

LAFAYETTE'S SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS: A COMMUNITY THAT CARES, PART 2

LAFAYETTE JUNIORS: Helping Our Community for Nearly 7 Decades



The Lafayette Juniors Suburban Women's Club, known more widely as Lafayette Juniors, is an organization of local women dedicated to helping others in need while enjoying friendships within their membership. Since its founding in 1953, Lafayette Juniors has fostered a sense of community, offering local women an opportunity to support a variety of nonprofits that serve diverse causes throughout Contra Costa County and beyond. Over the past 20 years, Lafayette Juniors has raised approximately \$800,000 for more than 50 Bay Area nonprofit groups. Each June, the group solicits applications from local organizations, and by August it selects a few worthy community organizations to support with funds that the Juniors raise during the school year. This past year, for example, the group's beneficiaries included the Winter Nights Family Shelter, the Rainbow Community Center, and Uncommon Law.

Currently, the group's 66 members are preparing for their major annual fundraiser, the Lafayette Juniors Kitchen Tour. This popular event consists of a self-guided tour – scheduled this year for Saturday, May 2, 2020 – of masterly-designed unique kitchens in beautiful homes all across Lafayette's neighborhoods. The group also raises funds during its annual rummage sale, which always occurs the first Saturday in October. In addition to raising approximately \$20,000 for the beneficiaries in 2019, the rummage sale is an environmentally-conscious way to recycle gently-used goods and give them a new life.

Besides fundraising, members hold a variety of social and volunteer events to foster friendships among members and help those in need. In previous years, Lafayette Juniors has served meals to the homeless and assisted urban farms. Every year they make blankets and pillows for those going through serious illnesses. For more information about the club, how to become a member, or this year's beneficiaries, please visit www.lafayettejuniors.org or find them on Facebook at www.facebook.com/lafayette.juniors.

In last fall's edition of Vistas, we looked at Lafayette's long history of "Communitarianism." That's an idea that grew out of Lafayette's incorporation in 1968 – to build a semi-rural city that honored volunteerism and community spirit. It lives on today in our all-volunteer City Council and more than twenty Commissions, Committees, and Task Forces that form the core of Lafayette. But our community is also made up of many volunteer service organizations, so many that we could not feature all of them in a single issue of Vistas. So, here is the second part of our overview of community-based service organizations that make Lafayette a truly special place to live.

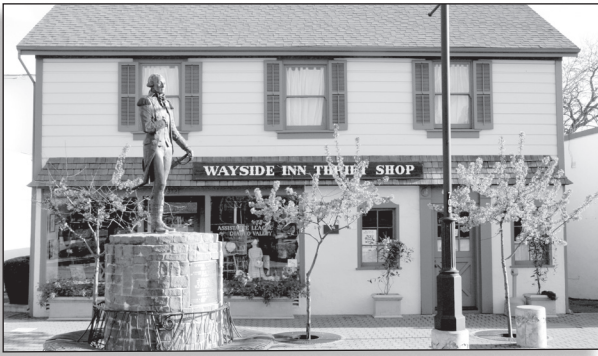
■ Lamorinda Spirit Van – They Love to Say Yes

The Lamorinda Spirit Van Program originated in May 2006 to help seniors age in place by providing necessary transportation after they can no longer drive themselves. Starting with part-time staff, a 10-passenger van donated by the County Connection, and preliminary funding from the City of Lafayette and the East Bay Community Foundation, the program has grown to four vans and 11 volunteer drivers, who provide rides from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm, Monday through Friday for Lamorinda residents, age 60-plus, and people with disabilities. They love to say "yes" to shopping, errands, medical and personal appointments, visits to a spouse at a care facility, exercise classes, BART, the bank, library, and post office – basically any and all destinations within Lamorinda, Concord, Martinez, Pleasant Hill, and Walnut Creek. Lafayette residents older than 70 are eligible for subsidized rides. Call (925) 283-3534 for more information or to register for rides.

■ Las Trampas Is Here to Help

Las Trampas has served Contra Costa County residents with profound intellectual and developmental disabilities since 1958. Their housing and day programs offer our neighbors with severe autism, epilepsy, cerebral palsy, and other conditions the resources they need to lead their best lives. Clients, who in previous generations may have been institutionalized or otherwise sidelined, use Las Trampas' services to hone life skills like cooking and money management, earn a living through job training, and build stronger relationships through new communication skills. A major renewal project at its Lana Lane day campus will bring state-of-the-art social, therapeutic and educational tools and services to a space designed to facilitate interaction and inclusion with the broader Lafayette community. When complete, Las Trampas will be able to serve 120 adults, up from 70. To learn more or to volunteer, contact us at (925) 284-1462 or visit www.lastrampas.org.

LAFAYETTE'S SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS: PART 2



■ Assistance League of Diablo Valley's Way Side Inn Thrift Shop Shares Lafayette Pride!

The Assistance League of Diablo Valley purchased the Way Side Inn Thrift Shop in 1978 for \$120,000 and earned \$30,604 during its first year of operation. Not a bad feat. The next year, however, brought a mix of triumph and tragedy: a newly created costume rental section yielded plentiful customers and increased sales, but a fire in November destroyed the well-known landmark. A temporary site opened, and in just over one year's time, the League's Way Side Inn Thrift Shop, was again opened at its original location, standing proudly at 3521 Golden Gate Way.

Serving as the League's primary fundraiser, the Way Side Inn Thrift Shop has fostered a history of caring, commitment, and innovations. Revenue gained from the thrift shop continues to fund the League's philanthropic programs, which include Operation School Bell, a nationally acclaimed program dedicated to literacy, R.E.A.D. (Read, Enrich, Achieve, Discover), Elementary Arts Discovery, and the Kids on the Block. Scholarships offer financial and emotional support for those in academics. Generous donations and purchases from the community play a pivotal role in the Way Side Inn Thrift Shop's success. To learn more, please visit www.assistanceleague.org/diablo-valley.



■ Lamorinda Arts Council: Artistic Expression

The Lamorinda Arts Council was founded in 1950 as the Orinda Arts Council, and re-named the Lamorinda Arts Council in 2015 to include the neighboring towns of Lafayette and Moraga. Their mission is to ignite and sustain artistic expression and appreciation. The Council's board members and volunteers produce events, partner with professional organizations and artists, give financial support and awards, and advocate for a vibrant, local culture of visual, performing, and literary arts. Notable programs include the student singing competition Lamorinda Idol, pictured above, the High School Visual Arts Competition, and the Lamorinda ShortDocs Film Fest. LAC also curates two galleries at the Orinda Library and the Wilder Art and Garden Center featuring exhibits by local professional artists. **Learn more at <https://lamorindaarts.org>.**

■ Sustainable Lafayette

Sustainable Lafayette is a grassroots non-profit corporation formed with the goal of transforming Lafayette into a highly sustainable community that enhances the quality of life for current and future residents. They seek to act as a model and partner for other interested communities and take a positive approach – providing the community with information, inspiration, tools, and assistance to facilitate the adoption of sustainable practices. Sustainable Lafayette hosts the Lafayette Earth Day Festival each year, and by sponsoring local “green meetups” and a film and speaker series, are able to bring the most relevant sustainability topics to the community and build a network of citizens and local businesses that can help and learn from each other. Sustainable Lafayette is also the



fiscal sponsor for the Lafayette Community Garden and Outdoor Learning Center (see below) as well as the Urban Farmers. Urban Farmers is dedicated to helping people share their excess backyard fruit, providing a scalable, cost-effective model to address hunger relief. Much more information can be found at sustainablelafayette.org

■ The Lafayette Community Garden Digs In

Started in 2009 as a “Local Foods” group, the Lafayette Community Garden was formed to help community members learn to care for the local ecosystem and grow sustainable food. Currently, there are 80 member families – and a waiting list. Work in the Garden is done by volunteers who share in over a ton of produce grown each year, and excess produce is donated. The official Garden season runs from mid-March through October, although a small group meets regularly during the winter to tend the beds and the chickens. The Garden hosts a day-long Harvest Fest for the community in late September, and community members are welcome to visit the Garden anytime it's open: Tuesdays, 4:00 to 6:00 pm, and Thursdays and Saturdays, 9:00 am to noon. Tours are available upon request – there's even a sandbox for children – and you can feed the chickens! For more information, please visit the Garden's colorful website at www.lafayettecommunitygarden.org.

Calling All Communitarian Groups

We hope you enjoyed these two special editions of *Vistas* featuring community groups from all around Lafayette. If you know of a community group we should feature, please write our Communications Analyst, Jeff Heyman, at jheyman@ci.lafayette.ca.us. He'll get word on all of our community-based organizations in the City's publications and social media. Find out more here: <https://www.lovelafayette.org/Connect>.

OUR GREAT SCHOOLS

One of Lafayette's wonderful treasures – apart from our green hills – is our great schools. For decades, families have moved to our community and stayed here in large part because of our City's outstanding schools: Burton Valley, Happy Valley, Lafayette, and Springhill elementary schools, Stanley Middle School, and Acalanes High School. Each day, thousands of students served by our schools receive excellent core academic instruction, as well as innovative and essential courses in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM), not to mention world-class arts and music programs, from transitional kindergarten through high school.

The 2019 annual results from the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress demonstrate that our students excel, with the vast majority meeting or exceeding the state standard in both English/Language, Arts and Mathematics, outperforming the County and continuing a tradition of residing near the top of statewide school and District results. Acalanes is also highly successful at measures of college and career readiness, an important indicator of the quality of education in our local public schools.



Proud parents on the first day of class at Happy Valley Elementary School last year.

Modern and technology-rich classrooms are essential to our students' learning, and our kids are reaping the benefits of community-backed bond initiatives in both school Districts serving our City. You may have noticed new construction at school sites across town. What may not be as visible are the vital updates made to the infrastructure, including electrical, fire protection, and other safety improvements.

We can all be proud that Burton Valley Elementary was recently named a California Distinguished School for 2020 by the California Department of Education, one of only five elementary

schools in Contra Costa County to receive this award. Superintendent Richard Whitmore said it best: "Burton Valley is a shining example of our schools' hallmarks – strong academics in a student-centered climate, with families and teachers working together every day for our children." Indeed, all residents of Lafayette should feel a part of this honor.

For more information about our great schools, visit www.lafsd.org or call the Lafayette School District at (925) 927-3500, and for Acalanes High, visit www.acalanes.k12.ca.us/acalanes or call (925) 280-3970.

LPIE: For Our Students

Lafayette Partners in Education, affectionately known as "LPIE," is a community-based education foundation run by parent volunteers working to enhance and expand the educational opportunities for students in Lafayette's six public schools. Since its founding in 1980, LPIE, which was originally known as Lafayette Arts and Science Foundation, has worked to mitigate school funding cuts and allow for local control. It began by placing instructors in classrooms to provide lessons in underfunded areas of study such as art, science, and music. Today, you'll see LPIE dollars at work in every subject and in every classroom, not only providing instructional lessons, but also funding teacher and specialist salaries, aides, library staff, technology, classroom and lab supplies, counselors, professional development, teacher and principal discretionary funds, and much

more. This past year, in its largest fundraising goal yet, LPIE pledged a record \$4.5 million to our Lafayette schools to help keep them strong and help our community thrive. We know that great schools not only help our students thrive, but also result in higher property values. Find out how you can get involved with LPIE at www.lpie.org.





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Vox Populi - Street Interviews:

Are you a member of a community or service organization?
If so, why? If not, why not?



Dick Craig – I was recently appointed a Commissioner to the Transportation and Circulation Commission. I'm now partly retired with a little more time on my hands and look forward to using my career expertise in transportation to hopefully make a difference and have a positive impact in the community. Also, we live up at Sky Hy Ranch and I've been a member of the local governing board there for close to 15 years now.



George Riley & Bobbie Freitas – We belong to the East End Coalition and it's to protect our businesses down there. We try to work with the City Council and the City to make things happen that will benefit all of us. It's a work-coordination kind of thing and so far it's paid off pretty well. We're going to get a new crosswalk in front of my hair salon, which will help protect people. I think that it's a really good thing for us to work with the City and the City Council.



Irene Jorgensen – I am not currently because I work part-time. But, as my schedule frees up, I would probably be interested in getting involved, particularly beautifying the highways, the entrances and exits in Lafayette. I think that people in the community can really help because they care about Lafayette.



Juana Droessler – I am not. I recently retired though a few months ago so I'm very interested to jump in. They are very important I think. I love Lafayette, there's been a lot of change after 40 years, and I feel like this is a critical juncture right now so I am very interested in getting involved.



Jason Bezis – I'm on regional boards. One of them is the Bay Area Transportation Working Group. That is a Bay Area regional one that is looking at transportation issues and trying to improve public transit around the Bay Area. Another one is the Hellenic-American Professional Society: Greek-Americans throughout Northern California and the greater Bay Area. It's important because often through these groups it helps to refine thinking about public issues, personal issues, and it's good to be out there interacting with people.



Robert McKee – No I am not. But I think they are very helpful, very, very fruitful. For the most part, they take in the concerns of the ordinary person and that way you can move ahead. They basically address the needs of people and are relevant in the time period we are living in.

CITY DIRECTORY

For Council Members call: 925-284-1968

Council Members

Mike Anderson	Mayor
Susan Candell	Vice Mayor
Steven Bliss	Council Member
Cameron Burks	Council Member
Teresa Gerring	Council Member

Email all Council Members at:
cityhall@lovelafayette.org

Administration

General Reception and Nirop Srivatsa, City Manager	925-284-1968 Fax: 925-284-3169
Tracy Robinson, Admin. Srv. Dir.	925-299-3227
Jennifer Wakeman, Assist. Admin. Srv. Dir.	925-299-3213
Joanne Robbins, City Clerk	925-299-3210
Mike Moran, City Engineer & Public Works Dir.	925-299-3203
Greg Wolff, Planning & Building Dir.	925-299-3206
Donna Feehan, Public Works Mgr.	925-299-3214
Jeff Heyman, Communications	925-299-3241

If you observe illegal dumping in creeks & storm drains or accidental spills on roads, call Contra Costa Hazardous Materials Division 925-646-2286.

Lamorinda School Bus Program

Whitney Simon, Program Mgr. 925-299-3216

Parks, Trails, Recreation

Jonathan Katayanagi, Director 925-284-2232

Senior Services

925-284-5050

Police Services

Ben Alldritt, Police Chief	911
Emergency: 24 Hours	925-284-5010
Police Dispatch: 24 Hours	925-283-3680
Police Business Office:	

Anonymous tipline, traffic enforcement, suggestions & LEARN (Laf. Emergency Action Response Network), 925-299-3230

Fax 925-284-3169

Address 3675 Mt. Diablo Blvd. #210
Lafayette, CA 94549

Website www.lovelafayette.org

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