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Halloween spirit comes to downtown Lafayette at Trick or Treat Street, Friday, Oct. 30, 4–6 p.m.

HELLO LAFAYETTE!

October has arrived, and with it a harvest of great stories.

This month, we celebrate **SEED Foundation** as it marks 20 years of supporting students with diverse learning needs and their families.

The **Peter Pan Foundation** also celebrates its 20th year as it looks ahead to its next chapter of performance and community service.

And we spotlight **Bentley School**, a longtime East Bay school whose Lafayette campus has become an important part of the community. We look at its rigorous academics and close-knit environment, where teachers truly know their students.

Please be sure to call on our business sponsors and thank them for making your hometown magazine possible!

And if you have a story idea or know someone we should feature, we'd love to hear from you! Email us at Lamorinda@n2co.com.

Wishing everyone a fun and festive Halloween!

Warmly,

Your *Greet Lafayette* Team
Lamorinda@n2co.com
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YOUR GREET LAFAYETTE CONTRIBUTORS & TEAM

Thank you to everyone who made this special issue possible!



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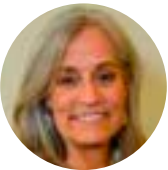
Carl Anduri
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Spotlight



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Greetings From Mayor Anduri



One of the City Council's top priorities this fiscal year is planning for the City's future recreation needs and how to fund them. We have long been aware that the City needs more recreation facilities. This priority has become more urgent following a recent assessment of City facilities that identified the original Community Center building in Burton Valley as being at the end of its useful life.

We will do three things to pursue this priority. First, we will evaluate long-term options for the Community Center. These include continued investment in the existing building at an estimated cost of \$500,000 annually, renovation or replacement at the current site, or a combination of facilities and services in different parts of the City. Any recommendations will take into account the needs of residents who currently rely on the Burton Valley location as well as opportunities to improve access citywide.

Second, we will undertake a short, medium and long-term recreational needs assessment to ensure that our facilities keep pace with our growing and evolving community.

Third, we will assess the cost of meeting our needs, explore fiscally responsible options for funding those investments, and recommend a path that balances long-term financial sustainability with our commitment to serving the community.

In the meantime, we are in active discussions to obtain land for a playing field, land for a dog park and possibly a mountain bike pump track, land for one of the downtown parks called for in our downtown specific plan, and additional space for indoor recreation programs.

We'll provide regular updates as these discussions move forward, and invite your input at each step of the planning process.

Carl

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

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We invite business owners and professionals, and Lamorinda residents to join us for the following social networking opportunities. Please plan to join us!

Wednesday, October 7 — Greet Happy Hour (5 - 7 pm)
Western Flyer Brewing, 3660 Mt. Diablo Blvd., Lafayette

Wednesday, October 28 — Greet Networking Lunch (11:30 am - 1 pm)
Chef Chao, 343 Rheem Blvd., Moraga

Wednesday, November 4 — Greet Holiday Happy Hour (5 - 7 pm)
Moraga Country Club, 1600 St Andrews Dr., Moraga
(NOTE: NO November lunch or December gatherings)

January 6 — Greet New Year Happy Hour
Location to be announced

BY INVITATION
Greet Gatherings
Greet Lafayette and *BeLocal* business partners and select community leaders are invited to attend. We meet four times a year to mingle and build stronger connections between our businesses, while discussing topics that impact our shared community. Our next gathering is Nov 12 (venue to be announced). Email Christine.Raymond@n2co.com to learn more

Greet Restaurant Tastings
Residents and participating business partners come together to make friends and enjoy delicious food! Residents can email Lamorinda@n2co.com to be added to the invitee list. Select business partners will be invited individually. We're in the midst of planning two now!

Follow [@greetlafayette](https://www.instagram.com/greetlafayette) for up-to-date information.

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SEED founder Nancy Wallace (center) with board members, from left: Hillary Benham-Baker, Jen Ripley, Hillary Stucker and Lindsey Abarca-Jones. Not pictured: Katie Howard and Subadhra Seetharaman

SEED Foundation Celebrates 20 Years

Supporting Students with Special and Diverse Learning Needs

Twenty years ago, four parents partnered with Lafayette Director of Student Services Dr. Dana Sassone to establish SEED (Special Education Enrichment Development), a local nonprofit supporting students with special learning needs. Initially focused on younger students, SEED expanded in 2017 with the launch of SEED High School.

Over two decades, SEED has supported thousands of Lamorinda families through specialized programming in local schools, parent education, social opportunities for students, and events where parents can connect and learn from each other.

Founding member Nancy Wallace explained, “SEED was formed with two goals: creating a tight-knit community of support for students with special and diverse learning needs and their families, and developing resources and events critical to enriching their lives.”

SEED’s founding members continue that vision today, volunteering with organizations like Sunflower Hill and Las Trampas, and serving on local school boards and parent advisory committees. Wallace says, “The

ongoing collaboration between SEED, school districts, local organizations, and our greater community is what makes Lafayette and Lamorinda so special for our families.”

BUILDING COMMUNITY FOR STUDENTS AND FAMILIES

SEED recognizes that social connection can be challenging for students with special learning needs. Its programs — including monthly birthday bashes, Family Days at Sienna Ranch, student social groups, SEED High School’s monthly bowling league, and the Friendship Circle it offers with Lafayette-Orinda Presbyterian Church — help students develop social skills and build lasting connections.

SEED also creates opportunities for parents to connect. Following its 2014 merger with SPSK, a support group founded by two local moms, SEED began offering parent social events and support groups, including back-to-school brunches, happy hours, coffee chats, welcome-to-high-school events, dyslexia and sibling support groups, and various book groups.



Gingerbread house making for all ages, donated by Carson Ahlquist.



Parent Education Workshop on Social Thinking, one of many topics offered by SEED.

“The collaboration between SEED, school districts, and local organizations is what makes Lafayette and Lamorinda so special for our families.”

— NANCY WALLACE, SEED FOUNDING MEMBER

EMPOWERING PARENTS THROUGH EDUCATION

Parent education is central to SEED’s mission. One of its first projects was an eight-week parent training on nurturing child communication skills and a 12-week training on navigating challenging behaviors at home. Over the years, SEED has sponsored hundreds of educational programs on IEP basics, executive functioning, dyslexia, sensory integration, visual aids, self-regulation, self-advocacy, launching neurodiverse teens, college planning, special needs trusts, financial planning, conservatorship, government benefits, and adult day programs. SEED hosts Ask an Advocate Nights, empowering parents to become effective advocates for their children. These events not only provide valuable information, but also facilitate parent connections and strengthen the community.

SUPPORTING LOCAL SCHOOLS

SEED collaborates with and advocates for students in the Lafayette and Acalanes school districts, sponsors specialized programs like Disability Awareness Week, hosts teacher trainings on topics like executive functioning, and funds teacher attendance at specialized trainings, including Lindamood-Bell training and reading and writing workshops.

One of its earliest initiatives was a recess facilitation program and installation of buddy benches to help students navigate social challenges on the playground. SEED continues to provide teacher grants and fund projects such as playground communication boards, accessible basketball hoops, Nugget couches, and toy storage. SEED High School partnered with the Acalanes district in developing its Special Education Parent Advisory Committee, which recently received the district’s Su Stauffer Award.

SEED is grateful to the many community partners who have supported SEED over the past 20 years.

Join SEED on Nov. 13 for the “Cheers to 20 Years!” fundraiser at the Lafayette Veterans Memorial Center. Tickets are available at seedlafayette.org.



Scan to purchase tickets or donate.



Sienna Ranch, a longtime SEED community partner, hosts SEED’s Annual Family Day.

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A Beautifully Refreshed Front Yard

PHOTOS BY CRAIG ISAACS,
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Stone steps wind through the garden.



Colorful blooms brighten the landscape.



The Flynns' front yard features new plantings and a smaller, more manageable lawn.

Alana and her team did a great job. They were responsive, efficient, creative, and flexible.

—BOB & PATTY FLYNN, LAFAYETTE RESIDENTS

A special thank you to Realtors Stella Tsakonas and Stephanie Mull for sponsoring this section.

After 14 years in Lafayette, Bob and Patty Flynn decided their front yard was long overdue for a refresh. They turned to Art Garden Design (AGD), a Bay Area landscape design-build firm founded by Alana Corpuz, after spotting her ad in *Greet Lafayette*. The result: a front yard they love and are proud to come home to.

The transformation was thoughtful rather than sweeping. The team replaced a patch of kurapia groundcover with a smaller, more manageable lawn, trimmed and refreshed the existing plantings, and added new greenery throughout. Stone steps and a new trellis rounded out the redesign, giving the yard both structure and character. “Alana and her team did a great job. They were responsive, efficient, and creative. They were also flexible,” Bob said.

That combination of creativity and flexibility is central to how Alana built AGD. Raised on a coffee farm on Hawaii’s Big Island, she developed an early connection to the land that led to work in biodynamic farming, urban farming, and arboriculture. She went on to earn an associate degree in landscape architecture and became a licensed California contractor. She founded AGD to build a company that treats its crews well, while listening closely to its clients. Today, AGD offers full-service design, construction, and maintenance across the Bay Area.

The Flynns’ advice for anyone starting a project: come with inspiration. “Have pictures of other gardens that you like to show the designer what you have in mind.”

Art Garden Design is a Bay Area landscape design-build firm led by Alana Corpuz, offering design, construction, and maintenance services.

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Karine Hajyan, DO, FACOG

THE NEXT FLIGHT

After 20 years of “Wish Upon a Star,” the Peter Pan Foundation looks ahead to its next chapter of performance and community service.



The cast of “Wish Upon a Star” during its final season.

THIS SPRING, “WISH UPON A STAR” took its final flight, bringing to a close the annual production that had been at the heart of Lafayette’s Peter Pan Foundation (PPF) for 20 years. Now, the organization is building on a part of its mission that has been there from the start: service to others.

PPF’s story goes back to 2006. Leslie Noel Hansen, then 25 and a vocal coach, met Acalanes senior Steffen Ryge at an alumni concert where she was performing. Inspired by his resemblance to Peter Pan and his enthusiasm for acting, Leslie wrote “Wish Upon a Star,” with Steffen in the role of Peter Pan.

The first production raised nearly \$20,000 for Children’s Hospital Oakland, and the group also performed part of the show for children at the hospital. As they prepared to perform it again that summer, Steffen made an ambitious prediction: “We could do it every year for twenty years!” They did.

Steffen, 18, died in a car accident shortly before the next performance. Leslie founded the nonprofit Peter Pan Foundation in his memory and became its artistic director.

Over the next two decades, “Wish Upon a Star” remained central to PPF’s performance community, while the organization grew to welcome thousands of youth and adults. On average, participants spent nine years as part of the PPF community. Numerous performers have gone on to professional careers in the performing arts, working on Broadway, national tours, concert stages, and television, as well as teaching the next generation of performers.

PPF’s impact has also extended beyond the spotlight. The organization has helped with over 100 wish reveals for Make-A-Wish and raised more than \$200,000 for UCSF Benioff Children’s Hospital Oakland. PPF has also partnered with organizations



Steffen Ryge as Peter Pan in the original 2006 production of “Wish Upon a Star,” which inspired the founding of the Peter Pan Foundation.



Founding Artistic Director Leslie Noel Hansen (center) directs Peter Pan Foundation performers at Disneyland.

“Service has always been an integral part of who we are, and as we begin this next chapter, we’re finding new ways to let that purpose shine even brighter.”

—LESLIE NOEL HANSEN, FOUNDING ARTISTIC DIRECTOR



Kisakye Naiga as Tinker Bell in “Wish Upon a Star.”

including the Born This Way Foundation and brought performances to hospitals, schools, and senior living facilities.

Now, with “Wish Upon a Star” complete, PPF is building on its longstanding tradition of community service through performance, creating new opportunities for participants to use their talents across the Bay Area.

“Through loss, resilience, and even a global pandemic, one belief has always guided us: you can fly,” said Leslie. “Reaching 20 years is about so much more than an anniversary. It’s about every person who has found their voice here, every family who has become part of this community, and everyone who has learned that what we do together can have an impact far beyond the stage. At the heart of everything we’ve done is the belief that when we discover our own magic, we can use it to make a difference in the world. Service has always been an integral part of who we are, and as we begin this next chapter, we’re finding new ways to let that purpose shine even brighter.”

PPF will mark its 20th anniversary at the Never Grow Up Gala on Oct. 17 at Creekside Commons in Lafayette. For more information, visit peterpanfoundation.org/box-office.



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



Justin Campo brings Peter Pan magic to a patient during a hospital visit, a PPF tradition that began in 2006.

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A teacher and student collaborate in the Maker Space at Bentley's Upper School campus in Lafayette.



BENTLEY SCHOOL

Academic Excellence and a True Sense of Belonging

PHOTOS BY PAIGE GREEN PHOTOGRAPHY

FOR MORE THAN A CENTURY, Bentley School has been a cornerstone of academic life in the East Bay, and its Upper School campus here in Lafayette has become a defining part of the community.

Serving grades 9–12, the Lafayette campus draws families from throughout the region who want rigorous college-preparatory academics paired with a close-knit environment. Together with Bentley's Lower and Middle divisions in the Oakland Hills, it offers a cohesive K–12 experience.

What sets Bentley apart is how well teachers know their students. Class by class, year by year, faculty learn how

each child learns best, where they shine and where a little extra support helps them stretch. Students are encouraged to try new things, stumble sometimes, and try again, without fear of failure.

“One of the reasons I believe so deeply in Bentley,” says Head of School Christie Moncharmont, “is because of the values that run throughout our K–12 community: an education that teaches students how to think, not what to think; faculty who truly love what they do and prioritize meaningful connections with students; and an educational journey that balances high levels of challenge with strong support.”

That sense of support goes beyond the classroom. At the K–8 campus in the Oakland Hills, extended care runs from 7:30 a.m. to 6 p.m., with after-school programming and bus routes serving Orinda, Walnut Creek, and Danville, all included in tuition.

Academically, the Lafayette campus stands among the region's most respected college-preparatory schools. Students choose from a wide range of AP courses and college-style seminars in subjects as varied as engineering, web development, photography, and multivariable calculus. Mini-Term, internships, the arts, athletics, service opportunities, and nearly 40

One of the reasons I believe so deeply in Bentley is because of the values that run throughout our K–12 community: an education that teaches students how to think, not what to think.

—CHRISTIE MONCHARMONT, HEAD OF SCHOOL

student-led clubs round out the curriculum.

That same personal attention carries students through the college process. Bentley's College Counseling Office gets to know each student's strengths and goals long before applications are due. “My college counseling philosophy is rooted in the belief that there is no one-size-fits-all path to higher education,” says Director of College Counseling Sonia Ryan. “We help each student identify colleges where they can thrive academically, personally, and socially.”

The results speak for themselves. Bentley graduates go on to attend some of the most prestigious and innovative universities in the world.

For Lafayette families searching for a school, Bentley offers something rare: rigorous academics, a strong sense of community, and a place where every student's individuality is embraced. Graduates leave ready for college and beyond, carrying the confidence and resilience of an education built around them.

Schedule a tour to learn more and experience Bentley School for yourself. Call 925-283-2101 or visit bentleyschool.org.



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40 Meek Place	\$1,830,000	\$1,790,000	26	4	2	2276	0.32
3365 St. Marys Road	\$1,750,000	\$1,750,000	9	4	2	1943	0.50
15 Surmont Court	\$1,775,000	\$1,700,000	22	5	3.5	3498	0.73
996 Hawthorne Drive	\$1,495,000	\$1,575,000	8	3	2	1499	0.24
368 Shire Oaks Court	\$1,499,999	\$1,540,000	14	4	2	1636	0.26
2589 Pebble Beach Loop	\$1,498,000	\$1,498,000	54	5	3	2674	0.37
3115 Del Oceano Drive	\$1,295,000	\$1,475,000	8	4	2	1874	0.39

Information compiled from MLS on 8/26/2026



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Lafayette’s Special Education Paraprofessionals

Celebrating Exceptional Work | BY THE LAFAYETTE SCHOOL DISTRICT

IN LAFAYETTE, WE PRIDE OURSELVES on a rich tradition of educational excellence. While that excellence is often measured through academic achievement and innovative programs, its true foundation lies in something even more meaningful: our commitment to ensuring every child is known, supported, included, and given the opportunity to thrive.

At the heart of that commitment are nearly 80 Special Education paraprofessionals serving students across our district.

THE EVERYDAY IMPACT OF THEIR WORK

Our paraprofessionals are an invaluable part of our Special Education team. They support students with unique learning, communication, behavioral, social-emotional, and other individual needs, helping them access instruction, participate meaningfully in school, develop relationships, and build independence.

Walk into one of our schools on any given day, and you may see a paraprofessional adapting

a learning activity, supporting communication, reinforcing an IEP goal, helping a student navigate a challenging moment, or celebrating a breakthrough others might not notice.

MAKING INCLUSION POSSIBLE
Inclusion is more than physical presence in a classroom. It means ensuring students have meaningful

Much of their most important work happens quietly. They know when to step in and when to step back, when a student needs encouragement or a different way to access a task, and when they simply need someone who believes they can do it.

They celebrate progress in all its forms: independently joining a group, using a new communication strategy, asking for help, making a friend, or finding the confidence to try something new.

“Being a paraprofessional at times can be a very challenging position, but at the same time a very rewarding job. I have been blessed to be the support behind many students and to be part of their journeys navigating school life. From encouraging them through challenges, celebrating their progress, and reminding them that they are capable of more than they realize, being a paraprofessional is very fulfilling. It brings joy to me to see the students grow, believe in themselves, and reach their full potential while in a job I love,” shares Gail Vasgerdsian, a beloved paraprofessional who is retiring this year after 14 years with the district.

It brings joy to me to see the students grow, believe in themselves, and reach their full potential.

—GAIL VASGERDSIAN, SPECIAL EDUCATION PARAPROFESSIONAL



A student uses a Communication Playground Board, funded by the SEED Foundation to support communication and inclusive learning.

opportunities to learn, participate, connect, contribute, and belong.

Our paraprofessionals help make that possible every day — in classrooms, on playgrounds, at lunch and recess, during assemblies and field trips, and throughout the many experiences that make students feel connected to their school.

Their impact extends beyond the students they directly support. When students learn alongside peers with diverse strengths, abilities, communication styles, and ways of learning, they develop empathy, understanding, flexibility, and a deeper appreciation for what it means to be part of a community.

As Shea Hunter, Director of Student Services, shared, “I am in awe of the work our Special Education paraprofessionals do every day. They bring an extraordinary combination of patience, compassion, creativity, resilience, and skill. Most importantly, they see the whole child. They see possibility where others may see

challenge, and they help students find their place, their voice, and their confidence within our school communities.”

A HEARTFELT THANK YOU

As we begin another school year, we extend our deepest gratitude to our nearly 80 Special Education paraprofessionals and to the teachers, specialists, administrators, classified bargaining partners, and families who work alongside them. Their work may not always appear in a gradebook or data report, but its impact can change a student’s experience of school — and help make Lafayette a place where every student truly belongs.



Special Education paraprofessionals take part in training focused on meeting the diverse learning needs of students.

Our Special Education paraprofessionals see the whole child. They see possibility where others may see challenge, and they help students find their place, their voice, and their confidence.

—SHEA HUNTER, DIRECTOR OF STUDENT SERVICES

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Dan Meade, Mark Towery, Lamorinda Village Auxiliary member Mary Beth Towery, and Lamorinda Village member Angie Bailie celebrating at Sip & Savor Lamorinda 2025.

GET READY TO RAISE A GLASS FOR A GREAT CAUSE!

The Lamorinda Village Auxiliary is excited to invite our friends and neighbors to the **3rd Annual Sip & Savor Lamorinda** — an evening bursting with fine wines, craft beers, small-batch spirits, mouthwatering local bites, and a silent auction packed with irresistible finds, all in support of Lamorinda Village.

Last year’s event drew more than 200 attendees and generated substantial funding for the organization.

Founded in 2015, Lamorinda Village is a community-based nonprofit. This local organization serves older Lamorinda residents by offering healthy aging programs and classes, fostering connection through happy hours, weekly coffee socials, and

educational events, and supporting independence through transportation, grocery shopping, computer help, and minor home repairs.

This year’s Sip & Savor Lamorinda is Friday, Nov. 6, 2026, from 5 to 7:30 p.m. at the Lafayette Community Center, 500 Saint Mary’s Road. Tickets are \$80 (\$70 for Lamorinda Village members).

Come thirsty, come hungry, come ready to bid — and help us pour our support into a cause that matters. Cheers to community!



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Acalanes sophomore Sameera Naidu collects cat food donations.

A DRIVE TO HELP

Sameera Naidu recently turned her love for animals into a pet food drive for local cats.

INTERVIEW WITH SAMEERA NAIDU

We saw your food drive in town. What inspired it? During the summer, I started looking into different animal shelters where I could volunteer. Community Concern for Cats (CC4C), a local nonprofit cat rescue, responded and suggested that I start with a food drive.

How did you organize it? I started by making a Facebook post that my dad shared and designed posters on my iPad that we

put up around downtown Lafayette. Our last stop was at the pet store Big Woof. They suggested putting a table outside the store to collect cat food. They were even kind enough to order a bunch of cat food to donate!

What was your favorite part? My favorite part was honestly coming home at the end of the day and seeing more and more food that people had dropped off in the bin outside our house.

Have you always loved animals? Yes, I love spending time with them and taking care of them. I have a malamute/Siberian husky mix named Arya who will turn 2 in November. We adopted her when she was just 8 weeks old. She's crazy and energetic, but she can also be calm and cuddly. She's also good at doing many tricks. She can sit, lie down, high-five, twirl, and speak.



Sameera put up posters around downtown Lafayette to spread the word.

What did you take away from this experience?

People shouldn't be afraid to do things like this. When I first started, I was worried that I wouldn't be able to collect anything. But once donations started coming in, I realized I was able to help many cats and support CC4C.

Special thanks to RecycleSmart for sponsoring our Pets with Personality section.

Do you have a pet story to share? Email Lamorinda@n2co.com.

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Robert “Bob” Roche (right) and Bob Kahl (“Uncle Bob”) at the going-away dinner at Locanda Positano in Lafayette, 2021.



Bob (lower left), Uncle Bob (upper middle), and their high school “Rum Dum” crew, 1940s.



Teri with her dad, Bob Roche.

BEST FRIENDS FOR 80 YEARS

BY TERI ROCHE DROBNICK

I reminded Dad, “This is the going-away party for Uncle Bob.”

“Oh?” I knew he wouldn’t remember—his dementia stealing him away from us.

“He’s moving to Portland to be closer to family,” I said.

Dad and Uncle Bob, as I affectionately called him, had been best friends for nearly 80 years. They met in the St. Francis Wood neighborhood of San Francisco during World War II — playing war games in an empty lot between their houses. From that day forward, they were inseparable — leading parallel lives that were nothing short of extraordinary.

Watching the two of them that evening at Locanda Positano restaurant, sitting side by side, I observed a shared intimacy as best friends. Their friendship was something that I could only aspire to. It made my heart hurt to think of them separated by geography, permanently. Equally important, I worried: If Dad saw Uncle Bob again, would he remember him? As I lay awake that night, I obsessed about writing a book to honor their friendship.

Since Dad’s memory loss had progressed to the point where he could no longer recall the history he and Uncle Bob shared, I began calling Uncle Bob regularly to record their stories. We alternately cringed, laughed, and became somber at their less-than-legal antics as adolescents, their fraternity pranks at Cal,

and their extraordinarily similar tragedies and losses. Listening to and recording these stories provided me with the connection to my father that I longed for.

As my father’s health further declined, Uncle Bob and I grieved the man that my father once was — best friend, father, patriarch, community activist, volunteer, and mayor of Lafayette. Realizing we were not alone in our grief, we created an unusual connection between a daughter and her father’s best friend.

Before Uncle Bob’s move, he promised to come back every few months to visit. On one occasion, he cruised into Dad’s condominium and beelined it to Dad’s chair since Dad was no longer able to get up to greet guests. Uncle Bob began chatting in his easy and familiar way. There was no question as to whether Dad recognized him — his eyes sparkled with delight at seeing his old friend.

At lunch, Uncle Bob entertained us with stories of their Sigma Nu fraternity pranks. But we became speechless and raised our eyebrows in unison when my father contributed, “Oh yeah,” with a slight upward turn to the corner of his mouth.

When Uncle Bob left that day, he hugged us all goodbye. As he approached the door, my barely verbal Dad said, “I’ll miss you.”

A tear snuck down my cheek. But Uncle Bob hadn’t heard, so I stopped him. “Uncle Bob, Dad said he’ll miss you.”

He stopped, slowly pivoted, and said, “Always.”

That night, my fingers flew over the keyboard. I felt an urgency not simply to document what I had witnessed, but to honor it. After nearly 80 years of friendship, their story had to be told.

Raised in Lafayette, Teri Roche Drobnick is the daughter of former Lafayette Mayor Robert “Bob” Roche. Since losing her father to Alzheimer’s, she has volunteered as a community educator for the Alzheimer’s Association. Her memoir, “Our Long Goodbye: A Daughter, a Father, a Best Friend, and the Journey Through Alzheimer’s,” will be published Nov. 3 and is available for preorder.

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



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LAFAYETTE HISTORY



The Rossi family at their Reliez Valley farm. The wagon was used to haul produce to markets at First and Franklin streets in Oakland.



Ed and Susie Rowland, the first settlers of Reliez Valley.



A horse-drawn farm sled at the Rowland Ranch in 1907. Farm sleds were commonly used to transport heavy or bulky agricultural goods across uneven or soft ground where wagons with wheels might sink or become difficult to pull.

today's Rancho View Drive. Livestock provided milk, meat, and wool. It was a life of hard work, but also of rhythm and routine: children walked two miles to school in Lafayette, women baked bread and churned butter, and men labored in orchards and vineyards. Every so often, the children would sneak away for a swim in the cool waters of the creek, dammed by neighbor William Quandt to irrigate his fields across Pleasant Hill Road.

Getting goods out of the valley, however, was another matter. The only road toward Lafayette was today's Pleasant Hill Road, where a punishing climb — “the 11% Grade” — tested every wagon and team of horses. Families like the Rossis and Kennedys made do with the narrow trail across Rowland's land. But for large landowner William Withers, whose property lay at the northern end of Reliez Valley, that simply wasn't enough. He needed a better way to haul his wagons over the hill and into Lafayette.

So Withers struck a deal. He bought parcels from Rowland, Rossi, and Kennedy and carved a dirt road through the valley, a gentler path that bypassed the steep grade. That simple wagon road, winding past today's Silver Dell and Echo Springs, gave the farmers and families of Reliez Valley a new way forward.

Eventually, the county took over Withers' private road and gave it a name: Reliez Valley Road. It was never a highway, never a grand thoroughfare — but it became a quiet connector, linking neighbors, farms, and families. And though today the valley is filled with homes, Reliez Valley Road still carries a trace of its past. With its winding curves, stands of oaks, and a lingering sense of open space, the road manages to feel rural — just as it did when wagons rattled along its dusty path more than a century ago.

Special thanks to Aegis Living Moraga for sponsoring our Lafayette History section.

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THE MAKING OF Reliez Valley Road

A Farmer's Path Through the Valley

BY JOHN KENNETT, LAFAYETTE HISTORICAL SOCIETY | PHOTOS PROVIDED

BEFORE RELIEZ VALLEY ROAD wound its quiet way between oaks and orchards, the valley itself was little more than a sweep of grassland, part of the 1842 Mexican land grant known as Rancho Cañada del Hambre y las Bolsas. For decades, cattle roamed where cars now pass, and only a handful of families made their homes among the rolling hills.

One of the earliest settlers was Edward Rowland, a man of means who owned much of the southern end of the valley. Rowland didn't farm the land himself; instead, he leased it out. A Japanese family cultivated the lower portion near what is now Vals Lane, while an Italian immigrant, Serafino Rossi, worked the upper acreage. Rossi would eventually own over 150 acres in the valley. Sheep grazed near where Silver Dell sits today, tended by a Portuguese family before the Rossi and Kennedy families purchased and planted the land.

The valley in those days was a patchwork of small farms and family labor. Pears, walnuts, tomatoes, and squash filled the fields; Serafino's grapes climbed the hillsides all the way to

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Running for Lafayette Schools

Each October, the **Lafayette Res Run for Education** brings neighbors of all ages together for a morning of running, walking, and community spirit.

Now in its 33rd year, the tradition drew nearly 2,200 runners and raised \$37,611 for local schools in 2025. Participants can designate a school to support when they register, and Lafayette School District principals join in the fun on race morning. The event is co-presented by the Lafayette Chamber and City of Lafayette, with longtime sponsor Oakwood Athletic Club.

“Community events like the Res Run strengthen Lafayette by encouraging wellness, fostering connections, and highlighting the schools, local businesses, and organizations that help our city thrive,” says the Lafayette Chamber.

There’s also a special story behind this year’s T-shirt. The colorful design was created by Robby Houghton, a



Robby Houghton designed the artwork for the 2026 Res Run T-shirt.

downtown Lafayette as runners and walkers take to the course.

Sunflower Hill, which creates residential communities and programs for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, has a growing connection to Lafayette. The nonprofit is developing its first Contra Costa County residential community at 949 Moraga Road, with 48 affordable apartments planned for the downtown site.

Sunflower Hill will also be among more than 20 health and education

resident of Sunflower Hill at Irby Ranch in Pleasanton. Robby has been drawing and painting since age 5 and especially enjoys working with acrylic paint markers. His artwork will be seen throughout

organizations at the Healthy Lifestyles Fair, where race-day activities include games, treats, and community resources.

The 2026 Res Run takes place Sunday, Oct. 18, with a 5K, 10K, and 2-mile fun run/walk. **To register, visit lafayettechamber.org/resrun.**



Robby’s design for this year’s Res Run.



Runners cross the finish line at the 2025 Lafayette Res Run.

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When Did I Become the Caregiver?

BY HOMECARE BY DESIGN



The role of caregiver often develops gradually as responsibilities grow.

It rarely begins with a single moment. It happens little by little — helping with groceries, driving to an appointment. Then you’re managing medications, insurance paperwork, and specialists. Somewhere along the way, helping became managing, and managing became a role you never expected. If this sounds familiar, you’re not alone. Millions of adults care for aging parents while balancing careers, children, and a life of their own.

Caring for someone you love is one of the greatest expressions of love, but that doesn’t make it any less exhausting. Many family caregivers quietly carry guilt for feeling overwhelmed, telling themselves they should be able to do it all because “it’s family.” Others delay asking for help, believing things aren’t difficult enough yet. Meanwhile, their own health, relationships, finances, and peace of mind slowly take a back seat.

This is often called caregiver burnout, but it feels less like exhaustion

and more like the slow realization that you’ve been taking care of everyone except yourself. Burnout doesn’t happen because you don’t love your family enough. It happens because one person was never meant to carry an entire support system alone.

The families who navigate this season most successfully aren’t the ones with the fewest challenges. They’re the ones who prepare before a crisis forces them to. They have honest conversations about wishes, finances, and future care while everyone can still participate. They know where documents are kept, who has legal authority to decide, and they share responsibilities rather than leaving one person to carry it all. Planning ahead doesn’t eliminate difficult moments, but it replaces uncertainty with confidence when it matters most.

Professional home care is one of many resources available to families, not because family isn’t enough, but because family deserves support too. A few hours

of relief each week, help with personal care, or companionship lets families focus less on managing every detail and more on simply being together.

The goal of professional care has never been to replace family; it’s to protect it. The moments you’ll remember most won’t be medication schedules or appointment calendars. They’ll be conversations over coffee, laughter around the table, and quiet afternoons together.

Sometimes the greatest gift you can give someone isn’t doing everything yourself — it’s making sure you still have the energy to simply be a son, a daughter, a spouse, or a friend.



Reach out to Maria at maria@homecarebydesign.org for any additional helpful information.



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