

THE ORINDA NEWS

Gratis
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Accessory Dwelling Units: Granny Flats to Luxurious Digs

By KATHY BOHANAN ENZERINK
Assistant Editor

Everywhere you look you'll find a computer, laptop or notebook. Cords and cables resemble a tangle of knotted necklaces. Cell phones have become appendages. The dining room has transformed into a study hall with laptops at each end of the table. The guest bedroom has morphed into an office and communications hub.

Since spring, 2020, this portrays the lifestyle of many families working and studying from home, together 24/7. The latest challenge: Where will grandpa stay when he gets released from rehab after his hip replacement surgery? An accessory dwelling unit, or ADU, could solve this dilemma.

Often referred to as a granny flat or in-law unit, an ADU can provide permanent provisions for living, sleeping, eating, cooking and sanitation. The long list of possible uses includes offices, art studios, workout gyms, guesthouses and rental



Ben and Sara Munday live in a Connect-Homes main residence with a detached accessory dwelling unit, used as an office and guest bedroom. The all-inclusive cost is \$279,000.

dwellings.

Units may get attached to an existing home, built over a garage, be completely

contained within a single-family residence or placed elsewhere on a property as a stand-alone structure. The material, cost and design options vary, and as the saying goes, restrictions apply. Regulations for setbacks, square footage, parking, building heights and permitting can be accessed at www.cityoforinda.org.

Construction choices include site-built, modular (with components built off-site and assembled in place), a prefab (completely manufactured off-site and installed on the property) and new construction technology using a 3D printer at an Oakland facility. According to Orinda Planning Director Drummond Buckley, consideration

for adding an ADU has definitely become "a popular issue."

Roberta and Orlando Calderon of Orinda started researching ADU options several months ago. A safe place to shelter in case of fire, bad air quality and earthquakes prioritized reasons for their exploration. They also considered housing for their elderly moms and having ample, private space for family visits.

This spring, the couple plans to have a "disaster-resistant" dwelling unit by CloudHauz installed. According to former Orinda resident Lisa Copass, founder and CEO of CloudHauz, the prefab panels, made from composite and steel, seed together, making them airtight.

"CloudHauz dwelling units have the highest flame-spread index rating," said Copass. "Even if cedar shakes are used for the exterior finish, the dwelling won't burn. They are dwellings for a new planet," she said.

Orindans Laura and Roman Giverts had a combination gym and office unit built on-site by Green Sheds. It sits on 33 piers rather than a concrete slab.

"As the CEO of VuMedi, a 50-person company, collaborating via Zoom just isn't the same," said Roman Giverts. "I invested in an ADU for my home office. Chris at Green Sheds offered the full service of installing a bathroom plus building a large deck for people to sit together at a distance and work. This is the perfect solution for my needs," he said.

"The turn-key 12' x 16' structure, with [SEE ADU page 10]

Community Concern for Orinda Cats

By BILLIE CUMMINGS
Contributing Writer

Even though it doesn't have a storefront, Community Concern for Cats (CC4C) has worked tirelessly for 34 years to help cats in Orinda and in other East Bay neighborhoods.

Just a few years ago, CC4C rescued 16 once-beautiful Persian cats from an elderly gentleman removed from his Orinda home to a hospital without any hopes of his return to care for them. CC4C saved all 16, most eventually adopted to new loving homes. Others, not in such good conditions, received care from members of CC4C.

Eric Le Blanc, a Boy Scout and Miramonte graduate, recognizing the suffering of homeless cats, earned his Eagle award by building CC4C 15 deluxe cat houses used all over for formerly homeless cats.

Orinda residents can follow Eric's example and be good Samaritans themselves by providing life-saving medical care for [SEE CATS page 4]



Isabella Honeyford of Pleasant Hill holds a litter composed of two sets of twins from Community Concern for Cats. She and her mother, as part of a mother-daughter adventure, are particularly good at socializing kittens so they become loving and gentle. She says that the secret is "Hold them. Hold them. Hold them. Never put them down."

Council Continues Memory Care Appeal

By KATHY BOHANAN ENZERINK
Assistant Editor

Orinda's City Council has continued the appeal by Wilder Owners' Association on a 38-bed, 32,084 square-foot, congregate memory care facility to Jan. 19. The project at 1 Wilder Road had been approved by the Planning Department on July 14 and initially heard by the City Council on

Nov. 17. City Council Members said they need more information to make a decision on the project.

During the five-hour November City Council meeting, differing points of view and interpretations of zoning regulations and laws emerged with Wilder residents and attorney Shona Armstrong disagreeing with city officials on several issues. One [SEE MEMORY page 4]

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THE ORINDA ASSOCIATION / FITNESS TIP

The New Year Brings New Orinda Association Board Members

By SALLY HOGARTY
Executive Editor

The Orinda Association (OA) begins 2021 with three new, highly qualified board members as well as its continuing group of dedicated volunteers. Kyle Arteaga, Jacqueline (Jackie) Buettner and Latika Malkani will join the Board.

Arteaga brings a wealth of experience in public relations as the CEO of The Bulleit Group, a technology PR firm focusing on “bringing sci-fi to life.” Clients include Google, LinkedIn, P&G Ventures and startups working in biotech, energy tech-

nologies, robotics and self-driving cars. He believes local journalism has never been more important and hopes to contribute to *The Orinda News*, which the OA publishes.

“As more and more families move to Orinda from San Francisco and other metropolitan areas, they will be looking for ways to participate,” said Arteaga. “I’m hoping *The Orinda News* can get our newer residents and the companies they work for involved in the Orinda community.”

Arteaga, who moved to Orinda in March of 2019, lives in Wilder with his husband Andrew and twin 4-year-old daughters Kolby and Kennedy.

No stranger to volunteering, Jackie Buettner looks forward to being involved with the OA. Having moved to Orinda in February of 1993, the busy chiropractor raised two sons in Orinda and volunteered with the Boy Scouts. Both her sons be-



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Kyle Arteaga.

Fitness Tip of the Month

Focus on Global Health & Get Results

It is a really good time for us to focus on our fitness as it relates to Global Health, whether that means we are working on our own health or being an example for others.

Leading by example will help you to be motivated to do the work you need to get the results you want and will be setting an example for others. Not only will this motivate you to get results but it will motivate those you care about to do the same.



For more information, contact Sheena with Living Lean personal training and eating for elite fitness at 925-360-7051 or www.thelivingleanprogram.com.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Jacqueline (Jackie) Buettner.

came Eagle Scouts as member of Troop 57. She has also volunteered for numerous political causes and with “Flying Doctors of America,” treating refugees in a variety of countries around the world.

“I’ve had quite the career. From being on *Good Morning America* to a gubernatorial appointment to the state board,” Buettner said. “I’m also fortunate to have my practice in the iconic 450 Sutter building in the City. I love the art deco and have been practicing there since 1989.”

With COVID-19, Buettner has cut her work schedule to three days a week. With traveling restricted, she felt she now had time to explore new volunteer opportunities.

Fighting for the rights of individual employees and seeking improved working conditions has been Latika Malkani’s passion as a lawyer and owner of her own law firm. Born in Bombay (now Mumbai), India, Malkani and her family moved to Orinda in 2004. She and her husband, Ray Cardozo, raised their three children in Orinda, the youngest a junior at Miramonte High School.

“Ray is also a lawyer and once argued in the U.S. Supreme Court. Yes, two lawyers in the same family; we’re really a fun bunch,” she joked.

Her volunteer work has focused on organizations working with kids and schools.

She currently remains active helping Boys Team Charity, a volunteer service organization dedicated to developing an altruistic spirit in young men; Miramonte Parents’ Club and Moms Demand Action. Previously, she volunteered with the Girl Scouts, Orinda Baseball Association and California Academy of Performing Arts. “I so enjoyed my dance mom duties, including many *Nutcrackers* and June shows,” she added.

Through the OA, the new board members look forward to finding new ways to improve the fabric of life in Orinda. For more information on the OA, or information about joining the Board, call 925.254.0800 or go to www.orindaassociation.org.

Sally Hogarty can be reached at sally@theorindanews.com.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Latika Malkani.

Congratulations to New OA Officers

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Vice President - Sally Hogarty
Treasurer - Diane Lautz
Secretary - Bryan Silveira

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THE ORINDA ASSOCIATION

A Message From the OA President
Gratitude



CARLOS BALTODANO

There is light at the end of the tunnel because the vaccines are here and soon will be available to all!

We, The Orinda Association, enter the New Year with renewed hope and a sense of gratitude for the community standing strong together, even if socially apart, in these challenging times. We salute and

The Orinda Theatre marquee expressed our gratitude to them by stating "YOU ROCK" (see picture).

Congratulations to the new incoming OA Board officers for 2021: Bill Waterman, President; Sally Hogarty, Vice-President; Diane Lautz, Treasurer; and Bryan Silveira, Secretary.



CARLOS BALTODANO

The Orinda Association expressed their praise to the 27 volunteer drivers for the Senior Around Town program.

deeply thank our medical care professionals and first responders for their dedication and sacrifice.

We would also like to acknowledge and praise the 27 volunteer drivers for the Senior Around Town (SAT) program, who tirelessly and unselfishly continue to provide rides, grocery pick-ups and reassurance phone calls to hundreds of seniors.

We would also like to welcome three new board members: Latika Malkani, Kyle Arteaga and Jackie Buettner. They will bring a lot of diverse experience and knowledge to continue our mission of improving the quality of life in Orinda.

Besides applauding and thanking our new officers and board members as we start

[SEE PRESIDENT page 4]

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.

Visit our office at 26 Orinda Way
(Library Plaza)
Phone: 254-0800
www.OrindaAssociation.org

The Orinda Association
P.O. Box 97
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OFFICERS	BOARD MEMBERS
President Bill Waterman	Kyle Arteaga
Vice President Sally Hogarty	Carlos Baltodano
Secretary Bryan Silveira	Jacqueline Buettner
Treasurer Diane Lautz	Joe Haughin – Board Member Emeritus
City Council Liaison Inga Miller	Chris Laszcz-Davis
	Latika Malkani
	Cindy Powell
	Devan Sudra
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All officers and board members volunteer their time.

Happy New Year!

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Donations for Those in Need

Orla Roche (in photo) said she lost weight during the COVID-19 pandemic and decided to clean out her closet and donate what no longer fit. She deposited several bags of clothing into the large green bin, owned by a non-profit organization, across the parking lot from Rite-Aid. While hauling bags from her car, she heard, "Thank you for donating!" from across the lot. The woman explained the items left on the ground next to the blue, for-profit bins, are for the neediest of the needy. "They've lost their jobs. They have no money. They come here for clothing and food items, which I and many others leave for them," she said. "I left some canned goods and clothing one day last week and the next day everything was gone."



KATHY ENZERINK

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EDITORIAL / CONTINUATIONS

Letter to the Editor

Praise to the Orinda Library Staff

A shout out to the Orinda Library for their service! When my Contra Costa County 38-year library card was rejected by the catalog website, I stopped by the Orinda Library and in 10 minutes, library staff member Suzanne

checked out and handed me the book I had tried to put on hold. In addition, the County Community Library Manager, Michael Beller, promised to work with IT to resolve my card problem – which was accomplished.

– Hilly Hoppock

◆ MEMORY from page 1

in particular involved a change in Orinda Municipal Code 17.9.3 in 2015 which permitted the City to use the RL-6 property designation. A designation which allows a memory care facility.

The proposed facility is also located in a public/semi-public zone bringing additional controversy. “Private, commercial, ‘luxury-class’ care businesses are not a public or semi-public use,” said Armstrong. Beaton, however, stated, “The specific purpose of the PS District is to preserve established patterns of diverse uses. The addition of a congregate care facility would add to the diversity of uses in the area, which consist of a single-family residential subdivision and associated athletic and recreational facilities.”

City Council Member Dennis Fay noted

the Council had much to consider following its November meeting, including concerns about ventilation, co-exposure and filtration in the proposed facility. Council Members also requested additional legal assessment of the project’s risks to the City. Additionally, the Council asked city staff to provide more information on potential geological hazards, utilities payback in the context of Proposition 218, clarification about codes for in-unit kitchens, ability to safely and timely evacuate patients, traffic, collisions and emergency vehicles on Highway 24 and screening vegetation.

For information on accessing the Jan. 19 Zoom meeting or history on the memory care facility, which was first proposed in 2010, go to www.cityoforinda.org.

Kathy Enzerink can be reached at kathy@theorindanews.com.

◆ CATS from page 1

homeless and abandoned cats in their neighborhoods through CC4C. The group just finished its annual “Holiday Giving Tree” but will gladly accept additional donations for the new year.

All funds raised support CC4C’s cat hospital in Clayton, which provides spay and neuter surgery to help prevent cat overpopulation. It also provides routine medical services and surgeries needed to heal broken bones, injured eyes and other maladies which cause pain and suffering to so many helpless cats and kittens, giving the kittens a healthy start to life.

Donors can also contribute by visiting CC4C’s Facebook page, going to it’s website www.communityconcernforcats.org or by sending a check with all donations tax-deductible.

As of early December, CC4C has treated 3,326 cats in their hospital and found homes for a whopping 645 cats and kittens. The hospital, currently open four days a week, performs 20-25 spay and neuter surgeries a

day, plus numerous exams on ill cats.

“There is a great need to be open for a fifth day of spay and neuter surgeries and well-pet exams, but that won’t be possible until we increase our funding. So please make donating generously to Community Concern for Cats part of your New Year tradition,” said Gemma Osendorf Boyd, CC4C president. “It will save so many precious lives and prevent a lot of suffering.”

Community Concern for Cats’ adoptions currently takes place virtually because of COVID-19. Go to the website and look for the list of cats available for adoption. Then, contact indicted sponsors. This will lead you through the next steps in meeting the cats and making them your own.

Community Concern for Cats’ website is an extremely helpful resource for people looking for information about cats, such as bottle babies, lost pets, what to do when you find kittens, low-cost spaying and neutering options among other great resources.

Billie Cummings can be reached at billie@bcummings.com.

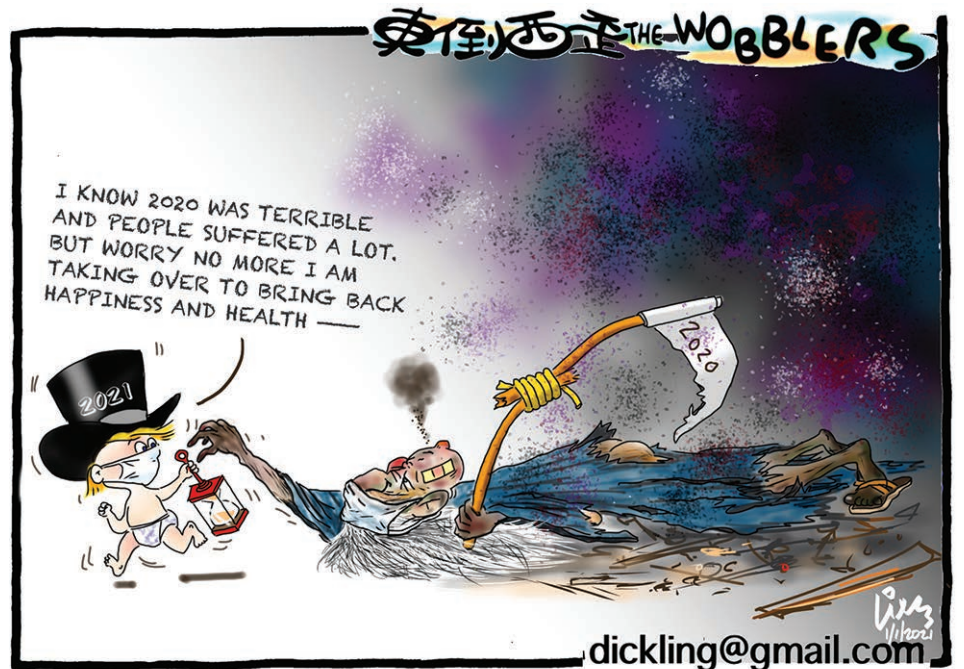
◆ PRESIDENT from page 3

the New Year, I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the current board, staff and volunteers for their wonderful support the last two years of my board presidency.

Because The Orinda Association’s a volunteer organization, it takes many people working together to make the delivery of programs and services run smoothly. The

creativity and organizational skills of the board and volunteers exemplified amidst the pandemic were exceptional. With deep gratitude, I thank you.

We embark upon the New Year in a celebratory mood as we plan to highlight our 75th year. The OA, which started in 1946, is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. As we continue and enhance our services and programs, we need your continued support.



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Your support and donations help us provide a door-to-door, transportation program for Orinda seniors, the Orinda 4th of July Parade, the annual Classic Car Show and the volunteer center that coordinates community-based volunteers.

In order to further reach out to the community, we've partnered with several Rotary clubs to provide the Cars2nd Chance program. The program will handle the paperwork and pick-up the vehicles at no charge.

The program provided 56 cars to the Paradise Rotary Club after the Paradise fires to replace burnt vehicles. Most cars get sold with the donations turned into cash for a charitable purpose.

As an example, the Lamorinda Sunrise Rotary Club garnered car donations and provided close to \$50,000 to the local Food Bank. This tax write-off donation can now

be provided to the OA by clicking the appropriate button at www.orindaassociation.org and indicating the program or service you wish to support.

The OA could not provide the services outlined without your support and donations. Besides donations, you can also volunteer. You can volunteer as a driver for seniors or assist in the many events in the 4th of July or the Annual Car Show. Please call us at 925.254.0800 or see us at 26 Orinda Way.

It has been an honor to serve as the OA President these last two years and a privilege to write this monthly column. Thank you and have a happy and prosperous New Year!

Carlos Baltodano can be reached at cbalt ldc@comcast.net.

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Letters to the Editor are printed on a space-available basis and should be no longer than 400 words. They must include the writer's first and last name, signature and telephone number.

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For display advertising rates, call Jill Gelster at 925.528.9225 (jill@aspenconsult.net), Elana O'Loskey at 925.984.1751 (elanao@mac.com) or Kathy Enzerink at 252.626.2109 (kathy@theorindanews.com). The deadline for the February issue is Jan. 8.

CITY NEWS / FINANCIAL NEWS

Firewise Council Receives Mayor's Award of Excellence for 2020

By KATHY BOHANAN ENZERINK
Assistant Editor

At the Dec. 8 City Council meeting, Orinda's outgoing Mayor Darlene Gee honored the Firewise Council with the Mayor's Award of Excellence for 2020 before subsequently handing the virtual gavel to Vice Mayor Amy Worth after a unanimous vote by Council Members. The new mayor then accepted the nomination of Dennis Fay as Vice-Mayor, followed by a second unanimous vote.

Gee, who called the selection of the Award for Excellence as one of the best things the mayor gets to do, noted this year she had "a very easy time identifying the recipient."

"The Firewise Council helped spur the formation of our Joint Subcommittee with the City of Orinda, MOFD and the Town of Moraga," said Gee. "It played a critical role in helping to pass Measure R, which will allow the City to advance critically needed fire prevention measures."

As the first mayor to act as "Zoom Master of Ceremony," Gee said she looks forward to a calmer year since "2020 wasn't exactly what I was expecting." She takes pride in progress made on the Downtown Precise Plan, the passage of Measure R and the City's relationship with the police and fire departments.

City Manager Steve Salomon, among many, bestowed accolades on Mayor Gee: "She has always given very thoughtful feedback when we've had conversations."

In Orinda, the five Council Members are elected to staggered, four-year terms. In 2018, Orinda voters elected Dennis Fay, Nick Kosla and Worth to the Council. Worth and Fay, receiving the most votes, now take over as mayor and vice mayor respectively. While votes usually determine who the mayor and vice mayor will be, city council members have, on occasion, declined the position for a variety of reasons.

Worth, no stranger to the mayor's job, will serve another term as mayor. First elected to the City Council in 1998, she won subsequent reelections in 2002, 2006, 2010, 2014 and 2018, elevating to Mayor two years following each election. She serves on several boards including the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, the Contra Costa Transportation Authority, the County Connection Transit Authority, Recycle and Solid Waste Authority and the



KATHY ENZERINK
Amy Worth and Dennis Fay were elected Mayor and Vice-Mayor respectively at the Dec. 8 City Council meeting.

Lamorinda School Bus Authority.

An Orinda resident since 1982, Worth said she loves to read and loves libraries. During her 22-year tenure, she feels proud about her involvement in getting Orinda's library built, working to see the Caldecott Tunnel's Bore 4 a reality, fixing roads and keeping the city financially solid. She and her husband Tom have three daughters and two grandchildren.

Ten years following his retirement as Executive Director at the Alameda County Transportation Commission, Fay decided to run for the City Council in 2018. He served on the Citizens' Infrastructure Oversight Committee for road repairs and paving and wanted to see those and the storm drains projects to their completion, which he did. Fay also focused on his interest in development of the downtown area as a Council member.

Fay and his wife Natalie, have a daughter who lives with her family in London and a son who resides in Jersey City with his wife. They have two grandchildren.

Jointly, Worth and Fay place wildfire safety as their priority as mayor and vice-mayor. They also agree two other important areas concern repairing or replacing critical drains and the Downtown Precise Plan.

"Fostering a feeling of being welcome in Orinda and inclusion to the community is something we all have to work on," said Worth, as Fay nodded in agreement.

Kathy Enzerink can be reached at kathy@theorindanews.com.

FINANCIAL NEWS

PROP 19 CREATES PLANNING NEED

DAVID BORN, CFA, CFP



The most prominent Proposition 19 ads marketed the law as a loosening of rules to assist wildfire victims. The recently passed proposition accomplishes that, but is likely to impact more Californians and Orindans through less advertised changes to the portability of tax valuations.

Most notably, the law allows residents over age 55 up to three transfers of their home's tax assessment to a new primary residence anywhere within the state. Transfers to more expensive properties will now increase assessed value by only the difference in market price – if you move from a \$1 million property to a \$1.5 million property, then your assessed value will increase by \$500,000. Assessed value transfers to an equal or lesser property, stay the same.

Residents with severe disabilities and – as advertised – victims of wildfires and other disasters are also eligible.

This replaces a regimen in which only one transfer was allowed to a property of equal or lesser value, typically only in the same county.

With this change, empty nesters and others over 55 will have less financial incentive to stay put or convert a primary residence to a rental to take advantage of a low assessed value. On the other side of that coin, this creates (unintentionally) an incentive for the not quite 56 age group to defer moving until they too qualify to carry their assessed value with them.

A second change from Prop 19 affects the rules for all assessed value transfers to

children and grandchildren, but these will become more restrictive. Only a property that is the primary residence (called "family homes" in the proposition) of both the transferor and transferee now stand to receive a benefit. Before, all property was eligible. The maximum benefit is now capped at a \$1 million downward adjustment to market value upon transfer.

Let's look at an example to see how this works: Suppose Grandma had a \$500,000 assessed value on a \$2.5 million family home when transferring it to grandchild. Grandchild would then receive the maximum \$1 million downward adjustment to assessed value, resulting in a new assessed value of \$1.5 million.

[SEE FINANCIAL page 13]

The Medicine Shoppe

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STUDENTS

Pivoting to Hybrid Learning Soon

By SALLY HOGARTY
Executive Editor

Although Contra Costa County remains in the state's COVID-19 Purple Tier, the Acalanes Union High School District (AUHSD), which includes Miramonte High School, is busily preparing for transitioning to a hybrid learning model when the county drops to the Red Tier.

To that end, AUHSD surveyed parents and students to see how many would return to classes on campus, and who would continue remote learning. The overall results for the district showed 35% opting to remain in remote learning and 65% wanting the hybrid model, which combines in-person and remote learning. Miramonte High School's numbers were 22% remote and 78% hybrid.

"I'm really, really excited about bringing our students back. I know there's a lot of nervousness about safety, and it's my top priority," said Miramonte Principal Julie Parks. "We're committed to getting everything together now so that when we move back into the Red Tier, we'll be ready to pivot into a hybrid model and get our kids back to Miramonte."

Miramonte junior Ania Keenan looks

forward to going back to in-person learning. "I've been covering the School Board meetings on Zoom for the school paper and I really appreciate the care and transparency they're exhibiting. The distance learning this fall is much better than it was in the spring," she said. "They've also put a lot of work into creating the hybrid model as well as doing things around campus to keep us safe. But I am still nervous about going back."

Students will be placed in either Cohort A or Cohort B for a combination of in-person and distance learning. Mondays both groups will be in distance learning with Cohort A on campus on Tuesdays and Thursdays while Cohort B has remote learning. On Wednesdays and Fridays, Cohort B will be on campus with Cohort A learning remotely.

"We also have Cohort C made up of the students who won't be attending in-person classes. But we have attached each student in Cohort C to either Cohorts A or B. They will be live streaming the classes their cohorts attend," said Parks. "We've also built-in special office hours for them to ask questions."

In addition, Parks and her team developed a plan that allows people to pivot in



Alicia Keenan

Miramonte junior Ania Keenan has a "classroom" in her bedroom that she uses for distance learning.

and out of the hybrid model if they happen to get sick. "People get sick all the time – colds, flu – or they might need to quarantine. We have to be ready for that," she said.

Parks acknowledged the challenge teach-

ers will have managing three cohorts at the same time. "It's a big change mid-year. But we feel we're up for and prepared to meet all the challenges."

[SEE HYBRID page 10]

Nonprofit Girls Crushing It Creates Girlpreneurs and Confidence

By HILLARY HOPPOCK
Contributing Writer

How do you build confidence and develop leadership and financial skills in young girls to ensure success in their future careers? Orinda resident Roxanne Chris-



Shelly Hamalian of Shutterbug94549

Catherine Foster, Orinda resident and Founder of Falaloops, an accessories business launched through the Girls Crushing It program.

tophe has made it her mission to change the stakes for girls whose confidence levels typically drop by 30% at ages 8-14, despite outperforming boys academically. Doing so, she hopes to address and begin to reverse the leadership and wage gap experienced by females in the business world.

In 2018, Roxanne encouraged her daughters Christophe Davis then age 10, and Sophie Davis, then age 8, to take their origami business to a local farmers market. Buoyed by their success, her daughters invited Wagner Ranch and OIS school friends with small businesses to join in. After 50 girls signed on, Roxanne hosted an "Entrepreneurship 101" workshop followed by a stand-alone marketplace with 400 visitors and customers attending. The response motivated her launch of Girls Crushing It.

Two short years later, Girls Crushing It has educated hundreds of girls in entrepreneurship. They've made pitches and sold products to more than 10,000 customers in the Bay Area. Each season, girls sign up for workshops that read as if they came from a university business school syllabus. They teach girls to turn their passions into products ranging from accessories, apparel and toys to dog biscuits and housewares to sell in a pop-up shop.

Girls Crushing It reached an all-time

[SEE GIRLS page 15]

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STUDENTS

Exhilarating Process for Miramonte High School Student Magazine Staff

By CHARLEEN EARLEY
Editor-in-Chief

Miramonte teacher Donia Gousios gets blown away by the level of talent her journalism students have, especially in creating *Writer's Mag*, the magazine they built on their own with little guidance along the way.

"I am constantly in awe of the great accomplishments these students do completely on their own," said Gousios, who teaches Honors English and journalism, currently fully online. "The motivation, creativity and drive they consistently bring to the classroom, everyday, are inspiring. It makes me smile and I am confident they will go on to do great things."

A total of 10 students in the Journalism Club began work on a 32-page, full-color magazine in the fall of 2019, before the pandemic hit, mostly during their lunch breaks and after school. Students meticulously so-

lited local businesses for advertisements; they applied for grants and contacted a printing company in San Leandro called 440 Creates.

Their magazine contains stories, essays, poems, cartoons, drawings and more.

Sponsors and advertisers, past and present, include the Orinda Community Foundation, Lamorinda Arts Council, Orinda Books, Jennifer Perlmutter Gallery, Friends of the Orinda Library, Aspire Education and Miramonte High School.

After working on the magazine, Co-Editor-in-Chief, Chaya Tong, a senior at Miramonte who plans to study English, classics and possibly history in college, talks about her future career goals.

"I am considering going to law school or going into writing and publishing," said Tong, who lives in Lafayette. "Putting the magazine together is an exhilarating process!"

Co-Editor-in-Chief, Scarlett Mosher, has



Miramonte's Journalism Club students (L-R) Alex Finegan, Mia Singleton, Chaya Tong, Scarlett Mosher, Miriam Yee and Olivia Eukel, proudly showcase their 2018-19 issue of *Writer's Mag*. Their 2020 issue was designed and finished in March, printed in April during COVID-19 and distributed in Oct. 2020. Journalism and English Honors teacher, Donia Gousios, advises the Club.

similar goals.

"I want to study classics, but more specifically, I'm looking at majors in classical civilization and Latin/Greek language; however, I also want to pursue creative writing in college, either as a minor or as an activity outside the classroom," said Mosher of Orinda.

The students enjoyed their time working on the magazine as a team.

"Putting this magazine together was a kind of 'exciting stress.' While it definitely was stressful to gather submissions, coordinate with the printing company and gather funds to get the magazine to print, it was a new and exciting experience, and one we didn't have to go through alone," Mosher said.

"The experience brought the entire club together, as we worked during lunches and after school to finish the magazine by our deadline," Mosher added.

Mosher said her favorite part of the process, during the lunches spent crafting the magazine, occurred while club members sat in the school's computer room, working on Adobe InDesign to create page designs.

"As one of the presidents, I walked around the floor of the computer room, helping with technical issues, as well as hopping back to my own computer to finish the pages I was assigned," she said. "Between chunks of hard work, we would take breaks to stretch, laugh and jump into the piles of beanbags in the corner of the room."

Fortunately, the club's students assembled the content of the magazine before COVID-19 hit; however, once schools went virtual, students learned to pivot through the challenges.

"Normally, we distribute the magazine in April," said Tong. "Since, all of the magazines were printed, we had to keep them at my house while we waited to see what would happen with lockdown. When we found out we would not be returning

to school in the fall, we mailed out copies to all the sponsors and people whose work appeared in the magazine."

They also left copies in the book room and at the front office at Miramonte, where students could pick them up on campus. Now, they're planning their next issue.

"As we look ahead to this year's magazine, we are trying to navigate the process of designing and printing without being in person," said Tong. "We are still planning on producing a magazine this year despite COVID-19. The process will look different, but our team is coming up with creative new ideas so we can still put out *Writer's Mag* in the spring."

Gousios feels Zoom is a huge blessing.

"There are some activities and tasks that are even more effective when done virtually," she said. "For example, working together in breakout rooms allows the student to focus on the specific task on hand, and it is very effective since they share their screens and work on documents in small groups."

She said they have already mastered working on page layouts virtually.

"Again, they are amazing," said Gousios.

In addition to the magazine, Gousios teaches a thriving production journalism program, where students produce *The Mirador*, a student-directed print newspaper.


"I act as advisor," said Gousios, of Lafayette. "*The Mirador* prints seven issues a year. We also have issues online, and we have hundreds of subscriptions that are sent out monthly."

Tong and Mosher are in both the journalism class and club, and find real-world benefits in these courses.

Mosher said she learned the importance of relying on others while creating: "Their feedback, ideas and opinions are incredibly important to making the final product. I learned how to work through disagreements

[SEE MAGAZINE page 13]


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THE YEAR NOT IN REVIEW

MIMI BOMMARITO



I'm pretty sure my Muse has coronavirus. She's nowhere to be found, and, if she does indeed have The Rona, I probably don't want her visiting me anyway. The CDC remains silent on whether to social distance from a Muse. As a result, I'm winging this month's column on my own. Like many things we took for granted before the pandemic – appointments, bodily contact and reasons to wear pants – I realize I miss my Muse and the wacky whispers she shares with me.

Without her, the first draft of this column, literally as pointless as a virgin margarita, captured 2020: The Year in Review. In my own defense, a "normal" year typically unfolds full of engaging and unique experiences, many of them humorous. Pressing rewind and revisiting the overlooked tidbits was once entertaining.

But, as I dissected 2020 in an attempt to fish out some positive moments, it occurred to me that even the least introspective among us has struggled to complete this exact sanity-saving exercise countless times already. Been there, done that. Not to mock the importance of positivity, but yes, we have all appreciated the extra family time. Yes, we have all embraced the "PR on top, PJ below" wardrobe hacks. We all agreed, no one missed commuting, our pets are flourishing and a Christmas tree makes everything better.

Everyone is exquisitely grateful for good health, employment, Zoom, Netflix and Amazon -- not always in that order. Young people will always believe they're invincible, no matter what. No one really enjoys wearing a mask, but we do it anyway. We all experienced the universal awkwardness of not hugging a close friend or family member, especially after a few drinks.

The Year 2020 offered few insights that have gone unfelt by the masses in our overabundance of personal reflection time. Plus, I found it super unpleasant to travel back and excavate my anxieties of those first months. A chip clip attached to my nostril would feel better. And I know this because – two nostrils, one chip clip and zero holiday parties.

Instead of commiserating, my Muse challenges me. She says things like, "Think about that sheer panic when you cough or sneeze? You know, that 'Oh shizzle, could this be The Rona?' paranoia, even though

it feels exactly like every allergy symptom since you were old enough to buy your own Sudafed."

"No," I say, "that fear is right up there on the list of universal things we've all experienced. Boring." But then she snaps, "Excuse me, I wasn't finished. Write about symptoms other than coughing or sneezing – hot flashes, for example."

Dang it, she's always right. I could describe how my hot flashes wake me from a sound sleep, after I've thrashed all my covers off like a five-year-old dreaming he's wrestling a T-Rex. As I lay there, baking, I wonder "Is this just another hot flash or a classic coronavirus fever?" In the middle of the night, everything always seems worse. Absolutely it's a coronavirus fever. About the time you've cursed your fate, imagined what your family and friends will say about you at your funeral, and if you'll be able to overhear it from wherever you are, and, maybe, somehow, stop any college stories from surfacing, the heat wave begins to fade. Moments later you are clutching those covers to protect you from the frigid night air.

Big sigh of relief. It's not the virus, but rather the yo-yo internal thermostat of a woman of – a certain vintage. "And how would I make my aging funny, Muse, instead of just oversharing?" I would ask. And, without missing a beat, she would look all mischievous and say, "Think of the rose in *Beauty and the Beast*."

"Bingo!" I would respond. "My age is like the Magic Rose from the Beggar Woman, when the Beast studies it, in that little glass bubble in his library that Belle wasn't supposed to visit. He knits his furry brow in concern – the clock is ticking."

"Exactly," says the Muse. "The petals aren't dropping off juuuust yet, but it sure ain't a rosebud anymore." We laugh, she maybe a little more than I.

Now we're on a roll. Muse would offer, "Why not add, 'aren't we actually lucky the symptoms of COVID-19 are loss of taste and smell.'"

"Wait. Why? I don't get it," I'd say.

"Because," she explains, "on that 'aging' note ... if the symptoms were diminished eyesight and hearing, no one your age would ever realize they had it till they spread it to at least 100 people!" She would

[SEE EVERYDAY page 13]

Orinda Trivia Buff Competes on Jeopardy!

By KATHY BOHANAN ENZERINK
Assistant Editor

Gabriel Ostler, competitive by nature, has always loved games and sports. Trivia and the ability to latch onto free-flowing facts earned him an invite as a *Jeopardy!* contestant.

"I grew up watching *Jeopardy!* with my parents," said Ostler. "We recorded it on VHS tapes so we didn't miss a night. And yes, mom, dad and I were competitive."

Ostler, a 2014 Miramonte High School graduate, attended the University of Notre Dame on a swimming scholarship, majoring in English. On the side, he hosted pub trivia games. He may have inherited a love for his favorite and strongest subject, sports, from his Orinda dad, Scott, a *San Francisco Chronicle* sports writer.

When Ostler heard about *Jeopardy!* soliciting applications for players a couple of years ago, he thought, "What do I have to lose?" After two unanswered online responses, the third proved successful. He applied in February, received an acceptance in April for the show taped in mid-June.

"It all happened pretty quickly," he said.

Ostler described the day as interesting and long for all the contestants; Alex Trebek, the iconic *Jeopardy!* host since 1984, proved "super impressive; like a machine," according to Ostler. He marveled that despite taping five shows in one day, Trebek rarely had a misstep. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the contestants served as the live audience when not competing. Although he didn't win during the final taping of the day, Ostler nearly ran the sports category about team mascots.

Viewers of the Nov. 28 airing learned Ostler has never watched a *Star Trek* movie nor ever tasted coffee. He told Trebek both make good conversation starters at parties. Off camera, Trebek asked Ostler about teaching youngsters to swim and which stroke he considered the hardest

[SEE OSTLER page 13]



KATHLEEN OSTLER
Gabriel Ostler enjoys reading Alex Trebek's book titled, *The Answers Is...: Reflections on My Life*. The book was given to Ostler during the June taping of the show, which aired Nov. 28, 2020.

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Orinda's farmers' market is bursting with citrus. Sweet navel oranges, found year-round, now find themselves joined by mandarins, blood oranges, the popular Cara Cara and pomelos.

A loose fitting or "zipper" skin and easy-to-separate segments identify mandarins and hybrids. We all love that! Depending on variety, they may be sweet or tart, large or small, seedless or seeded.

Best known of the mandarins are the tangerines with their thin, reddish orange skin. The Clementine is another sweet variety of mandarin, but slightly smaller in size with



BARBARA KOBSAR

Pomelos look like giant grapefruits with greenish skin, but they are actually a separate species of citrus fruit.

a brighter orange color than a tangerine.

Tangelos are a tangerine-grapefruit hybrid and generally firmer and larger than tangerines. Most popular of this type of mandarin is the Minneola. Virtually seedless, it is easily identified by its deep orange color, pebbly skin and round bump or knob at the stem end that gives it the bell shape and nickname "Honeybell" which distinguish it.

The tangor, also called the temple orange and a hybrid of the mandarin orange and sweet orange, typically comes to market late. Remember the tangor as a word formed from the "tang" of tangerine and the "or" of orange. The thick rind peels easily and its pulp provides full flavor, juice and seeds.

Blood oranges may look like any other orange on the outside (some may have a reddish blush), but the inside flesh reveals anywhere between a brilliant dark pink to dark blood red color. Its flavor hints of raspberry, and it proves delicious used in juices, jellies, cocktails and vinaigrettes.

The Cara Cara is a pinkish-red fleshed navel orange that tends to be sweeter and less acidic navels. Cara Cara also boast 20% more Vitamin C and 30% more Vitamin A when compared to regular navels.

Pomelos look like giant grapefruits with greenish skin, but they are actually a separate species of citrus fruit. The very thick skin of the pomelo peels easily, and the flesh, relatively sweet, gives you a reason to try.

Citrus fruits are sold ripe and ready to eat. Choose those that are heavy for their size, with full color and a shiny skin. Store them in a plastic bag in the refrigerator for

[SEE SHOPPER page 15]

◆ HYBRID from page 7

When Contra Costa County goes into the Red Tier, Parks and her team will have a two-week period to transition to the hybrid model, which includes staff development and student tours. The staff at Miramonte are also working on procedures for entering and exiting school grounds, moving around spaces, entering and exiting classrooms, using restrooms and more. A new staff member was also hired to work specifically on contact tracing. Currently, all staff receive daily health screenings and regular COVID testing.

"Our goal is to have everything queued up and ready to go so we can transition quickly into hybrid learning. Meanwhile, we continue to execute distance learning at the highest level possible. We're happy to see the most recent progress reports show student achievement increased dramatically."

Parks and her staff monitor academic progress closely. She noted kids struggling with distance learning have brought their grades up as well.

Keenan agreed not all her fellow students do well with distance learning: "The transition to distance learning in March put the bulk of the responsibility on the student. Teachers are doing their best in a difficult situation. Fortunately for me, I'm fairly self-motivated, but some of my friends need more one-on-one learning, and a few have used tutors to help."

One tutor used by a number of science and math students at Miramonte and Campolindo for added instruction is Tom Clements.

"In my group AP Physics and Chemistry tutorials, for example, I toggle between Zoom's screen share options for slide shows and my own direct-to-students whiteboard presentations," said Clements. "This helps keep students focused and engaged."

Student Jake Dashiell agrees: "Focusing

on Zoom classes online for the whole class can be difficult. But when the lessons are interesting and interactive, I can always take in all the information."

Clements noted a bonus feature of Zoom allows the recording of classes in the cloud. If a student misses a tutorial or wants a quick refresher, they just have to access the Zoom video.

While Miramonte junior Leo Cardozo hasn't used a tutor so far, he has taken advantage of teachers' office hours to get help. "In Zoom, we have breakout rooms for smaller groups, and the teacher goes around to each group to be sure we understand the material. The teachers have also been very responsive to emails if I ever have an issue," he said. "The teachers want to be sure we understand course content."

For social interaction, Cardozo plays tennis with a group three-plus times a week and does online calls with his friends. "It has been hard not seeing each other face to face. But the online calls on different platforms help socially and when we need to discuss homework assignments," he said.

While excited to return to campus in the hybrid model, Cardozo also feels concerned about what actions would be taken if a COVID-19 outbreak occurred. He was happy to hear the district had hired someone to do contact tracing should this happen: "They've been pretty good finding protocols to keep us safe."

In distance learning, classes begin at 9 a.m. most mornings with a few mornings even later. The hybrid schedule has a late start on Mondays but an 8:30 a.m. start Tuesdays – Fridays with students needing to get up early enough to get ready and drive to school.

"It will be a change," Cardozo said. "I'm definitely guilty of getting out of bed at the last minute and hopping on a Zoom call."

Sally Hogarty can be reached at sally@theorindanews.com.



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Working with selected contractors, Orinda Parks and Rec is providing all-day care for grades K-5, providing distance learning support and enrichment. Also, in an effort to serve as many community needs as possible, additional youth and adult enrichment programs are also being offered. In all cases, we are committed to providing programming that meets or exceeds the latest county and CDC health and safety guidelines and protocol. Please stay tuned to our website for all the program details and latest information.

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◆ ADU from page 1

a 500-foot redwood deck, cost less than \$60,000 dollars," said Chris Lotz, owner of Green Sheds.

Ben and Sara Munday of Orinda ordered their main house and an ADU from Connect-Homes in 2015. The 8' x 40' connectable units are built in a Southern California factory. They're transported in what looks like shipping containers, readily transported by truck, rail or ship. Ben Munday's office with a guest bedroom, a Connect-Two ADU (two 8' x 40' units), provides 640 square feet of space. The main residence, a two-story Connect-Eight, affords 2,560 square feet of living space.

As Connect-Homes Northern California representative Ben Munday said, the turn-key, all-inclusive cost for a Connect-One, 11.5' wide, runs \$200,000 and a Connect-

Two goes for \$279,000.

Habitat offers prefab ADUs built at a mobile home factory. The HUD-coded home arrives on the property complete with appliances, window treatments, floor coverings and customizable amenities. "We do all the hard work," said Robin Schick, Marketing Director at Habitat. "Our customers get to do all the fun stuff like choosing wall colors, drapery fabrics and the kitchen sink!"

He concluded, "Habitat offers great solutions for a lot of buildings. We're an awesome Honda or Toyota; we're not a Tesla."

According to a statement by AARP, "ADUs are among the housing solutions that can help to ensure that people of all ages, including older adults, have a roof over their heads."

Kathy Enzerink can be reached at kathy@theorindanews.com.



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VISUAL ARTS

Wilder Gallery: A New Year Awash in Vibrant Color

By ELANA O'LOSKEY
Staff Writer

The Lamorinda Arts Council invites you to view a virtual exhibit of 12 watercolor and oil paintings by Rashmi Rajesh to ring in the New Year. View images and a video of Rajesh's artwork at www.lamorindaarts.org/online-galleries through Jan. 31. All Council art exhibits are virtual until COVID-19 restrictions change.

San Ramon's Rajesh, a self-taught artist, drew pencil sketches at a very young age in India. As an adult, she relied on her drawing skills again while first pursuing acrylics and then oil paint and watercolors. Initially she didn't take to painting with acrylics. Instead of giving up, she tried oil

paint and calls both the process and results delightful.

After painting with oils for some time, she began exploring watercolors. "The looseness and transparency of watercolors instantly draws you in as a viewer. As an artist they keep me challenged enough to have control over the medium to know when to let go to achieve lightness in my creations. The more I paint, the more there is to learn. That's what keeps me coming back to these two media, oil paints and watercolors," said Rajesh.

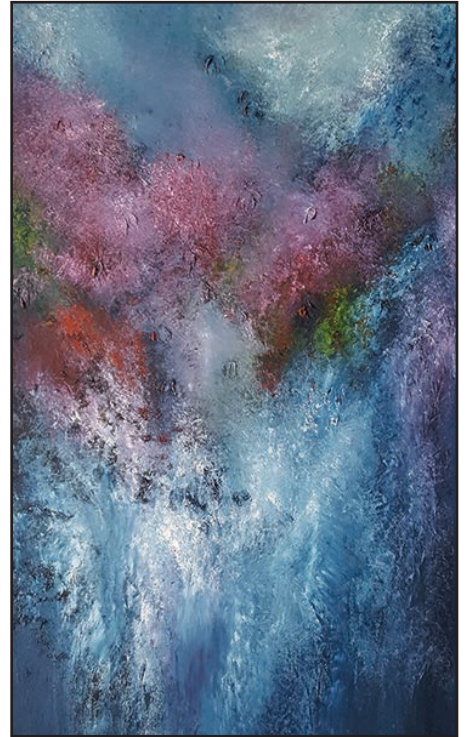
You'll find florals, landscapes, abstracts and still life works in her show. To keep her work fresh, she experiments with different techniques and subject matter. When you view *Perception*, a 28" x 22" oil painting

on canvas, see if the washes of blue moving into lavender take you somewhere.

She hopes her work sparks some kind of connection for viewers because, for her, connecting people together is one of the beautiful qualities of art. To that end, she also teaches art classes for beginning and intermediate students. Visit her website to view more of her artwork and get in contact at www.rashmisartcarte.com.

The Art Gallery at Wilder, closed due to COVID-19 restrictions, remains virtual. Contact Curators Denise Nomura and Aniston Breslin at wildergallery@lamorindaarts.org.

Elana O'Loskey can be reached at business.orinda@gmail.com.



RASHMI RAJESH

Artist **Rashmi Rajesh's** 28" x 22" oil painting, *Perception*, can be described as abstract Impressionism, because it suggests a point of view from above the clouds over a body of water.

Library Gallery: Safari Photos of Rare African Animals

By ELANA O'LOSKEY
Staff Writer

The Lamorinda Arts Council presents photographs of rare and protected animals taken on safaris in Africa, mostly in national parks, to welcome the New Year. The Council has created a virtual Art Gallery on its website. It includes still photographs and a video of this exciting exhibit. See www.lamorindaarts.org/online-galleries. All Council art exhibits will stay virtual until COVID-19 restrictions change.

Maggie Boscoe, David Fleisig, Pam Hall, Jeffrey Halliday and Maureen Rosati-Wee, local photographers, roamed far from home to capture these images. Boscoe agrees with Karen Blixen, author of *Out of Africa*, who said, "There is something about safari life that makes you forget all your sorrows and feel as if you have drunk half a bottle of champagne – bubbling over with heartfelt gratitude for being alive." The five-person exhibit includes exotic animals, birds and landscapes the photographers encountered on their travels.

Boscoe, of Orinda, organizer of the show, has also served as a volunteer curator of the Art Gallery of the Orinda Library for 13 years. "So many people I met had such

enthusiasm for their trips to national parks in Africa that I had to see the beautiful vistas and precious wildlife for myself," she said. She named her photograph *I Am Woman, Hear Me Roar* because it recalls an unforgettable moment filled with sounds from a lion.

Fleisig, who lives in Berkeley, has experienced three African safaris. He said each time he stays enthralled by traveling off road to view the abundant wildlife in its natural environment. He shot his *Serengeti Cheetah (Acinonyx jubutas)* photograph in the vast savanna of Serengeti National Park, which spans 12,000 square miles. This large cat has the capability to run up to 80 mph because of its light build, long thin legs and long tail.

Hall, also of Orinda, said, "I traveled with Maggie, who insisted we needed another adventure. Even though I have Parkinson's, I agree with her that it was the trip of a lifetime, and I'm glad I went." Her photos captured things she knew would hold her interest upon returning home, such as the rarely seen Golden Cat (*Caracal aurata*). The only forest-dependent wild cat in Africa, measuring about twice the size of a domestic cat, this sturdy, powerful animal has stout short legs and large paws.

They visited Hwange, Zambia, Kafue, Botswana and Okavango Delta National Parks. According to Hall, "It was very easy taking photos because our excellent guides knew how to find the animals; so, we stopped at particular places. We got used to taking our cues from the animals which would indicate when our time was up, doing things such as sticking their head in the jeep. That was the signal to move on."

Hall and Briscoe also visited Victoria Falls, a UNESCO World Heritage Site and one of the world's largest waterfalls at 1,708 meters (5,604 ft.) wide, in a helicopter. The falls form a natural border between Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Halliday's photos focus on African bird life. When you view his *African Darter* photograph showing the water bird drying its 47-inch wingspan, you'll understand why. People dub this species "snake-bird" (*slanghals* in Afrikaans) because it

[SEE GALLERY page 15]



JEFFREY HALLIDAY

Jeffrey Halliday snapped this *African Darter (Anhinga rufa)* photo while it was drying its 47" wingspan; it usually swims underwater with only its head and neck visible.



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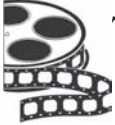
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REEL LESS TRAVELED / LOCAL AUTHOR



THE REEL LESS TRAVELED

VEERING TOWARDS THE
EDGE

TOM WESTLAKE



Knowing your audience keys the usefulness of a column like this. Even though I fancy myself a bit of a misanthrope, I have lived in the Lamorinda area more than a dozen years and do venture out from time to time. Observing and interacting with the good people that inhabit this charming part of the world, I trust, will help me provide apt recommendations to those very same people.

Knowing full well that I should shy away from anything too controversial, I, at the same time, have no desire to pander. It's in that spirit, then, that I write this first column of the New Year. The recommendations that follow come from an unexpected and unconventional place but will still manage to hold your interest.

Every once in a while, a director ventures out of the familiar to make a film that seems to contradict what we've come to expect. The most famous example would be Alfred Hitchcock who, apart from his usual, more suspenseful films, made a domestic comedy (*Mr. & Mrs. Smith*), an almost silly comedy of manners (*The Trouble With Harry*) and even a historical drama (*Jamaica Inn*). You could even argue that his *Topaz* has all the markings and plot beats of a James Bond film.

It's two other directors, however, who I wish to call to your attention. Though their output is fraught with themes of a decidedly adult nature, they have also made movies that still have their unmistakable stamp of style while being totally accessible for everyone. And, both deserve their PG ratings!

Starting chronologically, let's talk about

Ken Russell. I've mentioned him before and have long admired his work, from his films about famous classical composers' lives to his more visceral works such as *The Devils* and *Lair of the White Worm*. I've even mentioned *The Boy Friend* in the past, which I still think worth seeking out.

Here, however, I call your attention to *Tommy* (1975). Many will remember this as one of the first "conceptual" rock albums in that it's not an unconnected collection of songs by The Who, but one that tells a story with a beginning, middle and end. Performed on stage from 1969, like Pink Floyd's *The Wall* (itself a pretty impressive movie), it made a stunning film. Bearing all the trademark Russell excesses, it features Ann-Margaret and Oliver Reed with cameos by The Who, Tina Turner and Elton John.

Roger Daltrey assays the title role but it's the visuals that dominate. This, with the music, propels this movie forward with nary a quiet moment to catch your breath. And, fair warning, if you think you'll be watching something that's, in any way, conventional, then you're in for quite the surprise. Russell doesn't do "conventional." So, if you're open for something challenging, *Tommy* should work for you.

Another distinctive director, David Lynch, never shies away from anything. Though surreal might be the most common word used to describe his films – besides descriptors like violent, carnal and frightening – I'm glad to report that there's absolutely none of that in *A Straight Story*.

[SEE REEL page 13]

Book Author's Medical Thriller Releases in Days

By CHARLEEN EARLEY
Editor-in-Chief

Many talented residents, especially book authors, live in Orinda. Deborah Greenberg, working on her second novel but the first published, proves no exception.

Writing under the pseudonym Deven Greene, Greenberg's 284-page medical thriller has a scheduled release date of Jan. 7. Entitled *Unnatural*, it is the first in a trilogy.

Greenberg chose a pen name for memory reasons.

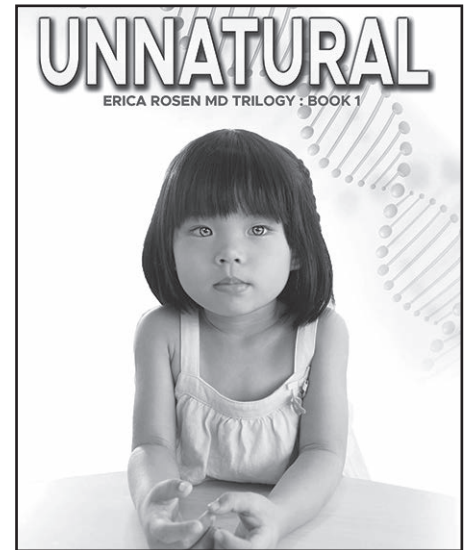
"I didn't want to use my real name but wanted to use something similar. I thought that by having 'e' as the only vowel, it would be easy to remember how to spell it," said Greenberg, a wife and mother of two grown children.

Born in New York City, moved to Sacramento with her parents at age five, Greenberg has lived in Orinda for the last 30 years.

To describe her novel, Greenberg directs readers to her book's back cover:

"Dr. Erica Rosen is perplexed when she sees a young Chinese girl with blue eyes in her San Francisco pediatrics clinic. The girl's mother, Ting, is secretive and Erica suspects she has entered the country illegally. Later, Erica encounters Ting's son and discovers he has an unusual mutation. Erica learns that Ting's children underwent embryonic stem cell gene editing as part of a secret Chinese government-run program.

"The Chinese government wants to murder Ting's son to prevent others from learning about his unusual mutation and the secret gene-editing program. At Ting's urging, Erica heads to China to expose the program and rescue the infant Ting was



COURTESY OF DEBORAH GREENBERG
Unnatural, written by Deborah Greenberg (pennane Deven Greene), is a 284-page medical thriller, the first in a trilogy and is slated to release Jan. 7.

forced to leave behind, all while attempting to evade the watchful eye of the Chinese government."

A few factors influenced her choice to write a medical thriller:

"The novel is a thriller because it moves rather quickly and there is a lot at stake," she explained. "It's a medical thriller, because it deals with a medical issue – embryonic stem cell gene editing – and the protagonist is a San Francisco pediatrician. The genre is a natural for me, given my background in biochemistry, where I started out years ago in medicine."

Before she retired, Greenberg had to squeeze in whatever hours she could find to get her writing done. It took her eight months to write and more time editing.

"Now I have a lot more flexibility," she said. "I write whenever I want, which is often, usually with a cup of coffee nearby."

[SEE GREENBERG page 13]



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CONTINUATIONS

◆ **MAGAZINE** from page 8

with my teammates, coming to a compromise that worked for everyone.”

Most important to her, she said, was the value of friendship: “I worked with my friends and fellow writers to create something wonderful, something that would unite the creative writers at Miramonte.”

Gousios is more than proud of the amazing work her talented students do. “It is an opportunity for the community and the students to be a part of something bigger than just high school,” she said. “Such a gift for all involved!”

Charleen Earley can be reached at editor@theorindanews.com.

◆ **FINANCIAL** from page 5

These new rules take effect Feb. 16. Before you rush out to transfer properties to would-be heirs, consider that a gift will not receive a cost basis step-up – potentially costing much more in capital gains if sold and lower depreciation if rented than saved, on property taxes.

Those with larger real estate portfolios may soon ponder the “Ship of Theseus” – an ancient Greek thought experiment in which every part of a ship is replaced one by one. Doing so might beg the question as to whether you end up with a new boat. Similarly, if property ownership turns over in this way, California law doesn’t recognize that ownership (or tax assessment) changed at all.

The Theseus exemption has inspired several unpassed state bills and the failed Proposition 15 that would have shrunk the exemption. While they are not law yet, they represent potential changes to consider in any planning.

David Born can be reached at david.born@brightonjones.com.

◆ **REEL** from page 12

Indeed, as far as I can tell, this may be the only Lynch film the Motion Picture Association rated G. Moreover, further proving its a typicality, Disney Studios distributed it! Based on actual events, it tells a story about an elderly gentleman who, hearing that his estranged brother has suffered a stroke, resolves to visit him, possibly for the last time. Himself in failing health and unable to drive, he uses a motorized lawnmower to make the cross-country journey. This gentle tale features tender performances by Richard Farnsworth and Sissy Spacek. Some might have a hard time with the film’s laconic pace, but those who appreciate Lynch’s style, especially his ability to find

wonder in the ordinary, will be rewarded. Beauty, wisdom and kindness run through this film, along with a little poignancy. It’s well worth your time.

On the local front, it’s probably common knowledge by now that the Orinda Theatre has closed its doors for the foreseeable future. This tragedy, brought about out of necessity to be sure, bears further mentioning, if for no other reason than to always keep Orinda’s gem in mind. The theatre’s Facebook page (facebook.com/orindatheatre) remains active, as does its fundraising page (gf.me/u/y2rv6q). I know at least some of you check in on these resources from time to time. If I can entreat you to encourage others to do so, it will help ensure the theater’s eventual re-opening.

And let’s not forget the International Film Showcase. Jo Alice and Efi continue with their virtual cinema program (internationalshowcase.org), currently the only game in town. Your patronage can only be seen as a good thing.

So, I leave you for another month. I wish all of you the very best in the months to come, and, as always, urge you to keep watching those wonderful flickering images of light, for that is where the reel magic lies.

Tom Westlake can be reached at popinjay@earthlink.net.

◆ **EVERYDAY** from page 9

howl with laughter here, because she’s older than these Orinda hills and looks about 28.

Let’s all hope she finds her way back to me soon. There’s so very little to laugh about in the midst of this pandemic, and at the same time, laughter is good, energizing therapy.

We’re at that point in the marathon where we feel like throwing up, but we must keep going. I know I speak for my Muse as well, as we wish everyone the focus and strength to straggle across the finish line.

Mimi Bommarito can be reached at editor@theorindanews.com.

◆ **OSTLER** from page 9

to teach. Ostler said the breaststroke and Trebek replied he had the most trouble with the butterfly “where I always got too tired.”

Ostler was on his way to Ohio to work as an announcer for a minor league baseball team when COVID-19 squelched those plans. Currently, he teaches swimming, his favorite sport, to young children at a swim school in Lafayette while waiting for a dream job of announcing or commenting about sports. He knows lots of

trivia to keep any one-way conversation flowing smoothly. In the meantime, he also becomes a licensed real estate agent this month.

Of the *Jeopardy!* experience, Ostler said, “Alex Trebek was exactly as personable as you would expect. I was lucky to be in his presence even for a little bit.”

Kathy Enzerink can be reached at kathy@theorindanews.com.

◆ **GREENBERG** from page 12

Nowadays, since I’m sheltering in place, I have few conflicts.”

Her simple writing routines utilizes a PC with a large screen so she can have her Word doc open and simultaneously search the internet for information. Though not sticking to daily goals, when she’s writing a first draft she typically writes 1,000 words a day.

Greenberg admits that one of the challenges she encountered writing this book had to do with timely topics.

“It’s risky because the world can change while you are writing,” she said. “For instance, once I finished my first draft of *Unnatural*, wherein the Chinese government set up a secret human embryonic stem cell gene editing program, something I was pretty sure no government would actually do due to the worldwide ban on such activities, a Chinese doctor announced that he had secretly done just that – performed gene editing on human embryos to prevent

HIV infection. I had to go back and make a few changes to reflect that.”

Not one to give advice to new writers, she will offer words of support: “I would encourage anyone who enjoys writing to keep it up, get input from others if possible and edit like crazy.”

Inspired by current events and her imagination, with no writer’s block along the way, Greenberg hopes her readers will enjoy her novel, but she also wants them to walk away with knowledge and appreciation.

“I would like them to learn about gene editing, and the dangers currently inherent in human embryonic gene cell editing,” she said. “Thirdly, I would like them to have an appreciation of life in China, as well as a few other things that come up in the novel.”

Her book can be found in paperback and electronic form on Amazon and Barnes & Noble.

“I do not know if it will be available in an audio format,” said Greenberg. “I plan to have it available at Reasonable Books in Lafayette, and possibly other local bookstores.”

Charleen Earley can be reached at editor@theorindanews.com.

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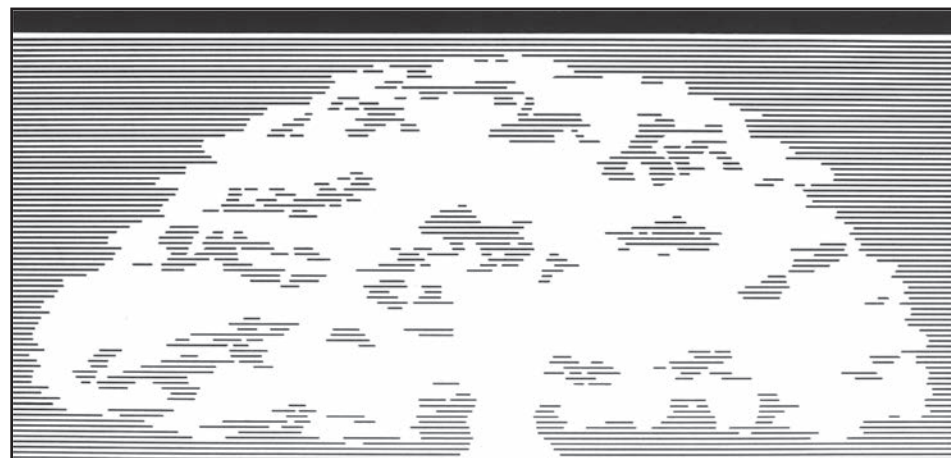
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WAGNER RANCH / MEASURE R

Wagner Ranch Nature Area Provides Joy for Children in the Outdoors

By KATHARINE BARRETT
Contributing Writer

Once again, the voices of children floated over the trails and along the stream at the historic Wagner Ranch Nature Area, as students played outdoor games, made nature crafts and explored the ponds and woods.

COVID-19 pandemic guidelines dictated suspension of traditional outdoor programs for the District's third through fifth graders, but people stepped up to offer viable alternatives.

Forty-year veteran Naturalist Toris Jaeger, with the encouragement of the Orinda Union School District and help of the Friends of the Wagner Ranch Nature Area (FWRNA), restructured the environmental investigations for small groups of seven children per day. Retired teachers

and nature aides, Mary Welte, Kim Curiel, Lilana Spindler and Evonne Morici helped lead these pilot programs on four select Saturdays.

Students wore masks, maintained six feet from each other and brought their own refillable water bottle, snack and lunch. The activities for "Nature Days," like all FWRNA programs, align with the California State Standards for Science and History/Social Science and Environmental Education.

The personnel involved felt thrilled to support the local student population in this way, during this unprecedented time. The positive feedback from students and parents ensured that people involved will look to bringing the program back in the spring.

Katharine Barrett can be reached at kd Barrett08@gmail.com.



WILLIAM HUDSON
Ayla Montane (standing) and **Sabrina Sellers** pause for a minute on a valley oak that fell during a storm, while walking the trails of the Wagner Ranch Nature Area, along with their guided group Saturday, Nov. 14, 2020.

City Council and Staff Eager About Measure R Strategy in Orinda

By MELANIE LIGHT
Contributing Writer

Orinda, poised to exert tremendous energy and good will, will transform itself into a wildfire resistant city. To recap, Orinda's general sales tax of .5% will expire

March 31. The newly passed general sales tax of 1%, however, will take effect on April 1. Measure R passed with a 58.7% yes vote.

The Orinda city staff and City Council seem eager to set the wheels in motion as soon as possible. At the City Council meet-

ing on Dec. 1, city staff put forth a proposal to take steps immediately. City Manager Steve Salomon spoke passionately and at length about the importance of addressing wildfire safety and disaster preparedness while coordinating these with a master plan.

He stressed the critical nature of education and community outreach to success while also stressing the need for a dedicated program person to integrate various stakeholders and to execute the city's master plan.

Salomon, together with Assistant City Manager and Director of Public Works, Larry Theis, and Administrative Services Director, Paul Rankin, presented a way to get the work needed started.

The current Citizens Infrastructure Oversight Committee (CIOC) will disband. A new commission of 7-10 citizens will emerge from the current CIOC, the Firewise Council and the former Finance Advisory Committee. This new Commission will create a framework and set of objectives. It will also provide a future spending plan in concert with the next bi-annual budget and provide an annual report to the City Council. Meetings should start this February.

The city's proposal suggested an interim, short-term budget of \$600,000 for the next six months to the end of this fiscal year, June 30. It would also have the Moraga-Orinda Fire District (MOFD) continue its chipper program to serve Orinda residents while the staff researches the purchase of its own truck and chipper. Clearing the city's

own land should be of the highest priority according to the proposal.

Discussion ensued about the issue of whether property owners or the city should take responsibility for clearing vegetation that abuts roads. Larry Theis clarified that fronting property owners need to take responsibility for the land under the older public roads in Orinda and that the road right-of-way constitutes an easement, not owned in fee title.

Generally, in the last few decades, new roads get dedicated to the city as public roads, specifically in fee title ownership such as Wilder Road. Orinda's municipal code, however, states that the abutting property owner shall maintain trees and vegetation in a neat, healthy and safe condition, regardless of who technically owns the road.

Council Member Dennis Fay noted we should also look for additional funding from the county's Measure X. "In addition to social service and other support services, Orinda should expect some return for other important priorities," said Fay during the meeting. That could include funding for wildfire prevention and mitigation. An example would be funding to maintain the North Orinda Fuel Break created by MOFD.

The City Council voted unanimously to approve the proposal, eliciting an ebullient and enthusiastic mood in the Zoom meeting.

Melanie Light can be reached at melanie@melanielight.com.



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FIRST FRIDAY FORUM / CONTINUATIONS

China Expert, Larry Lamborn, Speaker at First Friday Forum

By BOBBIE DODSON
Staff Writer

The First Friday Forum (FFF) will see an immediate change in 2021 when it meets the second Friday, Jan. 8, to avoid conflict with New Year's Day. Also, because of COVID-19, FFF can no longer meet in Lafayette-Orinda Presbyterian Church's (LOPC) sanctuary.

To participate, guests need to register to attend a webinar presentation. FFF Chair Mike Rusk announced that the speaker for 2021's inaugural forum will be China expert Larry Lamborn, who will address the topic "The Encirclement of Asia."

In a national security career spanning 45 years, Lamborn had 26-years of service as a Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) officer. He worked in a variety of Third World countries in the Caucasus and Central Asia, successor republics of the former Soviet Union.

As a trained Army strategic intelligence officer, he served in the Army Reserve, retiring as a full colonel. In the Pentagon, Lamborn was with the Strategic Warning Staff, the Office of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Office of the Secretary of Defense. He is a Vietnam veteran and holds a Master of Arts degree in Chinese Regional Studies from the University of Washington.

Of his presentation Lamborn said, "Few countries have risen as fast as has the People's Republic of China (PRC) with the world's second largest economy, increasingly powerful and modern military forces and global ambitions. Today China has the power to challenge the United States economically and militarily, and its goal is to surpass America as the world's leading power by 2030."

He explained, "Toward that end the PRC is steadily displacing the West throughout Asia and Africa and extending its influence into the Pacific Ocean area, Latin America and even Europe. *The Encirclement of Asia* is aimed not only at encircling Asia, but ultimately at drawing a technological and economic circle around the United States itself."

Dr. Tom Scovel, FFF team member, also well acquainted with China, says of his friend Lamborn, "Rarely do we have the opportunity to hear someone who is both a Washington insider and an outsider, especially when it comes to matters of international military concerns. One of his more recent books, *Arms of Little Value*, critiques many American policies that have dealt with insurgency movements. His global perspective and his familiarity with the PRC promises to make his talk timely and informative."

Lamborn is the author of four books, in addition to numerous essays. He says he



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Col. Larry Lamborn, a former CIA agent, will speak on Jan. 8 via Zoom for the First Friday Forum. His topic is called Encirclement of Asia.

has been a "China watcher" for 50 years, with the country the centerpiece of his academic study and professional work: "China fascinates me, and I have drawn upon my China knowledge in drafting my books and essays. I wrote my essay, the *Encirclement of Asia*, on which my talk will focus, because I believe it is important for Americans to understand Chinese expansionism and how that will shape the world in the coming years — not always to our benefit."

To register for this forum, go to www.lopc.org/first-friday-forum. Click on the link in the blue font and fill out the Webinar registration form with your name and email address. You will receive the Zoom link required to attend the talk scheduled for Jan. 8. The lecture is sponsored by LOPC.

Bobbie Dodson can be reached at bobbiedodson@comcast.net.

◆ GALLERY from page 11

typically swims underwater with only its neck and head sticking out. This gives the bird the appearance of a swimming snake.

Rosati-Wee of Orinda visited Africa because of her admiration for what the people of Botswana have done for their country as far as preserving wildlife. She returned with her entire family so they could share the experience. "I love the Okavango Delta in Botswana because of the care its people have put into their natural resources, wildlife and endangered species," said Rosati-Wee. She took her panoramic photo *Zambesi River* near one of her favorite camps because of its unexpected beauty. "The colors on the river change constantly throughout the day," she said.

To learn more about the Lamorinda Arts Council, go to www.lamorindaarts.org.

Elana O'Loskey can be reached at business.orinda@gmail.com.

◆ GIRLS from page 7

high of 6,000 visitors at the Palace of Fine Arts in San Francisco when they joined World Wide Women Foundation for the 4th Annual Girls Festival in November, 2019.

The spring 2020 pop-up, during the pandemic, proved equally impressive. It became a testament to the flexibility and persistence of these young entrepreneurs reacting to a calamity and turning it into an opportunity. Roxanne explained, "Training workshops focused on how to get product in local businesses like Orinda's Square Baby and Lafayette's Bel and Bunna's Books. The pandemic hit the very day items were going into the stores, and 90% of the 50 girls signed up for the pop-up event pivoted to a virtual pop-up, which logged 2,000 virtual visitors versus 500 anticipated 'in store' customers."

Catherine Foster, Orinda resident and Founder of Falaoops, an accessories business launched through Girls Crushing It, shared her enthusiasm about the program: "I feel like Girls Crushing It helped me become a real business person. Roxanne taught us how to think about pricing and marketing my product and encouraged us to experiment. I thought the COVID situation would mean we wouldn't be able to sell anything this year, but the virtual pop-up shop helped me sell even more than I did last year. I actually ended up selling

out of most of my products and being able to donate to the charity I am supporting." Catherine gave 15% of the \$550 sales from her animal-themed wristlet key chains to Heifer International.

Corporate sponsors of Girls Crushing It include Wells Fargo, Sephora, *Diablo Magazine*, among other local and national business, foundations and individuals. Recently Girls Crushing It partnered with Nasdaq Entrepreneurial Center to deliver virtual programming to girls around the world, offering a national and international Nasdaq Center Youth Camps with Girls Crushing It in July, 2020. Stay tuned for what pops up next.

Hillary Hoppock can be reached at hoppock@msn.com.

◆ SHOPPER from page 10

up to two weeks if necessary.

The Orinda market is open every Saturday from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Orinda Way in Orinda Village. More information is available at www.cccfm.org, facebook.com/OrindaFarmersMarket and [Instagram@OrindaFarmersMarket](https://instagram.com/OrindaFarmersMarket), or call the market hotline 925.431.8361.

Barbara Kobsar can be reached at Barbara@cotkitchen.com.

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Single Family Home Customers 2021 Holiday Tree Collection Schedule

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

Week of Jan 4-8	Customers in the cities and unincorporated areas of Danville and Walnut Creek, plus Alamo, Diablo, and Blackhawk.
Week of Jan 11-15	Customers in the cities and unincorporated areas of Lafayette, Moraga, and Orinda.
Week of Jan 18-22	Customers who missed prior tree collection.
AFTER Jan 22	Cut and place in organics cart; or call (925) 685-4711 for on-call, organics-only cleanup.



Tree Pickup Do's & Don'ts

- Do:**
- Remove lights, ornaments, and tinsel from branches before placing at curbside.
 - Leave trees at curbside on the same day as your regular garbage collection day during your city's tree collection week.
 - Cut in half all trees that are 8 feet or over in height.
- Don't:**
- Flocked trees can be collected curbside for a fee or be included in your once-a-year on-call garbage cleanup, but must be scheduled in advance. Call (925) 685-4711. If cut to fit inside with the lid closed, flocked trees may be placed in your landfill cart.
 - Do not leave stands (whether plastic, metal, or wood) on the tree. Trees with items still attached cannot be picked up.

Leave trees at curbside on the same day as your regular garbage collection day, during your city's assigned week.

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ELANA O'LOSKEY



Republic of Cake

Republic of Cake offers delectable cupcakes in mini to full sizes, cookies, cakes and all manner of imaginative baked goods made with locally sourced ingredients minus lard or butter substitutes. One taste confirms the ingredients are real; try anything made with chocolate as a test.

Owner Lindsay Pirkle's good friends and mentors, Chih-Chung Fang and Peter McNiff, founded Republic of Cake (ROC) in 2010. They trained her well; she purchased the business from them in 2016 to fulfill her



ELANA O'LOSKEY

What do Very Messy Chocolate, Chocolate Velvet and Vanilla Sprinkles have in common? They are mini or full-sized cupcakes looking for a home. See Republic of Cake owner **Lindsay Pirkle** in Orinda Theatre Square for adoption.

lifelong dream of owning a bakery. Pirkle said, "I love working in a kitchen with the aroma of fresh treats, the gleam of sparkling clean surfaces and the sound of a whirring mixer. It's my favorite place to be."

Born in San Francisco and raised in the East Bay, Pirkle has a Bachelor's degree in Employee Relations from San Francisco State University. She worked with local and national chefs at Ingredients Cooking School in Danville.

Orinda holds a special place for her family because her father Leonard Pirkle and his business partner Derek Zemrak own the Orinda Theatre and Cine Cuvee. Before taking over ROC, she served as general manager of the Orinda and Rheem Theatres for six years. Though she lives in Danville with her husband and daughter, Pirkle stays involved in the local community by supporting Orinda schools, local hospitals, Contra Costa Food Bank, Lamorinda Arts Council and St. Monica's Church in Moraga.

A quick survey of cupcake lovers in Theatre Square elicited this list of favorites: Very Messy Chocolate (filled with chocolate ganache topped with chocolate buttercream); Chocolate Velvet (devil's food cake topped with cream cheese frosting and chocolate sprinkles) and gluten free vanilla (baked with sprinkles topped with vanilla frosting and more sprinkles).

You can choose among mini or full-size cupcakes, cookies or special-order cakes and pies; gluten free items must be ordered in advance. "We change our menu



ELANA O'LOSKEY

Orinda resident **Kelly Sopak** cut his commute by moving his State Farm office from Albany to Orinda mid-pandemic. "The timing was actually good because no one expects to visit me anyway," said Sopak.

bi-weekly. New and popular items include our 7" full size cakes and Decorate-Your-Own Cookie kits," said Pirkle.

Pirkle said, "I wish I had time for hobbies, but I do love gardening and having a two-year old. I love teaching her new things. She loves to help me in the kitchen and around the house. We go on walks together and, of course, park time is a must."

Visit Republic of Cake at 2 Theatre Square #151 in Orinda or go to www.republicofcake.com. Shelter-In-Place hours are Wed. – Sun. 11 a.m. – 2 p.m. Pirkle prefers calls at 925.254.3900 for same day pickup, or if you are emailing your order after 2 p.m. for next day pickup (orders@republicofcake.com). You will find a limited amount of freshly baked items on hand in store, but ordering in advance works best. Holiday hours: Closed Fri. Jan. 1 – Tues. Jan. 5. All COVID-19 precautions observed.

help of Insurance Account Representatives Heather Golden, Debora Miller, Michalea Thomas and Lauren Sopak.

Sopak spent 11 years coaching Girls Varsity basketball at Miramonte. He and his wife Beverly have two daughters, Lauren and Leah, both Miramonte grads. Lauren studies abroad, finishing up a business degree in France, and Leah, a freshman at St. Martin's University in Washington, studies criminal justice and plays basketball.

While insurance does not make for exciting dinner conversation, according to Sopak, he has done it his whole life and finds it fascinating. He also loves cars and homes, making being involved with both through his insurance business make sense. He advises people to review their insurance coverage to ensure a correct setup and proper coverage in the event of a claim. He offers to meet people in person, over the phone or via Zoom to personalize a plan.

He and his wife hope things return to normal so they can participate in community events. In his spare time, he coaches basketball, loves old muscle cars and just took up golf again in his COVID-19 free time.

You'll find Sopak's State Farm office at 1 Northwood Dr., Suite 1 in Orinda, or visit www.kellysopak.com, email kelly@kellysopak.com or call 925.253-7700. Hours are Mon. – Thu. 9 a.m. – 5 p.m., Fri. 9 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Elana O'Loskey can be reached at business.orinda@gmail.com.

State Farm Insurance

Kelly Sopak of Orinda began with State Farm in 1994 and relocated to the Bay Area in 2000. He moved his office from Albany to Orinda in 2020 after the pandemic hit.

"I leased the Northwood space two years ago," said Sopak. "Moving mid-pandemic actually made the transition easier because no one was expecting to visit me in person anyway."

After running his State Farm business in the Albany/Berkeley area for 12 years, the time seemed right to relocate to Orinda so he could be closer to home. He focuses on home, business and car insurance with the



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