pursuit of state and federal grants
- Contributions from East Bay Municipal Utilities and Moraga-Orinda Fire Department

Referring to seven community forums held since Measure Q was defeated, Severson said discussions were "very long and reflective on how we can be prudent fiscally to not place an undue burden on

taxpayers and yet meet the urgent infrastructure needs that the City of Orinda is facing."

Campaign manager Rebecca Dahlberg has been operating a multi-pronged approach out of a campaign office in the old library, including having teams conduct informal polls, producing a list of frequently asked questions, and lining up volunteers for a number of duties. The campaign also launched a website, at www.fixorindaroads.org.

Supporters believe that the heart of the campaign lies in the new council's willingness to work together and foster a new spirit of cooperation. "We have a new spirit of collaboration," Severson said. Mayor Pro Tem Victoria Smith agrees – and emphasizes that the bond measure is an issue of health and safety and not just banged-up auto carriages.

[SEE BOND page 6]

Easter Egg Hunt in Community Center Park



SALLY HOGARTY

These two toddlers were happy to share their treasures at the combined Orinda Rotary Club and Orinda Community Center Auxiliary egg hunt in April.

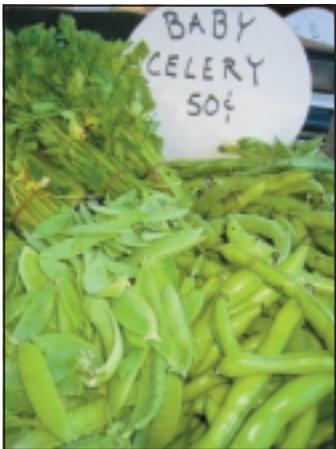
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FARMERS' MARKET

Farmers' Market Opens May 12 at New Orinda Location



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Fresh spring produce includes baby celery, crisp snow peas, and fava beans.

■ Fava beans top the list of delicious produce

By BARBARA KOB SAR
Contributing Writer

There's a party planned on May 12 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. in Orinda Village and everyone's invited. The Orinda Farmers' Market is set to begin its 11th season, and to celebrate its membership in Contra Costa Certified Farmers' Market Inc. (CCCFM). The market will open at its new, easy-to-find site in front of the Orinda Community Park on Orinda Way in Orinda Village.

Growers and vendors are looking forward to returning for another exciting season in Orinda. Opening day promises plenty of

cherries, asparagus, strawberries, and greens to fill bags and baskets along with fresh flowers, baked goods, and gourmet foods – a tempting preview of the line-up of fresh, in-season produce. Special cooking demonstrations, cookbook signings, wine tastings, face painting, and clowns are all gearing up for a festive first day at the market.

CCCFM owns bragging rights for opening the first farmers' market in Contra Costa County 25 seasons ago in Pleasant Hill. Farmers' markets continue to gain support from those looking for fresh produce direct from local farms and to help support safe agricultural practices. There are now more than 500 farmers' markets in communities statewide – including the very popular market here in Orinda.

Ratto Farms, Hamada Farms, and Ledesma Organics are just a few of the familiar farm stands to check out at the market. Every week may bring a new crop or a new variety, such as the Albion strawberries from J & J Farms. "This strawberry has good weather tolerance," says Adolfo Ramos, "so we can rely on a more consistent crop. The fruit color is rich and flavor is sweet," he says.

"Backyard" grower Jim McKeown knows his customers are looking for anything fresh. His half-acre vegetable garden in Danville produces a small weekly harvest to sell at the farmers' market. "Each week is different," he says, "and market shoppers like that idea."

McKeown keeps meticulous notes to compare the harvest from year to year. "Last year, the fava bean harvest started in mid-May," he says, "so I'm looking forward to having them on opening day at the Orinda market."

Fava beans are the cool-weather bean, followed by summer's snap beans and limas, and finally cranberry beans. Fava beans are particularly tasty early in the season.

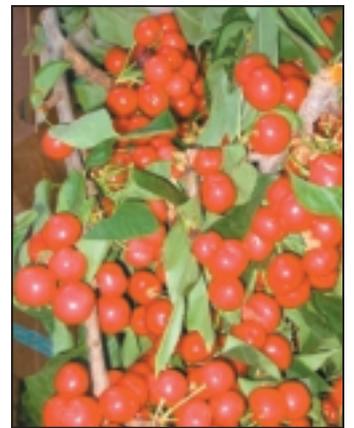
Bushy fava bean plants grow quickly to reach four to five feet and produce prodigious amounts of green, velvety pods. Each pod may grow as long as 18 inches, but some shoppers swear the best are in the six- to nine-inch stage. When opened, the five to eight beans are sitting comfortably inside the fuzzy lined pod.

Preparing fava beans is a two-step operation – first removing the beans from the pod and then removing the skin from the bean. Fava bean lovers promise it's

worth the effort.

First, cooks snap off the stem end from the fava bean pod and pull it back toward the opposite end. Using a thumb to pop open the seam, he or she then pushes out the beans. Drop the beans into boiling water for two to three minutes, drain and cool in ice water. Use a thumbnail to break the skin and squeeze gently to pop the bean out.

Most fava bean eaters claim simple cooking is best. Sauté prepared beans in a little olive oil and diced shallot or try them cold added to green or pasta salads. Or add favas to risottos and vegetable soups – get creative.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Bins of sweet red cherries await customers on opening day, May 12.

If one finds too many fava beans in the kitchen (if there is such a thing) you may freeze them in a single layer on a tray. Once frozen, slip them into air-tight freezer bags for later use.

Be aware that people with certain enzyme deficiencies can have a serious reaction to fava beans.

The Orinda farmers' market opens for the season on Saturday, May 12 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Orinda Way in front of the Orinda Community Park in Orinda Village. For more information visit the website at www.cccfm.org or call the market hotline at (925) 431-8361.

Barbara Kobsar may be reached at cotkitchen@aol.com.

Spanish Tortilla with Spring Vegetables
– from *Fresh from the Farmers' Market*
by Janet Fletcher

[SEE MARKET page 8]

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THE ORINDA ASSOCIATION

**A Message From the OA Presidents
A funny thing happened on the
way to the forum...**

Kate Wiley and Jim Luini



In our pursuit to follow our 60-year mission of informing and involving the residents of Orinda regarding issues of common interest, the OA board discussed at length the benefits of hosting another forum this spring on Measure E, the infrastructure bond measure. We debated what the format would be, what the content would be, how would questions get answered, how many or how few it would benefit. The final consensus of the board was to gather frequently asked questions from our membership and many other sources and provide factual answers and/or sources where those answers could be found using the June issue of *The Orinda News*. As noted in articles in this issue, you can find information today about Measure E on the website, www.fixorindaroads.com. The OA/Volunteer Center office also has hard copies of the documents listed on that site for your convenience. Those documents include the Measure E Ballot Argument, The Orinda Infrastructure Finance Plan, and the full bond proposition.

4th of July Updates: Orinda Celebrates CommUnity with an old-fashioned July 4th

It's time to start planning how you want

your group to participate in Orinda's annual 4th of July parade. Floats, music, dancing, biking, or walking, there are so many creative ways to advertise your group, or just share in family fun by being in the parade. The 4th of July committee has been hard at work on the parade and park activities. The 24th annual Fun Run and Pancake Breakfast sponsored by the **Orinda Road Runners** will take place at the Orinda Community Center along with the third annual Haley's Run for a Reason. Breakfast begins at 7:30 a.m., the runs begin at 8 a.m. The parade will begin at 10 a.m. and end at approximately 11:30 a.m. followed by food, music, and activities in the park. The **Orinda Community Center Auxiliary** will be sponsoring the live concert in the park immediately following the parade in lieu of their 4th of July evening concert. The auxiliary will also sponsor food and beverage booths in the park. The nonprofit and children's activities booths will be coordinated by **Suzanne Tom of Haley's Run for a Reason**. For parade or booth information, please call the OA at 254-0800 or check our website, www.orindaassociation.org. A detailed schedule of events and participants will be posted in the June and July issues of *The Orinda News*.

Orinda Rotary Presents Fire Engine to Mexican Town



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

(L-R) **Jose Avelar**, past president of Orinda Rotary Club presents photos of Fire Engine #43 to **Anthony Perry** of the Moraga-Orinda Fire District. The two organizations worked together to donate the engine to Orinda's sister Rotary Club in Tala, Mexico, which previously did not own a fire engine for this city of 70,000 people 30 miles northwest of Guadalajara. The total cost for mechanical repairs and transportation to Tala was approximately \$5,000.

The Orinda Association

The Orinda Association is a nonprofit corporation dedicated to:

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

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www.orindaassociation.org

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EDITORIAL

EDITOR'S NOTE: Due to the limited space in this edition of *The Orinda News* and the number of letters to the editor, both the editorial and the cartoon will not appear in this issue.

Look at Opposition's Suggestions

Roads in Orinda are falling apart, much worse than those in many developing nations. I think the city should take a hard look at Clyde Vaughn's suggestions. If additional resources are needed, the fair way would be to have each household contribute proportionally to the road repair via tax or bond, based on the number of cars each has.

— Suzanne Feinberg

Get on With Repairs

It's time to get on with the road repairs. Maybe there were problems with the city council in the past, but why whirl that issue around and around, while the roads crumble even more? We have a new city council now and another chance to pass a road repair bond. We were hoping the last bond would pass. This time it should happen.

We don't want to replace tires, have wheels re-aligned, and have the wear and tear on our cars due to our infrastructure. This is not the way our roads should be. We need to "bite the bullet" and get the job done, the bond passed, and the money spent as soon as possible.

Vote yes on the road bond!

— Ginger and Bill Wadsworth

City Council Mismanagement

The Orinda roads are in total disrepair because of Orinda City Council mismanagement. Last year, the council's solution to the road problems was to tax the citizens by proposing Measure Q in the November 2006 election.

Measure Q was defeated at the ballot box. The citizens told the council that taxing was not necessary. Funds were available. Additionally, the council would have to make some hard choices such as manage the city's business.

The arrogant council refuses to do this. Their answer is to offer the citizens another bond tax measure in the June special election while holding the citizens hostage with broken streets.

Thank you city council.

—Jack Eddy

Measure E Makes It Safer for Bikers and Drivers

As an Orinda teacher and resident, I am fortunate enough to be able to ride my bike to work. Riding a bike is my contribution to reducing pollution and traffic congestion.

It has been an example to the school community and others now are joining me to enjoy the benefits of exercise, fresh air and doing a good deed.

However, the roads in Orinda are in such

bad shape that I worry about drivers watching and swerving for potholes and not seeing me on my bike. Parents have said to me the pavement is so uneven they can't allow their children to ride even though they want to. I'm glad that now we have a solid proposal on the ballot, Measure E, to fix Orinda's roads. This will make the roads safer not just for drivers, but also for pedestrians and cyclists. There's also some funding in Measure E for safe routes to school.

I'm going to vote yes on Measure E for both these reasons. Please join me!

— Cheryl Collins

Vote a Resounding No

As a concerned citizen and a voice among many voices that feel the same in Orinda, let's once again in June put an end to Measure Q by voting a resounding no. To have the audacity to promote a measure that would for many years be a burden on each property owner is obscene.

Two added thoughts to remember, Orinda could have spent the \$18 million cost of the new city offices on our roads. Also, let the City of Orinda and its council go to Sacramento and demand a working grant for all repairs. They are rolling in funds from the yearly taxes collected from each and every vehicle.

—Len Synder

Get The Job Done

We've lived in Orinda for a long time, and the roads have been a problem for a long time. A lot of our roads were built in the 1930s and 1940s, and they were built for the small, light cars of that day, not the bigger cars and trucks we have now. Also they were built on our unstable clay soil with poor beds under the roads. And finally, for the many years we were under the county's care, repairs were neglected. So now it's time to take matters into our own hands and get the job done. Vote yes on Measure E, Orinda's roads bond!

— Helen Oliver

People Mistrust City Council

I do not know of anyone in Orinda who does not think that our roads and water systems are in need of fixing. The defeat of Measure Q was a vote of no confidence that the city can properly manage the multi-million dollar project. That attitude has been fostered by the irresponsible actions of the council in the past. The poor handling of the entire library issue, and the construction of an over-the-top city hall through the use of certificates of participation, thereby circumventing voter approval, are examples of why such great mistrust exists.

If the city council were to sell the new city hall building, thereby unloading that debt, and prepare a whole new financial plan, including a more sensible approach to office space, and a much greater city contribution to the infrastructure improvement, it would go a long way to

restoring much needed credibility and confidence. Who knows, it may even result in getting something done!

— Syd Anderson

Debate Arguments of Opponents

I am sending this letter to both of your organizations [*Orinda News* and *Lamorinda Weekly*] because your publications published a number of letters regarding the narrow loss of Proposition Q in the past election.

I have lived in Orinda for about 40 years and I did vote for Q, and yes, as I remember, the opponents of Q also opposed tax increases in past elections.

But I also had a long talk with some of its opponents. Some of their reasons appeared to be plausible and, not knowing the details, I became somewhat dubious of the merits of Q. After all, one has to listen to claims that most of what is needed could be accomplished without a very large bond issue.

Yet, their opposition was dismissed and nobody took the trouble to discuss the validity of their arguments. I believe this was a basic mistake!

The arguments of the opposition have to be debated in public the next time we have an election on this topic. Do not hide your head under a blanket and pretend that nobody will listen to them.

— Arturo Maimoni

Tax Dollars Going Up the Chimney

As I passed by the new Orinda city hall, I wondered why there were no solar panels on this so-called "green building." That's because heat is generated from a gas furnace of questionable efficiency. I am told that the furnace is 83 percent efficient at best. There are two visible chimneys on the building for exhaust.

To be called 100 percent green, points must be accumulated; and it is my understanding that the new city hall has only 11 out of a possible 40 points. Since the Public Utilities Commission has just granted PG&E permission to increase our gas bill, the cost of heating the building will be even more than originally projected.

The relatively new Orinda Library appears to be another building that is not green, and the burden of cost rests with taxpayers for keeping long hours of operation. The city council will undoubtedly ask for more tax dollars to pay for the increased costs of maintenance.

As a resident of Orinda for the past 30 years, I have lost faith in the decisions of the city council regarding their views and solutions to "fix Orinda." I believe we need to look at ourselves more closely and find solutions to our problems within our present budget.

— Richard Newman

Orinda's Dismal History of Road Neglect and Broken Promises

Orinda Bond Measure E will cost Orindans \$120 million principal and interest (P&I). The city council tries to gain our trust by appointing an advisory bond oversight committee. This toothless committee is appointed by the city council they oversee. The council will make all decisions.

We are led to believe all bond funds will be spent only on roads, drains, and water system improvements. The enabling Bond Ordinance (07-03) contradicts this promise. The cost of the improvements includes legal and all other fees connected with the authorization, issuance, or sale of the bonds.

We are led to believe the council will spend city operating budget money over a 33-year period for residential roads not covered by bond money. Unfortunately, there is no guarantee the council will spend operating budget money for residential roads. Orinda has a dismal history of road neglect and broken promises. Although Orinda's road maintenance budget is usually \$800,000 annually, why did the Council spend only \$108,000 in 2003-04 and just \$38,000 in 2004-05?

Isn't 33 years a ridiculously long time to repair these residential roads? The only way to get the council's guarantee these roads will be fixed is to finance a revenue bond funded from the operating budget. This should fix these roads within a six-year period without new taxes.

We are led to believe the fire district (MOFD) will contribute additional money for water pipe upgrades. However, MOFD only guarantees \$89,000 and for just one year.

To provide this \$89,000, they raised our Orinda fire flow tax by 20 percent without asking taxpayers.

Since 1997, we have been paying this special Orinda fire flow tax, which was to cover pipe upgrades. MOFD has never spent any money on pipe upgrades.

Any upgrades to EBMUD pipes should be paid from the \$450,000 Orindans pay annually into the fire flow tax, along with the annual \$2 million MOFD will receive from new Orinda development. This \$2,450,000 increases annually.

There is no justification for the city council and the fire district to reach into our pockets for \$120 million in new bond taxes.

Do not reward bad government with new taxes.

— Janet Maiorana

No Falsehoods

The leaders of the yes vote on Measure E, the \$120 million infrastructure bond on Orinda's June 5 ballot, claim that opponents of E are guilty of "falsehoods, misrepresentations, and distorted claims." It is interesting to note that nowhere do they identify any of the supposed falsehoods, etc. The reason is very simple: there are no falsehoods and distortions, and the leaders of the yes vote know this.

If we are to pass a bond, the city and fire district should make substantial and long-

[SEE LETTERS page 22]

The Orinda News prints 9,000 copies and is published 12 times a year by The Orinda Association. The office is located at 24 Orinda Way (lower level of the Library). All rights reserved. The publication is sent out by direct mail (Permit #4, Orinda Post Office) and distributed to key locations throughout the city.

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 Printing Folger Graphics

THE ORINDA NEWS

A Publication of
 The Orinda Association
 Mailing Address
 P.O. Box 97
 Orinda, California 94563
 Telephone: 925 254-0800
 Fax: 925 254-8312
 www.orindaassociation.org



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

Send letters to: Editor, *The Orinda News*, P.O. Box 97, Orinda, CA 94563, fax them to 254-8312 or email to news@orindaassociation.org. Letter to the Editor for the June issue is due May 5, 2007.

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

POLICE / POTHOLE



POLICE BLOTTER

Compiled by Haleh Allen,
Orinda Police Department
March 2007

False Residential Alarms: Officers responded to 56 false alarm calls throughout the city.

Auto Burglary (theft from a locked vehicle): 1 incident in the area of Camino Pablo.

Petty Theft From Vehicle (theft of less than \$400 value from an unlocked vehicle): 7 incidents in the areas of Tara Rd., Overhill Rd., Oak Rd., Tarry Ln., and Moraga Way.

All Other Petty Thefts: 9 incidents in the areas of Orinda Way, Camino Sobrante, La Fond Ln., El Toyonal, and Miner Rd.

Grand Theft From Vehicle (theft of more than \$400 value from an unlocked vehicle): 3 incidents in the areas of Davis Rd., Ellen Ct., and Ravenhill Rd.

All Other Grand Thefts: 3 incidents in the areas of Miner Rd., Owl Hill Rd., and Charles Hill Rd.

Vehicle Theft: 2 incidents in the areas of Barbara Rd. and Orinda Way.

Residential Burglary: 6 incidents in the areas of Ardor Dr., Meadow View Rd., Oak Arbor Rd., La Chesnaye, Camino Sobrante, and North Ln.

Commercial Burglary: 1 incident in

the area of Juniper Dr.

Vandalism: 22 incidents in the areas of Linda Vista, Claremont Ave., Las Vegas Rd., Loma Vista Dr., El Nido Ranch Rd., Lombardy Ln., Dalewood Dr., Sundown Terr., Charles Hill Rd., El Toyonal, and Stein Way.

Identity Theft: 4 incidents in the areas of La Plaza, Charles Hill Cir., Moraga Way, and Glorietta Ct.

Credit Card Fraud/Forgery: 4 incidents in the areas of Orchard Rd., Hall Dr., Muth Dr., and Camino Encinas.

Special Notes: There was a spike in the number of vandalisms for the month of March due to a property damage spree that took place during the St. Patrick's Day weekend. An unknown person(s) bashed in windshields, headlights, and taillights of several vehicles, as well as decorative light posts and mailbox lanterns, throughout the north side of the city. The incidents were primarily concentrated in the Orinda Downs area. This matter is still under investigation. If you have any information regarding this or any other case, please call Det. Andrews at 925-253-4217. As always, you can remain anonymous.

Pothole of the Month



BARBARA BOSTER

This pothole on Tarry Lane in Orinda no longer has any asphalt left, just a lovely example of Orinda dirt. Do you have a favorite pothole? Send a photo to us at: news@orindaassociation.org for possible inclusion in next month's edition. Be sure and say where it is located and why you think it should be chosen for the Pothole of the Month.

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◆ **BRUNETTI** from page 1

of the district's comprehensive, but unwieldy strategic plan. The result was a clearly defined set of strategic priorities and a more collaborative approach to decision-making and goal setting.

"The collaborative approach we have has resulted in a different way of organizing the district and put into play what's best for kids," Brunetti continues. "What's best for kids" is a phrase you hear a lot from him, and it's the foundation of the decision-making process he and his staff turn to.

Putting kids first seems like an obvious course of action, but Brunetti will tell you that's not always the way when non-educators get involved with education. An outspoken critic of the politicians who use education to make their mark, he's seen a fair number of changes in education over the past four decades. He believes that the future of public education in California will depend on "... whether or not the politicians can get their act together. Schwarzenegger may be able to do it. He's termed out as governor, he can't run for president, so he can take the bold stands. He may be the one who can bring the politicians together to focus on what's right and get the funding in order."

"As it stands now, the biggest challenge to education in California is the funding structure. The unfunded mandates and legal decisions that have been foisted upon education, for the most part, reflect the political whims of the legislators and governors. On the national level, we've heard a lot of loud noise but little substantive action from the federal government."

The federal No Child Left Behind legislation has imposed higher levels of accountability on schools, which Brunetti says isn't necessarily a bad thing, but the punitive approach of the legislation hasn't always resulted in doing what's best for kids. "Accountability is a good thing. It's made some people uncomfortable, but for the most part it's been good. People are getting used to working with accountability and curriculum standards."

"In Orinda, this [accountability and standards-based curriculum] is being done. The school board is knowledgeable and understands. In some districts, the school board and leadership aren't connected and that's a recipe for disaster. Orinda's fortunate to have excellent teachers and parent leadership and a school board that

supports them."

One of Brunetti's legacies to the district is his commitment to improving teacher salaries. When he arrived seven years ago, Orinda's teachers were among the lowest paid in Contra Costa and Alameda counties; not too surprising, given that the district is one of the lowest funded in the state. Recognizing that the state's funding structure wasn't going to change anytime soon – and seeing Orinda's competitiveness in hiring new teachers decline, Brunetti set a goal of bringing teacher salaries into the 55th percentile for the surrounding area. That goal was reached thanks to a parcel tax approved by voters in 2003. Always the realist, Brunetti warns that the district could quickly lose ground in hiring again if the parcel tax, which is flat, isn't adjusted periodically.

"Attracting quality teachers will continue to be a challenge, not just for Orinda, but throughout the state," Brunetti says. "There are a large number of retirements coming through the system – people who were hired in the 1960's and '70's. At the same time, there is a lack of qualified people to fill these positions. The state has ramped up its requirements for teachers, which is a good thing. But that also means that fewer people are getting through the process. Teaching is equivalent to any master's degree opportunity. Orinda seems to still be able to attract quality people because this is a good work environment. It's challenging and exceptionally rewarding. Not everyone can make it here, but if you're a good teacher, this is a great place to be."

Brunetti acknowledges that it's the people he works with that he'll miss the most. "I'll certainly miss the intrinsic satisfaction I get from being part of this amazing district. My greatest satisfaction has been in seeing others do great things. The challenge of running a district with such high expectations has been a double-edged sword – it's quite a full challenge and you live with it 24/7. It's going to be hard to learn how to re-channel."

Still, he looks forward to spending more time with his wife, Nina, his children, and grandchildren. Always purposeful, Brunetti says that his immediate goals for retirement include more mountain climbing, becoming fluent in Italian, and improving his winemaking. And for those who might miss Brunetti's no-holds-barred commentary on the players in Sacramento, he says you can probably find him on the side of a mountain or a golf course.

◆ **BOND** from page 1

"While people always say that you can't put a price tag on health and safety, that is exactly what we are asking Orindans to do

now. Bad roads cost us a lot in car repairs, but that cost pales in comparison to the consequence if police and paramedics can't reach an emergency or firefighters don't have water to put out a fire," Smith said.

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HELEN HOPPOCK

Orinda Native Goes Global With Own Socially-Conscious Fashion Line

By CHRIS LAVIN
Staff Writer

Only a little more than two years ago, Orinda native Helen Hoppock spent her days schlepping baskets and crates of fruits and vegetables around a farmer's market in Paraguay. She had left a two-year job in economics in London to join the U.S. Peace Corps. Her job: Economic development for a farmers' cooperative.

Putting her economics degree to work in economic development, she began facing the typical frustrations experienced by many Peace Corps volunteers: unfulfilled promises, tardiness, even theft and corruption.

She became frustrated, but not pessimistic.

As she worked and traveled in South America, and as her disappointments in her projects grew, the quality of some of the leather goods and textiles – especially those made in Argentina – began to catch her eye.

"I really loved understanding how they were made and where they came from," she said.

Since President John F. Kennedy formed the Peace Corps in 1961, more than 187,000 Americans, mostly people right out of college but retired people, as well, have served throughout the developing world. When Hoppock's service ended, and with a budding romance with another volunteer under way, she had an idea.

"I never really thought of myself as that creative," says 27-year-old Hoppock, who is living back in Orinda with her now-fiance ("living here for now," she quickly notes, because South America is calling them back.) "But once we went to Buenos Aires, I was surrounded by the most incredibly creative people. I started to become creative!

And, I would not be here if it were not for them."

Hoppock taught English to pay the bills, but with inspiration and help from her "creative" friends, she founded her own company, Helena de Natalio, a line of South American-inspired leather goods made in Argentina by artisans she selects. "You're only as good as your suppliers," she says.

She chose "Natalio" to honor her Peace Corps village. Hoppock designs her purses and belts, picks out all the leather herself in Argentina, and then supervises their manufacture.

Her leather accessories are now sold in high-end boutiques across the United States, including, in the Bay Area, Erin Paige in Lafayette and August in Oakland's Rockridge district. She's already in the black and this year, having added a half dozen stores in Oregon and Washington, she just might make enough to live on – something highly unusual in a business world that usually takes entrepreneurs three to five years to see any profits.

Sporting a deep brown bag over coffee recently, Hoppock let this writer examine her purse. The leather felt like a baby's bottom, soft and buttery. It looked perfect, with a matching braided band and dangling tassels. Seeing a minor imperfection that she herself could only detect, she said, "this one isn't perfect. I wear the rejects." It's cost on the shelf: \$282.

Top quality is the first of her requirements, but she has unbending rules, as well: Every piece must be manufactured paying fair wages, without child labor, and in a healthy work environment.

"When you go to South America and you see where some people are working – without windows, with children working there, you start to think that's normal,



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Helen Hoppock (L) examines the beautiful craftsmanship of one of her artists in South America.

because it's everywhere. Everyone does it," Hoppock said. "So you have to step back and look at the big picture and think, as an American, 'This is not OK.'"

After her disappointments in the Peace Corps, Hoppock felt good grabbing the reins herself, and making things happen.

"I'm incredibly determined," she said. "I didn't have to depend on anyone else, it was just me, so I told myself, 'Go!'"

She feels good about employing artisans at a fair wage, and selling her goods in one of the only countries in the world who can afford to buy them – with profits going back to improving people's lives. Some of her line can be seen at www.HelenaDeNatalio.com.

At the end of the year, Hoppock does even more. She donates five percent of her

[SEE HOPPOCK page 8]



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BRET HARTE FUNDRAISER

Plant Sale to Raise Funds for the Bret C. Harte Young Directors Fund

By MOYA STONE
Staff Writer

We're already halfway through spring, and summer is fast approaching, so if you haven't attended to your garden, now is the time. To help out procrastinators and gardeners alike, Orinda residents Lee Bressette and her husband Greg will have a plant and book sale from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. on May 5 and 6, at their home, 73 Coral Drive, Orinda.

Perennials or annuals for flower gardens will be available, and a gift plant for Mother's Day is always a good idea. How about a bonsai? Heirloom tomato plants and herbs are great for summer cooking. Both

passionate gardeners, Lee and Greg have propagated the plants themselves and they say there will be something for everyone, even books for those who are plant-growing challenged. All proceeds will benefit the Bret C. Harte Young Director's Fund.

Two years ago when Bret Harte was killed in a car accident, friends and family wanted to honor his memory in some way. Bret's parents, Dennis and Juanita Harte, had the idea to fund a director's internship at Berkeley Repertory Theater in Bret's name. Bret had been pursuing his dream of directing plays and had worked in numerous theater capacities at Berkeley Rep, as well as California Shakespeare Theater, the Orinda Village Starlight Players, and the Dean Leshner Center for the Arts in Walnut Creek.

"To be perfectly honest," says Lee, "when this internship was created right after Bret's death, we hadn't really thought about how to fund it." The people at Berkeley Rep



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Bret Harte, who was an active member of the Orinda Village Starlight Players, died in a car accident two years ago.

offered their support and funded the first internship themselves. Earlier this year, they also helped to organize and host a silent auction, the first major fundraising event for the Hartes and their supporters. "It was successful beyond our wildest dreams," says Lee. "All our time and all the auction items, food, and wine were donated, and we raised over \$13,000."

They are now focused on raising \$100,000 to establish an endowment. Thanks to the big fundraiser earlier this year as well as private donations, they have raised \$40,000. "None of us has ever done anything like this before, but it's amazing how motivated one can be when following one's heart," said Lee.

For more information, visit www.bretchartefund.com.

◆ MARKET from page 2

- 5 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil, plus 1 additional tablespoon
- 1 1/2 pounds baking potatoes, peeled and sliced 1/8 inch thick
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 3 cups thinly sliced leeks, white and pale green parts only
- 6 large eggs, lightly beaten
- 1/2 cup cooked English peas
- 1/2 cup peeled fava beans (about 1 pound unshelled fava beans)

Heat four tablespoons olive oil in a 12- to 14-inch skillet over high heat. Add potatoes, season highly with salt and pepper and sauté, tossing often, until tender, about 10 minutes. Drain potatoes in a sieve set over a bowl. Let cool.

Return skillet to moderate heat and add one tablespoon olive oil. When hot, add leeks, season with salt and pepper and toss to coat with seasonings. Cover, reduce heat to medium and cook until leeks are tender, about 15 minutes. Let cool.

In a large bowl, combine eggs, potatoes, leeks, peas, and fava beans. Season with salt and pepper. Stir well, then let stand for 10 minutes.

Heat a 10-inch skillet over high heat. When hot, add one tablespoon olive oil. When oil is hot, add egg mixture, spreading it into an even layer. It will bubble vigorously around the edges. Immediately invert a cookie sheet or flat plate over the skillet. Grasping the skillet handle with one hand and holding the cookie sheet in place with the other, flip the skillet so the tortilla falls onto the cookie sheet. Immediately slide it back into the skillet, cooked side up. Cook an additional 10 minutes, then invert onto a serving platter. Let stand at least 20 minutes before serving. Serves four as a lunch dish or six as an appetizer.

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◆ HOPPOCK from page 7

proceeds each year to Ashoka, a non-profit organization that works toward social entrepreneurship. (www.ashoka.org.)

And she's busy. She has a wedding to

plan - her husband-to-be was recently accepted into a Stanford University graduate program in Latin Studies. But she will be back and forth.

"I have to go back to South America," she said.

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Exercise Move of the Month



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SALLY HOGARTY



SALLY HOGARTY

While leaning back, push the cans overhead and then bring them back to just above your shoulders. Perform three sets of 12. For a more advanced version, keep your heels lifted off the floor while you perform the shoulder press. *Exercise Move of the Month* courtesy of *Living Lean*, (925) 360-7051.

BALANCED LIVING

Spice-up Your Life

Andrea Colombu



You are probably familiar with the saying: "variety is the spice of life." Unfortunately, like many other insightful maxims created throughout history, this one, too, passes by our everyday awareness unacknowledged more often than not.

It is perfectly normal and essential to our wellbeing to have and to function by sets of regular routines. Take sleep and eating for example. We depend on them for our wellbeing and survival. But when our other life routines become too crystallized, predictable, and inflexible, lacking variety and spontaneity, we start to lose some of that great vital energy. Life is full of variety.

Lack of creativity, spontaneity, and variety in our lives brings forth monotony, boredom, stagnation, dullness, and even unhappiness. Sometimes these feelings may be hard to notice at first because they are so well embedded in our consciousness that they become hard to recognize. They become part of who we are, they change our outlook on life, and before we realize it, we are unhappy and don't know why. These unfulfilling experiences are also partly responsible for our lack of energy,

enthusiasm, and excitement. In other words, lack of creativity, spontaneity, and change can dry up our well of life.

On the other hand, more creativity, spontaneity, and variety can help revitalize and reenergize our everyday life, enhancing our sense of fulfillment, vitality, and purpose. And, it doesn't take much to get there. Try to break your predictable daily routine, today if you can. Use your imagination and creative spirit and redesign your day the way, perhaps, you always wanted, the way you really would like. Do something different even if for just a few hours, but give your creativity a chance and yourself the opportunity to experience newness and freshness in your life. Challenge your status quo; your happiness may depend on it!

Neuroscience researchers have found that every time we try something new, every time we go through the process of learning something new, or change our routine, the changes introduce new elements to the adapted brain function. Our brain actually undergoes a process of change and new [SEE BALANCE page 10]

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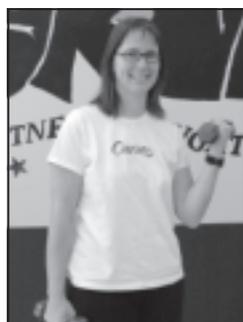


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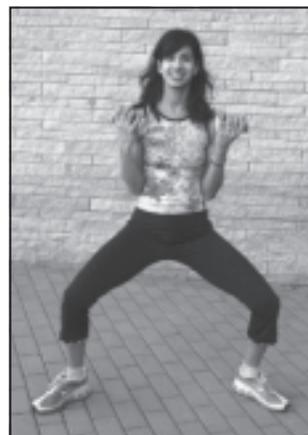
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PAULA REESE



DOROTHY BOWEN

Ninety-years young, Paula Reese reminisces about the historic photos in her album.

Looking Back More Than 50 Years in Orinda

BY DOROTHY BOWEN
Staff Writer

When she turned 90 in December, Paula Reese looked back on her years in Orinda, raising a family, and teaching school. "It's changed a lot, but a lot hasn't changed." Since 1954, she has lived in the house her husband, Don Reese, designed. The changes since then include the addition of a dining room to accommodate Christmas and Easter dinners for their extended family. She was cooking dinner one Christmas Day, when she was pregnant. In the midst of preparing the feast, her labor pains began. She started to explain to her sister-in-law in great detail how to prepare the green beans with almonds and lemon sauce that she always made. "Why are you telling me this?" the sister-in-law asked her. "Because I am going to the hospital," she replied. Her new daughter was named Carol because she was born on Christmas Day.

Before the trees grew tall, the Reeses could look across the valley to the Orinda Country Club golf course and see celebrities like Bing Crosby playing there.

Paula grew up in Oakland and graduated from UC Berkeley in 1938. She got her teaching credential in 1939/40. Her first job was in San Leandro where she had to be interviewed by each of the five principals in the district. She got the job and taught a class of 26 fourth graders and 26 fifth graders. The school was on double sessions, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. and 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.

"It was wartime then," she said. Then she got a job in Danville and finally in Orinda teaching second grade at Orinda Union School and fourth and fifth grades at the

new Glorietta School when it opened in 1949. There were only 26 fourth graders there. "I thought I was in heaven," said Reese. "Every Friday was play day when students could sing, recite, or dance." To learn California history, they built a relief map of the state with flour and salt paste and built tee-pees when they learned about Native Americans and missions for the Spanish.

Unfortunately, because the map was spread out on a cafeteria table, the custodian mistook it for garbage and threw it away. The class was outraged. The principal had to come and calm them down. The children searched the garbage cans for their piece of the project. "They learned a lot, but they also had a lot of fun," Reese said.

Reese remembers when The Orinda Preschool and the Orinda Community Church bought the Navy's "band building" at St. Mary's College and moved it by truck all the way down Moraga Way and up the hill to the church site where it became the Fellowship Hall.

"They had to hurry to get it across the Crossroads before the signal changed. Then they had to stop traffic to get it up the hill. It took all day," she said. She has seen a lot of changes in downtown Orinda, most notably when Phairs changed from a general grocery store "where you could buy everything" into a boutique and then disappeared entirely.

On the coffee table in her living room is a photo album full of pictures of her children. And, along with the photos of her daughter Karen's horseback riding pals are several of Paula herself as a young woman in overalls, with long blonde curly hair saddling up their horse, Punkin. Her oldest daughter, Karen, kept Punkin on watershed land. She and her classmates, Lucy Ann Hupp on Don Quixote and Patsy Stevens on Kitten would roam from Lafayette to Moraga and back to Orinda on horseback.

The girls and their friends had an overnight horse camp in Tilden Park. During the night, Patsy's horse, Kitten, got away. "He could untie knots," Reese said. They had to go and look for him and after they found him, someone had to keep watch all night. "Nobody got much sleep that night," she added.

All of her other children — Don, Carol, and Ellen — learned to swim at Park Pool and went out for the swim team. On the baby grand piano in the living room are more recent photos of her children and her children's children, most recently a great granddaughter only one year old.

◆ BALANCE from page 9

growth. New neurons and synaptic circuits are created to adapt to the change and cause the brain to promote higher cerebral activity and new life. This increase in cerebral and neurological activity stimulates not only brain growth and activity but also elasticity and functionality — thus making it less prone to its inevitable slow decline.

Physically speaking, changing what you eat once in a while and introducing new foods and nutrients into the body revitalizes enzymatic production, stimulates digestive, metabolic functions and can improve your immune system. Changing your exercise routine is immensely helpful to your health and fitness. New exercises mean stimulating new muscle growth, which helps increase metabolism, and helps you to stay healthy and fit. But even changing simple things such as the route of your daily

walk, or your drive to work or the store, what you wear today, what music you listen to, the pictures on your walls, new flowers in the garden, how you start your day, and how you end it, helps your entire body.

Change is a lot easier than we may think, and the benefits can be far greater and can reach deeper into the fabric and meaning of our life than we can imagine. Empower and remind yourself of your ability to choose. Try to do one thing differently today and every day. Before you know it, a lot will be changed in your life and variety, creativity, spontaneity, and beauty will surround you and carry you through life in balance, health, peace, and joy. Achieving and maintaining balance in our lives is also about variety. Break the shell of monotony, and open the doors to the polyphony of life. Bring variety to your life, spice it up, flourish, and live fully.

Until next time, be well and many blessings!

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GARDEN TOUR

Orinda Houses Featured on Moraga Juniors Garden Tour

■ May 5 tour benefits Bay Area children's hospice, Comfort for Kids

By SALLY HOGARTY
Editor

Two Orinda residences figure prominently in the Moraga Junior Women's Club's fourth annual Lamorinda garden tour, "Through the Garden Gate." Scheduled for Saturday, May 5, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., all proceeds from the event go to Comfort for Kids, the only program in Northern California that offers in-home treatment to terminally ill children and their families.

The garden tour will showcase six



STEVE LAMBERT

This large masonry, gas fireplace allows residents of this Orinda home to enjoy their patio on cooler evenings.

Lamorinda gardens — three in Lafayette, two in Orinda and one in Moraga — which feature such outstanding garden elements as outdoor kitchens, vineyards, koi ponds, and waterfalls as well as unique ideas for integrating hardscapes, children's play areas, and sun protection.

According to Steve Lambert of Garden Lights landscaping in Orinda, the two Orinda gardens — located on Monterey Terrace and Valley Drive — proved a creative challenge. "Both have difficult sloped sites with mature oak trees that needed protection," explains Lambert. "I almost walked away from one of the jobs because the site conditions were so difficult," he explains. One of those challenges was a deck that had to be engineered and suspended 35 feet above ground. Both gardens also had very limited access for large equipment and material deliveries.

Lambert installed water features in both gardens. The Monterey Terrace garden includes a carved Mexican stone fountain in the center of the driveway while the Valley Drive residence features a meandering stream along the entry walkway that spills into a large koi pond near the front porch. Large masonry, gas fireplaces enhance the enjoyment of both yards at night. In addition, the Valley Drive garden has over 150 different species of plants while the Monterey Terrace garden's plant palate exceeds 400 species of plants. To enjoy these gardens in the evening, Lambert included extensive lighting to highlight the most impressive features of the landscapes.

Not only can participants tour these beautiful Orinda homes, they will also be helping a very worthwhile cause. Comfort for Kids, a program of Hospice and Palliative Care of Contra Costa, provides



STEVE LAMBERT

Over 400 species of plants adds to the color and warmth of this Monterey Terrace home.

an interdisciplinary team of pediatric specialists to care for all medically qualified children in Contra Costa, Alameda, Solano, or San Francisco Counties, regardless of the ability of the family to pay for services. Founded in 1995, the organization offers such vital services as coordination of medical care between all caregivers, pain and symptom management, intensive family support from specialized social workers, respite care for families, chaplain counseling, and much more.

Tickets at the garden tour are available for \$30 (with lunch for sale for \$10) and can be purchased at McDonnell's Nursery in Orinda as well as Ace Hardware and "Across the Way" in Moraga, and Orchard Nursery in Lafayette. Tickets can also be obtained by mail through the Moraga Junior Women's Club, PO Box 462, Moraga, CA 94556. The entire \$30 ticket price will go to support Comfort for Kids. For more information on the garden tours, visit www.throughthegardengate.org.



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BACKYARD GETAWAYS

Backyard Getaways and Beyond San Antonio, Two Cities in One

Sally Hogarty



Walking along San Antonio's downtown streets imparts an eerie feeling. Scantily populated with business people, shoppers, and a handful of homeless, a visitor might conclude that the boarded up shops signal a dying downtown. But, nothing could be further from the truth. A brief walk down to San Antonio's famous River Walk reveals a vibrant, pedestrian friendly, beautifully sculpted small river that twists and turns through the city's best restaurants and shops.

For walkers/runners, this three-mile scenic route just below street level provides an early morning exercise opportunity. You wouldn't want to try running through it, however, from mid-morning until night when the cobblestone pathways are filled to overflowing with tourists and locals enjoying the delicious food and large variety of live music available. The city has done a wonderful job creating waterfalls and other water features along the meandering waterway, where flat bottom

boats provide a quick tour of the area.

There are so many fine restaurants along the walk that it is impossible to mention them all. Most offer both inside and outside dining and many feature jazz, country, Mexican, or pop musicians. The Arneson River Theater also offers free outdoor concerts throughout the year. We found that most restaurants offered a delicious selection of fish as well as tasty Texas beef. Landry's Seafood House became our favorite for fresh fish prepared in unique ways while Paesanos couldn't be beat for a flavorful peppercorn encrusted filet in a red pepper sauce.

If you happen to be in San Antonio during Mardi Gras (this past year February 16 - 18), a procession of decorated river barges, complete with costumed revelers and lots of live entertainment, will transform the River Walk into a floating Bourbon Street. "It's a family-friendly version of the party which enlivens the streets of New Orleans each year," says Bud Light parade sponsor



San Antonio's famed River Walk features delicious dining along the meandering creek where flat boats take visitors on tour.

Ric Morales. The festivities also include a special arts and crafts show with plenty of unique handmade trinkets and treasures.

The Aztec On The River is the River Walk's newest attraction. This historic 1926 movie palace has been meticulously restored, complete with a Mighty Wurlitzer theater organ. A free, multi-million dollar special effects show takes place in the Grand Lobby every 90 minutes.

While the weather was perfect during our visit in early March (70s to low 80s), summer months can be stifling, causing many visitors to forgo the romantic outdoor seating for the air-conditioned comfort of inside. We did learn, however, that at least one major restaurant is looking into adding misting devices to cool outside diners, ala Palm Springs.

One place to be sure and visit is the River Center. Reached by either the picturesque

River Walk or via surface streets, the center is primarily a large mall full of every type of shop and food service imaginable. If shopping isn't on your agenda, try sitting outside in the inviting courtyard surrounded by waterfalls and the music of various Central American bands. To partake of San Antonio's historical significance, venture into the mall to the IMAX theaters. Here, you can enjoy a well-done, 45-minute reenactment of the valiant men and women who held the Alamo for 13 days against Col. Santa Anna's much larger force. After seeing the movie, head over to the real thing. The Alamo is a quick two blocks from the movie theater. You can go on self-guided tours with knowledgeable docents around to ask questions. On certain weekends, the San Antonio Living History Association does reenactments of the 13-

[SEE BACKYARD page 20]

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TRACY MC DOWELL

The Unglamorous, Yet Fun, Life of a Professional Actor

By TRACY MCDOWELL
Contributing Writer

EDITOR'S NOTE: After graduating from Miramonte High School in 2000, Tracy McDowell moved to New York City to pursue her dream of becoming a full-time actress. She studied at the American Musical and Dramatic Academy and completed her degree at the New School University, where she focused on writing. She has since appeared in a variety of off-Broadway musicals, cabarets, and touring productions. She credits Miramonte drama teachers Heather Cousins and Tracy Shearer, and Eddie Belasco of Belasco Theater Company in Walnut Creek with giving her a good foundation in her craft. McDowell, whose parents still live in Orinda, is currently on a national tour portraying Maureen in the musical Rent. Her following account of life on the road gives a glimpse into the often crazy life of a professional actress.

Welcome to my typical day. I wake-up bright and early at 6 a.m. Today we have a 6:30 a.m. load onto the bus and a 7 a.m. leave call. My two other roommates and I each turn off our cell phone alarms, which since we didn't get to bed until 12:30 a.m. have rung much too early.

I pack up my luggage and, this time, remember to include my toiletries. It is so easy to leave all of my new shampoo and face wash at the hotel on these early bus days. It is freezing outside here in Kitchner, Massachusetts, and I am rudely awakened for the second time by the snow and wind. I drop my stuff off with our bus driver Jim, who is like a father to us all and get my morning "hello beautiful." The bus leaves promptly at 7 a.m. If you miss it, you'll have to find your own transportation. It's always sad watching your friends running behind the bus in their pajamas and winter coat, bags exploding with clothes as they watch those on the bus wave goodbye.

Today, we have an eight hour drive to Springfield. The bus seats are our home. Each actor gets their own row of two seats. We sit across from a partner with whom we have previously made sleeping arrangements. One sleeps on the floor with a mat, and the other sleeps draped across the aisle on the other row. Each section looks like a camp bunk, crowded with baby blankets from Target, the nylon insulating blanket from the hotel, and, of course, several hotel pillows that somehow make their way onto the bus. We basically live on the bus. I actually prefer it to a plane ride. Everyone sleeps thru the first hour, known as quiet hour, and then we slowly

wake up but still sit in silence. I listen to my iPod, study songs, think about my life, my family, my future, and whether I'll be able to eat at the lunch stop. I always keep my laptop near, and since I am one of the lucky hyperactive kids who can't sleep on the bus, I watch movies too.

Noon comes, and we are stopped at a mall in the middle of nowhere. The food court is slim pickings to say the least. If we happen to stop at a fancy mall, we can go to a restaurant, which always makes me very happy since I don't eat fast food. I do wear a cat suit in the current show and definitely have to watch the calories. Some of us eat while others scramble through kiosks looking for phone chargers and hair products left behind at the last hotel.

We have an hour exactly. I feel like a zombie walking around in my sweats. I try to pick up some caffeine and new underwear because laundromats have been scarce. I run to the bus just in time.

We are off for the rest of the trip watching DVDs, talking, sharing music, and playing games. I am on vocal rest most bus days, so I spend my time reading trade



Tracy McDowell as Maureen from the musical Rent.

magazines in silence. Other days at this time, I might call my agent to check on upcoming auditions or take the time to memorize new audition songs. I pray we get in a little before 3 p.m. so that I have enough time to take a shower and eat before the bus takes us to the theater for the 5 p.m. sound check.

When we finally arrive in Springfield, I wait on the bus until my name is called to pick up my room key. I shout out the room number for my roomies behind me and start

to pull my luggage off the bus. I get to my room, jump in the shower, eat some tuna from a package, and some nuts, because there will not be time to eat again until after the show. I get dressed with my hair wet, hoping it dries before show time. Downing a Red Bull energizing drink, I get to the theater just in time for my sound check. I am so tired, but I still manage to get dressed in my costume and do my makeup with time to spare. I walk around backstage and introduce myself to the locals, who will dress me and prepare my props. When the stage manager gives us the five minutes to show time call, we all get our mics checked, and go to our places for the top of the show.

The cast somehow always performs brilliantly on the four hours of interrupted sleep plus bus naps that we usually get on travel days. When we get back to the hotel, we all try to get to the bar for a drink to wind down and maybe some bar food if its low carb. If they have a salad, the vegetarians eat, too. After a quick bite, I proceed to my hotel room and wash my face. I call my parents and my friends if I'm not too exhausted. Then, I finally fall asleep because tomorrow I know I am going to get up and do it all over again.



Miramonte graduate Tracy McDowell.

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BURMESE ORPHANAGE

Miramonte Students and Community Members Help Orphans a World Away

By LANA OLMER
Staff Writer

This winter, when I told my peers, my teachers, or my friends' parents where I was going for vacation, I got a unanimous reaction: "Burma? But isn't that dangerous?" Burma, also known as Myanmar, borders with China and Thailand and is separated from India by the Bay of Bengal. Burma has, for a long time, been a hotbed of political corruption and human rights violations, which has led many Western nations, including the United States, to place economic sanctions on the country. However, through loopholes in legislation, some corporations such as the French oil company, Total S.A., have continued to exploit the country's natural resources with the help of the Burmese military. The company is now being charged with using civilian slavery to help build a pipeline from Myanmar to Thailand. Current events sadly mirror the past. The military regime is headed by Senior General Than Shwe, whose picture is often placed in restaurants to show the owner's loyalty to the government. In 1988, during what

became known as the 8888 uprising, the regime opened fire upon demonstrators and martial law was instated. Even though the National League for Democracy, led by Aung San Suu Kyi, won over 60 percent of the vote and over 80 percent of parliamentary seats in the election, the military regime has stayed in power. Aung San Suu Kyi was placed under house arrest. She won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1991, but even today, 16 years later, she is still unable to leave her home.

When Burma was a part of the British Empire, it was the world's largest exporter of rice. Today, it is the world's second largest exporter of opium. The golden pagodas adorned with some of the world's largest diamonds, rubies, and sapphires lord over the simple huts in which the Burmese people live. However, not all of the Burmese are lucky enough to have their own homes or a family.

Fundraising For An Orphanage

Our family found out about an orphanage in Taunggy through our guide, who had grown up in the same town. At first, we didn't think it would even be possible to help the orphanage, because of the distance and political situation. But my mom wouldn't let up, and I'm so glad she didn't because I was finally convinced and got involved. I turned to the fellow members of Interact Club at Miramonte, friends, and



KSENJA SOSTER OLMER
Lana Olmer (front) and her sister Naya, stand by the three and one-half tons of rice purchased with money from fundraisers in Orinda.

orphanage. The next fundraiser we did, thanks to the sponsorship of Orinda Peet's Coffee, was a before-school breakfast sale of coffee, hot chocolate, and pastries. It was a hectic few hours on a freezing early November morning, as we learned the difference between lattes and cafés au lait, and tried to juggle passing out drinks and food while accepting payments, and receiving orders all at the same time. Many students and teachers at Miramonte were delighted with a warm breakfast and asked if we would come back. However, by far the most successful fundraiser was when Interact Club members replaced professional waiters as food servers at the annual Orinda Rotary Christmas Dinner. The club gave us a donation for our work,



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KSENJA SOSTER OLMER
Although shy at first, the students at the orphanage in Taunggy soon warmed to the visitors from Orinda.

friends' families. We began fundraising in September. At times, it was a bit frustrating because it was hard to convince people to volunteer their time to help with the project. First, we had a car wash while it was still warm. Orinda Motors, as usual, generously donated their water and space. Although we were several hands short, we still had a constant stream of cars driving through and people were very interested when they read the poster and saw the picture of the

and we also got to mingle with the guests. As a co-president of the Interact Club, I was asked to give a short speech introducing the club and our latest project. Many members were inspired to put generous donations in the glass jar that was traveling from table to table. By the time we were ready to embark on our trip, we had raised more than \$1,000 for the orphanage.

We then, once again, turned to our friends
[SEE ORPHANAGE page 20]

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LUKE ELLIS

Luke Ellis, A Special Kind of Coach

■ Personal injury attorney, is the Miramonte High School mock trial coach.

By KSENJA SOSTER OLMER
Staff Writer

Many people have fond memories or even give credit for their life's success to dedicated coaches who they were lucky to know as teens. But those are generally athletic coaches who are well-known personalities, at least on the high school grounds if not in the community. Yet, there is another kind of dedicated coach who, unbeknownst to many, makes an enormous impact on a number of local students and their families.

A gentle, soft-spoken man, and a dedicated father of three, Ellis is a powerful, preminent lawyer with the Orinda Law Firm of Gillin, Jacobson, Ellis & Larsen. The firm, practicing exclusively in the field of civil litigation, is well-known in the law arena and, in the last two years, has won verdicts and settlements in excess of \$150 million. For the students he coaches every Tuesday evening at school and many weekends at his own home, he is simply Luke, a coach and mentor they can easily connect with.

"I always liked working with kids," says Ellis of his six-year commitment to the program. "I was actually an education major in college before going to Boalt at UC Berkeley. I love the law, and I love to get kids excited about it. It is also very rewarding for me. Each year, with new kids in the program, it takes on a new personality. I am also proud of the kids who were in mock trial and are now in college. They e-mail me or call me on the phone. They'll meet me for coffee when they are home on break, and I love to hear about how they are using the skills they have gained in the program or that they are involved in mock trial on the college level, some even all the way up to Nationals."

Mock trial at Miramonte was started by teacher Doreen Wagner as an after-school program for students who are interested in law. Mock trials help them gain a practical understanding of the way the American legal system functions. While learning the details of trial process and procedure, students also develop important lifetime skills: critical analysis of problems, reasoning, listening, oral presentation, and extemporaneous argument. Students work with local attorney "coaches" and a teacher coach as they prepare to play the roles of attorneys and witnesses in simulated trials. They prepare both the defense and the

prosecution side. As in real life, they prepare opening and closing statements, examine and cross-examine witnesses, present evidence, and sometimes try to get a case thrown out of court.

"This has been a difficult transition year for the Miramonte mock trial team," says Ellis, "because our teacher coach retired. So we do not have a permanent classroom to practice in and there is nobody to act as a connection between the school and the team. I had to rely on the help from parents. The program is supported by EFO, but I wish that it was more integrated into the school as part of a class like public speaking or government. Then more students could benefit from it. Actually, some of the top high schools at the state level have mock trial as an elective and have a number of teachers and coaches involved."

This year, 34 Miramonte students participated in the program and will get five units pass/no pass credit on their high school transcripts. The competing team itself has a minimum of 10 and a maximum of 20 participants as each school has a set defense and prosecution team and the same number of witnesses and pre-trial attorneys. Other members can fill in roles as bailiffs, courtroom artists, reporters, or understudies. The program attracts many students from drama and public speaking classes. All the interested students are allowed to try out for different roles, and then Ellis works with them to see what role would be best for them and the team.

"This year, we started with a very young rookie team," explains Ellis. "Most of the kids that we had in our key roles in the years past graduated. We had only three seniors left, so we had to start at ground zero with practically every participant. There is a big learning curve as you are teaching kids about court proceedings, about evidence that takes lawyers three to four years to figure out, and you are compacting it into a couple of months. You try to get them to articulate a legal thought or an effective objection that the judge will understand and accept. It is all the more rewarding to see the kids blossom, to watch them go from never having done any of that – from not understanding the process at all – to being able to in the middle of a trial on their feet with a judge three times their age bearing down on them and a court filled with spectators, to being able to just come back with something cohesive. It is fantastic!"

During the trials, which are held in local courthouses, local judges and practicing attorneys evaluate the student performances. Students are judged on their analysis and presentation skills, not on

[SEE ELLIS page 18]



Luke Ellis (standing in suit) poses with members of the Miramonte Mock Trial team.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO



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SCHOOLS / STUDENTS

Mobile Dairy at Del Rey Elementary School

Kindergartner **Maxwell Coons** gets upclose and personal with a young calf. The Dairy Council of California's Mobile Dairy Classroom came to Del Rey Elementary to teach children about the importance of agriculture and farming.

The Mobile Dairy Classroom, an educational milking parlor on wheels, teaches children about how milk starts at a farm and ends up on their dinner table. Students also learn about the anatomy of a cow, agriculture's role in our food supply, and the value of dairy foods in a healthy diet. To enhance the learning experience, the classroom brought a live cow, plus the young calf, from a nearby dairy for a milking demonstration.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

OIS Honored for Character Education Program

By **PAY RUDEBUSCH**
Assistant Editor

Orinda Intermediate School (OIS) has been named a California School of Character by the Center for Youth Citizenship and the Character Education Partnership. The award is presented to schools with exemplary character education programs that improve the school culture and bring about positive student behavior and improved academic performance. OIS has also been selected to represent the State of California at the national level, an honor attained by only 25 schools nationwide.

Orinda Mayor Steve Glazer, along with Joseph Maloney from the Center for Youth Citizenship and Priscilla Cox of the California Center for Character Education, recognized the school at an assembly last month. "It is a very proud day in Orinda when our children, parents, and school leaders are recognized for their substantial contributions to helping those in need," said Glazer.

Character education became a key focus of the Orinda schools seven years ago, and OIS has led the way in implementing a creditable program that instills key character traits such as honesty, respect, responsibility, and consideration for others. "I am incredibly proud of our students and their involvement in the character education and Others First programs," said Michael Randall, principal of OIS. "The objective of the character education program is to help students learn to respect themselves and others, to value differences, and to interact with people in positive, considerate, and healthy ways. It is their mission to promote self reliance and to realize that OIS is much more than an academic environment."

Others First, a school-based program

organized to provide students with opportunities to help those less fortunate, is a keystone of OIS's character education program. This past year alone, students have contributed thousands of hours to helping organizations ranging from the Contra Costa Food Bank to the American Cancer Society. Students also have been resourceful and generous in raising money for UNICEF and The American Red Cross.

Randall sees the character education program as an important element in students' learning, noting that it teaches kids not only how to be good citizens of their community but also to reach out and share their talents with those who are less fortunate.

"We can conduct a program like this at OIS because of the tremendous support we get from our teachers and parents," Randall says. Clearly, the organization of volunteers and activities requires a good deal of staff and parent involvement. Nevertheless, all those involved say that the effort is well worth the rewards of helping a generation of students develop the character traits that will make them successful and compassionate adults.

Later this month, Character Education Partnership will announce the ten schools winning national recognition. The Washington, D.C.-based nonprofit, which is funded by the John Templeton Foundation and the UAW-General Motors Center for Human Resources, is a national leader in promoting character education in schools and communities. OIS is one of only 25 schools nationwide that has advanced to the finalist level. Whether OIS is among the final 10, is secondary to the important experiences students are gaining at the school. After all, it's not whether you win or lose, but how you play the game that matters most.

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HOLDEN HIGH SCHOOL

Celebrating Holden High School's 38th Year in Orinda

By EMILY WITT
Contributing Writer

Orinda's Holden High School is celebrating its 38th year in our community with its 4th annual "friendraiser" on May 4 from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. at the Orinda Community Church. This fundraising and community event will feature performances of student theater and music, as well as art work by members of the current student body.

Later, she graduated from San Jose State University with a bachelor of science degree in occupational therapy. She also earned a fellowship in Hand Therapy at Texas Women's University, in conjunction with Baylor College of Medicine. Zappettini has since founded Advanced Therapies Integrated, a successful registry for hand therapists where she works as a therapist herself. She also had her own hand therapy clinic, which she later sold.

Zappettini readily affirms that CCAS

psychology through film; sobriety; and relationships groups.

Six adults, two men, and four women, co-direct the school using a consensus-based group approach. Everyone is heard and can contribute. This non-hierarchical model of governance sets an example of conscious community-building and mutual respect for students to emulate. They, in turn, hold counsel in their own meeting space (complete with floor-to-ceiling student murals and well-worn couches) on a regular basis to problem solve, make decisions, and to hang out together.

Classes at Holden High School are small, interactive, and have an experiential component. Recently, for example, students went to visit the Bay Bridge expansion project, invited by a Holden High School graduate who works there. Back on campus, as part of the science classes, the students maintain an organic garden, learning the basics of ecology, biology, and chemistry. Learning is relevant and personalized to each student's interests and abilities.

For more information about Holden, call 254-0199 or email info@holdenhhigh.org.



SALLY HOGARTY

Students rehearse for the Holden High School fundraiser under the watchful eye of Bob Marley. (L-R) Miles Zimmerman (percussion), Zack Scott (cow bell), Harry Gold (lead guitar), Cody Hoff (drums), and Simon Haines (rhythm guitar).

Known for nurturing self-expression and self esteem among its students, Holden High School was founded in 1969 as the Contra Costa Alternative School (CCAS). Its philosophy of self/community responsibility and development as well as an understanding that "people learn in social, creative, emotional, and spiritual ways, which are just as important as academic ones," has changed the lives of countless young adults from the Bay Area and beyond.

Donna Zappettini, an Orinda native and 1977 graduate of CCAS, says, "I was ready to drop out of high school and get a job somewhere when my parents learned about and enrolled me in CCAS. I never liked school and before attending Holden High, did not foresee graduating." She said that public high school was not able to provide the individual academic and emotional attention she needed at that time in her life. At CCAS, Zappettini recalled that she "...felt more connection. I got more guidance and instruction that fit my particular learning style."

Upon graduating from CCAS, now Holden High School, Zappettini went to city college and earned an AA degree.

changed her life. "They geared the program towards my needs, emphasizing my strengths and helping me with my weaknesses." She also says that her experience there greatly raised her self-esteem.

This small, nurturing educational environment (40 students maximum) has been and continues to be an oasis of acceptance for young adults, ages 13 to 18, who may have previously suffered socially and emotionally, sometimes due to their individual differences. Giving attention to and allowing time for healing and growth, students meet with counselors once a week. Research has shown that the primary factor contributing to success in school is a one-on-one relationship with a staff person.

"We want to provide students the opportunity to connect one-on-one with a caring adult here at the school." Many of the staff at the school have counseling experience, including two licensed MFC therapists, as well as masters and post masters level counselors who do individual, group, and family counseling on site. Some of the groups at Holden High are a women's group; men's group; art as self-expression; dreamwork; death, dying and suicide;

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*Out
and
About* Pat Rudebusch



Public speaking. It's commonly listed as a fear worse than death itself; but not so for members of **Orinda Intermediate School's public speaking and debate team**. Coached by OIS teacher **Terry Eubanks**, the team finished its inaugural year with an impressive showing at the East Bay Debate League tournament earlier this year, earning five awards in both individual and team events.

Public speaking and debate are relatively new programs at the middle school level and this year marked the beginning of the **East Bay Debate League** and the league's first tournament. In addition to OIS, teams from Stanley Intermediate in Lafayette, Joaquin Moraga Intermediate, and Sutter Intermediate School in Sacramento participated in the tournament. Eubanks, who teaches drama and public speaking electives at OIS, says that she has been interested in starting a competitive team at the school for several years. A fortuitous call from representatives of Claremont McKenna College, which sponsors the Middle School Public Speaking and Debate program, prompted Eubanks to initiate the OIS program this year.

According to Eubanks, over 9,000 students in Southern California, New York, and Washington, D.C. participate in the Middle School Public Speaking and Debate program. The East Bay Debate League is the newest chapter and the first in Northern California. "The program is designed to empower students and promote confident

public speaking and leadership. Through debate, students develop critical thinking skills, argumentation literacy, floor management, and civility. Besides that, it's exciting and fun," she says.

Given the popularity of the Miramonte High School debate program, it's likely that public speaking and debate will continue to grow at OIS and surrounding middle schools.

Hannah Swernoff, a seventh grade student at OIS enjoys the competition aspect of the public speaking and debate team. "It's fun to get up there and share your thoughts with other people who are interested in the same thing. If you work really hard at something, you want to show other people what you can do. Even if you don't win, you know that you did your best," she says. **Alyssa Sheets, Erin Anderson, Ari Migdale, Robbie Fluegge, Conor Bean, Jason Lammert, and Lisa Meyer**, along with Swernoff, make up the OIS team. Erin Anderson, Alyssa Sheets, and Rachel Cook each earned team trophies; Anderson and Sheets also earned individual speaker awards.

"It was truly exciting to watch the kids during the course of the day," Eubanks continued. "In the morning, they were nervous. By the second round, they were charging to their respective debate rooms and setting up command posts to strategize and prepare last minute notes. It was a real joy to behold."

◆ ELLIS from page 15

whether they "win" the legal case. "The cases are real-life situations that kids can relate to and usually involve a murder, a who-done-it," explains Ellis. "That's the most interesting and exciting for the kids. This year the case revolved around an alleged school bombing by a student who was taunted by his schoolmates, and the prosecution had the task of proving his guilt beyond a reasonable doubt, which was a big challenge."

All the names of the witnesses are neutral so they can either be fielded by boys or girls.

"The cases are real-life situations that kids can relate to and usually involve a murder, a who-done-it," explains Ellis.

"This year, interestingly, we had more girls than boys in the program, out of six we had five female lawyers. Some years, we have more boys, and we always have to play to their different strengths," Ellis said.

Despite its rookie status, the Miramonte team came in third in the county. It was a great success for the freshmen and sophomores on the team but some of the senior members were crushed by the broken streak of five years in a row of winning first place and going to state.

"We'll start another winning streak next year," Ellis promised them, "now that we have an experienced team again." He also promises that he will stay part of the team as long as he practices law. "This is a unique program with the element of drama, law, and intellectual competition. It gives me great joy to be around the wonderful energy that the kids have. Even the law students get a little jaded but these kids are fresh, open, excited, and not at all cynical about the process. This is my calling!"

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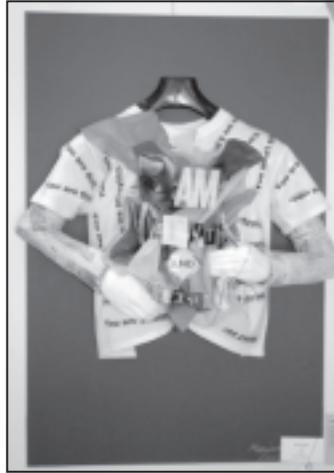
By PAT RUDEBUSCH
Assistant Editor

For over 50 years, the Orinda Arts Council (OAC) has been promoting and supporting arts in the schools, and spring is the time when the group shines its spotlight on student artists. Last month, OAC sponsored its annual Student Visual Art Competition for high school students who either live or attend school in the Lamorinda communities. Contest entries were displayed in the Orinda Library Gallery, the primary venue for OAC-sponsored shows.

"We had a tremendous response to the student art contest this year, both in the number of entries and in representation from the various schools in the area," says Ann Mordine, an OAC board member and chair of the group's arts in the schools committee. "What's really striking was the diversity of subjects and the manner and expression of the works. It shows that not only are the teachers teaching technique, they're also allowing students to explore ways to express themselves."

Over 200 students submitted works in three categories: 2-D art, 3-D art, and photography. OAC awarded prizes totaling \$2,500 to those entries placing first, second, or third in the competition; an additional 27 students received honorable mentions. "The work was all of a high caliber," Mordine continues. "One of the photography judges said that he could have easily awarded 50 first prizes."

Entries were judged on the basis of creativity, content, and technique in the student's chosen medium. Local, professional artists and gallery owners judging this year's contest were Sheila



SALLY HOGARTY
Miramonte's Marisa Rowland tied for third place in 3-D art for her innovative collage called "I Am."

McNulty, Andrew Denman, Susan Kendall, Jim Jordan, Gerry Wallace, Heidi Donner, Russell Abraham, John Chiara, and Wenda Pyman.

Mordine believes that the opportunity for students to show their work and compete in art shows is important on two levels. "Seeing art is good for kids. There are all sorts of studies that show that exposure to art – both seeing and doing – improves not only academic performance but also communication and social skills. Exhibiting in an art show is also a way to create real-world experiences for kids, some of whom will go on to art school," Mordine explains. "But even for those who don't go on to become professional artists, we're giving them an opportunity to participate in an event and take pride in their work. We're so good at celebrating athletes in this community, but it's just as important to celebrate the kids who have talents in other areas and to honor those skills publicly."

OAC showcases performing arts students, as well as visual artists. After the overwhelming success of last year's Orinda Idol competition, OAC hopes to make it an annual event. Performing artists attending local schools will have a chance to demonstrate their talents when OAC sponsors the second annual Orinda Idol contest this fall. Auditions for Orinda Idol will be held later this month. Information on Orinda Idol auditions or general information on OAC, including ways to support the group, can be found on their website: www.orindaartscouncil.org.



SALLY HOGARTY
Miramonte's Lucy Wittenberg won first place for this photograph entitled "Be mine?"

2007 Student Visual Arts Competition Winners

PHOTOGRAPHY

1st Place:
Lucy Wittenberg, Grade 10, Miramonte

2nd Place:
Molly Turrentine, Grade 11, Bentley

3rd Place:
Kaitlin Strang, Grade 11, Campolindo

Honorable Mentions:
Taylor Holland, Grade 10, Bentley

Nathaniel Brewer, Grade 11, Bentley

Kendall Sankary, Grade 12, Miramonte

Eliot Tang-Smith, 11, Bentley

Rose Greenway, Grade 12, Campolindo

Ani Dietkus, Grade 12, Miramonte

Daniel Woznicki, Grade 12, Miramonte

3-D ART

1st Place:
Richard Alex Klevan, Grade 12, Miramonte

2nd Place:
Daniel Seymour, Grade 12, Miramonte

3rd Place:
Eva Imber, Grade 12, Miramonte

Marisa Rowland, Grade 10, Miramonte

Alena Field, Grade 10, Campolindo

Honorable Mentions:
Katie Batlin, Grade 11, Miramonte

Michelle Sonada, Grade 12, Miramonte

Kelsey Harrison, Grade 12, Miramonte

Austin Zimmerman, Grade 12, Miramonte

Sara Helt, Grade 10, Campolindo

Aislinn Sterling, Grade 12, Miramonte

Anna London, Grade 11, Miramonte

Max Parragué, Grade 12, Miramonte

Suki Clements, Grade 11, Campolindo

Andy Deal, Grade 12, Miramonte

2-D ART

1st Place:
Kaylan George, Grade 12, Campolindo

2nd Place:
Madison McClintock, Grade 12, Campolindo

3rd Place:
Andy Hurrell, Grade 12, Orinda Academy

Kelsey Harrison, Grade 12, Miramonte

Honorable Mentions:
Kate Petersen, Grade 12, Acalanes

Nadia Mufti, Grade 12, Bentley

Jarad Solomon, Grade 9, Miramonte

Walker Gable, Grade 11, Bentley

Pamela Tu, Grade 12, Campolindo

Julie Sommer, Grade 12, Campolindo

Sheldon Silvera, Grade 12, Miramonte

Richard Dent IV, Grade 11, Acalanes

Pilar Schmidt, Grade 12, Acalanes

Derrick Huey, Grade 12, Acalanes



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ORPHANAGE/ SAN ANTONIO

◆ ORPHANAGE from page 14

and community. We began collecting donations of travel-size shampoo and conditioner. A friend of a friend arranged for Hilton Hotels to donate boxes of soap. Dental clinics donated floss and toothbrushes, and Girl Scout troops collected hair ornaments, chewing gum, crayons, and stickers. With the help of club members, we then stuffed 130 zippered toiletry bags, one for each orphan, with these necessities.

Arriving in Burma

We had a hard time explaining what the four duffel bags filled with identical plastic bags were to the customs officials at the airport in Rangoon. I use the term airport loosely, as there was only one terminal. We exchanged \$1,000 U.S. for 1.5 million

Burmese kyat, which I had to carry in a big shopping bag and eventually lug around in a backpack. When we arrived at the orphanage, sweating from the 85 degree weather, we were greeted by Christmas decorations and carols about baby Jesus that looked and sounded strangely out of place. At first, the orphans hid from us, merely peeking out from doorways at these strange white people who had entered their world.

The orphans varied from teens to small children just growing out of infancy. All of them had sad stories, the youngest and newest addition witnessed his family being shot after soldiers entered his village. Some had been sent to the orphanage because their families could not afford to take care of them. Eventually, the orphans warmed up to us, and admired our light hair and eyes and especially my dad's hairy arms. They were really excited when we began

passing out the bags, which to them seemed like amazing Christmas presents filled with never-before-seen wonders. As I walked around demonstrating the use of floss, the children giggled as I moronically gestured twining the string around two fingers and putting it in my mouth, for no reason they could comprehend. The gum was soon discovered and eventually the room (which doubled as both a classroom and a cafeteria) was filled with happy children busily chewing.

After singing some carols with the children, eating a Christmas dinner of noodles, and touring the two other rooms of the orphanage, and the few feet of backyard occupied by chickens and a pig, my family and I went with the head of the orphanage to the local market, where we used the fund-raised money to buy 25 blankets, pots, cement, 1,400 bricks, oil, and three and a half tons of rice. When deciding what type of rice to buy, the head of the orphanage knew exactly what she wanted: the rice of lesser quality because it stayed in the children's stomachs longer. When we came back to the orphanage to say our goodbyes, everyone, including us, was crying. The director hugged me multiple times, tears in her eyes, and kept repeating "God bless you" over and over again.

It was hard to return to our hotel that night, knowing that at the same time, orphans were sleeping three or four to a bed, covered only with a flimsy blanket. I know that there are so many more obstacles that these brave children from Burma must overcome, but I think, that day, we left them with a small piece of happiness and some materials to improve their orphanage. When my family came home, people often asked me how we did it. I simply answered, "You do what you can. And people are willing to help out, if you tell them what you are trying to achieve." I now encourage other families to visit Burma because it is a fascinating country, but also with the hope they will have a chance to meet "our orphans."

◆ BACKYARD from page 12

day siege. To find out more about these, go online to www.thealamo.org or call (210) 225-1391.

And, once you are up on street level, be sure and visit the historic Majestic Theatre. This architectural marvel has long been recognized as one of the most ornate facilities in the country. Opened in 1929, the theater includes Spanish Mission, Baroque, and Mediterranean architectural traditions, which transport patrons to a fantasy villa. Walls become towers with windows of colorful glass. A rare white peacock perches on a balcony railing as doves are caught in mid-flight. Grape vines creep along the walls and the vaulted "sky" comes to life as stars twinkle and clouds drift overhead. Balconies, tile roofs, arches, statues, and even a bell tower all aid in the creation of this mystical village.

In order to check out the ornate interior of this fanciful 2,311-seat venue, we purchased tickets to a touring production of the musical *Rent*. To our surprise, a local Orinda girl, Tracy McDowell, was starring in the production. Another nice coincidence had us seated right next to the assistant technical director's family. During intermission, Lindsay Sullivan, the assistant TD, overheard us mention McDowell and offered to set up a meeting following the show. The powerhouse performer was very gracious and excited to see someone from her hometown at a production in San Antonio. For more on this talented actress, see her story on page 13.

A few miles from the aptly named Majestic Theatre, you can find a slightly different architectural delight — the King William Historic Area. This 25-block area near downtown on the south bank of the San Antonio River was the city's most elegant residential enclave in the late 1800's. Prominent German merchants originally settled the area and brought with them the architecture of their country. It has become a fashionable neighborhood that includes charming bed and breakfast inns, art galleries, and restaurants. Go online to www.kingwilliamassociation.org for more information.

Another historic community worth the visit is La Villita. Located adjacent to the River Walk, this unique arts village features a variety of artwork, crafts, and restaurants. A fun plus is watching the many artists who are on-site creating their beautiful stained glass, pottery, paintings, or weavings while visitors stroll down the narrow lanes. For more information, go to www.lavillita.com.

Additional information on the above attractions, and many more historical sites, can be obtained through the San Antonio Convention and Visitor's Bureau. Go online to www.sanantoniocvb.com. Enjoy!

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CALENDAR

ON THE CALENDAR

MAY

- 3 OIS's production of *Snow White*, also performs 5/4-6, 376-4402.
- 4 **Holden High School** 4th annual fundraiser featuring student music, drama, and art work, 7 - 9 p.m., Orinda Community Church, 254-0199.
- 12 **Orinda Books** program on dogs with ARF therapy dog named Egg, 11:30 a.m. - 2 p.m., 254-7606.
- Orinda Farmers' Market**, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Continues each Saturday through November.
- 15 **World Affairs Book Group**, 3 p.m., Orinda Books. Discussion of "*After Fidel: Raul Castro and the Future of Cuba's Revolution*," by Brian Latell. Book group meets bi-monthly at Orinda Books and welcomes new members.
- Orinda Owls**, 7 p.m., Orinda Books, reading and discussion of "*Wickett's Remedy*" by Myla Goldberg.
- Page Book Group**, 7 p.m. Orinda Books, reading and discussion of "*The Places In Between*" by Rory Stewart. Welcomes new members.
- 18 **Kids 'N Dance 'N Theater Arts**, "Aladdin Jr.," at 5 and 7 p.m. Repeats on May 19 at 11 a.m. and 1 p.m., Orinda Library Auditorium, 26 Orinda Way. Adults \$10 and children \$7. Call (510) 531-4400 to charge tickets.

AT THE LIBRARY

- 1 **Toddler Lapsit**, for infants to 3-year-olds and their caregivers, 10 a.m.; repeats at 10:30 a.m. Stories, songs, and bounces. Free, no registration necessary. Repeats May 8.
- 5 **Saturday Morning Live**, 11 a.m., family story-time for 3 to 5-year-olds. Also, 5/12
- 24 **Story Swap for Adults**, 7-9 p.m., a group of storytellers and listeners keeping the oral tradition alive, in the Gallery Room. Free and open to the public, no registration necessary.
- 29 **Fireside Chat**, 7-8 p.m., with Dr. Beshara Doumani, professor of history at the University of California, Berkeley, discussing his most recent book, "*Academic Freedom after September 11*." Free and open to the public.

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

CLUB MEETINGS

- Friends of Orinda Creeks**, Orinda Library, May Room, fourth Wednesday, 8 a.m., 253-1997.
- Lamorinda Sunrise Rotary**, Postino's in Lafayette, 7 a.m. every Friday, 254-0440, ext. 463.
- Orinda Lions Club**, Europa Restaurant, 64 Moraga Way, every Tuesday at 12:15 p.m., 254-0482.
- Orinda Rotary**, Community Center, every Wednesday at noon, 254-5537.
- Orinda Association**, Orinda Library, May Room, second Monday, 7:30 p.m., 254-0800.
- Orinda Historical Society**, third Wednesday of the month, OHS Museum, 3 to 5 p.m., 254-1353.
- Orinda/Tábor (Czech Republic) Sister City Foundation**, fourth Thursday of the month, 7 p.m. social, 7:30 p.m. meeting, call 254-8260 for location.

CITY/FIRE/SCHOOL DISTRICT MEETING SCHEDULE

Acalanes Union High School District

First and third Wednesdays, district office, 1212 Pleasant Hill Road, Lafayette, 7:30 p.m.

City Council

First and third Tuesdays, 7 p.m., Library Auditorium, www.ci.Orinda.ca.us.

Historic Landmarks Committee

Fourth Tuesday, 3 to 5 p.m., Library Garden Room, public is welcome, for information, please call 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, www.orinda.k12.ca.us.

Planning Commission

Second and fourth Tuesdays, 7 p.m., Library Auditorium, 253-4210.

Parks and Recreation Commission

Second Wednesday, 7 p.m., Community Center, room 7, 254-2445.

CALENDAR BY CHRIS LAVIN

Send calendar items to chrislavin@earthlink.net

WomenSing Reaches Out to Others



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Staff members from Catherine's House prepare homemade apple cider for residents. The house will benefit from June WomenSing concerts.

By LYNDA LEONARD
Staff Writer

Good news! WomenSing and the San Francisco Gay Men's Chorus (SFGMC) are collaborating again in concerts on June 2 and 3. They will present selections from English composer Michael Tippett's *A Child of Our Time*, arrangements of African American spirituals in an impassioned protest against persecution and tyranny.

WomenSing will also be performing music that will be taken on tour to Spain, including pieces for the competition at the Cantonigros Festival, such as *Indian Singing* by Ron Jeffers, a mosaic of various powerful poems by Gail Tremblay, rooted in the Native-American experience, that speak about concern for the environment and honoring the Earth as the supporter of life.

WomenSing first collaborated with SFGMC in May 2004 singing Fauré's *Requiem* with orchestra. Artistic director Martín Benvenuto believes that collaborating with other artists such as through performing mixed chorus symphonic masterpieces builds WomenSing's artistry and community. "It's also an opportunity for the group to work with other conductors and singers. SFGMC and its director Kathleen McGuire agreed enthusiastically to the idea and the groups proved to be a good match both musically and socially. WomenSing president Patti

Sax says "We were able to serve as ambassadors to each other's worlds, creating not only beautiful music together but also understanding and genuine affection." From that experience, friendships and loyal audiences were forged.

WomenSing is unprecedented in its program of benefit performances. Proceeds from the June concerts will benefit Catherine's House a retreat center near Angels Camp in the Sierra foothills. The house, located among 80 acres of forested land with a meadow and pond, provides respite for those sick with HIV/AIDS and their caregivers. Begun in 1976, Catherine's House is a project of Earth Abides Land Trust/Catholic Worker Farm, whose mission is simply to provide charitable services.

Catherine's House serves from 80 to 100 clients a year, bringing them from the San Francisco Bay Area for, on average, a four-day stay. Proceeds from the concerts will provide accessibility to those with marginal ability to pay.

WomenSing and the SFGMC will perform the benefit concerts on Saturday, June 2, at 7:30 p.m., at St. Dominic's, San Francisco; and Sunday, June 3, at 4 p.m., at First Congregational Church, 2345 Channing Way, Berkeley.

Tickets are \$20 general, \$18 senior/student, and \$10 youth ages 18 and under. Tickets are available at the door or may be charged in advance by calling (925) 974-9169.



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BUSINESS BUZZ

◆ BUZZ from page 24

HypNutrition

HypNutrition is the brainchild of nutritional consultant Theresa Tsingis and certified hypnotherapist Gerri Levitas. Their unique comprehensive program combines hypnosis and a very advanced state of the art body composition analysis to help people effectively lose weight. Their business is located at 89 Davis Road, Suite 180, in Orinda.

As a certified hypnotherapist with a specialty in weight loss, Gerri Levitas



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Theresa Tsingis of HypNutrition.

describes hypnosis as being similar to meditation but with a purpose. "During hypnosis the conscious mind is in a relaxed, neutral state. The subconscious, where negative thoughts reside, becomes very alert and very receptive to suggestion and reprogramming," she explains.

According to Levitas, the conscious mind is only about 10 percent of our brain capacity and 90 percent of our brain is subconscious. Going into hypnosis allows the subconscious to become very alert and active. "Hypnosis works very quickly, easily, and effortlessly. We can eliminate cravings and deal with problem areas such as snacking, emotional eating, and night eating. Through this process, I help people release their negative thinking, the part where we sabotage ourselves," says Levitas. "The best way to lose weight is to be clear and focused, which is also the best way to accomplish any goal in life," she adds.

Through this process, one is able to make behavioral changes both internally and externally. "At HypNutrition, we combine the internal with the external to make all important behavioral changes that will bring about desired results. We give a person the techniques to overcome self-defeating behaviors," says Levitas. Another key feature of hypnosis is that it reduces stress. According to Levitas, hypnosis deactivates the fight or flight mechanism that resides inside the brain.

This two-part program includes a customized nutrition plan based on a

Pete Escovedo Kicked Off Jazz Appreciation Month



Jazz great, Pete Escovedo (L) got April's Jazz Appreciation month at The Orinda House off to a great start. It was standing room only when the famed congo player appeared. PAT RUDEBUSCH

client's body composition, which is determined by nutritionist Theresa Tsingis. The body composition is a measurement of how much fat and muscle is in the body and where it is stored. Too much fat increases the risk for heart disease and diabetes. The lean mass reading relates to how much muscle a person has. This is a very important factor because muscle protects the immune system," says Tsingis. "I optimize body composition and give clients a long range plan that can optimize



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Gerri Levitas of HypNutrition.

health," she adds.

This step-by-step approach to weight loss that takes place during an eight-week program costs \$995. If additional maintenance sessions are necessary, there is an additional charge. This includes four body composition reading follow up sessions, four hypnotherapy sessions, and four hypnotherapy CD's, as well as telephone consultations.

"I determine a client's lifestyle, understand the client's health or weight loss goals and devise a plan that works for that individual, according to the body composition and lifestyle. If lab tests are

necessary, then I order lab tests for my client. I think of myself as a detective," says Tsingis.

For more information about HypNutrition, please visit the website at www.ilovehypnutrition.com or call Tsingis and Levitas at 283-9355.

See The Orinda News On-Line at www.orindaassociation.org



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BUSINESS BUZZ

Business Buzz

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Carlisle Collection

Suzu Tabor has enjoyed a passion for fashion her entire life. Prior to having a family, she was a department manager and local buyer for Saks Fifth Avenue. "I started representing Carlisle 11 years ago when my children finished high school, and I entered the empty-nester stage. I have always had an interest in fashion and the retail business, so this is a natural for me," says Tabor.

As a Carlisle representative, Tabor is, in fact, a personal shopper and consultant. Carlisle is a designer based in New York and features exquisite fabrics, beautiful

detail, and handwork. Charles Resnick and Susan Klopp create the gorgeous color-coordinated fashions four times a year. "I also represent Per Se, which is an edgier, more European cut that appeals to the younger crowd. My clients range from 18 to 93 years of age," says Tabor.

In addition to the sumptuous clothes that are on par with Chanel, Armani and Valentino, clients receive incredibly customized personal service from Tabor at the trunk shows that she stages eight times a year. She stages one for each season in both San Francisco and Orinda. The next trunk show will take place at Woodhall in Orindawoods during August.

"Most people I work with like fashion,

but they don't like dealing with retail stores. The quality of both the Carlisle and the Per Se Collection is outstanding. This is what I really stress. Along with offering a very one-on-one boutique experience, from fitting a client, personally delivering the items, and arranging for alteration if that is what a client desires, it is the incredible quality that women appreciate," says Tabor.

An Orinda resident since 1980, Suzu is married to Allan Tabor, an attorney and former mayor of Orinda. The couple have two children, Michelle and Sean, who both graduated from Miramonte High School. Michelle is a make-up artist to celebrities in Southern California and Sean is a singer-songwriter living in San Francisco. He recently released his first CD. "I love being a Mom, and I am glad I was able to stay at home with them, but I also love working and managing my own business," adds



VALERIE HOTZ

Julanna Morris of Salon Elegante.

silver décor is inviting. Clients travel here from all over the Bay Area, including Benicia, San Jose, and San Francisco for good reason. This looks like a relaxing place to get your hair cut and styled while having a Zen moment.

Proprietors Julanna Morris and Tom Vicencio ("You can see why I did not take his name," laughs Morris.) have owned and operated salons since 1968. Tom built his dream home on property he bought in Orinda back in 1973. He and Julanna married in 1981. Today Salon Elegante features six stylists, Julanna Morris, Debbie DiMaggio, Janine Hedlund, Luda Kaminski, Chris Stein, and Farry Malakian. You may view the staff bios on the web site at www.salonelegante.com.

In addition to haircuts and styles, several services are available, including coloring, permanents, and hair extensions. All stylists are independent contractors and the price for a cut and style range from \$25 to \$60 depending on the intricacy of the cut and length of hair.

Chatting with Julanna reveals her grandmother, Mary Ann Perreault Pickett, was a passenger on the Titanic who survived the harrowing ordeal. "I realized she was very famous, but I was not really interested in her story until I was older. Charles M. Hayes, president of the Canadian Grand Trunk Railroad, employed my grandmother. She was on a business trip with Mr. Hayes and his family, which included his wife, daughter, and son-in-law. A male secretary to Mr. Hayes was also travelling with them. All of the women survived the sinking, and all of the men died," says Julanna.

At Salon Elegante, you may purchase fine boar bristle hairbrushes, Kenra, Loma, and CHI hair products. "Loma is a plant based product, specifically Aloe Vera, that is excellent. We offer two different lines of Loma," says Morris. The salon is open Monday through Saturday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and later by appointment only. Please call Julanna Morris for more information or to schedule an appointment at 258-4247.

[SEE BUZZ page 23]



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Suzu Tabor (R) shows client Patti Camras a selection of designs.

Tabor.

Suzu Tabor works closely with the New York offices of Carlisle in order to provide excellent personal service to her wide base of clientele. This summer's hot colors include greens, yellows, peach, and shades of brown. Cropped pants continue to be popular. You may view the collections of both lines by visiting the website, www.carlislecollection.com. If you would like more information, send Tabor an email at suzannetabor@sbcglobal.net or give her a call at (510) 604-9727.

Salon Elegante

Step inside Salon Elegante, located at 43 Moraga Way, Suite 204, and you step into a soothing bucolic environment. Along the entire width of the salon is a row of windows that allow cascading sunlight to flood inside. Beyond the windows is a wall of peony ivy covered lattice and the marquee for the Orinda Theatre is just visible beyond.

The cherry wood flooring and black and



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