

# THE ORINDA NEWS

Gratis  
Volume 24, Number 6

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

12 Issues Annually  
June 2009

## Changes Ahead for Theatre Square as New Operator Takes Over Theater

By SALLY HOGARTY  
Editor

On May 7, 2009 long-time Orinda Theater operator Allen Michaan handed over the art deco building to new operators Tom Peterson and Jim Sheehan. Peterson and Sheehan have operated the Rheem Theater for the past year and look forward to increasing attendance at the Orinda location.

"We have struck a great deal with the City of Orinda, the landlord, and the Lam-orinda Film and Entertainment Foundation (LFEF)," said Sheehan. "The theater is in safe hands for the next 15 years," he added

referring to the length of the lease he signed with Theatre Square owners GLLBVK Properties, LLP. The German pension fund agreed to initially cut the rent 60 percent for the new operators.

Michaan, who has operated the theater for over 20 years, said at the May 5 City Council meeting that the rent reduction is key to the theater's survival. "At one point I was running 20 theaters, but Orinda was always the hardest. I had a hard time getting first run movies from the studios and the competition with the multi-plexes in Walnut Creek and Pleasant Hill is brutal. Theaters run on a very tight margin with 62

[SEE THEATER page 6]



Tom Peterson (L) and Jim Sheehan (R) are the new operators of Orinda Theater. Shown here with new house manager Monica Lind.

## Orinda Resident Ian Bremner Wins Jefferson Award

By FRAN MILLER  
Staff Writer

Accolades and recognition have never been the motivation for Ian Bremner in his work with developmentally disabled adults. But despite his best efforts to remain in the background, the Orinda resident was recently awarded the equivalent of the No-

bel Prize for public service – the "Jefferson Award" – for his tireless commitment to education and training of cognitively impaired adults.

"It's a little overwhelming," admits Bremner of the honor. While his programs have received recognition in the past, he has never been personally acknowledged. "This

[SEE BREMNER page 8]



IAN BREMNER receives prestigious award for his work with developmentally disabled adults.

**OA Members check page 3 for your June discounts!**

## McDonnell's Nursery and Local Garden Club



SALLY HOGARTY

Sarah McDonnell Slight of McDonnell Nurseries helps Orinda Junior Garden Club member Lisa Jorgens plant one of the hanging baskets that adorn Orinda streets. The nursery annually donates flowers and expertise to the garden club for the beautification of the community.

## Housing, Retail Top Task Force To-do List

By MAGGIE SHARPE  
Staff Writer

The Orinda community would like to see changes, especially in the downtown area, says Emmanuel Ursu, the city's Director of Planning. "This community would like a more vibrant downtown than we currently have, with local shopping opportunities," says Ursu. "Right now, people have to go to Walnut Creek or Lafayette for lots of their needs."

In addition, Ursu says there is a strong desire among residents for more options in the type of available housing. "Now, most homes are single-family dwellings on large lots on hillsides," says Ursu. "We want to keep that, but there is also a significant sector of the population that is aging and empty-nesters. A lot of them don't want to navigate the windy roads or maintain a big house. But they want to remain in Orinda where their friends are."

Retail development and housing options are two of the main items that are addressed in a draft report formulated by the Planning Process Review Task Force, people from a cross-section of the community including residents, property owners, developers and contractors, as well as Vice Mayor Thomas McCormick and City Councilmember Amy Worth.

The task force was formed at the urging of McCormick after his election two years ago. Over the last two years, the task force has spent many hours defining, reviewing and refining issues related to housing, downtown development, and the city's planning review process itself.

The task force has garnered feedback from public meetings as well as industry

experts such as arborists, engineers, architects, the Friends of Orinda Creeks, and commercial real estate developers.

Ursu emphasizes that the task force's recommendations are being reviewed by the City Council and Planning Commission who must give their approval before any changes are incorporated into the city's General Plan or zoning regulations.

The task force has proposed that mixed residential housing be allowed in the downtown area. "This could be a mix of townhouses, condos or row houses," says Ursu. He says the proposal will maintain the current downtown "retail core" with street front shops. "We also want to maintain the small-town charm of downtown, so design is critical."

The task force proposes allowing an increase in building height of 20 feet (from 35 to 55 feet) to allow for housing to be built on top of selected retail stores, up to three or four stories high. "We are looking at residential above retail, with a building set back from the street as it gets higher," says Ursu. According to Ursu, there will be definite limitations on where the 55-foot building elevation will be allowed. For example, areas next to existing single-family homes would be off-limits. "We want to allow development while not creating a negative impact on the surrounding neighborhoods," Ursu says.

As an example, Ursu says housing development would be acceptable on the downtown block occupied by Nation's on one end and Long's on the other, because there would be no impact on current residences. But housing would not be allowed

[SEE PLANNING page 8]

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Kattenburg Architects Celebrates Milestone



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

On April 23, Kattenburg Architects celebrated building over 100 projects. Founded in 1981, the full-service award-winning firm specializes in residential projects. Rick Kattenburg (center in blue), who is the vice president of the Orinda Chamber of Commerce, marked the occasion by also joining the Lafayette Chamber (shown above). The group had a ribbon cutting ceremony in front of Kattenburg's office, which is located directly across the street from the historic Orinda Theater.

Three-Quarter Century Club Party

By BOBBIE DODSON  
Staff Writer

Celebrating their tenth year, the Three-Quarter Century Club of Orinda will hold its annual luncheon on June 10 at 11:30 a.m. in the Fellowship Hall of the Orinda Community Church, 10 Irwin Way, Orinda.

A gift to those in Orinda who are 75 years or older (a younger spouse or partner may also attend), the Three-Quarter Century Club event is sponsored by the Lamorinda Sunrise Rotary, Prudential California Realty, and the Orinda Community Church. The festive event includes a luncheon, prizes and a speaker.

"This year we have a special treat in store for our guests," says organizer John Fazel. "Mark Twain (in the person of McAvoy Layne) will join us to talk about his life experiences, things he has done, and his opinions on a variety of subjects. I sug-



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Miramonte graduate McAvoy Layne has made a career out of impersonating Mark Twain. He returns to Orinda to speak at the Three-Quarters Century Club luncheon. The "buffalo" coin is named after Coach Phillips, who coached football for many years at Miramonte High School.

gest people brush up on his writings and the history of Mark Twain as much of the program is predicated on questions from the audience," Fazel says.

Other highlights of the afternoon are finding out the youngest guest present, the oldest man and woman, and the couple married the longest. For the past several years, Tom Deahl, now age 93 and Helen Vurek, now 99, have been crowned the oldest two, while Aileen and Tom Deahl have been married the longest – June 7 marked their 68th anniversary.

Fazel patterned the event after the Three-Quarter Century Club to which his parents belonged in Perry, Iowa. It was begun in 1930. He says, "I thought this was a nice thing to do to show our appreciation for all our senior citizens have done for our community. As far as I know, these are the only two such organizations in the entire country. Both the city and county here send proclamations to our event."

Fazel notes that space is limited and suggests that interested participants call him at 925-324-2017.



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ORINDA ASSOCIATION

Gearing Up for the 4<sup>th</sup> of July Celebration

By IAN HEETDERKS  
Staff Writer

The Orinda Association's (OA) annual 4th of July celebration is quickly approaching, and this year's celebration will feature many of the favorite events and activities from last year. The **Orinda Roadrunners' race**, **Haley's Run for a Reason** and the **Orinda Roadrunners' pancake breakfast** are all scheduled to take place.

"The celebration this year will reflect the economic times we're in," said OA celebration organizer Mark Roberts. "We're doing things a little leaner and meaner this year." The parade will start at 10 a.m., and last until around 11:30 a.m. The parade includes cars representing many Miramonte graduation classes including one driven by a 1970 grad with his daughter (a 1998 grad) and grandchild (future 2024 grad). Afterwards, food and beverage booths, as well as music and other fun events, will be set up in the Community Park until around 2:30 p.m.

Musicians are also invited to join in another annual 4th of July tradition: the **All-Orinda Pick-Up Marching Band**, now in its 26th year of performing during the parade. All instruments and levels of musicianship are welcome. Musicians are asked to wear blue shorts and a white shirt and will need to supply their own lyre to hold their music during the parade.



SALLY HOGARTY

Dressed to celebrate the day, this 4th of July participant enjoys the concert in Library Plaza prior to last year's parade.

Drummers should call Maurice Levitch in advance for assignment at 283-0361. Music is also available in advance by calling Levitch. The band will meet on the morning of the 4th next to the Valero gas station near Casa Orinda. Drummers meet at 8 a.m. and all other musicians meet at 9 a.m.

For more information on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July celebration, call the Orinda Association at 254-0800 or go online to [www.orindaassociation.org](http://www.orindaassociation.org).

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- 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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## Staying Positive in a Negative World

With H1N1 (more commonly known as swine flu) causing concern around the world, wars on distant shores, and a troubled economy, it can be difficult times to stay on a positive footing. Some local residents, however, have no problem doing just that.

Rather than obsessing about things he can't control, **Ian Bremner** concentrates on things he can do to help people with developmental disabilities. The Orinda resident was recently honored with a Jefferson Award for his tireless dedication. Read more about him on page one.

Orinda Academy senior **Zeke Nierenberg** decided to do what he could by founding Future Builders with several friends. The teen-run organization uses art to power social change. Learn what Zeke is up to and how you can help on page 15.

Other students making a difference include five new **Eagle Scouts**, whose projects benefit our local community. Their story is on page 13.

Orindawoods is opening up their tennis courts for a tennis clinic and tournament that benefits the **Carol Ann Read Breast Center** at Summit/Alta Bates in Oakland.

Carol Ann Read was an Orinda resident who lost her courageous fight 11 years ago. See page 17 for information on how to be involved.

The list goes on and on as local people look beyond their everyday world to see how they can benefit others. Sometimes looking at the big picture is just too overwhelming. Focusing in on a goal closer to home that you can achieve not only brings a sense of accomplishment, it also causes a ripple effect that can have untold benefits.

If you are a graduating senior looking for something to do this summer or a retired person with some extra time, why not try volunteering? The Orinda Association has a binder full of volunteer opportunities, as do many non-profit organizations in the East Bay. In fact, the OA could use a plethora of volunteers to help with the upcoming 4th of July parade and park festivities (see page 3). Volunteering is a wonderful way to help others and gives the volunteer a feeling of satisfaction and pride. So, when the news headlines make you want to hide under the pillow, fight the urge. Instead, look for some way you can make the world around you just a little bit better.

– Sally Hogarty, Editor

## Letters to the Editor

### Right Philosophy

I was so impressed with Rachel Sloane's editorial that I clipped it to send to my grown son. Her philosophy echoes my own: appreciate what you have and you will always be content, don't sweat the small stuff ... and yes, discipline reaps rewards. So stop and smell the roses: pass it along.

– Cinda MacKinnon

### Scrap Plan for Downtown

Totally reckless is the best way to describe the plan to raze part of Moraga Way in the downtown theater district. The area involved stretches from Long's Drug Store to Nation's fast-food outlet.

The City of Orinda has been holding meetings to discuss installing new stores and residences in the affected area. The city hopes to gain additional tax revenue. Buildings as high as five to six stories may be erected.

The ugliness and parking problems that this project will bring to Orinda are sufficient reasons to reject the plan.

But there are other reasons. In the last 12 months, Orinda residents have been clobbered with massive tax increases.

In these 12 months, Orinda residents have seen a 44 percent increase in library taxes, a 24 percent increase in garbage fees, a 32 percent increase in school taxes, and a 17-year extension of a tax for the Acalanes High School District. On April 1, the sales tax in Orinda (and the rest of Contra Costa County) went from 8.25 percent to 9.25

percent.

Because the cost of doing business is so high in Orinda and because the project will wreck Orinda's downtown charm, the city ought to scrap this ill-considered project immediately.

– Richard S. Colman

### Downtown Housing a Good Idea

After reading Scott Zeller's letter regarding the Draft Planning Process Review Task Force report, I had to go back and review both the report and your article to make sure that I hadn't missed anything. The report does not specifically describe any "razing" of the Breed/Howkins property (area of Long's Drugs, Orinda Hardware, etc.). From what I can see, the report is very preliminary and is not a specific development proposal.

Downtown Orinda is the perfect location to place more housing. The State requires that every city prepare a housing element that details how it will help the region (in his case the Bay Area) accommodate the need for housing. The City of Orinda will need to construct housing units needed to meet our housing unit requirement (218 units for a variety of income levels for the period from 2007-14). This housing unit requirement is mandated by the state and is allocated to Orinda by our regional government (Association of Bay Area Governments [ABAG]).

Downtown is the perfect location for housing since it is a close and easy walk to BART, which would allow car-free access to employment and retail in Walnut Creek, Oakland and San Francisco. Proximity to



BART is a phenomenal benefit to the City of Orinda given this linkage and would make housing in downtown Orinda very desirable for many types of professional people. Given the high cost to our health and the environment from vehicle emissions and use of fossil fuels, we need to encourage housing that reduces vehicle trips, not encourage more car dependent housing.

Additionally, according to the report, Orinda is an aging city with 23 percent of its population over 55 in the year 2000 and an anticipated 30 percent of its population over 55 by 2013. Transit-friendly housing in downtown Orinda would allow some members of the aging population to live independently in Orinda long past the time they are comfortable driving.

Assessment of opportunities for development of areas surrounding BART is a timely topic given the hurdles we are facing as a society dealing with increases in greenhouse gases, dependence on fossil fuels, maintaining seniors independence, and maintaining economic vitality of downtown areas.

– Kat Holoch

### OUSD Ignites Fire Storm

Earlier this year, the school board published a list of programs that may be cut in the 2009-2010 academic year. The naturalist position at Wagner Ranch Nature Area was at the top of the list. This position is the backbone of the environmental education program.

While it is true that many parents in the community are angry and frustrated, they

did not approach the school board from an adversarial position. In recent school board meetings (both in March and April), community members pleaded with the school board to work with them in a collaborative way. Three specific proposals for alternative funding for the nature program were presented. In addition, several requests were made by members of the SEE committee (Save Environmental Education) for a task force to explore other options. However, this seems to have fallen on deaf ears. It certainly makes me, as a parent in this community question whether the school board sees itself as accountable to its constituency.

I am struck by the lack of transparency in the board's decision-making and what appears to be a lack of interest in parent input. The board talks about problems with the budget that would make the cut to the environmentalist position necessary. However the budget is posted nowhere. At the recent board meeting, they mentioned that surveys of the community were used to prioritize programs which placed the environmental education at the top of potential cuts. However, as far as I can tell, the last survey was in 2006, and it was never published. We don't know how many parents completed that survey. I am told that the district no longer surveys parents, but as far as I can tell no alternative was put into place. The school board meetings are held at 4 p.m. on weekdays, which is difficult for working parents to attend. As a parent, one begins to wonder if the school board really wants to hear your voice. As

[SEE LETTERS page 6]

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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 Graphics..... Aspen Consulting: Jill Gelster & David Dierks  
 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.orindanews.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. Letters to the Editor for the July issue are due June 5, 2009.

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MOFD

## Determined Firefighter Reunites Special Bracelet With Owner Years Later

By SALLY HOGARTY  
Editor

It was just another routine training session for Moraga Orinda firefighter Dan Johansen. He was out at Briones Reservoir with others practicing “pulling” water from Briones to fight potential wildland fires two years ago when he saw something sparkle in the mud. He reached down and discovered a beautiful gold bracelet with an inscription “Meleana – to our great Punahoe graduate, 6/3/95 Love M&D.” Johansen recalls that there hadn’t been much rain that year and the reservoir was down considerably. “The place where I found the bracelet had been covered with up to 10 feet of water in previous years,” he explains.

Johansen brought the bracelet back to his supervisor Ken Mannshardt, who became determined to find the owner. “It was a special gift, and I thought whoever lost it would want it back. Plus, with the name and the high school I thought I had enough information to track down the owner,” says Mannshardt.

It turned out to be more difficult than

Mannshardt thought. He contacted the high school Punahoe on Oahu in Hawaii, but they didn’t have a Meleana who graduated in 1995. He realized that that was her Hawaiian name and her real name could be very different. Then he remembered that a number of college crew teams used the reservoir to practice. He contacted East Bay Regional Parks and got a list of the three schools that used the reservoir regularly. He sent out letters and didn’t get a response. He decided to join Face Book and see if any people from Punahoe’s 1995 graduating class were on the social network. He sent out emails to the 30-40 people listed. Again, he didn’t receive a response.

He was about to give up when he decided to try Face Book again. By now, over 80 people from the 1995 class were on Face Book, including one Marlowe Kim. He went to her page and saw she had graduated from Cal Berkeley and saw a photo of her at a crew alumni day. Bingo. He was sure he had found the owner. He sent her an email.

“I couldn’t believe it when I got that [SEE BRACELET page 6]



SALLY HOGARTY

Firefighter Dan Johansen, Marlowe Kim and son Blake, and retired firefighter Ken Mannshardt at MOFD’s Station 41, when Kim was reunited with her bracelet.

## City Council Votes for Consultant on MOFD

By IAN HEETDERKS  
Staff Writer

In 1997, Moraga and Orinda formed the Moraga Orinda Fire Department (MOFD) as an alternative to the Consolidated Fire District, which also provided emergency services to Walnut Creek, Lafayette and Concord. The City of Orinda decided to part ways with Con Fire because Orindans

felt they weren’t receiving a level of service equivalent to the amount of money they were paying. Today, a group of Orinda residents feels the same problem exists with the MOFD.

Steve Cohn is among the Orinda residents who believe a disparity exists between the share of the fire district’s expenses that Orinda pays for and the services that are

[SEE MOFD page 6]

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CONTINUATIONS

◆ LETTERS from page 4

a parent who gives money each year to the district to supplement state funding, I find their stance insulting.

What started as a desire to preserve environmental education at the Wagner Ranch Nature Area has become something much larger. Nearly 600 community residents recently signed a petition to save the environmental education position. Until the school board responds to the community, this firestorm will only grow stronger.

— Susan Bell

◆ THEATER from page 1

percent of the ticket cost going back to the studios," he explained.

Peterson and Sheehan have already ordered a new popcorn machine that will be self-venting. Currently, bagged popcorn is used because regular popcorn machines could damage the wall murals. "We are also adding a digital 3D projector within the next year," said Peterson. "This is a great time to take over the theater with all the wonderful summer movies coming out."

As part of the rental agreement, Peterson

and Sheehan will turn the theater over to the LFEF for 21 days during the year for a variety of events. "We're very excited about this," says LFEF board member Randy Holleschau. "We're looking at several film festivals, a speaker series, Orinda Idol, and other cultural events."

The Orinda City Council introduced Ordinance No. 09-01, which deals with zoning designations and changes to the development agreement for Theatre Square, at its May 5 meeting. A second reading of the ordinance and vote on acceptance took place on May 19. Zoning changes included

allowing portions of the ground floor of Theatre Square to change from Type I (retail and restaurant) to Type II (service businesses).

The ordinance also includes new landscaping, better signage for businesses in Theatre Square, and a marketing plan reviewed by the owners and city staff annually. In addition, the ordinance allows the theater operator to hold matinees on weekdays, which is currently prohibited by the development agreement, and eliminates the restriction of a maximum of 25 seats in Theatre Square restaurants.

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◆ MOFD from page 5

received. Cohn argues that the amount of money paid by Orinda and Moraga should reflect the division of the fire department's services between the two cities. Orinda has 11 firefighters, and Moraga has eight. Cohn, therefore, believes that Orinda should pay for 58 percent of the total cost of the fire department, and Moraga should pay 42 percent. Since Moraga currently pays \$6 million annually, Orinda should pay \$8 million. However, Orinda currently pays \$11 million. "Orinda's terrible roads and water pipes could use that \$3 million," Cohn said. He believes that this money could be accounted for by operating the MOFD with less. "This area has very few actual fires," Cohn explained. "Medical services account for most emergencies, and we don't need this many firefighters for that." Rather, Cohn believes that the Moraga-Orinda area could be properly serviced by a department comprised mostly of paramedics and EMTs.

In response to these concerns, a Tri-Agency subcommittee was formed, and a simultaneous, separate investigation was

conducted by the Contra Costa LAFCO (Local Agency Formation Commission).

The Tri-Agency was comprised of two representatives each from Orinda, Moraga, and the MOFD, which met to discuss the issue. Fire Chief Pete Nowicki explained the MOFD's operations and funding, and demonstrated why he believes no inequity exists. The Tri-Agency concluded that the MOFD answered all their pertinent questions, and that their task was, therefore, complete.

At a subsequent city council meeting, three actions regarding the issue were undertaken. Firstly, the Tri-Agency's report was accepted. Secondly, a letter was authorized to be sent to LAFCO opposing an annexation of the MOFD by Con Fire. Finally, the city council, after hearing from numerous residents during the public forum, voted to propose contacting an outside consultant to the City of Moraga and the MOFD to further examine the issue. The city council is currently waiting on Moraga and the MOFD to vote on their interest in an outside consultant, at which time the city council will determine how to proceed at their next meeting in June.

◆ BRACELET from page 5

email," recalls Kim. "I was in Los Angeles visiting my parents, and I just went into shock." Kim had lost the bracelet during the winter of 2001 when she was coaching a crew team from Cal. "I had worn that bracelet all four years that I rowed with no problem but when I was coaching, I tugged at a glove I was trying to get off and off came the bracelet right into 10 feet of water. I couldn't find it and just knew I'd never see it again. I even waited a year to get up the courage to tell my parents I

had lost it," she explains. Kim, who now lives in El Cerrito with her husband and her two young sons, didn't bother emailing Mannshardt back. She picked up the phone and called MOFD.

Mannshardt, who retired from MOFD in April, returned to Station 41, where Johansen is now stationed, on May 5 to give the bracelet to Kim. She happily showed the treasure to her sons, 1-year-old Blake and 3-1/2-year-old Carter. While they seemed to think the shining gold was cool, they were much more interested in the bright red fire engines.

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## POLICE BLOTTER / ORINDA MOTORS



## POLICE BLOTTER

April 2009

**False Residential Alarms:** Officers responded to 122 false alarm calls throughout the city.

**Auto Burglary** (theft from a locked vehicle): 2 incidents reported at La Vuelta and El Nido Ranch Road at St. Stephens Dr.

**Petty Theft From Vehicle** (theft of less than \$400 value from an unlocked vehicle): 4 incidents reported on Las Palomas, Camino Sobrante, Snowberry Lane, and Berkeley Ave.

**All Other Petty Thefts:** 4 incidents reported at Theatre Square and at Orinda Way, Charles Hill Road, and Camino Sobrante.

**Grand Theft – From Vehicle (theft of more than \$400 value from an unlocked vehicle):** 2 incidents reported on La Cuesta and Loma Vista Dr.

**Grand Theft Other:** 1 incident reported in the area of Crane Ct.

**Stolen Vehicle:** 2 incidents reported at Overhill Rd. and Orinda Way.

**Armed Robbery:** 1 incident reported on Camino Encinas.

**Residential Burglary:** 11 incidents reported on Whitehall Dr., Moraga Way, El Toyonal, Overhill Rd., Miner Rd., Diablo View Dr., Loma Vista Dr., Heather Ln., Warford Terrace and Lombardy Ln. (All locations under construction.)

**Commercial Burglary:** 1 incident reported on Camino Sobrante.

**Vandalism:** 4 incidents reported on Camino Pablo (2) and Moraga Way (2).

**Domestic Violence:** 1 incident was reported on Sundown Terrace.

**Arrests**

**Alcohol – Drunk in Public:** 6 individuals were arrested on Camino Sobrante, Moraga Way, Bryant Way, and Orinda Way.

**Commercial Burglary:** 1 arrest was made on Camino Sobrante.

**Possession of Dangerous Drugs:** 1 arrest was made on Moraga Way.

**Probation Violation:** 2 individuals were arrested on Moraga Way.

**Recovered Stolen Vehicle:** 1 vehicle recovered on Orinda Way.

**Driving Under Influence – Misc.:** 2 arrests were made on Moraga Way at Valley View Drive and Camino Pablo at Miner Rd.

**Other Felony:** 1 felony arrest was made on Camino Sobrante.

**Warrant Arrests:** 8 individuals were arrested on Brookwood Rd., Village Square, Camino Pablo at 24 EB, La Espiral, Barbara Rd., Hidden Valley at Stephens Dr., Martha Rd., and Moraga Way.

**Vandalis:** 1 individual was arrested on Camino Pablo.

– Compiled by Jeanette Irving,  
Orinda Police Department

## Sustaining Service to Customers and the Community

By MARK ROBERTS  
Contributing Writer

Sustaining a business during the current recession is no small task. Orinda Motors has weathered the economic storm by maintaining its commitment to providing quality service to its customers and by supporting numerous events and organizations in its hometown community. “It makes good business sense to be visible to our customers outside of the office,” says service manager John Vanek. While owners Allen and Terry Pennebaker continue to be familiar faces in the office and around town, Vanek has taken the lead in building the firm’s commitment to service.

“For the past year, we’ve looked for new ways to provide even better service and value to our customers,” says Vanek. “One way to do that is to support the events and organizations here in Orinda that are important.”

Earlier this spring, as they have for several years, Orinda Motors sponsored the Opening Day event for the Orinda Baseball Association. Vanek says the parents of the players express their appreciation during the event – and when they bring their vehicles in for service.

Since cars are their business, and one of Vanek’s passions, he’s especially proud of their sponsorship of the annual Orinda Classic Car Show. The 2008 event raised more than \$15,000 to support the Orinda Association’s Seniors Around Town program, which matches volunteer drivers with Orinda seniors who need help shopping and getting to medical appointments. This year’s event is set for Sept. 19.

Vanek also enjoys participating in Orinda’s Fourth of July celebration each year.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO  
Kyle Vanek ran the Hot Wheels race at last year’s 4th of July celebration.

He drives a classic convertible in the parade with his family and appreciates the greetings of customers and friends along the route. Last year, he, his son Kyle who just finished his junior year at Cal, and daughter Sarah, “had a blast” running the Hot Wheels car races for future drivers in the park after the parade. Orinda Motors will again be a lead sponsor of this year’s event.

The firm was a sponsor of Orinda Idol for the past two years and contributes each year to Glorietta, Sleepy Hollow, and Wagner Ranch Schools. They have also provided banner sponsorship to the Miramonte High School baseball and football programs and supported the school’s basketball program.

Other youth groups served by Orinda Motors include local Boy Scout and Girl Scout troops and Cub Scout packs which enjoy tours of the facility and car talks. On any given sunny weekend, you’ll find one youth group or another holding a fundraising car wash in the parking lot in front of the facility.

Vanek and the Pennebakers are visible  
[SEE ORINDA MOTORS page 18]

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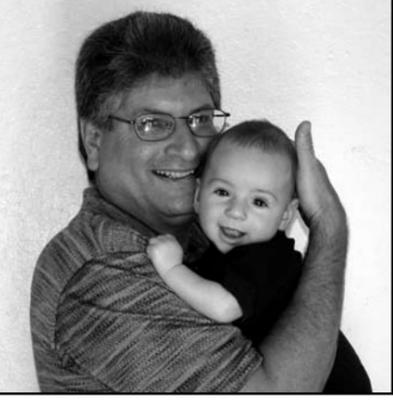


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◆ BREMNER from page 1

is the first time I've received an award, and it's a bit humbling."

Named for the spirit of excellence exemplified by Thomas Jefferson, the Jefferson Award is a prestigious national recognition system encouraging and honoring individuals for their achievements and contributions in community and public service. The award seeks to serve as a "call to action for volunteers" in local communities.

Bremner's well-deserved honor is the result of his 20 years of dedication to an underserved population. Inspired by his volunteer work with Special Olympics years ago, Bremner founded RES SUCCESS in 1994 (Redefining Educational Services), a non-profit organization offering day services to individuals with moderate to severe behavioral challenges who are traditionally referred to state-run hospitals. The organization runs on Bremner's belief that everyone deserves to lead a fulfilling life and achieve his or her own personal potential.

Bremner oversees three RES SUCCESS centers (two in Martinez and one in Pleasant Hill) where students are fully supported through specially designed behavioral modification and community inclusion programs, which include education, training and a daytime community structure for adults with a range of developmental disabilities, from mild to profound. A fourth location is opening this month in Pittsburg and will feature solar panels, recycled furniture, refurbished computers

previously destined for landfill, and flash water heating.

Inspired by the "green" theme, Bremner will offer a curriculum of green facts and technologies, which he believes to be a growth area in which his clients might be trained. "Just imagine that these individuals with developmental disabilities, who are so often devalued and discarded in our society, might become the new experts and leaders on green procedures for our community - teaching us how we can be greener in our offices, our home and our outdoor spaces," says Bremner.

"The secret to Ian's success is his approach to his clients," says Gina Jennings, executive director of the Developmental Disabilities Council of Contra Costa County. "He has a philosophy of great compassion and respect, which in turn nurtures their positive behavior and ability to learn, share and contribute - ultimately bringing a sense of dignity and meaning to their lives."

As a Jefferson Award recipient, Bremner was recently featured on CBS 5 News and, as a result, has been inundated with congratulatory emails. He has been enjoying his moment of fame. "It has been great hearing from friends, family and even strangers," says Bremner, who, in true self-effacing form, adds, "But better yet, we've even received some new donations for RES SUCCESS."

For more information on Res Success, visit [www.ressuccess.org](http://www.ressuccess.org). For more information on the Jefferson Awards, visit [www.jeffersonawards.org](http://www.jeffersonawards.org).

◆ PLANNING from page 1

across the street where Peet's is located, as there are residences behind the stores on that side of the block.

A key proposal by the task force, which would affect all residences in Orinda, is a change in residential structure size limitations. "Currently there is an absolute limit on the size of homes based on the size of the parcel," says Urzu. The task force proposes changing that absolute limit on the size of new homes or additions so that homeowners could go above that limit if their plans meet design review standards. That review would take into account factors such as compatibility with the neighborhood, privacy, views and architecture. "The new home or addition would have to be compatible with the scale and mass of other homes in the neighborhood," says Urzu.

Another key change proposed by the task force is in the design review process itself. "The change would allow projects to be reviewed at the staff level rather than having to go to the Planning Commission for review - if the neighbors consent," says Ursu.

If this change were implemented, it could cut the review process by as much as a month; application fees would be lower,

and the applicant would save money on architectural plans. The homeowner would be responsible for obtaining consent forms from immediate neighbors for the staff-only review; in addition, the city would send out notices to every home within a 300-foot radius of the homeowner and neighbors would have 10 days to respond or request that a full Planning Commission review be held.

The final major change proposed by the task force is the re-zoning of parts of downtown to allow for more service industries in areas that are currently zoned only for retail or restaurant. "The idea is to get more foot traffic, which service industries tend to bring in," says Urzu.

This concept also applies to Orinda Theatre Square where business is noticeably lacking. "It makes sense to have service businesses back there, such as Salon Entourage," says Urzu. The general idea, says Urzu, is to rework the zoning codes so that retail and restaurant will still front the street, but service industries will be allowed to open at a proposed 30 feet back from the street.

To read the task force's draft report or find out about upcoming public meetings on the topic, visit the city's website at [www.cityoforinda.org](http://www.cityoforinda.org).



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LOCAL COUPLE / KIWANIS

# Orinda Couple Achieves Success with Style

By MOYA STONE  
Staff Writer

Standing in the checkout line at Safeway, you notice the woman in front of you has great hair: subtle color and a sharp looking cut that suits her. Go ahead ... ask her where she gets her hair done. Chances are she will happily tell you. Because every fashionable Bay Area woman knows the best place for fabulous looking hair is Gina Khan Salon.

Owned by Orinda residents, Vijai and Gina Khan, Gina Khan Salon opened in 1999 at the former Yosh Salon on Maiden Lane in San Francisco. In 2007, the couple opened a second salon on South Main Street in Walnut Creek. "I've been in the business for 35 years," says Gina, dressed in a simple black dress, accessorized with a colorful shawl and an armful of gold bangles. "I started at the bottom, sweeping hair, and worked my way up."

In 1974, Gina went to work for Yosh, learning their particular styling technique as well as the business of running a salon. She soon became a master cutter and in 1986, she became a colorist. Eventually, Gina worked as the manager until she and her husband Vijai bought the business.



SALLY HOGARTY  
**Vijai and Gina Khan** at their Walnut Creek salon.

The Khans immediately went to work giving the salon a new look and a new name. "We updated, putting in several hundred thousand dollars worth of improvements," says Gina.

Vijai and Gina both hail from India, but they met here. "The funny thing is the person who set us up told Vijai I was high maintenance," Gina says glancing at her husband, who picks up the story. "So when I took her out, I was surprised to discover that she was a cheap date. She didn't drink, was a vegetarian, and didn't eat much. But she likes her gold."

As the Khans revamped the salon, they also honed their business philosophy, creating what has become a unique salon experience. "We are a departmental salon," says Gina. Which means designers only cut and style hair and colorists only color. Rather than renting chairs, as is the usual practice, they recruit recent beauty school graduates and train them in their own technique. The new employees go through an 18 month training process and then have the opportunity to work their way up within the salon,

meeting certain criteria and continuing their education. "Working for Gina Khan Salon is a career path," says Vijai, a stylish gentleman with longish gray hair. "We promote from within and offer vacation, 401K, and medical benefits."

The Khans believe keeping a staff of well-trained employees creates continuity, which is key to their success. "For us, it's a business," says Vijai. "A lot of salon owners are just leasing agents." Employees get to know the clients, their personal style and lifestyle, what works for them, and what doesn't. "We take time in consultation and consider skin tone, features, and maintenance," says Gina, herself sporting a chic short hairdo. "Suitability is one of our main focuses."

In addition to personal attention, clients get a little pampering with a cappuccino or a juice smoothie, cheese and crackers are offered and wine. The shampoo chair gives a massage, and there are magazines galore, free wireless Internet access, and at each cutting station is a small screen for perusal of an online magazine. Both salons offer styling parties for proms, brides and birthdays. Friends often make appointments together and consider going to Gina Khan Salon an event. "Clients come to us from all around the Bay Area, even out of state," says Gina.

Despite the recession, women are still spending money on their hair. Vijai says business is good and continues to grow. The Walnut Creek location sees four or five new clients every day. The Khans try to offer something for every pocketbook, with styling prices starting at \$56 and a color starting at \$141, price depending on the experience level of the stylist or colorist.

Feeling blessed with their success, the Khans are committed to giving back to the community. They participate in local school fundraisers and help to raise money for the YMCA and mammograms for low income women. They have a special fundraiser the Monday before Thanksgiving every year. All the day's income goes directly to CASA, Court Appointed Special Advocate, and staff donates the day's salary and tips.

Gina continues to work with clients as a colorist in San Francisco and Vijai runs the whole operation out of the Walnut Creek location. Additionally, the couple travels the world giving presentations and attending conferences, and Vijai also has an online lighting business.

The couple works 14 hour days, but they try to weave in a little R&R as well. They both love living in Orinda, having moved here five years ago from Berkeley for the warmer climate. Gina especially enjoys our hot summers. Vijai teases, "She was a lizard in a past life." Vijai plays golf and cooks, recently exploring fusion Indian and Japanese cuisine. Gina is an avid gardener, proud of her 300 tulips she planted this year. After long days and lots of travel, for the Khans coming home to Orinda is like escaping to an oasis. "It's like a vacation spot," says Gina. "I'm happy if I can get one uninterrupted day in the garden."

## Kiwanians Boost Local Education Foundations



STAN HOLCENBERG

"Serving the children of the world" is the motto and mission of Kiwanis International. The local chapter of the 96-year-old service organization takes it to heart. The Kiwanis Club of Moraga Valley, which includes Orinda residents, annually supports three local educational organizations. This year's recipients, shown above with Kiwanis members include (front row L-R): **Darci Chan of The Lafayette Arts & Science Foundation, Shari Simon of the Moraga Education Foundation, Janet Riley of the Educational Foundation of Orinda.** Also in the front row (holding Kiwanis' signs) are president elect **Tim Frieman** (L) and president **Cherie Grant** (R).

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# real experiences



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## ROGER

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MOVE OF THE MONTH / LIBRARY GALLERY

## Move of the Month

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## East Bay Women Artists: Summertime Group Show

By ELANA O'LOSKEY  
Staff Writer

Celebrate summer by enjoying an exhibit from an incredibly talented group of women – the East Bay Women Artists. From Tuesday, June 2, through Monday, June 29, their work will be on view at the Orinda Library Gallery. The Artists Reception is scheduled for Sunday, June 2, from 3 to 5 p.m.

Ten members will be showing including Norma Andersen Fox, Kay Athos, Lorraine Bruce, Virginia Dorn, Sally Kiehn, Nancy Pollock, Paula Powers, Lynda Robinson, Gwen Halpin, and Rita Sklar. East Bay Women Artists has been around 14 years or so, and began as an offshoot of San Francisco Women Artists (SFWA, see [www.sfwomenartists.org](http://www.sfwomenartists.org)), which dates from the 1880's. East Bay women who attended the San Francisco group wanted a venue closer to home to show their artwork, although many show nationally and internationally. Founders of the group include Gwen Halpin, Lynda Robinson, and Shirley Warwick.

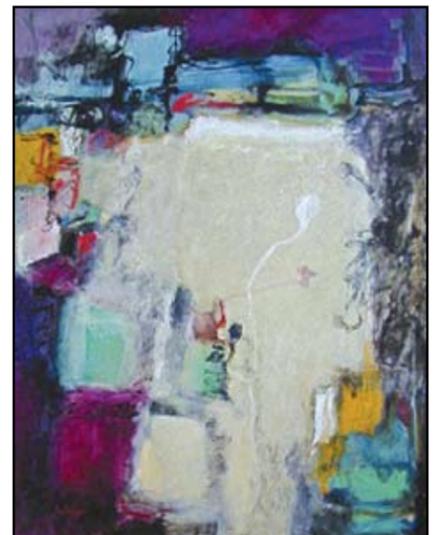
For over 12 years, they exhibited at the Royal Ground in Montclair, where they had guest artists and rotated shows every six to eight weeks. Now they are showing at Cafe Dibartolo, 3310 Grand Avenue (at Mandana Blvd.) in Oakland.

Rita Sklar is an award-winning watercolorist who lives and works in Oakland and is well known for her wildlife paintings of birds and animals featured by the Oakland Zoo and Lindsay Wildlife Museum. Sklar searches for new ways to express the singularity and diversity of our fragile world. She recently won a grant from the

City of Oakland to do a series of paintings celebrating the city's diversity. Her works are in private collections across the country and Europe. See [www.absolutearts.com/portfolios/r/ritasklar/](http://www.absolutearts.com/portfolios/r/ritasklar/) for more of Sklar's work.

Kay Athos' work "... relies on imagination and inspiration. I try to tap into my subconscious and to paint automatically rather than intellectually. A painting is created by the artist and God, and the less the artist has to do with it the better." View Athos' realistic and abstract paintings at [www.geocities.com/athosart/index.htm](http://www.geocities.com/athosart/index.htm).

Lorraine Bruce has a great admiration for human beauty and through the years has focused on the human form as her main source of inspiration. When working from



KAY ATHOS

"Time Out," a colorful abstract piece by Kay Athos.

the model or creating abstracts, she hopes to evoke the emotional, as well as expressing the sensuality of the interpretations. Bruce's work can be seen at <http://lmbBruce.com> or [www.womensart.com/artists/bruce/index.htm](http://www.womensart.com/artists/bruce/index.htm).

Sally Kiehn loves the spontaneity of watercolor, the immediacy and fun of pastel and the old and serious medium of oil painting. A member of the California Watercolor Society and Pastel Society of the West coast, she describes her paintings as "translating feelings and associations, capturing the intangible and fleeting into a loose combination of impressionistic, expressionistic and realistic styles." Kiehn is interested in the simplicity expressed by the relationship of light, shape and color into an harmonious whole. View her work at [www.sallykiehn.com](http://www.sallykiehn.com).

Come and enjoy this diverse exhibit at the Orinda Library Gallery during normal library hours - Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.; Friday and Saturday 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. and Sunday 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. at 26 Orinda Way. Call 925-254-2814 for more information.



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CHRISTY DALTON

Orinda's Very Own Superwoman Flexes Her Muscles

By SALLY HOGARTY  
Editor

For most, taking care of a home and two energetic young boys, being a devoted wife, and running a personal training business (Fit Chicks) would be more than a full life. But young mom Christy Dalton also manages to find the energy and drive to compete in bodybuilding's fastest growing segment – figure competitions.

"I've always been involved with athletics," says Dalton. "I was getting bored with my running routine and decided to try body building for a change of motivation." That "change of motivation" led to Dalton's first competition in June 2008, where she placed second in two events. A subsequent competition in Sacramento led to first and third place designations. Her most recent competition took place May 9 at Chabot College in Hayward where she placed first.

Unlike traditional bodybuilding, figure competitors usually have less muscle size, definition and vascularity than a bodybuilder's physique. In competition, the

emphasis is on how the athlete presents herself on stage. Confidence and poise are very important with judges looking for an athlete who walks with poise and grace and can transition between different poses smoothly and effortlessly. "The hardest part for me is to smile and look pretty while flexing every muscle in my body," laughs Dalton. "You're not wearing very much so you also have to be very comfortable with your body." Competitions include a series of figure poses in the morning and then an evening "figure walk" where contestants can add a little flair.

Dalton works out year round but goes into high gear two months before a competition. Her personal trainer is Kenny Tali at Max Muscle. Her workout schedule two weeks before the May 9 competition included an intensive array of cardio and strength-building exercises plus a very strict diet. Her food for the week of April 20 consisted of four meals of 4 ounces of chicken, 6 ounces of sweet potatoes, and 8 ounces of veggies each. In between these meals, Dalton had a cup of oats with 1 cup of egg whites and three protein shakes. "Kenny revises my diet and workout schedule weekly depending upon what I need at that point. Sometimes it can be hard to finish all the food," Dalton explains.

Christy's husband Pat, who owns Dalton Construction and also works out regularly, is proud of his wife and her dedication while sons 10-year-old Shane and 7-year-old Brice (both students at Wagner Ranch) think it's "really cool" that their mom has all these muscles. "I'll keep doing the competitions as long as it's fun and I feel challenged," says the all-around wife, mother, business owner and committed athlete.

For more information on body building competitions, go to the National Physique Committee website at [www.npcnews-online.com](http://www.npcnews-online.com).



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Christy Dalton (R) with husband Pat and sons (L-R) 10-year-old Shane and 7-year-old Brice.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Christy Dalton at a recent competition in Hayward where she placed first.



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**OAKLAND STROKES**

## Chuck Blue – Living a Long and Productive Life

By DOROTHY BOWEN  
Staff Writer

Longtime Orindan Chuck Blue died from a stroke on March 25, 2009. He was 93 years old and had lived here since 1948 with his wife Mollie and their three sons. Services were held at the Orinda Community Church.

Chuck was Orinda Fire Commissioner for 23 years. When he was stricken, the young firefighters who responded to the call were amazed to learn that they were rescuing the man the Blue Room in the Orinda fire station was named after.

His rich employment history included working for Los Alamos Lab more than 50 years ago, when nobody knew where it was or what the Atomic Energy Commission was doing there. Following the Atomic Energy Commission, Chuck was director of purchasing and contract management for Lawrence Livermore Lab. After retiring from the lab in 1981, he worked for St. Mary's College for 13 years.

Chuck was a member of Rotary and a



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO  
Chuck Blue at Orinda Historical Society dinner.

charter member of the Orinda Historical Society, serving as president for a year. Lucy Hupp Williams, who followed him in office said, "He was a mentor to me and brought great professionalism to the office." He received the OHS award at the holiday dinner in 2007 for his contributions to preserving local history.

## Way to Grow in Orinda "Honey, I Shrunk the Lawn" Water Saving Sod Substitutes Steve & Cathy Lambert



Orinda, like most American towns, has a love affair with lawn. Sod is one of the biggest sponges when it comes to water consumption, and unlike Midwest and East Coast properties where Mother Nature takes care of most of the watering, our gardens need to be irrigated. Because we're now facing water rationing, lots of sod makes little sense.

Everybody loves the look and feel of a gorgeous green lawn until . . . it's time for mowing, watering, fertilizing and weeding, or paying those hefty lawn care bills each month. Grass is a marvelous and eye-pleasing landscape plant, especially for those of us with young children or pets. If your kids have grown up and if you're fed up with drought surcharges on your water bill, it may be time to shrink your lawn.

EBMUD recommends that you have no more than 15 percent of your total property size in sod. Take a good look at your property to decide what lawn areas you really use. Next, think about what type of space you'd like to add. Have you always dreamed of having a vegetable or flower cutting garden or your very own mini vineyard? You may be surprised to know that these replacements would require less water use per square foot than most common sod lawns. Finally, consider areas that can easily and inexpensively be expanded such as an existing plant bed which could be filled in with native or drought tolerant plants

If you still prefer the look of a large, lush green space without the large water bill, replace your lawn with a native "meadow" grass. New meadow blend grasses are being produced by turf grass companies like our favorite sod growers, Delta Bluegrass. They have six native grass blends that can save more than 50 percent of the water a typical lawn grass requires. These grasses are not as soft underfoot as the standard sod lawn and most need to be kept taller, about 5- to 8-inches. They are, however great for covering sloping areas and do much better than standard grass in the shade. If you prefer the manicured lawn look, two of these low-water, meadow blends can handle mowing as much as once a week, down to the standard lawn height of about two inches. Our favorite of the mowable blends is Delta Grassland mixture, a proprietary Blend of Molate Red Fescue,

Junegrass and Slender Hair Grass.

There are also many **low-growing, ground cover** planting schemes that can be used to replace lawn if you're looking to achieve a flat space that can handle some traffic. Check out the collection of low growing plants from a company called Stepables. In our own front yard, we have a large area by our pond planted with a combination of Blue Starcreeper, Creeping Veronica, and Corsican Mint. This combination is a sensory satisfying trio with



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO  
Artificial sod (above) looks like the real thing.

its dense cushion underfoot, eye-catching chartreuse color and the pleasant scent of mint it releases.

If you plan to reduce your sod and water use by adding or expanding existing planting boarders, choose **native plants** of graduating sizes. Your front row plants could include short grasses to medium-sized Manzanita then finish off the back of your boarder with Ribes. This kind of layering will give your yard an increased sense of depth of space.

For a low maintenance, no water sod replacements consider adding **some gravel or stone** to your yard in the form of paths, patios, or sitting areas. Landscaping gravel is sold as decomposed granite, coarse-grade stone chippings, stone aggregates and even shingle-chip. For paths and patios, use gravel that is less than 1/2 inch and mostly angular as it can be compacted and locked together. Round gravels, like pea gravel, give way underfoot, making walking difficult, and they scatter creating a maintenance challenge. There are several recycled products out there like colored ground rubber tires and colored glass that can be

[SEE GROW page 15]

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## SCHOOLS / STUDENTS



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The following scouts from Troop 57 became Eagle Scouts. (Front L-R) Daniel Migdale, Galen Danziger; (Back L-R) Ted Kizor, Joseph Chen, David Lau.

## Five Miramonte Seniors Achieve Rank of Eagle Scout

By ALAN KIZOR  
Contributing Writer

On May 3, Boy Scout Troop 57 recognized Daniel Migdale, Galen Danziger, Joseph Chen, David Lau and Ted Kizor for successfully fulfilling the requirements of Eagle Scout. All seniors at Miramonte High School, the new Eagle Scouts were saluted for their leadership skills, community service, and proficiency in outdoor activities such as backpacking, water sports and wilderness survival as well as for their ethics and good citizenship.

Migdale's Eagle Scout project involved developing a picnic and meeting area at Temple Isaiah. He raised the funds through some of the support groups within the Temple including the Women of Isaiah, and outside suppliers, notably Diamond K

Hardware. Migdale will attend California Maritime Academy in the fall and major in Marine Transportation.

Danziger built a stairway down a steep hillside at Del Rey Elementary School as well as developed a path to a nearby creek. He will attend UC Davis and will likely pursue a major in Physical Sciences.

Chen renovated the amphitheater at Orinda Community Park for his Eagle Scout project. Various work teams managed by Chen replaced 38 rows of aged and splintery benches and seats with all-new facilities. The project took detailed planning, required \$3000 in materials, and relied upon skilled carpentry from beginning to completion. Chen will attend UC San Diego and wants to major in Interna-

[SEE EAGLES page 18]

## Miramonte Choirs Entertain with Annual Pops Concert

By KSENIJA SOSTER OLMER  
Staff Writer

Traditional end of season choral show, also known as the Miramonte Pops concert, will be held Wednesday and Thursday June 3 and 4 at 7:30 p.m. at the Miramonte Theater.

"We hold two concerts, because our theater is simply too small to accommodate all choral enthusiasts in our community," explains Sarah Downs, Miramonte choral teacher. "We always perform crowd pleaser songs that people know, so it is a delightful evening. The students enjoy breaking away from traditional music and have a lot of fun with a cappella pop songs."

About 120 students from all four choirs will be performing, starting with the Mixed

Chorus comprised of freshmen followed by the Women's Ensemble, mostly sophomore and a few junior girls, then Choral Artist, the most advanced chamber choir and, finally, the Concert Singers, the big concert choir of juniors and seniors.

The concert will include such well know Beatles songs as "Hey Jude," "Can't Buy Me Love," "Here Comes the Sun," and John Lennon's "Stand by Me." Repertoire will reach back to the early '60's with Carol King's "One Fine Day" and James Brown's "I Feel Good" and skip to the '80's with the Beach Boys' "Kokomo" and Cyndi Lauper's "Girls Just Want to Have Fun." The '90's will be represented by Boyz II Men's "Thank You" while "Drive" by Incubus will bring the music into the 21st century.

"The songs were voted for by all the kids

in the program," explains Downs. "They are eclectic, and the kids have a chance to incorporate choreography and even live band performance of some of our singers who are also talented instrumentalists. The kids also enjoy shedding the formal black attire for this last concert of the year."

The tradition of the pops concert was started by Downs' predecessor, Chris Olin. "I added the showcasing of our seniors," explains Downs. "This year, I have 25 seniors, and some will audition to perform their favorite piece at the concert."

Senior Ted Kizor comments, "I am very excited about the pops concert. It is a relaxed and informal concert where everyone has a lot of fun. It is a wonderful tool for new audiences to get introduced to our

[SEE CHOIR page 18]



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Miramonte's Symphonic Band and Orchestra pose on the steps of the Los Angeles Philharmonic concert hall during a recent tour of Southern California.



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SCHOOLS / STUDENTS



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## Miramonte High School Cycling Club Takes Off



Miramonte Cycling Team (Back L-R) Kurt Maupin, Anthony Goryl, Adam O'Camb, Ben Sukys, and head coach Alex Smith; (Front L-R) Alexi Robbins, Conor Wilcox, Clara Tsao, and Izzy Zucker. Not pictured: Robert Burt, Colin Downy, Alex Paxton, and Max Wolfe.

By VALERIE HOTZ  
 Staff Writer

As an organized competitive team sport, mountain biking is fast growing in popularity. Miramonte High School established a mountain biking club this past year with 12 riders representing the school in Division II races throughout Northern California this spring.

The team is coached by Alexander Smith, himself a professional bike racer, and the academic adviser is Emily Reichardt. "It is an endurance racing team with a social aspect. Racing is not the only focus," explains Coach Smith. "Some parents and students approached me about establishing and coaching a cycling club at Miramonte and I agreed. We found out early on that there is a big demand for sports that do not make cuts in high school," explains Smith.

The team roster this year included 12 students with seven core riders. Club participation requires a major commitment from the student's parents as well, because every race is a two to three hour drive in each direction. Additionally, work outs during the season (which runs from March to mid-May) are four days a week, and this usually includes individual two hour rides and team "practices" on Tuesdays and Sundays. When it is raining, workouts move indoors for spin classes at 24 Hour Fitness in Moraga.

"The Nor Cal High School Biking League is highly committed to safety and fun. There are five races every year, which are well structured and the regulations are

clearly written out. There are four classes of competition, which include freshman, sophomore, junior varsity and varsity. Each race course is about seven to eight miles in length," says Joel O'Camb, one of the parent organizers of the Miramonte Cycling Club. O'Camb biked in high school and college and his son, Adam, is a member of the Miramonte Cycling Club. "We encourage students to come out and join, including 8th graders who are moving up to Miramonte in the fall," he adds.

Mountain biking is both an individual and team sport. Girls compete against other girls and boys compete against boys. "Miramonte has done very well, with very impressive results the first year of competition. Everyone is placing in at least the middle range or better, with sophomore Ben Sukis routinely a top performer," says Coach Smith. It is no secret Smith wants to see the club grow. "Izzy Zucker and Clara Tsao are our only two girl racers, and they have graduated. We really want to see more students, especially girls, join up in the fall," adds Smith.

Sophomore Adam O'Camb enjoys meeting new people through the club. "I like mountain biking. At first, I did not realize we would be racing, and now I really like racing. It is a lot of fun. I push myself to go as hard as I can to try to win," he says.

Pleasant Hill Cyclery sponsors the club by providing discounts and helping team members get started. For more information, please visit the website at [www.miramontecyclingclub.org](http://www.miramontecyclingclub.org).

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SCHOOLS / STUDENTS

# Graduating Senior Uses Art to Power Social Change

By SALLY HOGARTY  
Editor

Overcoming obstacles is nothing new to Orinda Academy's Zeke Nierenberg. The graduating senior has dealt with a variety of visual processing and sequencing disorders most of his life. You would never know it looking at this confident and ambitious 18-year-old. "I credit the Orinda Academy with providing me with the tools to be able to focus and become a successful student," says Nierenberg.

But, Nierenberg has done much more than succeed academically. He, along with a group of friends, created Future Builders, a youth organization that uses art to power social change. The group holds concerts and other fundraisers to benefit environmental and humanitarian organizations. The group was founded following a summer at Wavy Gravy's Camp Winnarainbow where they were challenged to find ways to make a difference. The group's website, [www.future-builders.org](http://www.future-builders.org), says, "We don't expect to be able to change the whole planet, but we know for sure that we can change ourselves and our friends. By bringing the Bay Area's young community together through local music while raising awareness and funds for important issues, we hope to spark small shifts in consciousness that will make a huge difference later." Future Builders recently released its second CD entitled "One Note at a Time." Produced by Nierenberg and Dylan Kimsey-Hutchinson, it sported art by fellow members Shannon Miller and Olivia Laurel. Proceeds from the CD go to the Ella Baker Center, a Bay Area



SALLY HOGARTY

Zeke Nierenberg won a \$10,000 award from the National Center for Learning Disabilities.

organization dedicated to bringing justice, opportunity and peace to urban areas. The group's first CD benefited Sustainable Harvest International. In addition to the fundraisers, group members are helping to create a butterfly garden in Tilden Park.

In addition to his work with Future Builders, Nierenberg recently received the Anne Ford Scholarship, a \$10,000 award from the National Center for Learning Disabilities. He is one of two winners chosen from 450 students nationwide. "Zeke is an outstanding student, and this award recognizes his ambition and successes," says Ron Graydon, founder of Orinda Academy. "My learning challenges taught me that I have to work hard," says Nierenberg, "but Orinda Academy helped teach me that by putting energy into my school work a lot of new opportunities emerge." The enterprising young student will attend Hampshire College in Amherst, Massachusetts in the fall.

◆ GROW from page 12

used in place of gravel. Large pieces of flagstone or other flat stones filled in with gravel or a low growing ground cover also make a great combination for pathways and small patio areas.

If someone told us a few years ago that we would ever recommend the use of artificial sod, we would have said "not a chance." However, what we're installing these days is not the AstroTurf you may remember from the 70's. The newer artificial sods come in two types; filled and non-filled. The filled turf requires an infill of ground rubber or sand. The non-filled is a single layer of turf with bi-level blades which gives this option an even more realistic look. These brands appear so real you have to touch them before you know there not. Still some of the newer artificial sods we've seen are shiny and very fake looking so check out all the brands before you decide. Artificial sod can be great for optimizing your water savings and is especially good for yards with lots of dogs, for areas close to pools or any other spot in your yard where you've had difficulty getting sod to grow.

If you have any questions about this article or suggestions for a future "Way to Grow" article, email [office@gardenlight-landscape.com](mailto:office@gardenlight-landscape.com).

## Wagner Ranch Presents Disney's Aladdin



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Magic comes to Wagner Ranch Elementary school with the performance of *Aladdin*. The Disney musical performs June 5 at 4 and 7 p.m. and June 6 at 3 and 7 p.m. in the Wagner Ranch multi-purpose room. The show is directed by Ron Pickett and produced by Jennifer Vigo and Gloria Kubitschek. Ticket information can be found at [www.orindaschools.org/wagnerranch](http://www.orindaschools.org/wagnerranch).

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John Muir Laws Finds Connection in Nature

By BOBBIE DODSON  
Staff Writer

Naturalist, educator and artist, John (Jack) Muir Laws is the speaker for First Friday Forum on June 5 at 1:30 p.m. in the sanctuary of Lafayette-Orinda Presbyterian Church, 49 Knox Drive, Lafayette. His topic, "Finding Connection in Nature," will be a visual treat along with the lecture as he shares some of the 2,710 watercolors he created during six years when he backpacked the Sierra Nevada to research and illustrate his newly published book, *The Laws Guide to the Sierra Nevada*. The pocket-sized guide covers over 1,700 species found in the area, ranging from mammals and fish to insects and reptiles.

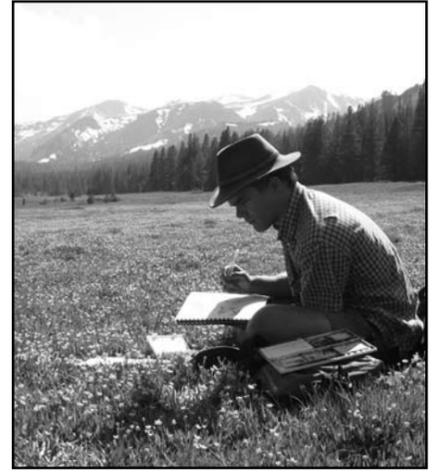
Trained as a wildlife biologist and currently an associate of the California Academy of Sciences, Laws says his parents

instilled in him a love of nature. However, he wasn't named after the famed naturalist, as one might suspect. The name John came from a grandfather and Muir was after a great grandmother. And it was a grandmother who presented him with a set of watercolors when he was a youngster. He says, "I've been at it ever since."

Laws suggests his talk, and his book, will help readers enjoy the out-of doors more because "the more you understand about what is out there, the richer the experience becomes. I'll present ways to increase observation skills which enables one to get more from a walk in nature." The guide helps readers understand the biodiversity of the region, allows botanists to identify the insects that come to their flowers, birders to identify the trees in which birds perch, or hikers to recognize the starry constellations.

When asked how he feels about the green movement and its effect on preserving natural habitats he explains, "First one needs to love and appreciate nature; then comes the true desire to preserve it. Start with the love of it, not 'Hey, let's save the redwoods.'"

Laws has worked as an environmental educator for over 25 years in California,



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO  
John Muir Laws will discuss how to connect with nature at the next First Friday Forum.

Wyoming and Alaska. He teaches classes on natural history, conservation biology, scientific illustration, and field sketching. He currently coordinates the Sierra Nevada Classroom Project, using the field guide as the basis for writing biodiversity curricula that link to California's science, math, language and social studies standards.

Refreshments will be served at 1 p.m. in Fellowship Hall with the lecture following at 1:30 p.m. in the sanctuary. For further information, call 925-283-8722 or go online to [www.lopc.org](http://www.lopc.org).

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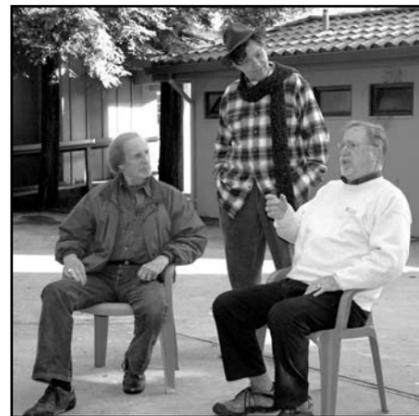
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Starlight Season Opens with *Spider's Web*



SALLY HOGARTY  
(L-R) Al Guaraglia, Geotty Chapple and Barry Hunau rehearse a scene from Starlight's season opener *Spider's Web*.

By DOROTHY BOWEN  
Staff Writer

As usual, the Orinda Starlight Village Players will open their summer season with an Agatha Christie murder mystery. But the play they have chosen features neither Hercule Poirot nor Miss Marple. What is the world coming to?

Perhaps the reason is that Christie wrote *Spider's Web* in 1954 for Margaret Lockwood, and the beautiful British actress was not suitable to cast as either the Belgian detective or the elderly village spinster.

Directed by Geotty Chapple, the plot centers on the wife of a diplomat who daydreams about finding a dead body in the library and comes downstairs to find her dream comes true. The body must be disposed of, so she enlists the aid of her house guests to deceive her husband and

the police. In the words of Sir Walter Scott, "Oh, what a tangled web we weave when first we practice to deceive."

*Spider's Web* has a long history with Orinda Starlight Village Players. They have done it twice in the past 28 years. Chapple played Jeremy, one of the house guests, and the Inspector once. This is the first time he has directed the piece. Chapple also played Jeremy at the Pittsburg Playhouse production a couple of years ago.

Shows at ORSVP are often family affairs. When Chapple appeared in the production of *Spider's Web* 10 years ago, his real life daughter Claire played the part of Pippa, a young girl at the center of a custody battle. In this production, Pippa will be played by Natalie Chapin, whose real life mom and dad, Laura Martin-Chapin and John Chapin, will play her parents in the show, Clarissa and Henry. Clarissa is the role Christie wrote for Margaret Lockwood. Shawn Bonnington will play the Inspector. "It's Clarissa and the Inspector's show," says Chapple. Others in the cast include Starlight regulars Malcolm Cowler, Al Guaraglia, Marian Simpson, Jim Fritz and Barry Hunau as well as newcomer Tom Westlake.

The mystery opens June 5 and runs through June 27, Friday and Saturday evenings at 8:30 p.m. at the Outdoor Amphitheater, Orinda Community Center Park, 26 Orinda Way. Additional performances will be Sunday, June 14, 4 p.m. and Thursday, June 25, 8 p.m. Tickets are \$15 and \$7.50 students/seniors at the box office or by calling 253-1191. You can also visit the new website at [www.orsvp.org](http://www.orsvp.org).

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## CALENDAR

## ON THE CALENDAR

## JUNE

- 2 **East Bay Women's Artists** reception, 3 to 5 p.m., Orinda Library Gallery, 254-2814.  
**Cal Shakes** *Romeo and Juliet* continues through June 21, Bruns Memorial Amphitheater, various times, 510-548-9666 or www.calshakes.org.
- 3 **Miramonte High School** Choral Department Spring Pops Concert, 7:30 p.m., Miramonte Theater, 750 Moraga Way, Orinda. Free admission. Also, June 4.
- 5 **First Friday Forum**, John Muir Laws discusses connecting with nature, 1:30 p.m., Lafayette-Orinda Presbyterian Church in Lafayette, 925-283-8722.  
**Orinda Books**, Thomas Graboys, M.D., will discuss his memoir, *A Life in the Balance: A Physicians Memoir of Life, Love, and Loss with Parkinson's Disease and Dementia*, 4 p.m., 276 Village Square, 254-7606.  
**Wagner Ranch Elementary School**, 4th and 5th grade production of Disney's *Aladdin*, 4 and 7 p.m., also 6/6 at 3 and 7 p.m., 258-0016.  
**Orinda Starlight Village Players** presents Agatha Christie's *Spider's Web*, 8:30 p.m. Orinda Community Center outdoor amphitheater. Plays Friday and Saturday nights through 6/25. Also, Sun., 6/14 at 4 p.m. and Thurs., 6/25 at 8 p.m. Contact info@orsvp.org, 253-1191 or see the website at orsvp.org.
- 10 **Three-Quarter Century Club** lunch, 11:30 a.m., Orinda Community Church, 324-2017.  
**Orinda Books**, Ayelet Waldman will discuss and sign copies of *Bad Mother: A Chronicle of Maternal Crimes, Minor Calamities, and Occasional Moments of Grace*. 1 p.m., 276 Village Square, 254-7606.  
**The 2nd Wednesday Book Group** will read and discuss *The Early Stories: 1953-1975 of John Updike*. The group welcomes new members. 3 p.m., Orinda Books, 254-7606.  
**Orinda Community Center**, Thai Cooking class, 6:30 - 9:30 p.m., 28 Orinda Way, Residents, \$60; non-residents \$66. Call 254-2445 to register.
- 11 **Orinda Public Safety Advisory Board** meeting 7 p.m., Littlehale Room, Orinda City Hall, 22 Orinda Way, 253-4221.
- 13 **Orinda Books**, Jane Ganahl, editor of *Single Woman of a Certain Age: 29 Women Writers on the Unmarried Midlife - Romantic Escapades, Heavy Petting, Empty Nests, Shifting Shapes and Serene Independence*, will discuss and sign copies, 3 p.m., 254-7606.
- 17 **Orinda Community Center** AKC Canine Good Citizen class (2-week session), 3:45 - 4:30 p.m., 28 Orinda Way, residents, \$44; non-residents, \$49. Call 254-2445 to register. Also, June 24
- 20 **Orinda Books**, Max Isaacman will discuss and sign copies of his new book, *Investing With Intelligent ETFs: Strategies for Profiting from the New Breed of Securities*. 3 p.m., 276 Village Square, 254-7606.  
**Alliston McCrady Fine Arts** exhibit by 20 local artists, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., Theatre Square, 788-5866.
- 27 **Orinda Books** Simon Read will discuss and sign copies of *War of Words: A True Tale of Newsprint and Murder*, which details the bloody birth of the *San Francisco Chronicle*. 3 p.m., 276 Village Square.  
**Ace It!**, fund raising tennis tournament for the Carol Ann Read Breast Center, Orindawoods, clinics by pros in a.m., tournament in afternoon, go to www.orindawoodstennis.com.

## AT THE LIBRARY

All events are free unless otherwise specified.

## Children's and Adult Events

- 8 **Summer Reading** for adults, teens, kids and babies. Runs through Aug. 17. Adults - read a book, write a short review, and enter the drawing for a one night stay at the Renaissance ClubSport Hotel in Walnut Creek, dinner for two at Stanford's Restaurant, or a book lover's bag of goodies. Prizes for younger readers as well. go to cclib.org to learn more.
- 14 **Arts Festival** for kids and teens, 3 to 4:30 p.m.
- 16 **Toddler Lapsit**, 10 a.m., Stories, songs and finger-plays for 1- to 3-year-olds and their caregivers. Drop in, but please attend no more than one Lapsit a week. Repeats at 10:30 a.m. in the Gallery Room. Also June 17, 23, 24, 30.  
**Peek-a-boo Story Time**, 11:30 a.m. Bounces, rhymes and songs for pre-walkers and their caregivers. Also June 23, 30.  
**Origami for Fun**, 2:30 p.m., Learn origami with Yuki Siegrist.
- 20 **Saturday Morning Live!** 11 a.m., Family story time for 3- to 5-year-olds. Also June 27.

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

## MEETINGS:

## CITY/FIRE/SCHOOL DISTRICT MEETING SCHEDULE

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

## CLUB MEETINGS

- Diablo Star Chapter #214**, Order of the Eastern Star. Second Monday, 7:30 p.m., Orinda Masonic Center. Contact Karen Seaborn, 925-689-0995.
- Friends of Joaquin Moraga Adobe** meeting. All interested in preservation of the landmark are invited to attend. For date and location, call 254-8260.
- Lamorinda Sunrise Rotary**, Postino's in Lafayette, 7 a.m. every Friday, 254-0440, ext.463.
- Orinda Rotary**, Community Center, every Wednesday at noon, 254-2222.
- Orinda Association**, Orinda Library, May Room, second Monday, 7:15 p.m., 254-0800.
- Orinda Historical Society**, third Wednesday of the month, OHS Museum, 3 to 5 p.m., 254-1353.
- Orinda Job's Daughters**, first and third Monday, 7 p.m., 9 Altarinda Road, 925-283-7176.
- Orinda/Tabor (Czech Republic) Sister City Foundation**, Fourth Thursday of the month, 7 p.m. social, 7:30 p.m. meeting, call 254-8260 for location.
- Orinda Woman's Club**, Second Tuesday, 9:30 a.m. to noon; call Jean Barnhart, 254-3881.

Calendar by Maggie Sharpe

Send calendar items to m.sharpe66@gmail.com.

## Romeo and Juliet Opens Cal Shakes Season

BY DOROTHY BOWEN  
Staff Writer

Some Shakespeare fans may be disappointed that the Cal Shakes summer season includes only two plays by the Bard. But they will be more than compensated by the selection of *Romeo and Juliet* to open the season and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* to close. These two much loved plays are usually chosen for special occasions. R and J was in the 10th anniversary season line up and MSND opened the first season at the Bruns Amphitheater. Both



KEVIN BERNE

Alex Morf and Sarah Nealis as the "star-crossed lovers" in California Shakespeare Theater's production of *Romeo and Juliet*, directed by Jonathan Moscone.

plays have been performed five times since the 1970s when the company was known as Berkeley Shakespeare Theater.

*Romeo and Juliet*, which runs May 21 - June 21, will be directed by Cal Shakes Artistic Director Jonathan Moscone. The story has been set in many times and places over the years. "The world of the play,"

says Moscone, "was initially inspired by a kind of fascist architecture in Italy, imposing, monolithic and anything but cheery. But against these gray walls is a burst of graffiti-inspired color to underscore the young lovers' intense, electric energy," he explains.

"Jonathan Moscone plans a swift paced production," says Resident Dramaturg, Philippa Kelly. "He wants to get at the passion and violence at the heart of the play. The implicit violence of the Italian male is the reason Shakespeare set the play in Italy. He was dramatically attracted by that."

The tragedy of the young lovers is one that has not always been easy for audiences to accept. In the middle of the 18th century, actor/manager David Garrick, rewrote the play to give it a happy ending with the lovers reunited in the tomb. That version lasted until the middle of the 19th century.

"But, the demise of the young lovers, *Romeo and Juliet*, is a metaphor for Shakespeare of the first perfect passion that can't last," says Kelly. Audiences still ask, "What if... What if Italian fathers weren't so tyrannical? What if the postal service between Verona and Mantua were more reliable?" Kelly suggests that then *Romeo and Juliet* might have grown old together and turned into Lord and Lady Montague.

"All the kids in the play make choices that have huge consequences - banishment or death," says Kelly, "making it an intense experience for parents as well as young people."

It does have a happy ending of sorts in that the warring families pledge to stop feuding and build a golden monument to their lost children.

The program notes will include additional insights with discussions of Elizabethan ideas about marriage and the role of mothers. And as usual, Grove Talks, 45 minutes before the performances, will be given to

[SEE SHAKESPEARE page 18]

## Kids on Camera Summer Camp

Lights, camera, action and fun in this summer acting/audition training program that improves confidence, communication and social skills while expanding creativity. Ages 4-7 will learn physical comedy and improv while those 7-12 will learn the art of story telling and enhance their ability to communicate ideas, images and feelings. Camp is through the Orinda Community Center. Call 925-254-2445.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Kids on Camera's Olivia Hytha.

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## BUSINESS BUZZ

## ◆ BUZZ from page 20

aMFa Gallery, McCrady also offers painting instruction. Summer classes will be held from 2-5 p.m. on Thursday afternoons at the Theatre Square gallery.

Beginning June 18 and continuing through the first week of August, aMFa Gallery will host a wine and cheese Open House reception from 5-7 p.m. on Thursday evenings. McCrady encourages the public to drop by. Another event this summer in Theatre Square is "Walk in the Art." Mark your calendar now for Saturday, June 20, and drop by between 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. when aMFa Gallery hosts an art show in Theatre Square featuring the work of 25 local artists. The artists will be there to discuss their work. "There are exceptional values here. There will be photography, as well as a variety of paintings represented, from still life to abstract," says McCrady.

As an art consultant, McCrady enjoys helping people jump start how they want their home to look artistically. "I can bring a collection of paintings that include formal and casual, playful or serious and clients can determine what suits them best. I insist people take art home for a minimum of three days before they buy it, in order to be certain that they really love it," says McCrady.

McCrady has spent the past two summers traveling and completing commissions. In 2007, she was commissioned by a client to paint a specific section of the New Zealand coast and, last year, she traveled to Italy. "Clients commission me to paint a special place for them. It may be the 18th hole at Orinda Country Club or a tree in their neighborhood," she says.

Allison McCrady lives in Orinda and her three children attend local schools. Campbell Condon is a seventh grader at



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Allison McCrady displays one of the larger works of art on display at her gallery in Theatre Square.

Orinda Intermediate School; Brad Condon is a sophomore at Miramonte High School where Sean Condon is a senior this fall. McCrady enjoys giving back to Orinda by donating paintings to the Miramonte High School Booster's Club, Educational Foundation of Orinda, and the Crisis Nursery. aMFa Gallery is a member of the Orinda Chamber of Commerce. Drop by aMFa Gallery in Theatre Square from noon to 3 p.m. and visit with Allison. For more information, call 925-788-5866 or visit the website at [www.allisonmccrady.com](http://www.allisonmccrady.com).



VALERIE HOTZ

Charles Mounzer of La Piazza.

### La Piazza Celebrates 14 Years at the Crossroads

La Piazza, which translates to "The Square," takes its name from Theatre Square located just across the street. Charles Mounzer opened this popular Italian restaurant with his cousin, Mike Deeb in 1995, and it immediately became an Orinda favorite. If you are one of the regulars, you know Mounzer as Charlie, and he is always there to greet you with an endearing smile.

Serving ethnic Italian food seven nights a week, La Piazza's warm and inviting atmosphere is a real treat. The wood burning oven bakes a variety of pizzas to perfection – smoked salmon with red onions and green peppercorn, fennel seed Italian sausage and wild mushrooms, and spicy salsa verde, tequila chicken with avocado and cilantro are some of the more exotic selections. But that is not all. The linguine alla vongole and petrale sole are very fine. You can't go wrong with any one of the fish specials and a perennial favorite is cream of artichoke soup.

Mounzer was a structural civil engineer by profession (with 15 years in the business) until he teamed up with his cousin Deeb to open La Piazza. Deeb has a background in restaurant ownership, having established Nob Hill Café and Venticello in San Francisco, and he brought along all his delicious recipes to La Piazza. "At the time, Orinda did not have many casual, family style restaurants, and we felt it was right for Orinda. The reception has been positive from the beginning and in very short time it became a hangout for people," says Mounzer.

Originally from Lebanon, Mounzer was studying engineering at the French University in Beirut when war broke out. He finished his academic studies at the Universit  de Lyon in France. His first language is Arabic, and he is quick to point out that written Arabic is the same language in every Arabic speaking country, but there are so many different spoken dialects that it can be impossible to understand spoken Arabic in some countries. Mounzer grew up speaking French as a second language, and he learned English when he came to the United States in 1988.

Mounzer enjoys traveling back to Lebanon whenever he can and stopping off in Italy on the way to get new recipes. One

of his current favorite dishes is prosciutto crudo. Naturally, dining out is one of his hobbies, as well as live theater and traveling.

"Our customers have always been so supportive. I am grateful to the Orinda people for consistently supporting local businesses. I have been very fortunate to have a loyal and friendly staff that treats La Piazza as if it were their own business. They are a big part of our success," says Mounzer. Pedro has served as the head chef for 10 years. Server Javier has made the operation run like clock work for the past 14 years. Rachel has been a key figure for 10 years, with waitresses Shelly, Ana Maria, Tiffany and Jessie all present for the past seven years.

In a step toward supporting a greener environment, La Piazza recently did away with to-go foam containers and now uses only biodegradable containers. Charles Mounzer enjoys giving back to the community by supporting local public schools. For more information, call 253-9191.

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**Coiffure Hut Features Priscilla Bye and Fay Enferadi**

Hair stylists extraordinaire Priscilla Bye and Fay Enferadi, formerly with Great Clips in Orinda, have moved to Coiffure Hut, located at 23 Orinda Way, adjacent to the Dr. Gerald Dzendzel's Orinda Veterinary Clinic.

Stepping inside Coiffure Hut will trans-

port you through time. It is reminiscent of the beauty salon my grandmother patronized every Saturday morning at 10 a.m. to "get her hair done." The 1950's décor features naughahyde vinyl covered chairs, complete with ashtrays and drink holders attached to the armrests, footrests and circular hair dryer attachments that youngsters of today imagine are related to some obscure *Star Wars* character. Original owner Bob Mahan is still cutting hair and has been serving some of his same loyal

clients for 46 years. There is ample Orinda history here at Coiffure Hut as Mahan and his crew continue catering to generations of Orindans.

Priscilla Bye has 40 years of experience. She has both owned and managed salons, and been an instructor at the Paris Beauty College in Concord. Bye cuts hair for men, women and children and is certified in hair replacement and extensions. "I like creative cutting. It is totally the opposite of plain haircuts. When a client comes to me with a request for an out of the ordinary style, I am prepared. I aim to please and guarantee to satisfy," explains Bye, who is originally from New Orleans.

"As a full-service salon, Coiffure Hut has a friendly home touch atmosphere. Every stylist's station has a vase of flowers, which clients bring fresh from their gardens every week. There is ample parking, and we are conveniently located in the Village," says Bye, who is married to John Walter Bye, "the best bartender at Spenger's Restaurant in Berkeley," she adds.

Priscilla Bye welcomes walk-ins and encourages clients to call for an appointment at 254-3373. Her hours are generally Wednesday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. and Saturday, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.

In addition to offering haircuts to men, women and children, Fay Enferadi specializes in coloring, highlights, permanents and waxing as well. Originally from Tehran, Iran, Enferadi came to the Bay Area in 1985. She has 22 years of experience and enjoys every aspect of her work. "I love all my clients. I feel like they are part of my family, and I enjoy the creative aspect of my work, making something new for my clients," she says. Enferadi also enjoys spending time with her daughters, 14 year-old Nadia and 11 year-old Tania.

The relaxed atmosphere at Coiffure Hut is therapeutic. Tea and coffee are offered to clients when they arrive and late Friday afternoons wine is poured and cheese is



SALLY HOGARTY  
 (L-R) Fay Enferadi, Priscilla Bye, Judie Johnson and Bob Mahan of Coiffure Hut.

served. For haircuts and styles, Enferadi accepts walk-ins, but with regards to other services such as coloring, highlights and permanents, she prefers clients call ahead to schedule an appointment, as these services require larger blocks of time. She is available five days a week, Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Call 925-858-8871 for an appointment. Both Priscilla Bye and Fay Enferadi give back to the Orinda community by making donations to local public schools.

Three days a week manicurist and pedicurist Judie Johnson sees clients at Hair News at Coiffure Hut. She is a registered nurse who specializes in pedicures for elderly diabetic individuals. Known for her high level of care, Johnson regularly has podiatrists refer their patients for pedicures. Judie Johnson is available Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. by appointment. Call 254-9299 for more information or to schedule an appointment.

**Allison McCrady Gallery transforms to aMFa Gallery**

A painter since the age of four, Allison McCrady seriously took up painting 10 years ago and began selling her art in 2001. "I started selling my paintings and then began expanding sales. I never consciously set out to be a professional artist and have to say I just let it evolve over time," says McCrady, whose gallery in Theatre Square opened in April, 2008. This past spring she relocated the gallery across from Shelby's Restaurant. "The larger space accommodates more paintings and the natural sunlight is phenomenal," says McCrady.

Originally a showcase for her work, the Allison McCrady Gallery has been renamed the aMFa Gallery, and it features nine other talented Lamorinda artists. The collection is mostly paintings, but sculpture is also represented. In addition to managing

[SEE BUZZ page 19]



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