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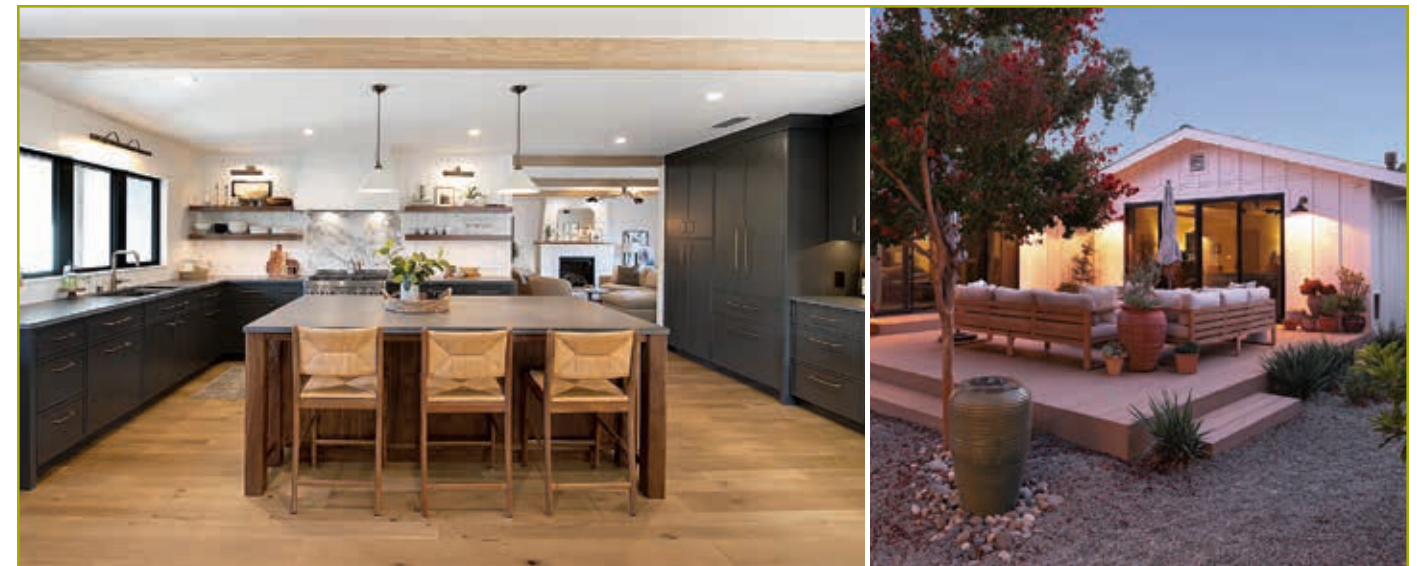
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HELLO, LAFAYETTE!

We hope your 2026 is off to a great start. It is our honor to share the following stories that truly capture what makes Lafayette special — neighbors coming together, residents pursuing their passions, and the love our furry friends bring into our lives.

We're excited to introduce you to Alana Corpuz, arborist, landscape architect, and founder of ART GARDEN DESIGN (AGD). Her exceptional landscape design-build firm creates beautiful, personalized outdoor spaces inspired by each homeowner's unique story.

Quick Correction: The correct email address for **Nathan Casey of KC Custom Builders (our January Business Spotlight)** is info@kccustombuilder.com. Our sincere apologies for this error!

We'd love to hear your story, and we encourage you to support our wonderful business partners who make your monthly magazine possible.



Wishing everyone a Happy Valentine's Day and a warm and cozy February.

Your *Greet Lafayette* Team
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GREETINGS FROM MAYOR ANDURI



Mayor Carl Anduri

Each year, the City Council sets priorities for the next fiscal year. Our three current priorities are, in brief, preparing for and mitigating wildfire risk, implementing our housing element, and planning for fiscal sustainability. On Friday, February 20, the Council will meet to set priorities for the fiscal year that begins July 1, 2026. We welcome your participation.

While the Council sets the priorities, each mayor has added something to the mix that — ideally — does not require significant staff time or money. This year, we are trying something new. I reached out to councilmember, now vice mayor, John McCormick, to see if he would like to join me in planning and launching projects that will carry on through both our terms as mayor, thus giving them a greater chance of achieving positive results. I am very grateful that he said yes. We have seven initiatives, which means I can't discuss all of them this month, so I will start with our plan to double down on the Slow Down Lafayette campaign.









We are enhancing the Slow Down Lafayette campaign because safe streets are a Lafayette priority, and by far the main determinant of the severity of an accident is speed. The campaign involves education, engineering, and, yes, enforcement. Through the Slow Down Lafayette campaign, we want to establish observing posted speed limits as a recognized civic value — something that each of us does to make all of us safer.










Carl Anduri

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

YOUR GREET LAFAYETTE CONTRIBUTORS & TEAM

Thank you to everyone who made this special issue possible!

 Diane & Tom Elliott Meet Your Neighbor	 Michael Dadasovich Learning & Education	 Denali Pets With Personality	 Rachel Blatt Pets With Personality
 Stephanie Eukel Senior Living	 Kate Berolzheimer Student Life	 Laura-Kate Rurka Lamorinda Village	 Alana Corpuz Business Spotlight

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MEET YOUR NEIGHBOR



From left: Miles Elliott, Kayla Nason, Asad Khan, Diane and Tom Elliott. Photo by Craig Isaacs, BlueGoo Photography

The Elliotts

Turning Holidays Into Community

For Diane and Tom Elliott, the holidays aren't just dates on a calendar. They are opportunities to create shared moments that stop neighbors mid-stride and turn an ordinary walk into something memorable.

The couple, who have lived on Moraga Blvd. since 1999, are well known for transforming their home into seasonal experiences for the neighborhood. The most melodic of those arrives each winter with Toll House, Milk-Bones, and Jazz, an annual driveway concert now in its fifth year. What began as a casual performance by Tom's jazz trio — including now-retired Stanley Middle School music teacher Bob Athayde and neighbor Dashiell Fabela — has grown into a full holiday event featuring the 17-piece Steve Snyder Big Band, hot beverages, cookies, and an open invitation for neighbors to stop by and stay awhile.

"We've made wonderful friends through these gatherings," Diane said. "They give people a reason to come together."

That same welcoming spirit appears again in February, when the Elliotts install a Valentine's Day kissing booth for dogs. Complete with costumes, props, and treats, the booth invites passersby to step into the yard for do-it-yourself photo opportunities.

By October, the Elliotts' creativity goes into full production, as Halloween becomes their signature event. Diane, an event marketing executive, has been designing elaborate Halloween displays for more than 20 years. Early versions featured classic scenes: a gothic graveyard, a witches' corner, and a scarecrow-filled field. After a major home renovation in 2019, the displays evolved into something larger, more cohesive, and increasingly theatrical.





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Today, the Elliott yard serves as the fictional ghost town of Abandoned Flats, a desert-inspired setting that changes themes annually. Past years have included a drive-in movie showing the original "Little Shop of Horrors," a Wild West town inspired by "Yellowstone: 1883," a full-scale alien invasion, and, most recently, Bone-a-Ville Raceway, a Formula 1-themed spectacle complete with seven handmade racecars, skeleton drivers, and creatively named teams and sponsors.

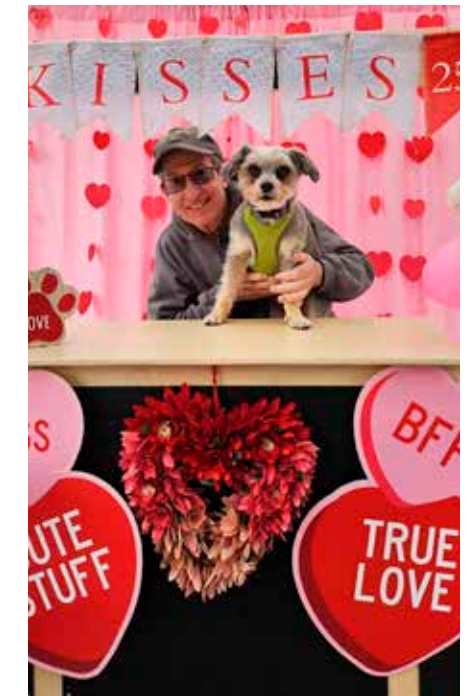
The projects are brainstormed one to three years in advance, sketched and storyboarded in the spring, and fabricated over the summer. Tom, a retired IT professional and full-time musician, along with their foster son, Asad, and son, Miles, help bring the concepts to life.

On Halloween night, when the final trick-or-treater leaves, the family and friends dismantle the display and replace it with Día de los Muertos decorations, sometimes in just a few hours. The next morning's reactions, Diane said, make the effort worthwhile.

"I have such fun changing the theme each year and keeping it a secret until the installation begins and all is revealed. I love hearing what the kids say as they walk to school and discover new details," she said. "Their excitement is my excitement."



From Halloween to Día de los Muertos, transformed in just a few hours.



Tom and their dog, Tasha, at the annual Valentine Canine Kissing Booth.

For the Elliotts, the goal is simple: to surprise and delight. Along a busy trail entrance where walkers regularly passby, their home has become a place where creativity meets community, and where no holiday is ever ordinary.

A special thank you to Realtors Stella Tsakonias and Stephanie Mull for sponsoring the Meet Your Neighbor section.



One Halloween featured a drive-in movie night with a screening of the original "Little Shop of Horrors."

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Denali's Story

BY RACHEL BLATT, LAFAYETTE RESIDENT

The story of Denali begins with our old dog, Baker. My late husband, Dave, found Baker in the San Francisco animal shelter shortly before we met.

Baker, a Rottweiler/Australian Shepherd mix, became our glue and was with us through our move to Lafayette and the birth of our two sons. He was, as I often said, the perfect dog and my favorite child. After Baker died in 2018, I looked in vain for a dog that matched him, almost flying to Texas for one during the pandemic.

Four years later, and two weeks after Dave passed away from cancer, I finally found that dog in the back of a pickup truck in Aspen, Colorado. That dog, a five-month-old puppy with huge paws, had just been adopted by someone. Still, I asked the owner if he might want to sell her. He told me he would think about it. Two days later, he texted and said he would.

The issue became getting her to California, especially since I promised my nine- and thirteen-year-old sons a golden retriever puppy. Enter the Uber driver in Aspen who listened to my story in the ten-minute drive to the airport and pronounced, "I will drive her to you."

Three weeks later, the puppy with the huge paws ran over to us at the park in front of Sideboard and sat in my



Rachel with her sons, Ben and Miles, and Denali. Photo by Craig Isaacs, BlueGoo Photography

PETS WITH PERSONALITY

son Ben's lap. We named her Denali in honor of Dave's favorite mountain. It was a leap of faith bringing a new dog into our lives so quickly after losing Dave. She brought the joy and laughter we all so desperately needed. It shifted the energy in our home as we began to make sense of our new normal. Three and a half years later, she has grown into those big paws, loves to chase tennis balls and squirrels, is always on the lookout for food scraps, and takes turns cuddling with us.

And while she does not share DNA with Baker — Denali is a mix of German Shepherd, Great Dane, American Staffordshire Terrier, hound, and pit bull — like him, she is that elusive perfect dog and favorite child.



Denali, named for Dave's favorite mountain.



Dave with Baker.

“Denali brought the joy and laughter we all so desperately needed. It shifted the energy in our home as we began to make sense of our new normal.”

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11 Lucas Ranch Court	\$6,995,000	\$6,250,000	85	5	4+	5639	1.97
3362 Johnson Road	\$4,565,000	\$4,443,000	11	5	4+	5762	1.32
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155 Arbor View Lane	\$3,899,000	\$4,000,000	3	5	4+	4953	0.51
840 Broadmoor Court	\$3,560,000	\$3,560,000	20	4	3	2620	0.40
3749 St Francis Drive	\$3,498,000	\$3,400,000	12	6	3+	5181	0.49
631 Murray Lane	\$3,350,000	\$3,350,000	0	4	3	3171	0.24
30 Arieley Lane	\$3,250,000	\$3,150,000	41	5	4.5	4490	0.31
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1255 Sunrise Ridge Drive	\$2,079,000	\$2,125,000	13	4	3	2970	0.34
3260 Rohrer Drive	\$2,095,000	\$2,055,000	55	3	2	2416	0.23
3474 Monroe Avenue	\$1,950,000	\$1,950,000	0	3	2	1379	0.14
3580 Boyer Circle	\$1,925,000	\$1,850,000	20	3	2	2158	0.83
853 Revere Road	\$1,695,000	\$1,845,000	6	5	3	2868	0.30
3075 Sweetbrier Circle	\$1,785,000	\$1,830,000	7	4	2	1933	0.24
20 Stanley Court	\$1,495,000	\$1,800,000	9	3	2	1936	0.43
3665 Boyer Circle	\$1,689,000	\$1,750,000	6	4	3	2788	0.44
3803 Quail Ridge Road	\$1,798,000	\$1,750,000	89	3	2.5	2223	0.46

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ART GARDEN DESIGN's Holistic Vision for Lafayette Homes

Alana Corpuz was born on the Big Island of Hawai'i and grew up on a coffee farm in the Hualālai mountains near Kailua-Kona. The natural environment had a profound impact on her childhood, ultimately leading to a career in designing and building outdoor spaces.

When Alana moved to San Francisco during high school, she adapted to an entirely new climate and urban lifestyle. In her early twenties, she volunteered at the San Francisco Botanical Garden and helped develop community gardens, running youth programs around gardening and medicinal plants. After graduating from Santa Clara University with a bachelor's degree in communication and anthropology, she interned on a biodynamic farm in coastal Mendocino. These experiences shaped her career as a landscape builder.

Alana became an arborist, a mother to her daughter, Eva, and graduated from Merritt College for Landscape Architecture. She worked as lead designer for five years with Garden Light's Landscape & Pool Development before founding ART GARDEN DESIGN (AGD) in 2019. AGD takes a holistic approach of how the home and one's outdoor space has an impact and value to our lives, exploring each homeowner's unique story as design inspiration.

Lafayette is one of the best cities to design and build outdoor spaces. Homes are surrounded by natural environments, oak trees, mountain vistas, and diverse plantings, while maintaining an active sense of community and contemporary lifestyle. Alana loves showing homeowners that their landscape extends beyond property lines through thoughtful placement and plantings that screen unsightly views while pulling in exterior vistas, making properties feel more expansive.

What sets AGD apart is simple: they design it, and they build it. The vision clients fall in love with is the space they actually get. AGD also collaborates closely with architects and designers, because the best projects come from shared expertise.

Over the past six years, AGD has built a trusted team that understands outdoor spaces, from foundations and drainage to custom woodwork, stone details, and lighting. They're also deeply rooted in planting design, sourcing healthy plants, and installing them so gardens thrive and support habitat.

While AGD is known for thoughtful residential transformations, they are expanding into public works, creating natural play spaces for schools and early childhood centers. Using reclaimed trees from local arborists, they craft



play structures that invite exploration and connection. Research shows that time in nature supports children's cognitive, physical, and emotional development. As both a designer and a mother, stewarding the Earth's resources for future generations remains central to Alana's work. If AGD's mission resonates with you, Alana welcomes the opportunity to collaborate on an outdoor space that reconnects you to nature — it begins with a thoughtful consultation.



"Our backyard went from boring to WOW! It is such a vision of color, texture, and natural stone paths and walls. I love walking through these beautiful spaces. I could not be happier with the outcome!"

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Michael Dadasovich

An Artist Who Engages in a New Way of Seeing | BY JIM SCALA

Plain air artists often bring their easels to the Lafayette Reservoir and paint beautiful scenes using this local treasure as their backdrop. Michael Dadasovich is an exception. Michael usually paints at the reservoir dam site, but he also packs and lugs his easel to the rim trail to gain a different view and a new way of seeing the reservoir. He unequivocally proves that painting allows a person to see things differently as he captures his outlook on canvas.

As a young boy, Michael enjoyed sketching and drawing. After high school in Manteca, in the San Joaquin Valley, Michael studied architecture and took classes in delineation and freehand drawing. Early on, he developed a career taking on many different roles. He worked as a city and regional planner, developed real estate, grew wine grapes, and bred horses. Yet



Michael paints en plein air at the Lafayette Reservoir.

he always continued to sketch. Unlike most artists, Michael also drove formula race cars.

As one of Michael's early instructors once said, "Art is a new way of seeing." Michael says, "I am still learning to see, whether looking at a scene, a person, light reflection, distance or contrast, as they are all in a constant juxtaposition." He adds, "My style is eclectic and always evolving." His perspective is continually developing. Michael often begins a painting with ink or charcoal sketches. Then he continues his work with about six colors in oil or acrylic.

Michael met his wife, Kathy, at college 54 years ago. They moved to Lafayette in 1977, raised their children in local schools, and now enjoy having their children and grandchildren living nearby in San Francisco. Kathy, a retired educator, stays active with tap and water aerobic classes, a book club, and a writing group, and has been walking the reservoir for 40 years with mom friends she met when her children attended Lafayette Elementary School.

Michael is a highly accomplished local artist who has won numerous awards since 2004 and sold many paintings. His website features a selection of stunning paintings. One, the reservoir from the rim trail, is especially worth seeing. To view his work, visit michaeldadasovich.com.



Rim trail view of the Lafayette Reservoir, painted by Michael Dadasovich.

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

From Guilt to Grace on the Long-Term Care Journey

We all want our loved ones to be safe and happy as they age. Knowing when more care is needed than what you and your family can provide is a difficult decision. Having resources and a support system is important for everyone.

BY STEPHANIE EUKEL

When Jenna first began noticing changes in her father's behavior, missed appointments, confusion about familiar tasks, and increasing agitation in the evenings, she told herself it was just part of aging. But as the months went on, the signs became harder to ignore. He was leaving the stove on, forgetting to take his medications, and occasionally mistaking her for her sister. Jenna did everything she could to support him at home, but eventually, she realized his safety and her own well-being were at risk. Deciding to explore long-term care wasn't easy. She questioned whether she had tried hard enough, waited too long, or acted too soon. Like many adult children caring for aging parents, Jenna didn't just grieve the loss of her dad's independence; she carried the weight of guilt.

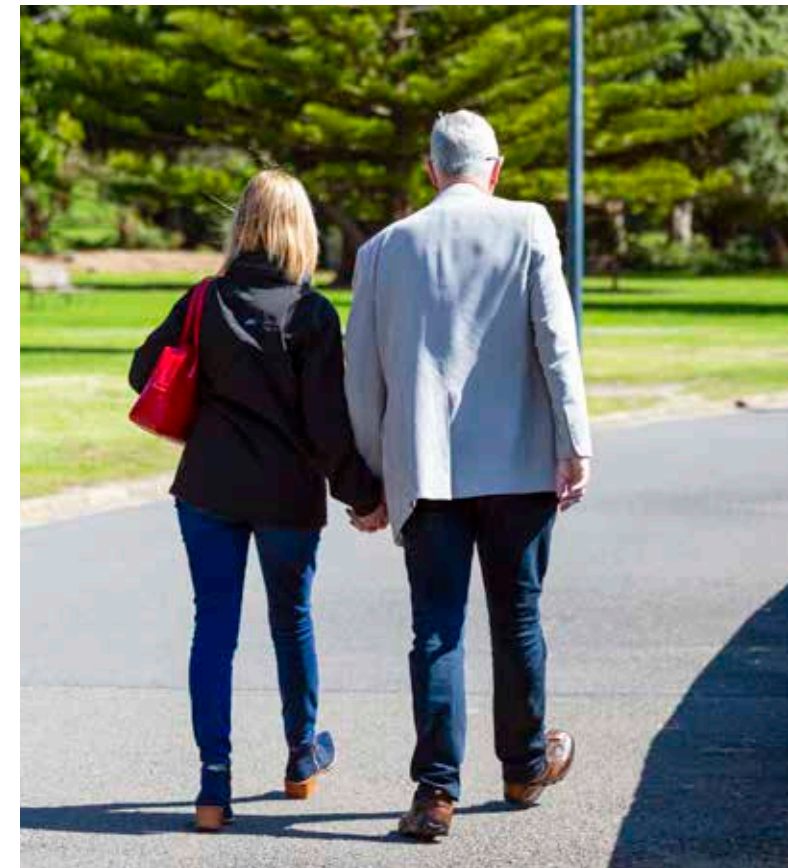
If you're walking this same road, you're not alone. Guilt is one of the most common and often least acknowledged emotions that surfaces during the caregiving journey. Whether you're currently caring for a parent or spouse, weighing the move to long-term assisted living or memory care, or recovering from the aftermath of that decision, guilt can creep in, even when you've done everything "right."

But guilt doesn't have to define your caregiving experience. With awareness, support, and compassion — for your loved one and yourself — it's possible to move from guilt to grace. As dementia care expert Teepa Snow puts it: "You're trying to be everything to somebody who's changing every day ... and that's not realistic. Letting go isn't giving up. It's shifting to a kind of support that works better for both of you."

When is it time to consider other options? While there's rarely a perfect or obvious answer, the most important question may be: Is my loved one safe, supported, and thriving in their current environment?

Whether you've already made the move or are just starting to consider it, remember: You don't have to carry guilt alone. There are people, resources, and communities like Aegis Living that are ready to walk beside you.

We're here to help. Reach out to Stephanie at Aegis Living Moraga to ask questions or to just talk: Stephanie.Eukel@aegisliving.com, 925-377-7900.



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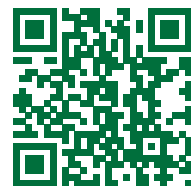
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Seniors Come Together at SWELL

BY LAURA-KATE RURKA, LAMORINDA VILLAGE



Suzy Pak and volunteer Beth Brown welcome guests at Senior SWELL.

Older adults looking for coffee and companionship can do no better than Senior SWELL, a Lamorinda Village drop-in program hosted in the café space at the Lafayette Library. In partnership with the Lafayette Library and Learning Center Foundation, Lamorinda Village staff and volunteers welcome seniors with healthy snacks, coffee/tea, and treats each Tuesday and Thursday from 10 a.m. to noon. Wednesdays feature drop-in Mahjong at SWELL during the same hours, perfect for those who already know how to play.

"SWELL is an informal gathering place for seniors to connect with others, exchange ideas and information, and relax over refreshments," says Suzy Pak, Lamorinda Village community outreach manager. "Over the last two years, many new friendships have flourished that extend far beyond the library café. No registration is required, and our regulars are friendly and welcoming. It is one of Lafayette's best hidden treasures."

Join us for Senior SWELL: Tuesday and Thursday for coffee and snacks, and Wednesdays for drop-in Mahjong for experienced players, from 10 a.m. to noon at the Lafayette Library and Learning Center, 3491 Mt. Diablo Blvd. Senior SWELL is open to anyone in Contra Costa County who is 65 or older.

A special thank you to the Community Foundation of Lafayette for its support of our Healthy Aging programming.



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STUDENTS IN SERVICE: How East Bay Youth Support 10,000 Lunches



College Prep sandwich assembly line for local unhoused neighbors.

BY KATE BEROLZHEIMER, STUDENT WRITER

I've been dancing at the California Academy of Performing Arts (CAPA) in Moraga since I was eight years old. Every year, I've performed at Campolindo High School's Performing Arts Center, sharing holiday magic through "The Nutcracker" and celebrating the end of the school year with our June Show. Over the years, my family and I have bought many rose bouquets from the concession stand in the lobby. It wasn't until this past June that I learned those purchases supported an organization called 10,000 Lunches. This discovery changed the way I saw something familiar and inspired me to get involved.

Founded in 2013, 10,000 Lunches is an East Bay nonprofit dedicated to providing ready-to-eat lunches to unhoused community members, primarily in Oakland. Their mission is "to alleviate hunger in homeless communities by empowering middle and high school students as they prepare and provide meals." What began as a grassroots effort has grown into a powerful example of community action. Founder Kim Anderson explains that the impact goes far beyond food. "It's about the compassion when [the recipients] hear about students making these lunches...knowing that they are seen is really amazing and beautiful. It means a lot to them," she said.

As a student at The College Preparatory School in Oakland, I wanted to bring that spirit of service to my campus. Along with friends, I co-founded YUM (Youth United for Meals), a club that organizes students to prepare food for 10,000 Lunches. My school is not alone in this effort. Students from across Lamorinda — including Campolindo High School, Joaquin Moraga Middle School, and De La Salle High School — come together to prepare meals. What might look like a simple sandwich line becomes a reminder that local teens care about their neighbors. The organization's growth reflects that commitment. "When we first started, it was maybe a couple hundred [sandwiches] in a month; now we're hitting that when we deliver every week," Anderson shared.

Behind the numbers are real people and stories. Anderson recalled meeting a teenager living in a tent alongside his mother and grandmother. "It just broke my heart," she said. For Anderson and for many of us who volunteer, connection is at the heart of the mission. "If you really sit down with people and hear their stories and see where they come from, they're just like your friends, your next-door neighbors, or your grandparents." Through 10,000 Lunches, Lamorinda teens are proving that small, local actions — whether buying roses or packing lunches — can make a meaningful difference.

For more information or to contribute, please visit 10000lunches.org.

Kate Berolzheimer lives in Lafayette and is a junior at The College Preparatory School.

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



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A NEW ADVENTURE BEGINS: Welcoming Our 5th Graders to Stanley Middle School

BY THE LAFAYETTE SCHOOL DISTRICT



A look inside Stanley Middle School's music program, one of many opportunities available to incoming 6th graders.

We can all feel the excitement that fills the air each year as our 5th graders prepare to take their next big step: the move to Stanley Middle School! It's a transition filled with anticipation, curiosity, and the promise of new possibilities. Stanley is more than the next stop on a student's educational journey — it's a vibrant, supportive community where young learners discover new interests, build confidence, and begin to define who they are becoming.

At Stanley, students experience a holistic balance of strong academics and engaging enrichment. Whether a child loves

science experiments, math challenges, musical performances, visual arts, creative writing, or world languages, Stanley offers something for every learner to explore. With a wide range of electives, clubs, and extracurricular opportunities, students are encouraged to find what excites them and embrace it fully. Our graduates leave exceptionally well prepared for high school, ready for advanced college prep and AP pathways, and families can feel confident that their children are building a strong foundation for what lies ahead.

This winter and spring, Stanley is once again welcoming families to learn more through campus tours and special events designed to ease the transition. From "Get to Know Stanley Night" to guided tours with Principal Brian Mangold and student leaders, families gain an authentic look at the classrooms, programs, and warm culture that define Stanley. 6th grader Eva Bycel shared, "The tours of the school were really helpful. I even came back with my friends and family to find all my classes so I would be ready for the first day."

In mid-January, Stanley administrators and 6th-grade student leaders will also visit each elementary school to meet with 5th graders, answer questions, and help them feel comfortable about the journey ahead. Kelly Fleming, a 5th-grade Parent Advisory Council representative, reflects, "The clear, thoughtful communication Stanley provided while our kids were in 5th grade made our family feel supported and prepared. What followed was a seamless transition thanks to the true concern and attentiveness of Stanley's leadership and staff."

We're so excited for our future 6th graders to step into the Stanley community, where new friendships, meaningful challenges, and endless possibilities await!

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

Would you like to suggest a topic for School Scene? Email Lafayette@n2co.com.

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