



THE ORINDA NEWS

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Orinda Intermediate School and Miramonte Host Winter Performances

By ADELIE REINER
Staff Writer
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As the chill of the winter sets in, many seek comfort next to the fire, decorating the home, cooking culinary delights and spending time with family and relatives. However, it is also the time of year when students, teachers and parents anticipate the school's winter plays and choir concerts.

These annual events are heartwarming traditions that bring extra joy for the holi-

day season, while showcasing the incredible talents of Orinda students.

Christina Holling's students at Orinda Intermediate School (OIS) host their annual Band & Chorus winter concert, their winter play *Elf The Musical Jr.!* and Miramonte High School students present their annual Winter Choral Concert.

OIS Band & Chorus Winter Concert

Dec. 7, Chorus: 6 p.m., Band: 7 p.m.
Isola Gym at OIS

[SEE WINTER page 18]

Never Short on Giving: A Sampling of Orinda's Many Service Organizations



STEVE HARWOOD

Fourth grader **Natalie Schroeder** gleams with joy after receiving her prize for winning the grade 3-5 solo performance during the 2016 Lamorinda Idol competition sponsored by the Lamorinda Arts Council.

BY NATASHA KAYE

Staff Writer

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Orinda's idyllic, close-knit reputation wouldn't be possible without the dedicated effort of its numerous community service organizations. With so many of them, it can be tricky to know who does what, so here, in alphabetical order, is a quick guide to some of the notable organizations that shape Orinda and Lamorinda.

Lamorinda Arts Council

The Lamorinda Arts Council is the backbone of the art scene in Orinda. Dedicated volunteers and donors run this non-profit that currently holds seven active art programs, including the "Art of Mixology" fundraiser and the Lamorinda Idol competition, as well as two art galleries at Wilder and the Orinda library. To support smaller art initiatives, the council also makes grants to local non-profits like the Orinda Intermediate School Bulldog

[SEE SERVICE page 6]



COURTESY OF CHRISTINA HOLLING

The Orinda Intermediate School choir is a performance-based class and loves any opportunity to spread the joy of music throughout the school year. Front Row (L-R) **Giulia Aparicio, Maya Elkind** and **Sophie Baker**. Second row (L-R) **Anders Brune, Syd Smith** and **Brandi Hatzirallis**. Third row (L-R) **Olivia Szeman** and **Christina Holling**. back row (L-R) **Cassandra Unverfurth, Ira Manav, Vivi Decareau, Emalia Kim, Sadie Gibson** and **Mia Cortesio**.

Glazer Opts Out of Next State Senate Run

By CAMERON SULLIVAN

Staff writer

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California State Senator Steve Glazer (D-Orinda) considers his work to be public service, not politics.

Serving the public well and avoiding politics are the reasons he decided not to seek reelection in 2024.

In early November, Glazer spoke with *The Orinda News* about his decision. His primary reason for not seeking reelection is tied to a 2012 state law that limits elected state senators and assembly members to 12 years of service over their lifetime. The law does not yet specify if the years of a partial term count against that total.

In 2015 Glazer was elected to a partial

term in a special election to fill the spot vacated when Mark DeSaulnier began his first term in the U.S. House of Representatives. Because state senators are elected to four-year terms, if Glazer were reelected in 2024, he would reach the 12-year limit during the new term.

Rather than contest that law and risk the district's having to run another costly, mid-term election, Glazer wants the district to have as robust a field of candidates as possible.

"As an example, I don't think you would have as strong a candidate as Tim Grayson running for the seat if I had declared for reelection," he said.

His decision not to seek reelection, he said, does not feel like a sacrifice in the

[SEE GLAZER page 18]

IN THIS ISSUE

Advertising List	6	Performing Arts	1, 23
Business Buzz	15	Pet of the Month	17
Calendar	19	Residents	4, 5, 16
Cartoon	3	Seasoned Shopper	20
Classifieds	18	Service Above Self	5
Community	2, 7, 9, 12	Sports	13
Crime/Police	7	Students/Schools	1, 10, 12
Events	8, 10	Teen Corner	11
Everyday Orinda	22	The Orinda Association	3
Local News	1, 7	Travels with The Orinda News	22
Meet Your Neighbor	21	Visual Arts	14, 16

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HOLIDAY GIVING / NON-PROFITS

OakLuv Foundation: Spreading Holiday Cheer with a Zany Twist



COURTESY OF OAKLUV FOUNDATION

OakLuv's **Knucklehead Santa** and elves deliver gifts to an Oakland classroom. The local non-profit has distributed tens of thousands of toys over the past 15 years.

By **KATHY CORDOVA**
Executive Editor
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As far as origin stories go, OakLuv's is epic.

On Christmas Eve, 2009, in a humble Lamorinda family room, the legend of Knucklehead Santa and Chaz the Elf was born.

Alex Cox and Alan Smith, best buddies since playing high school baseball together

in Oakland, didn't have any grand plan other than spontaneously deciding to don silly costumes and hand out a few trinkets to kids in their old neighborhood.

Little did they know a joy ride to deliver hastily gathered toys and candy would grow into a movement that would impact thousands of kids, adults, veterans and domestic abuse survivors - all while spreading holiday happiness with their unique brand of free-spirited zeal.

"I had just gotten this 1963 Corvair

Convertible and it had a pretty good sound system. Alex is a great break dancer and we just wanted to go out and have some fun," said Orinda resident Smith (aka Chaz).

"We thought we would get dressed up in these cheap Santa and elf suits and load up the car with some candy canes, books and toys from Walgreens and the 99-cent store," said Cox (aka Knucklehead).

Their first stop was Cox's childhood home. The woman who answered the door, cracked it open, "saw two really funny-looking white dudes and asked, 'Who are you? What do you want?'" said Cox.

When he told her he used to live there and he came bearing gifts, she didn't believe him.

Then he said, "Is that bullet hole over the window still there? I was 10, sitting in the living room when that bullet popped in. And she was like, 'Oh, wow! This person is telling the truth.'"

She invited the two in for cookies and then escorted them around the block, introducing them to neighbors.

"We turned up the music a couple of notches, and we started dancing in the streets. High-fiving, handing out toys and candy canes. I vividly remember one woman asking if she could get a picture because her son had never had a picture with Santa in his life," said Cox. "So it turned out to be a spur-of-the-moment photo session like at the mall, as people lined up to take pictures with Knucklehead Santa."

OakLuv, the 501c3 non-profit founded by Cox and Smith following their fateful holiday visit, is now over a decade old. The non-profit has given out tens of thousands of toys to children at Christmastime, donated laptops and supplies to classrooms, delivered an SUV to a single mom of three and lavished vast amounts of holiday spirit on countless families, youth and communities in under-resourced areas throughout Oakland.

That first Christmas Eve experience was "stumbling into the joy of giving," said Smith. The pair described "the sense of

[SEE OAKLUV page 17]

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A Message From the President
Looking Ahead to 2024



SALLY HOGARTY
sally@orindaassociation.org

As the weather continues its march toward colder temperatures and the holidays appear on the horizon, many of us look forward to being with family and friends, and anticipating new adventures in the coming year.

The Orinda Association looks forward to celebrating the 40th anniversary of the 4th of July Parade and the 20th anniversary of the Classic Car Show! We hope you will join us for these popular and fun events, which will be even more spectacular in 2024!

I am definitely looking ahead to 2024 and beginning new undertakings myself. At the end of December, my term as The Orinda Association president will be over. Serving this non-profit organization has truly been an honor. I will also be resigning from the board of directors and will miss its dedicated members who have such enthusiasm for this community.

In the 30 years that I have been involved with The OA, I've learned so many wonderful things about Orinda and have met some incredible people who make this city even better.

But as a 49-year resident of the little enclave of Canyon, it's time I spent more energy on matters closer to home. After the residential fire Canyon experienced in early November, better evacuation routes take top priority for our community.

Our quaint Canyon Post Office, which has long been a favorite for those wishing to avoid long lines during the holiday season, has also become a favorite destination for those intent on vandalism and robbery. As a boardmember of the organization entrusted with the post office and the land it occupies, I know we need to step up security to a new level.

While it will seem strange to not be involved with The OA's wonderful programs, such as Seniors Around Town, 4th of July Celebration, Classic Car Show and much more, other incredibly dedicated and talented folks have already stepped up.

Beginning in January 2024, Chris Laszcz-Davis and Kelly Sopak take over as co-presidents of The OA, with Alex Drexel as vice president, Cindy Powell as treasurer and Eloise Sotelo as secretary. I know they will do a tremendous job for the Orinda community.

But, before we leave 2023, don't forget about those tax-deductible donations! The Orinda Association needs your support to run all of its wonderful programs. We also need additional volunteer drivers for Seniors Around Town. Please visit www.orindaassociation.org to see how you can help.

Have a very happy and safe holiday season! ■

The Orinda Association

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

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

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Vice President - Kelly Sopak
Secretary - Eloise Sotelo
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RESIDENTS

Sue Severson Elected as Board Chair of Brain Chemistry Labs

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

Known for her active involvement in the Orinda community, Sue Severson is moving into a new role as board chair at Brain Chemistry Labs (BCL), a non-profit dedicated to research and development for those who suffer from neurodegenerative diseases.

Severson was elected on Sept. 14 and

Documentary Film

Toxic Puzzle, a documentary film about the danger of cyanobacterial blooms, was recently released by renowned Swedish Director Bo Landin. The film is narrated by Harrison Ford. Free public viewing is accessible via the lab's homepage at www.brainchemistrylabs.org.

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said this position will help her continue the legacy of former Chair, Bill Egan.

"It allows me to continue working with the extremely talented BCL board members and scientists in a great cause that may significantly improve the lives of patients and their families and bring hope and prevent the historic devastation these diseases have caused around the world."

Severson said BCL's team cares about improving patient outcomes, not profits.

"Both laboratory and *in vivo* studies strongly indicate their innovative approach is working, including recent amazing accomplishments to find diagnostic tools, treatments and cures for ALS, Alzheimer's disease and Parkinson's disease," she said.

Born and raised in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, Severson earned degrees in microbiology and chemistry from Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah. In 1978 she and her husband, Ralph Severson, moved from Southern California to Orinda. Severson was mayor of Orinda in 2009 and 2014, city councilmember from 2006 to 2014 and trustee, president and board of trustees (now retired) from the Orinda Union School District.

Along with her husband and nephew, Severson co-founded Cozy Earth LLC, which sells bamboo bedding, bath and loungewear products. Severson continues to serve on the board for the Orinda Community Foundation and supports other local causes. She also recently welcomed her 23rd grandchild into the world.

Discovering new ways to prevent, diagnose and treat neurodegenerative diseases is important to Severson. "Neurodegenerative diseases impact almost every family and are truly devastating," she said. "Find-



COURTESY OF BRAIN CHEMISTRY LABS

Ralph and Sue Severson of Orinda, with the Orbital Trap Mass Spectrometer they gifted to Brain Chemistry Labs (BCL), a non-profit organization headquartered in Jackson, Wyoming. BCL's team of board members and scientists conduct research to find cures for neurodegenerative diseases including ALS, Alzheimer's and Parkinson's.

ing diagnostics and treatments are a priority for BCL. A dear friend and fellow Orinda Community Foundation board member, Carol Penskar, died recently of Parkinson's disease. It was such a tragic loss for her family and our community."

Hitting closer to home, Severson's niece was recently diagnosed with Parkinson's disease.

"It has caused many struggles for her, her husband and their four young children," said Severson.

Development Associate of BCL since April, Marya King of Alpine, Wyoming, first met Severson a few months back in her prior role as a board member.

"Sue brings both knowledge of science and high energy to her role as chair of our board and is keen to advance some of the great work we've been doing in diagnosing, treating and preventing neurodegenerative diseases," said King.

Severson started with BCL years ago after meeting Dr. Paul Alan-Cox, executive

director of BCL in the 1980s, when he was a researcher at Cal Berkeley and his family lived in Orinda.

The Seversons recently gifted Brain Chemistry Labs with funds to purchase a new Orbital Trap Mass Spectrometer, a machine that determines how the BMAA neurotoxin inserts itself into proteins causing them to misfold.

"BMAA is an environmental toxin produced by cyanobacteria that can lead to ALS and possibly other neurodegenerative diseases, like Alzheimer's and Parkinson's," said Severson.

One of her immediate goals as the new board chair is to more fully engage the many capable and talented board members in their areas of expertise.

"This will enhance the Brain Chemistry's mission to facilitate making the new diagnostic tools and treatments available for the patients suffering from these terrible diseases – to improve their quality of life and bring hope to their families." ■

BARB BRAWNER HOMES



From my home to yours,
wishing you all a fantastic
holiday filled with love,
happiness and laughter.

I'm tremendously grateful to be able to live and work in Orinda. Thank you to my clients, colleagues, family, and friends for your continued support.



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What Do I Need?



CLAY DEANHARDT
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Though it may seem counterintuitive, the call to public service often begins with an introspective question: What do I need?

What do I need? is not a selfish question like its cousin, what do I want? Instead, what do I need? is a quest to find what is missing – to identify and fill a gap in resources, ideas, connection or support that affects your life and, by extension, the lives of others like you.

When you identify that need and act in response, you can make a profound difference.

That's exactly what Orinda's Anna Tague did in 2009-2010 when she answered the question "what do I need?" by creating Parents of Orinda Individuals in Special Education (POISE), a service and support organization that has touched the lives of hundreds of Orinda families.

POISE is an all-volunteer group that helps Orinda families of children with special needs arising from Down syndrome, epilepsy, autism, ADHD, dyslexia or other challenges, navigate life and the sometimes daunting world of school services for their children.

Equally, or maybe even more importantly, POISE creates a supportive community for families that otherwise may never have found each other.

Tague created POISE because her daughter Nicole has Phelan-McDermid syndrome, an extremely rare genetic anomaly that can lead to a combination of speech and developmental delays, physical impediments and other diagnosable conditions such as autism. When Nicole received her diagnosis, there were fewer than 300 people who shared it.

Seeking other families like hers, Tague attended conferences in 2009 and 2010 dedicated to Phelan-McDermid syndrome families. At every meeting, she found a temporary sense of community that she knew she needed, but could not find, at home.

So she created it.

After her second conference, Tague began reaching out to other people in Orinda, including significant people in charge of special education in the Orinda Union School District.

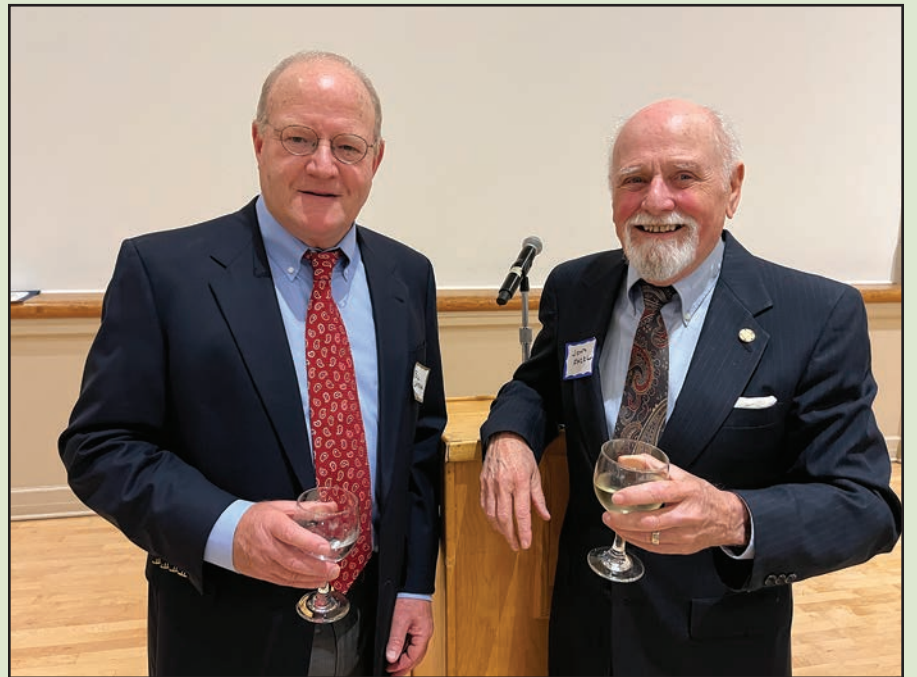
The first POISE meeting had 45 attendees. POISE grew into an organization – meeting three distinct needs: (1) helping families understand and navigate

school district resources and processes; (2) connecting those families with other helpful resources outside of school; and (3) through coffee chats, speakers, and focused subgroups, creating a sense of community that Tague wanted for herself and other families.

Alicia Keenan has led POISE for the last six years. She's a supermom who was profiled in the April issue of *The Orinda News* (find and read the great interview on www.theorindanews.com).

Keenan's son, Simon, has Down syndrome and when the family moved to Orinda, Keenan, like Tague, was looking for community. She found it in POISE, [SEE POISE page 11]

2023 Citizen and Volunteer of the Year

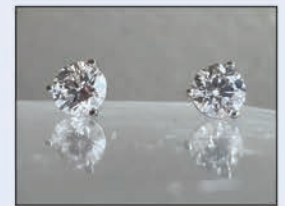


CINDY POWELL

Citizen of the Year, **Bill Waterman**, and Volunteer of the Year, **John Fazel**, were honored at the Orinda Community Foundation's dinner on Nov. 5. Longtime residents, Waterman and Fazel have volunteered countless hours for Orinda's many events and causes over the decades.



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CONTINUATIONS

◆ SERVICE from page 1

Theater program and Miramonte *Writer's Magazine*. You can support their work by attending fundraisers or by purchasing art pieces. Visit <https://lamorindaarts.org/>.

Lamorinda Presents

Launched by leaders from Orinda, Lafayette and Moraga years ago, the tri-community forum meets monthly with the following objectives: Facilitate the three Lamorinda communities (Orinda- Lafayette- Moraga) partnering on initiatives of mutual community interest, events, celebration and value; Provide tri-community leadership to optimize resources, identify interfaces, opportunities and conflicts; Foster professional development; Celebrate signature events; Raise funds (to support future tri-community endeavors). Contact Chris Laszcz-Davis at ChrisLD@EQ-Organization.com.

Lamorinda Sunrise Rotary Club

Every Rotary Club is unique, with the Lamorinda Sunrise Rotary Club (LSR) being one of five in the area. All share the same purpose - to bring innovative, sustainable change to improve communities worldwide. Sunrise members hail from the Lamorinda area, as well as surrounding communities, often drawn in by the enthusiasm and fun-loving spirit of this particular breakfast group. Projects are both local and global and include, among other initiatives: Scholarships (nursing, STEM, automotive, Asante Afrika and Family Harvest Farm for transitioning youth out of foster care); Planning and engagement in the annual AAUW STEM Conference for young middle-school age girls at Saint Mary's College; Support in the earlier stages of the Orinda Creek renovation project; Building hiking trails in Moraga; Las Trampas rebuilding; Winter Workshop for kids at the Lafayette Park Plaza; New Good Character Awards at local middle schools; HOPE Initiative COVID-19 education of Latin American healthcare workers; Local Food Banks; HOME Team repairs for senior citizens; Cars2nd Chance; and White Pony Express delivery of food to the homeless. If interested in joining one of Friday morning speaker breakfasts (which often rival the Commonwealth Club), contact president Scott Parsons. Website: <https://lamorindasunrise.org/>.

Lamorinda Village

Lamorinda Village, launched by Don Jenkins and colleagues, cultivates a supportive and dynamic community that promotes vibrant living, healthy aging and the provision of valuable resources to enable older adults to age gracefully, independently and vitally. The president is Sharon Iversen and the Executive Director is Kathryn Ishizu. For more information, go to www.lamorindavillage.org or email

info@lamorindavillage.org to ask to be put on the newsletter list.

ONE

As public-school budget cuts increase, Orinda Network for Education (ONE), aims to bridge that gap. "Our mission is really to preserve and enhance Orinda's signature educational programs, provide for exceptional teachers and staff and promote the academic experience for every single student in Orinda public schools," said Emily Allen, executive director of ONE. Now entering its third year, ONE sponsors advanced class courses, additional class periods and works to expand the college and career center services for Miramonte students. Visit <https://www.oneorinda.org/>.

Orinda Community Foundation

After the 2008 financial crisis halted funding for cherished community events like the 4th of July parade, Richard Westin and several of his friends decided to act. The results produced the Orinda Community Foundation (OCF), which aims to "enhance the life within Orinda for the arts and various other traditions," said Westin, who now serves as the organization's president. Through community donations, the group helps support the 4th of July Parade, Opera in the Park and movie nights. OCF also sponsors the annual Orinda Action Day of Community Service, Orinda Citizen of the Year and Volunteer of the Year award banquet and other events. Visit www.orindafoundation.org/.

Orinda Historical Society

Established in 1970, the Orinda Historical Society (OHS), seeks to preserve the town's history through community education. The group prides themselves on their museum, located beneath the library, which holds a collection of protected artifacts, documents and images. Alison Burns, OHS's president said they run on a "shoestring budget," relying on their \$65 membership dues, book sales, a few small grants and the sale of their "Landmark Throws," to support their work. They're always looking for more volunteers. Visit <https://orindahistory.org/>.

Orinda Park and Recreation Foundation

The Orinda Park and Recreation Foundation works to enhance outdoor experiences and events. Originally founded with the intention of raising funds for public recreational facilities, the group has since evolved into a non-profit that has fought to preserve open space, develop Orinda Oaks Park and establish the Community Center Building. The foundation also helps fund numerous outdoor gatherings, such as summer movie nights and concerts, as well as the annual Holiday Tree Lighting event at the Community Center Park. For more information, contact Carolyn Mills at bandcmills@comcast.net.

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	Page		Page
Automotive		Real Estate	
Mash Gas and Food	1	Coldwell Banker	
Orinda Motors	3	Laura Abrams	11
Orinda Shell Auto Care	13	Suzanne Toner Geoffrion	12
Community		Shellie Kirby	16
Orinda Parks & Rec	22	Melanie Snow	20
Fitness		Compass	
Corekinetics	23	Rick Kaluza	14
Financial Services		The Grubb Company	
Park Place Wealth Advisors	2	Rebecca Ciccio	8
Garden/Landscaping		Paymun Realty	
Brush Pros	15	Ben Zarrin	2
Garden Nest	21	Prime Vintage Realty	
Ken's Redwood Fencing	10	Rodney Lal	13
Ken's Rototilling	11	Sotheby's	
McDonnell Nursery	22	Barb Brawner	4
Tree Sculpture	7	Ann Newton Cane	7
Wildland Corporation	8	Village Associates	
Medical and Dental		Linda Friedman Team	3
Dr. Brian Clark, Psy. D.	13	Ari Hatton	
Dr. Mary Smith DDS	20	Gillian Judge Hogan	17
Hospice East Bay	21	Dexter Honens II	18
Medicine Shoppe	19	Christina Linezo	21
Non-profit		Murphy Team - Karen & Hilary Murphy	9
Court Appointed Special Advocates	10	Ann Sharf	7
ONE	12	Molly Smith	24
The Orinda Association	3, 17	Clark Thompson	19
Rotary Club of Orinda	14	Restaurants/Catering	
Professional Service		Baan Thai	18
5A Rent-A-Space	16	Casa Orinda	19
Kent Fickett - Home Power Consultant	23	Farmers' Market	20
Green Sheds	21	O'Yammy Sushi	5
Jeff Heyman Photography	19	Siam Orchid	18
Kirby Carpet Cleaning	18	Zamboni's Pizza Company	16
Law Office of Victoria Robinson Smith	9	Retail	
The Positive Parenting Coach Patti Camras	17	Girls Crushing It	14
Ray Robinson Attorney	16	Hilton House Consign & Design	16
State Farm, Bryan Silveira	22	McCaulou's	4
State Farm, Kelly Sopak	12	Morrison's Jewelers	5

Orinda Woman's Club

The Orinda Woman's Club was founded with the mission to improve the quality of life for women, children and the elderly across Alameda and Contra Costa County. The group fundraises through donations, sponsorships and events, including the annual Festival of Trees, which is a holiday-themed luncheon, raffle and fashion show that generates the bulk of their funds. Donors can also visit their website and click "Become A Sponsor" to donate directly to scholarships supporting foster children and women returning to school. Visit <https://orindawomansclub.org/>.

Orinda/Tabor Sister City Foundation

For the past 25 years, Tabor, a tiny historic town nestled in the heart of the Czech Republic, has been in partnership with Orinda as a sister city. As an emerging democracy in the former Soviet Union, Orindans were eager to connect with Taborans to learn more about their experiences. Each year since then, one high school student from Tabor comes to Orinda and is hosted by a local family while attending Miramonte High School. The foundation is eagerly awaiting volunteer host families for the Fall 2024 semester. Contact Bobbie Landers at 925.254.8260 or visit <https://www.orindataborsistercityfoundation.org>.

Rotary Club Orinda

Celebrating 75 years of experience serving the community, the Rotary Club of Orinda is one of the oldest clubs in town dedicated to giving back. "Our motto is service above self," said Clay Deanhardt, the club's current president. Powered by endowments and donations, the club supports education by sponsoring tutoring in Richmond and Oakland, and promoting outdoor recreation through an annual fishing day for the Boys & Girls Club of Oakland. It has hosted one of the longest running events in Orinda, the annual Frank Isola Field Day at Miramonte. Visit <https://orindarotary.org/>.

The Orinda Association

The Orinda Association has promoted service, neighborhood dialogue and community empowerment since its inception in 1946. Powered by donations from dedicated members and sponsorships from local businesses, the non-profit runs the Orinda Volunteer Center, the town's hub for service work. Here you can get involved with their Seniors Around Town volunteer driving program, help coordinate the 4th of July Parade or Annual Classic Car Show, and of course, pick-up your copy of *The Orinda News*, which it has published for 40 years. Visit <https://orindaassociation.org/>. ■

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For advertising rates, contact Carson Cordova at 650.646.1357 (carson@theorindanews.com), Kathy Enzerink at 252.626.2109 (kathy@theorindanews.com) or Jill Gelster at 925.528.9225 (jill@aspenconsult.net). The deadline for the **January** issue is **Dec. 8**.

NEWS BRIEFS / POLICE / CORRECTION

Orinda Around Town: News Briefs

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

Hospice East Bay Holds Tree of Lights Ceremony in Orinda Village Square

For 37 years, Hospice East Bay has held Tree of Lights ceremonies throughout Contra Costa County.

Join the Orinda ceremony on Saturday, Dec. 2, at 4:30 p.m. in Village Square near McCaulou's.

These ceremonies allow community members the opportunity to honor loved ones by having their names read aloud. There will be a brief reflection, music and a poem reading, followed by a candle light-

ing – while reading the names. The ceremonies conclude with lighting of the tree. Funds raised by these ceremonies support the many unique and compassionate programs that Hospice East Bay provides to the patients and families they serve. For more information contact Jyoti Gandhi at 925.887.5678 or jyotig@hospiceeastbay.org.

Wreaths Across America Ceremony

Orinda members of the Acalanes Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) and VFW Post 8063 host the National Wreaths Across America Day ceremony on Saturday, Dec. 16, at noon, at the Lafayette Cemetery, 3285 Mount Diablo Blvd., Lafayette.

This gathering of volunteers and patriots takes place in local and national cemeteries in all 50 states, and most recently at more than 3,100 participating locations.

DAR members Mary Carrillo, Bonnie Gallogly, Louise Diracles and Vanessa Crews, along with Orinda veterans Bill Charles, Scott Butler and Terry Murphy, will participate in the event.

The ceremony will include the Presentation of Colors, military wreath laying by service members and veterans and comments by emcee Scott Butler, VFW 8063 Post Commander, Bill Charles and other dignitaries.

Following the ceremony, wreaths will be placed at the graves of 325 veterans who lie at rest in the historic Lafayette Cemetery.

The public is invited to attend the ceremony and assist Scout Troop 284 place the wreaths as they say each veteran's name out loud. Learn more about the event or donate a wreath at www.wreathscrossamerica.org/CA0565. ■



YONI MAVERI

Local veterans buried at the historic Lafayette Cemetery will be honored on Saturday, Dec. 16, with wreaths at noon.

CORRECTION

Correct caption for photo by Mark Bell in the Nov. issue, page 17, should be: Miramonte's newly formed DAL flag football team is led by freshman quarterback **Sophia Blore**. Seen here scanning down field for an open receiver, but to no avail, having just lost a flag to a rushing Campolindo defender.

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POLICE BLOTTER

October 15 through November 13

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Assault, Simple: 2	Property Found: 1
Burglary, Residential: 1: Brookwood Rd.	Tow: 1
Burglary from Motor Vehicle: 1	Vehicle Theft: 3: El Toyonal, Irwin Way, Bates Blvd.
Death, Non-Criminal: 3	
Identity Theft: 3	
Interfering with Public Officer: 1	
Outside Assist: 2	

Arrests

Drugs, Possession of Dangerous: 1
– Compiled by David Dierks
Assistant Editor

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FILM

Documentary Reveals Secrets of San Francisco's Iconic Cable Cars



PHOTOS COURTESY OF STREPHON TAYLOR

Today, cable cars operate on three lines, the Powell-Mason, Powell-Hyde and the California line shown here. A mecca for tourists, the cable cars also provide transportation for local residents.

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By SALLY HOGARTY
Staff Writer
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With their distinct bells, vintage wooden interiors and incredible views of the city, San Francisco cable cars are a top-of-the-list experience for visitors to the Bay Area. Many local residents, however, view the cable car as a lure for tourists rather than as the first form of public transportation which revolutionized the industry world-wide.

Now, as we celebrate 150 years of cable cars in the Bay Area, Orinda residents have the perfect opportunity to learn more about this iconic form of transportation with Strehon Taylor's comprehensive documentary titled *San Francisco Cable Cars* showing Dec. 9 at the Orinda Theatre.

"The cable cars and the Golden Gate Bridge are the diamonds of San Francisco," said Taylor. "At its height, there [SEE CABLE CARS page 19]

CAIFF Opening Night at the Orinda Theatre



JEFF HEYMAN

Orinda Theatre Owner **Derek Zemrak**, left, and California Independent Film Festival (CAIFF) Program Director **Eli Lubliner**, right, welcomed movie lovers to opening night of the festival at the Orinda Theatre on Nov. 9.



JEFF HEYMAN

CAIFF is in its 25th year, and scores of film fans turned out for the gala opening reception held in the colorful lobby of Orinda's historic movie palace. This year's festival, which ran through Nov. 16, screened 29 films from 14 countries, including 14 Bay Area premieres and after-movie programs that featured Q&As with directors of nine of the films.

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DIWALI CELEBRATION

Celebrating Diwali – A Night of Lights, Music and Dancing

By S. K. GUPTA
Staff Writer

sk.gupta.us@gmail.com

Diwali originated in India, but now it has spread all over the globe – even to Orinda.

In the last decade, many Indian Americans have moved to Orinda. The easy access to San Francisco, good schools, residential environment and low crime rates are major attractions for young professionals to raise their families here.

Along with their knowledge and skills, these professionals are broadening the cultural landscape of Orinda by bringing new traditions and celebrations like Diwali.

Diwali, a festival of lights, is celebrated

by over a billion people every year. Generally, it is considered to be a triumph of good over evil, light over darkness and wisdom over ignorance.

The Diwali date changes every year with the Hindu calendar, usually falling between mid-October to mid-November. This year Diwali is celebrated on Nov. 12, the day of the new moon – a dark and moonless night and the perfect setting for the colorful lights of the holiday.

Technically, Diwali is a religious festival, however, it has evolved to become a cultural event in North America – a fun evening where adults and kids alike look forward to having a good time.

In 2009, President Obama celebrated Diwali by lighting the first-ever diya (an oil lamp lit during the festival of Diwali) in the Oval Office. The diya lamps – traditionally made with clay – have a cotton wick dipped in oil. Today, most families use flameless candles.

“Diwali is like Christmas, Thanksgiving and the 4th of July rolled into one,” said Rodney Lal, the immediate past president of the Rotary Club of Orinda. “There is always food, lights, firecrackers and lots of sharing.” Born in Fiji of Indian heritage, Lal and his wife Ursula always have a diya outside their home on Diwali.

In 2016, the United States Post Office issued a Diwali *Forever* stamp, which is still available. The stamp design features a beautiful diya on a sparkling gold background.

Orinda had its first public Diwali festival in 2022, when some Orinda residents decided to take it out of their homes and into the Orinda Community Center. Opened up to the Orinda community, about a hundred people sang, danced and enjoyed the food.

“Growing up in Chicago, this was one



JEFF HEYMAN

Grandma **Geeta Pugashetti** excited to see her granddaughter, **Laila Badlani**, all dressed up for Diwali.



JEFF HEYMAN

Three Kaiser physicians swapped their scrubs for some gorgeous outfits to celebrate Diwali, (L-R) **Shazneen Hushmendy**, **Naleena Sidhu** and **Tejinder Gill**.

holiday that we went all out for,” said Neela Paykel, one of last year’s organizers. “We hung our Christmas lights from Diwali until New Year’s – much to our neighbors’ amusement.”

“I am a first-generation immigrant,” said Sapna Tandon, another organizer from last year, “I want to give my daughter the same cultural experience I had while growing up in India. As our extended families are not here, the community is our family.”

This year, Tandon set up a beautiful Diwali information booth at the Orinda Library, which runs through December.

For Diwali, houses are cleaned, new clothes are bought and greeting cards are sent. Many homes create an elaborate *Rangoli* – a beautiful design on the floor, often made with rice, beans, flowers and colored powder. Family and friends eat, drink and celebrate by exchanging fruits and sweets.

“When my boys got a little older, I wanted to introduce them to a proper Diwali

[SEE DIWALI page 11]

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STUDENTS / FESTIVAL OF TREES

Miramonte Club Gives Students a Safe Space for Provocative Discussions

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

I'm a sophomore at Miramonte High School, and with so many national and global political events in the news, I decided to create a discussion forum on campus called Centerpoint, to help students not only voice, but also broaden their perspectives.

Last year, I noticed some of my peers and I were cautious and even afraid to talk about various viewpoints for fear of judgment from teachers and students. We found news topics were often polarizing and divisive, which wasn't helping anyone.

Knowing that we would value an outlet of discussion inspired me to create Centerpoint.

It's a political unity club for students to have all-encompassing political and social discussions on all sides of the aisle in a safe space. Another purpose of the club is to find common ground in recognition of our shared sense of humanity.

I'm hopeful participants will be inspired to take actionable steps on topics that matter most to them.

Centerpoint has over 60 active members

who meet every other week during lunch. It's so popular, it can be standing room only, which indicates kids want to be involved in community-related conversations through inclusive discourse, learning from each other and rounding out the depth of their knowledge.

Covering topics that are difficult – but important to discuss – has been a main focus. Topics on abortion and the “Don't Say Gay” bill have been the most attended and energetic meetings.

The complexity of the Palestine-Israel conflict was another timely and controversial topic we recently covered.

With the help of teacher/advisor Joel Compton, we've structured discussions by breaking students into small groups of three to four. All groups then share their outcomes with the larger club. We use this process because smaller groups lead to



Model **Ellie Razmi** walked the runway, sporting an IC Collection jacket and Frank Lyman pants from Le Rouge in Montclair Village on Nov. 17 at the Orinda Woman's Club's 37th Annual Festival of Trees fashion show fundraiser, held at the San Ramon Marriott Hotel. Dan Ashley, ABC Channel 7 news anchor, was Master of Ceremonies who introduced this year's major recipients, Trinity Center of Walnut Creek and its Transitional Aged Youth program. Founded in 1953, the Orinda Woman's Club has a long history of community involvement and enrichment through many philanthropic endeavors.



Miramonte students discuss the Israel-Palestine conflict during lunchtime at the newly formed political discussion club, Centerpoint, created by sophomore Charley Matthews.

higher levels of engagement and enhanced participation, while sharing with a larger group fosters a better understanding of

different perspectives.

Olivia Barakeh, a sophomore and Centerpoint vice president, feels safe to express herself in this club.

“Centerpoint has given me insight on people's opinions, as well as given me the opportunity to express genuine thoughts – knowing I'll still be respected as a person, no matter if I'm agreed or disagreed with,” said Barakeh. “For the same reasons, it's given my friends an outlet and an opportunity to respectfully talk about issues.”

Ultimately, it's important our community continues to give its kids a voice.

I'm thrilled that Centerpoint is attracting differing viewpoints on all sides and giving a voice to those who might otherwise not have felt comfortable sharing their thoughts and having provocative conversations.

If you haven't already, I suggest the next time you have an opportunity to talk about current events, ask the kid(s) in your life, “What do you think?”

Their answer just might surprise you. ■



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CASA Needs Orinda Volunteers to Make a Difference in the Lives of Kids in Foster Care

Imagine children first being placed in the foster care system – through no fault of their own – but rather based on child abuse or neglect from the adult in their life. Then imagine children enduring multiple placements, having to start all over again with a change in schools, teachers, home and peers. Imagination is actually the reality in Contra Costa County and beyond, however there's hope for these kids – through CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocate) volunteers.

CASA volunteers are appointed by a judge to represent the best interests of abused and neglected children in the foster care system. They work to ensure the children receive appropriate care, services and placement in a safe and permanent home. They investigate cases, provide recommendations to the judge and make sure the child's voice is heard in court.

Founded in 1977 by Judge David Soukup in Seattle, Washington, Soukup felt that well-trained volunteers could help judges have a better, well-rounded view of the children's needs, and that's when CASA was born. CASA of Contra Costa began in 1981 and was the 4th CASA program in the nation. Today there are 939 CASA programs serving children in 49 states.

The mission at CASA of Contra Costa County is to provide programs to support abused and neglected children in foster care, to help every child find a permanent home and complete their education.

Children in the foster care system frequently have their social worker and attorney change, so quite often, their CASA volunteer is the only stable and consistent person during this scary and chaotic time.

CASA volunteers ensure that a child does not fall through the cracks or get lost in the overburdened system. They make sure the child's needs are met and their voice is heard in court.


In Contra Costa County, children with CASA volunteers have higher high school graduation rates, are more likely to go on to post-secondary education and have lower rates of becoming homeless or committing a crime. CASA volunteers provide support, hope and opportunity. They empower youth and help to end the cycle of abuse and neglect, making a difference for generations to come.

CASA of Contra Costa focuses on supporting the whole child and offers different programs to help meet their needs.

1. CASA volunteer program recruits, trains and supports volunteer advocates to be a voice for foster children during the court process.
2. CASA Therapy Program works in partnership with A Home Within to provide tele-therapy to foster youth throughout California.
3. CASA Tutor Program recruits, trains, and supports volunteers with educational backgrounds to provide tutoring services to our foster children.

CASA is actively looking for more volunteers. Volunteers need to be at least 21-years-old, have a California driver's license and insurance in their name, and be able to pass a thorough background check.

No particular background is needed to apply as an advocate, as CASA training covers everything you will need to be a successful volunteer. However



applicants to tutor, should have a background as a tutor, teacher or paraeducator, and applicants for a therapist must have a LPCC, LMFT, LCSW, or be an associate in those fields in the state of California.

Although CASA accepts all applications, they have a high need for applicants who are male, BIPOC, Spanish-speaking and who identify as LGBTQ+, as those are often requested by our youth.

Supporting children and youth who are in foster care is not just a moral obligation, but it is also a way to create a more caring, inclusive, and thriving community.

When youth in foster care receive advocacy and support, proper health care, mental health support, complete their education, and have access to safe housing, it contributes to a healthier, stronger, community.

To learn more about CASA volunteer roles, attend an online Informational Session. Visit <https://cccocasa.org/menus/become-a-volunteer.html> or contact Recruitment & Outreach Coordinator, Sarah Bradford at sarahbradford@cccocasa.org or 925.256.7284, ext. 7.

Donations are greatly appreciated and can help fund its programs by visiting <https://cccocasa.org/menus/donate-now.html> (so many ways to help), or contact Colleen Miller at colleenmiller@cccocasa.org or 925.256.7284, ext. 8.

TEEN CORNER

TEEN CORNER
 A TEEN'S GUIDE TO A WONDROUS WINTER BREAK
 CHARLOTTE SHAMIA
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SCAN ME

Although living in California can sometimes make it hard to know when winter officially arrives, the one thing that lets you know for certain is when the school bell for the long anticipated Winter Break finally rings.

Whether it's 75 degrees and sunny or cold and wet, Winter Break is always a welcomed time away from school and a relaxing break from the hectic schedules we all endure.

The best part about Winter Break is that it allows us time to recharge and refocus. There are so many wondrous things to do. If you're looking for festive activities, look no further than the expansive list below.

Winter Break opens the door to great activities and opportunities from ice skating in San Francisco's Union Square or Walnut Creek on Ice, to hiking through Muir Woods.

Take a weekend trip with friends and family to see snow in Lake Tahoe, or drive to Ocean Beach and have a bonfire and reminisce about the summer months.

Ride BART to San Francisco to see a Nutcracker performance and visit the shops to get into the holiday spirit and purchase gifts for your loved ones. Winter Break also provides the opportunity to snuggle up at home and read a good book, listen to holiday music and decorate the house.

It's also a great time to dust off the cookbooks and try out recipes new and old. Depending on how ambitious you feel, you can plan a holiday dinner extravaganza or relax a bit and bake some old favorites,

like chocolate chip cookies or blueberry muffins.

Feeling competitive? Host a gingerbread house decorating competition with friends and family. There's no place warmer and more welcoming than a bustling kitchen during the holidays.

Winter Break is also the perfect time to reflect on the year and think about giving back. Toy drives and volunteering are fun and rewarding ways to spend time and give back to the community.

The Food Bank of Contra Costa and local soup kitchens can always use an extra set of hands or donations. It's also a good way to help spread holiday cheer. Get a group of friends together and make it a collective and fun outing.

Bring some holiday cheer to others by visiting retirement homes or assisted living facilities. Take the time to write cards or talk to seniors to bring them much needed joy during the holiday season.

Declutter and organize your space for the new year and donate the items you no longer need to charities or shelters.

Spend quality time with friends and family or get in touch with relatives or friends who live far away.

Finally, reflect on the past year and how you can improve in 2024 by writing down a New Year's resolution list.

Whatever path you choose for this Winter Break, know that the opportunities are boundless. Enjoy each activity to the fullest, embrace the downtime and do what makes you feel happy and fulfilled. ■

◆ **POISE** from page 5

which now extends its reach to Miramonte High School.

Tague and Keenan's commitment to service in connection with the community is not surprising.

Experiencing so much volunteerism in Orinda and, as a member of Rotary Club of Orinda for 16 years, I believe the need for and the belief in community underlies most public and volunteer service.

POISE Organization

POISE is a support group for parents in Orinda schools seeking support, guidance and resources for their children with IEPs and/or a 504 plan. Any parent whose child needs additional support – reading, behavioral, speech, academic, etc. – is welcome at POISE. For more information, visit www.orindapoise.org.

Rotary, for example, didn't start out as a service organization – it started as a group of people from different professional backgrounds coming together to create a community. But it's a very short intellectual, emotional and intuitive step from embracing the idea of community to taking action to support your community, however you define it.

What do I need? Four little words. One simple question. But asking it, and acting

on the answer, has the power to change lives. Tague and Keenan's answer – community – has helped hundreds of families in Orinda through POISE. Rotary's founder, Paul Harris, had the same answer in 1905, and Rotary has since helped billions of people around the world. ■

◆ **DIWALI** from page 9

festival," said Deepa Krishnan.

That's when she and a few others started a Diwali celebration in Orinda's Wilder community. In its third year, it has grown to over 30 families participating.

Krishnan bought new Indian outfits for her boys and they are excited about participating in the festival. She said she would be wearing "A new saree, of course!"









Diwali is all about good times with friends and family. It is also a time of giving, and those who can share what they can with those who are not so fortunate. ■

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SPIRIT OF GRATITUDE

United States Postal Service: Have You Hugged Your Mail Carrier Lately?

By S. K. GUPTA
Staff Writer
sk.gupta.us@gmail.com

We are all guilty of taking things for granted. We expect our mail to show up six days a week. Every week. Whether it's junk mail or a precious handwritten letter from a loved one, heaven forbid if there's no mail for a couple of days.

Many of us in Orinda are fortunate to have had the same mail carrier for decades. Darchelle Turner has been working Route 9, on and around Miner Road, for nearly 20 years. She's been with the Orinda Post Office for 26 years.

Turner enjoys her route and running into residents.

"My job allows me to be outdoors, but the old delivery trucks – with right hand drives – can be a challenge on some of

Orinda's roads," she said.

Hot days, with no air conditioning in the delivery trucks, can be draining for mail carriers, but Turner often gets solace along her route. "I am delighted when a resident offers me a glass of cold water on a hot day," she said. "And unlike some other cities, Orinda is a safe city and I am happy to work here."

She was surprised and touched when the customers on her route offered her hugs and flowers when she lost her husband.

If you've been to the Orinda Post Office, you have likely encountered Latonya Henderson.

After 38 years as a clerk, she has seen it all.

"Most of our customers are professionals and we understand it is our job to serve them," said Henderson. "A few come in upset and it's usually because something

[SEE USPS page 13]



S.K. GUPTA

United States Post Office Carrier, **Darchelle Turner**, getting ready to drive her truck and deliver mail.

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Rotary Fishing Outing for Boys & Girls Club of Oakland



CREDIT


On Oct. 21, 40 kids from the Oakland Boys & Girls Club had an adventurous day on a fishing trip to the San Pablo Reservoir. Organized by the Rotary Club of Orinda – now in its 19th year – this event honors former Rotarian, **Tom Fitch**.

Along with many volunteers from the Rotary Club of Orinda, Miramonte Rotary Interact Club and Orinda Scout Boys and Girls Troops 303B and 303G, it was a great opportunity for many young kids to experience an outing outside their urban community. The kids enjoyed a day on the water and tried their hands at fishing.


The Rotarians provided all the necessary equipment, such as boats, poles, lines, tackle, bait and other items, while teaching the fundamentals of casting and reeling-in one's catch. The Department of Fish and Game provided the fish and San Pablo Reservoir staff donated the picnic area and a boat for rides. The kids enjoyed barbecue, drinks and donuts while sharing fish tales with each other.

New this year was a fun essay-writing and artwork-coloring contest. Several cash prizes were awarded at the end of the day.

To get involved in next year's fishing excursion or other volunteer events, visit <https://orindarotary.org/>.




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SPORTS

GAME ON

The Return of Kai and Quinn

MARK BELL
mark@omegalightingdesign.com



Sitting in the Miramonte football bleachers on a late Friday afternoon at the end of November brings a series of unique seasonal sensations. Hearing the odd reverberations of hollow aluminum stairs as fans stomp their way skyward, the smell of cup-o-noodles soup freshly steaming from the concession stand nearby and the unmistakable icy chill of those same aluminum bleacher seats pulling absolutely all the living warmth from your body like an industrial, turbocharged, heat-sucking vacuum.

Luckily, to help counteract this cryogenic transformation is the heartwarming story of the Rochette twins, Kai and Quinn. Two guys everyone just seems to love. Both are former Miramonte students and football standouts from Class of 2018, who have returned to their alma mater (Alma-Matador?) after graduating from Cal, to

help coach the Junior Varsity team to an amazing winning season.

Under the fresh leadership of Head Coach Jake Gilbert, the brothers have shared the responsibilities as assistant coaches for both the offensive and defensive line. Gilbert will quickly point out, "They also lead our entire team in blocking drills and are the go-to coaches for help in all details in the run game."

The coaches seem to have a chemistry that's working.

Based on their win record and what I can see from my vantage point as a sideline photographer, the kids really respect Kai and Quinn's opinions, wisdom and even-keeled demeanor.

My son, who played with the twins back in the day, always told me of their incredible work ethic and commitment to succeed,

[SEE GAME ON page 20]



Inset left: Players Kai and Quinn Rochette pose with their father, Michael Rochette, after a Miramonte football game in 2017. Main photo: Coaches Kai and Quinn address the Junior Varsity Matadors post victory in 2023.

◆ USPS from page 12

didn't go right."

Henderson finds the United States Postal Service (USPS) a good place to work, even though her hours (4 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., six-days-a-week) are long.

"You don't become rich working for the USPS, but I raised three kids and have a decent life," she said.

Another carrier, Yvonne Tormey, qualified to join the USPS just after high school, but instead decided to get married and raise a family.

"But just after getting divorced, I received a letter from the USPS, letting me know I was still eligible and I jumped at the opportunity," she said.

After 20 years, she finds Orinda's hilly terrain to be demanding on a mail carrier's body, especially with some of the heavy packages. Hopping in and out of the truck, climbing stairs and wet, slippery and steep driveways – are all potential hazards.

When it first opened in 1888, it was

called "The Orinda Park Post Office." In 1895, "Park" was dropped from the name.

"The mail volume has dramatically decreased since 2006, but it has been replaced by packages," said Ric Tolero, the Postmaster at the Orinda Post Office. The USPS also delivers over a billion mail-order prescriptions annually.

In the early days of our postal system, the postman had to deliver the letters personally to the receiver. Now the mailboxes are mostly outside and one may never run into the mail carriers. We don't see them, but we still expect our mail to be there when we open the mailbox.

DeeAnn Jacuzzi, a long-term Orinda resident, had high praise for her mail carrier. "Tormey is above and beyond with everything she does," she said. "Her commitment to her job and customers is wonderful. We are blessed to have her in Orinda!"

"You can't make everyone happy," said Tormey, "but I sure want to try! ■"



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ASE CERTIFIED

VISUAL ARTS

Art Gallery at the Orinda Library: Printmakers Elevate New Vistas

By ELANA O'LOSKEY
Staff Writer

business.orinda@gmail.com

The Lamorinda Arts Council sends warm holiday wishes to all art lovers and invites the public to take a moment to view a variety of curated printmaking works throughout December.

Eight members of Diablo Valley Printmakers (DVP) fill the entire Art Gallery at the Orinda Library with printmaking works highlighting diverse and unique techniques. Meet the artists at a reception in their honor while enjoying light refreshments on Saturday, Dec. 16, from 3-5 p.m.

If you are unfamiliar with the world of printmaking, here are some basics. The Metropolitan Museum of Art defines printmaking as “An artistic process based on the principle of transferring images from a matrix onto another surface, most often paper or fabric. Traditional printmaking techniques include woodcut, etching, engraving and lithography, while modern

artists have expanded available techniques to include screenprinting.”

The California Society of Printmakers defines a lino cut, linoleum cut or linoleum block print as “A relief process in which an image is carved into the surface of a sheet of linoleum using the same knives and gouges used for woodcut.” Their website’s glossary lists close to 100 techniques and processes involved in printmaking.

This show is a rare glimpse into the complex world of printmaking by those who love the genre.

Participating printmakers include Shari Arai DeBoer of El Sobrante, Donna Brown of Alamo, Marian Sims Harris of Walnut Creek, Danguole Rita Kuolas of Lafayette, Carol Brent Levin of Fairfield, Karen Baden Thapa of Lafayette, Donna Westerman of Orinda and Linda Yoshizawa of San Ramon.

All exhibitors are members of the California Society of Printmakers and have been printing together as Diablo Valley Printmakers for about 10 years.

Because their work includes hand-pulled woodcuts, linoleum block prints, etchings, monoprints, collagraphs (a combination of collage and graphic) and solar plate prints, one can say they pull new vistas to the surface.

For example, biomorphic elements in Kuolas’ 2D linoprint *Emerging* hover above the surface creating an umbrella-like wave of floating leaves. The leaves grab our attention and show the entrance way to a window. The window invites us to walk through a field of undulating feather grass. The full effect is a trompe l’oeil experience of a 3D journey on overlapping surfaces.

DVP is showing a variety of prints and printing plates in the large glass display case so that people understand how hand-made prints are created. The display is a clear demonstration of the “before and after” of printmaking. Examples of media include copper, aluminum and collagraphic plate prints; woodcuts and wood prints; mono prints; lino prints and solar plate etchings.

The show runs until Dec. 29. Visit the library 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, Dec.



COURTESY OF DANGUOLE RITA KUOLAS

Danguole Rita Kuolas linoprint *Emerging* shows the versatility of the media, which allows her to display both figurative and etched designs to tell a story.

25 and 26. For more information, call 925.254.2184 or visit <http://ccclib.org/>. View and purchase their work at <https://lamorindaarts.org/online-galleries/>. Questions? Email galleries@LamorindaArts.org or call 925.359.9940. ■



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Art Embraces Words



LINDA HARTMANN

(L-R) L-R Lamorinda Arts Council volunteer **Kathy Molloy** as E.A. Poe's The Raven and co-chair **Elana O'Loskey** as Bastet, an Egyptian Goddess who often appears as a cat.

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BUSINESS BUZZ

Garden Nest: Three Talented Women Bring Natural Joy to Orinda

By ANDREA MADISON
Staff Writer
drea.madison.05@gmail.com

For longtime Orinda resident Jeannie Fitch, the gardening and gift shop she opened in early October represents the culmination of a dream for the landscape designer, who, according to her daughter, is artistically inclined and skilled in drawing.

“She’s very detail-oriented,” said Regan Fitch of her mother.

Regan is a professional residential stylist and handles the administrative, media and organization work for the Garden Nest shop. The mother and daughter team, along with shop buyer Kelli Schley, represent a good mix of demographics, said Jeannie. All three have design backgrounds, with Schley also bringing her horticultural experience to the team.

The seeds for Jeannie’s eventual career in landscape design were planted by her mother’s fondness for gardening, as well as some of her own gardening while she was in college. After studying graphic design, she moved to the San Francisco Bay Area from San Diego following college and spent more than 15 years managing the catalog for kitchen and home furnishing company Williams-Sonoma.

When her job required frequent traveling to the East Coast, while simultaneously parenting small children, Jeannie decided to move in a new direction and began to study landscaping. She enrolled in a program with Merritt College and worked for design firms and contractors, eventually launching her own landscape design company in 2005. Soon after, she obtained her landscape contractors license.

Jeannie’s award-winning Garden Nest



JEFF HEYMAN

(L-R) Buyer/Designer **Regan Fitch**, shop buyer **Kelli Schley** and shop owner **Jeannie Fitch** are surrounded by greenery at GardenNest, a local floral and garden shop opened in early October in Orinda Village. The cozy selection of plants, garden supplies and gifts, plus the inviting garden sitting area out back, make the shop a relaxing stop for residents.

Residential Landscape design-build company’s installation crew members have more than 25 years of combined experience.

Jeannie admired the brickwork of a building in Lafayette, and almost secured it as a shop location when she noticed a salon at 105 Orinda Way was vacant. Its backyard was neglected and underutilized,

and the building itself needed a lot of work, but Jeannie decided to take on the task.

“I love this part of Orinda,” she said. “The charm of the buildings in this area of the city sets Garden Nest apart.”

“It was a lot of blood, sweat and tears,” said Jeannie.

They installed planters and shelv-

ing for a variety of potted plants in the backyard, which also features bistro-style tables and chairs, windchimes, tree canopy shade and the quiet bubbling of a pot fountain.

On the Garden Nest’s first floor, a selection of woven baskets, sage smudge sticks, hand creams, candles and more greet

[SEE NEST page 16]

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VISUAL ARTS

Orinda Oak Trees Series by Jeff Heyman at de Young

By ORINDA NEWS STAFF
 editor@theorindanews.com

A series of photographs of Orinda oak trees by *The Orinda News* photographer Jeff Heyman is now on display at the de Young Museum in San Francisco. Heyman's nine-photograph series, "Oak Scars No. 3," was selected by a jury to be part of this year's de Young Open 2023, an exhibit showcasing Bay Area artists.

The exhibit runs through Jan. 7, 2024. The black and white photographs consist of close-up images of oak trees in Orinda, mainly photographed on La Cuesta and Kite Hill roads during Heyman's dog walks with his rescue pup, Natalie.

The series is presented together in a 20" by 20" print, which captures the unique scars left on the old growth oak trees from decades of limb cutting.

"These images are a different view of something most of us in Orinda see every day – oak trees," said Heyman. "The beauty of photography is that it allows us to see the commonplace in an entirely new way. Plus, Natalie enjoyed the walks through Orinda's beautiful strands of oaks as I picked out trees to photograph."

First taking photography classes at San Ramon Valley High School in Danville, Heyman went on to earn a degree from San Francisco State University in fine art photography. Along the way he learned Ansel Adams's Zone System and met a number of noted photographers, including Ruth Bernhard, Jack Welpott and Don Worth.

Heyman visited the de Young Museum frequently with his parents while growing up in San Francisco and he knows they would be proud of his accomplishment of having a series of his photographs on the museum's walls.

In addition to *The Orinda News*, Heyman's photographs are regularly featured in other local publications and in local exhibits. View his work, including "Oak Scars No. 3," at <https://heymanfoto.smugmug.com>.

For more information about The de Young Open 2023, including exhibit hours, visit <https://www.famsf.org/exhibitions/de-young-open-2023>. ■



COURTESY OF JEFF HEYMAN

The *Orinda News* photographer Jeff Heyman's series of photographs of oak trees in Orinda, *Oak Scars No. 3*, is on display in The de Young Open, an exhibit of Bay Area artists at the de Young museum in San Francisco, now through Jan. 7, 2024.

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◆ NEST from page 15

visitors. A trip up the staircase leads to a display of books and an inviting couch to curl up on, in front of a window looking down on Orinda Way.

Outdoor and house plants, vegetable starts and heirloom seeds round out the wide selection in the cozy location. The shop also offers floral centerpieces for special occasions. Fresh bouquets are available to purchase or made to order.

Gift items, including books, candles and tea towels, have been a big draw, according to Schley.

The ladies of Garden Nest look forward

to hosting various craft and gardening classes and workshops as the holiday gift-giving season gets underway.

The shop's neighbors have been very supportive, and community members would often peek into the windows ahead of the official Oct. 7 opening and offer encouragement.

The women running the shop agree that more community-based events, such as music circles and tarot readings, are on the horizon: "Our hope is it will be a place where you want to hang out."

Garden Nest is located at 105 Orinda Way or visit www.gardennest.com. ■

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PET OF THE MONTH

◆ OAKLUV from page 2

selfless giving” as almost like a drug. It changed their lives.

“We were pumped. The twinkle in the children’s eyes. We could sense the pain in some of the moms who were like, ‘Hey, I don’t know who you are or where you came from, but when I woke up this morning I didn’t know what I was gonna do. It’s Christmas Eve. And basically, you just showered my kids with gifts and made our Christmas.’ It was so exciting and we decided that we would do it again the next year, only bigger,” said Cox.

Smith videotaped the whole thing and posted it on Facebook. The vibe and joy of the day went viral. By the next Christmas, the Lamorinda community, including Smith’s friends from Sleepy Hollow School and Oak Springs Pool, enthusiastically contributed money, gifts and volunteered to deliver toys.

Smith and Cox partnered with the Oakland community, including school administrators, church leaders, social agencies, small business owners and the Oakland police and fire departments. Even the local motorcycle gangs took notice, offering protection and flanking the motorcade of cars delivering toys each year.

Oakland resident Shirley Block first came into contact with OakLuv years ago when she worked at Youth Uprising, an organization serving young people in Oakland. “I’ve never experienced anything like that in my life,” she said. “It was like the Christmas shows you see on TV. When the kids saw the fire engine and Santa and the elves passing out toys, they went crazy. It was beautiful.

“OakLuv is the real thing. Their heart is

in it, talking to the kids and letting them know they care about them. Whatever the kids ask for, they get. They go above and beyond. OakLuv is a blessing to the community. Alex puts it all into (playing) Knucklehead Santa. He is a piece of gold.”

This year, in addition to holding their annual Posada – a free event with music, games, food and toy giveaways – OakLuv is honoring mothers, grandmothers and other matriarchs in the community.

“Matriarchs are lifelines for families and make societies stronger. However, they don’t always get the support they need. This is why we are awarding five matriarchs in our community with a grant of \$3,000 to help bring them, and their families, joy during the holiday seasons,” according to the OakLuv website.

“We want to do something big to fundamentally change this holiday season for some deserving matriarchs,” said Cox.

Smith, an attorney, and Cox, a “tech sales guy” have come a long way since their Oakland childhoods. Both are successful professionals now, but they never want to forget their origins. “I feel so lucky. Sometimes I wonder how I got to where I find myself today,” said Cox.

“Our life is so good now that we can have a false sense of reality of what the world is like. I try to stay true to my roots,” said Cox, the father of three. “OakLuv has been a way to give back and also to show my family how lucky and privileged we are. Dancing, celebrating life, and focusing on the true spirit of the holidays - selflessly helping others and giving back.”

Visit OakLuv.com for more information. ■

Pet of the Month



KIMBERLY ERCIUS

Identical twin brothers, (L-R) **Landon** and **Riley Ercius**, are very excited to introduce their dog **Taco**, who they describe as “a very good dog.” Taco, a Catahoula Leopard dog, loves walks (searching for treats), meeting new people (searching their pockets for treats) and dinner (with a side of treats). To Landon and Riley, Taco is “Pet of the Month” every month.



Knucklehead Santa, Chaz, volunteer elves and community members spread holiday cheer to kids and families in underserved Oakland neighborhoods as part of OakLuv Foundation’s mission. COURTESY OF OAKLUV FOUNDATION

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CLASSIFIEDS

◆ WINTER from page 1

Admission is free and open to the public. The one-hour show features dozens of Orinda's finest young musicians performing a variety of tunes from pop to rock to holiday to classical.

"Our Annual Winter Concert Extravaganza introduces to audiences for the first time this year four ensembles which will be performing at school and in the community throughout the 2023-24 OIS school year: our String Orchestra, Concert Band, Bulldog Band and Jazz Band!" said OIS band teacher, Greg Mazamanian.

"I hope the audience leaves the concert filled with hope, joy and pride of their young performers," said OIS Choir Director

Christina Holling.

The choir will also perform at the annual Orinda Tree Lighting event at the community center on Dec. 3 at 6 p.m. The inaugural tree lighting event is the perfect way for the Orinda community to ring in the holiday season.

OIS presents *Elf The Musical Jr.!*

Six shows from Dec. 14-16
OIS Bulldog Theater
Tickets are \$12 and available for purchase at <https://www.showtix4u.com/event-details/77951>.

Elf The Musical Jr.! is based on the beloved holiday comedy, *Elf*, which follows Buddy the Elf in his quest to find his true identity. It is a story about family and sharing special moments with those you love.

Directed by Christina Holling, current OIS choir and drama teacher, the students have put months of preparation into the production. "We have two casts with a total of 48 performers and a 10-student tech crew. The actors started weekly rehearsals on Aug. 23 and continue to meet every week until showtime," said Holling. "This modern-day holiday classic is sure to help everyone embrace their 'inner elf.'"

Miramonte's Winter Choral Concert

Dec. 14, 7-8:30 p.m.
MHS Theater
Donations accepted in lieu of tickets.
Featuring over 60 performers, the concert encompasses students from the Miramonte Chamber Singers, Mixed & Concert Choir and Musical Theater Workshop.

Students will sing a variety of winter and holiday-themed songs, featuring favorite classics in addition to less well-known songs. Additionally, the concert will feature Miramonte's choir seniors and have several special numbers with solos, duets and more.

Miramonte Choir Director Meredith Hawkins hopes the community will enjoy a night of coming together filled with live music during a time when the Miramonte arts programs continue to struggle.

"Our vocal music program is still feeling the impact from COVID-19. We lost the ability to sing together and carry on our traditions, like the Winter Concert. We're still trying to build it back," said Hawkins. "I hope everyone – audience and performers alike – will enjoy a night of coming together and enjoying live music." ■



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◆ GLAZER from page 1

slightest, nor is he ruling out seeking other elected positions. To Glazer, public service is all about community.

"I love this work and I'm still healthy, have a lot of energy and am very much committed to representative democracy," he said, describing his approach as steeped in ongoing learning to understand all aspects of various issues. "I reflect a thoughtful center of the district in the work I do and the positions I represent. That's very fulfilling in an otherwise polarized world, country and state."

On his *Table Talk* podcast in August, Glazer suggested he was "looking into" the possibility of running for the California State Assembly. Given that State Assembly terms are only two years, Glazer would be able to complete a full term with the Assembly should he run and win.

By early November, he was not ready to announce a decision on seeking that seat, for which the period to declare candidacy ends Dec. 8. Glazer also would not speculate on the possibility of a 2026 run for the State Treasurer's office or the U.S. House of Representatives.

Born and raised in Sacramento and a graduate of San Diego State University, Glazer and his family moved to Orinda in 1996. He soon became active in local government. By 1997, he was appointed to serve on the city's Parks and Recreation Commission. The same year, he joined the committee to form the Moraga Orinda Fire District.

Ultimately serving 10 years on the

Orinda City Council, including three terms as mayor, Glazer co-chaired two Orinda school parcel tax committees that protected schools facing budget cuts.

As a state senator since 2015, Glazer has authored bills aimed at addressing air and water pollution, gun control and predatory lending. Among legislation he has authored, one bill closed a loophole on assault-style weapons. While mayor of Orinda he was also a charter member of the national organization Mayors Against Illegal Guns.

In the upcoming and final year of his time as state senator, two of Glazer's key focus areas are to better empower BART's newly created office of the inspector general and to continue his push for the state university systems to increase their four-year graduation rate.

"I can talk about all the state stuff and bore you to death," joked Glazer, noting his belief that all politics are local and he likes meeting residents of his district. "I have great affection for this community and the enormous volunteer spirit across Orinda." ■



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CALENDAR



PHOTOS COURTESY OF STREPHON TAYLOR

Cable cars began their historic journey Aug. 2, 1873, when engineer **Andrew Smith Hallidie** tested his invention on Clay Street in San Francisco.

On the Calendar in December

- 1 **Orinda Sunrise Rotary** presents Ashdeep Seth: Catalyzing Collaboration – Connecting Businesses and Nonprofits for Social Impact. 7 a.m. Veterans Memorial Center, 3780 Mount Diablo Blvd., Lafayette. www.lamorindasunrise.org. or lamorindasunrise@gmail.com.
- Orinda Books Gallery** features the paintings of Paul Kratter. www.paulkratter.com throughout December.
- 2 **Orinda Farmers’ Market**, 9 a.m. Orinda Way in front of Rite Aid and the Community Center Park. Visit www.cccfm.org or 925.431.8361. Also Dec. 9, 16, 23 and 30. See article p. 20.
- Orinda Village Holiday Market**, 11 a.m to 3 p.m. 31 Orinda Way. See advertisement p. 2.
- Orinda Books** presents Joe Di Prisco’s newest book, *My Last Resume: New and Collected Poems*. 3 p.m.
- 2nd Annual Winterfest and Gingerbread House Contest**. Saturday, Dec. 2, 6 p.m., Orinda Community Center.
- 4 **Miramonte High School Winter Spirit Week** through Dec. 8.
- 5 **Orinda Books Pat’s Book Group** will read and discuss *French Braid* by Anne Tyler. 11:00 a.m.
- 7 **Orinda Intermediate School Winter Concert**. Choir - 6 p.m. OIS MPR Band - 7 p.m. OIS ISOLA. See article p. 1.
- Miramonte Winter Band Concert** 7 p.m. MHS Theater.
- 8 **Orinda Sunrise Rotary** presents Hazji Xu: Woman Takes Matters Into Her own Hands to Create the Perfect Menstrual Product. 7 a.m. Veterans Memorial Center, 3780 Mount Diablo Blvd., Lafayette. www.lamorindasunrise.org. or lamorindasunrise@gmail.com.
- Orinda Ballet Academy** presents *A Sweet Dream Nutcracker*. 6:30 p.m., Also Dec. 9, 1 and 5 p.m. and Dec. 10, 11:30 a.m. and 3:30 p.m.
- 9 **Intro to Crochect**, 2 p.m. to 3 p.m. Orinda Library with Lily and Adelina of Charitable Crochet. Materials provided. Sponsored by the Friends of the Orinda Library.
- Orinda Theater** presents *San Francisco Cable Cars*. Noon see article p. 8.
- 10 **Orinda Academy** open house 10 a.m.-noon. Also Virtual Information Session Dec. 12 7 to 8 p.m. Register for either or both at orindaacademy.org.
- 14 **Orinda Parks and Rec Senior Trip** to SF: *The Nutcracker* 8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. \$140 per person. Reg. required. 925.254.2445. Visit www.OrindaParksandRec.org or contact OrindaParksandRec@CityofOrinda.org.
- Morrison’s Jewelers** holiday party 4 to 7 p.m. Jewelry raffle 5 p.m.
- Miramonte Winter Choral Concert** 7 p.m. MHS Theater. See article p. 1.
- Orinda Intermediate School Elf Jr** musical Multipurpose Room, 80 Ivy Drive, Orinda. Also Dec. 15: 4:30 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. and Dec. 16: 2 p.m. and 5 p.m. www.showtix4u.com/event-details/77951. See article p. 1.
- 15 **Orinda Sunrise Rotary** presents How to Do Life: What They Didn’t Teach You in School. 7 a.m. Veterans Memorial Center, 3780 Mount Diablo Blvd., Lafayette. www.lamorindasunrise.org. or lamorindasunrise@gmail.com.
- 16 **Orinda Library Art Gallery** showing Diablo Valley Printmakers Reception 3 to 5 p.m. See article p. 14.
- 22 **Orinda Parks and Rec Winterfest** Orinda Community Center Park, 6 p.m.

Send calendar items to Jill Gelster at calendar@aspenconsult.net.

◆ CABLE CARS from page 8

were approximately 20-30 lines going at once. Now, we’re down to three - the California, Powell-Mason and Powell-Hyde lines.”

Introduced Aug. 2, 1873, by Scottish-born inventor and engineer Andrew Smith Hallidie, the cable car became a practical means of dealing with San Francisco’s steep hills. Hallidie put his knowledge of Gold Rush ore mining’s use of steel rope into practice and built the first steam-driven public transportation system.

“The technology is massively simple and massively efficient. It’s really good, green energy,” explained Taylor. “There is just the gripman and brakeman running the cars. They need to be strong. It’s hard work, but they love it. In fact, the early cable car guys were like rock stars. With all the single women riding the cars, they were never lacking for dates.”

Taylor had just finished a film on San Francisco’s old Playland at the Beach and was researching the waterways and lighthouses of the Bay Area for another documentary when he switched gears and began work on his cable car documentary.

“All these interesting facts about cable cars and how they helped shape San Francisco kept coming up and when I went to find a documentary on them, I realized there wasn’t one,” Taylor said.

Taylor decided to rectify the omission and put together his own film which shows – among other interesting historical

information – how the cable cars survived the 1906 earthquake and San Francisco politics to remain not only a tourist attraction, but also convenient transportation for locals.

The film also tells the story of Friedel Klussmann, who saved the cars from extinction when local politicians wanted to replace them with diesel-powered buses. When Klussmann died in 1986, the cable cars were decorated in black in her memory, and the city dedicated the turntable at the outer terminal of the Powell-Hyde line to her.

“When we were showing the film at the Balboa Theater in San Francisco, a man came up to me afterwards and said how he wished he could go back in time and ride a cable car. I couldn’t believe he didn’t realize they were still running, including one line just a few blocks from where we were standing,” said Taylor.

The 93-minute film shows Saturday, Dec. 9, at noon at the Orinda Theatre, 4 Orinda Theatre Square. A display on the history of the cable cars will be in the lobby with Taylor giving a short talk at the conclusion of the film.

For more information and tickets, visit <https://www.orindamovies.com/>. Following the film, why not go into San Francisco and hop on a cable car? Like BART and MUNI, they even take the Clipper card. ■

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JEFF HEYMAN

Ernesto Garcia from Nuno Farms is ready with onions and sweet potatoes for your holiday dishes. Onion soup, caramelized onion tart, stuffing, focaccia, roasted onions, baked sweet potato, pies and casseroles are all on the menu!

Seasoned Shopper

Seven Simple Stress Savers

BARBARA KOBSAR
barbara@cotkitchen.com

The holidays are fast approaching and our Orinda Farmers' Market is open every Saturday to offer a few simple ideas.

Buy early when you see what you like – sweet potatoes, potatoes, carrots, onions and squash all store nicely in a dry, well-ventilated space. Brussel sprouts and apples keep for up to two weeks in the refrigerator.

Visit Ernesto Garcia's booth, from Nuno Farms, where he sells onions and sweet potatoes. With his onions, you can make onion soup, caramelized onion tart, stuffing, focaccia, roasted onions, baked sweet potato, pies and casseroles – all great for the holidays.

Thinking about making a pie? Pick up and prepare your favorite apples to slice, toss with sugar and cinnamon and place in freezer bags – ready when you are to make holiday pies or tarts. Whole, unbaked apple pies can also be frozen and baked right out of the freezer on that special day.

Several vendors sell delicious, ready-to-go baked goods. East Bay Bakery has fabulous lemon bars, crumbles and assorted dessert boxes. Fresh pasta, sauces, raviolis, desserts and ready-to-bake dishes are the Italian Corner's specialties. Be sure to ask about the gluten-free Eggplant Parmigiana and Arancini.

Hummus and tamales offer plenty of choices for a quick pick-me-up, appetizer or

snack. Achadinha Cheese is best known for award-winning farmstead cheeses and also sells goat cheese, fresh feta and a selection of curds - all great choices for your next charcuterie board.

Don't forget to pick up some holiday beverages. Stop by the Kombucha stand to ask William Tse about the holiday flavors. Nick Wugofski at the Epidemic Ale stand brings some tasty treats for the adults, such as...

Decorate with a Farmers' Market flare by using bowls filled with nuts and citrus. Pears make a nice display with sprigs of holly down a table runner or use a variety of small winter squash in between some beeswax candles from Pete's Gold Honey.

Start some of your holiday shopping early. Make your own personalized gift baskets with jams from the Cottage Kitchen, dried fruits and nuts from J & J Farms, honey from Pete's Gold Honey, coffee beans from Zolo Coffee and cheese from Achadinha Cheese. You can always add some crackers, a fun tea towel, a coffee cup, cheeseboard or a book to complete the basket.

The Orinda Farmers' Market is open every Saturday from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Orinda Way in Orinda Village.

For more information visit www.cccfm.org, facebook.com/OrindaFarmersMarket and Instagram at [OrindaFarmersMarket](https://instagram.com/OrindaFarmersMarket) or call the market hotline at 925.322.6228. ■

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Melanie Snow

◆ GAME ON from page 13

especially in the weight room. They were team captains who led by example.

These are the values they're passing on to the players today. The importance of details. Show up ready. Make fewer mistakes and give your opponent fewer opportunities to succeed.

"I would roughly classify our style as tough, but fair. We hold our guys to a higher standard and expect them to do the same to themselves. We work hard Monday through Thursday, so we can have fun on Friday," said Kai.

"A lot of things changed when we started coaching," said Quinn. "And things are continuing to evolve in the right direction,

which has shown on the field." Adding, in response to their young age, "The guys appreciate that we can relate to where they're at and what they're going through – especially beyond the field."

Gilbert said Kai and Quinn love Miramonte football more than just about anyone.

"They've been the backbone to the success that JV has had recently," said Gilbert. "There aren't a lot of people, if any, that have had a greater impact on this program over the past couple of years than these two."

I've said before, it takes a village to raise a championship team. Thankfully for the JV football program, Kai and Quinn have returned to the village. ■

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MEET YOUR NEIGHBOR

Miramonte Art Teacher Exhibits Sculpture at The de Young Open 2023

By KATHY CORDOVA
Executive Editor
cordova@theorindanews.com

Gavin Kermode loved drawing as a child, but when he took a 3-D art class his sophomore year at Miramonte High School, he found that the third dimension was his calling. “It was sculpture, metal, casting pottery, and it just had a different energy to it,” said Kermode. Twenty-five years later, Kermode is teaching that very same class at his alma mater.

Today, Kermode is not only a beloved teacher and the chair of the visual and performing arts department at Miramonte, but he is also a working artist. His sculpture, *Alluring Brim*, is currently on display at The de Young Open 2023, an exhibition featuring the work of Bay Area artists.

You were a football star at Miramonte in 1997. After high school, you decided to go to the California College of the Arts instead of a more traditional school. Was that a difficult decision?

Not really. I’ve always loved art and sports. When I decided to go to art college instead of pursuing sports, everything just flooded to the front. It felt wonderful.

Did you ever expect to return to your alma mater to teach the very same class that first inspired you?

It’s been almost 20 years now. My old art teacher got brain cancer right as I was graduating from college and he was the one who first had the idea of me taking over his job. It was my first job after graduating from college. Things happened quickly because of circumstances, but I felt ready to step into those shoes because I knew the program and I felt confident in my skill set.

On to the big news! Your sculpture was selected to be displayed at The de Young Open 2023. What was the selection process like?

They opened the process up to residents of nine Bay Area counties. Entrants could only submit one image and a title. The judges looked at the images without any background information on the artists. Over 7,700 artists submitted their work and only 883 were chosen.

How does it feel to see your work on display at the de Young?

It’s very exciting to be a part of a world-class museum like the de Young. The exhibition has a wide range of art and it’s very well curated.

What does your family – your wife Natalia, and children, Reese (age 9), Cora (age 5) and Hunter (age 3) – think about seeing your work in the museum?

They think it’s awesome. They’re always

around art because that’s what we do at our house and my studio and they know Dad is an artist, so it’s part of their lives. My nine-year-old is actually old enough to be aware of how special it is and that’s really cool.

Tell us about the selected sculpture?

It’s probably the most recent one I completed. I’ve always been interested in the human form. This sculpture is very geometric, breaking the form down into elegant, sharp lines and with clothing like the hat and the scarf. It also touches on the idea of what people wear and how that brings a whole other dialog to how you see someone or how you interact with them.

What does the title *Alluring Brim* mean?

I have always found edges engaging and fascinating – the fringe of a hat, the verge of [SEE KERMODE page 23]



STEVE HARWOOD

Kermode’s *Alluring Brim* is one of 883 works from Bay Area artists shown in the The de Young Open 2023 exhibition.



STEVE HARWOOD

Miramonte art teacher and artist Gavin Kermode and Tish Harwood discuss his sculpture on display at San Francisco’s de Young Museum through Jan. 7.

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LAURA LAMISON

In between croissant runs and attempts to “parler Français,” staff writer, **Nicole Lamison**, took a reading break with her copy of *The Orinda News* in front of the golden gates of the Palace of Versailles.

Everyday 😊 Orinda

Every Day Will Not Be Your Best

MIMI BOMMARITO
editor@theorindanews.com



“Never be so kind you forget to be clever.
Never be so clever you forget to be kind.”
-Taylor Swift, song *marjorie*, 2020

I bombed last week. And, as a result, I felt a genuine growth spurt.

Not the teenage variety, but the mental kind. Reminded me how growth is transformative, but the morphing can be uncomfortable and awkward, whether that means expanding plates in the ‘knee bones connected to the thigh bones,’ or the few hardy brain cells I have left firing off new synapses.

In an effort to craft a seasonally relevant article for our December issue, I was striving for holiday shopping humor. I initially repurposed an actual letter I wrote (but never sent) to Hollister management. Not the town, the store.

Exasperated venting from yours truly, Mom on the Tipping Point who, after a trying day at the Sun Valley Mall, had enough of Hollister’s perfume-spritzing Tween Cave blaring music. All tactics aimed at impressionable kids hoping to bolster their popularity via a clothing brand.

My young daughters, naturally, gulped their proverbial Kool-Aid – much to my chagrin – likely because I foolishly coveted the exact same thing in my day. Just swap the labels: Abercrombie and Hollister for Izod and Calvin Klein.

I knocked out my rant in 2010, never sending it anywhere, but saving it for unknown reasons.

Maybe to teach my future self this lesson: nobody wants to hear an Orinda parent stewing about her shopping trip to the mall. Even if the sales clerks were condescending, transporting me back to middle school geekdom with their unwillingness to make eye contact. I came across as entitled and insensitive in the letter.

I was damn lucky to be able to afford to buy my kid a pair of their overpriced jeans. As for feeling unseen by the store staff, that’s where I really needed to ‘Shut The Front Door.’ The noxious perfume spritzing, however, may have been my one reasonable objection.

My outburst wasn’t intended to be a Karen-thing, more like an expression of absurdity and resentment that a brand focused on making both the wearers and the adult purchasers feel so insecure about themselves could rake in such profits.

In a notable cultural shift, many of today’s rising stars of future adulthood have embraced thrifting and online buy/sell/trade groups. Astounding how sensible and frugal our kids become once it’s their nickel. “Nickel?” they remark. “How quaint.”

Rescuing me from a potential debacle was my phenomenal book club, Orinda’s Read Hot Mamas. Accustomed to reading and critiquing the written word together without fear of judgment or hurt feelings (seriously, it’s hard to say “I hated this book” when your respected and beloved friend selected it, but it’s happened), I asked my book club members for their honest assessment of my Hollister letter.

Consensus: Not my best work.

I’ve received an early holiday present: loyal friends who will 1) take time out of their busy schedules to stop and read something I’ve written, and 2) return honest, heartfelt criticism giftwrapped in gentleness.

I feel that growth spurt. My skin is now thicker.

In becoming a wiser, more confident writer – or any occupation, really, but especially creative ones – one must fight the powerful urge to shrink in embarrassment from missing the mark. Get back up on the horse that threw ya.

In addition to TayTay’s, I’ll add some wisdom my former employer, Roy Spence, past president of GSD&M Advertising in Austin, Texas, shared in a little book he wrote recently, *The Ten Essential Hugs of Life*. I’ll note that his definition of “failure” is when one stops caring, quits trying or gives up.

“There is a huge difference between failing and coming up short. Coming up short is simply playing it all out and not winning. Failing is a violation of character. Don’t confuse the two.”

Joyful Holidays to all! ■

What’s On Deck With Parks & Rec!

2nd Annual Winterfest and Gingerbread House Contest. Saturday, Dec. 2, 6 p.m., Orinda Community Center.

Dec. 14, Senior Trip to S. F. Nutcracker. 8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. \$140 per person. Reg. required.

New classes this Winter include wreath making, science for kids, natural play for babies, caregiver & child yoga, and adult exercise.

Free senior tech help on 3rd Saturday of the month, 11 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. Registration required.

City Holiday Closure: December 22 - January 1.

Go to www.orindaparksandrec.org or call 925-254-2445 for questions and registration.



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PERFORMING ARTS

A Sweet Dream Nutcracker



PATRICIA TOMLINSON

It's that time of year again when **Patricia Tomlinson's** Orinda Ballet Academy & Co. students perform A Sweet Dream Nutcracker, celebrating their 15th season. With its humble beginnings in 2009 and surviving the pandemic, Tomlinson, owner and artistic director, is proud to present five shows with 80 performers including students, adult performing volunteers and professional guest artists - double the performers last year. Front row (L-R) **Gianna Galando, Renee Silberschmidt, Emma Silberschmidt, Chloe Sabo-Nichols, Mia Jeric** and back row (L-R) **Maya Elkind, Zoey Ying, Amy Li, Ella Pierce, Bailey Brothers, Emily Charo, Frances Giquinto, and Sadie Elkind.** Professional Guest artists include **Kendall Sparks, Fiona Hutchens and Michael Wells.** Held at the Orinda Library Auditorium, the show runs Dec. 8 at 6:30 p.m., Dec. 9 at 1 p.m. and 5 p.m. and Dec. 10 at 11:30 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. Visit www.OrindaBalletAcademy.com for more information and tickets.

◆ **KERMODE** from page 21

lips, the contours of a hairline, neckline or shoulder. I like to think that *Alluring Brim* invites viewers to delight in the margins or be seduced by the boundaries of the human form.

What's inspiring you now?

One of the fun things about being an artist is that you're always trying out something new and challenging yourself, and seeing what comes from that. You're always evol-

ing. That's something I've always enjoyed and that keeps me engaged.

What's your advice for young artists?


You have to really have a passion. If you enjoy making art, you're going to put that time in and work and have discipline. You have to really love it because it's not guaranteed you're going to have a successful career. But if you like it and you feel you need to do it, then go all in. ■

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Kent Fickett with grandson Rowan Chen

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