



# THE ORINDA NEWS

Gratis  
Volume 38, Number 5

[www.theorindanews.com](http://www.theorindanews.com)

Delivered to 9,000 Households and Businesses in Orinda

12 Issues Annually  
May 2023

## Miramonte Junior Prom



KATHY CORDOVA

Miramonte students greet each other at the school before boarding buses headed to their junior prom at the Canyon View Event Center in San Ramon on April 15.

## State Approves Orinda's 6th Cycle Housing Element

By KATHY CORDOVA  
Executive Editor

After nearly two years of research, consultants' reports, community outreach and engagement and several revisions, Orinda's 6th Cycle Housing Element was deemed in full compliance by the California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD).

The approval marks a significant milestone in Orinda's efforts to address the ongoing housing crisis in the state and comply with regional housing requirements. Notably, at press time, Orinda is only the second municipality in Contra Costa County and one of only 13 within the 109 Bay Area jurisdictions to receive this approval, according to HCD's website. City Manager, David Biggs, attributes

Orinda's success with their early start and integration of the Downtown Precise Plan (DPP) with the Housing Element.

"The HCD saw that Orinda planned for housing as a tool to revitalize downtown and not to just meet their requirements," said Biggs. "Because of the DPP, we weren't considered to be a city trying to plop down housing just to meet their RHNA (Regional Housing Needs Allocation). This gave the whole plan credibility."

Although the approval is good news for the city, with three years to complete necessary rezonings instead of one year, it is not without controversy.

### HCD did not Consider CalTrans Site as Part of RHNA

By not considering the CalTrans Gate-  
[SEE HOUSING page 5]

## Award-Winning Film Screened at Orinda Theatre

By CHARLEEN EARLEY  
Editor-in-Chief



JEFF HEYMAN

Hollywood actress and writer **Kathy Garver** attended the screening of *Yellow Bird* at the Orinda Theatre on April 1, a new indie film by **Angus Benfield** and **Tony Jerris**, where she stars as Rachel Rush, a mom with Alzheimer's. The film, which is streaming on Amazon Prime Video, was shot in one week in a grocery store in Redding, CA.

Hollywood actress and writer Kathy Garver has visited Orinda friends many times and appeared in promos at the Orinda Theatre for owner Derek Zemrak. However, April 1 was the first time she's walked through the theater doors in her honor of the new indie film screening, *Yellow Bird*.

Known as Cissy in the 1960s sitcom, *Family Affair*, Garver stars as Rachel Rush, afflicted with Alzheimer's and mother of the main character, Jake Rush, played by Angus Benfield. She said she loved working on this film, mostly for its "heart and humor."

"The characters are relatable and have a certain something they are going through."

[SEE BIRD page 16]

## Friends of Orinda Creeks Celebrate Phase One Restoration Completion

By ANDREA MADISON  
Staff Writer

Pablo Creek.

Mayor Miller expressed gratitude to Bauer-Kahan, an Orinda resident, for securing state funding for the project and to FOC, calling the progress in the stretch of the creek behind 25 Orinda Way "an ability to bring people here and show them what Friends of Orinda Creeks is doing and what

[SEE CREEK page 7]



JEFF HEYMAN

The local non-profit Friends of Orinda Creeks held a celebration event on the bank of San Pablo Creek, behind 25 Orinda Way, on March 25, attended by city dignitaries, citizens and members of the organization. Restoration committee member **David Hop** speaks as the attending crowd looks on.

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CHARITY / CARTOON

# Cars2ndChance Raises Funds for Local Charities One Car at a Time

By ANDREA MADISON  
Staff Writer

When Jacalyn Buettner decided it was time to get a new car for her son Dan, his 2008 Ford Escape hybrid “Dory” had been with the family for 12 years. The SUV had “been all around the West, and traveled to Utah, Idaho and Wyoming,” said Buettner. Its odometer registered 218,000 miles.

But this was not the end of Dory’s story. “I knew Dory didn’t have big trade-in value,” said Buettner. As an Orinda Association board member, she was familiar with the Cars2ndChance program, the ease of donating and its financial impact for the Lamorinda Sunrise Rotary (LSR) and its non-profit recipients. Buettner thought, why not donate Dory, and request The

Orinda Association and Seniors Around Town be beneficiaries?

The Buettners donated Dory to the local Cars2ndChance program, which accepts all types of vehicles in any condition, including RVs, motorcycles and boats. Partner company D&H Automotive, owned by Mary and Dave Kemnitz for 28 years until their retirement last April, either reconditions an accepted vehicle or sends it to auction. The time span between donating and selling the car is usually six weeks.

“We wanted to do more for our community and our Rotary,” said Mary Kemnitz on the initial motivation behind the program. “We learned many of the car donation companies had exorbitant administrative fees and very little of the proceeds from a car donation went back to the cause.”

With the help of Rotary volunteers, Cars-



JACALYN BUETTNER  
Dan Buettner drove “Dory” the Ford Escape on a ski trip to the Teton Mountain Range. The 2008 SUV has since begun a new life in Mexico after Dan’s mother Jacalyn donated the vehicle to Cars2ndChance.

2ndChance maintains very little overhead costs. One hundred percent of vehicle donation proceeds, after the cost of repairs and a small administration fee, go toward helping local Bay Area communities and toward projects around the world through support for parent organization Rotary International.

A special program with a powerful impact, “Cars for Paradise” reconditioned and then delivered 60 cars to the small California community in the aftermath of its devastating wildfire.

Donors can enter vehicle information into the Cars2ndChance website portal at [www.cars2ndchance.com](http://www.cars2ndchance.com) and will receive a response with instructions and a phone call, said Kemnitz.

While donations are easier if the donor is in possession of the vehicle’s title, the program can also assist in obtaining a title from the DMV.

Vehicles donated to Cars2ndChance are picked up almost immediately. If the vehicle is deemed worthy of reconditioning,

D&H completes a 52-point safety inspection and brakes, tires and other safety items are usually replaced.

Dory was reconditioned and sold on the auction block and now has a new home in Mexico.

“This is a fabulous fundraising program. We work with over 80 non-profits,” said Kemnitz. “The beauty of working with us is that we do all the work – and split the proceeds with the non-profits.”

Half of Dory’s proceeds, a little over \$700, went to The Orinda Association. The other half was split between Clayton Valley and Lamorinda Sunrise Rotaries.

Orinda Association board member of 10 years and longtime resident Chris Laszcz-Davis emphasized the value of Cars2ndChance, which donates over \$200,000 each year.

“It’s a win-win for everybody,” she said. “It all goes back to the community.”

Andrea Madison can be reached at [drea.madison.05@gmail.com](mailto:drea.madison.05@gmail.com).



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THE ORINDA ASSOCIATION

A Message From the President  
July 4 Events and William Penn  
Mott Jr. Awards Coming Soon

SALLY HOGARTY



Can you see the sun in the sky and feel the warmth on your skin? It's finally spring with our much needed wet winter behind us. And we all know what that means. Orinda's 4th of July celebration will soon be here.

The Orinda Association is busy planning for another great parade and concert in the park. The theme is Earth Kindness and our grand marshal is the Friends of Orinda Nature Center (formerly the Wagner Ranch Nature Center).

Located at the north end of Wagner Ranch Elementary School, this valuable resource sustained major damage during the past winter. Currently closed, the Friends are working to remove damaged and downed trees and to rebuild paths and other infrastructure to ensure the safety of visitors. When open, the Orinda Nature

Area will continue its mission of conserving this historical site while educating visitors on environmental conservation. Oh yes, and having fun with hikes, Native American football, searching for turtles in the pond and much more.

Remember the young man who rode his gas-powered lounge chair last July 4? The group who cut fine dance routines with their push mowers? Or the energetic families with dogs in tow? Join the fun and enter your club, group of family or friends to march in the 2023 parade. Registrations are free at <https://orindaassociation.org/participate-parade> and we look forward to a wide variety of entrants.

We need your volunteer help, prior to and especially the day of the parade, to make our events even better. Sign-up now [SEE MESSAGE page 8]

Editorial

Mother's Day Writing Project for Students

By CHARLEEN EARLEY  
Editor-in-Chief

I taught journalism at Deer Valley High School in Antioch from 2008 to 2013 and every May, I gave my students a particular assignment.

I didn't tell them what it was about. I gave no background or set-up. They figured it was journalism-related, so they would just dive right in without question.

Centered at the top of the whiteboard, in large, thick letters, I wrote "My mom is ...".

I could hear the muffled giggles and jokes as the students made their way toward their seats – dropping backpacks on the floor and booting up their computers.

Once the intercom announcements were finished, the assignment began.

I had each student – one at a time – write a word or expression on the whiteboard to finish the sentence about their mom (or primary caregiver).

I gave them the freedom to write whatever they wanted, sans vulgar language.

Their words and expressions covered a variety of sentiments, from "my best friend" and "thoughtful" to "controlling" and "overbearing." These were teenag-



CHARLEEN EARLEY

"My mom passed away 17 years ago and I miss her every day. I created this writing project for my students, as a way to appreciate their moms or caretakers, through a written letter," said Charleen Earley.

ers, so understandably, the bulk of their words leaned toward annoyance and irritation.

We'd go over the words, one-by-one. Some required more context and explanation, which some students readily gave, while others would laugh or concur their mom was the same.

Once we discussed all the words, I gave my take on my mother. She died in 2007.

[SEE EDITORIAL page 6]

The Orinda Association

The Orinda Association is a not-for-profit corporation dedicated to:

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

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FIELD DAY / WILDFIRE PREVENTION AND SAFETY FAIR / ORINDA ACTION DAY



JEFF HEYMAN

Rotary Club of Orinda partnered with the Miramonte Track Team for the **70th Frank Isola Rotary Field Day** on April 22. The event, for third to fifth graders, was held at Miramonte Stadium. This long-running Orinda tradition gives older students the opportunity to volunteer and work with younger kids, while giving elementary school students a taste of being a “big kid” on the high school track.



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JEFF HEYMAN

Orinda police officers and MOFD firefighters were on hand to answer questions from the community at the annual **Wildfire Prevention and Safety Fair** on April 22 at the Orinda Community Park. This event was sponsored by the City of Orinda.



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JEFF HEYMAN

**Damon** (L) and **Isaac** helped clean-up the San Pablo Creek on April 22 at this year's **Orinda Action Day**. Responsible for this event were the Orinda Community Foundation, City of Orinda's Parks & Rec., Orinda Woman's Club, Friends of Orinda Creeks, Rotary Club of Orinda, The Friends of the Nature Area and Orinda resident volunteers.



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CHARITY

◆ HOUSING from page 1

way site as part of Orinda’s necessary housing allocation, the HCD effectively moved affordable housing units to other parts of the city and left a very small buffer for low-income housing in the plan.

The CalTrans location along Highway 24 adjacent to Cal Shakes was proposed for 200 units of low-income housing. This plan was opposed by housing rights organizations and some residents amid concerns about its proximity to the freeway, distance from amenities like shopping and transportation and potential traffic impacts.

**Future CalTrans Site Opportunity**

Nick Waranoff, a critic of the original plan for the CalTrans site, who also opposes dense housing in downtown, primarily due to wildfire evacuation risks, sees an opportunity for the city.

“Orinda can take advantage of the approval of the Housing Element to fix this situation,” he said. “It gives the city breathing room to develop a better distribution of new housing, which would minimize the adverse impact on evacuation and also satisfy Orinda’s RHNA.”

Waranoff added, “Such a plan might reduce density downtown and compensate for that reduced density by changing the proposed use of the CalTrans site from a low density, exclusively lower income outpost to a high density, mixed-income, mixed-use village with amenities such as a casual restaurant, convenience store, dry cleaning drop-off and the like.”

He said this could serve the Wilder community and the future memory care center as well.

The HCD approval letter states, “This program commits the City to rezone the CalTrans Gateway site and decertify the

**Axe ALS Golf Tournament at Orinda Country Club**



CARSON CORDOVA

The Axe ALS (amyotrophic lateral sclerosis) Foundation hosted a charity golf tournament at the Orinda Country Club on April 3, with all proceeds supporting the foundation’s mission of raising awareness and funding for ALS treatments and clinical trials. Their goal is to help ALS patients and their families live as full and normal lives as possible; and to encourage research for prevention, alleviation, care, treatment and (one day) a cure for ALS. Co-founder **Amanda Stevens**, whose husband **Eric** was diagnosed with ALS at 29-years-old, is pictured waving the golfers onto the course. For more information, visit <https://axeals.org/>.

**Orinda's Housing Element, a component of the City's General Plan, outlines the strategies and policies which guide the development and preservation of housing in the City.**

**The 6th Cycle Housing Element aims to address growing demand for affordable housing in the state by assigning a Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) for every California municipality.**

**The cycles span eight years, with the 6th cycle extending from 2023 to 2031 and mandating that Orinda provide a plan to add 1,359 housing units in that time, 587 of which must be low or very low-income housing.**

cite (sic) to allow for affordable housing development by January 2026.”

According to Biggs, HCD expressed concerns about the CalTrans location and the timing from the very beginning, so this was not a surprise. He doesn’t preclude mixed-use housing there.

“We’re going to continue working on it,” said Biggs, who pointed out the City may locate affordable housing in other areas that were not in the original plan as the eight-year cycle unfolds.

**Implementation is Key**

Councilmember Latika Malkani is realistic, yet hopeful, noting approval of the Housing Element is great, but this is simply a plan and implementation is key.

“It’s exciting,” she said. “I’m not going to say [adding a large volume of additional housing] is not a burden. On one hand, it’s a huge challenge, one of our biggest challenges, but we have to see the silver lining.”

Malkani said the way to get a vibrant downtown is by adding housing.

“There’s a blight in Orinda and that’s not

ok,” she said. “We’re not alone. A lot of Bay Area jurisdictions are facing problems post COVID-19. If you walk around Theatre Square, it’s depressing.

“We have a lot of work to do to address current needs and to plan long-term,” she added. “We need to plan multi-use structures that include additional housing density which will in turn attract restaurants and businesses. The vast majority of Orindans want vibrancy downtown.”

Affordable housing is a necessary component of development due to California’s RHNA requirements.

Malkani believes Orinda is making a true effort in that area. As evidence, she points to the grant application the City is pursuing for pre-planning of development of the BART site, which may be part of Orinda’s 7th Cycle Housing Element.

“We’re all supposed to do our part,” she said. “And I think there is a genuine interest in Orinda.”

*Kathy Cordova can be reached at [cordova@theorindanews.com](mailto:cordova@theorindanews.com).*

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EDITORIAL / POLICE

# Letters to the Editor

## Misallocation of Funds

Last month's *The Orinda News* included an insert of the spring edition of the City's "The Orinda Way" publication. The second page of this four-page newsletter was devoted to Measure R, the 1% sales tax approved by the voters in November 2020, which was sold to the voters as a source for funding wildfire prevention measures based on a community survey.

The report listed all the wildfire prevention measures the City has embarked on, but it neglected to mention anything about what, in fact, Orindans' Measure R dollars are being used for.

The facts are that for the first full fiscal year the tax has been in effect (ending June 30, 2022):

The tax collected \$3.7 million dollars from us.

Only \$600,000 was spent on wildfire prevention.

Two weeks after the end of the fiscal year, the city staff, without discussing with the citizen oversight commission, recommended to the Council that the City spend virtually all of the year's revenue (\$3.4 million) on road maintenance, not wildfire prevention. The Council approved \$2.4 million of this.

"The Orinda Way" reports none of this.

More details on this misallocation of funds can be found at [www.SaferOrinda.info/latest-news](http://www.SaferOrinda.info/latest-news).

– Steve Cohn

## Wildfire Evacuation Hampered?

On March 3, the community group Orindans for Safe Emergency Evacuation (OSEE) filed a petition with the California

Superior Court over what we believe is a flawed decision by Orinda's City Council, based on inadequate analysis in the Plan Orinda EIR (Environmental Impact Report) on wildfire evacuation and first responder access.

Primarily, Plan Orinda facilitates and encourages increased residential housing through rezoning – a maximum of over 2,300 new residential dwellings and over 6,500 additional residents – mainly in the evacuation chokepoint of downtown.

Members of OSEE support and do not oppose developing housing, but do oppose a decision (made under great pressure from the state) based on inadequate analysis and with no options offered to avoid what the EIR itself called a "significant adverse impact."

The Oakland Hills Firestorm taught us what it means to live in the state's highest level of wildfire risk. Along with major constraints, such as traffic chokepoints, severely limited evacuation routes and challenging topography, Orinda's homes are often set on long, narrow, steep, winding roads which make evacuation safety and first responders' access paramount. OSEE's petition was filed in the hope that the city can find a way to prevent or at least avoid exacerbating any emergency evacuation or emergency response problems before plans move forward to dramatically increase the number of residents and congestion.

For more information, email [OrindaSEE@gmail.com](mailto:OrindaSEE@gmail.com) or [jrf@atalawgroup.com](mailto:jrf@atalawgroup.com).

– Michele Jacobson

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# POLICE BLOTTER

March 16 through April 15

## Calls for Service

- Assault: 1 incident
- Burglary, Commercial: 1 incident: Washington Ln.
- Burglary on Motor Vehicle: 10 incidents: Valley View Rd., El Toyonal, Orinda Way, Theatre Square, Muth Dr., Tahos Rd., Scenic Dr., Stein Way, Brookside Rd., Old Tunnel Blvd.
- Burglary, Residential: 4 incidents: Valley View Rd., El Toyonal, Tahos Rd., Evergreen Dr.
- CVC Failure to Obey Officer: 2 incidents
- Death, Non-Criminal: 1 incident
- Grand Theft: 1 incident: Loma Vista
- Grand Theft Vehicle Parts: 1 incident: Las Vegas Rd.
- Hit & Run - Misdemeanor: 1 incident
- Hospitalization: 1 incident
- Identity Theft: 1 incident

- Outside Assist: 4 incidents
- Patrol Request: 1 incident
- Petty Theft, Shoplifting: 1 incident: Moraga Way
- Property - Receiving Stolen: 2 incidents
- Robbery, Strongarm: 1 incident.
- Vandalism: 1 incident

## Arrests

- Driving with Suspended/Revoked License: 1 arrest
- Drugs - Possession of Paraphernalia: 1 arrest
- DUI, Misdemeanor: 1 arrest
- Weapon, Violation of Probation: 1 arrest
- Warrant Arrest: 9 arrests

– Compiled by David Dierks  
Assistant Editor

## ♦ EDITORIAL from page 3

The students didn't know this.

"Today, I wish I could say my mom annoys me. I wish I could say she upset me. Today I wish I could say she doesn't understand me. But I can't say those words today. I know I'm an adult now, but I miss her so much. She was my best friend. I truly wish I could have one more day with my mom on Earth and walk up to this whiteboard and write the words you have written on the board, but I can't," I said.

By this time, about half the students would tear up, while some fought back the tears to stay cool in front of their classmates and teacher.

That's when I would direct them to get out a piece of paper and pen or pencil. Now for the writing assignment. Each student had to write a letter to their mom.

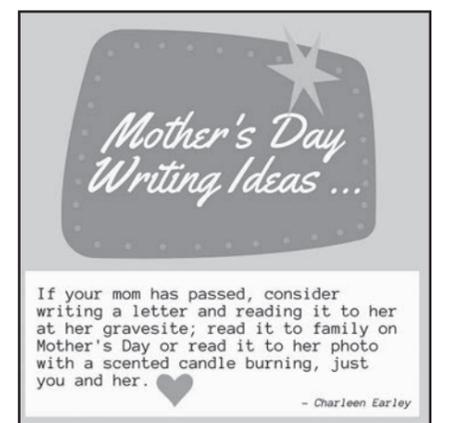
They could write whatever they wanted. Afterwards, they could read the letter out loud to the class and publish it in the next issue of our student newspaper. Or, it could be kept personal and private – but the one requirement was to give it to their mom or

caregiver.

Many students came to me later to say they had never written a letter to their mom before and how thankful they were for this assignment. I received emails from parents, expressing the same gratitude.

If you've never written a letter to your mom or you haven't written one in a long time, write her a letter – I bet she will cherish your words forever.

Charleen Earley can be reached at [editor@theorindanews.com](mailto:editor@theorindanews.com).



*The Orinda News* prints 9,000 copies and is published 12 times a year by The Orinda Association. The office is located at 26 Orinda Way (lower level of the Library). All rights reserved. The publication is sent out by direct mail (Permit #4, Orinda Post Office), distributed to key locations throughout the city and online at [www.theorindanews.com](http://www.theorindanews.com).

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# The Orinda News

A Publication of  
The Orinda Association  
Mailing Address  
P.O. Box 97  
Orinda, California 94563  
Telephone: 925.254.0800

[www.theorindanews.com](http://www.theorindanews.com)



The OA is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization.

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Letters to the Editor are printed on a space-available basis and should be no longer than 250 words. They must include the writer's first and last name, signature and telephone number. Send letters to: Editor, *The Orinda News*, P.O. Box 97, Orinda, CA 94563, or email to [editor@theorindanews.com](mailto:editor@theorindanews.com). Letters to the Editor for the June issue are due May 8.

For advertising rates, contact Carson Cordova at 650.646.1357 ([carson@theorindanews.com](mailto:carson@theorindanews.com)), Kathy Enzerink at 252.626.2109 ([kathy@theorindanews.com](mailto:kathy@theorindanews.com)) or Jill Gelster at 925.528.9225 ([jill@aspenconsult.net](mailto:jill@aspenconsult.net)). The deadline for the June issue is May 8.

## AROUND TOWN

## ◆ CREEK from page 1

more is to come.”

Founded 30 years ago by hydrogeologist Cinda MacKinnon, FOC is dedicated to the restoration and preservation of Orinda's watershed, working with local entities including East Bay Municipal Utility District (EBMUD), the City of Orinda and the Contra Costa County Public Works Department, Flood Control Division.

Tom MacKinnon, geologist and active FOC board affiliate, worked alongside former FOC President Bob Stoops and member Tom Morehouse to clear a temporary path along the creek from the former Bank of America building to the Chevron gas station.

With Project Engineer David Hop, wildlife biologist Reg Barrett and fisheries biologist Brian Waters, among the other members, “we have a really incredible team,” said MacKinnon.

According to FOC President Michael Bowen, key areas of focus include ensuring habitat for wildlife, reintroducing rainbow trout and creek enhancement, as it flows downtown.

“We have a lot of irons in the fire,” he said.

The maintenance of water quality and striking a balance between community fire safety and preserving the quality of creeks – also remain important aspects of the ongoing project.

## Orinda Park and Recreation Foundation Helps Seniors, Students

By CHRIS HARNETT  
Contributing Writer

In keeping with its mission since 1975, the Orinda Park and Recreation Foundation (OPRF) announced \$22,000 in charitable donations to aid Orinda's recreation and community service activities during 2023.

The Orinda Parks and Recreation Department received \$14,000, which helps fund the monthly Senior Field Trip Transportation in partnership with the Town of Moraga; Summer Concert and Movie Series in the Park; Teen Advisory Council for Orinda Youth Sports uniforms, equipment and facility rental and for their Spring Blood Drive, in addition to food and crafts for Kids Night-Out events, which promote health, wellness and relationship-building.

Lamorinda Adult Respite Center (LARC), a state-licensed, non-profit, received \$3,000 to support its live musical entertainment program. Offered four days a week, this and other activities are key for residents suffering from Alzheimer's

“FOC has been successful in raising awareness,” said Bowen.

In prior decades, San Pablo Creek was well known for its fish population.

“It was called a blue-ribbon trout fishery,” said FOC board member and certified professional hydrologist Bruce McGurk, who spoke of the creek's previous natural meandering path through the area around Village Pizza on Orinda Way.

That path was modified in 1958 by the county, as a part of the four-lane Highway 24 project. Flow was diverted into a concrete channel designed to allow water to reach critical speed to maximize capacity.

It was also meant to efficiently carry the 50-year flow and provide a bypass around downtown via excavation of the hill on the west side and construction of the new Camino Pablo, said McGurk.

“In the restoration business, we call that ‘putting it in a straitjacket,’” he said. The creek's former channel area was converted into Orinda's present-day business area.

Phase One of the restoration project marks the first change to the creek since 1962, when a storm damaged the channel and sent broken concrete downstream. FOC removed some of the concrete chunks last summer, but some remain, raising flood risk.

Step pools were installed using rock weirs; dam-like structures which slow water flow and control its release. The work has proved solid in face of recent storms.

and Parkinson's diseases, strokes, etc., while giving respite for caregivers. Since 1997, LARC staff and trained volunteers have provided supervised activities such as lively singing, dancing and laughing to foster dignity and self-worth for its seniors.

OPRF donated \$2,000 to the Pacific Chamber Orchestra Music in Schools program, which supports inspirational classical music educational performances within OUSD elementary schools.

In late 2022, the Foundation gave additional funds to The Orinda Association for the 4th of July Parade and to the Orinda Parks and Recreation Department for the Christmas Tree Lighting in the Park

For those interested in serving on the OPRF board or volunteering with its fundraising efforts to renovate the park or support ongoing recreational programs, contact President Carolyn Mills at bcmills36@gmail.com.

Chris Harnett can be reached at editor@theorindanews.com.

“More work needs to be done,” said McGurk.

The initial restoration phase cost around \$150,000, with at least \$90,000 coming from small donations, said McGurk. The planning stage lasted a year and a half and the hands-on work took two and a half weeks.

Future potential plans include a bicycle path, more riparian plantings, ensuring a clear path for fish from above San Pablo Reservoir and turning city businesses toward the creek.

Perceptions of San Pablo Creek as just a drainage ditch have shifted, said Bowen. “I think the city is really starting to look at the creek as an amenity.”

Assistant Public Works Director for the County Public Works Department, Flood Control Division, Tim Jensen, commented on the recently completed work.

“The property where the project was done is vacant county land that is no longer

needed for any use by the county,” he said.

Jensen called FOC's work dealing with the broken concrete channel, “a benefit to the county.”

He continued, “Our role was to coordinate with FOC, review their plans to ensure they meet county standards and check the work when completed. Everything went smoothly during that process. Our next step is to move forward with giving the land to the city or some other entity that would like to have it.”

Orinda councilmember Janet Riley expressed her excitement and appreciation for the restoration efforts at the celebration event.

“It's wonderful to be able to walk through the natural beauty of the restored area,” she said. “It makes you feel so lucky to live here.”

Andrea Madison can be reached at drea.madison.05@gmail.com.

## Orinda News Briefs: Around Town

### Chipper Time Again

With all the beautiful greenery, as a result of our wet winter, it is time to prepare for the fire season: limbing up trees and trimming bushes to avoid laddering up into trees and making sure the fire code is met.

Residents can remove hazardous vegetation from their properties utilizing funds available from Measure R. Orinda adopted Fire Aside's ChipperDay software last August. Ninety-five percent of residents rated their chipping experience 4+ and 89% gave it a solid 5. This is a year-round, cost-free

chipping service, through the Fire Fuels Reduction Incentive Program. To reserve a time slot, visit [www.reserve.chipperday.com/Orinda](http://www.reserve.chipperday.com/Orinda).

The City of Orinda offers rebates as an incentive to make homes wildfire resistant. Qualified applicants could receive up to \$599.

### Sudden Oak Death Early Warning

Sudden Oak Death (SOD), halted by the drought, spreads in wet conditions [SEE TOWN page 10]

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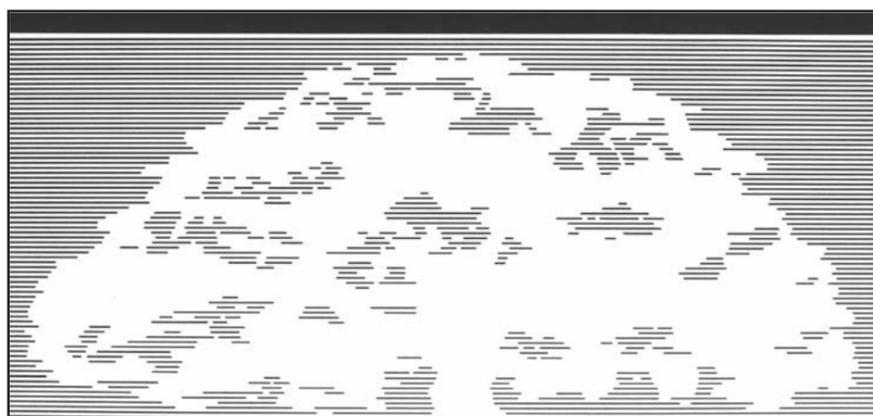
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FIREWISE

◆ MESSAGE from page 3

at <https://orindaassociation.org/volunteer>.  
Our wonderful seniors are out and about, going to appointments and shopping. Can you spare a few hours a month? Apply to volunteer for this free transportation service at the link above or call Seniors Around Town at 925.402.4506.

And, finally, we honor the William Penn Mott, Jr. Environmental award winners for this year, and the recent past years, at

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a ceremony June 4 at 1 p.m. at the Wilder Art and Garden Center, 20 Orinda Fields Center.

This annual tribute recognizes the citizen or group who displayed outstanding contributions in education or preservation of the environment in celebration of its namesake who lived in Orinda, was director of the National Park Service as well as the first president of The Orinda Association.

**Honorees are:**

- 2019 – Barbara Lightner/Friends of Orinda Creeks
- 2020-21 – No award due to COVID-19
- 2022 – Orinda Eagle and Gold Scouts
- 2023 – Friends of the Orinda Nature Area

This free event welcomes everyone. For more information, email [oa@orindaassociation.org](mailto:oa@orindaassociation.org) or visit [www.orindaassociation.org](http://www.orindaassociation.org).

*Sally Hogarty can be reached at [sally@orindaassociation.org](mailto:sally@orindaassociation.org).*

**FIRE ADAPTED COMMUNITY NEWS**

**MEET MARC EVANS, NEW COMMUNITY LEADER**

MELANIE LIGHT



The Orinda Firewise Council (OFC) is fortunate to have Marc Evans as its new chairperson. In 2005 he and his wife Karen, a pediatrician, chose to move to Orinda as it was the midpoint between their commutes.

Karen worked at Kaiser in Walnut Creek and Marc at Chevron in Richmond as a technical manager. They were also excited to send their four children to the public schools here. All are now out in the world and adulting well.

Evans worked as a technical manager for Chevron in Kazakhstan during his last nine years with the company, rotating every three months with his job partner. He retired in 2020, having left Kazakhstan on the last flight before the pandemic shut down air travel.

With lots of time suddenly on his hands, he decided to work for a year as a construction manager.

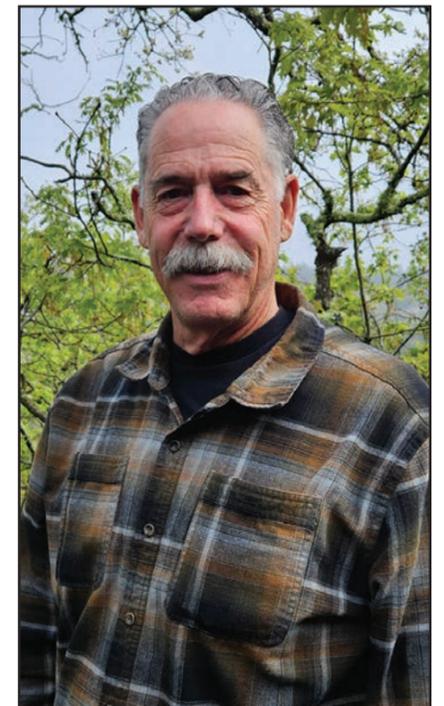
Meanwhile, neighbor Christine Hilsinger became aware of the Firewise program at one of Moraga Orinda Fire Department (MOFD) Chief Winnacker's presentations. In April 2020, Evans and Hilsinger joined their neighborhood email coordinator, Carol Alvord, to form the Monte Vista Firewise group.

A natural organizer, Evans got involved with efforts to clear out the excess vegetation. He met neighbors, who lived there for years, for the first time and really enjoyed it after having been cut off from his community due to work.

One of those neighbors, Rick Trapp,

made a map of the homes on Monte Vista, which was used to create subgroups for better self-organization. Having success with their neighborhood, Evans and Hilsinger took the Fire Adapted Community Ambassador (FAC-A) training in 2021. They reached out to every resident in their Firewise group offering free assessments for wildfire prevention.

[SEE FIREWISE page 9]



MELANIE LIGHT  
Long time Orinda resident, **Marc Evans**, is the new chair of the Orinda Firewise Council.

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COMMUNITY-MINDED

# Orinda Woman's Club Builds Friendships while Helping Others

By BOBBIE DODSON  
Staff Writer

The Orinda Woman's Club (OWC) has a 75-year history of community involvement, enrichment and helping make Orinda better.

Members organize fundraisers, community-building events and social gatherings. Their major donation source is the Festival of Trees, slated for Friday, Nov.17. This annual event features a fashion show, luncheon, silent auction and raffles.

The primary beneficiary of funds in 2022 was Familias Unidas in Richmond. Other recipients include White Pony Express, CASA, Friends of Wagner Ranch, Monument Crisis Center, Hospice Orinda Tree of Lights, The Orinda Association, Orinda Library, Seniors Around Town and educational grants to high school graduates, especially foster children.

Past President, Barbara Rogan, enjoys the lasting friendships formed through the club.

"The club gives me the opportunity to meet many wonderful, intelligent and philanthropic women who give freely of their time to help local charities and provide scholarships," said Rogan. "These friendships are cemented by many fun,

social activities as well. If one is new to the community or a recent retiree, the Woman's Club is a fine opportunity to get involved in charitable endeavors."

Janet Clark said she wanted to meet people when she moved here. "I found a group of women dedicated to helping people in the Lamorinda area who have become good friends. I enjoy working with the team, and am now chairperson of the Festival of Trees."

Club President, Jean Barnhart said, "We look out for each other and our community. We have fun enjoying and enhancing life, be it a book club, playing American Mahjong, walking together, the genealogy group, meals, etc."

"Our members are from Orinda, Moraga, Lafayette, Oakland, Pacifica and Rio Vista – really anyone willing to do the work," she said. "Many think because it is called Orinda Woman's Club, they must live in Orinda."

The club welcomes new members with fresh ideas and energy to help improve the lives of others.

According to the Club's "Who We Are" statement, "The Orinda Woman's Club is a community-based organization which focuses on addressing urgent and ongoing needs of women, children and families,



JEFF HEYMAN

Orinda Woman's Club holds a "Happy Hour Orientation" to welcome new and prospective members. (L-R) back row: **Janet Clark**, Festival of Trees (FOT) chair, **Deborah Eiben**, new member, **Charlene Antal**, Linus project chair, **Pamela Woy**, prospective member, **Diane Lautz**, new member, **Hilma Johnsen**, member, **Kelly Davis**, FOT silent auction chair, **Donna Schuppert**, membership chair, **Mary Ann Gunderson**, member, **Nancy Royster**, auditor; (L-R) front row: **Carol Morehouse**, FOT stage/light/sound chair, **Adeleine McClatchie**, FOT major beneficiary chair, **Jean Barnhart**, president; **Margaret Bentson**, newsletter editor, **Elene Lee**, community service chair.

both in Contra Costa and Alameda Counties."

"I am honored to be the president of this fine group," said Barnhart. "It enhances and gives purpose to my life and the chance to get to know a group of strong, caring women from varied locations. The friends and relationships I have enjoyed over the past 24 years are priceless."

Meetings are the second Tuesday of the

month at 9:30 a.m., Sept. - May at various locations. Visit [www.orindawomansclub.org](http://www.orindawomansclub.org) or email Barnhart at [jeanr.barnhart@gmail.com](mailto:jeanr.barnhart@gmail.com).

*Bobbie Dodson can be reached at [bobbiedodson109@gmail.com](mailto:bobbiedodson109@gmail.com).*

◆ FIREWISE from page 8

As a FAC-A, Evans did assessments outside his Firewise group. One was for Paula Reinman, a commissioner for the Measure R funds. Her neighborhood is adjacent to Evans' and together, they formed a much bigger group.

The construction gig ended last spring

and Evans had to give up the truck. By now he was obsessed with the potential for transforming Orinda into a wildfire adapted community.

Evans agreed, as a volunteer, to take over the Orinda Firewise Council. He has created a five-year road map for the purpose and priorities of the OFC, partnering with the city and MOFD. He would like to work

with Moraga and Lafayette as they begin to organize around Firewise. His vision extends to Richmond and El Sobrante, where he is helping residents form Firewise groups. He is solidly committed to making our region safe.

*Melanie Light can be reached at [melanie@melanielight.com](mailto:melanie@melanielight.com).*

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EVERYDAY ORINDA



COURTESY OF INTUITIVE WRITING PROJECT

Lamorinda youth from TIWP's (The Intuitive Writing Project) Senior Writing Anthology class. At the close of this session, these emerging young writers from the Class of 2022, created an anthology of their own poetry or writing. (L-R) back row, **Louisa Perry-Picciotto, Viviana Sanchez, Ava Choudry, Zoe Moga, Erin Hambidge, Aly Kirke, Caroline Hesby** and **Josslyn Grover**, (L-R) middle row, **Riley Faust, Elana Tamagno, Emma Wong, Zara Quiter, Katerina Bonderud** and **Sol Dente**. (L-R) lying down, **Ben Johnson** and **Maya Petzoldt**.

Everyday 😊 Orinda

WE MUST. WE MUST. WE MUST INCREASE OUR DAUGHTERS' SELF-ESTEEM

MIMI BOMMARITO



**T**True confessions from an empty-nester: Ignoring better judgment, I frequently overscheduled my three daughters well into their high school years. Partially for the “street angels, home devils” syndrome and partially to reorchestrate my childhood, incorporating the activities my mom would never spend money for. Most importantly it was to pry them from the almighty screen. Even *before* smartphones, TikTok and social media, this was an issue.

To combat endless over-scheduling vs screen time, I suggest a local hidden gem: The Intuitive Writing Project (TIWP), a writing-based empowerment program for girls and gender-expansive youth.

While TIWP classes could be considered a “scheduled activity,” they also serve as a soothing, therapeutic balm. They are designed to recognize and share students’ unique, hidden gifts of observation and to enable them to create and mentally unleash, without judgment, in a well-trained and supportive environment.

Anybody cook with the Instant Pot? Visualize the forceful blast of steam as the pressure release valve is flipped. This is your daughter’s central nervous system, as she develops a critical, lifelong coping mechanism for her madcap, stress-laden journey through modern adolescence.

Like my precious morning coffee, TIWP classes “lift you up and calm you down” at the same time. The variety of guided writing sessions are geared toward small groups of girls ages 8-18. Sessions for female adults are also offered and I’m excited to share that I will soon be participating.

These classes in no way resemble an English assignment. TIWP is not graded, no analysis of sentence structure or correct usage of an Oxford comma. More like pouring out the most delicious parts of your soul; thick, rich syrup over a stack of buttermilk pancakes. Or vomiting, depending on how the week went. It’s how a young female gradually begins to answer the perplexing question, “Who am I, anyway?” Elizabeth Perlman, who birthed and nurtured TIWP in 2013, devised an effective routine for simultaneously strengthening brain muscles while emptying the lint trap of toxic social pressure and anxiety. The Amherst Writing method is employed, where participants are supported rather than critiqued. Surrounded with positivity and cushioned in a safe, encouraging environment, girls are heard. They learn to treasure and trust the sound of their own voice.

Five emerging Lamorindans make up the TIWP Youth Advisory Board: Miramonte senior Reagan Kaelle and collegians Caroline Hesby, Julia Lima, Maxine Pollock and Sarah Inouye. Orindans Praveen Singh, Janet Moga and Jodi Kaelle serve on the Board of Directors.

Perlman created the program she wished she had when she was a teen. “Finding your voice and practicing how to express it is the creative antidote to a social media culture,” she said.

There remains much more to share about this treasure for young women and gender expansive youth in our community.

Visit [www.intuitivewritingproject.org](http://www.intuitivewritingproject.org) to check out the class offerings. Whether adult or adolescent, summer is the perfect time to take a plunge into your own head space.

*Mimi Bommarito can be reached at [editor@theorindanews.com](mailto:editor@theorindanews.com).*

◆ TOWN from page 7

and could re-emerge, killing hundreds of oaks. Consider participating in UC Berkeley’s annual SOD Blitz, a citizen science survey tracking SOD for 15 years, to help create early warnings of vulnerable areas. Collect and submit leaves with SOD symptoms from areas and at times of your choosing in the East Bay on May 12. Visit [www.sodblitz.org](http://www.sodblitz.org) or contact Bill Hudson at [wllhh@gmail.com](mailto:wllhh@gmail.com).

*Compiled by Charleen Earley, who can be reached at [editor@theorindanews.com](mailto:editor@theorindanews.com).*

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**Happy Mother's Day to all Orinda Moms!**

*Inga Miller and Paul Gilbert*

FIRST FRIDAY FORUM

# First Friday Forum Speaker Eukel Addresses Land Conservation

By BOBBIE DODSON  
Staff Writer

Linus Eukel, executive director at John Muir Land Trust (JMLT), is speaking at First Friday Forum May 5 at 10 a.m. His topic is “Gaining Ground: The Importance of Conserving Land and the Critical Challenges Facing Our Society.” The presentation is in the Fellowship Hall at Lafayette-Orinda Presbyterian Church (LOPC), located at 49 Knox Drive, Lafayette.

“Since its founding 30 years ago, JMLT has become one of the leading forces for conservation in Northern California,” Eukel said. “With more than 3,500 acres protected, many beautiful places in the East Bay are permanently preserved for recreation and wildlife habitat. JMLT believes that the vitality of our natural open spaces is essential to the health of our earth, air, water, native plants and animals – and all of us.”

Acquiring land is at the heart of the Land Trust. Members protect and care for open space, ranches, farms, parklands and

shorelines in Contra Costa and Alameda counties.

“It identifies and purchases open spaces that should be conserved in a natural state and enjoyed by everyone,” said Eukel. “It carefully stewards these properties by providing low-impact opportunities for public recreation, while protecting the needs of wildlife.”

According to their website, the JMLT community has protected a diverse collection of places, ranging from small community gardens to former ranches encompassing hundreds of acres. These locations provide outdoor recreation, protected wildlife habitat, stunning scenic beauty, sources of pure drinking water, natural economic benefits and close-to-home areas where everyone can experience nature and learn about shared environments.

“Foresighted people shaped the beautiful natural landscape where we live today,” said Eukel. “The lands protected by JMLT are an inspiring window into that past and a hope for what’s to come. The challenges of waves of population growth in the last century were huge and population pressure will become even more intense over the coming years.”

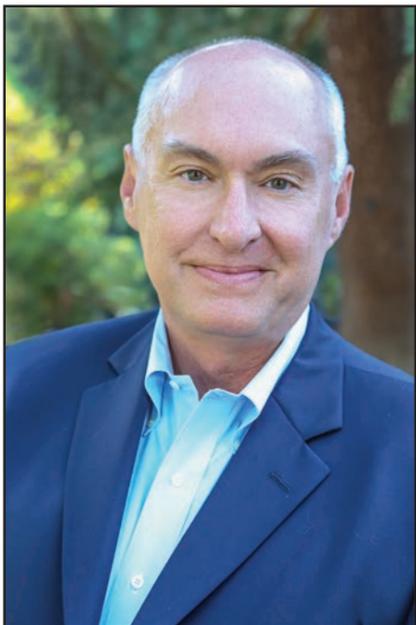
“We urgently need to permanently protect our remaining essential wild lands to ensure an abundant, biodiverse future for nature for all,” he said. “JMLT is proud to be advancing a decades-long effort to conserve the places which make the East Bay special.”

Eukel, who joined JMLT in 2004, is a member, elder and past clerk of session of LOPC and board member of the California Council of Land Trusts, the East Bay Leadership Council’s Infrastructure Task Force and the Warren W. Eukel Teacher Trust.

“The next few decades will define the character of this region for generations to come, likely forever,” he said. “Come see how JMLT is working to make this happen.”

To attend via Zoom, register at [lopc.org/forum](http://lopc.org/forum). Registration is not required to attend in person.

*Bobbie Dodson can be reached at [bobbiedodson109@gmail.com](mailto:bobbiedodson109@gmail.com).*



COURTESY OF JOHN MUIR LAND TRUST  
Executive Director of the John Muir Land Trust, **Linus Eukel**, speaks at the May 5 First Friday Forum at 10 a.m. at the Lafayette-Orinda Presbyterian Church. His topic is called, “Gaining Ground: The Importance of Conserving Land and the Critical Challenges. Facing Our Society.”

## Congratulations Alexis DeBusschere



Your hard work and diligence all through high school has paid off. Take time and relax, you will ROCK it in college. (Environmental Science major pun included) Cannot wait to see what your future holds. We love you so much! Mom, Dad and Justin

## Jonathan, Congratulations!!



We are so proud of you, and are excited for your wonderful next adventures in college!

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*With love and gratitude to Annie who has been a significant role model as a Mother, Grandmother and Great Grandmother. Pictured here with her first great grandchild, Sage.*



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Ricky, we are so proud of all of your hard work and accomplishments at Miramonte! You have begun building your monument and we are excited to see how you flourish in college next year. With love, Mom, Dad, Athena, Cricket & Dragonfly.



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**Rising Star Ava Nicole Frances Closes Live At the Orinda! Series**

By SALLY HOGARTY  
Staff Writer

While most performers in the Live At the Orinda! concert series have substantial performance experience and Broadway credits, the season's final performer brings a wealth of young talent and growing accolades.

A veteran cabaret performer, 19-year-old Ava Nicole Frances has performed to sold-out audiences at Feinstein's at the Nikko in San Francisco, Don't Tell Mama in New York and Feinstein's at Vitello's in Los Angeles.

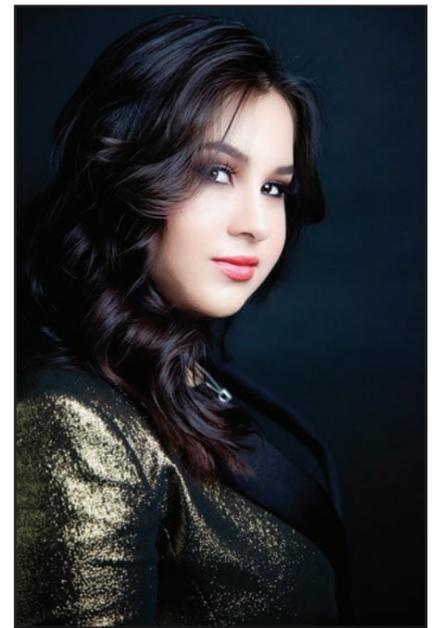
Frances makes her debut solo performance at the Orinda concert series with *Here's Looking at You Kid*, a robust combination of musical theater melodies, songs from *The Great American Songbook* and pop tunes, as well as stories of her life and career.

Adopted at birth, she was raised in San Francisco by her two dads, Frank Silletti and Sony Vukic, who surrounded her with music.

"I owe my dads absolutely everything. They were always very heavily involved with music. I did my first cabaret show at 13, dedicated to my favorite singers, Judy Garland and Liza Minelli. At 15, my father Frank and I did a duo show. In fact, he's the director for my show in Orinda while Sony is one of the producers," said Frances. "I am so grateful for the opportunities they've given me."

Those opportunities include attending the Ruth Asawa San Francisco School of the Arts (SOTA) and partnering with Broadway and recording artist Charlo Crossley. This partnership led to her second Broadway World award for the duo's *Mutual Admiration Society* at Feinstein's at Vitello's.

Her first award was as best junior performer in *Hell on Earth*, performed at Feinstein's at 54 Below in 2020. The



STEPHEN MOSHER

Ava Nicole Frances, 19, closes out the Live At the Orinda! concert series with her solo debut *Here's Looking at You Kid*. The San Francisco native and winner of two World Broadway awards, performs a variety of musical theater melodies, songs from *The Great American Songbook* and pop tunes.

same year, Frances released two singles benefiting the Save the Children charity.

A freshman at NYU Tisch School of the Arts, the young vocalist spends her time working behind the scenes for fellow students' shows, studying for classes and preparing for her Orinda show, which, with a few tweaks, will be performed at Feinstein's at 54 Below in New York.

"I'm so looking forward to making my solo debut in the Bay Area. I owe it all to my parents and my lovely musical director Michael Cowen," said Frances. "He's a wonderfully talented man. He is magic, pure genius."

The Live At the Orinda! show is May 21 at 5 p.m. at the Orinda Theatre. To be placed on a waiting list for the sold-out show, call 925.254.9060 or go to www.orindamovies.com. Frances' website is www.avanicolefrances.com.

"I can't fathom that this is my life right now," said Frances. "My ultimate goal is to be on Broadway. I just love being a little sponge and soaking up everything I can in New York. Oh, and if my parents ask, I do find time to get a good night's sleep!"

Sally Hogarty can be reached at sallyhogarty@gmail.com.

Got a news tip, success story, sports achievement, great human-interest idea for the *The Orinda News*?

Send to editor@theorindanews.com

**Congratulations, Scott!**



We are so proud of you.  
Looking forward to your next chapter.

Love, Mom, Dad, & Madeline  
(and Dakota & Reno)

## PERFORMING ARTS

## Cal Shakes Envisions Bruns as Multi-Disciplined Performance Center

By SALLY HOGARTY  
Staff Writer

Marking the first time since 1974, (COVID-19 excepted), Cal Shakes will not produce its own theatrical productions in 2023. The company will open the Amphitheatre to outside groups and events while its board of directors revamps the organization for a return in 2024 and a celebration of its 50th anniversary.

The long-range goal is to turn the Bruns Amphitheatre into a multi-disciplined performing art center, a cultural community resource with Cal Shakes as the resident theater company.

“The board came to the realization they’d been dancing around for years – the model we were operating under was just not tenable anymore,” said Executive Director Clive Worsley. “Producing four theatrical productions of the scale we were used to that always lost money was not sustainable.”

*“We want to get more and more people up to the Bruns. It’s a safe place for people to come and enjoy themselves in a beautiful outdoor setting,” said Worsley.*

In its most popular seasons, revenue from tickets and subscriptions covered 60% of the cost of producing a show, with the company relying on grants and fundraising to fund the rest.

Cal Shakes, like many companies in the Bay Area and across the country, faces increasing costs, reduced ticket sales and fewer donors. According to the company’s statistics, ticket revenue in this post-pandemic era will only cover 45% of costs.

While the company reorganizes and looks at options for a return next year, it hopes to have a mix of live music, dance, opera, family programming, civic and cultural events, as well as educational activities this summer. Some events will be announced this month, followed by monthly rollouts of additional presentations. An open-community event is also planned at the Bruns this summer.

Registration is currently underway for Cal Shakes’ 2023 Summer Con-

servatory. A three-week (June 12 -30) and a two-week session (July 17 – 28) for grades 6-12 will develop and improve skills in acting, voice, movement, text analysis and more while rehearsing one of Shakespeare’s plays.

For older students, Cal Shakes’ highly regarded dramaturg, Dr. Philippa Kelly, continues her six-week series *Shakespeare and the Modern Mind*, which explores Shakespeare’s relationship to contemporary theories of psychology and ecology. Students may sign up for individual classes May 2 and 9. Kelly’s lecture is pre-recorded with the study group classes live-streamed on Zoom.

For more information on the Summer Conservatory or Kelly’s lecture series, visit <https://calshakes.org/>.

The company will also allow private events such as weddings to take place at the Bruns.

“We want to get more and more people up to the Bruns. It’s a safe place for people to come and enjoy themselves in a beautiful outdoor setting,” said Worsley. “If people come and have that magical Bruns experience under the stars with the coyotes howling in the background, they’re likely to come back and maybe even come back for something they wouldn’t normally be drawn to.”

Sally Hogarty can be reached at [sallyhogarty@gmail.com](mailto:sallyhogarty@gmail.com).



JIM MCCAMBRIDGE

California Shakespeare Festival isn’t producing a play this season, but envisions opening the Bruns Amphitheatre to a wide variety of events, including weddings this year. The company plans to perform its own theatrical productions in 2024.

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PET OF THE MONTH / STUDENTS

## Student from Czech Republic Needs Orinda Host Family

The Orinda-Tabor Sister City Foundation members have chosen a visiting student from Tabor in the Czech Republic. This August, Eliska will attend Miramonte High School in the fall/winter semester as a senior.

This is a great opportunity for an Orinda family to have an international learning experience with another culture.

Academically at the top of her class, Eliska is especially interested in gymnastics, with the possibility of learning about cheerleading – a discipline not offered in Czech Republic schools.

For more information, contact Foundation President Bobbie Landers at 925.254.8260 or [bobbieanders@yahoo.com](mailto:bobbieanders@yahoo.com).

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**Ryan**  
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**Love, Mom and Dad**

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## May School Calendar

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <p>1-5 <b>Miramonte High School</b> Teacher Appreciation Week</p> <p>2 <b>Miramonte High School</b> Sports Information Fair</p> <p>3 <b>Miramonte High School</b> State of College Admissions Presentation</p> <p>10 <b>OUSD</b> Day of the Teacher</p> <p><b>Holden High School</b> All School Clean-Up and BBQ</p> <p>11 <b>Miramonte High School</b> Spring Band Concert</p> <p>12 <b>Miramonte High School</b> Broadway Showcase</p> <p>15 <b>Miramonte High School</b> Senior Week</p> <p>16 <b>Holden High School</b> Last day of classes</p> <p><b>Miramonte High School</b> Senior Day</p> <p><b>Miramonte High School</b> Senior Awards Night</p> | <p>17 <b>Holden High School</b> Last day of school</p> <p><b>Miramonte High School</b> Senior Sunset</p> <p>19 <b>Miramonte High School</b> Drama 2 Presents <i>Showcase</i> in the Theater 7 p.m.</p> <p>21 <b>Miramonte High School</b> Time of Reflection</p> <p>22 <b>Orinda Academy</b> Early dismissal day</p> <p>23 <b>Miramonte High School</b> Finals Begin</p> <p><b>Orinda Academy</b> performance day</p> <p>24 <b>Orinda Academy</b> End of year BBQ</p> <p>25 <b>Orinda Academy</b> End of Year Awards and Graduation Dinner</p> <p><b>OIS</b> Promotion-Min. Day</p> <p>26 <b>Miramonte High School</b> Graduation</p> <p><b>OUSD</b> Last Day of School-Min. Day</p> <p><b>OIS</b> Semester Ends</p> <p><b>K-5</b> Trimester Ends</p> <p>31 <b>Holden High School</b> Graduation rehearsal</p> |
|--|--|

### Pet of the Month

SUDHEERA SIVAKUMAR

“My pet’s name is **Mirchi**, which means chili peppers in the Hindi language,” said **Sudheera Sivakumar**. “He is a purebred Canadian Chocolate Labrador and loves water. He is almost three years old and like the chili peppers, he is full of pep and energy.”

## Happy Birthday, Tenny Jo!

Your 83 years (so far!) have been an extraordinary life full of love, compassion, kindness and generosity. We love you more than you can imagine.

XOXO,

Kathy, Jeff, Savannah, Carson, Matt and Charlie

GIRLS AND SCIENCE MIX WELL

# Awesome Experiences at March Saint Mary's STEM Conference



LEANDER HAURI

The Orinda-Lafayette-Moraga branch of the American Association of University Women (AAUW) held its seventh STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) Conference at Saint Mary's College on March 25. Sixth through eighth grade girls participated in interactive workshops, heard exciting speakers, met career professional women and networked with like-minded girls. Lamorinda Sunrise Rotary, Lafayette Rotary and Rossmoor Rotary Clubs supported the conference financially and operationally. Over 20 Rotarians participated, working as part of the six-month pre-planning Leadership team, as senior workshop monitors, photographers and assisting with a host of other logistical details.

By MARAKI ESAYAS  
Contributing Writer

Have you ever thought about how acclaimed women scientists achieved fame? Marie Curie, Jane Goodall, Katherine Johnson. This list goes on and on. They had childhood passions and held onto them. They worked endlessly until they rose to the top of their schools, fields and science itself.

What if they grew up in this time period? Having their dreams be accepted and encouraged as young girls? It would make their lives easier, huh? Well, it's what I imagine the thought process was which helped coordinate the AAUW STEM (American Association of University Women: Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) Conference at Saint Mary's College.

Ever since forever, I have asked myself question after question after question. I remember reading Wikipedia articles when I was younger, any piece of information satisfying me somehow. I guess it is what makes me inclined to STEM, the thirst for knowledge and discovery, using the resources around me to find things out for myself.

I don't get many chances to express my love and passion for science and engineer-

ing. When my teacher sent an email to all the girls in my science class, you can imagine what I thought to myself: "A conference funded, taught and empowered by women, for girls like me at a fancy-looking college? Oh, yeah! I would be absolutely dumb not to take this opportunity." And so I did.

This was my second AAUW STEM Conference, first in seventh grade and now in eighth. I'm not going to lie. This year exceeded my expectations from the previous conference.

Initially I was a bit disappointed because I didn't get any of the workshops I really wanted. But I ended up learning so much. For example, I didn't know just how much robot and artificial intelligence designs take from nature until the Designing Robots workshop. And you can hear absolutely nothing in space, thanks to the Experiments in Space. Or math can actually give some semblance of entertainment (I had really low hopes for this workshop).

The whole day was an awesome experience. I got to learn about science, something I love, with my friends from school. Hey, I even made some new ones! I think meeting people who understand the passion for observing everything around you,

[SEE STEM page 21]



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FILM SCREENING

◆ BIRD from page 1

They are real,” said Garver, as she posed for photos with attendees. “The interaction is marvelous and the emotions transfer to the audience.”

The film won 2023 Best Feature Award in the Santa Monica International Film Festival, MABIG Film Festival and Mediterranean Film Festival (Milan-Cannes-Athens) and 2023 Best Narrative Feature in the World Carnival Singapore.

Co-produced by Benfield and writer

Tony Jerris, the 104-minute film was shot in a grocery store.

“Not having a big budget, we needed to find a store that didn’t cost a lot to rent,” said Jerris. “The Holiday Market in Redding offered it free for a week and we couldn’t be more grateful to them.”

Jerris started writing *Yellow Bird* as a series in 2016.

“I wanted to create a down-on-his-luck character who overcomes adversity, sort of a coming-of-middle-age story, where our lead character finds his ‘Yellow Bird,’ the one person or thing in life you can’t live without.”

He said working with Garver was a joy. “She is not only a true professional, but a genuinely great person,” said Jerris. “We were shooting in 100-degree heat and her scenes took place in an old, rundown RV that had no air conditioning. Trooper that she is, she nailed her performance without complaining. I adore her.”

Garver shared her experiences with the audience after the film.

“My mom had Alzheimer’s and I really wanted to characterize what people go through,” she said.

Barry Barsamian of Oakland, who shares a 23-year friendship with Garver, including co-hosting a TV talk show in San Francisco from 2005 to 2010 called, *Backstage! With Barry and Kathy*, said he enjoyed the film and *Yellow Bird* enlightened him.

“What I learned is letting go of the past opens up a whole new world,” he said. “That was the message I felt. And we all must follow our dreams, our passions.”



JEFF HEYMAN

At the award-winning indie film screening of *Yellow Bird* on April 1, some attendees gathered to have their photo taken with actress **Kathy Garver**. (L-R) back row, **Dennis Lancaster, Paul Pekarek, Ronald J. Fields, Derek Zemrak, Barry Barsamian, Jeffrey McGee**. (L-R) middle row, **Marcus Siu, Sher Lancaster, Cindy Pekarek, Gay Parker**. (L-R) front row, **Robert Da Silva, Kathy Garver, Patricia Paulson, and Deb Da Silva**.

“My late mother suffered from dementia and I felt Kathy’s portrayal of a mom with Alzheimer’s disease was quite touching and authentic,” added Barsamian. “I attend many events at the historic Orinda Theatre and have worked here since 2018, starting with a Hollywood wardrobe exhibition and the Academy Awards special events.”

Gay Parker, a frequent Orinda Theatre attendee from Oakland, said *Yellow Bird* was a feel-good movie with a message.

“Everyone has their problems and how they conduct themselves affects those around them,” she said. “I think with all we went through with the pandemic and the economy the past three years, this was a perfect time for this movie.”

Jerris said he loves how *Yellow Bird* is taking flight.

“I’m grateful to the cast and crew who have become sort of a family – the ‘Yellow Bird family,’ like the characters in the film,” said Jerris. “I’ve always been a dreamer and never gave up on my dream as a writer, which is why this movie has come to fruition.”

Jerris’ next movie, *Bobby Holiday & The Saleslady*, shoots this summer.

*Yellow Bird* is currently streaming on Amazon Prime Video, Tubi, Roku and Memento. Visit [www.angusbenfield.com](http://www.angusbenfield.com) and [www.tonyjerris.com](http://www.tonyjerris.com).

Charleen Earley can be reached at [editor@theorindanews.com](mailto:editor@theorindanews.com).



JEFF HEYMAN

Orinda Theatre owner **Derek Zemrak** introduced actress and author **Kathy Garver** to the audience. She stars in the indie film *Yellow Bird* as Rachel Rush, a character who suffers from Alzheimer’s disease.

ORINDA ART SCENE

Orinda Art Scene

MAY IN THE ART GALLERIES  
AT THE ORINDA LIBRARY AND  
WILDER

DAVID FONSECA



Art Gallery at the Orinda Library:  
Ekphrasis Collaborative Exhibit

The inspiration for this month is “Ekphrasis,” the Greek word for writing, which describes or explains other art. The exhibit is a collaboration of the California Writers Club (CWC) – Mt. Diablo Branch, the Lamorinda Arts Alliance (LAA) and the Lamorinda Arts Council (LAC).

This unique exhibit focuses on fine artworks which inspire literary works and literary works that inspire fine artwork.

Linda Hartmann, vice-president of the CWC and the 2021 Jack London awardee, said the initial definition of Ekphrasis was a literal or poetic representation of visual portrayal.

“Ekphrasis is an elegant way to appreciate both literary works and visual arts, coupled rather than separately, and within the context of an inspired relationship,” she said.

Hartmann, chairs CWC’s Scholastic Art & Writing Awards and Ekphrasis and participates in the annual Young Writers Contest as a juror, emcee and creator of the screen presentation for the award ceremony.

“We’re rendering this distinction two-ways, with visual artists responding to their inspiration from a literary or poetic piece,” she said. “I find this intriguing, dramatic and moving, but not often represented in the artistic arenas; thus, it’s an idea for an accessible exhibit for our community. It’s exciting.”

Everyone is welcome at the Saturday, May 8 reception from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. Visit <https://lamorindaarts.org/ekphrasis/>.

Art Gallery at Wilder: Figurative and Abstract Paintings

Award-winning Walnut Creek artist Mary Claire Stotler’s figurative and abstract paintings exhibit is extended through May for attendees to revel in this self-described “a little sassy and crazy” artist’s works.

Stotler said the arts are her passion.

“As a teen, I took classes at the Art Institute of Chicago. I got to see the paintings of Monet, Degas, Manet, Gauguin and my favorite – Vincent van Gogh,” said

Stotler. “They become ingrained in my brain. They’re like old friends when you see them.”

Moving to Miami, she became a potter and designed murals.

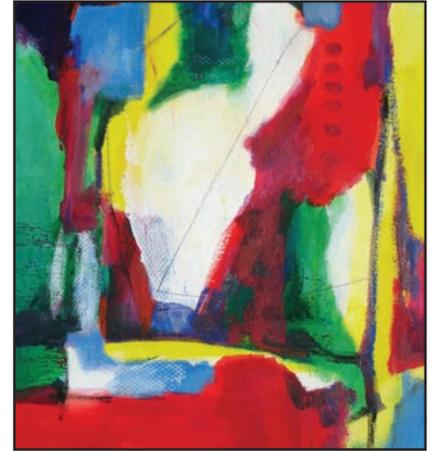
“Then I went to clay on the wheel,” she said. “When I moved here, I joined a painting class with Mary Ann Brown and did abstract watercolors. Later, I learned to

paint in the plein air style with another well-known California painter – Pam Glover. What fun. So now I paint in abstracts, fantasy abstracts and in the plein-air style. Lucky me.”

Explaining her creative process, Stotler said, “I usually turn on the music in my gazebo and listen and then maybe I dance a little bit and let the feeling and energy flow.”

The Wilder Art and Garden Center is located at 20 Orinda Fields Lane. To schedule a viewing appointment, contact Curator Ani Breslin at [anistonbreslin@berkeley.edu](mailto:anistonbreslin@berkeley.edu). For more information, call the Lamorinda Arts Council at 925.359.9940.

David Fonseca can be reached at [davef52@gmail.com](mailto:davef52@gmail.com).



MARY CLAIRE STOTLER

Just in time to coincide with Orinda’s characteristic colorful spring is *Carnival of Colors*, an acrylic 22” x 30” abstract painting by **Mary Claire Stotler**. View this and other works by her this month at the Art Gallery at Wilder, by appointment only.

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CALENDAR / CLUBS

On the Calendar in May

- International Film Showcase** presents *Ajoomma*. Visit [www.internationalshowcase.org](http://www.internationalshowcase.org) for trailers and showtimes. See article p. 20.
- Art Gallery at Wilder** presents figurative and abstract paintings through May. To schedule a viewing, contact Curator Ani Breslin at [anistonbreslin@berkeley.edu](mailto:anistonbreslin@berkeley.edu). See article p. 17.
- Cal Shakes** Summer Conservatory and Dr. Philippa Kelly's lecture series, *Shakespeare and the Modern Mind*, registration at <https://calshakes.org>. See article p. 13.
  - Orinda Books** presents Barbara Graham and Katie Hafner who discuss *What Jonah*

- Knew and The Boys* 11:30 a.m.
- Orinda Books:** Pat's Book Club reads and discusses *Still Life* by Sarah Winman. 11 a.m. Email [info@orindabooks.com](mailto:info@orindabooks.com) for reservations.
  - Taste of the World** food trucks Orinda Community Center parking lot, 5 - 8 p.m. Also May 11, 18 and 25.
  - First Friday Forum** presents Gaining Ground: The Importance of Conserving Land and the Critical Challenges Facing Our Society with Linus Eukel, 10 a.m., via Zoom. Register at <http://lopc.org/forum>. See article p. 11.
  - Orinda Farmers' Market**, 9 a.m. Orinda Way in front of Rite Aid and the Community Park. [www.cccfm.org](http://www.cccfm.org) or 925.431.8361. Also May 8, 13 20 and 27. See article p. 22.
  - Art Gallery at the Orinda Library** "Ekphrasis Collaborative Exhibit" reception 3 p.m. Visit <https://lamorindaarts.org/ekphrasis/>.

- See article p. 17.
- Orinda Parks and Rec Senior Trip** - Slow Burn Glass Studio visit [www.OrindaParksandRec.org](http://www.OrindaParksandRec.org).
  - Orinda Parks and Rec OYS** Fall Soccer Registration Begins [www.orindaparksandrec.org](http://www.orindaparksandrec.org).
  - Orinda Library** presents Mark Twain: The Mysterious Stranger 6:30 p.m. <https://ccclib.bibliocommons.com/events>.
  - Orinda Theatre Free Movie Night** presents Alfred Hitchcock's *Strangers on a Train* at 6:30 p.m. See article p. 20.
  - Movie in the Park, The Incredibles.** Orinda Community Center Park. Begins at dusk.

- Chiller Diller Theater** presents *The Invisible Boy*, 7 p.m. See article p. 20.
- Pacific Chamber Orchestra** presents *Refresh Yourself in Spring Waters*. 7:30 p.m. St. Stephens Episcopal Church. Visit <https://pacificchamberorchestra.org>.
- Contra Costa Chamber Orchestra** presents *Discoveries and Revivals*, St. Stephens Episcopal Church, 4 p.m.
- Live At the Orinda!** presents singer Ava Nicole Frances. Orinda Theatre, 5 p.m. See article p. 12.

Send calendar items to Jill Gelster at [calendar@aspenconsult.net](mailto:calendar@aspenconsult.net).



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Club Meetings in May

- American Association of University Women-Orinda-Moraga-Lafayette Branch** (AAUW-OML) AAUW provides fellowships and grants for post-graduate academic work and community projects. [aauw-ca.org/govtrek/](http://aauw-ca.org/govtrek/).
- Backyard Drumming Circle** meets every other Wednesday at the SunJams Backyard Stage, 183 Moraga Way. Contact Amer Budayr at <https://events.humanitix.com/wednesday-drumming-circle-we-start-from-the-beginning>.
- Community Gentle Yoga**, via Zoom, Mondays and Thursdays 9-10 a.m. Contact Gaby Mozee at [gcmzee@gmail.com](mailto:gcmzee@gmail.com).
- Friends of the Joaquin Moraga Adobe**. Third Monday, 7:30 p.m. via zoom. Contact [kentlong@moragaadobe.org](mailto:kentlong@moragaadobe.org) or [www.moragaadobe.org](http://www.moragaadobe.org).
- Friends of the Orinda Creeks**. Fourth Wednesday. 3 p.m., 925.408.1840. [www.orindacreeks.org](http://www.orindacreeks.org).
- Lamorinda Alcohol Policy Coalition**. Third Wednesday, 10 a.m., 925.687.8844, ext. 227. <https://bit.ly/3egD3EZ>.
- Lamorinda Garden Club**. Contact [jumpfor@gmail.com](mailto:jumpfor@gmail.com) for the meeting schedule.
- Lamorinda Meditation Community**. Mondays and Thursdays, 10:30 - 11:25 a.m. All levels and philosophies welcome. Contact Gaby Mozee at [gcmzee@gmail.com](mailto:gcmzee@gmail.com).
- Lamorinda Republican Women Federated**. Third Thursday. For more information, visit [www.lamorindarepublicanwomenfederated.org](http://www.lamorindarepublicanwomenfederated.org).
- Lamorinda Sunrise Rotary**. Fridays at 7 a.m. breakfast at Veterans Memorial Center, 3780 Mount Diablo Blvd., Lafayette. Guests welcome, no reservations needed, [www.lamorindasunrise.org](http://www.lamorindasunrise.org), [lamorindasunrise@gmail.com](mailto:lamorindasunrise@gmail.com).
- Montelindo Garden Club**. Visit [www.montelindogarden.com/meetings](http://www.montelindogarden.com/meetings) for information. Lafayette Library Community Hall, 3491 Mt. Diablo Blvd, Lafayette. 9:30 a.m. registration. Free.
- The Orinda Association**. First Monday 7 p.m., Meetings are in person at 28 Orinda Way, 1st floor of the Library or via Zoom. 925.254.0800 or [www.orindaassociation.org](http://www.orindaassociation.org).
- Orinda Chamber of Commerce**. Third Wednesday 4 - 5 p.m. via zoom. Contact [info@orindachamber.org](mailto:info@orindachamber.org).

- [orindachamber.org](http://orindachamber.org).
- Orinda Garden Club**. [www.orindagc.org](http://www.orindagc.org), 925.257.0668.
- Orinda Hiking Club**. Every weekend and first Wednesday, contact Ian at 925.254.1465 or [www.orindahiking.org](http://www.orindahiking.org).
- Orinda Historical Society**. Open Thursdays from 3 - 5 p.m. and the last Saturday of the month from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Call 925.254.1353 or email [info@orindahistory.org](mailto:info@orindahistory.org). <https://orindahistory.org>.
- Orinda Junior Women's Club**. Second Tuesday, 7 p.m. Contact [membership@orindajuniors.org](mailto:membership@orindajuniors.org) for location.
- Orinda Masonic Lodge #122 F&AM**. 9 Altarinda Road. 925.254.5211. Visit [www.orindalodge.org](http://www.orindalodge.org) for meeting/rental information.
- Orinda Rotary**. Wednesdays, 12:15 p.m. at the Founders' Auditorium, 28 Orinda Way, Guests welcome. Honoring the OUSD Teachers of the Year lunch meeting May 10, 12:15 p.m. Email [rotaryclubforinda@gmail.com](mailto:rotaryclubforinda@gmail.com) for details.
- Orinda Satellite Rotary Club**. Second Wednesday, 12:15 p.m. Call Sylvia at 510.224.8548.
- Orinda/Tábor (Czech Republic) Sister City Foundation**. Fourth Thursday, 7 p.m., social, 7:30 p.m. meeting via Zoom. 925.254.8260.
- Orinda Teen Advisory Council**. Contact Recreation Coordinator Matt Delmartini at [mdelmartini@cityoforinda.org](mailto:mdelmartini@cityoforinda.org).
- Orinda Woman's Club**. Second Tuesday, 9:30 a.m., Garden Room of Library. Email Jean Barnhart at [jeanr.barnhart@gmail.com](mailto:jeanr.barnhart@gmail.com).
- Road Runners**. Meet 5:45 a.m. Tues., at Pappion, 67 Lafayette Circle, Lafayette, Wed., Gepetos, 87 Orinda Way, Thur., SiSi, 910 Country Club Drive, Moraga and Fri., Starbucks, 470 Moraga Road, Rheem. Contact John Fazel at [runmtns@prodigy.net](mailto:runmtns@prodigy.net).
- Sons in Retirement (SIR)**. Lamorinda Branch 174, second Wednesday at 11:30 a.m. For info, call Tyler at 925.963.5741 or Bill at 925.963.0442 or [www.branch174.sirinc2.org](http://www.branch174.sirinc2.org).

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ORINDA AMATEUR RADIO TEAM / CLASSIFIEDS

# Amateur Radio Operators Help Communications During Emergencies

By S. K. GUPTA  
Contributing Writer

Once upon a time, not so long ago, in 1988, and not so far away, in Orinda, a troop of Girl Scouts needed a project for their Gold Award. One of the dads was a licensed ham radio operator and a member of the Orinda Amateur Radio Team, or OART. The seven scouts decided to learn Morse code and get their licenses.

"This was the beginning of the Miramonte High School Radio Club," said Diana Wilde, who served as their troop leader.

Since 1988, the OART has grown into today's LARIG, the Lamorinda Area Radio Interest Group.

The Federal Communications Commission, FCC, granted a license to LARIG in 2007 with call sign K6ORI and Keith Riley has been the Trustee since. LARIG was incorporated as a non-profit 501(c)(3) corporation in 2012.

LARIG has evolved to serve two purposes. First, to be a hub for amateur radio operators, who help with training, licensing and support new members. Riley has been an Elmer, a mentor, to newly licensed operators and has helped many learn the Morse code - which is no longer required to get a license.

"Our goal is to bring together folks who have interest in radio operation and are willing to help the community, when needed," he said at a weekly Tuesday morning coffee meet, over which he unofficially presides.

The second purpose is to provide support for emergency operations, especially for major disasters and big events like the Orinda 4th of July parade and the NORCAL Kids Triathlon.

When hurricane Katrina hit Louisiana

in Aug. 2005, cell phones died and Ham radios became the primary source of emergency communication traffic. During the Loma Prieta earthquake on Oct. 17, 1989, many emergency organizations discovered they were unable to communicate with each other.

"When all else fails, we rely on the amateur radio operators to provide communications when it really matters," said Todd Gritzer, the recent president of LARIG.

All emergency organizations now have Amateur radios, including the City of Orinda, MOFD, Moraga and Lafayette Police departments, as well as educational institutions including Saint Mary's College and all Lamorinda schools.

The Miramonte High School Ham Radio Club, established by the Girl Scouts in 1990, continues to function.

"We have helped two members get their licenses this year and have repaired the school's base station," said Club President, Ryan Kaelle.

Over the years, the term "ham radio" has segued to "amateur radio," recognizing the purely personal aim of the individuals and "without pecuniary interest."

"They are anything but amateurs," said MOFD's Emergency Preparedness Coordinator, Dennis Rein. "They bring an impressive and interesting set of technical knowledge that is essential for communication during an emergency."

FCC uses three levels of licenses for amateur radio: technician, general and extra; each requires passing an exam. However, anyone can get a General Mobile Radio Service, or GMRS license from the FCC without an examination. Basic hand-held radios are inexpensive and highly recommended for staying in contact with family members during an

emergency.

LARIG currently maintains and operates three K6ORI voice repeaters (UHF - Ultra High Frequency) and three GMRS repeaters, one of each in Orinda, Moraga and Lafayette. The repeaters are needed to overcome the hilly terrain and extend the range of the radios. LARIG also

programs the radios MOFD's Community Emergency Response Team, or CERT, volunteers use. This team has two portable repeaters to deploy during emergencies.

[SEE RADIO page 20]

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TOM WESTLAKE

So, on this merry month, the big screen presents unexpected journeys, trains and reused Shakespearian robots – so let's get right to it.

The International Film Showcase wins the "Most Oddly Titled" movie sweepstakes this month with *Ajoomma*, concerning a character simply known as Auntie.

Leading an unremarkable life, her escape is through the trials and tribulations seen on soap operas. Her grown son promised a trip to Korea, but moved away unexpectedly, leaving Auntie on her own for the first time.

Taking the trip anyway, she finds herself

in the company of an equally inexperienced and somewhat apathetic tour guide and eventually finds herself stranded.

This is a gentle film about life and discovery, filled with charm and quirky characters. Visit [www.internationalshowcase.org](http://www.internationalshowcase.org) for trailers and showtimes.

May 18, Free Movie Night features Director Alfred Hitchcock's *Strangers on a Train* at 6:30 p.m. It's one of the really great films that shows the Master of Suspense at the full height of his powers.

Two strangers meet, get acquainted and a particularly deadly scheme is proposed. One stranger looks at it as an interesting, yet

[SEE REEL page 21]

**What's On Deck With Parks & Rec!**

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**Senior Trip - May 11 - Slow Burn Glass Studio & Lunch at Bay Street Shopping Center (Emeryville) \$66**

**OYS Fall Soccer Registration Begins May 15**

**Thursday Night Food Truck Events have returned, 5 - 8 p.m. Concerts Begin in June.**

**Friday Night Movie, May 19. *The Incredibles*. Movie begins at dusk.**

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[www.OrindaParksandRec.org](http://www.OrindaParksandRec.org)  
OrindaParksandRec@CityofOrinda.org  
28 Orinda Way – Orinda Community Center

◆ RADIO from page 19

"My wife Sandi and I were introduced to the GMRS radios when we went through CERT training. We got hooked and took our exams to get amateur radio licenses," said Gritzer.

Annually, LARIG members conduct a Field Day to ensure all equipment is in working condition and they clean the space around the East Bay Hills repeater regularly. The Lafayette repeater was installed in a resident's house on a hill. Recently, when the resident decided to move, his neighbor offered his house for the repeater. The volunteers worked through a weekend to move the equipment and antenna to the

new location.

Local amateur operators' backgrounds include businessmen, pilots, doctors, engineers, homemakers, photographers, artists and firefighters. Their common bond is using a radio and helping the community.

LARIG is always looking for new people to learn and join the community. Visit [www.larig.org](http://www.larig.org) for more information.

"I started coming for the technical stuff, but now I come for the enjoyable company," said Carol Alvord, LARIG's newest member.

S.K. Gupta can be reached at [sk.gupta.us@gmail.com](mailto:sk.gupta.us@gmail.com).

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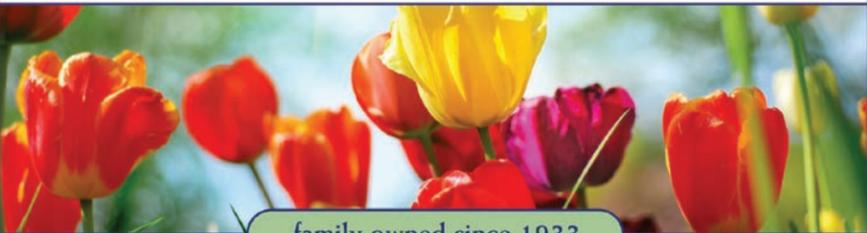
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JEFF HEYMAN

In addition to providing public service radio coverage for local events, the Lamorinda Amateur Radio Interest Group, known as LARIG, participates in the American Radio Relay League's annual "Field Day." **Matthew Vurek** makes a Field Day contact while working the group's station at last year's event.

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BUSINESS BUZZ

# Business Duo Open Community-Centered Virtual Thrift Project

By TRISTAN SHAUGHNESSY  
Staff Writer

Tony DeMartile, a recent Orinda resident and hair stylist for more than 30 years, is trying his hand at a new profession – thrifting.

Opening Saint Anthony’s Virtual Thrift Project with his business and life partner Guy Gargiullo, DeMartile hopes their store, at 128 Village Square, “change[s] the way thrift happens.” Saint Anthony’s is named after the patron saint of lost items, according to DeMartile.

Starting with online sales last month, Saint Anthony’s currently offers clothes shopping and home organizing services. Gargiullo, who runs the latter, visits clients to help organize and pick-up donations. The duo plans to expand, with a timeline matching their goals of changing thrift culture, while creating a sense of community at the store.

Plans are in place for open houses the first Saturday of the month, starting May 6, until the grand opening on National Thrift Day, Aug. 17. DeMartile envisions an event with food trucks and fun for curious shoppers, which he hopes will keep the momentum going for years to come.

The goal is to move Saint Anthony’s to a larger space which can accommodate more inventory and workers, specifically elderly artisans and energetic young folk. Bringing in older employees was Gargiullo’s



JEFF HEYMAN

Tony DeMartile, co-owner of Saint Anthony’s Virtual Thrift Project, is pictured amongst some of his own artwork. A professional hairstylist and creative, he and partner Guy Gargiullo hope Orinda’s newest thrift store will be a communal and creative space for Orindans.

idea.

Noticing some of his friends and family in need of additional income and wanting fulfilling work, Gargiullo thought incorporating Orinda seniors was a way of using Saint Anthony’s to give back to the community.

As for bringing in younger employees,

that vision came from DeMartile. While growing up, he attributes formative moments and insights to his elders, those special people willing to share their lived experiences. So, for DeMartile, creating a store which unites Orinda’s young and old, just makes sense.

“I got so much information from the community and from all of the elders,” he

said. “It felt sacred to me in a way and a lot of the time, I don’t think we have those connections of learning from people who actually know something about something. I want to bring that element to the community.”

Hiring the city’s elders is also a chance to expand Saint Anthony’s services. Utilizing their lifelong skills – whether it’s sewing, stitching or hemming – DeMartile wants

[SEE BUZZ page 22]

◆ REEL from page 20

purely hypothetical idea. The other doesn’t and from then on, it’s pure edge-of-your-seat entertainment. You may never go on a merry-go-round again.

The Chiller Diller Theatre presents Lord Blood-Rah who unearthed a little-known gem, *The Invisible Boy*.

Made in 1957, it throws a lot of concepts on the screen, some of which were ahead of their time, without having any clear idea what the film is supposed to

be about.

The behind-the-scenes details are far more engaging, especially for conspiracy theorists. That Robbie the Robot is part of this, only scratches the surface of what this film is – or might be. The movie shows May 20 at 7 p.m. Visit [www.orindamovies.com](http://www.orindamovies.com).

Remember to go toward those wonderful images made of sound and light, for that’s where the reel magic lies.

*Tom Westlake can be reached at [poppinjay@earthlink.net](mailto:poppinjay@earthlink.net).*

◆ STEM from page 15

making new discoveries and being curious, especially with all the girls being from the Bay Area, kind of relieved me. There are so many other girls out there who have passions in science, technology, engineering and math, but they can be so hard to find.

I believe having a place dedicated to empowering young girls is important and

necessary in our community. Awesome keynote speakers, awesome people and awesome cookies. Why wouldn’t you go? And who knows, maybe this conference could be the starting point for another Mae Jemison.

*Maraki Esayas is a student at Sequoia Middle School and can be reached at [editor@theorindanews.com](mailto:editor@theorindanews.com).*

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SEASONED SHOPPER

◆ BUZZ from page 21

to not only resell clothes, but also repair them.

This pivot away from single-use attire is part of how DeMartile wants to shift the way we thrift. For example, customers can come into Saint Anthony's looking for a used jacket, while getting their tattered pants –which probably would have been thrown away – patched and repaired.

DeMartile, an experienced business owner, and Gargiullo have set ambitious goals for Saint Anthony's. Starting his own beauty salon in 1996, he built strong, long-lasting relationships with clients, like Doris Adler.

An Orinda resident for 28 years, Adler has known DeMartile for the same amount

of time. She was so impressed with his hairstyling, that while working in Albuquerque, she would wait to get haircuts at his salon when visiting family in California.

Hearing about DeMartile and Gargiullo's new endeavor, she is confident they will succeed.

"He's got a truly kind soul," said Adler. "He is just benevolent to the nth degree and he is all about balance in the universe and making everyone feel good about themselves, feeling whole and giving back to his community."

For virtual shopping, visit [www.saintanthonys.net/](http://www.saintanthonys.net/) or call 510.501.8331.

Tristan Shaughnessy can be reached at [tristan.c.shaughnessy@gmail.com](mailto:tristan.c.shaughnessy@gmail.com).



## Seasoned Shopper

### Here Come the Stone Fruits

BARBARA KOBSAR



May starts the stone fruit season with cherries and apricots. In season and fresh, fruit at the Orinda Farmers' Market offers a variety of each to make the choices most interesting.

Hundreds of varieties of cherries grow in the United States, both wild and commercially cultivated. Ponce Farms from Delhi, in the Modesto area, brings a few of the most popular varieties to try over the next several weeks.

Choose firm, plump cherries with fresh green stems. Unwashed, they can be placed in single layers between paper towels in a container, covered and refrigerated for up to four days. Wash before using.

Freshly harvested apricots include Apache, an early variety which has a pinkish-orange skin and a finely-textured orange flesh. A freestone, which means the flesh is not attached to the pit or stone,

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## SATURDAY

# Farmers' Market

22 Orinda Way,  
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EBT Welcome

Royal Tioga cherries, developed at the research station at Zaiger's Genetics in Modesto, are the first offerings. They are large, firm and red-skinned with pleasant sweetness and aroma.

Brooks cherries follow and bring a sweet, rich, well-balanced flavor. The firm flesh holds up well when chopped into salsa, tossed into salads, baked in pies, simmered into preserves or added to cheese boards. For some, these are the cherry-of-choice before the Bing cherry hits the stands.

Bing, the most popular cherry, arrives around the middle of May. The sweet, juicy, deep red cherry is treasured for fresh eating, cooking, canning and freezing.

The cream-colored Rainier cherries arrive next. Their sweet creamy flesh is a one-of-a-kind delight, but they are fragile and susceptible to bruising.

makes it easy to eat. The lovely aroma reminds us – fresh is always best.

An apricot look-alike, called an Aprium, is another fruit developed in the late 1980s by Zaiger's. This hybrid is the result of a cross between apricots and plums – roughly 75% -25% respectively.

Apriums tend to be on the small size with a red-blushed, orange, smooth skin and firm texture. They are sweet with a little plum tartness. Enjoy them out of hand or use them in any recipe calling for apricots.

The Orinda Farmers' Market is open every Saturday from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Orinda Way in Orinda Village. For more information, visit [www.cccfm.org](http://www.cccfm.org), 925.322.6228.

Barbara Kobsar can be reached at [Barbara@cotkitchen.com](mailto:Barbara@cotkitchen.com).



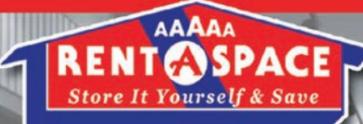
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PERFORMING ARTS

◆ NEIGHBOR from page 24

with special needs in our everyday lives. Sometimes we have to be a bit more patient, but being inclusive is not always the laborious ordeal it is believed to be. And a small effort of inclusion can go a long way in a child's or a family's experience in school, sports and community.

Simon is in the musical at OIS and he's on the track team, because the school district is making an effort to be inclusive. Before COVID-19, Simon was a part of the Peter Pan Foundation musical and has participated in several community activities within Orinda, so my experience is the community as a whole makes an effort to be inclusive.

What are you doing for Mother's Day?

I always get stuffed French toast on Mother's Day. Last year we all worked together in my vegetable garden afterwards. It was a really good day. Maybe we'll do that again.

Kathy Cordova can be reached at cordova@theorindanews.com.

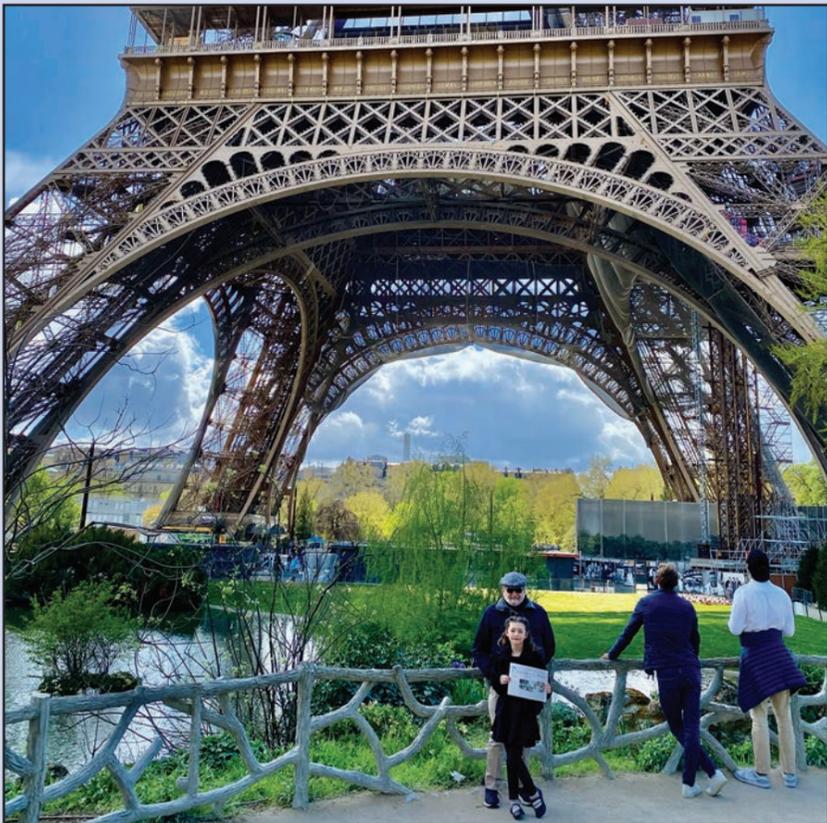
Flock of Swans Lands at the Orinda Library



PATRICIA TOMLINSON

Orinda Ballet Academy's performers present Swan Lake & Contemporary Dances at the Orinda Library Auditorium, May 19 - 21. (L-R) Phoebe Higgins, Maya Elkind, Frances Giquinto, Emily Charo, Ella Pierce, Bailey Brothers, Sadie Elkind and Ava Allaire. Kneeling (L-R) Mia Jeric, Amy Li, Chloe Sabo-Nichols and Gianna Galando. "Swan Lake was the ballet we were rehearsing and ready to perform in Spring 2020, before COVID-19 shut it all down," said Patricia Tomlinson, owner and artistic director. "We are excited to revive it. The dancers have worked hard on this dramatic classical ballet, about love conquering evil. Guest artists include Jackie McConnell, Christopher Dunn and Maurice Monge." Purchase tickets at https://www.eventbrite.com/.

Oh, The Places You'll Go with The Orinda News



KATHY FINCH

Bob Finch and his granddaughter, Lily Beck, read their hometown newspaper while visiting the Eiffel Tower in Paris, the City of Lights.

Where will you go with The Orinda News? Send photos of YOU reading our paper in interesting places, around town or around the globe to editor@theorindanews.com. We'll publish a new photo each month.

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MEET YOUR NEIGHBOR

# Q&A with Super Mom Alicia Keenan

By KATHY CORDOVA  
Executive Editor

When we asked for recommendations of an extraordinary mother to feature this month, Alicia Keenan got more nominations than *Everything Everywhere All at Once*.

She was described as “mom of five, including one with special needs, rock star, friend, mentor, advocate, substitute teacher, dynamic, impactful and just a wonderful human.”

You had us at “mom of five.” Here’s our delightful, insightful conversation with the amazing, inspiring Alicia Keenan.

**How long have you lived in Orinda and what brought you here?**

My husband David and I met in high school in upstate New York. We’re East Coast transplants who first moved to San Ramon when David transferred with Twitter.

What we had in San Ramon was a great school district, but not a community. Everyone said if we wanted a community, we should be in Lamorinda and that’s exactly what we found when we moved to Orinda in 2016.

**You have five kids, including triplets, one of whom has Down Syndrome. What are their names and ages and how do you and your husband manage it all?**

Our oldest, Ania, is 19 and finishing her first year at NYU. The triplets, who are 13, are Lorelei, Grayson and Simon who has Down Syndrome. Our youngest, Rowan, is 11 and was born 20 months after the triplets.

When the children were younger, we lived within 15 minutes of both sets of grandparents, so we had some help. The key is David and I have a relationship in which we are true partners.

Be it paid work or sitting in an IEP (individualized education program) meeting or managing a team activity, we value the work the other is putting in for our whole family. Another mantra we practice, especially having a child with special needs, is that he, Simon, [and all our children] are a part of our circle, not the center of it. We are all a part of our family circle.

**Tell us about your involvement with POISE.**

When we first moved to Orinda I heard about POISE for parents of children with special needs. I was approached six years ago and asked to revitalize it as a support group for parents.

It’s hard being a parent of a child with special needs. It’s difficult to navigate and POISE is a place where parents can talk to each other and share and collaborate.

We have monthly coffee chats and parents with children with autism or dyslexia, for example, can form their own little support groups. It’s about making connections, which is the community I craved.

**What’s it like to raise a child with special needs?**

It’s a lot like raising any kid. Each one



KATHY CORDOVA  
Alicia and David Keenan parent their five children with the philosophy that everyone is a part of their family circle, with no one person in the center. In their garden (L-R) Lorelei, David, Grayson, Rowan, Alicia and Simon. Their oldest child, Ania, is not pictured.

is so different. Two typical kids can be so drastically different.

For example, Simon has buckets and buckets of confidence. He walks into a room and he’s the first to tell two jokes. We tease each other that Simon got all the confidence DNA.

Logistically it’s harder. Simon has more doctors appointments than the other four combined.

Having an IEP (a document that’s created through a team of the child’s parents and district personnel) for Simon is also different. The IEP dictates what’s provided and worked on with a child from age three to 22.

**What has been your greatest lesson in this journey?**

People often talk about the children who didn’t fall far from the tree, the kids who are just like us. When you have a child who falls far from the tree, it’s pretty crystal clear, the things people think are most important-making great grades, getting into an elite college, being the number one on a sports team-none of those are really important.

What is important is why you become parents. The “why” is to love somebody and have them love you back. You want them to be part of the community and to have goals to achieve.

**What do you wish other people knew about kids with special needs?**

It doesn’t take a lot to include people [SEE NEIGHBOR page 23]

**POISE**

Parents of Orinda Individuals in Special Education (POISE) is a support group for parents in Orinda schools seeking support, guidance and resources for their children with IEPs and/or a 504 plan. Any parent whose student needs additional support – reading, behavioral, speech, academic, etc. – is welcome at POISE. Visit <https://www.orindapoise.org/> for more information.

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