



# THE ORINDA NEWS

Gratis  
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Delivered to 9,000 Households and Businesses in Orinda

12 Issues Annually  
January 2024

## Matadors' First Section Title in a Decade



MARK BELL

Miramonte senior #30 **Nate Howe** takes on Saint Bernard's notorious #19 **Wyatt Simoni** during the Division 5, North Coast Section Championship game on Nov. 25, 2023, at Acalanes High School's field in Lafayette. Thanks in part to the success of Miramonte **Coach Schram's** passing attack, quarterback **Carson Blair** threw for four touchdowns against The Crusaders, who traveled all the way from Eureka. The unmatched speed of Miramonte's ground game helped seal the deal on the 42-20 victory for the Matadors. This was their first section title since 2013.

## Planning Commission Holds Rezoning Recommendation

By KATHY CORDOVA  
Executive Director

[cordova@theorindanews.com](mailto:cordova@theorindanews.com)

The Orinda Planning Commission held a public hearing on Dec. 12, 2023, to discuss a recommendation to the city council to rezone four "opportunity sites" that were part of the city's certified Sixth Cycle Housing Element. The meeting was attended by a large group of citizens, including approximately 30-35 who took turns speaking at the podium, almost all of whom strongly opposed the rezoning.

California's Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) adopted the Housing Element in March 2023 as part of the state's requirement for Orinda's plan to add 1,359 additional dwelling units by 2031.

To start the meeting, Associate Planner Winnie Mui gave a brief presentation outlining the basics of the Housing Element, including Orinda's state-mandated increase in planned housing.

Orinda's plan includes 623 units of existing capacity, 90 zoned units and 707 units

[SEE PLANNING page 11]

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## Gee Serves as 2024 Orinda Mayor

By KATHY CORDOVA

Executive Editor

[cordova@theorindanews.com](mailto:cordova@theorindanews.com)

New Mayor Darlene Gee isn't one to shy away from a challenge. She was one of only six women out of 600 students in the engineering department at University of Illinois, where she earned her bachelor's degree in civil engineering. She also served a term as mayor of Orinda in 2020 – the year COVID-19 emerged, necessitating lockdowns, budget cuts and drastically transforming the way meetings and city gatherings were conducted.

Luckily, as Gee takes the reins of the city in 2024, things are looking up. The pandemic is mostly in the rear view mirror. City meetings are held in person again and Orinda's finances are strong. Gee is no longer one of a handful of women in places of significance and influence. Today, she is a senior VP at a major engineering consulting firm and, notably, leading Orinda's first all-female city council.

If the past is any indicator, Gee is fully prepared to tackle any challenges that may come her way in 2024.

Read on to learn more about Gee, her accomplishments and her priorities for Orinda.

**You were first appointed to the city council in 2015 to take Steve Glazer's place when he was elected as a state senator. What inspired you to serve then, and to run again for the seat in 2016 and 2020?**

Before joining the city council, I spent many years serving on the Citizens' Infrastructure Oversight Commission and volunteering to help with our roads and drains program. I had two key reasons why I wanted to be on the city council. The first was to continue the work I was doing and to ensure we completed the important program regarding our roads. The second was that I really wanted to give back to the community.

**What are the city council's biggest accomplishments over the last eight-plus years you have served?**

The thing that I'm most proud of is how



JEFF HEYMAN

Photographed in the iconic Orinda Library, Mayor **Darlene Gee** is looking forward to engaging with the community during her 2024 term.

well run the city is, particularly by our staff, who do incredible things given our size and resources. The caliber of the staff is amazing.

The council, along with the staff, has steered Orinda into being very well managed fiscally. We have a strong reserve fund. We don't have any pension liabilities. We have no unfunded liabilities.

We weathered the pandemic very well. All of our Parks and Rec programs are back in place and our staffing is back to the level it was before the pandemic.

**As your second time as mayor, what did you learn and what would you do differently?**

When I served as mayor in 2020, it was a difficult year. Because of the pandemic I was restricted in my ability to engage with the community. I really missed the opportunity to be out and about and connect with groups and meet with residents. I would have done it the first time if I could. This time I'm really planning to be much more engaged.

[SEE GEE page 5]

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CITY PLANNING NEWS

# City of Orinda Planning Director Drummond Buckley to Retire

By CAMERON SULLIVAN  
Staff Writer

cameronsullivan@cameronsullivan.net

Drummond Buckley, Orinda’s director of planning, will mark his retirement from public service Jan. 18. A longtime planner who joined the city staff in 2016, Drummond may best be known for his ability to create transparent processes that foster open dialogues.

“Before I was hired, I was told one of my main responsibilities would be to restart the conversation about downtown,” said Buckley, noting that frequent attempts to address the controversial issue had been unsuccessful.

“We started with a very memorable, standing-room-only meeting at the library in 2016,” remembered Buckley. The room was filled with a mix of people who opposed change and those who wanted modifications and updates.

“That was the only meeting in my career that, at the end, the crowd applauded,” said Buckley, with a self-deprecating laugh. He prefers to talk about his staff rather than himself. To him, the meeting demonstrated Orinda’s collective ownership of smart planning and development.

Orinda City Manager David Biggs has appreciated Buckley’s insight about the community.

“He has a great knowledge base and re-



ally does love Orinda,” said Biggs. “He’s had to navigate tough issues and did it with great aplomb, considering local constraints and state obligations.”

Under Buckley’s leadership, in January 2023 Orinda adopted its Downtown Precise Plan (DPP). Representing years of planning efforts, consultations, studies, community outreach and feedback, the DPP guides the community and policymakers toward a shared vision for downtown.

Biggs praised Buckley’s work in training many of the city’s key planners over the years.

“He’s constantly challenging them and encouraging them to grow as professionals,” he said.

In conjunction with the DPP adoption last year, the city approved the 2023-2031 Housing Element. The housing element allows zoning for the construction of more than 1,000 new housing units in the eight-year period.

In December, the Orinda Planning Department received the Mayor’s Award of

Excellence for 2023. Buckley prefers not to take personal credit for the achievement. Instead, he highlighted the dedication and accomplishments of the planners who joined the department during his tenure.

“Looking back, I’m most proud of the team that I work with here,” said Buckley. “I’ve had the opportunity to mentor a lot of really great planners. And I’m grateful to the city council for supporting the planning department and the process we’ve taken the community through over the years.”

The city is working with an executive search firm to carefully identify and hire Buckley’s successor.

“The goal is to have someone in the position by May or June,” said Biggs. “In the meantime, we will have an interim planning director who will bring a lot of experience to the city.”

Biggs was unable to share that individual’s name before this issue of *The Orinda News* went to production, nor had the job requisition officially opened.

[SEE BUCKLEY page 10]



JEFF HEYMAN

Orinda Planning Director **Drummond Buckley**, fourth from left, retires in January after nearly eight years with the city. Buckley is most proud of Plan Orinda, which led to last year’s adoption of the Downtown Precise Plan and featured the collective work of key city planners, including (L-R) **Julie Tamayo**, **Celina Palmer**, **Donna Baarsch**, **Buckley**, **Winnie Mui**, **David Bafumi**, **Darin Hughes** and **Patricia D’Amico**.

## 2023: A GREAT YEAR!



“Thanks for a great job selling my home. You were on it every minute until the sale was completed. You have a great system to make the process easy. I personally felt I was working with a close friend and hope we can continue to work together on other properties. Lots of good luck in the future.”

-Geetha N., Seller

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THE ORINDA ASSOCIATION

Message From the Co-President  
Happy New Year!



KELLY SOPAK  
president@orindaassociation.org

Happy New Year! Three simple words are how I choose to start my first message as Co-President of The Orinda Association. Ringing in the "New Year" for me has always been about starting anew, as in new friendships, new beginnings and new endeavors. I am looking forward to all the newness 2024 will bring!

Before we get too far into 2024, I want to take an opportunity to thank all the individuals who supported The Orinda Association's plethora of activities in 2023. Our 4th of July Parade was a huge success and a lot of fun for our entire community.

The 19th Annual Orinda Classic Car Show, which featured, of all things ... Land Yachts, was a smashing success. The car show is much more than shiny chrome and revved-up engines – it has become a gathering place for friends and family where we open our wonderful community for all to enjoy.

Thank you to the record number of families who attended and generously donated money to The Orinda Association. We were

able to raise additional funds for some of our lesser-known, sponsored activities.

We saw a high volume of volunteers for Seniors Around Town, and the money we raised for the program has allowed us to further our commitment to our seniors. We also need additional volunteer drivers for Seniors Around Town. Please visit orindaassociation.org to see how you can help.

We are also very appreciative of those who donated their old cars to Cars2nd-Chance. Car donors receive a tax write-off and our Rotary Club sponsors take care of all the behind-the-scenes logistical details to make the process seamless for everyone.

Reminder, if you have an old car, maybe one you are still incurring DMV and insurance premiums on, please consider donating today. Call 925.326.5868 and they will get this process started for you. This is a great way to reduce your taxes while helping others. Please donate today!

As we start the new year, all of us at [SEE MESSAGE page 17]

The Orinda Association Welcomes  
New Board Co-Presidents

By CHARLEEN EARLEY  
Editor-in-Chief  
editor@theorindanews.com

Two for the price of one – although the positions are unpaid and voluntary. The Orinda Association (OA) welcomes Chris Laszcz-Davis and Kelly Sopak as this year's board co-presidents.

With Sally Hogarty stepping down from her term as president, the two busy and community-minded board members are ready to get started.

Chris Laszcz-Davis

"I've been engaged with many non-profits in Lamorinda, including The OA. My lens this next year will be focused on The Orinda Association, its community voice and ability to leverage needed initiatives to affect change," said Laszcz-Davis, an Orinda resident for 34 years. "Since I'm a community networker/collaborator, I hope that leveraging various community groups

[SEE CO-PRESIDENTS page 6]



JEFF HEYMAN

Chris Laszcz-Davis and Kelley Sopak (L-R) will serve as 2024 co-presidents of The Orinda Association (OA) board. Pictured at The OA office, they showed off the newly-designed OA shirt and hats for sale.

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.

OFFICERS

Co-Presidents - Chris Laszcz-Davis  
Kelly Sopak  
Vice President - Alex Drexel  
Secretary - Eloise Sotelo  
Treasurer - Cindy Powell  
City Council Liaison - Latika Malkani

BOARD MEMBERS

Carlos Baltodano  
Barb Brawner  
Jacalyn Buettner  
Lisa Burlini  
Kathy Cordova  
Grace Paik  
Bill Waterman  
Kate Wiley



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www.OrindaAssociation.org

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Individual & Families: Consider making a donation of money or time, bring your friends & family to the events.

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www.orindaassociation.org/4020campaign

What's On Deck With Parks & Rec!

City Holiday Closure: December 22 - January 1.  
Winter/Spring Registration Open, programs begin January 8, 2024  
Free senior tech help on 3rd Saturday of the month, 11 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. Registration required.  
Jan. 24, Senior Trip to Pardee Home Museum, Tour and Tea, 9:30 a.m.-2:30p.m. \$66 per person. Reg. required.  
OYS registration open for t-ball/baseball, soccer, and NEW Ultimate Football. Reg. closes January 14.  
Go to www.orindaparksandrec.org or call 925-254-2445 for questions and registration.

Orinda Parks and Recreation Department  
925-254-2445  
www.OrindaParksandRec.org  
OrindaParksandRec@CityofOrinda.org  
28 Orinda Way – Orinda Community Center

FRIENDS OF THE NATURE AREA

# OUSD Board Approves \$1.5M Budget Plan for Friends of the Nature Area

By ANDREA MADISON  
Staff Writer  
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A budget plan for the \$1.5 million in state funding awarded to the Friends of the Nature Area (FONA) was approved at the Orinda Union School District (OUSD) Nov. 13, 2023 Board of Trustees meeting.

FONA, also known as the Wagner Ranch Nature Area, is an almost 19-acre nature preserve owned by the OUSD, featuring a forest, meadows, ponds and streams. Orinda elementary school students take part in field trips, hands-on educational activities and summer camps at the historic site.

Storms in the winter of 2022-2023 significantly damaged the nature area, creating safety hazards due to downed and falling

trees and eroded pathways, forcing closure of the property.

The extensive damage requires considerable funds to repair the site. In 2022, OUSD requested \$4.5 million for the preservation and protection of the nature area through Assemblymember Rebecca Bauer-Kahan's office, but the funding was not granted. After a resubmission of the request, the district was awarded \$1.5 million for the area's current needs.

The initial request included estimates for a visitor and education center, nature pathway signage and displays and a shade canopy, which were not included in the approved budget. Tree removal and trimming, upgraded pathways and five years of ongoing maintenance of the nature area are new additions. Other line items, such as ADA-compliant pathways, fencing and outdoor education coordinators, were funded, but to a lesser extent than originally requested.

The nature area is reopening in phases. The Wagner Ranch Parent's Club funded repairs to the school garden, which reopened last August.

Funding and volunteer efforts from Boys Team Charity, which helped to remove fallen tree limbs and other hazards, enabled the nature area garden to reopen in October.

The rest of the site remains closed for now, but is expected to open "hopefully by mid-2024," according to a recent update from FONA.

"We have to ensure the safety of the nature area, otherwise nothing can be accomplished," said OUSD Superintendent Aida Glimme. All costs in the current budget are based on estimates and need to be updated based on actual quotes.

Tree trimming and removal service will require OUSD to issue a request for a proposal, which is a lengthy process, according



REG BARRETT

Student board members from the Friends of the Orinda Nature Area (FONA), along with local students, help FONA naturalist **Toris Jaeger** prepare beds for native seeds and seedlings on Dec. 10, 2023.

to Glimme. A contractor to repair pathways must also be secured.

OUSD is slated to receive the funding in January or February.

During the meeting on Nov. 13, FONA Vice President Rebecca Dahlberg thanked Glimme for her work on the grant request, while also expressing concern about not

being consulted on the budget line items.

"We have questions about where certain dollar figures came from, and are things like a kitchen upgrade really necessary?" said Dahlberg. "We would love to have a seat at the table, talking about these things, because we think we can bring something

[SEE FONA page 14]

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## Orinda Village Holiday Market Raises Over \$3,000 for Local Schools



JEFF HEYMAN

The Orinda Village Holiday Market, held Saturday, December 2, 2023, was a hit with local families and seasonal shoppers of all ages and a hugely successful fundraiser for our local students. The Holiday Market, hosted by **Ben Zarrin** of Paymun Real Estate, Design and Development, held in the former Bank of America building in Orinda Village Square, benefited the Orinda Network for Education (ONE) to the tune of over \$3,000, which will go a long way to help fund local schools. Dozens of local businesses and arts and craft vendors – all decked out for the holidays – participated, and kids were treated to a giant slide, face painting and an ever-so-popular bouncy house – much to the delight of parents.

### Finding the Right Fit in 2023

<b>Represented Sellers:</b>	
254 Manzanita, Orinda	\$1,550,000
75 Barbara Road, Orinda	\$1,850,000
404 Wovenwood, Orinda	\$1,850,000
24 La Cuesta, Orinda	\$2,685,000
367 Dalewood Dr., Orinda	\$2,800,000
59 Tiger Tail Rd., Orinda	\$4,295,000
120 Via Floreado, Orinda	\$2,900,000
161 Ardith Drive, Orinda	\$2,450,000
124 Sleepy Hollow Ln, Orinda	\$2,600,000
<b>Represented Buyers:</b>	
46 Camino Sobrante, Orinda	\$1,975,000
2501 Golden Rain Rd., WC	\$355,000
2548 Joseph Drive, Alamo	\$1,950,000
5 Hidden Lane, Orinda	\$2,600,000
3158 Hambletonian Lane, WC	\$1,140,000
832 Solana Drive, Lafayette	\$1,310,000

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WILDER

# Commission Recommends Eliminating Wilder HOA Shuttle Requirement

By CHARLEEN EARLEY  
Editor-in-Chief  
editor@theorindanews.com

The Orinda Planning Commission held a public hearing on Dec. 12, 2023, to discuss, among other topics, the 9th

Amendment of the Wilder Development Agreement (DA), including the requirement of its Homeowners Association (HOA) to institute and operate a shuttle to BART, the Orinda Arts and Garden Center, the Wilder playing fields and downtown Orinda.

At the close of the hearing, the planning commission voted unanimously to recommend the city council eliminate the shuttle requirement.

Orinda Planning Director Drummond Buckley explained, "The next step is a public hearing before the city council at which the council will consider the proposed DA and Final Development Plan (FDP) amendments, as well as the commission's recommendation."

Formerly called Montanera, the Wilder subdivision is a planned development in the Gateway Valley, located in South Orinda.

According to the City of Orinda website, "Wilder has a Development Agreement, Final Development Plan and Master Landscape Plan that, in conjunction with the

Orinda Zoning Ordinance, govern the development of individual home sites within the subdivision."

According to Wilder HOA President and resident Scott Honeychurch, between 15-20 residents attended and several spoke at the public hearing, with another 19 comments submitted via email.

Overall, residents expressed concerns that if the shuttle requirement moves forward, it would be a "ghost shuttle doing loops."

"No doubt the original biodiesel-powered BART shuttle requirement from 20-plus years ago was a well-intended plan to promote a 'green' transportation service, but as more current personal EV technology has [SEE WILDER page 9]

### ◆ GEE from page 1

#### What are Orinda's biggest challenges in 2024 and what are your priorities?

My priorities are recruiting and retaining good staff, spending our tax dollars effectively and growing and changing our city in a positive way, including a continued focus on fire prevention.

Specifically in terms of staffing, I want to prioritize finding ways to maintain high-caliber staffing, because our residents have high expectations – and deservedly so. It's just always challenging to find talented people in today's world and in a small city.

Through Plan Orinda, we're making provisions for changes in the community. Some people are really excited about that and others less so. But the reality is one way or the other, change is going to occur over time. We have to both fulfill obligations that are put on us by the state and navigate the process so we're responding to what Orindans want.

#### As a Measure R proponent, what's your stance on how Orinda has spent those funds so far and how they should be spent in the future?

Measure R dollars are a combination of fire prevention and infrastructure. We've done a good job of improving our roads and drains and our infrastructure. Now that we've done that, we have to look very hard at fire prevention.

There are differing viewpoints and it's a very evolving area. We know there are some key things that can be done. For example, reducing vegetation growth is important.

#### How the Orinda Mayor is Determined

The mayor is elected by the city at its first regular meeting. The term is one year. Traditionally, the vice mayor becomes mayor next and the councilmember who had the most votes in the last election, becomes vice mayor. Based on that system, councilmember Malkani is vice mayor this year, and mayor in 2025. Then councilmember Iverson will become vice mayor.

#### Darlene Gee Bio

**Born:** Bloomington, Illinois  
**Education:** Bachelor's degree in engineering from the University of Illinois, MBA from UC Berkeley  
**Current Job:** Senior vice president at engineering consulting firm HNTB Orinda resident since 1989  
**Family:** Husband of 37 years, Dennis Gee, and two sons, Brian, age 31, and Eric, age 28

But how a city can spend money versus how you and I, as private people, can spend money, is different.

Some of our residents want us to swoop in and start cutting down everything in sight. That's a little hard on private property. Some of our residents think we should do studies that other people haven't thought were important. There is definitely a lot we still have to navigate.

I do support and hope that we will find continued ways to spend more money on fire prevention. We are constantly evaluating and looking for more ways to spend the Measure R funds effectively.

#### What are your thoughts on serving on Orinda's first all-female city council?

It's been wonderful. I think it's a very thoughtful, talented group. I have thought the world of all my male colleagues over time, and I'm sure we will have more male colleagues at some point, but this is a great group.

#### Is there anything about you that might surprise Orindans?

Many people know how much my husband and I love to travel, and we are lucky to have seen many places in the world. But not everyone knows that I collect decorative roosters from all the countries and key places I travel to. I have strict criteria that they need to be made by local artists and they represent art from a particular locale. In many cases I've had the pleasure of meeting the artists themselves. My family is always surprised, annoyed, intrigued or perplexed at the length I will go to bring roosters back. They are amazed that I can remember exactly where each one comes from. ■

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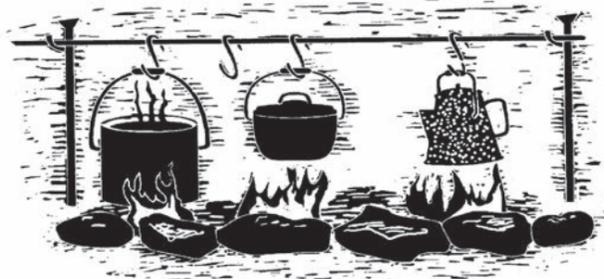
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EDITORIAL / POLICE

# Letter to the Editor

## Friends of the Orinda Library

We saw your nice story in *The Orinda News* (Dec. 2023) about Lamorinda non-profits and service groups, and we were disappointed to see that the Friends of the Orinda Library was not included on your list.

The Friends was started in the mid-1950s and raised money to build the first library (across from the fire station), then raised \$5 million for the new library on Orinda Way.

We raise a significant amount of money for library materials and programs. Our membership has been dwindling, as new residents don't know about us – something we're working hard on, but being left out of

the story just lets us know how much harder we have to work!

Please visit the Friends website for more information about this worthy all-volunteer organization at [friendsoftheorindalibrary.org](http://friendsoftheorindalibrary.org).

If you'd like to help support our library, join the Friends! A membership contribution will help buy more library materials and support library programs. You can contribute safely online via PayPal, or mail a check to the Friends at P. O. Box 152 in Orinda. We warmly welcome volunteers, too! Email [volunteer@friendsoftheorindalibrary.org](mailto:volunteer@friendsoftheorindalibrary.org) to get started.

- Nancy Ross-Madnick, President  
- Linda Landau, Treasurer

## ◆ CO-PRESIDENTS from page 3

will enable The OA and others to take on some additional, much-needed community initiatives."

Born in the United Kingdom and raised in Cleveland, Ohio, Laszcz-Davis earned her bachelor's degree, with a double major in chemistry and biology, at Notre Dame College.

"I was on my way to medical school when I discovered the new pioneering world of public health," she said. "So I pivoted with a fellowship to the University of Minnesota." There she earned a master's degree in environmental health engineering.

"Exciting times in this country with the launch of EPA, OSHA, NIOSH, DOE, and companion programs in industry," she said.

Laszcz-Davis has traveled the world with

her various jobs in government, industry and management consulting. She and her late husband Steve raised two children – Lauren, age 37, and Grant, age 34.

"Both children have delightful spouses and offspring," she said. "We are very close and have been blessed over the years with our tight-knit family. My kids went to Glorietta, OIS and Miramonte, where they had great academic and athletic experiences."

With The OA infrastructure in solid shape, Laszcz-Davis said her role as co-president will be one of facilitating and enabling "the great staff and volunteers to do what they do best year after year."

"I hope to function as the voice of The OA when required, which includes board meetings, town council report-outs, launching new initiatives and running interference for an association staff and board that

## List of *The Orinda News* Advertisers

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<b>Automotive</b>		State Farm, Bryan Silveira	10
Mash Gas and Food	1	State Farm, Kelly Sopak	8
Orinda Motors	24	<b>Real Estate</b>	
Orinda Shell Auto Care	9	Coldwell Banker	
<b>Community</b>		Laura Abrams	7
Orinda Parks & Rec	3	Suzanne Toner Geoffrion	17
<b>Fitness</b>		Shellie Kirby	8
Corekinetics	12	Compass	
<b>Financial Services</b>		Rick Kaluza	9
Park Place Wealth Advisors	14	The Grubb Company	
<b>Garden/Landscaping</b>		Rebecca Ciccio	19
City of Orinda	8	Sotheby's	
East Bay Tree Service	10, 16, 17	Barb Brawner	11
Garden Nest	4	Ann Newton Cane	15
Ken's Redwood Fencing	10	Village Associates	
Ken's Rototilling	19	Linda Friedman Team	5
McDonnell Nursery	10	Gillian Judge Hogan	12
Tree Sculpture	16	Dexter Honens II	14
Wildland Corporation	18	Christina Linezo	3
<b>Medical and Dental</b>		Murphy Team - Karen & Hilary Murphy	13
Dr. Brian Clark, Psy. D.	10	Ann Sharf	16
Dr. Mary Smith DDS	9	Amy Rose Smith	4
Medicine Shoppe	15	Alexis Thompson	2
<b>Non-profit</b>		Clark Thompson	5
Court Appointed Special Advocates	14	<b>Restaurants/Catering</b>	
The Orinda Association	3, 12	Baan Thai	16
Rotary Club of Orinda	11	Casa Orinda	5
<b>Professional Service</b>		Farmers' Market	19
5A Rent-A-Space	12	O'Yammy Sushi	17
Char's Resumes	20	Siam Orchid	15
Green Sheds	11	Zamboni's Pizza Company	4
Jeff Heyman Photography	16	<b>Retail</b>	
Kirby Carpet Cleaning	5	McCaulou's	15
Ray Robinson Attorney	12	Omega Lighting & Design	14
Recycle Smart	19		

have incredible vision and purpose," she added.

Outside of work, she enjoys spending time with her family and friends, along with other activities. "Hiking, global travel and experiencing new cultures, reading, trying new things – such as snowshoeing and dog sledding – and pioneering new global professional endeavors, keep me energized," she said.

### Kelly Sopak

Twenty-year resident and State Farm Insurance agent in Orinda for almost 30 years, Kelly Sopak served as vice president of The OA last year.

"This is my first time as co-president and I wanted to continue to serve in any capacity with The OA, because it does so much for our community," he said. "It is an honor to be a part of such an amazing group of people, helping this amazing city of Orinda."

Born in Puyallup, Washington, Sopak and his wife Beverley have two daughters, Lauren, age 24, and Leah, age 21.

Sports are a big part of Sopak's life. He is founder and director of the Cal Stars Basketball Club based out of Orinda with programs in Northern California, Southern California and Arizona.

He's the current head coach of the women's basketball team at Carondelet High School. For 11 years he was the head coach of Miramonte's girls basketball team where

he coached Sabrina Ionescu, who currently plays professionally for the Women's National Basketball Association's New York Liberty.

Sopak is also the wide receivers football coach at Miramonte, where they recently won the section championship. He and Beverley own Power Sports Academy, formerly called NorCal Courts, a five-court, 30,000-square-foot basketball, volleyball and futsal facility in Martinez.

"I know Chris and I have our work cut out for us replacing Sally, but we have some of the most amazing individuals at The OA and I am personally just excited to be around them and keep building and helping our community," he said. "Orinda is one of the best communities in California and my wife and I are so fortunate and proud to have raised our family here." ■

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

Send to [editor@theorindanews.com](mailto:editor@theorindanews.com)

## POLICE BLOTTER

November 14 through December 15

**Calls for Service**

Abandoned Vehicle: 1:  
Lavenida Dr.

Battery, Misdemeanor: 1

Burglary, Commercial: 2

Burglary from Motor Vehicle: 2:  
Canon Dr., Brookside Rd.

Death, Non-Criminal: 1

Fraud: 1

Grand Theft: 3

Hit & Run Misdemeanor: 2:  
Moraga Way, Sundown Ter.

Hospitalization: 4

Identity Theft: 1

Illegal Fireworks: 1

Littering: 2

Outside Assist: 1

Petty Theft: 1

Petty Theft, Vehicle Parts: 1:  
Wilder Rd.

Property Found: 1

Property Lost: 2

Shoplifting: 1

Tow: 1

Vandalism: 7

Vandalism, Felony: 1

Vehicle Theft: 1: Wilder Rd.

**Arrests**

DUI, Misdemeanor: 2

Probation Violation: 5

Property, Receiving Stolen Goods: 1

Warrant Arrest: 4

– Compiled by David Dierks  
Assistant Editor

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STUDENTS / ORINDA COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

# Miramonte Students Present Curriculum Proposals to Board of Education

By CHARLEY MATTHEWS  
Staff Writer  
charley.matthews2008@gmail.com

The Sacramento Downtown Holiday Inn emitted a different energy than its usual, quiet presence. The vibrancy was the result of a group of inspiring and dedicated student leaders from every corner of the state, working together to improve California's education system.

As a sophomore at Miramonte High School, I attended the Student Advisory Board on Education (SABE), Nov. 5-8, 2023 with Miramonte sophomores George Balan and Calla Garrett, as well as senior Leo Ding.

SABE is a four-day intensive program hosted by the California Association of Student Councils (CASC) that gathers 75 high-school-student delegates to create proposals for the State Board of Education (SBE) to consider.

As the governing body for the California Department of Education, the SBE influences over six million students, and SABE is a unique opportunity for students to speak directly to the board. Past SABE proposals have successfully been implemented, and delegates work throughout the year to implement new ones.

Upon arrival, I worked with the delegates to narrow down prevalent issues in our education system and joined one of six groups to brainstorm solutions.

Within a couple of hours, delegates transformed from strangers to friends and began discussions for specific proposals. As a whole, SABE is a race against time, with the constant passionate chatter of motivated high schoolers.

As part of our lobbying efforts, I led my group of delegates to California's assembly offices.

There we met with legislative aides and directors for feedback, resulting in a stronger proposal and a better presentation.

Seeing the interest of our state board, asking questions, providing helpful feedback and talking about implementation made me feel optimistic, knowing our substantial work was time well spent.

In the end, two of the six proposals were presented by Miramonte students to the State Board.

Balan presented an idea to tie current events into history-class frameworks.

"By connecting World and U.S. History with the global present, our proposal helps fight against the growing apathy toward others, ensuring that Californian students are informed of global events from yesterday and today at a time in which we often simply aren't," said Balan.

Miramonte Board Representative for the Acalanes Union High School District Board (AUHSD) and speaker for the mental health proposal, Ding worked to add a metric to districts' accountability plans, allowing them to create targeted programs and initiatives to address mental health.

"Leading up to my speech, I was extremely nervous and was praying it wouldn't show," said Ding. "But once I stood at the podium, the adrenaline allowed me to focus, and I ended up gaining more confidence throughout the speech."

Currently, Ding and I are working on the implementation of all six proposals created at SABE through the Legislative Policy Committee through CASC, meeting monthly with a larger team along with our assembly members and senators.

SABE has offered me the experience to pursue my passions with like-minded peers and apply my teamwork and public-speaking skills in a real-life setting. I'm excited to return next year with even more students from Miramonte.

If you're a student looking to get involved in education policy, please reach out to me for opportunities and ways to get involved! You can also visit [casc.net](http://casc.net). ■



RISHAL MELVANI

Pictured in front of the Sacramento State Capitol building on Nov. 8, 2023, Miramonte students (L-R) Leo Ding, Calla Garrett, Charley Matthews and George Balan (being held), were among 75 high school delegates from throughout California who gathered at the Student Advisory Board on Education.

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PERFORMING ARTS

**Orinda Starlight Village Players Auditions**

The Orinda Starlight Village Players are holding auditions for their 2024 summer season Jan 14.

The 2024 season starts with Agatha Christie's *Spider's Web*, continues with William Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing* and concludes with Malcolm Cowler's adaptation of Sheridan Le Fanu's *Carmilla*.

Rehearsals for the Agatha Christie start mid-April for performances in June. Rehearsals for Shakespeare start in May with performances mid-July through mid-August. Rehearsals for *Carmilla* start mid-July for performances in September.

If you are interested in participating other than acting this is also a good time to come and meet the group and let them know how you would like to contribute or learn about community theater.

For more information, visit [orsvp.org/auditions.html](http://orsvp.org/auditions.html) or call 925.528.9225.



CHARLIE JARRETT

Will Spongberg (L) and Patrick Atkinson graced the Orinda Starlight Village Player's production in Agatha Christie's *The Secret of Chimneys* in 2023.

**Live At the Orinda! Begins 2024 on a High Note with Award Winner**

By SALLY HOGARTY  
Staff Writer  
[sallyhogarty@gmail.com](mailto:sallyhogarty@gmail.com)

Following appearances in London and Paris, multi-platinum singer/songwriter Ann Hampton Callaway brings her velvety tones to the Orinda Theatre, Jan. 21.

The in-demand performer, whose songs have been recorded by Barbra Streisand, Carole King, Patti LuPone, Liza Minnelli, Karrin Allyson and Michael Feinstein, will accompany herself on piano and share intimate stories of her career at the Orinda venue.

Callaway will perform songs by those who have inspired her, such as Carole King, Joni Mitchell, James Taylor and Paul Simon.

"I do a few cool mashups of their songs with mine where you see the beautiful connection between our spirits," said Callaway.

She will share songs from her new CD, *Finding Beauty: Originals Vol. 1*, which features songs co-written with Oscar-winner Alan Bergman, Grammy-winner Melissa Manchester and Golden Globe-winner Amanda McBroom. The CD also includes Callaway's frequent musical partner and sister, Emmy-winning Liz Callaway.

In a career studded with accomplishments, Callaway noted one in particular – helping to create and star in the Broadway musical *Swing!* She was nominated for a Tony for her role and won a Theatre World Award. The cast album was also nominated for a Grammy Award.

"It was my lifelong dream to be in a Broadway musical and, as I like to say, it only took 21 years to become an overnight sensation," said Callaway.

Callaway has characterized herself as a "worried optimist," which she explains as someone who looks for "silver linings and beauty" in all things and people.

"But I am also keenly aware of how much needs to be done to make this world safer, more loving and fairer," said Callaway. "It's hard to relax when so many people are being unjustly treated."

The busy singer has always found time to be involved with philanthropic and humanitarian causes and hopes her music can make a difference as well. One of her current concerns involves the rising tide of prejudice, violence and hatred and the wars spawned by such emotions.

"It is absolutely senseless and barbaric," she said. "I don't know if music can solve all the world's problems, but as an artist, I



BILL WESTMORELAND

Multi-award-winning singer/songwriter **Ann Hampton Callaway** brings her intimate one-woman show to Live At the Orinda! on Jan. 21. She will sing songs from her new CD *Finding Beauty*, as well as songs from those who inspired her, such as **Carole King, Joni Mitchell, James Taylor and Paul Simon**.

think we can surely try our best."

To that end, Callaway wrote songs such as *At the Same Time, Love and Let Love* and *Be the Light* to address such issues.

"I hope by opening my heart through my music, I can open others. Once the heart is open, the mind is soon to follow," said Callaway.

While promoting her new CD on concert tours around the world, Callaway is also writing additional songs for a follow-up CD and considering other challenges.

"I'd like to write another Broadway musical and create new symphony shows since I love working with orchestras," she noted. "I also have a dream of taking a year off and traveling the world interviewing people in remote places, writing songs based on their answers and recording them with local musicians. It would be a global portrait of the gorgeous tapestry of mankind."

Before Callaway can turn her dream into a documentary or CD, however, she must concentrate on traveling from one location to another as she shares her current music.

"Travel has become unreliable and baffling much of the time," she said. "It increases the stress of an already demanding life for all artists trying to bring happiness to people. I feel like I sing for free but get paid to travel. Maybe I should start my own airline!"

Ann Hampton Callaway appears at Live At the Orinda! Jan. 21 at 5 p.m. at the Orinda Theatre, 4 Orinda Theatre Square, Orinda. For tickets, go to [orindamovies.com/events/](http://orindamovies.com/events/). ■

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FIRST FRIDAY FORUM / HISTORICAL SOCIETY

# First Friday Forums Begin January 5

By ALISON BURNS  
Staff Writer  
alisonjburns@gmail.com

Afficionados of the ever-popular First Friday Forum series will be pleased to learn that its sponsor, the Lafayette-Orinda Presbyterian Church (LOPC), has come up with yet another compelling lineup of presenters for their 2024 program.

Bringing a variety of thought-provoking lectures to our local community in an increasingly complex world, the six programs are offered from January through June at 1:30 p.m. on the first Friday of the month.

The opening and closing talks in the series are via Zoom only, but those from February to May will be simultaneously livestreamed and in-person at the LOPC campus. There is no subscription or entry fee.

As always, the speakers are of a very high caliber with a broad and fascinating range of subjects.

Return speaker, Dr. Joe Whitehouse, kicks off the series on Jan. 5 with his Zoom presentation, *Iraq: Cradle of Civilization* – which indeed it is, since Mesopotamia, known as present-day Iraq, has long been cited as the source of a writing system, mathematics, timekeeping, calendar and the Hammurabi law code. Whitehouse promises to show a number of extraordinary pictures of historical, cultural and religious significance in Iraq, Kurdistan and Lebanon.

On Feb. 2, Adam Hochschild, author and lecturer at the Graduate School of Journalism at the University of California, Berkeley (UCB), will discuss *Post WWI Challenges to American Democracy*. The following month, Carolyn Chen, UCB professor of ethnic studies, will reveal how today's companies are transforming the very nature of spiritual experience in



COURTESY OF JOE WHITEHOUSE  
World traveler and photographer, **Dr. Joe Whitehouse**, kicks off the 2024 First Friday Forum speaker series on Jan. 5 with his fascinating presentation via Zoom, titled *Iraq: The Cradle of Civilization*.

modern life, with her March 1 presentation, *Work Pray Code: When Work Becomes Religion in Silicon Valley*.

Taking the stage on April 5, William Jagust, professor of public health and neuroscience at UCB, will speak about *Untangling Alzheimer's*. On May 3, Laura Beth Nielsen, professor of sociology and director of the Center for Legal Studies at Northwestern University, will share her remarkable progress in *Northwestern University's Prison Education Program*.

The First Friday Forum concludes on June 7, with a Zoom presentation by Stanford University's Oliver H. Palmer Professor in Humanities, Gordon Chang, about the *Forgotten, Even Ignored, Chinese Who Built the Western Portion of the Transcontinental Railroad*.

LOPC is located at 49 Knox Drive, Lafayette. For more information, including a variety of archived presentations, visit [lopc.org/first-friday-forum](http://lopc.org/first-friday-forum). ■

## Orinda Historical Society Open House



JEFF HEYMAN

Father and son musicians (L-R), **Luke Burns** and **Patrick Burns**, entertain visitors at the Orinda Historical Society's (OHS) Open House on Nov. 30. An excellent turnout impressed guests by how far the Orinda Historical Society has progressed under the newly formed board, led by President **Alison Burns**, (center) seen here with former president, **Terry Murphy** (to her right). OHS also welcomed Mayor **Inga Miller** (center), standing with OHS Secretary **Vivian Ricci**.

### ◆ WILDER from page 5

been adopted and work-from-home lifestyles have become the norm here [Wilder], the shared bus shuttle concept has lost its original relevance," said Honeychurch.

He said it was nice to see the planning commission shared that conclusion at the hearing, and Honeychurch resonated with Natalie Fay, one of the planning commission member's thoughts.

"[She] stated that she had worked on community shuttle bus plans for 35 years and agreed that they are an expensive and logistically difficult solution for an HOA

to run," said Honeychurch. "She went on to say that it would potentially have few, if any, riders if implemented in a neighborhood like Wilder."

Honeychurch was content to see the turnout from his immediate community.

"We were very pleased to see how much energy and conversation the Wilder shuttle agenda item generated within the community," he said. "I think it shows that Wilder residents want our neighborhood to be both forward-thinking and continue to evolve into the perfect place to live and raise a family in the Bay Area." ■

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TEEN CORNER

◆ BUCKLEY from page 2

Biggs expects no major changes to the existing job description on the city's human resources web page. The consolidated salary schedule, published July 1, 2023,

shows the annual starting salary ranging from \$156,322 to \$190,743.

"I think we'll get some quality candidates," said Biggs. "The key is to continue this forward momentum and give life to those plans we now have in the uniquely Orinda way."

As for Buckley, his plans after Orinda will bring him to a new continent.

"I'm going to move to Bogotá, Colombia," he said. "It's a city I've been to at least five times. I plan to learn Spanish more fluently and I want to keep my mind active."

Moving around the globe is not new to Buckley, who worked as a master planner on a U.S. military contract in Afghanistan in 2013.

Buckley added, "Orinda has been a great place to work. We're small but dynamic, so you get to do some of everything." ■



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**TEEN CORNER**  
 New Year's Resolutions:  
 High Schoolers and Adults  
 Differ in Goals

AVA RANZAL  
 avacranzal@gmail.com

The advent of a new year indicates the prospect of turning a fresh page in the narrative of one's life, especially after an eventful year. This turning of the page often finds expression in the form of New Year's resolutions.

Teenagers and adults demonstrate contrasting resolutions.

For teenagers, New Year's resolutions typically revolve around self-improvement, encompassing aspects such as personal health, academic performance, social interactions and mental well-being.

The teenage experience is multi-faceted and filled with challenges. Nurturing personal health becomes a concern for sustaining both mental and physical balance. The complicated interaction between social life and academic pursuits further details a teenager's existence, rendering the crafting of New Year's resolutions a strategic attempt aimed at overcoming these challenges.

With adults, the landscape of New Year's resolutions takes on a different form.

Work-related aspirations, travel goals, objectives related to social engagements and personal health pursuits all tend to dominate the resolutions of adults. The canvas of adulthood is painted with responsibilities and commitments, with the toil of the workplace occupying a central position.

Unlike teenagers, adults have experienced more and, in the process, acquired a reservoir of skills to navigate through life's complexities, making their resolutions reflective of a seasoned perspective.

Teenagers, in the crucible of adolescence, experience a more profound and sometimes intense social landscape. According to a new Pew Research Center survey of youth ages 13 to 17, "Substantial shares point to anxiety and depression, bullying and drug and alcohol use (and abuse) as major problems among people their age," wrote

Drew DeSilver.

This intensity can impact them significantly, as they struggle with the challenges of self-discovery and identity formation.

In contrast, adults, having sharpened their interpersonal skills over the years, possess more of an ability to navigate social intricacies. The difference in intensity of social interactions between these two groups leads to harder-driven resolutions.

Despite the inherent promise and optimism associated with New Year's resolutions, there exists a separation of outcomes, with many resolutions proving short-lived and disappearing within the initial weeks of the year: "There are many factors that can stand in the way of achievement.

Many people lose sight of their resolutions after [a few] weeks because making lifestyle changes is hard and it is easy to overcommit and get overwhelmed. We get stuck when we create too many broad goals," wrote Emma Cutting in an article titled *New Year's Resolutions That Last!*, published by Colorado State University.

This short-lived nature of our resolve is often attributed to the setting of unrealistic goals that exceed the bounds of practicality.

To reduce this challenge and harness the transformative potential of resolutions, individuals are advised to adopt a practical approach. Opting for manageable, flexible and incremental goals not only enhances the prospects of sustained commitment, but also brings a sense of accomplishment and positive self-transformation over time.

The art of crafting New Year's resolutions becomes a delicate dance between ambition and practical thinking, with the ultimate goal of fostering personal growth and fulfillment.

Overall teenagers and adults have many different resolutions, but both have the ultimate goal of self-improvement. ■



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CONTINUATIONS

◆ PLANNING from page 1

to be rezoned for high-density housing, defined as 20-25 dwelling units per acre. Downtown encompasses 421 of the units to be rezoned. The remaining estimated 286 units are divided among four sites, all located in South Orinda on Moraga Way:

- Holy Shepherd Church, 433 Moraga Way, approximately 21-26 units
- St. Mark's Church, 451 Moraga Way, approximately 44-56 units
- St. John's Church, 501 Moraga Way, approximately 32-41 units
- Miramonte High School, 750 Moraga Way, approximately 187-234 units

The city proposed a fifth opportunity site, the Caltrans site (adjacent to Highway-24 Wilder Road exit), for 200 units, but it was rejected by the HCD and cannot be counted toward Orinda's requirements in the next eight years without an amendment that must be approved by the state.

Once the meeting opened to public comments, the anger, confusion and opposition to the rezoning among those attending was clear.

Most of the evening's speakers live near the four certified housing sites. Their objec-

tions centered around the following issues: anticipated increase of already-congested traffic and accidents on Moraga Way; dangers of gridlock in a wildfire evacuation; the impact of additional students on an overburdened school system; and the effect multiple high-density housing units would have on the small-town character that attracted so many residents to Orinda.

Speaking about traffic and safety concerns, Sarah Gupta, who lives across the street from Holy Shepherd said, "As a family we're excited about more diversity. Two things: Moraga Way is beautiful to drive on, but it's not a safe road. We've been there for four years and we've seen four accidents in front of our house including one fatality."

There was palpable anger, including several outbursts, among the audience about perceived lack of notice for this meeting and a general sense the rezoning plan was sprung on them without giving them an opportunity to voice their opinions. Several attendees implored the city and planning commission to come up with a better plan with the rallying cry of "Do the work," sometimes spoken sternly from the podium, and other times shouted rowdily from the audience.

City Planner Drummond Buckley re-

sponded by stating the approved plan was the result of almost two years of work by the city, including over 15 meetings held with the Downtown Planning & Housing Element Subcommittee, Planning Commission and City Council.

He directed citizens to the Plan Orinda website at planordinda.com, which contains hundreds of pages of detailed information about the Housing Element, Safety Element, Downtown Precise Plan and California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

When an attendee asked if Orinda's housing requirement could be satisfied without the inclusion of these four sites, Buckley said that would require an amendment and he didn't know the process to amend a certified plan, but he would find out. He noted that Orinda is one of very few municipalities in the Bay Area that has an approved plan.

In a statement to *The Orinda News*, Buckley said, "Orinda is in a much better position with its housing element than most other Bay Area cities. Out of a total of 109 jurisdictions, only 13 housing elements were certified by the HCD deadline and are therefore allowed three years, instead of only one, to complete all their rezonings.

"On top of that, many agencies still have uncertified housing elements, but are still subject to the one-year rezoning deadline. Furthermore, by adopting its housing element by the deadline, Orinda has avoided

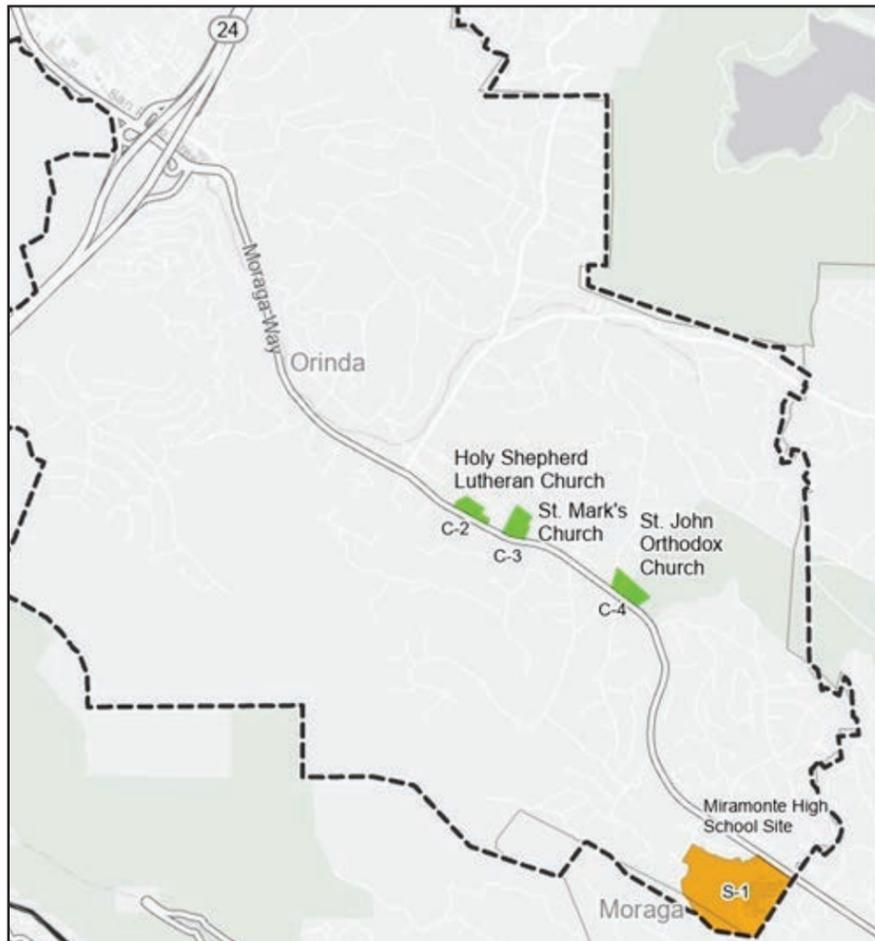
the 'builder's remedy' that gives developers carte blanche to build projects that don't comply with local zoning rules. That certification is why the city has the luxury of three years to implement the plan instead of one."

Orinda's rezoning deadline is three years and 120 days from Jan. 31, 2023, the date the plan was adopted by the city. When asked about the timing of the Dec. 12 meeting, Buckley replied, "We started the rezoning process for the opportunity sites because we were ready to do so. Our plan has been to do those sites first, then focus our efforts on the downtown rezonings, which are more complex for a number of reasons, including the need to codify the draft Objective Design Standards."

In the end, the planning commission recognized the overwhelming public concern about the rezonings and unanimously voted to pause making a recommendation to the city council.

"These are my neighbors. I do live in South Orinda. For any development that happens anywhere in the city, I want it to be something that the whole community can support and be behind and be well-informed of," said Commissioner Lina Lee.

The commission also called for an additional public hearing at a future undetermined date to provide more information and a chance for citizens to have further input into the process. ■



COURTESY OF THE ORINDA PLANNING DEPARTMENT

Map displaying the locations of the four sites at the center of the rezoning debate. Orinda's approved Housing Element calls for rezoning of the sites to allow 286 units of high-density housing.

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BUSINESS BUZZ

# Business Buzz: New Indoor Cycling Studio in Orinda Makes Fitness Fun

By NICOLE LAMISON  
Staff Writer  
nlamison34@gmail.com

Warm up. Weight lift. Cardio. Stretch. It's easy for working out to feel like a chore. Overused routines can make the gym

feel like a personal groundhog day, repeating the same movements and workouts over and over again.

To add some spice to working out, William Booth founded Cycle Scape.

Cycle Scape is a music-centric indoor cycling studio that moved to Orinda

during the pandemic. While other studios focus on revolutions per minute (rpm's), Cycle Scape focuses purely on the music and matching the beat of the songs.

The gym offers two different types of riding classes. First, a beats ride, which is a rhythmic ride incorporating weighted upper-body movements. The second is called power ride and is geared toward outdoor riders. It includes several inclines and declines. Both options provide a unique workout experience to enable people to let loose while enjoying tunes.

Other special features Cycle Scape offers are two 10-foot-by-10-foot projectors in the front of the studio that display landscapes

becomes increasingly difficult to go on runs and lift weights. Cycling offers an alternative form of cardio to the aforementioned workouts – it doesn't put pressure on the lower body's joints, but it certainly still makes one feel the burn and emerge from the studio glistening with sweat.

When Booth started Cycle Scape, the vast majority of his clients were women. Since then, more men have joined the cycling community and have begun to frequent the studio. Classes are attended by a wide range of ages and riders from all skill levels.

Weekday cycling classes run from 6 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. On the weekends, cyclists can catch up on a few extra z's

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## Pet of the Month!

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JEFF HEYMAN  
Cycle Scape owner **William Booth** showcases his new cycling studio, equipped with state-of-the-art stationary bikes and two projectors that display 10' x 10' visual landscapes of places around the world.

of places around the world.

“One of our central [aspects] is that we ride to screens,” said Booth. “You can ride through Paris, London, Argentina and places like that.”

Oftentimes, going to the gym can feel nerve-racking. Gym anxiety is an issue as many people are afraid of being watched and judged during their workouts. Cycle Scape eases that tension with its unique experience.

“One of the things that [people] like is that no one's really looking at them as they work out. It's in the dark with music. Everyone's looking toward the instructor,” he said.

Cycling is different from most cardio and leg workouts since it is low impact. As we age, our joints weaken and it

with classes from 8:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. Class choices range from 45 minutes to an hour and can be purchased in monthly unlimited-ride packages for \$260, a 10-class package for \$190 or individual classes for \$27. Check in for available specials.

When fitness feels like a chore, working out consistently becomes all the more difficult. Eleven years ago, Booth started Cycle Scape with the intention of making working out fun.

“If you're going to do something in terms of fitness, make sure you do something you enjoy so that you can do it on a consistent basis,” said Booth.

Located at 23 Orinda Way, Suite #C, Orinda. Contact Cycle Scape at 925.464.1005 or visit them at [cyclescapefitness.com](http://cyclescapefitness.com). ■



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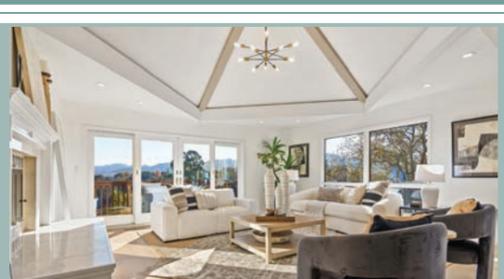
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Thank you to my clients and colleagues for a great real estate year.  
**Wishing everyone a lovely 2024!**

SPORTS

# GAME ON

## Amazing Players, Amazing Coach

MARK BELL  
mark@omegalightingdesign.com



“Attitude is a big part of the game,” Miramonte girls golf team captain, Antong Cao, tells me.

The right mix of great attitudes was a winning formula for the team in 2023, when the top five players placed third in the Division 2, North Coast Section.

Each member contributed her unique skills and mindset to the team to create this success.

Sophomore Emma Wang brought her great sense of humor to the NCS team – and her 180+ yard driving skills.

Karlee Tu, also a sophomore, added her design skills and artistry on the course.

Sophomore Page Sovocool, possibly the best putter on the team, brought her A-game every day.

Freshman Marley Vlieks illustrated

notable emotional control, resulting in her amazing ball control.

Senior Antong Cao shared her positive attitude to keep things light for everyone on both sides of the matches.

And of course, there’s the chef whipping up the winning recipe. Coach Doug Senz leads the team with kindness and encouragement.

Senz is quick to deflect any compliments and always points the spotlight back to the student-athletes he’s coaching. But he deserves some praise.

Senz is a walking history book of Orinda sports. I’d title the most recent chapter “Winning Girls Golf Team Coached By A Man Who Doesn’t Play Golf.”

Yes, you read that correctly.

Senz played on Miramonte’s very first



MARTA SENZ

From left to right: Karlee Tu, Emma Wang, Coach Doug Senz, Marley Vlieks, Paige Sovocool and Antong Cao. All played major roles in the golf team’s success in 2023.



MARK BELL

Miramonte boys teams swept NCS Championships this fall. An unprecedented “Triple Crown” with each sport winning their sectional in the same year, so the Matadors hold all three titles at the same time. No other school in NCS history has ever achieved this, in any season, ever. Cross Country: NCS Division 4 Champions, Football: NCS Division 5 Champions and Water Polo: NCS Open Division Champions.

water polo team in 1967, coached by the legendary Bill Brown. Senz played on the

tennis team as well, but not golf.

Years later, Senz accepted a job coaching basketball at Miramonte. He later coached tennis and diving.

Then he had a special needs son who absolutely loved golf. Senz absorbed a lot of learning from his son’s lessons. When the opportunity came up to coach girls golf, he raised his hand. The rest is history.

The teammates recalled some of his “Dougisms” like “One shot at a time” and “Years from now, when you’re a CEO, doing million-dollar deals on the course, you’ll remember the good times from the team experience, not who won or lost.”

Miramonte staff praised his demeanor. “I’ve never heard him utter a negative word – ever,” said Head Varsity Football Coach Jack Schram.

[SEE GAME ON page 16]

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VISUAL ARTS

# Woodturnings, Plein-Air Oil Paintings, 3D Collage and Sculpture

By ELANA O'LOSKEY  
Staff Writer

business.orinda@gmail.com

The Lamorinda Arts Council rings in the New Year featuring creations from members of the Bay Area Woodturning Association, paintings from Attila Czeglényi, 3-D collages from Kimiko Kogure and sculptures from Michael Rizza. Meet the artists at a reception, while enjoying light refreshments, on Saturday, Jan. 7, from 3 to 5 p.m.

Bay Area Woodturners Association (BAWA) is a non-profit organization with 150 members. For novice turners to hobby enthusiasts, instructors to professionals, BAWA provides a place to share and learn while educating the public in the art of woodturning. Monthly meetings are held in Pleasant Hill.

Kim Wolfe, event organizer, said, "Beneath the bark, wood is a living medium. Sometimes the exterior of a tree will provide clues as to the beauty beneath the bark, but most often a tree's secrets are unveiled while an artist is at the lathe. This collection

of work celebrates the beauty and idiosyncratic nature of wood: striking figures, bark inclusions, voids and hollows."

Expect to see 30 pieces of art from 20 members. For more information, visit bayareawoodturners.org.

Attila Czeglényi of Hayward has been painting for 30 years in various media, emphasizing oil for the past 20 years. Most of his time is spent painting in the open air at various sites in the San Francisco Bay Area and beyond.

"I like the challenge of painting on location, plein-air, where the fast-changing lights and shadows make me capture the impressions with true colors of the site," said Czeglényi.

He hopes as viewers see his work, they are inspired to spend some time in nature to appreciate the diversity of our area.

Kimiko Kogure of Orinda pursues self-discovery through working with materials that are meaningful to her. For this exhibit of 3-D collages, she has thrown her innermost feelings into the pieces hoping to engage with those who come across it.

Her materials include cotton, paper,



COURTESY OF ATTILA CZIGLENYI

Attila Czeglényi's oil painting, *Fall in Sycamore Grove Park, Livermore*, captures a moment in time where the wind whips about the sycamore tree leaves and grasses beneath; we can almost feel a whisper of wind beneath our feet.

ink and acrylic polymer. This way of communicating with others through her work requires her to be her authentic self. Learn more about Kogure's art at <https://www.kimikokogure.com/>.

Michael Rizza, a 96-year-old sculptor from Walnut Creek, has been legally blind since 2007. He had worked in bronze for 50 years and stone for 30 years. His transition from being a sighted sculptor to a blind sculptor was difficult at first, since he had to stop driving and couldn't use power tools.

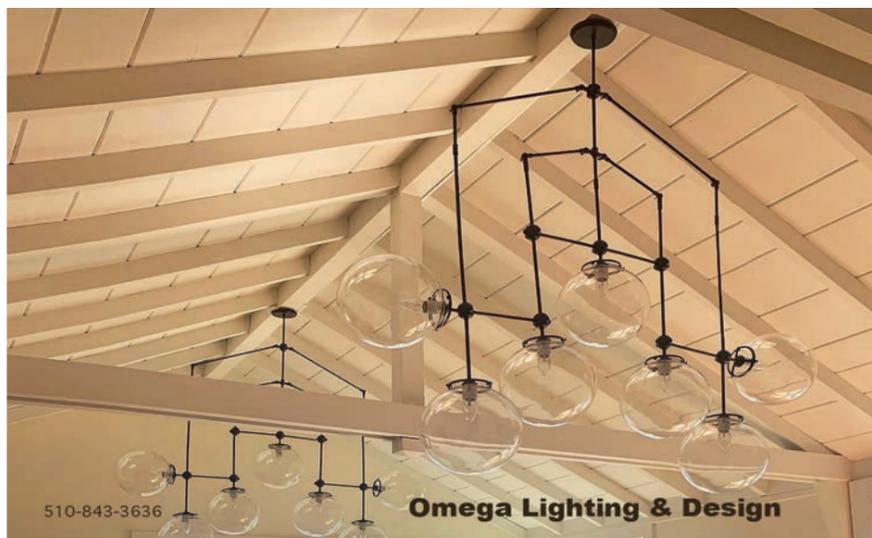
"So I went back to basics using a hammer, chisel and files," he said. "I couldn't

see with these eyes, but my hands became my eyes."

He delights in creating something beautiful and hopes the 12 sculptures he is exhibiting are enjoyed by others.

The show runs Jan. 2 - 27. Visit the gallery at 26 Orinda Way, from Mon. - Thu., 10 a.m. to 8 p.m., Fri. - Sat., 10 a.m. - 6 p.m. Closed Sundays and Jan. 15, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day. For more information, call 925.254.2184, visit [ccclib.org](http://ccclib.org). View and purchase artwork at [lamorindaarts.org/online-galleries/](http://lamorindaarts.org/online-galleries/), email [galler@LamorindaArts.org](mailto:galler@LamorindaArts.org) or call 925.359.9940. ■

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◆ FONA from page 4

with our knowledge base as you discuss the different issues and line items."

In a press release sent by Kathy Barrett, FONA members confirmed meetings will be held in the coming weeks to discuss

goals, "We look forward to collaborating with the Orinda school district so that we can reopen the nature area and restart greater volunteer activities, and the school district can restart nature programs for our school kids as soon as feasible." ■

**Wagner Ranch Nature Area - Budget Request**

Item	Budget Request April 2022	Budget Proposal November 2023
Visitor/Education Center	\$2,500,000	-
Restrooms	\$500,000	\$270,000
ADA Compliant Pathways	\$250,000	\$150,000
Outdoor Education Coordinator/Educators (5 years)	\$500,000	\$200,000
Nature pathway signage/displays	\$50,000	-
Outdoor kitchen	\$100,000	\$100,000
Outdoor classroom	\$100,000	\$150,000
Fence	\$100,000	\$10,000
Shade Canopy	\$300,000	-
Garden upgrade	\$100,000	\$20,000
Safety - tree removal and trimming	-	\$250,000
Safety - pathway upgrade	-	\$100,000
Ongoing Maintenance (x 5 years)	-	\$250,000
<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$4,500,000</b>	<b>\$1,500,000</b>

\*Restrooms - exploring a restroom without utilities.  
\*OUSD Educators - not funded for 5 years and exploring collaboration with other agencies.  
\*Fence - minimal repair.  
\*Garden - School and Nature Area garden.

COURTESY OF ORINDA UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT

The Orinda Union School District updated its state funding budget proposal for the Wagner Ranch Nature Area. The original visitor and education center, nature pathway signage and displays and shade canopy have been omitted, estimates for other expenses adjusted and costs for maintenance and safety added.

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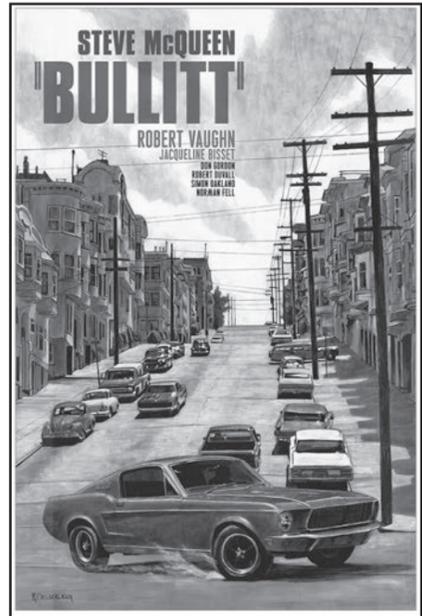
CALENDAR

On the Calendar in January

- International Film Showcase** *Driving Madeleine* screening in January at the Orinda Theatre. Visit [internationalshowcase.org](http://internationalshowcase.org) for previews and showtimes. See article p. 16.
- 4 **Orinda Books Pat's Book Group** will read and discuss *All The Lonely People* by Mike Gayle, 11 a.m.
- 5 **Lamorinda Sunrise Rotary** presents Sonia Tikoo, "Moon Magnetism, Man in the Moon...". 7 a.m. Veterans Memorial Center, 3780 Mount Diablo Blvd., Lafayette. [lamorindasunrise.org](http://lamorindasunrise.org). or [lamorindasunrise@gmail.com](mailto:lamorindasunrise@gmail.com).
- First Friday Forum** presents Dr. Joe Whitehouse *Iraq: Cradle of Civilization*, 1:30 p.m. via Zoom. See article p. 9.
- 6 **Orinda Farmers' Market**, 9 a.m. Orinda Way in front of Rite Aid and the Community Center Park. Visit [www.cccfm.org](http://www.cccfm.org) or 925.431.8361. Also Jan. 12, 19 and 26. See article p. 19.
- 7 **Orinda Library Art Gallery** artists reception, 3 p.m. See article p. 14.
- 8 **Orinda Parks and Rec** Winter/Spring event

- registration opens. [OrindaParksandRec.org](http://OrindaParksandRec.org).
- 12 **Lamorinda Sunrise Rotary** presents "Rotary Big Picture," 7 a.m. Veterans Memorial Center, 3780 Mount Diablo Blvd., Lafayette. [lamorindasunrise.org](http://lamorindasunrise.org). or [lamorindasunrise@gmail.com](mailto:lamorindasunrise@gmail.com).
- Miramonte High School** Shakespeare Showcase, 7 p.m. MHS Theatre.
- 13 **Orinda Books** presents Dacher Keltner, author of *Awe*, 2 p.m.
- 14 **Orinda Starlight Village Players** 2024 season auditions. Orinda Community Center. Visit [orsvp.org](http://orsvp.org) for reservations.
- 16 **American Assoc. University Women - Orinda Moraga Lafayette Branch** present "Food Insecurity in Contra Costa County," Orinda Community Church, 10 Irwin Way, 9:30 a.m.
- 18 **Orinda Theatre Free Movie Night** presents *Bullitt* with Steve McQueen, 6:30 p.m. Free Admission. See article p. 16.
- 19 **Lamorinda Sunrise Rotary** presents Dr. Usha Farey Lingappa "Deciphering and Communicating the Secrets of How Our Biosphere Works, How it Came to Be and

- How to Protect it Going Forward." 7 a.m. Veterans Memorial Center, 3780 Mount Diablo Blvd., Lafayette. [lamorindasunrise.org](http://lamorindasunrise.org). or [lamorindasunrise@gmail.com](mailto:lamorindasunrise@gmail.com).
- Montelindo Garden Club** presents Golden Gate Bird Alliance Executive Director Glenn Phillips speaking on "Saving Birds, House by House." 9 a.m. Visit [montelindogarden.com/2024-meetings](http://montelindogarden.com/2024-meetings) for more information. Lafayette Library Community Hall, 3491 Mt Diablo Blvd, Lafayette. Free.
- Miramonte High School** Public Speaking Showcase presented by MHS Theatre and Student Union Public Speaking, 7 p.m. MHS Theatre.
- 20 **Orinda Books** presents Adam Plantinga, author of *The Ascent*, 5 p.m.
- 21 **Live At The Orinda!** presents singer/songwriter Ann Hampton Callaway, 5 p.m. at the Orinda Theatre. For tickets, visit [orindamovies.com/events/](http://orindamovies.com/events/). See article p. 8.
- 24 **Orinda Parks and Rec Senior Trip** to Pardsee Home Museum tour and tea 9:30 a.m. \$66 per person. Reg. required. 925.254.2445. Visit [OrindaParksandRec.org](http://OrindaParksandRec.org) or contact [OrindaParksandRec@CityofOrinda.org](mailto:OrindaParksandRec@CityofOrinda.org).
- 25 **Orinda Books'** Cozy Mystery Club discusses *Murder on a Girls' Night Out* by Anne George, 10:30 a.m.
- 26 **Lamorinda Sunrise Rotary** presents Tamara Helfer, "MemMag: Growing Healthy kids," 7 a.m. Veterans Memorial Center, 3780 Mount Diablo Blvd., Lafayette. Visit [lamorindasunrise.org](http://lamorindasunrise.org). or [lamorindasunrise@gmail.com](mailto:lamorindasunrise@gmail.com).
- 28 **Lamorinda Arts Council** Mocktails & Cocktails, 4 p.m. at The Hideout Kitchen & Cafe, 32 Lafayette Circle.



COURTESY OF WARNER BROTHERS  
Steve McQueen's *Bullitt* shows at the Orinda Theatre Jan. 18.

**Funny Side Up**  
I'm a Walking Thesaurus and I Can't Help It

Charleen Earley  
[editor@theorindanews.com](mailto:editor@theorindanews.com)



I'm a walking thesaurus and it's becoming a problem ... or is it an issue? I do it sitting down too, not just while walking. When someone is talking, I blurt out their last word or I'll throw out a better, more descriptive, illustrative, colorful, eloquent and vivid word to help them.

But they don't want help – wherein lies my problem (and possibly invoking restraining orders called peaceful contacts).

I know what you're thinking, too. Who died and made you Ms. Verbal Editor, eh? I can't help it.

It's not like I'm from New Jersey and talk a-mile-a-minute (not that everyone from New Jersey talks a mile-a-minute), but it seems everyone around me (here in California) talks very slowly, like I'm in a dream.

It's others who come up with the worst words to describe their experiences. Or they do that long minute pregnant pause with the annoying "um" to go with it. This type of communication just screams inside my head with, "Charleen, help him (or her) out. Quick! What's the word they're fishing for?"

It's not me, it's them – I silently convince myself.

If they'd just be more accurate in conveying their messages, I wouldn't have to jump in and save their verbal-communication-day with an amazingly precise and scrupulous word. Not trying to toot my own vernacular horn here, but you'd think they'd be praising my efforts.

Instead, they roll their eyes, grunt, reluctantly repeat my word with disdainful resolve, or (and this one hurts) ask me to let them finish their own sentence pleasssse. It happened today.

When I get that type of "shush," I realize I have a dilemma and things are getting way out of control. Is there a 12-step program for this?

Hi, my name is Charleen and I'm a sentence-finisher. Welcome Charleen!

Only I'm not welcome.

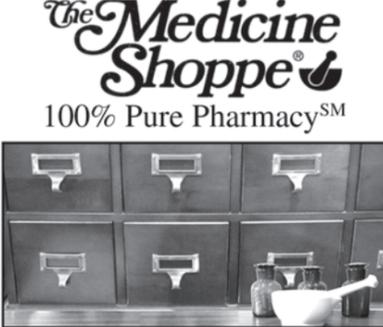
People around me would rather polish off their own sentence with the most tedious, dreadful, hideous, unexciting, wear-

[SEE FUNNYY page 16]

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◆ FUNNY from page 15

some, humdrum, uninspiring, thoughtless, non-descriptive, mind-numbing, sleep-inducing, inaccurate, lackluster word they can muster. And they're perfectly happy with it too, borderline proud.

Really?

So, I whisper a silent prayer. Forgive them Father, for they know not what better word to use. I also pray (heavily) those around them will somehow miraculously understand the message conveyed. They usually do.

So, it is me.

Ultimately, I'm learning to keep my mouth shut. To speak and let speak. To toss my internal thesaurus while others are talking ... or is it yapping? ■

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◆ GAME ON from page 13

Principal Ben Campopiano said, "Doug isn't just a coach – he's a mentor, supporter and leader who embodies the values of

*"Doug isn't just a coach – he's a mentor, supporter and leader who embodies the values of Miramonte. – Ben Campopiano"*

Miramonte. His many decades of service to our athletic community have benefited literally thousands of student-athletes, and the positive impact he's left will last a lifetime. Doug's hard work, commitment and dedication to Miramonte is second to none, and I know I speak on behalf of the entire community when I say that everybody is grateful for his extraordinary contributions."

Now in his fiftieth year of coaching at Miramonte, Senz is clearly beloved.

There's a saying, "A good coach can change a game. And a great coach can change a life."

I'd bet Doug probably has done both, multiple times, over his storied career. ■

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It's never a good idea to start with bad news, but I want to get this out of the way to make room for the good stuff. Due to diminishing attendance and overall lack of interest, the Chiller Diller Theatre at the Orinda Theatre will go on an indefinite hiatus, leaving me with that much less to write about, and everyone else with an empty hole where cheesy horror/science fiction used to live.

I wish Lord Blood-Rah and crew the best of luck and hope for their return sometime soon.

The good news is we still have the International Film Showcase and the free monthly movie night to talk about – so allow me to elucidate.

Actually, the International Film Showcase will show a film that opened the California Independent Film Festival in November. Then I described *Driving Madeleine* as a frank, "no punches pulled" film about a life well lived, though not without controversy. I was also quick to point out that if you're expecting a Parisian *Driving Miss Daisy*, you might find yourself surprised.

Upon thinking about it, this film more

resembles – thematically at least – Michael Mann's actioner *Collateral*, albeit without the violence, gunplay and Tom Cruise. In its place though is a gentle, kindly film about the difficulty life hands us and how best we can learn, regardless of the source, to accept and continue on. As we go to press, no date has been set for this film, but make sure to keep checking with internationalshowcase.org for previews and showtimes.

Next, we have the free film classics movie night. This month presents what I call a template film, which means a movie that sets the tone for countless other films to emulate. The film is *Bullitt* with Steve McQueen.

If you haven't yet seen this film, especially on the big screen, it would be easy to think you have, mainly because it introduced many of the elements such as car chase scenes and hard-boiled cops we now take for granted.

Indeed, would there even be a *Dirty Harry* were it not for *Bullitt*? (Speaking of which, as exciting as the car chase is, if you know the Bay Area well enough, you might notice how geographically impossible that sequence is.) *Bullitt* also boasts a large number of actors you swear you've seen elsewhere. It will screen at the Orinda Theatre on Jan. 18 at 6:30 p.m. Free admission.

In closing, I would like to remind everyone that the Orinda Theatre is far more than just a movie theater. Derek Zemrak has also transformed it into a concert hall with top name artists performing – Donna McKechnie and Ute Lemper to name a few. There may be one or two tickets available, so please go to orindamovies.com and click on the concert series tag to find out more.

And, as ever, remember to always go toward those wonderful images made out of sound and light, for that's where the reel magic lies. ■

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CAR TIME / PETS OF THE MONTH

# CAR TIME

2023 Sets Record High Auto Loan Delinquency

XAVIER ESTRADA

xavier.estrada.freelance@gmail.com



Housing takes the cake when it comes to the biggest expense one can take on, but second to that is owning a vehicle. High interest rates, coupled with rising inflation, have left a dent in multiple sectors. In particular, they have left a big hit on the car market.

Just a couple of years ago, new vehicles were scarce due to multiple shortages caused by the pandemic. Loan rates were much lower, but people were also overpaying. Used vehicles shot up in value and held a premium price, while dealerships with new cars were charging huge markups, making it impossible for anyone to buy at MSRP (manufacturer's suggested retail price) or lower. At the time, depending on one's desire to buy, it wasn't completely unheard of for someone to pay \$5,000 to \$20,000 above MSRP for a new car.

Longer car loans also became the norm over the past few years. Seventy-two months gravitated to the default when calculating numbers online to purchase a car. Shockingly, even 84-month loans are now available and may be marketed as a way to afford a car, since the longer-term loan results in lower monthly payments. Extremely lengthy auto loans may stretch past the factory warranty on a vehicle, making it a depreciating asset.

Auto loan delinquency in 2023 is greater than it was in 2009, at the end of the Great

Recession. By the time the final numbers are in, it may surpass the recorded peak of delinquencies in the 1990s.

In September it was reported that 6.11% of subprime auto loans were 60 days past due. The interest rate on some of the subprime loans ranges from 11% to 21.18%. Even with great credit financing, a new vehicle could accrue around 5% interest, depending on the duration of the loan.

If payments are significantly past due, the vehicle is repossessed since lenders need to recoup their expenses. Typically, the vehicle ends up in auction. If it sells for less than what is owed, the debtor has to pay the difference, plus fees and possibly penalties and interest as well. It is very rare that the vehicle sells for more than what is owed.

In general, car prices have increased every year. Higher interest rates on loans further hamper affordability for most consumers. Additionally, the cost of insurance rates have gone up (which was also affected by the parts shortage) and the price of fuel is higher, too. The counter argument to fuel costs is the EV, but EVs are still nowhere near as affordable as entry-level gasoline-powered vehicles.

Inflation has taken a huge toll on everything, particularly for a large purchase, such as a car. It is uncertain what 2024 may bring. We may see an even greater number of loan delinquencies in the coming year. ■

◆ MESSAGE from page 3

The Orinda Association are starting to plan for the 2024 4th of July Parade. As you can imagine, there is so much work that leads up to the actual event. If you are interested in volunteering your time, please call The Orinda Association office directly at 925.254.0800. I guarantee you will find the time rewarding!

Lastly, on behalf of The Orinda Association and the entire Orinda community, I want to extend a huge heartfelt thank-you to Sally Hogarty for all that she's done for The Orinda Association and our entire Orinda Community.

For 30 years, Sally has dedicated an enormous amount of time, money and energy making our community a very special place. In Sally's last message as the president of The Orinda Association,

she reflected on the incredible people who make Orinda a better place. I am not sure you could find a more incredible person or one who has contributed more to making Orinda better than Sally Hogarty. Thank you, Sally, we already miss you!

Again, Happy New Year and enjoy this amazing edition of *The Orinda News*. ■

## Pets of the Month



M'LISS GREENLEE

"This is our cat **Atticus** (age three), with our German shorthair pointer, **Betsy** (we think she's 10). Both are rescues, smart and playful, loving family members. Atticus thinks that Betsy is his dog," said owners **Bill Cosden** and **M'Liss Greenlee**.

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MORRISON'S PARTY / OH, THE PLACES YOU'LL GO!

Morrison's Holiday Raffle



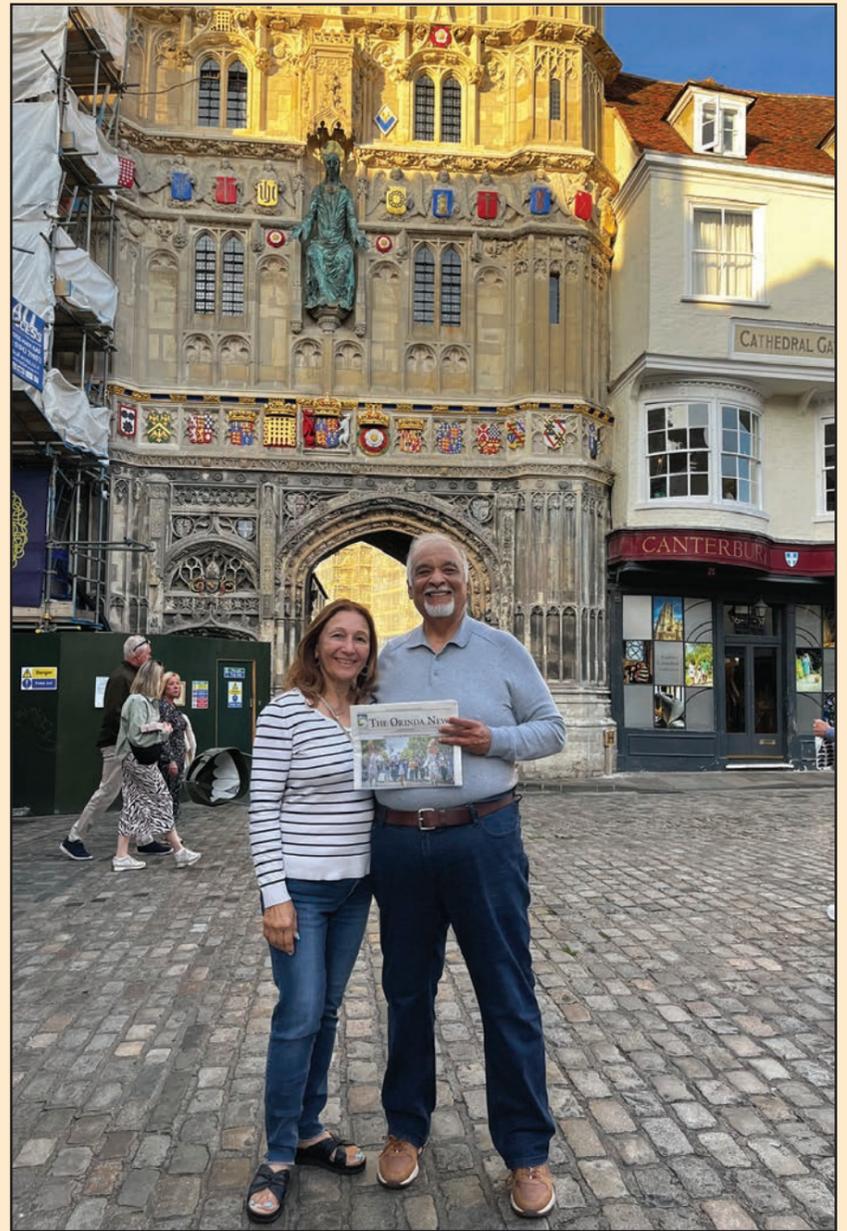
Christine Berryhill, left, who along with her husband David owns Morrison's Jewelers in Orinda, drew the winner in a raffle for a pair of diamond earrings. Morrison's commemorated its 100th anniversary in 2023, and as part of the jewelry store's celebrations, it offered a pair of diamond earrings as a raffle prize. The sale of raffle tickets took place throughout the year and the proceeds went to Norsled, a sled dog rescue agency. Huskies are dear to the Berryhills, as anyone knows who has met Morrison's husky mascot, Harley Jane. The drawing for the diamond earrings – and other goodies – was held on December 14, 2023, at a festive holiday party attended by local jewelry lovers at the shop on Moraga Way.



David and Christina Berryhill, owners of Morrison's Jewelers.

PHOTOS BY JEFF HEYMAN

Oh, The Places You'll Go!



Neeta and S. K. Gupta with *The Orinda News* at the Canterbury Cathedral in Canterbury, UK. The 1964 movie *Becket* featured Richard Burton as the Archbishop of Canterbury.

COURTESY OF S. K. GUPTA

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SEASONED SHOPPER/ SENORS AROUND TOWN



# Seasoned Shopper

Cheers to the Citrus

BARBARA KOB SAR  
barbara@cotkitchen.com



Ready to start the New Year with a good dose of Vitamin C? One orange or a cup of strawberries provides enough for the day, and the Orinda Farmers' Market is a great spot to find the freshest supply.

The Cara Cara navel orange is a favorite. The beautiful reddish-pink interior bursts with sweet flavor with few or no seeds. Quite easy to peel, it's lower in acid than other oranges and very aromatic. Try a squeeze of Cara Cara juice in a simple vinaigrette.



JEFF HEYMAN  
**Adam Ponce** in the background with his son helping, is owner of Ponce Farms, offering his fresh citrus from the family farm in Merced County.

Mandarins are another type of citrus offering all sorts of sizes and flavors, and their "zipper" skins and easy-to-divide segments are an extra bonus. Tangerines (a mandarin and bitter orange hybrid), tangelos (a cross between a tangerine and a grapefruit) and tangors (a cross between a tangerine and a sweet orange) are all mandarins. Most popular with market shoppers are the seedless Satsuma and sweet Fairchild tangerines.

Pomelos are large – very large. They look like overgrown grapefruit and are, in fact, the grapefruit's ancestor, ranging

from cantaloupe-size to the three- to four-pounders. The thick and puffy, easy-to-peel rind on a pomelo varies from yellow to pinkish in color and may even show hints of green. The light-colored pulp is generally drier and less acidic tasting than grapefruit, so a sprinkle of sugar helps to bring out the juice.

Blood oranges (Moro oranges) are at their best this month. Cooler nights result in a deeper red-blushed skin and a beautiful deep red flesh. Enjoy the sweet-tart flavor of the blood orange simply peeled and eaten fresh or in salads, salsas and jellies.

Lemon lovers appreciate the arrival of fragrant Meyer lemons. Their mild, sweet flavor is treasured in lemon curd, baked goods, pies, tea and limoncello. A word of caution when cooking with Meyer lemons – their fragrant aroma is quickly lost when paired with strong flavors or overheated. Lisbon and Eureka lemons pack more punch than the low-acid Meyers.

**ORANGE AND AVOCADO SALSA**

- 2 blood oranges
- 1 navel orange or mandarin
- 2 green onions, thinly sliced
- 1 small jalapeno, minced
- 1 avocado, cleaned and chopped
- 4 teaspoons fresh lime juice
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- ½ teaspoon salt

Cut the tops and bottoms off the oranges. Cut the peel and white pith from the oranges by slicing in sections from top to bottom. Slice the peeled orange crosswise into ½ inch slices and cut slices into wedges. Add to bowl. Add remaining ingredients and toss gently. Makes about 2 cups. Serve with corn chips.

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 [cccfm.org](http://cccfm.org), [facebook.com/OrindaFarmersMarket](https://facebook.com/OrindaFarmersMarket) and Instagram at [OrindaFarmersMarket](https://OrindaFarmersMarket) or call the market hotline at 925.322.6228. ■

**Seniors Around Town Open House**



JEFF HEYMAN

The Seniors Around Town (SAT) annual Open House for riders and drivers was back in person on Nov. 30, 2023. **Steve Harwood** emceed the event and Lamorinda Idol finalist, **Ashley Dong**, (not pictured), provided the entertainment. SAT volunteers provide free, door-to-door transportation to all eligible Orinda seniors to doctors' appointments, errands and social events. For more information, to sign up as a rider or to volunteer, call 925.402.4506.



JEFF HEYMAN

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Your tree pickup will be on the same day as your regular garbage service but by a separate truck.

<b>Week of Jan 2-6</b>	Customers in Walnut Creek, Danville, Alamo, Diablo, and Blackhawk (including unincorporated areas).
<b>Week of Jan 8-12</b>	Customers in Lafayette, Orinda, and Moraga (including unincorporated areas).
<b>Week of Jan 15-19</b>	Any customers who missed prior tree collection.
<b>AFTER Jan 20</b>	If possible, cut tree and place in organics cart with lid closed, or call (925) 685-4711 to schedule a pick-up for a fee.

**Tree Pickup Reminders**

- Remove lights, ornaments, tinsel, and stands (whether plastic, metal, or wood) before placing tree curbside.
- Trees over 6' must be cut in half.
- Flocked trees should be cut to place inside your black landfill cart, or call (925) 685-4711 to schedule a curbside pick-up in advance.

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MEET YOUR NEIGHBOR

# Meet Your Neighbor Ken Dychtwald

By KATHY CORDOVA  
Executive Editor  
cordova@theorindanews.com

The first thing you notice when opening Ken Dychtwald's new memoir, *Radical Curiosity: My Life on the Age Wave*, is a sprawling collage of photos in the first pages. Interspersed with wedding and family snapshots is an image of Dychtwald on the cover of *Inc. Magazine* and – wait for it – photos of him with Presidents Carter, Reagan and Clinton.

Within the memoir are lively anecdotes featuring an array of diverse luminaries including Harrison Ford, Lee Iacocca, Betty Friedan and Arnold Schwarzenegger. This is a man who clearly runs in impressive circles.

It's a vast understatement to say Dychtwald's life has taken a nontraditional trajectory – from a lower-middle-class Jewish kid in New Jersey to a hippie "seeker" in Big Sur, to a high-flying Bay Area entrepreneur who raised \$100 million in venture funding. Then, in the advent of the internet, those businesses crashed and burned, leaving Dychtwald depressed and suicidal.

In his own hero's journey, he arose from those ashes and is now a wildly successful, world-renowned expert on the subject of healthy aging, a term he coined. At the age of 73, Dychtwald is a prime example of his life's work – a prolific author, in-demand

keynote speaker and consultant to some of the world's most prominent companies.

Read on to learn more about the extraordinary, curiosity-driven life of Ken Dychtwald.

**When did you move to Orinda and why did you choose to live here?**

My wife and I were living in the Berkeley Hills with our two-year-old daughter, Casey, and we wondered if there was a place where we could have a backyard and a terrific public school system. Orinda was just over the hill and we got a beautiful home with two and a half acres.

**Why did you choose *Radical Curiosity* as the title for your memoir?**

My publisher said, "You've been driven by curiosity your whole life. You ask questions. You seek people out. You try to continue to learn more about yourself and the world. Why don't we call the book *Curiosity*? It's almost like a radical curiosity." So I thought, you know, I like that – radical curiosity.

**Explore, learn, teach, repeat is a theme in your book. How has that manifested in your life?**

One of the things I learned as a psychologist is some people learn things and hoard them as treasures. I felt that if you learn something, you should try to make sense of it and then share it with others. That's what's driven me to write books and give speeches to over two million people. The idea of learning, digesting, breathing and repeating has been a mantra to me. Not, let's see how much I can gather for me and my wife and kids, but what role can I play in contributing.

**You are very vulnerable in your memoir, specifically about the implosion of your business and your depression that followed. How did you decide to tell this story?**

When I gave the first draft of my memoir to my son, he thought it was too positive. He said, "I know you went through some hard times. Don't leave them out. Otherwise it's not a memoir, it's a promotional brochure."

I wound up rewriting the book based on his edits, and let the truth come out about my business failure and that I was very depressed and not sure if there was a future life for me. It was good for my kids to hear about my rough times. It took some pressure off them and gave them the freedom to not feel that everything they did had to



JENS WAZEL

Ken Dychtwald's unlikely journey, from a lower-middle-class Jewish kid in New Jersey to a student of human potential at the Esalen Institute, to an expert in the field of healthy aging, is chronicled in his new memoir. For more information about Dychtwald and his work, visit [agewave.com](http://agewave.com).

turn out right.

Orinda is a community of extraordinarily successful people and sometimes kids look at their parents and see their beautiful home and great car and think things have always worked out for them. But letting our kids know our falls, as well as the times we're soaring, gives them a more comfortable set of hopes and dreams and motivations for the future.

**You've worked closely with presidents, business leaders and lots of influential people. Who was the most impressive?**

The most extraordinary human being I've ever met was Nelson Mandela, who I met in Davos at the World Economic Forum when he was about 80. I was in the presence of a man who spent 27 years in jail because of the color of his skin, many of those years in solitary confinement, who rose up to be the president of his nation.

He was tall, handsome, very modest and made of steel. Many of our leaders now are braggarts and knuckleheads and liars. To have the experience of being in the presence of Nelson Mandela was profoundly important.

But if I really had to pick one extraordinary person who's had the most influence on my life it would be my wife, Maddy. We just celebrated our 40th wedding anniversary. Every year we get remarried in a different place with a different religious ceremony.

She's powerful. She's beautiful. She's supported me through the hard times and I've tried to be there for her as well. We've stuck it out, and we've grown deeper in our understanding of who we are as individuals and who we are as a team.

**What's the most significant aging trend that you have seen in your research?**

I think we're entering a new age of aging. Harrison Ford at 81 coming back as Indiana Jones. Martha Stewart at 81 being on the cover of *Sports Illustrated*. Oprah's 69 and nobody's telling her to pack it up and go sit in a rocking chair.

What we're seeing is 60- and 70- and 80-year-olds are blazing new paths – going back to school, starting a new career or falling in love again.

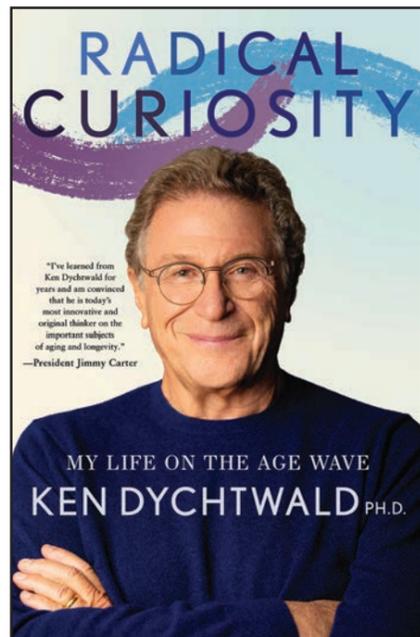
I can remember when, if you were 50 or you retired, you were over the hill. Now that hill has been broken down and people are freer to move in the world in all sorts of new and different ways.

What are the opportunities of a longer life and what are the challenges? It's been my life's mission to be a guide, a navigator, a spokesperson and a provocateur around these issues.

**As we age, you talk about the need to focus on moving from success to significance. What does that mean? What is your legacy?**

It's about a life that isn't just for fun or just for your own self-indulgence, but where you do significant things for your community.

As for my legacy, I'm a Jewish person and there's a Yiddish word that my grandparents would use – a mensch. I'd like to feel like I was a mensch in this life – meaning that I was a devoted and caring husband, a loving father, brother, son and employer. And it wasn't just about making money, but I was about trying to reshape the path to the future. ■



COURTESY OF THE UNNAMED PRESS

All proceeds from Ken Dychtwald's memoir, *Radical Curiosity: My Life on the Age Wave*, will be donated to the Esalen Institute, a non-profit retreat center and intentional community in Big Sur, California.

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