

greet LAFAYETTE

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to the
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HAPPY NEW YEAR, LAFAYETTE!

We hope everyone enjoyed a joyful and cozy holiday season. As we welcome the new year, we're delighted to share Frankie Tinley's story — an accomplished baker carrying on his grandmother's legacy. We're also celebrating 90 years of the Roundup Saloon, cooing over adorable kittens, and bringing you other heartfelt stories from your neighbors.

We're thrilled to feature **Nathan Casey, CEO of KC Custom Builders**, in this month's business spotlight. Nathan's meticulous attention to detail, commitment to building lasting relationships, and focus on clear communication set his company apart in the building and remodeling industry.

When you're in need of a trusted business, please check out our Preferred Partners Index on page 4, and be sure to thank them for making *Greet Lafayette* possible!

Greet Lafayette is **All About You & Your Neighbors!** Read more on page 21.

Warm regards,


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Thank you to everyone who made this special issue possible!



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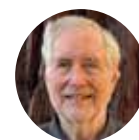
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GREETINGS FROM MAYOR ANDURI



HAPPY NEW YEAR!

I hope 2026 is off to a great start for each of you!

Thank you to *Greet Lafayette* for giving to Mayor Susan Candell last year and to me this year the opportunity to share with you our thoughts and aspirations for Lafayette. And thank you to Susan for her leadership during 2025 and her focus on bringing people together to solve problems and achieve results.

The new year will be a busy one. Three projects will have high visibility. First, The Park Theater Trust is working hard to open the Park Theater by the end of the year, which will give a huge boost to the vitality of our downtown. But the Trust will need the help of all of us. Please visit parktheatertrust.org to see how you can contribute.

Second, the city will construct a new pedestrian/bicycle pathway along School Street and Topper Lane that will link the Lafayette-Moraga Trail to Moraga Road and the First Street pathway, completing a safe route from Burton Valley to downtown.

Third, work will begin on the south side of the BART station, which will increase bike parking and create a more accessible and welcoming entry to our downtown.

As we head into the new year, I am grateful for our outstanding city staff and police department, for the more than 100 of our neighbors who serve on city commissions, committees and task forces, and for the countless others who volunteer their time to make Lafayette an even better place to live. I look forward to working with all of you in 2026.

Carl Anduri

Mayor of Lafayette

Please let me know if you have suggestions for future topics for the Mayor's column at canduri@lovelafayette.org.



You Are Invited!

Exciting news! *Greet Moraga* is launching in February and *Greet Orinda* will be joining us later in 2026! With this, we'll be expanding our events to include residents throughout Lamorinda and *Greet* business partners starting in February. Mark your calendars!

Wednesday, Feb 11 – Greet Happy Hour (5 - 7 pm)
 Canyon Club Brewery, 1588 Canyon Rd., Moraga

Wednesday, Feb 25 — Greet Networking Lunch
 (11:30 am -1:00 pm)
 Tropa Modern Filipino, 3400 Mt. Diablo Blvd.



GREET RESTAURANT TASTINGS

Lafayette residents and participating business partners come together to make friends and enjoy delicious food! Email Lafayette@n2co.com to be added to the invite list.

GREET WINE & BUSINESS ROUND TABLES

Greet business partners are invited to gather at Deer Hill Vineyards to get better acquainted and to talk business. To learn more, email Christine.Raymond@n2co.com.

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THE ROUNDUP SALOON:

Cheers to 90 Years

BY JOHN KENNETT, LAFAYETTE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Step through the door of the Roundup Saloon and you're stepping into Lafayette history — a place where time slows down, laughter drifts across the bar, and stories are poured as freely as the beer.

Established in 1935, just two years after the end of Prohibition, the Roundup is Lafayette's oldest continuously operating business. In 2025, the Roundup marked its 90th anniversary — nine decades of cold drinks, loyal regulars, and the unmistakable buzz of a true hometown bar.

In the mid-1930s, Lafayette was still a dusty farm town when horseman Lou Borghesani opened Lou's Bar, then built the Roundup at 3553 Mt. Diablo Boulevard. Horses really did stop here. Lou kept a hitching post and a water trough out front, and a supply of carrots behind the bar. "Every horse got a carrot, and every rider got a beer if he stayed on his horse!" he liked to say.

Lou sold the bar in the early 1940s to Harry Costa, who added a little edge. Behind a curtained wall, a few slot machines quietly spun until 1945, rumored to have disappeared the moment the district attorney changed. Later, J.W. "Johnny" Combs renamed it Johnny's Roundup, giving the saloon its reputation as the "Horseman's Rendezvous."

Over the decades, the Roundup passed through a lineup of colorful owners — Benny Harris, Al La-Barth, the enigmatic Leo, the Fuller brothers, and then Kevin Gruanstadt and Joe Pangburn — each leaving a mark on the bar's evolving personality.

In 1977, two locals with no bar experience, Bill McCabe and Mike Content, took the leap and bought the place. They learned fast, navigating everything from mislabeled mixers to customers pulling barroom pranks. Their era introduced 10-cent beer nights, charter buses to Giants games with BBQ tailgates, and annual June parties with free food and kegs that flowed all day.



Owners Karen and Mike Johnson continue the Roundup's tradition as Lafayette's hometown bar — and yes, still cash-only. Photo By Craig Isaacs, BlueGoo Photography



The Roundup Saloon has stood at 3553 Mt. Diablo Blvd. since 1935.



Bill McCabe and Mike Content bought the Roundup in 1977.



Lafayette Chamber members and staff celebrate 90 years of the Roundup, the city's longest-running business.

By the late '70s, Saturday nights at the Roundup offered a blend only this bar could pull off, complete with disco shirts beside Pendletons, Cadillacs next to dusty pickups and VW buses. "The bikers were here for the same reason as everyone else, to have fun," longtime bartender Gentleman Jack insisted. The Roundup had grit, but it also had heart.

In 1994, Lafayette native Karen Kirschner took a part-time job at the bar to help pay for culinary school. Ten years later, she and her husband, Mike Johnson, became the new owners — thanks to outgoing proprietor Bill McCabe, who wanted to pass the keys to someone who truly understood the bar's soul.

Today, the shuffleboard and pool tables still hold court, just as they have for generations. The walls are a kaleidoscope of memories — vintage beer signs, antique horse tack, taxidermy trophies, and snapshots from rowdy nights gone by. "Each piece means something to someone," says Karen.

Karen and Mike continue the legacy of hospitality and Western charm. Over the years, the Roundup has

hosted everything from live bands and karaoke to charity fundraisers and reunion parties.

Ownership and crowds may have changed over the years, but the Roundup's soul remains the same: friendly, familiar, and if you close your eyes for a moment and listen closely — you can almost imagine you've stepped back in time, as the walls softly whisper stories from our town's spirited past.

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Baking with Heart

BY FRANKIE TINLEY

My name is Frankie Tinley, and I love the Lafayette community. I grew up here, went to Springhill, Stanley, and Acalanes, and still live here today at age 31. Lafayette feels like one big happy family and has supported me in so many ways.

A lot of people know I was born with disabilities, but they may not know how many people helped me get to where I am. When I was little, doctors told my parents I might never walk or talk. But my family believed in me, and without my physical therapists, occupational therapists, speech therapists, teachers, and countless others, I would not be doing the things I love today.

One of those things is cooking and baking. During COVID, when I was furloughed, I asked myself, “What do I do now?” The answer turned out to be baking. That led me to enroll in a holistic chef program at Bauman College. My goal is to become a pastry chef, and the program taught me how to blend flavors and make



Frankie in his kitchen, making his signature chocolate chip cookies. Photo By Craig Isaacs, BlueGoo Photography

pastries in a thoughtful way. But the best part was that everyone there truly cared. They saw my abilities, not my disabilities.

All of this inspired me to start my own home bakery: YaYa's Sweets. The name comes from my Filipino grandma, Ludy. As a young child, I had trouble pronouncing “lola” (which means grandma in Tagalog) so I called her “YaYa.” She is one of the most caring people on earth. She would give the coat off her back to help someone. My grandma has the biggest heart, and she’s also the best cook I know. Her love has been a guiding light in my life, and I carry her with me in every recipe I make.

I make all kinds of sweets, but cookies are still one of my favorites because that’s where I first started. If you’d like to see my latest treats or order something sweet, you can find me on Instagram @ayayassweets or visit yayasweets.com.

When I think about the lessons that inspire me, I always remember something my grandpa Frank told me when I was feeling down as a kid: “You got dealt a bad hand, but you can always make a bad hand into a good hand.” His words have carried me through every challenge.

As for the future, I think the sky’s the limit. Someday, I’d love to open my own storefront bakery right here in Lafayette. Until I can land a baking job, I will continue working with developmentally disabled persons at Las Trampas (which I love) and bake out of my home — one cookie, brownie and sweet treat at a time.



Frankie with his YaYa, Ludy.



Frankie named his home bakery after his grandma, Ludy, whom he calls YaYa. Photo By Craig Isaacs, BlueGoo Photography

“My son’s journey hasn’t been easy, but his resilience has been extraordinary. Despite his disabilities and challenges, he has pushed forward with courage and a love for baking that lights him up. Seeing him graduate from culinary school is a joy beyond words. He inspires me more than he’ll ever know. And on top of it all, he makes the best chocolate chip cookies and gluten-free brownies ever.”

—PATTIE CURTIN, FRANKIE’S MOM



Frankie's brownies

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BUILDING BETTER EXPERIENCES

KC Custom Builders Transforms Lafayette Homes

How Nathan Casey's Detail-Driven Approach Sets the Standard in Lamorinda



Since 2006, KC Custom Builders has been delivering exceptional custom homes and remodels throughout Lamorinda and the surrounding communities. For founder Nathan Casey, building better experiences isn't just a tagline; it's the philosophy behind every project.

Nathan's journey began as a finish carpenter, where he learned that exceptional results come from disciplined processes and unwavering attention to detail. Those principles remain the foundation of KC Custom Builders today. "We're not structured for high-volume, standardized work," Nathan explains. "Each build is tailored, thoughtful, and executed to meet elevated expectations."

What truly distinguishes KC Custom Builders is Nathan's commitment to advancing building science and exploring smarter construction methods. His intellectual curiosity ensures every home performs as beautifully as it looks, combining innovative building techniques with timeless craftsmanship.

From the first conversation to the final walkthrough, clients experience a

structured, organized process designed to be seamless and stress-free. Through a cutting-edge cloud-based platform, homeowners enjoy 24/7 access to project status, schedules, budgets, and real-time photos, fostering the transparency and trust that defines the KC Custom Builders experience.

The company's guiding values — personalized service, respect, and unwavering quality — aren't marketing slogans. They're the foundation of every interaction. Nathan takes time to know clients personally, understanding not just what they want to build, but how they want to live.

KC Custom Builders maintains an intentionally lean structure, combining dedicated office staff and core carpentry teams with longstanding subcontractor relationships. "We consider our subcontractors part of our team," Nathan emphasizes. This approach ensures continuity between trades and consistent workflow throughout each project.

As a Bay Area native who chose to settle in this region to raise his family, Nathan has developed deep community roots. He's built lasting relationships



with local business owners and remains actively engaged in NARI, BNI, and the Lafayette Chamber of Commerce.

When he's not transforming homes, Nathan enjoys spending time with his family, traveling, hiking, snowboarding, and exploring the Bay Area's dining scene as an admitted foodie.

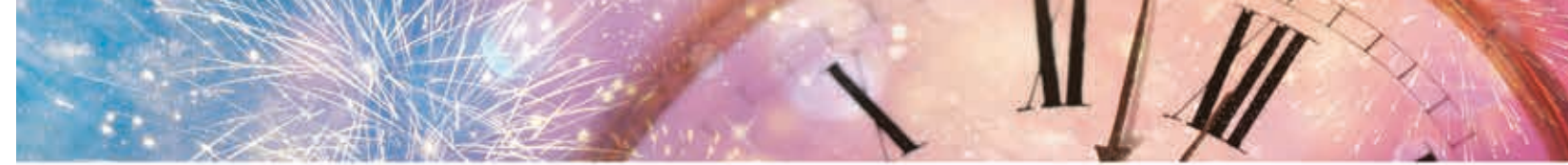
Nearly two decades after opening its doors, KC Custom Builders continues setting the standard for custom building in Lafayette. Under Nathan's leadership, the company proves that building better experiences means combining craftsmanship with innovation, maintaining unwavering quality, and treating every client like a partner.

KC Custom Builders serves Lamorinda, Walnut Creek, Pleasant Hill, Danville, Alamo, and the Berkeley/Oakland Hills.

You can contact Nathan at info@kccustombuilder.com.

"I have been in commercial construction for 30 years. During that time, we did 8 significant remodel projects to our personal residence. KC Custom Builders' communication through their app, attention to detail, and quality was by far our best experience. We thoroughly trusted and were very comfortable with Nathan and his crew and definitely recommend them!"

—DYLAN AND DARCI OLSON, LAFAYETTE



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11 Lucas Ranch Court	\$6,995,000	\$6,250,000	85	5	4+	5639	1.97
147 Camellia Lane	\$4,900,000	\$4,900,000	57	5	4.5	7195	1.22
3362 Johnson Road	\$4,565,000	\$4,443,000	11	5	4+	5762	1.32
1133 Estates Drive	\$4,495,000	\$4,250,000	45	4	4.5	4502	1.06
155 Arbor View Lane	\$3,899,000	\$4,000,000	3	5	4+	4953	0.51
3749 St Francis Drive	\$3,498,000	\$3,400,000	12	6	3+	5181	0.49
935 Reliez Station Road	\$3,350,000	\$3,350,000	0	5	4.5	3610	0.47
3238 Greenhills Drive	\$3,295,000	\$3,050,000	18	5	4.5	4799	0.67
961 3rd Street	\$2,850,000	\$3,000,000	9	4	3	3165	0.17
24 Brookdale Court	\$2,395,000	\$2,440,000	6	3	2	1929	0.27
3617 Happy Valley Glen Road	\$1,995,000	\$2,400,000	3	3	3	2603	0.42
706 St Marys Road	\$2,399,000	\$2,200,000	70	4	4.5	2625	0.50
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We appreciate the support the community has shown to Dudum Real Estate Group, and we look forward to what the new year will bring. May it be a happy and prosperous year for one and all!



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Alice (center) with her students Melinda La Bonge and Rima Makdisi.

LAFAYETTE'S MAH-JONGG MENTOR

How Alice Stern Built a Community Around a Chinese Game

PHOTOS BY CRAIG ISAACS, BLUEGOO PHOTOGRAPHY

For more than 15 years, Lafayette resident Alice Stern has been shaping one of Lamorinda's most vibrant niche communities: American-style mah-jongg. Warm, welcoming, and endlessly patient, Alice has taught more than 200 women the game, helping build friendships and connections along the way.

Alice and her husband, Gary, moved to Orinda in 1971 and settled in Lafayette in 1979. Their children attended Lafayette schools before heading east for college and graduate programs. After years as a stay-at-home parent, Alice returned to teaching when her children reached Stanley Middle School. However, it wasn't until 2015 that a simple question set her on a new path.

That year, Alice joined the Assistance League of Diablo Valley. This nonprofit operates the Way Side Inn Thrift Shop and funds programs that support children and families in Contra Costa County. "At one monthly meeting, someone casually asked if I knew anyone who played mah-jongg," she said. That moment prompted Alice to begin teaching fellow members. She later started teaching mah-jongg at the Lafayette Community Center and eventually brought classes into her home.

Teaching quickly became more than instruction. "Something magical happens at the mah-jongg table," Alice said. "Everyone starts at the same place, knowing nothing about the game, and it becomes a cooperative experience. Students help each other, and everyone works toward the same goal." Many of those students have since become close friends.

Alice teaches American-style mah-jongg, based on rules formalized in the 1937 by what is now the National Mah Jongg League. The game itself originated in China in the late 1800s and spread to the United States in the 1920s, popularized in part by Joseph Babcock, an American working in Shanghai. American mah-jongg evolved from the traditional Chinese version and incorporates a standardized card of winning hands. The game blends luck and skill, and its distinctive tiles continue to attract players of all ages. Alice's students have ranged in age from six to 81.

Classes are held at Alice's Lafayette condo, and all fees benefit the Assistance League's scholarship fund. Alice recently published "No Jokers in a Pair," a book for aspiring teachers that is part memoir and part lesson guide. It is available at Vintage Vida in Lafayette, on Etsy, and directly from Alice, with all proceeds supporting the Assistance League.

For Alice, the greatest reward isn't the mastery of tiles or strategy — it's the community built around the table, one lesson and one friendship at a time.

To learn mah-jongg from Alice, contact her at nojokersmahjongg@gmail.com

Special thanks to Realtor Ashley Battersby for sponsoring our Learning & Education section.



During an afternoon game, Alice guides her mah-jongg students: Maniza Dhillon, Joy Wiehn, Melinda La Bonge, Rima Makdisi, and Melissa Martin.



Modern mah-jongg tiles designed by Lafayette's Kara Gragg, a favorite of Alice's students. Learn more at fourfriendsmahjong.com.

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THE SWEET LIFE: Donut & Churro

INTERVIEW WITH GITA JACOBSON

These inseparable Scottish Kilt Munchkin brothers live the sweet life with Gita Jacobson and her family — snuggling, bird-watching, and napping side by side.

How did Donut and Churro become part of your family? We found Donut first. After lots of research, we knew we wanted a kitty who adored cuddles, was chill at heart, and would happily live a pampered indoor life. That brought us to a Scottish Fold Munchkin breeder in Berkeley. We instantly fell in love with Donut. He was loving and mellow from the day we brought him home, and always wanted to be around someone.

Since Donut is such a social kitty, we realized he was not happy when we left town, no matter how many treats and toys the cat sitter brought. So we went back to the same breeder to try to find him a friend. We were lucky to discover that Donut's dad had a new litter. And there was Churro: the fuzziest, most lion-like kitten in the bunch.



Donut, 1.5 years old, posing with his little brother Churro, 6 months.

How did you name them? We decided to continue our dessert-themed names. We had a hamster named Marshmallow.

How would you describe their personalities? Donut is our mellow, lovebug of a cat who's happiest being cradled like a baby and sharing snuggles with literally anyone. When he's not curled up in someone's arms, you'll find him gazing out the window — bird-watching!

Churro is the confident little brother with big main-character energy. He's the first to dive into dinner and snag the best toys. After a full belly, he turns into a total cuddlebug with Donut and his human family.

Any funny moments to share? From climbing on top of bookshelves to stealing Nerf darts, these two are always getting into mischief. One evening, our kiddo was doing homework in the kitchen when Donut, the sweet snuggle bug, climbed onto the next stool and looked down at Churro, who had just learned to jump high enough to reach it. Not to be outdone, Churro made a wild leap onto a stool of his own, knocking over a cup of chocolate milk all over the homework and countertop. While we stared in shock, Donut happily licked up the milk like he'd planned the whole thing.

What do you love most about life with Donut and Churro? They bring us a lot of joy and peace. We love getting home from school and work and having them greet us. Their purrs and cuddles are the perfect way to end a stressful day — and they've basically become the unofficial mascots of In the Deets, keeping me company while I work.

Special thanks to RecycleSmart, a valuable resource for residential recycling information, for sponsoring our Pets with Personality section.

The Scottish Fold Munchkin, also known as a Scottish Kilt, is a hybrid of a Minuet (a Persian-Munchkin mix) and a Scottish Fold. They're known for their short legs and folded ears. Donut's ears stay upright, but Churro's ears fold down.



Donut loves his morning walks -- leash on and ready to spot every bird and bug!



Churro's happy place: curled up in his window bed.

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Lafayette educators meet at the Contra Costa County Office of Education to review the math curriculum.

STRENGTHENING MATH SUCCESS ACROSS THE LAFAYETTE SCHOOL DISTRICT

BY THE LAFAYETTE SCHOOL DISTRICT

Lafayette has long been recognized as a place where students thrive, and nowhere is that more evident than in our math classrooms. With three California Blue Ribbon Schools and a recent ranking as the 6th best school district in the entire state by Money Inc, we have so much to celebrate. Our students consistently perform at high levels, our teachers bring extraordinary expertise to their craft, and our families

and community partners remain deeply engaged in supporting student learning.

This year, we are taking the next step in strengthening math instruction across all grade levels: adopting a new, state-approved math curriculum. While our current program has served students well, the updated state framework encourages deeper thinking, stronger problem-solving, and more meaningful real-world applications — areas where our district is ready to grow even further.

A dedicated group of Lafayette educators — classroom teachers, instructional specialists, and administrators — has begun the thoughtful work of reviewing the high-quality curricula approved by the California Department of Education. This collaborative exploration includes attending countywide preview events, analyzing materials through the lens of our strategic goals, and engaging in rich conversations about what best supports students at every level. Their focus is clear: finding a curriculum that not only maintains the rigor that our community values but also expands opportunities for differentiated learning, ensuring that every child is challenged, supported, and inspired.

“Our goal in this math adoption is to choose a program that offers a clear and connected learning experience, supports learners at every level with both access and appropriate challenge, and provides teachers with strong materials that help every student thrive,” shares Betsy Balmat, assistant superintendent of curriculum and instruction.

As we move through this adoption cycle, one thing remains constant: Lafayette’s commitment to excellence. Our District has a long, proud tradition of high achievement in math, and this next chapter is an opportunity to build on that success in a way that reflects the needs of today’s learners and tomorrow’s innovators.

Special thanks to In the Deets and Konstructo for sponsoring our School Scene section.

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Jonathan's Eagle Scout project: a hands-on science and sustainability garden at Happy Valley Elementary.

Growing a Love of Learning

INTERVIEW WITH JONATHAN JUDSON



shows kids how food scraps can be turned into something useful for growing better food. The rain barrel teaches kids about water conservation and preserving natural resources.

What was the process for planning and building the garden? It was very complex due to the large number of groups and individuals involved. I worked with the district superintendent, principal of Happy Valley Elementary, district operations manager, custodians for Happy Valley, and Happy Valley Green Team, as well as my Boy Scout district, council, and troop leaders. I am appreciative of the major supporters of the project: Outdoor Supply Hardware in Moraga, Sustainable Lafayette, Ashby Lumber, Ace Hardware Lafayette, Happy Valley Elementary Green Team, and Home Depot. Furthermore, the Happy Valley Garden Club is considering donating funds through the Happy Valley Improvement Association in honor of Mary Jo Shepherd to support a second phase of the project.

What impact do you hope it has? First of all, I hope Happy Valley students and teachers will see the garden as a way to enjoy hands-on learning. I've heard that students are taking an interest in it and considering the creation of a gardening club. Secondly, many of these sustainability concepts are complex, so they can be difficult to explain to young children. Because of this, I hope the garden helps students learn about sustainability by acting as a physical example of simple sustainability concepts that can be impactful. Thirdly, if my project is successful, I hope it shows the community how much one kid can do to help other kids.

Special thanks to Realtor Brian Rochford of Rochford Real Estate for sponsoring our Student Life section.

Do you have a student in your life that you'd like to celebrate? Email Lafayette@n2co.com with your thoughts.

After 10 years in Scouting from Pack 223 in Happy Valley to Troop 204, Acalanes sophomore Jonathan Judson returned to his roots to create a science and sustainability garden.

What inspired your Eagle Scout project? During my time at Happy Valley, I developed a love for learning that I wanted to share with younger kids. I also wanted to inform them about how they can keep Earth healthy.

Tell us about the features of the garden. The garden includes a composter, a rainwater collection barrel, and drought-resistant, pollinator-attracting, and edible plants. The composter



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It's All About You & Your Neighbors!

As we start this new year, we want to take this time to remind everyone about how *Greet Lafayette* works and why this was created for the town of Lafayette.

Greet Lafayette is a printed social platform for neighbors to share their passions, interests, and activities with one another. Our intention is to be a reflection of Lafayette. Do you want to celebrate your child's activities and achievements, highlight a special nonprofit organization that's near and dear to your heart, or put a spotlight on your pet? You can do that!

Our primary goal is to foster a greater sense of community throughout Lafayette. When we share our stories, we become better acquainted with one another. We keep it local, positive, uplifting, welcoming, and inclusive. AND, we vet, introduce, and connect trusted businesses to others throughout the community.

Another aspect of building community is welcoming people when they move to this region. We also connect with brand-new homeowners within 10 communities (Orinda to San Ramon). This platform is called *BeLocal Lamorinda & Diablo - The New Movers' Guide to Local Favorites*. This beautiful guide is mailed directly to new movers, and anyone can access this helpful resource online — go to BeLocalpub.com/locations, go to the California listing, and link to the *BeLocal Lamorinda & Diablo* landing page.

Greet Lafayette and *BeLocal Lamorinda & Diablo* are proud to be part of The N2 Company, a national, award-winning family of

community-building magazines and platforms. Our concern for the community extends beyond Lafayette. Two percent of every ad dollar goes to fight human trafficking worldwide. To date, we've donated more than \$26 million to this cause!

Please reach out to us with any ideas for content, to learn about being a contributor or team member, to join *Greet* or *BeLocal* as a new business partner, to investigate the possibility of having your very own publication, or just to say hello.

We are honored to serve these different communities and look forward to collaborating with all of you in 2026 and beyond.

Wishing everyone a prosperous and safe new year,

Your *Greet & BeLocal* Team
Christine.Raymond
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P.S. *Greet Moraga* launches in February and *Greet Orinda* later in 2026. We'll soon be Lamorinda-wide!



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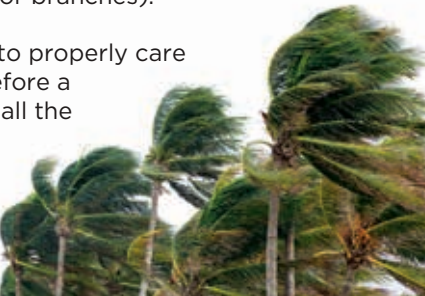

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