

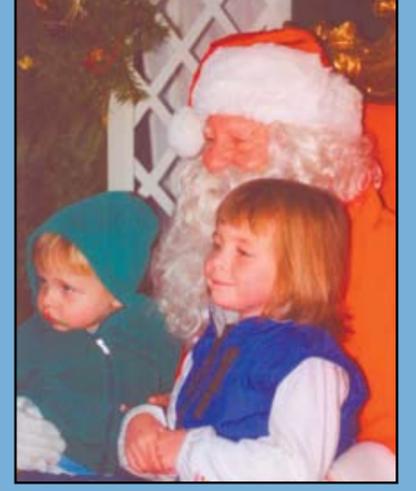
# THE ORINDA NEWS

Gratis  
Volume 24, Number 12

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

12 Issues Annually  
December 2009

## Lots to Choose From This Holiday Season



Whether it's ballet, a classic film, live theater, or a trip to Santa Claus, you'll find it and more close to home this holiday season. For more information on local events, go to page 11.

## Voters Give Acalanes High School District Parcel Tax An A +

By MAGGIE SHARPE  
Staff Writer

The Acalanes High School District parcel tax passed with flying colors on November 3. Nearly 74 percent of voters gave their blessing to Measure G, which extends a tax of \$189 per year on each parcel of taxable real estate within the school district.

The beneficiaries of the tax are Miramonte High School in Orinda, Campolindo in Moraga, Acalanes in Lafayette, and Las Lomas in Walnut Creek.

Walnut Creek's Measure H, which was promoted in tandem with Measure G, also met the two-thirds majority required to pass with 75 percent of the vote. It renews a \$82 parcel tax on Walnut Creek property owners, with funds earmarked for K-8 programs.

Both measures are extensions of existing parcel taxes that are set to expire in 2011. Neither measure has a "sunset clause," which means the money will be collected indefinitely. Both measures offer an exclusion for seniors over 65.

At Miramonte High School, principal Adam Clark says he was relieved but not surprised by the 74 percent approval rating for Measure G. "I wouldn't have been surprised if it had been 90 percent," says Clark, noting the "commitment and good job that all the schools are doing."

However, he says, there is always cause for concern until the votes are counted. "You worry about low voter turnout and the state of the economy," says Clark. "But there is a strong commitment to schools and education in this district. Parents are willing to support the schools and our young people."

Measure G had its fair share of opponents too, including Donald Lively of the Lafayette Taxpayers Association. "It's not a surprising outcome given the tactics employed by the district," said Lively. "Bloomberg Markets listed fiscal management by the

Acalanes district as less than ethical, noting that several 'bond refinancing' transactions resulted in 41 percent of proceeds going to lawyers and money managers."

John Stockton, superintendent of the Acalanes School District, says that Lively's concerns have been addressed by the district and referred to a document entitled "District Position Regarding Bloomberg Article."

It states, in part: "Prior to the publication of the Bloomberg article, the district recommended to the author that he make a Public Records Act request for information regarding the district's re-financings. He declined to submit a request for the facts. By lacking factual support, the article contained so much inaccurate and misleading information that the district has declined to comment on the article, choosing instead to more fully inform district residents of the details of the re-financings."

(Note: The article in question, "California Loses \$1 Billion From Unconstitutional Bond Sales," by David Dietz and Karen Gullo, was published August 26, 2009, Bloomberg.com.)

### Passage "Imperative"

Despite its detractors, Clark says that it was "imperative" that Measure G passed. Its failure would have cost more teacher jobs. "It comes down to salaries, because that's the highest percentage of the district's payout," says Clark.

At Miramonte, the downfall of Measure G would have translated into six teacher layoffs in the 2010-11 school year and six more in 2011-2012. "California is already woefully under-funded in terms of dollars per student," says Clark.

He says California earmarks about \$5,000 per student, compared to \$15,000 to \$20,000 in New York State. "Take that low number coupled with cutbacks, and it becomes more challenging to continue the level of services that we provide," says Clark.

Those services have put Miramonte High School in the top 20 performing high schools in California, according to the CST (California Standardized Testings) rankings at schooldigger.com.

"Kids are doing amazing things at Miramonte," says Clark. "The depth of what kids are engaged in, whether clubs, athletics or performing arts, is pretty incredible."

[SEE SCHOOLS page 16]

## Prepare for Disaster

By SALLY HOGARTY  
Editor

Over 45 Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) volunteers practiced transporting victims, setting



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO  
Orinda Intermediate and Miramonte High students volunteered to be victims during drill.

up shelters, and evacuating residents at a training exercise recently in Orinda.

The exercise was almost "too realistic," says coordinator Tom Chan. "We had three times as many victims as CERT volunteers, and we really need to get more young people interested in becoming CERT trained."

[SEE CERT page 3]

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VISUAL ARTS

# The Magical Qualities of Water, Light and Color on Paper

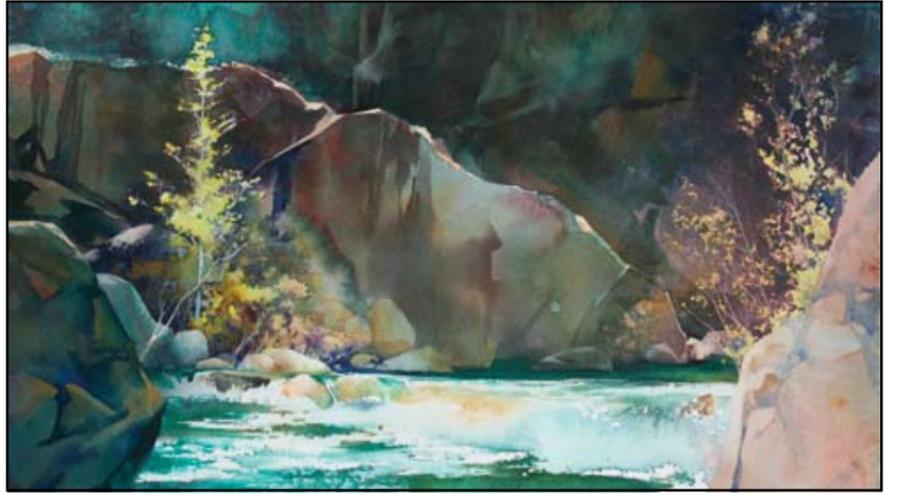
By ELANA O'LOSKEY  
Staff Writer

Few Californians would disagree with the famous quote, "Wine is sunlight, held together by water," Galileo Galilei, 1564-1642, astronomer. Even fewer would disagree that the December exhibit at the Orinda Library Gallery transforms water, light and color into a myriad of fascinating paintings (oils and pastels are included as well) by the East Bay Fine Artists. The show fills the gallery and runs from December 1 through the end of the month, with an artists' reception on December 20 from 2 to 4 p.m.

The East Bay Fine Artists (EBFA) was formed in 1996 when outgoing board members of the California Watercolor Association realized they wanted to keep meeting. The group critiques were so valuable and inspiring they formed the East Bay Fine Artists to continue their fellowship.

Because they meet monthly, alternating in each other's homes, membership is held at 14 and new members are accepted only by unanimous vote. Members showing this month include Carol Groothaert Lutz, Cynthia Eastman-Roan, Gail Zavala, Geri Keary, Gordon Towell, Leslie Wilson, Linda Darsow Sutton, Margo Sanger, Mary Lou Correia, Nancy Partovi, Robin Purcell, and Wayne White.

Their prodigious range of styles includes impressionist, realism, plein air, still lifes, landscapes, ocean scenes - with lots of focus on nature and wildlife - and some abstract works. Group members have a diverse range of artistic experience and several have national reputations. Some are art professionals who teach. Mediums include acrylics, caseins, oils, watercolors and pastels. EBFA is run cooperatively and has one major show a year; this is the third year in Orinda, their favorite venue. No wonder. The soaring window-wall gushes



Linda Darsow Sutton's transparent watercolor "Tough Approach" is among the works to be shown at the Orinda Library Gallery in December.

LINDA SUTTON

light all day long, showing paintings in their ascendancy.

Here is a glimpse of a few of these fine artists. Margo Sanger, Berkeley, works with gouache and pastel but primarily uses watercolor and has been painting for 20 years. She does "pours" where she just pours

watercolor on the paper, lets it dry and starts pulling out designs; the pour gives her the direction the painting is going. As her imagination runs with it, there's always recognizable imagery such as leaves, grapes or trees that emerge.

[SEE GALLERY page 6]

## Art in Public Places Committee Honors Artists and Seeks Matching Funds

Orinda's Art in Public Places Committee (APPC) honored several artists involved in the public art program at a reception on October 17 at the Orinda Library Gallery. Artists Patricia Vader, Nina Lyons, and Kent Roberts were present to speak about their work. Ted Urban, APPC committee chair, gave an informal talk about the project to date, now in its third year. "So far we have 350 responses to our online survey ([www.cityoforinda.org](http://www.cityoforinda.org)); 90 percent were familiar with the art; almost all of them were pleased with it; over 50 percent would donate funds to help purchase public artwork and two-thirds of them would support a request for matching funds from the city to buy the art," said Urban.

The success of the program involves a lot of mutual cooperation. The city contributes the space and place for the art, insurance



BILL CARMEL

Kent Roberts' sculpture "Surveillance" hovers high above Orinda Library visitors in the rotunda. The skylights above it illuminate the metallic gold and red painted elements. "I rely on my engineering background for many of the formal elements of my socially conscious sculptures," says Roberts.

to cover vandalism, and loss of the art; the artists agree to the rotating loan program and pick up their own liability insurance. The city would like to purchase some of the art for permanent display but needs the community's support. One possible scenario is that a portion of Parks and Recreation fees will be matched dollar for dollar by private donations for the purchase of public art. There is no formal proposal or agreement at this time, and the APPC is open to suggestions.

For more information, contact Skinner at 253-4202 or at [tskinner@cityoforinda.org](mailto:tskinner@cityoforinda.org).

- Elana O'Loskey, Staff Writer

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*Happy Holidays*



ORINDA ASSOCIATION

A Message From the OA President  
Home (Town) for the Holidays



Mark Roberts

The holidays are upon us – ready or not. While I enjoy the shopping opportunities in Walnut Creek, Berkeley and San Francisco (etc.) as much as the next person, this year I’m planning to purchase as many holiday gifts as possible here in Orinda.

Why, you may ask? For one reason, while I love to drive, I really hate traffic (just ask my wife). I’m also not a big fan of spending a lot of time trolling for a parking space. While I admit that I sometimes don’t find a parking space right in front of the store I’m going to visit in Orinda, I never have to spend more than a few minutes or drive more than a block or two to find a space. The same can definitely not be said about the other communities I mentioned, especially during this time of year.

Another reason is that I enjoy patronizing Orinda merchants. I’m a big fan of **Orinda Hardware** because there’s always a friendly offer of assistance if I spend more than a couple of nanoseconds looking for something. Janet Boreta and her staff at **Orinda Books** do a superb job of bringing the literary community to Orinda and making the selection of a book – as a gift or for yourself – a very rewarding experience. And the staff of the **UPS Store** will make sure that the perfect gift you’ve found for a distant recipient is packed and shipped to arrive on time and in perfect condition.

Of course, there are dozens of other merchants here in Orinda who offer a wide variety of products and services. The owners of many of these businesses live here, too, so they have a two-fold interest in attracting customers to our community and their business.

The folks in city hall have a similar interest. While not as much of sales tax revenue generated here in Orinda actually stays here as we would like, it’s still an important source of funds that helps the city provide vital services. As I mentioned in last month’s column, donations to the Orinda Community Fund (great year-end, tax deductible charitable giving opportunity – hint, hint) support the programs and activities that make Orinda such a special place. But sales tax revenue funds many of the city’s basic needs.

So let’s add up the benefits. Shopping in Orinda for the holidays saves time, gas and your sanity. It helps provide a livelihood for local merchants, many of who

also live in Orinda and who, in turn, support other local businesses. And most products, some services and all restaurant purchases (why take your holiday party out of town?) generate sales tax revenue that helps the city provide essential services.

By buying your holiday gifts for friends and loved ones here in Orinda, you’re also giving your community a present. So when it comes to shopping, make it home town for the holidays.

Speaking of another great year-end, tax deductible charitable giving opportunity, please use the enclosed reply envelope and become a member of the Orinda Association. We’d welcome your support and would be delighted to include your name in our membership roster that will appear in the February issue of *The Orinda News*. If you’re already a member, first of all, thank you! Please renew your membership by responding to the mailing you received last month if you haven’t already done so. OA membership is a gift that keeps on giving to you, your family and your fellow Orindans throughout the year.

To all OA members on behalf of the board of directors, please accept my best wishes for a safe, peaceful and enjoyable holiday season.

The Orinda Association

The Orinda Association is a nonprofit corporation dedicated to:

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

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◆ CERT from page 1

Chan also notes that school personnel need to have the training and resources to take care of students should a disaster occur during the school day. He says that all the elementary schools and OIS have been rated building by building with certain buildings designated as shelters during a disaster. Miramonte High School is scheduled to be rated this year.

“The best Christmas present you can give your family is to be prepared,” says Chan. He says preparing for the small earthquakes we often have is a good beginning. “You can do simple things like moving heavy objects to the bottom of shelves, securing pictures and mirrors. At least that is a start.”

For additional information on earthquake preparedness, see article on page 5.

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# Letters to the Editor

## Use eScrip to Help Fund Schools

If there is any doubt in your mind that Californians pay their share of taxes already, spend five minutes on a couple of websites to educate yourself (provided below). According to the California Taxpayers Association, the parcel tax at Orinda Union is already the highest of any school district in Contra Costa County.

It appears that California, while one of the hardest states hit with the latest recession, is eager to tax the people more vs. investigating how to cut back and spend less. The irony of it all is when the tax machine gets its wheels moving with endorsements from city officials and community leaders, they are a force to be reckoned with. Unfortunately, the "yes" votes only occur because our voting public won't take the time to read or investigate alternatives.

I don't condemn those eager mom's for getting out the vote because they want the best for their students. After all, that's why we work so hard, so that our students can get a superior education in Orinda. But there are alternatives that aren't being interjected in the dialogue.

-Did you know that of the 2100 families at Miramonte signed up for eScrip, less than 20 percent have their debit and credit cards signed up with eScrip to take advantage of business contributions towards our education budget?

-Did you know that Safeway Corporation contributes 1 percent of all our grocery spending in their stores back to our school system? Yet less than half of the links work and are actually tallying up all the monies spent - ergo, less than half are getting back into our school budget.

-Did you know that eScrip has designed an online mall for shoppers this holiday to automatically track our spending, allowing business partners to contribute a percentage back to our schools, but less than 5 percent of our families have it on their computers to utilize it?

This small example enunciates that when we fix these operational problems, and when Orinda parents actually sign-up and use the online mall for this holiday season, contributions from business partners in the eScrip program can amount to hundreds of thousands of dollars for Orinda's schools.

Instead of taxing each household more money, why don't we fix what is broke. Apathetic Orinda, sign up for eScrip and take advantage of the business contributions already in place to fund our schools.

See [www.caltax.org/CaltaxReports/2008/110708\\_local\\_tax\\_elections.htm](http://www.caltax.org/CaltaxReports/2008/110708_local_tax_elections.htm).

-Christine Temple-Wolfe

## Thank You for Passing Measure G

On behalf of the nearly three hundred teachers, counselors, psychologists, nurses

and librarians of the Acalanes Union High School District, I would like to thank the community for their support of Measure G. Because of the support of the community, our students will continue to be challenged by and engaged in the excellent and varied instructional programs we offer, and they will continue to receive important support services to promote academic achievement, foster personal growth, and improve physical health.

By voting for Measure G, the communities of Moraga, Lafayette, Orinda and Walnut Creek sent the students of our district a strong message: education is crucial to the success of a community, and we want you to continue to learn and grow. Those of us who serve these students also heard this message; encouraged by the community's dedication to and sacrifice for its youth, we continue to be dedicated to helping these students become smart, informed, creative, healthy and happy members of their communities.

Thank you.

- Jennifer Nickl, President,  
Acalanes Education Association

## Necessary Annoyance

I agree that leafblowers are annoying. I also believe airplanes, motor vehicles, and other loud noises and mechanized equipment are annoying.

The reality is we live in a tree-covered geography. We also live in the age where we must be efficient and use means to get the job done. For me, this includes leafblowers, lawnmowers, chainsaws and weed wackers. I would not need these things if I lived in a big city. Also, my reality is that I work during the week and enacting a law or ordinance "outlawing" mechanized equipment on weekends or any other day is a law I feel is unnecessary.

As a resident of Orinda, I don't want to be limited to the equipment I wish to use to maintain my home. Rule of thumb - be considerate when using power equipment. Talk to neighbors when annoyed and live and let live.

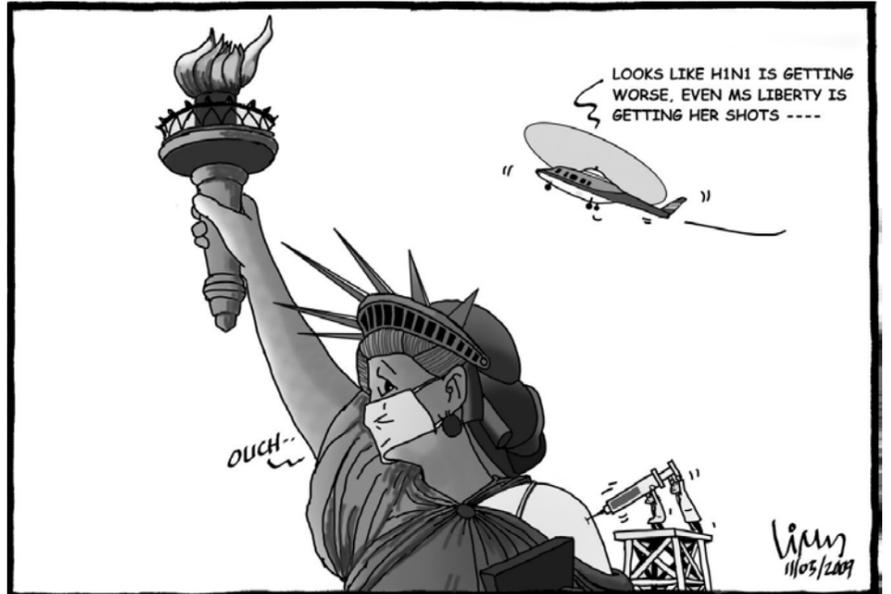
I urge our City Council to think and consider long and hard before creating new ordinances.

- Hank Lindemann

## A Time For Action

Our recent letter to the editor regarding Orinda's out-of-control noise pollution, mainly caused by leaf blowers, must have struck a chord! My husband and I are amazed at how many fellow Orindans (and even some from Lafayette and Moraga) made an effort to contact us to express their support for a ban on them.

Several urged us to organize a campaign to help Orinda to enact an ordinance banning leaf blowers entirely. In doing so,



Orinda would join quiet-law communities like Piedmont, Palo Alto, Berkeley, Santa Barbara and others. While we're not the community-organizer types, we're happy to work with other like-minded Orindans who are ready to take back the quiet and tranquility of their neighborhoods.

A Google Group has been set up, called Quiet Orinda <http://groups.google.com/group/quietorinda>, where several have already signed up. The group can serve as a central forum for discussing and planning the campaign. Similarly, anyone interested in further information may send an email to [quietorinda@gmail.com](mailto:quietorinda@gmail.com).

In the meantime, one simple, short-term solution is, of course, to require that your gardener switch to rakes and brooms. We did, and it didn't cost us any more money. You and your neighbors will most certainly appreciate the quieter soundscape and cleaner air!

- Susan and Peter Kendall

## Leaf Blowers Drive Us From Yard

I too am writing in support of banning leaf blowers (especially the gas powered ones) after reading Susan and Peter Kendall's October 2009 letter to the Editor and the subsequent letters in the November paper.

As I write this on a Saturday afternoon, my family and I are closed up in our home trying to escape the incessant noise from our neighbor's noisy lawn service. This service uses loud gas powered mowers and leaf blowers. We have the unfortunate circumstance of being surrounded by four backyards that use the same lawn service on a Saturday afternoon from 1-5 p.m. on Estabueno Drive.

Little did we know that when we bought our tidy rancher for a princely sum in 2003 that we would not be able to use our backyard to play with our children, throw birthday parties, read a book or even have a conversation on a Saturday afternoon. Neighbors on both my cul-d-sac and Es-

tabueno have tried talking to their neighbors about the noise, even passing around and signing a petition. Nothing has worked. We endure the ghastly noise of gas-powered leaf blowers for hours on a Saturday. In the past six years, we have had only one neighbor graciously move their Saturday lawn service to a weekday.

We are now at the point that we want the Orinda City Council to enact a better noise ordinance (one that has a decibel level for lawn equipment which could be enforceable), and seriously consider banning the use of gas-powered leaf blowers in Orinda. At the very least, the City Council could consider banning these noisy machines on a Saturday and Sunday so we can enjoy the sanctity of our homes.

For what we paid for our house, for what we pay in property taxes, and one of the reasons we moved to the 'burbs, I would simply like to be able to enjoy my backyard on a Saturday with my children while they are young! Never thought Orinda would be noisier than some of the former cities (Seattle, Oakland and Berkeley) we have lived in!

-Maya McBride

## Keeping MOFD Important

In recent months a small group of Orindans [FAIR] has advocated detaching the City of Orinda from MOFD and forming a municipal fire department that would contract with Contra Costa Fire [Con Fire] for fire services and AMR for emergency medical and ambulance services. The primary goal would be to take money from fire services and use it for infrastructure projects.

Using debatable calculations, FAIR proposes replacing the firefighter/paramedics now staffing our ambulances with civilian AMR personnel who would be stationed at the downtown Orinda firehouse. Doing so would:

Significantly degrade the level of service we now enjoy in Orinda, making it impos-

[SEE LETTERS page 14]

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For display advertising rates, call Jill Gelster at 925-528-9225 or email to [jill@aspenconsult.net](mailto:jill@aspenconsult.net). The deadline for the February issue is December 16, 2009.

EARTHQUAKE / POLICE BLOTTER

# Can There Be Peace of Mind in Earthquake Country?



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

This home in Watsonville was thrown off its foundation by the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake because it lacked basic foundation bolting and cripple wall reinforcing plywood.

By SALLY HOGARTY  
Editor

When Peter Yanev, Orinda resident and leading earthquake authority, heard the title his publisher had chosen for his new book, he thought it was misleading. But he soon realized that *Peace of Mind in Earthquake Country* was a very appropriate title.

“At first I thought, ‘how can you have peace of mind in earthquake country?’ After all, it’s not a question of if there will be an earthquake, but when.” His book, however, can give local residents a measure of peace with its step-by-step guide to determining

your risk of loss in an earthquake and how to manage that risk.

“It’s really about risk management,” says Yanev. “You need to understand the facets of your risk – how close are you to fault zones, what type of soil is your house build upon, what is the building type, and what are the financial consequences.” Answering those questions will help homeowners and small businesses determine whether they need to do some retrofitting and whether earthquake insurance makes sense for their situation. “Buying earthquake insurance without analyzing the risk and retrofitting

[SEE EARTHQUAKE page 6]



## POLICE BLOTTER

October 2009

**False Residential Alarms:** Officers responded to 103 false alarm calls throughout the city.

**Auto Burglary** (theft from a locked vehicle): 8 incidents reported on Lomas Cantadas, Tahos Rd., El Gavilan, Warford Terr., Orinda Way, Bates Blvd., Davis Rd. and Moraga Way.

**Commercial Burglary:** 1 incident reported on Northwood Dr.

**Grand Theft** (theft of more than \$400 value): 3 incidents reported on Moraga Way, Bates Blvd. and Linda Vista.

**Petty Theft From Vehicle** (theft of less than \$400 value from an unlocked vehicle): 1 incident reported on Bates Blvd.

**Stolen Vehicle** 1 stolen vehicle discovered on Muth Dr.

**Vandalism:** 3 incidents reported

on Bear Creek Rd., Estates Dr., and Moraga Way.

**Arrests**

**Alcohol – Drunk in public:** 1 arrest made on Moraga Way.

**Battery Domestic:** 1 arrest made at Meadow View Rd.

**Drugs - Sale of Marijuana:** 1 arrest was made on Camino Pable at Camino Sobrante.

**Possession of Drugs:** 1 arrest was made on Camino Pablo at Santa Maria Rd.

**Warrant Arrests:** 3 warrant arrests were made on Orinda Way at Santa Maria Way, Rheem Blvd., and Moraga Way at Valley View Dr.

– Compiled by Jeanette Irving,  
Orinda Police Department

Advertisement

## Public Has High Expectations for Windows 7

By Evan Corstorphine,  
Portable CIO

Recently, Microsoft released their new operating system called Windows 7 to the public. Microsoft’s last operating system (Vista) was a disappointment, so there are high expectations on Microsoft this time around.

A buddy of mine works for Microsoft, and when I recently visited him we got to talking. He said when Vista came out, the internal opinion was that it was awful. About 75 percent of the internal Microsoft user feedback was negative. When Windows 7 came out for Beta testing, the feedback was the other way around, where more than 75 percent really liked it. I decided to load Windows 7 on my system.

A while back I upgraded my hardware to a 2.6Ghz Xeon processor, and eventually upgraded to 8gb RAM. Even with this super hardware, my system ran slowly.

Enter Windows 7. Out of the box, without any services disabled and running the full-blown Aero interface, it’s the fastest computer I’ve owned. I can have tons of applications open and the next one still opens and operates quickly. I’ve not had a single crash or malfunction. Yesterday I was using 4.6gb of RAM, and the processor was loping along at 3-4 percent. It’s as if it was looking up at me asking for more. I’m blown away.

My research tells me that one reason why the system is so fast is that Microsoft redesigned the way the system uses memory. In their other operating systems, every application takes a slice of video memory whether it’s being used or not. That means if you have 10 programs running minimized,

they all are using the same resources as if they were the primary application being used. This causes the system to run out of resources, making it run slow. In Windows 7, this part has been redesigned so that an application only uses video memory when it’s the program in the foreground being used. Apparently it works, because I open a ton of windows, and I still haven’t been able to bog down my system.

Another reason why my system is so fast is that I am using the 64-bit version of Windows 7. This enables me to use memory past the 4GB barrier of 32-bit systems, and gives the operating system a far larger data path between the CPU and the RAM. In non-geek-speak, it’s like doubling the lanes on a congested highway; suddenly everyone can move faster.

If you plan to buy a new computer, it will now come with Windows 7. For a home user, the Windows 7 Home Premium version is all you need. The Professional and Ultimate versions have a lot of business-oriented features that aren’t likely to be useful at home. I recommend buying 8gb of RAM; minimum 4gb. And, I would strongly consider buying the 64-bit version of the operating system. While I’ve found a few disappointments with drivers or devices that won’t work with 64-bit, most 32-bit applications and drivers run fine and fast.

If you’d like to learn more about how Windows 7 might fit into your plans, or what to look for in a new computer, contact the friendly staff at Portable CIO for our buyer’s recommendations sheet: 925-552-7953, or email info@theportablecio.com for a brief consultation before you make your purchase decision. For more information, visit us at www.theportablecio.com.

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CONTINUATIONS

◆ EARTHQUAKE from page 5

is like buying car insurance and not checking the brakes," says Yanev's son Alex, who works with him in his consulting firm.

Written by Yanev and fellow earthquake engineering and risk management consultant Andrew Thompson, *Peace of Mind in Earthquake Country* demystifies the technical aspects of earthquakes and presents a do-it-yourself approach to preparedness. With more than 50 years of combined experience, Yanev and Thompson are seasoned experts. Yanev has been to every major quake that has occurred throughout the world in the last 36 years to assess damage and is the originator of a seismic experience database, which includes an exhaustive inventory of structural and equipment performance in earthquakes. "I have seen

so many earthquakes that I have a pretty good sense of where the damage will be and what's likely to go wrong," he adds.

Yanev notes that since Loma Prieta, California has worked on improving the infrastructure for schools, hospitals, various public buildings, and bridges, but not for small businesses or individual homes. "That is something that each homeowner must deal with themselves," he says. For instance, an unreinforced masonry building is the least resistant to earthquakes, whereas a properly braced wood-frame building is the safest small structure. Yanev points out that building codes can give a false sense of security. "The codes are to protect public safety, to help you get out of a building, but they don't protect your property. You need to do more if you want to have less damage."

Yanev says one of the biggest problems for Orinda following an earthquake will be landslides. "Even if you have sheer walls to strengthen your home and it's bolted to the foundation, it won't help you if the hill behind your house starts to slide. Yanev suggests getting maps that show landslide areas and have a soil engineer check your property.

"The idea is to understand the level of damage you'll sustain," Yanev explains. "You need someone who understands the effects to go with you through your home and observe what is likely to go wrong in an earthquake and how to strengthen your house. You don't have to do it all at once." The UC Berkeley and MIT graduate notes that many strengthening techniques can be accomplished for little cost when combined with other projects. "If you are putting a new roof on your house and you have a brick chimney, it's the perfect time to add sheets of 3/4 inch plywood to the roof where the chimney could fall during a quake. It won't cost much more to do so, and it will prevent a very costly repair and possible injuries if it fell through the roof and into the house."

Before purchasing his Orinda home, Yanev had a soil engineer assess various properties before deciding which one to purchase. Since then, he has gradually strengthened his home. "But you can't build just to protect against an earthquake, you also have to make it a livable space," he says. "We have large windows in our home, but they are a structural weakness. We have reinforced them to limit the damage, but we know they will go in a quake. However, the light they bring in and the view they afford are worth the risk."

*Peace of Mind in Earthquake Country* is available at Orinda Books, 276 Village Square in Orinda.

◆ GALLERY from page 2

herself a colorist, she loves pulling people into a painting with deep rich colors and strong contrasts. "I think strong contrast settles the soul," says Sanger, "... embodying the light and dark is true balance. Your eye is usually drawn to the place where there's the greatest contrast in a painting, so that's how I develop my focal point."

Leslie Wilson of Walnut Creek has been an artist all her life. In 1990, she turned to watercolor painting and has developed a style all her own – impressionist, charged with light and color. Making something ordinary and forgettable into something stunning filled with light and color fascinates Wilson. She believes people often forget to notice how beautiful their surroundings are. "I like to take something like that and make the world see how amazing it is." Placing the paint directly from her palette onto paper to retain vibrancy is Wilson's favorite technique. In any given landscape, she looks for what tops out the light. Next, she makes a composition around it by exaggerating the contrast between light and color.

Linda Darsow Sutton of Martinez says she was "one of those kids who always had a pencil in my hand, drawing." In love with our local land and its wildlife, she points out the indigenous colorations on California wildlife often defy the norm for its species. Her fascination with the land extends in all directions, including one of our most precious treasures, water. When you view "Declaration of Occupation" or "Tough Approach," two transparent watercolors in the show, you can't miss what has inspired her to capture these water scenes. Sutton often works with environmental groups because she's committed to "saving what we have left."

Sanger says that when she visits a community – small or large – that is big on the arts she feels safe – the proper decisions are being made, it feels alive. Art reflects whether or not there is life in a community," she says. Wilson believes we would have a very dull life without art; that it is at the root of satisfaction and happiness, starting with the very young and continuing on one's whole life. Sutton believes that artists of all kinds are the only hope left for kids in school in terms of stimulating their ability to develop vision for, and awareness of, the world that surrounds them – it's diversity of people, ideologies and approaches to life. "Schools aren't offering much any more that goes beyond academics and I understand why. But without encouraging young people to develop imagination and originality with art, music and other creative explorations, where will they learn what lies beyond academics?"

Come and enjoy this uplifting exhibit at the Orinda Library Gallery during normal library hours – Monday through 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.



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CAR TIME / CITY TREASURER



**CAR TIME**

Travel and Safety Tips

by JEFF JOYCE

Think about it. The only part of your vehicle that touches the road are your tires. Unfortunately, many motorists ignore worn tires -- putting themselves as well as others directly in harm's way. Typically, tire performance is judged on traction during acceleration and when cornering. But what about when braking?

About 81 percent of vehicles involved in fatal crashes in 2005 were passenger cars or light trucks -- including pickups, vans and sport utility vehicles. Light trucks are the most popular vehicles on American roads today. The open and rugged tread design of their tires limits the vehicle's ability to stop and turn. On average, pickups and SUVs need between 10-20 percent more distance to stop than passenger cars traveling at highway speeds. Stopping distances increase as tires become worn. Consumer Report tests found with standing water about the depth of a dime, vehicles with tires worn to legal limits (2/32") will require nearly double the distance to stop traveling at 70 m.p.h. than the same vehicle would equipped with new tires. At the point the vehicle with new tires stopped, the vehicle with 2/32" tread remaining would still be traveling at 55 m.p.h.! Vehicles with tires worn to 4/32" would still be traveling at 45 m.p.h. Is your safety really worth jeopardizing in order to get a few more miles out of your tires? Anything on the roadway that makes it wet, slippery, or unstable will affect your tires' ability to hold on to the road. Low tire tread will also affect your tires' ability to channel moisture away and increases the risk of hydroplaning.

Before the rainy season begins, prepare your vehicle for wet weather driving. Carry an umbrella and keep your windshield, windows and headlights clean. Ensure the following systems are in good operating condition:

- Tire inflation, tread depth
- Steering and suspension components
- Windshield wipers, fluid and blades
- Battery
- Lights
- Brakes
- Ignition

The first 20 minutes of a rain shower is the most dangerous time to be driving. The water mixes with dust, dirt, sand and oil on the road surface, creating an extremely slippery substance. As the rain continues, this slippery mixture is washed away; the road, however, continues to present a low traction driving environment. Regaining control of your vehicle when you find yourself in a skid requires you to:

- Respond quickly and don't panic;
- Look and steer in the direction you want the front of the vehicle to go;
- Make smooth steering corrections;
- Don't give up. You may have to make several steering corrections before you regain steering control.

Maintain your tire pressure as recommended by the manufacturer in your vehicle's user manual or on the label attached at the drivers door jamb. If your tires are over-inflated, they will tend to wear in the center of the tread and not provide you with the maximum "grip." If the tires are

[SEE CAR TIME page 16]

**Notice of Opportunity to Serve as the City of Orinda City Treasurer**

Notice is given that the City of Orinda is accepting applications from resident volunteers to serve as the City's Treasurer.

The City Treasurer is appointed by the City Council with responsibilities including:

- Custodian of all monies, bonds and other securities of the city;
- Invests available funds with qualified depositories;
- Provides for the investment of all idle cash in accordance with the "Orinda Investment Policy;"
- Maintains records and portfolio for all city investments;
- Prepares reports required of the treasurer by state and city codes; and
- Performs related duties as necessary.

Candidates must have working knowledge of state and city codes relating to the receipt, custody of and the investment of public funds; skills in the practices of investing public funds; ability to read, understand, interpret and explain updated codes relating to treasurer's duties. Please see City Treasurer position description for minimum qualifications.

The two-year term for the City Treasurer will expire February 28, 2012. The City Council will review all applications and interview eligible candidates.

Applications, the complete city treasurer position description and copies of the City of Orinda investment policy are available from the City Clerk's Office, 22 Orinda Way, Orinda, CA 94563. Telephone: 925-253-4221. Email: molsen@cityoforinda.org. Application forms may also be downloaded from the city's website at www.cityoforinda.org. The deadline for completed applications is **Friday, December 4, 2009.**

– Michele L. Olsen  
City Clerk

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BOOKS

# Friends of the Library to Boost Book Sales

By BARBARA BONTEMPS  
Contributing Writer

The Friends of the Orinda Library (FOL) hosted another successful book fair on October 3, opening its doors to a community hungry for bargains during these tough economic times. The fair's first-ever trivia contest, the "Kwiz Kids Lit Quiz" was also a big hit, with 12 winners and runners-up, including:

Adult Winner – Claire Phillips  
Adult Runners-Up – Amy Worth and David Carson

Child Winners – Eleanor and Elizabeth Woods

Child Runners-Up – Shea Gillanders, Jordan Grelling, Sophie Hammond, Lola Olabode, Lola and Vasco Rodriguez, and Hannah Witbeck.

"The turn-out was great," said FOL president Pam Pulley. "It gave us pause to consider ways we can better accommodate this community's eager book lovers in the future. We decided after the fair that we need to hold more frequent sales of all the wonderful books we receive," said Pulley. The new sales approach will kick-off this



SALLY HOGARTY

**Twins Eleanor (L) and Elizabeth Woods**, both students at Glorietta Elementary School, won the "Kwiz Kids Lit Quiz" sponsored by Friends of the Orinda Library.

month with a holiday sale and, starting in February of next year, the Friends will host monthly sales events through their book shop and sorting room.

The upcoming sale on December 5 will be held from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. and will feature a variety of gift-appropriate books for the holidays – coffee table books, children and young adult literature, collectibles and more – all at greatly reduced prices. Shoppers should come early for the best selection.

Next year's sales will occur every month except August and some will be held on Saturdays in order to accommodate working families. Sales will take place in both the FOL book shop and in the sorting room, which is on the library's ground floor near the parking garage, and proceeds will be used for new acquisitions and library programs.

The book shop, which is adjacent to the library's reception desk, will continue to operate daily except Sundays from 1 to 4 p.m., Monday through Saturday and on Thursdays from 1 to 6 p.m.

# Between the Lines Considering the Night Before Christmas

Marian Nielsen, Orinda Books



Will downloads ever quite equal the excitement of unwrapping a gift book, carefully selected just for you by your nearest and dearest? This year there are countless choices beyond e-books — some that Kindle, Nook, or Vook cannot possibly replicate. A recent picture in *The New York Times* showing a dad reading to his three-year-old from an e-book — presumably a bedtime story as the child was in jammies — made one hope it wasn't the classic bedtime picture book, *Good Night Moon* or a favorite Beatrix Potter story with its minimal text and incomparable illustrations.

So many holiday gift books are notable for their beautiful design with text and graphics complementing each other. One of the visual delights that will be a happy treat for the whole family this season is the stunning *Evidence of Evolution* by Susan Middleton and Mary Ellen Hannibal (Abrams, \$29.95). These two San Francisco women have collaborated on an exquisite book that celebrates the 150th anniversary of the publication *On the Origin of Species* and honors the California Academy of Sciences. It ranks as our #1 choice for an affordable coffee table book with beautiful photographs of the academy collections that document key concepts of the evolution of life on earth.

In a similar vein is another attractive package, *The Darwin Experience: The Story of the Man and His Theory of*

*Evolution* by John Van Wyhe (National Geographic Society, \$50). It offers readers a chance to explore facsimiles of some of Darwin's original notes, observations, and maps and brings the work of this remarkable man vividly to life on the bicentennial of his birth.

And even though we are now living in an electronic age — how could we not be aware — we remember that before "tweeting" meant staying in touch, birdwatchers of the world knew that a "tweet" was one of the many ways they could identify their feathered friends and expand their lifetime count. This year there are beautiful gifts for the birdwatchers in your life on Orinda Books shelves. A new book by Colin Tudge, *The Bird: A Natural History of Who Birds Are, Where They Came From, and How They Live* (Crown, \$30), is a superb exploration of the avian world. Tudge is an engaging author and will entertain even non-birders in this lively and attractive volume.

Tudge's book could well go hand-in-hand, or wing-on-wing, with a beautiful new folio edition from the folks at National Geographic. They have rescaled the artwork from their popular field guide in this new *Illustrated Birds of North America: A Folio* by Jon L. Dunn and Jonathan Alderfer (National Geographic Society, \$50). Superb maps as well as exquisite drawings make this volume an important resource in the Audubon tradition. And, in an art book for ornithologists, Andrew Zuckerman, a New York-based photographer, has focused on the wonders of the winged world in *Bird* (Chronicle, \$60) which offers 200 breathtaking photographs — parrots to penguins — as you've never seen them before.

For many of us, the holiday would be empty without a big and beautiful new cookbook. This year, a very special gift will be *Gourmet Today: More than 1,000 All-New Recipes For The Contemporary Kitchen* by Ruth Reichl (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, \$40). The iconic cooking magazine may have breathed its last breath but these pages are mouthwatering. And what amateur chef will want to be without *Ad Hoc at Home* by Thomas Keller (Artisan, \$50). Family style meals are not what come to mind when we consider Michelin winner Keller (*The French Laundry*) so this book is a surprising delight. Based on the food he serves at Ad Hoc, his Yountville bistro, it will please any home chef. The color photographs are superb.

Although many of us do resort to the [SEE BOOKS page 16]

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WAY TO GROW

**Way to Grow in Orinda**  
*Landscape Design with Family in Mind, "Go Outside and Play"*

Steve & Cathy Lambert



This holiday, instead of buying the latest, greatest video games why not give your kids and yourself more reasons to go outside and play? We always enjoy designing a landscape that accommodates the entire family. Although your yard can make a great play space for children, a family garden should offer something for everyone, whatever their age.

Whether you're starting from scratch, re-landscaping or just looking to make a few kid-friendly changes, planning for the evolving needs of your family will allow your garden to easily grow and change with you. With good forethought, you can develop a long-term design where landscape features and plantings can be easily changed to suit your needs as your kids grow and their interests change and as time and money become more available to you.

Using our own yard as an example of a long-term, family oriented landscape plan, here's how our garden has evolved with our family. One of the first additions we made was a fenced deck off the master bedroom. This served as a safe outdoor play space when the kids were toddlers. Later it made a great place for a wading pool since there is no need to drain and remove it each time (like you'd have to do on a lawn) and because it allows for easy draining right through the deck – just pull the plug. This deck space is still enjoyed by our daughter and her friends who spend a lot of time in her playhouse and kitchen. We built this deck with dreams of a future secluded hot tub spot for mom and dad. It was framed so we could easily cut in a hole and drop in a hot tub – sometime soon we hope.

Next, since we live on a very busy street, we decided our children needed a place to push and pull outdoor toys and to ride their tricycles and toy cars. To accommodate this need, we installed what we now refer to as a Trike-Track. We positioned this curvy, circular path within view of the kitchen windows so we could keep a watchful eye while still getting things done. For added interest, we used stamped, colored concrete and pressed in various leaves and some fossils of dinosaur bones (from a 3-D wooden puzzle) and dino tracks (made from a clay mold). The path was built to circle around an existing tree and planted mound.

When our kids were old enough for a play structure, we removed some of the plants from inside our Trike-Track and added a simple structure with two swings, a fort, a slide and monkey bars. We chose a small structure that fit the space allowing for a safe boarder between it and the hard surface of the path. Our future plan for this spot is to one day, hopefully in the not too distant future, transform it into a family entertainment space with a built in barbecue, bar seating, and fireplace. We keep asking, but our daughter is not quite ready to trade-in her swing set and slide just yet.

When our kids got a little older, we added a path down to the creek that runs through the far edge of our backyard. It's a great natural playground full of frogs, bugs and other fun things to discover. The next kid-friendly addition, when they were old enough to be trusted in the front yard, was our pond and waterfall. Aside from being a great place for the kids to enjoy fish, turtles, birds and dragonflies, our water feature helps to mask some of the street noise. While most homeowners would install a pond (aka a kid magnet) in their backyards, our space limitations didn't allow us that option, but it's still a favorite spot for our kids and their friends to gather and feed the fish.

Another favorite family spot is our vegetable garden. This is a great place to spend time together outdoors since we all enjoy planting and picking fresh fruits and veggies. If you have the sun, the space and dig digging in the dirt, a veggie garden is a fun and educational way to enjoy your yard with your kids. If you're also into composting and recycling, a great kid garden amenity (and a cool Christmas gift) is a worm farm/composter. The kids will love adding family food scraps and waste paper to it and be amazed by how quickly the worms eat through everything.

The largest play space in our yard is our lawn and it gets plenty of play time. Although it's only about 800 square feet, every inch of it gets used for catch, football, slip and slid, and sprinkler play.

Our next plan to get the kids outside is to install a zip line across our creek. These are becoming very popular. If you have the right spot for it the sit-and-zip lines are much safer, especially for younger



STEVE LAMBERT

This sand box is an integral part of the Lambert's kid-friendly backyard.

children, than the hand bar style zip lines. Also important is a large, level launching pad and a clear, flat landing spot.

That's about all we have the room for in our own yard. To follow are some other ideas and installation tips for more family fun spots you may want to consider for your yard.

When planning your yard, keep in mind that lawns are not a complete necessity. That said if you have the room leave as large a space as possible for ball play and tag. For a nice plush lawn, choose an all-

[SEE GROW page 18]

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## COOKING WELL

Essentials of Proper Food Selection, Preparation and Enjoyment – Vegetable Cookery: Roasting

Chef Charles Vollmar



As I was thinking about a timely topic for the coming season, I decided to share some pointers about one of my favorite cooking methods for vegetables: roasting. I have mentioned before that foods, especially vegetables, are only as good as prepared. Roasting transforms vegetables by heightening hidden sweetness and creating depths of flavor by browning and caramelizing (referred to as the Mayard reaction). The complex results are actually simple to produce: vegetables of choice, oil, seasoning and heat. There are some tricks that will help ensure the perfectly roasted vegetable:

Roast vegetables of similar densities together (root vegetables for instance), otherwise roast separately. Higher temperatures are recommended (400°F – 425°F) for a shorter period, to ensure proper browning and *al dente* doneness. Cut the vegetables into similar sized pieces for uniform cooking time and appearance.

Toss cut vegetables in a large bowl with olive oil making sure the pieces are coated on all sides. Use approximately one tablespoon of oil per pound of vegetables to lightly coat the pieces. Appreciate the natural flavors of foods by seasoning with just kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper. Place cut, oiled, seasoned vegetables on a baking sheet(s) (sheet pan with a lip) in a single layer with space around each piece. A crowded pan will not brown properly, but rather will steam and lack crispness.

Check vegetables halfway through roasting time – toss to keep from sticking and redistribute to a single layer – then check and toss every 5 minutes until done. Vegetables are done when the centers are soft, but firm (*al dente*) and the outsides are browned and crisp. Taste and season with additional kosher salt, if necessary. Serve immediately.

I have included two of my favorite recipes. The squashes for the soup are cleaned,

coated with olive oil and roasted flesh-side up in the oven until well caramelized. This produces a rich, complex flavor in the finished soup. The root vegetables are cut uniformly as described above, and I suggest a visit to Berkeley Bowl, as I did recently, where you will discover an unusual collection of colorful and flavor-filled root vegetables and tubers. Serve with freshly prepared basil-mint aioli for a truly unforgettable dish.



CHARLES VOLLMAR

Roasted Winter Squash soup can be a big hit on a cold winter day.

### Featured Recipes

#### Roasted Winter Squash Soup with Acorn Squash, Persimmon and Pumpkin Seed Sauté

Winter squashes are harvested in the fall and are available from October through March, although the mid-season fruit is the best. Any winter squash can be used in this recipe or a combination of your choice: butternut, acorn, Hubbard or Delicata. At the market, look for heavy, hard-skinned squash with no blemishes or bruises

#### Soup

1 medium butternut squash and 2 medium acorn squashes (yields approximately 5 cups roasted flesh)  
2 tablespoons olive oil  
1 medium onion, diced  
1 carrot, peeled and diced  
1 celery stalk, diced  
1 tablespoon curry powder  
2 teaspoons allspice  
2 teaspoons cinnamon  
8 cups chicken or vegetable stock  
1/2 cup dry sherry

Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

#### Acorn Squash, Persimmon, Pumpkin Seed Sauté

1/4 small acorn squash, peeled and cut into 1/4-inch dice  
1 Fuyu persimmon, peeled and cut into 1/4-inch dice  
1 tablespoon unsalted butter  
1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil  
1 tablespoon finely chopped sage  
1/4 cup roasted pumpkin seeds

• Preheat oven to 375°F. Cut the squashes in half, remove the seeds, brush with olive oil and bake, cut side up for 40–45 minutes or until soft.

• While the squashes are roasting, in a heavy-bottomed stockpot, heat the olive oil

over medium heat. Add the onion, carrot, celery (*mirepoix*) and sauté for 5 minutes. Add the spices and sauté for another 5 minutes. Add 2 cups of the broth and simmer for 15 minutes. When the squash is done, allow squash to cool slightly, and scoop out the flesh. Add the roasted squash and remaining stock. Bring to a boil, reduce heat and simmer for 15 minutes longer.

• Add the sherry. Remove from heat and purée the mixture with a hand blender or in batches in a bar blender. Return to heat and season with kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste. Keep warm until served.

For the acorn squash, persimmon and pumpkin seed sauté: Heat the butter and olive oil in a medium sauté pan. Add the diced acorn squash, persimmon, and chopped sage and sauté for 3 - 4 minutes until slightly soft. Season to taste with kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper. Stir in the roasted pumpkin seeds.

• To serve, ladle soup into serving bowls. Top with a generous portion of the squash, persimmon sauté.

Serves 8

#### Roasted Winter Root Vegetables

This is a wonderful fall or winter medley of root vegetables and tubers that when roasted are full of flavor and sweetness. Cut the vegetables into uniform pieces for appearance and even cooking time. Any combination of vegetables may be used.

4 medium red potatoes, quartered  
1 parsnip, peeled and cut into 1" diagonal cubes

1 turnip, peeled and cut into 1" chunks  
1 small rutabaga, peeled and cut into 1" chunks

2 carrots, peeled and cut into 1" diagonal pieces

2 medium Chioggo or golden beets, washed, trimmed and cut into 1" chunks

1 fennel bulb, cut into triangles  
1 medium red onion, sliced 1/2" thick

3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil

1 tablespoon fresh thyme

1 tablespoon kosher salt

1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

• Preheat oven to 400°F.

• Place cut root vegetables in a large bowl, add olive oil and toss until well-coated. Add the thyme leaves, kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper and toss until combined.

• Place vegetables in a single layer on a sheet pan and roast for approximately 40 - 45 minutes until lightly browned and tender crisp. Serve warm with a dollop of herbed aioli.

Serves 8

#### Basil-Mint Aioli

An Aioli is a French sauce, which is a mayonnaise base with plenty of garlic. The process is simple and successful if a few guidelines are adhered to: All ingredients must be at room temperature and the oils

[SEE COOKING page 16]



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HOLIDAY ENTERTAINMENT

## The Nutcracker Comes to Orinda this Holiday Season



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Students and professional dancers will bring to life the characters from *The Nutcracker*.

By SALLY HOGARTY  
Editor

A colorful parade of characters will dance across the Orinda Library Theater this December as the Orinda Ballet Academy and Company presents "A Sweet Dream Nutcracker."

Featuring excerpts from *The Nutcracker Suite*, the performance tells of a very special Christmas where young Clara is given a nutcracker from her favorite uncle. Following the party, Clara falls asleep under the tree with the beloved nutcracker in her arms. She soon begins to dream of a Nutcracker Prince and a fierce battle against a Mouse King. Her dream comes to life in this much-loved holiday treat.

Artistic director Patricia Tomlinson has cast accomplished company members as well as students in the show, which takes place December 11 at 7 p.m., December 12 at 2 and 6:30 p.m., and December 13 at 1:30 p.m. Tomlinson has been teaching and choreographing in the East Bay for the past 14 years. She trained in New York City at the School of American Ballet where she was coached by such luminaries as George Balanchine, Alexandra Danilova, Peter Martins, and Helgi Tomasson. Tickets may be purchased at the Orinda Community Center and at the door on performance date. For more information, go to [www.cityoforinda.org](http://www.cityoforinda.org) or call 254-2445.

## Snow Expected At Orinda Theatre Square This Holiday Season

By SALLY HOGARTY  
Editor

One of the all time best feel good Christmas movies with some truly amazing song and dance numbers comes to the Orinda Theater this holiday season. *White Christmas*, starring Bing Crosby, Danny Kaye, and Rosemary Clooney will brighten the holiday season for local movie-goers on December 12 at 4 and 7 p.m.

This classic movie about two army buddies from World War II who pull together a show to help out a former commanding officer will be the second screening in a series of events planned to honor the move by the California Independent Film Festival (CAIFF) to their new home at Orinda Theatre Square. The event will also feature live holiday music and singing carolers from Miramonte High School Chamber Choir. This event benefits the Lamorinda Teen Center and CAIFF.

"Orinda, being a small city, is excited about having a renowned film festival in our community," says Orinda Mayor Tom McCormick. "The Lamorinda Teen Center Inc. is very fortunate to have the support of the California Independent Film Festival. We are hopeful a Lamorinda teen center will eventually come to fruition in the Lamorinda area."

Tickets for *White Christmas* are \$15 for



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Bing Crosby and Danny Kaye star in the classic film *White Christmas*.

adults and \$13 for students and seniors. Tickets may be purchased online at the festival's website ([www.caiff.org](http://www.caiff.org)), or call 925.277.1355. Tickets will also be available at the Orinda Theater and at the Rheem Theater.

The California Independent Film Festival, which will be held for the first time in Orinda from April 22 - April 25, 2010, is in its 12th season.

## The Musical Version of *The Velveteen Rabbit*

*Whiskers*, by local playwright **Caroline Altman**, features several local performers including **Melissa Wilson** and **Elena Wasserman** shown at right. Also in the cast are **Tosca Maltzman** and *The Orinda News* editor **Sally Hogarty**. The show performs Dec. 11-19 at the Leshner Center for the Arts in Walnut Creek. Call 925-943-SHOW.



SALLY HOGARTY

### Hospice Tree Lighting on December 5



Members of the Orinda Chamber of Commerce (shown above) pose with Santa, who will be available for children at the tree lighting ceremony. It begins at 4:30 p.m. with refreshments and entertainment by local choral groups. Each light on the tree represents a loved one who is being honored or remembered. For more information, call the Chamber at 254-3909.



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MAGGIE

Margaret, an avid cyclist, suffered extensive injuries when hit by a car. After several surgeries, she transferred to our care and received intensive medical and rehabilitation services to help regain her ability to care for herself. Margaret is now back home.

ROGER

Roger had a double knee replacement. After the surgery, he needed physical rehabilitation before returning home. We helped him regain strength and endurance. Roger is home and golfing with his friends and family.



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### Other Local Holiday Happenings

Dec. 5 - **Kids 'n Dance** presents *Wicked* at 10 a.m., and *The Little Mermaid* at 1, 2:30 and 4 p.m. All shows will be at the Orinda Library Auditorium. Tickets can be purchased at the door.

Dec. 16 - **Miramonte High School** Winter choral concert, 7:30 p.m., at Miramonte High School Theatre. The Mixed Chorus, Women's Ensemble, Concert Singers, and Choral Artists will perform holiday favorites, winter music, spirituals and classical works.

BACKYARD GETAWAYS

Backyard Getaways and Beyond

Russia Revisited



Bobbie Dodson

On my first visit to Russia in 1992, Moscow had an overwhelming sense of darkness and gloom. Crumbling buildings were gray and dingy; tired looking mothers stood in lines for a meager portion of bread or milk; grocery store shelves were almost empty; men in shabby suits tried to sell a pair of their own shoes at the entrance to a subway station. It was the first year after the break up of the Soviet Union and for the next decade, conditions grew worse as the new Russian “democracy” tried to find its way, with no road map to follow after centuries of subjugation of one sort or another.

It gladdened my heart to see Moscow today with brilliantly lit streets and build-

ings, the GUM department store’s block long facade outlined with glowing bulbs, mirrored skyscrapers reaching skyward, market shelves brimming; Lexus, BMW, and Mercedes cars numerous in the traffic packed highways, and smartly dressed men and women rushing to their next business appointments.

While the Russians still have a long way to go to raise the standard of living of their masses, great strides have been made. Our guide, Misha, said, “Now, we know the truth about how well off the Western world is. In the Communist days, we were told that 95 percent of the people in America went to bed hungry every night and many other such lies. We would never want to go

back to that kind of repressive regime.”

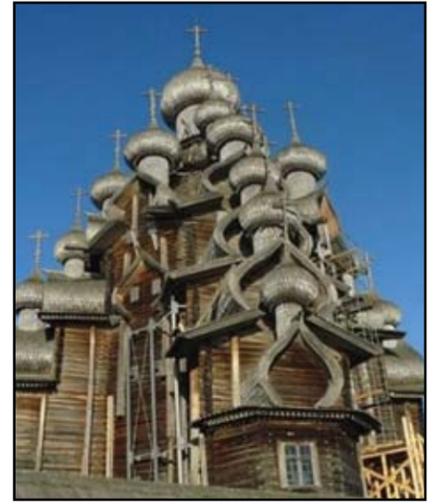
Along with the good feelings about the new look of Russia, there was the joy of seeing more and more of the churches, palaces and public buildings restored to their former grandeur. While viewing all of this opulence helps our understanding as to why there was a revolution in 1917 to overthrow the Czarist regime, still one can’t help but marvel at the magnificent beauty they created.

In St. Petersburg, the Hermitage tops everyone’s “must-see” list. One of the most famous museums in the world, it occupies seven buildings, including the Winter Palace. Brimming with an outstanding art collection, sculptures, silver and porcelain objects, overall it has more than three million exhibits. We were told it would take a person nine years to walk through and observe everything.

For our group, visiting Peterhof was a close second. Although the palace is lovely, the gardens are the draw with their multitude of fountains. The dazzling Grand Cascade is a sequence of 37 gilded bronze sculptures, 64 fountains, and 142 water jets descending from the terraces of the Great Palace to the Bay of Finland

Catherine’s Palace has its Amber Room, a complete chamber decorated with 18 panels of amber, weighing over six tons, backed with gold leaf and mirrors. So unique it has been called “The eighth wonder of the world.” Looted by the Nazis during World War II and taken to Germany, all of the amber interior paneling disappeared, its whereabouts still a mystery. In 1979, Russian craftsmen began to rebuild the Amber Room, completing it in 2003.

Founded in 1703, the first capital of Russia, St. Petersburg has suffered greatly in numerous times of war, but never has an army succeeded in setting foot within its limits. The city endured the most terrifying blockade in mankind’s history, lasting 872 days from September 8, 1941 to January 27,



BOBBIE DODSON

The Cathedral of St. Basil the Blessed on Red Square in Moscow.

1944. The rebuilding of its many palaces, cathedrals and public buildings, here, and throughout the land is remarkable.

This is the case in Moscow as well. In both these cities, the impressive sights are too numerous to mention, but here are a few which stood out for us in Moscow.

Who can forget the May Day scenes of Russia’s military might on display in Red Square? Today tourists come here to visit Lenin’s Tomb, the Kremlin, Armory Museum, GUM Department Store and the quintessential Church of St. Basil, with its nine spires or domes, each more gaudily painted than the rest, looking as though Disneyland designers created it.

How fortunate that it, and numerous other churches, were designated as museums and survived the Communist regime. However, many did not and have been painstakingly rebuilt. Inside most are richly decorated – ceilings and walls completely covered with frescoes, mosaics, and icons.

Considered the most beautiful subway system in the world, Moscow’s metro stations were referred to as “The People’s

[SEE RUSSIA page 18]

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EXCHANGE STUDENT

Czech Student A Good Fit With Local Family

By FRAN MILLER  
Staff Writer

Orindans Bob and Maryett Thompson have generously opened their home over the years to a number of foreign exchange students, providing both short term and long term housing to young people from Japan, France, Denmark and Viet Nam. They've hosted so many students, they've lost count.

With their latest boarder, Czech 16-year-old Michaela "Michi" Kopecka, they feel they've hit the jackpot. Kopecka is this year's Orinda-Tabor Sister City Foundation exchange student, having persevered through the rigorous vetting process, which includes multiple interviews and written essays. Kopecka beat out eight other Czech students for the opportunity to live in Orinda, attend Miramonte High School, and experience the American way.

"Michi has been fantastic," says Bob Thompson. "She is engaged with us and with those at her school, and she has a great demeanor. She is always polite, and she is very helpful at home. We've really enjoyed having her."

Kopecka's indoctrination to the American way began on the first night of her arrival in August, when her host family introduced her to "In and Out Burger," which she declared "delicious." Subsequent outings, all noted and starred on a Bay Area map to be sent home with Kopecka in February as a remembrance, include Fenton's Creamery in Oakland, a weekend at Lake Tahoe, visiting Thompson friends in Sonoma, and a tour of the Stanford campus (Bob's alma mater).

Kopecka had only imagined what California might be like, and she is finding the reality to be fairly close to what she envisioned.

"It's so beautiful here," says Kopecka, who recently attended her first ever homecoming dance and festivities. "We don't have social or sports activities at school in the Czech Republic. School is only academic. I'm having fun with the social part of high school."

And so is her host mom Maryett, who regularly attends Kopecka's Miramonte tennis matches and has met a whole new group of Orinda friends as a result. With the three Thompson kids grown and living on their own, Maryett assumed her days as supportive sports mom were over. But when Kopecka won a spot on the Miramonte girl's varsity team, Maryett, like any proud parent, started attending all her matches.

Kopecka is considering trying out for the

girls' basketball team next and at 5'10," could prove to be a surprise asset.

Her primary motive in studying overseas is to broaden her English language skills, though she arrived possessing a more-than-adequate grasp. Still, she finds her English class to be most challenging and getting through *The Scarlet Letter* was a bit daunting. She considers *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* to be a bit easier. She still "thinks" in Czech and translates to English in her mind – a tiring process – and only when she starts "thinking" in English will she consider herself fluent.

Because her school credits here will not transfer to her Czech studies at home, she has opted for a broad range of interesting subjects such as cooking and sports medicine. If she can pass an academic test upon her return home, she will rejoin her Czech classmates without missing a beat.

As the holidays approach, Kopecka is asked if she will miss being home. "No, I'll be fine. Christmas is definitely a big event at home, with Christmas Eve being the most special time. We have lots of lights, and many traditions, some of which I am excited to share with the Thompsons."

"Michi is going to teach us how to make traditional Czech Christmas cookies," says Maryett. "We're going to bake up a storm."

Kopecka will be in the States until February 14, at which time the Thompsons will lower the Czech flag that waves from the flag pole in their front yard - they always raise the country flag of each of their boarders. But another flag will undoubtedly soon take it's place.

"We've always obtained our exchange students by answering appeals," says Maryett. "We just can't seem to say no."



FRAN MILLER

Bob and Maryett Thompson are hosting Tabor exchange student Michaela Kopecka (center). The 16-year-old attends Miramonte High School and has helped the school's tennis team make some impressive wins.

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LETTERS

◆ LETTERS from page 4

sible to meet the minimum standards established by national, state and county fire and emergency medical service agencies.

Be extremely dangerous as it would inevitably lead to severe property damage and loss of life from house and grass/wildlands fires, especially since much of Orinda is classified a Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone by Cal-Fire.

Increase the risk of death in a medical emergency, especially in South Orinda where MOFD units from downtown Moraga are currently the first-responders.

But, there is little reason to believe FAIR's plan could ever be enacted. In order to withdraw from MOFD, the City of Orinda would have to prepare a detailed analysis for LAFCO of their plan and its

impact on Moraga, as well as the adjoining wildland areas. Those include a large area from the Tunnel north through the Berkeley Hills, encompassing Tilden Regional Park, the Sibley Regional Preserve, and portions of the Wildcat Canyon Regional Park and the San Pablo and Briones Reservoirs. LAFCO's state mandate is to simplify governance. Most likely, LAFCO would determine that MOFD's annexation to Con Fire would be a more cost-effective solution.

In 1994, LAFCO tried to annex the old Orinda Fire District to Con Fire, ignoring strenuous objections from local residents and officials. Orindans collected signatures to force an election and then voted overwhelmingly against annexation. California Government Codes today require that, if LAFCO initiates annexation, residents of the entire Con Fire district vote alongside us on the question of annexation, making our vote meaningless.

In short, FAIR's plans are unrealistic and dangerous. But in pursuing them, FAIR is putting MOFD at increased risk

of annexation to Con Fire, the end result being a reduction of service and Orinda's fire tax revenue going to Con Fire, not the City of Orinda.

—Ellen Dale

**Angry Over Article**

I am extremely angry and concerned after reading Daniel Borenstine's column in *The Contra Costa Times*, entitled "Expensive fire district needs to be studied."

Frankly, I do not think that Mr Borenstine did his due diligence in gathering information before he made certain assumptions and statements in his article.

MOFD is a crucial part of our towns infrastructure, and we benefit greatly by the service it provides to our communities. Responding quickly to emergencies and knowing the roads well is a matter of life and death in most situations. Why mess with a system that was put into effect for important reasons in 1997 without concrete evidence of its failure or dysfunction. If our fire services are changed by annexing MOFD to the Contra Costa Fire District, it will be disastrous for our community.

We as responsible members of this community cannot take a backseat attitude after reading an article whose misinformation could directly impact and compromise the safety of our lives.

— Sonny Hanson

**Orinda Should Form Own Fire District**

I believe Ellen Dale's article in the 10/17/09 *Contra Costa Times* was filled with misinformation without documentation.

Using common sense and 5th grade math, it becomes obvious that since the creation of Moraga/Orinda Fire District (MOFD) in 1997, Orinda has been subsidizing Moraga. Orinda has 52 percent of all medical and fire incidents to 48 percent in Moraga. Yet Orinda furnishes 65 percent of the budget revenue to only 35 percent from Moraga. This financial disparity increases to 70 percent from Orinda and 30 percent from Moraga within a few years (See MOFD Long Range Financial Plan 2/20/07).

Orinda is paying \$2.4 million more annually for its three stations than Moraga pays for its two stations. This \$2.4 million will increase to almost \$4 million when Montanera [Wilder] comes on line (See MOFD Long Range Financial Plan 2/20/07). There is no amount of undocumented assertions that can justify Orinda subsidizing Moraga \$4 million annually.

Orinda must detach from MOFD, and form an Orinda Fire District. Ms. Dale states that if LAFCO would allow detachment from MOFD, they would most likely

require that Orinda be annexed to Con Fire. This flies in the face of past history.

LAFCO allowed Orinda to detach from Con Fire in 1997. What evidence does Ms. Dale have that LAFCO would not allow Orinda to detach today from MOFD and form an Orinda Fire District?

Orinda citizens voted to detach from Con Fire and form MOFD in 1997 because Orinda was subsidizing other communities in the county. Orinda citizens should now have the same opportunity to vote to determine if Orinda should detach from MOFD to stop subsidizing Moraga. An Orinda Fire District would allow Orinda to use its tax dollars in Orinda. The money Orinda uses to subsidize Moraga could be better spent on Orinda roads and water pipes.

— Janet Maiorana

**Disgruntled Reporter**

Having read Daniel Borenstein's Sunday *Times* column (October 11,2009) compels me to write. Having served for almost 21 years on the Moraga Fire Commission and on the newly formed Moraga/Orinda Fire District board of directors, I cannot stand by and watch Mr. Borenstein conduct a hack job on the communities fire district. He has laced his writing with inaccurate and false information, that appears as if it was plucked from the manifesto of those few disgruntled Orinda residents who have, what appears to me, to be a deep seated hatred of the MOFD.

I am not going to hash over the details of the arguments as many have done at Fire District meetings, letters to LAFCO and in the pages of several papers, but I will say that Mr. Borenstein needs to do a lot more research before he writes an article. I know for a fact that he has intentionally discarded some information that he deems not relevant and takes at face value other information that he believes will pique interest in his column, whether truthful or not.

— Gordon Nathan

**Orinda Never Part of Con Fire**

As past president of the Orinda Association and having served on the Orinda Fire Protection and Emergency Services Advisory Committee in the mid 1990s, I feel compelled to respond to Janet Maiorana's statement in a recent letter to the editor regarding LAFCO. In her letter, she takes issues with Ellen Dale's concern that, if the City of Orinda asked LAFCO to allow it to withdraw from MOFD and establish a municipal fire department, it was very likely LAFCO would respond that it makes more sense to annex to Con Fire. She says this "Flies in the face of history."

There is an old saying that says, "Those [SEE LAFCO page 16]



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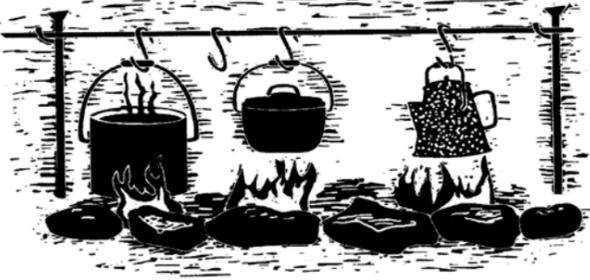
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CALDECOTT TUNNEL

# Tunneling Through Time

By LENNIE LAMB ROBERTS  
Contributing Writer

Construction of the fourth bore of the Caldecott Tunnel recently took one more step towards reality, when bids were opened September 30 for this long-awaited congestion-relieving project.

As an early resident of Orinda, I was just a year old and, therefore, not quite able to enjoy the spectacle of Army planes, fireworks, flocks of pigeons, and speeches by Governor Frank Merriam and other dignitaries when the Caldecott first opened on December 5, 1937. The parade of cars stretched for miles and miles.

My dad, Malcolm Lamb, rejoiced! He had daily navigated through the old Kennedy tunnel, a dark 17-foot wide timber edifice located on the hillside 200 feet above the Caldecott. His once-arduous commute from Orinda to San Francisco had already been greatly improved in November 1936 when the S.F.-Oakland Bay Bridge opened, eliminating the ferry ride across the Bay. With the new twin-bore Caldecott, my dad joined 5,700 other happy souls zipping back and forth daily through the Berkeley hills.

Who among them could have possibly imagined that in just 70 years the traffic spurred by Contra Costa County's real estate boom would overwhelm not just two

tunnels, but three?

Today, I doubt that the 160,000 drivers who daily grit their teeth as they jostle, weave and squeeze their vehicles into six lanes to crawl through the tunnel give much thought to "how things used to be." But I never drive through the Caldecott without appreciating the unusual journey my mother, Dorothy Clark Lamb, took through the Kennedy tunnel back in 1919.

World War I was over, the country was recovering from the great flu epidemic of 1918, and my grandparents had bought a summer place at the end of Hemme Avenue in Alamo. My mother, age 17, decided to ride her horse from Oakland to Alamo – an all day trip that took her through the rickety Kennedy tunnel.

Her account of the ride was uneventful, except for getting a cold shower from the water that dripped incessantly from the old timbers. If she had met any "machines" as automobiles were popularly called, I imagine Babe the horse would have spooked, and this story would have been much more dramatic. My mother never told me the details of how she managed to convince her parents that this venture was a good idea. I wonder if my grandparents knew she was going to do this, or whether she just surprised them.

It's amazing to me to think about how



COURTESY OF THE ORINDA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The original "upper" Caldecott Tunnel, also known as the Kennedy Tunnel.

the Bay Area has been transformed in just 90 years since Dorothy's ride. Most people accept the hassles and stress of commuting as a necessary evil. I have to wonder, though, what this place will look like in another 90 years. Will we have figured out how to get around without relying primarily on the automobile and its ever-expanding network of freeways? Will we have found new, clean energy sources and reversed the alarming increase of greenhouse gases? Will Orinda still be a quieter, more rural, community?

Meanwhile, my sentimental hope is that someone rides a horse in the parade when the Caldecott's fourth bore opens!

*Lennie Lamb Roberts grew up in Orinda, and now lives in Portola Valley, CA. She and other environmental leaders waged a 30-year battle against Caltrans' proposed freeway bypass of 600 feet of unstable cliffs at Devil's Slide near Half Moon Bay, promoting a tunnel instead. In 1996, voters in San Mateo County overwhelmingly approved Measure T, the Tunnel Initiative. The 4,200 foot long Devil's Slide tunnel is the first new tunnel to be constructed in California since Caldecott's third bore in 1964 and is scheduled to be opened in 2011. The same type of tunneling equipment used at Devil's Slide will be utilized on the Caldecott's 4th bore.*

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CONTINUATIONS

◆ **CAR TIME** from page 7

under-inflated, they will tend to wear on the outer edges and adversely affect vehicle handling, fuel economy, and ride quality.

Tire failure can occur suddenly and without warning. The most frequent cause of a flat tire, however, is a gradual loss of air that the driver does not notice. Today's vehicles offer larger wheel diameters with shorter sidewalls. This makes it difficult to spot an under-inflated tire. Abnormal tire wear can be caused by several things:

- Under inflation (low tire pressure)
- Repeated hard and abrupt braking
- Sharp and overly aggressive steering maneuvers
- Unbalanced wheels
- Poor wheel alignment

- Frequently driving over bumps and through potholes
- Lack of tire rotations.

A "blowout" occurs when a tire suddenly loses all of its air pressure. Old and badly worn tires have a high risk of going flat or having a blowout if you hit a pothole, strike a curb, or run over an object in the roadway. When you experience a tire failure in your front tires, the vehicle will pull hard in the direction of the deflated tire. When you experience a tire failure in a rear tire, the rear of the vehicle may fishtail or swerve.

When replacing two tires only, the Department of Transportation recommends installing the new tires on the rear. Shopping for new tires can become confusing and often times a shock at current tire prices.

Today's vehicles use higher performance rated tires, larger diameters and some vehicles are equipped with "Run-Flat" tires which offer the motorist the ability to continue driving the vehicle with a flat tire off the highway to safety. Unfortunately, the "Run-Flat" tires are not repairable because

part of their design insures the capability to drive for up to 50 miles on a flat. Once the tire has been compromised by a puncture, it must be replaced. Be sure to always replace tires with factory approved load and performance ratings, and use a competent tire facility.

◆ **COOKING** from page 10

must be incorporated slowly to ensure a proper emulsion.

- 1 egg yolk
- 2 teaspoons Maille-brand Dijon mustard
- 1/2 cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 1/4 cup walnut or pure olive or canola oil
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 4 garlic cloves, finely minced
- 10 basil leaves, coarsely chopped
- 8 mint leaves, coarsely chopped
- Juice of 1/2 lemon

• Whisk together the egg yolk, mustard and 1 tablespoon of the olive oil until an

emulsion is formed.

• Combine the oils and slowly add the oil to the emulsion, whisking vigorously and constantly. Continue adding the oil in a steady stream until all the oil has been added. Add the minced garlic, chopped basil and mint, lemon juice and season to taste with kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper.

Makes 1 1/4 cups

For comments, questions or suggestions feel free to contact the Chef, via email: [charlie@epicureanexchange.com](mailto:charlie@epicureanexchange.com) or visit [www.epicureanexchange.com](http://www.epicureanexchange.com) for more information on programs and classes.

◆ **SCHOOLS** from page 1

Clark, who is new to the principal's job this year, recognizes that Miramonte is a "high-performing school" and, with that, comes a lot of stress on students to get into a Stanford or Ivy League college.

"Some kids put in the work to do that," says Clark. "Other kids are still in a discovery mode. I want all kids to be treated like they're important, that what they say has meaning and relevance."

Clark says he wants kids to think positively about their high school experience,

not that school hampered them in any way. "I tell students, 'you only have four years here, let's enjoy the time.' I tell them, 'expand your circle, get involved, go to a concert or play - you might meet someone new or find a new interest.'"

Clark says his goal is to make a personal connection with each student and to help kids establish healthy lifestyles and healthy relationships. "They are great kids, doing tremendous things," says Clark. "They should be praised and recognized for their accomplishments. I try to do that as much as I can."

◆ **LAFCO** from page 14

who forget history are doomed to repeat it." The factual history is that in 1994 LAFCO approved a merger of the Orinda Fire Department into Con Fire over strong objections of Orinda's representatives. In order to avoid annexation, the people of Orinda had to collect enough signatures to force a vote on the issue. Orinda voted 5503 to 2652 against annexation that year.

Now, however, if LAFCO were to take the same action, we would not be able to vote it down because every resident in Con Fire (of which Orinda has never been a part) would be voting along side of us at the polls. And why would they vote against annexing MOFD given our healthy tax base?

Mrs. Maiorana is arguing on the wrong side of history.

- Judy Shallat

◆ **BOOKS** from page 8

Internet these days when we find ourselves trying to make dinner with a can of garbanzos and some sun-dried tomatoes, what takes us back to cookbooks such as Keller's are not only the recipes but the gorgeous illustrations - the efforts of the best food stylists and graphics people in the business. Another Orinda Books favorite this season is *Cooking Dinner: Simple Italian Family Recipes Everyone Can Make* by Rima Barkett and Claudia Pruett (Mega \$34.95). The charming Rima Barkett visited the bookstore last month and inspired us with her dedication to bringing the American family back to the kitchen - and to the

dinner table - together. (We also loved her story of cooking a celebratory dinner for George Clooney and Don Cheadle when they were being honored in Rome for their contributions to world peace).

Many Lamorinda homes do still cherish family traditions and share family meals while, at holiday time, stockings are hung by the chimney with care. This year a pleasing little literary stocking stuffer might be Gregory Maguire's *Matchless: A Christmas Story* (William Morrow, \$19.99), a charming retelling of Hans Christian Andersen's *The Little Match Girl*. Delightfully formatted and illustrated by Maguire himself, it is not even available as an e-book. Take that, Kris Kindle!



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## CALENDAR

## ON THE CALENDAR

## DECEMBER

- 2 **Orinda Historical Society** Holiday Dinner, Orinda Community Church, Fellowship Hall, 10 Irwin Way, 6 p.m. Guest speakers Tom Peterson, co-owner of the Orinda Theater, and architect William Simpson "Downtown Orinda - Yesterday and Tomorrow" 254-1353.
- 4 **Overhill Road Holiday Boutique**, 214 Overhill Road. Dec. 4, noon to 8 p.m., Dec. 5 and 6, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Percentage of proceeds benefits Komen Breast Cancer Foundation, 254-3944.
- 5 **Hospice Tree Lighting**, 4:30 p.m., Village Shopping Center, choral groups, tree lighting, visit by Santa Claus.
- Friends of the Orinda Library** Holiday Book Sale, Bookshop and Sorting Room, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., 254-1358.
- 6 **Orinda Community Church** Advent Fair, 10 Irwin Way, 4 to 7 p.m. Fun for the entire family with crafts and carol singing, 254-4906.
- 7 **Transition Point and Brain Gym** Speaking Fearlessly transforms the way people communicate, 7 to 9:30 p.m., 58 Van Ripper Lane, Orinda. RSVP Pam Whitman, 253-1223, or visit [www.transitionpoint.org](http://www.transitionpoint.org).
- 10 **Orinda Chamber of Commerce** Christmas Mixer, Mechanics Bank, 77 Moraga Way, 5:30 to 7 p.m.
- 11 **Orinda Books** Ceramic artist Gerry Wallace will hold a show and sale of whimsical and holiday ornaments, 276 Village Square, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., 254-7606.
- 12 **California Independent Film Festival** presents two showings of *White Christmas* at the Orinda Theater, 4 and 7 p.m. Also featuring the Miramonte High School Chamber Choir. Purchase tickets at Orinda or Rheem theater box office or at [www.caiff.org](http://www.caiff.org), 277-1355.
- 16 **Miramonte High School** Winter Choral Concert, 7:30 p.m., Miramonte Theatre. Also Dec. 17 at 7:30 p.m.
- 17 **Orinda/Tabor Sister City Foundation** Christmas Czech Dessert and Ornament Exchange, 7 p.m. For location, call Bobbie Landers at 254-8260 or visit [www.CityofOrinda.gov/SisterCityTabor](http://www.CityofOrinda.gov/SisterCityTabor).
- 24 **Orinda Community Church** Christmas Eve Family Candlelight Service, 10 Irwin Way, 5:30 p.m. Worship with the Angel Choir, the Chancel Choir and talented soloists. Share in the Nativity Story and sing Christmas carols, 254-4906.

## AT THE LIBRARY

All events are free unless otherwise specified.

- 1 **Toddler Lapsit**, stories, songs and fingerplays for 1- to 3-year-olds and their caregivers, Gallery Room, 10 to 10:30 a.m. No registration required but attendance limited to once per week. Also Dec. 2, 8, 9, 15, 16, 22, 29 and 30.
- Peek-A-Boo Time**, stories, songs, rhymes and rhythms for newborns to 1-year-old (pre-walkers) and their caregivers, Gallery Room, 11:30 a.m. Also Dec. 8, 15, 22 and 29.
- 5 **Saturday Morning Live!** Family storytime for preschoolers, Picture Book Area, 11 a.m. Also Dec. 12 and 19.
- 8 **An Evening with Dylan Thomas: A Fireside Performance** by Actors Reading Writers, 7 to 8 p.m., including *A Visit to Grandpa's* and *A Child's Christmas in Wales*, teens and adults.
- 9 **Drawing Class for Young Children**, Geanie Choy leads the class for children in kindergarten through 2nd grade, Tutoring Room, 4 p.m. Space limited, sign-ups available one hour before class.
- 16 **Aurélia's Oratorio**, a Berkeley Repertory Theatre docent presentation, Gallery Room, 7 to 8 p.m., teens and adults.
- 21 **Holidawgs!** Relax with a Santa Paws, Hanukkah Hound and Kwanzaa Kanine. Read a story to a friendly dog, make a craft and play a game, Gallery Room, 4 to 5 p.m. **Note:** The library will be closed Dec. 23 to 27. For more information on library programs, call 254-2184.

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](http://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 the Joaquin Moraga Adobe**, third Thursday, 7:30 p.m., Orinda Community Church, 10 Irwin Way, Orinda [www.moragaadobe.org](http://www.moragaadobe.org)
- Friends of the Orinda Creeks**, fourth Wednesday, 8:30 a.m., May Room, Orinda Library. Call 253-1997.
- Montelindo Garden Club** third Friday of the month 9 a.m., Orinda Community Church, 10 Irwin Way. Visit [www.montelindogarden.com](http://www.montelindogarden.com) or email [montelindogarden@aol.com](mailto:montelindogarden@aol.com).
- 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 Hiking Club** meets at 9 a.m. at the old library parking lot on Irwin Way for its weekly Wednesday Hike. Call Steve at 253-0131 or visit [www.orindahiking.org](http://www.orindahiking.org).
- 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 Juniors** community service and social meetings, the first Tuesday of the month 7 p.m. Contact Diane Petek and Ann Sullivan at [orinda.juniors@yahoo.com](mailto:orinda.juniors@yahoo.com) for location.
- Orinda/Tábor** (Czech Republic) Sister City Foundation, Fourth Thursday of the month, 7 p.m. social, 7:30 p.m. meeting, call 254-8260 for location.
- Orinda Teen Advisory Council** meets second Wednesday of the month, 4 p.m., Orinda Community Center, 28 Orinda Way. For information, email [orindateenadvisorycouncil@gmail.com](mailto:orindateenadvisorycouncil@gmail.com).
- Orinda Woman's Club**, Second Tuesday, 9:30 a.m. to noon; call Jean Barnhart, 254-3881.
- 2nd Wednesday Book Group** will discuss *1776* by David McCullough, 3 p.m. Orinda Books 276 Village Square, 254-7606.
- Sunrise Rotary**, Postino's in Lafayette, 7 a.m. every Friday, 254-0440, ext.463.

## Kate Chenok Featured in Holiday Art Show

Avid Orinda potter, Kate Chenok, will be among 40 East Bay artists offering holiday shoppers and art lovers a multitude of gallery quality, handmade gift ideas.

"It's wonderful to be part of an ancient tradition that offers a tactile way to innovate," Chenok says. "I love the creative process in which a form emerges from a piece of clay. It is so different from the corporate executive part of my life." The mother of two teenage daughters, Chenok has her own consulting firm, which focuses on the healthcare sector.

The Orinda potter will be displaying her works at Civic Arts Education's annual Holiday Art Sale. The sale, co-sponsored by Clay Art Guild, takes place December 4 (5 - 9 p.m.), December 5 and 6 (10 a.m. - 5 p.m.) at two locations. Ceramic, including Chenok's work, will be at 1313 Civic Dr. in Walnut Creek while paintings, jewelry, textiles, and more will be at 111 Wiget Lane in Walnut Creek. For more information on the sale, call 925-943-5846.



MELISSA CHENOK

Orinda Potter Kate Chenok at Clay Art Guild studio.

## Memorial Plaque for Orinda Resident Art Amos



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Friends and family, with cooperation from the Orinda Parks and Recreation Foundation, held a celebration for long-time Orinda resident, local dentist and pilot, **Art Amos**. A plaque was placed at one of his favorite spots, Orinda Oaks Park. "Art loved the view, the beauty and peace he felt when he was up there," says his wife **Nathalie Musson**. Shown above are (L-R) **Musson**, son **Ramon** and his friend **Shireen**, daughter **Miranda** and her husband **Mark** and grandson **Tyler**.

## New Eagle Scout for Orinda Troop 303



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Eagle Scout Will Lavis

Congratulations to Will Lavis. The Miramonte High School junior recently held his Eagle Court of Honor at Santa Maria Church. He is a member of Orinda's Troop 303. His parents are Jennifer and Bill Lavis.

Over the past summer, Lavis completed two Eagle projects for the Northern Light School in Oakland. He planned and built a large storage facility to support the PE and science departments and a large 3-part composting system for the school's garden, which works with all grades at the school

[SEE SCOUT page 18]

Sherrie and Billy wish  
all of our friends  
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and joyous  
Holiday Season  
and a  
Happy New Year.



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BUSINESS BUZZ

◆ BUZZ from page 20

reading, writing and spelling exercises”), *Making Math Real*, the *Wilson Reading System*, and *Project Read*. Requa earned her bachelor’s degree from Loyola Marymount University, a California teaching credential at the California State University, Los Angeles, and a certificate in Educational Therapy from the University of California, Berkeley.

Most of the students who come to Requa have been tested by an educational psychologist. She examines the data and determines the student’s instructional needs. “I enjoy the fact that I can see such gains in students. It is incredibly rewarding to see a child decode and become a fluent reader.” While admittedly not a math person, some parents have asked Requa to work with their student, and she will tutor math up to the fourth grade level.

An Orinda resident since 1995, Requa is married to Hal Requa, a real estate investor. The couple has three children. Katie is a 2009 Miramonte High School graduate, Christie is a junior at Miramonte, and Carrie is a student at Orinda Intermediate School. Mary has two children from a previous marriage, Joshua Smith and Kellie Smith. She is also the proud grandmother of Joshua and his wife Jessica’s 2-year-old son, William.

Not surprisingly, Requa’s favorite pastime is reading children’s books. Her recent reads include *Unwind* by Neal Shusterman, *The Hunger Games* by Suzanne Collins and *The Magician’s Elephant* by Kate DiCamillo. Most especially she enjoys spending time with her grandson and can be found playing tennis on the weekends.

For more information, email Mary Requa at mrequa@mac.com or give her a call at 258-9396.

**David Collins Painting**

David Collins established his paint-



VALERIE HOTZ

David Collins has been restoring homes since 1970.

ing business in 1970, specializing in fine restoration painting of old homes in the East Bay. His work encompasses everything from Italian Villas to Craftsman to modern architecture; Collins especially enjoys restoring sash windows by removing defective putty and replacing with weather seal, thereby preserving the craftsmanship of those who came before him.

“I always have enjoyed this kind of work because I work in incredible neighborhoods and preserve homes that I would not ordinarily see. There are some real beauties here in the East Bay. The range of colors available today is a lot of fun. We are currently working on an old home in Orinda and are doing a lot of epoxy work so we don’t have to replace the wood sash windows that make the home particularly distinctive. Also, it is very expensive to replace one wood sash window so we end up saving the homeowner a lot of money when we do restoration work,” explains Collins.

A native of Castro Valley, Collins and his wife Denise moved to Orinda 15 years ago with their two sons, Tyler and Brody, both Miramonte High School graduates. Denise has her own animal training business called I Talk Dog and is the bookkeeper for the family business, which additionally employs six other painters. The Collins’ enjoy spending time at the beach on the weekends, and David goes trap shooting in Martinez on Wednesdays.

Collins takes on all types of projects, from painting an entry bathroom for an upcoming party, cleaning and sealing wood decks, to complete interior and exterior restorations. He works with many interior



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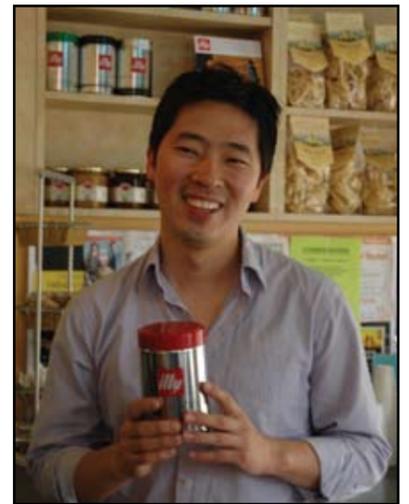
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**Cafe Teatro Goes Italian**

**Cafe Teatro**, located on the plaza at the Orinda Library, has been chosen by Italian coffeemaker Illy as “*Artisti del Gusto*.” Cafe Teatro owner **Joe Cho** says he has always served Illy coffee and feels grateful to have been selected as one of only 28 coffee shops in the United States to receive the designation. The only other Bay Area locations are San Francisco (two) and one in Napa. “They will be bringing us a special new espresso machine and new cups to reflect how coffee is served in Italy,” Cho explains. During November, Cafe Teatro was transformed into an Italian cafe complete with Italian pastries and, of course, gelato.

For more than 20 years, the closely held Illy Caffè SpA, based in Trieste, Italy, has sold its coffee in high-end grocers such as Whole Foods and in coffee shops, hotels and restaurants in the U.S. It hopes to expand its foothold in the U.S. by working closely with independently owned coffee shops.



SALLY HOGARTY

Joe Cho, owner of Cafe Teatro.

decorators that enjoy using colorful interior paints that compliment art displays. “Benjamin Moore’s newest exterior paint, Aura, is so much improved with better durability and color retention that a homeowner can’t afford not to use it. Its hiding ability is almost double and that makes a major difference,” says Collins.

“Working on old homes and working with colors is a real turn on for me. If it is needed, we do waterproofing on stucco

surfaces when a home is leaking. Rather than replacing stucco, we use elastomeric coating, which means it waterproofs the surface. On an old, old home this is preferable to removing the stucco wall and replacing the felt water barrier within the wall,” explains Collins.

For more information about your home restoration and painting needs, visit the website at [www.davidcollinspainting.net](http://www.davidcollinspainting.net) or give Collins a call at 254-6882.



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**Going Away Travel Relocates**

This fall Fimi Schulze, owner of Going Away Travel, decided out of the blue that she needed more personal space to do the creative programs she is known for and moved her customized travel service from 85 Orinda Way to her home office. "I am spending more quality time with my clients, and I am able to do more writing without interruptions. Everyone seems to be thrilled with my decision," she says. This highly personalized travel agency also provides a convenient visa service for those traveling to exotic locations. You may reach Fimi Schulze at 254-0940 or email her at gat98@aol.com.

**Orinda Village Horse Shop Expands**

After nearly 15 years at 101 Orinda Way, this quaint equestrian shop moved a few doors down to 85 Orinda Way – the former location of Going Away Travel. Relocating in October to more spacious digs allows owner Linda Engelstad to bring in additional new inventory that her customers have been requesting. The space is brighter and with more floor space, it clearly accommodates the variety of offerings much better.

"Our specialty is primarily English equestrian riding apparel, helmets, gloves and boots. We do carry some Western gear, but dressage, hunter jumper, and three-day eventing are our focus. We also do the fun side of riding which includes gifts for Christmas, paintings of horses, jewelry,

books, instructional videos, and gifts for children," says Engelstad. "We have noticed a lot of women returning to riding when their children grow older, and we are pleased to give a 10 percent discount to new or returning riders."

A former rider herself, Linda Engelstad established Orinda Village Horse Shop when her own daughters took up riding



VALERIE HOTZ  
 Linda Engelstad of Orinda Village Horse Shop.

during their teen years. "When they were 13 and 14 years of age, they worked in the shop after school and on weekends. Julia currently lives in Walnut Creek and is a former competitive rider. Emily is attending medical school in Irvine," explains Engelstad. Her husband, Barry, is a radiologist with Bay Imaging Consultants. A physician with the Alameda County Medical Center in Oakland, Engelstad practices internal medicine and is a specialist in allergy and asthma care. In their spare time, the Engelstads enjoy foreign travel and are currently planning a trip to Japan.

"For all these years, I have had outstanding help in the store with a very dependable staff. Every one of my staff is a rider, a trainer, or otherwise involved in equestrian activities. Sara Lyness is my sales manager, and she previously did a lot of training with children. Rachel Gunnerson is experienced as well, and they are very knowledgeable with excellent customer service skills," adds Engelstad.

The Orinda Village Horse Shop supports the local Pony Club, the Orinda Horseman's Association, and the Moraga Horseman's Association by providing discounts to these organizations. Engelstad makes it a practice to donate to several local charities, including the Xenophon organization in Orinda.

The Orinda Village Horse Shop is open Tuesday – Friday, 11 a.m. to 6 p.m., Saturday, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Sunday, 12 to 4 p.m. It is closed on Monday. For more information, visit the website at www.orindavillagehorseshop.com or give them a call at 254-1421.

**Educational Therapy with Mary Requa**

With a background as a literacy specialist in the Orinda Union School District, Mary Requa was a member of the original team of Judy Puckett, Jill Hope, and Linnea Burnett. She established her private educational therapy practice in 2005 at 340 Village Square in Orinda.

Educational therapy works with students who have learning differences. "Two out of 10 children learn differently from the way curriculum is taught. That means 20 percent of our students are not able to understand the material. For example, some individuals experience an auditory and visual processing issue, a short term memory issue, a slower processing speed, and there are students who have Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). I teach these students strategies that help them learn and to focus on their strengths," explains Requa, who works with kindergarten through 8th grade students.

Learning differences used to be referred to as learning disabilities and that term implied a student had some type of a disability. "These students in fact learn in a different way than the general population. I teach in a multi-sensory way. They see it, they hear it, and manipulate it in a certain way. For example, with reading they have to manipulate sound, and I help them with that. I work with each student on an individual basis," adds Requa.

It is very important for parents to understand that there is a distinct difference between what Requa provides as an educational therapist and the services of a tutor.

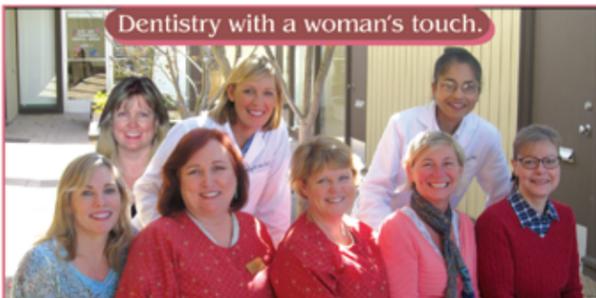


VALERIE HOTZ  
 Mary Requa of Educational Therapy

"Working with students who have learning differences, I do not teach the curriculum. I focus on what the student's needs are and integrate strategies and manipulatives to assist the student," she explains.

She has advanced training in Lindamood Bell processes ("fabulous materials for

[SEE BUZZ page 19]



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