



March 2015 Village News



## Meet the Executive Director

We are delighted to welcome Executive Director Anne Ornelas to Lamorinda Village. We met with her in our new Village Office on March 3—her second day of work. Here are her answers to our questions:

### **Tell us a little about your background. You're an East Bay native?**

I was born in Walnut Creek and grew up in several East Bay towns, and I have worked in five of the nine Bay Area Counties. Before joining Lamorinda Village, I was a senior director at the American Society on Aging in San Francisco. I also volunteer as an Advisory Board member for Oasis For Girls. My passions are at both ends of the spectrum of young girls and older adults, and

the value that each brings to this world. When I'm not working or volunteering, I love to be outdoors and active through running, yoga, and cycling.

### **Were you already familiar with the Village model before this job opportunity arose?**

A colleague of mine was an early staff member at San Francisco Village and I knew about the Village concept through my agency's work on aging in place. When I saw the Executive Director listing for Lamorinda Village, I realized this was an opportunity to see what I could bring to a new, growing organization. I'm excited to be part of a start-up, to help launch something so important, and I'm looking forward to getting to know the members and volunteers.

### **What do you think is unique about the Lamorinda community?**

The area is more rural than some other Village communities, and that seems to create interesting challenges. For example, areas like this can lead to isolation if we aren't able to design solutions to the transportation issues. That is one of the key reasons to develop a Village, because we know that preventing isolation is vital to health and longevity. We need to make sure that our members stay connected, through the Village's volunteer services and our events and activities.

### **What are your first priorities as Executive Director?**

Aside from getting settled in the new office, my highest priority is reaching out to the people who have expressed interest in the Village and sharing the value that membership can bring to both individuals and couples. I look forward to meeting members and friends of the Village at our launch event on April 6<sup>th</sup>. As our volunteers begin supporting members, we will be working to match each volunteer with his or her strengths and interests. Developing partnership opportunities to bring more services and assistance to our members is another key priority in providing members with more services.

### **What have you learned in your first two days with Lamorinda Village?**

I knew there were many people already working on the launch of the Village, but I'm not sure I understood how very much had been done. There is still a lot to do as we move toward our April 6<sup>th</sup> opening. I'm so impressed with the core group of volunteers; they are engaged and passionate about the Village, and that makes me even more passionate and ready to help make it a success.

Anne can be reached through the Village office at 925 253-2300 or by email at [Anne@lamorindavillage.org](mailto:Anne@lamorindavillage.org).

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## Questions and Answers About Lamorinda Village

As we meet with community members to introduce the Village movement and our own Village, a few key questions have been asked more than once. We will be expanding the Questions and Answers section of our website, but we wanted to highlight some of the most common questions here. You can also email your questions to [info@lamorindavillage.org](mailto:info@lamorindavillage.org) and we will forward them to the person who can give you the answer.

### What is Lamorinda Village all about?

#### **Our Mission:**

To provide a one-stop resource for members to access services and programs that will empower them to remain independent in their homes and communities as they grow older.

#### **Our Values:**

We believe that Villages run on the power that comes from connecting people who possess abundant energy, creativity, knowledge, and the determination to make the world a better place. At Lamorinda Village, we make every effort to meet the needs of our members through services, programs, and referrals.

#### **We will:**

- ◇ Provide a caring, supportive, and inclusive environment for our members and partners.
- ◇ Treat all members with respect and value the diversity of our community, including across generations.
- ◇ Support our members in achieving safety and independence in their homes.
- ◇ Offer opportunities for social interaction, learning, and community engagement.
- ◇ Whenever possible, ask a volunteer to fill a member's request.
- ◇ Provide resources to help members improve their health and fitness.
- ◇ Strive to be an innovative proactive resource to our members and our community.
- ◇ Not compete with existing sources of support in the community, but rather partner with them to create a centralized, personalized referral system for our members.
- ◇ Commit to maintaining an organization that is dependable and trustworthy.
- ◇ Administer Lamorinda Village effectively and provide good value for members in return for their contributions.

#### ***Q: How will I know what services the Village is offering?***

A: The Village office will continually communicate about available services through our newsletter, our website, and person-to-person communications. For volunteer services, we will work to meet your request from the volunteers we have available at the time. For professional services, as you read in last month's newsletter, we are starting first with the categories that Lamorinda seniors identified as their highest priorities: transportation, handyman services, and computer assistance, although service providers in other areas are also on board. You will have a chance to meet some of them at the April 6 launch event. Most important, suggestions and referrals from Village members will be critical to expanding the available options.

#### ***Q: We are a couple but only one of us wants to join the Village at this time. Can we apply for an individual membership?***

A: Individual memberships are designed for one-person households. If your household includes more than one adult over age 55, you would need to apply for the household membership or household social membership. If that doesn't meet your needs at this time, you could consider other ways to support the Village without becoming a member, such as volunteering or providing a tax-deductible donation. That way you can help ensure that the Village will be there in the future, in case your circumstances change.

#### ***Q: How can I be sure that it's safe to have a volunteer come to my home?***

A: All Lamorinda Village volunteers are carefully screened, including background checks, and all volunteers are receiving training designed by our Village. Those who have already applied as volunteers will complete the training during the second half of March, before our launch date.

Those volunteers who will drive members on errands, to medical appointments, or other journeys receive their training from our transportation partner, Senior Helpline Services.

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***Q: Do I have to be a member in order to volunteer with the Village?***

A: No. We encourage members to volunteer, but volunteers are not required to be members.

***Q: As a volunteer, do I have to sign up for a minimum number of hours?***

A: No. We welcome your volunteer contribution at whatever level is right for you. You can specify certain days of the week, for example, or select the kinds of volunteer services that you can contribute.

***Q: Can I volunteer if I don't live in Lafayette, Moraga, or Orinda?***

A: Absolutely; we welcome volunteers from any community.

***Q: If I made a donation to Lamorinda Village, does that mean I am automatically a member?***

A: Donations and membership fees are different entities, because donations are tax-deductible while membership fees are not. Some Village members have also made donations; however, in order to receive the benefits of membership, you would need to complete the membership application process and pay the applicable membership fee.

### **Fitness First: Do You Love to Dance?**

According to the [Berkeley Wellness Letter](#), dancing is a good way to support your physical and emotional health.

The Wellness Letter article reports on studies that show dancing can reduce depression or anxiety, improve self-esteem, promote aerobic activity, and support overall fitness. It's a great way to spend time with other people, and for those who don't enjoy going to the gym, dancing is a good alternative.

Check with your physician first, and then start up the music!

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Copyright 2015 Lamorinda Village, Inc. Lamorinda Village is a nonprofit (501(c)(3)) self-governing, community-based membership organization with the goal of enabling members to remain safely and independently in their homes and communities as they age. Residents of Lafayette, Moraga, and Orinda, California, aged 55 and above, are eligible to apply for membership in the Village.

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