



# The I C O N

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## Finding Felicity in Food & Work

By Dr. Laura Pawlak

“Life Is Good.” These three words have blossomed into a worldwide slogan. Why? You feel good just reading the words.

These days life elicits more worries than “happies.” Good times are short-lived and may be prone to addiction: compulsive shopping with credit cards; eating comfort foods loaded with calories; drinking too much alcohol; or searching for drug dealers to soothe emotional or physical pain. Sustainable happiness begins with the simple things: the food you eat and the work you do.

Brain imaging has identified the pathway that produces good feelings. Named the Reward Circuit, you experience an emotional response to foods consumed and work performed. Thus, the recommendation to “eat right and move more,” can improve both happiness and health.

Is eating right a happy experience? It’s pretty obvious that foods high in fat, sugar, and salt light up the Reward Circuit, elevating feelings of joy. Is it possible to eat foods that are healthy for the brain and add “happy” to your mood?

Researchers at the University of Warwick in Coventry UK say “yes!” The staff followed 12,000 adults from Australian households for six years. Participants kept food diaries and answered survey questions about their lives as well as their mental and emotional health. By the end of the second year, participants who changed from eating no fruits and vegetables a day to eight portions a day reported feeling happier. Participants who did not increase their intake of fruits and vegetables over the same period experienced a drop in happiness score. The “happy” power of fruits and vegetables was equivalent to going from unemployment to a job. (American Journal of Public Health, August, 2016)

Consuming eight servings of fruits and vegetables each day (about four cups) provides thousands of antioxidants and anti-inflammatory nutrients that improve brain function in mea-

surable, mood-altering ways.

What about work? Regardless of the wording (labor, exercise, work, or toil), the brain activates, controls, and evaluates movement. Both psychologists and neuroscientists have independently addressed the theory that work ignites positive emotions.

Psychologists investigated a unique consumer issue called “The Ikea Effect,” that is, the consequences of buyers’ assembling items purchased. The study concluded that assembling an item boosted feelings of pride, confidence, and competence even when the end product was poorly assembled. It appeared that work, especially with the hands, activated the Reward Circuit.

Real-time imaging of the brain, conducted by Kelly Lambert, a neuroscientist, confirmed the conclusions of the Ikea study. Dr. Lambert recruited persons with untreated depression and set up work projects, such as pottery-making, wood carving, or knitting. She demonstrated that labor with the hands and arms activated the Reward Circuit, elevating positive emotions sufficiently to eliminate the symptoms of depression in her patients. Dr. Lambert labeled the process as “effort-driven reward.” Yes, work can be a happy experience. And, when the effort is purposeful and helps others, the happiness rating is even higher. (“Lifting Depression” by Kelly Lambert, 2010)

*“The groundwork for all happiness is good health.”* –Leigh Hunt, English poet

*Dr. Laura Pawlak (Ph.D., R.D. emerita) is a world-renown biochemist and dietitian emerita. She is the author of many scientific publications and has written such best-selling books as “The Hungry Brain,” “Life Without Diets,” and “Stop Gaining Weight.” On the subjects of nutrition and brain science, she gives talks internationally. ■*



## EDITORIAL: Bruce London for City Council

*“You have been sat too long here for any good you have been doing. Depart, I say, and let us have done with you. In the name of God go.”*

Those words were uttered by the English dictator Oliver Cromwell when he addressed the English Rump Parliament in April 1643.

Cromwell might as well have been speaking about the majority of the Orinda City Council.

With the notable exception of council member Eve Phillips, the city council, over the last decade, has made Orinda a less desirable place to live. The city’s semi-rural environment is in jeopardy. The schools face overcrowding. Unless this trend is stopped, Orinda, a city which has no more room for development, faces the construction of high-density, high-rise housing. This housing, when occupied, will only make Orinda’s traffic and parking problems worse. Unelected bureaucrats in Sacramento and opaque regional bureaucracies are forcing Orinda to build hundreds of new residences.

Ms. Phillips, who was elected to the council in 2014, has tried valiantly to bring balance and good judgment to a city council that has ignored the concerns of



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The Icon is a periodic publication that covers news about Orinda as well as health-related matters.

# Bruce London, MD, Candidate for the Orinda City Council, Seeks More Openness In Government & Wants to Preserve Orinda's Semi-Rule Environment

By Richard Colman

Bruce London, MD, now running for a seat on the Orinda City Council, wants more openness in city government.

Dr. London, a 32-year resident of Orinda and a retired physician, says that Orinda is threatened by a "loss of local control." The State of California, he says, exerts too much control over local communities.

During a late August interview in a private Orinda home, Dr. London said that Orinda is becoming too "urbanized."

Asked if he favors a 35-foot height limit for Orinda buildings, Dr. London said, "I absolutely do."

In the area of crime prevention, Dr. London said, "Public safety is the number one priority."

Dr. London said, if elected, "his goal is to be an advocate for all Orinda residents."

Dr. London expressed concern over Orinda's Housing Element, a California-mandated plan to bring hundreds of new residences to Orinda, a city that is basically full. Citizens, not government, should "make the decision" on whether or not to have a Housing Element, he said. Between 1960 and 2010, Orinda's population, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, went from 4,712 residents to 17,653, an increase of 275 percent.

In his platform, Dr. London states: "I support a refreshed downtown." Several Bay Area cities like Danville, have renewed their urban areas. Danville built attractive shopping areas that are compatible with the city's environment.

Also in his platform, Dr. London says, "I will fight to preserve Orinda's semi-rural character and the downtown village character."

He says, in his platform, that he supports "real fiscal restraint."

In his interview, Dr. London was critical of such regional governmental agencies as ABAG (the Association of Bay Area Governments) and MTC (the Metropolitan Transportation Commission). ABAG is involved in land-use planning for Bay Area counties. MTC is concerned with Bay Area transportation matters.

The respective members of the boards of directors of ABAG and MTC are not directly elected by voters. The directors of each

agency come from a pool of locally elected officials. Dr. London favors the direct election of ABAG and MTC directors.

The Orinda City Council, according to Dr. London, needs to communicate better with the city's residents. He favors town-hall meetings, public forums, and press conferences. In the last six years, the city council has held no town-hall meetings at which council members and residents could exchange views. In those six years, there have been no press conferences.

Dr. London was critical of the way most members of the city council handled Measure L, a \$25 million bond to fix Orinda's damaged roads and drains. He said the majority of the current city council made a "big mistake" by not holding a series of town-hall meetings on Measure L.

On June 7, Orinda's voters passed Measure L, a \$25 million road-repair bond. The city council put Measure L on the ballot.

Measure L's \$25 million bond falls far short of the \$47 million needed to fix all bad roads in Orinda.

Dr. London said that the city council, through town-

hall meetings, should have tried to educate residents about the value of going forth with the full \$47 million, enough money, he said, to fix all of Orinda's bad roads.

Orinda's environment is in jeopardy, Dr. London said. He cited the Orinda Grove/Pulte development on Altarinda Road. In that development, 73 homes are squeezed into a tiny area. Many of the homes are so close together that a tall person, by extending his arms, can touch two adjacent structures.

Potential school overcrowding concerns Dr. London. All the extra residential construction planned for Orinda, he said, will lead to classrooms that are too crowded. He said that cities like Dublin and Fremont are experiencing overcrowded classrooms because too much residential construction has gone on in each city.

Dr. London said he opposed raising the Contra Costa sales tax by one-half percentage point. On the November ballot, there will be a vote on raising the county-wide sales tax. In Orinda, the sales tax, if the ballot measure

passes, will go from 9.0 percent to 9.5 percent. The tax, if enacted, will bear down heavily on low-income people and senior citizens living on fixed incomes.

On the subject of BART (Bay Area Rapid Transit), Dr. London said he opposes the \$3.5 billion bond measure to upgrade BART. The bond measure, which will be on the November ballot, will raise, if passed, property taxes in Orinda and elsewhere. BART, Dr. London said, needs to "put its fiscal house in order." BART has been criticized for paying too much in salaries and benefits to its employees. In 2013, BART employees went on strike twice.

Dr. London's views closely align with those of incumbent city-council member, Eve Phillips. In 2014, Ms. Phillips a newcomer to Orinda politics, ran for one of three open city-council seats. Phillips, one of six candidates, came in first.

Ms. Phillips who grew up in the Orinda area and graduated from Orinda's Miramonte High School, did her university studies at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Later, she received a degree from the Stanford Business School. After her university days, Ms. Phillips returned to Orinda, saying the city had drastically changed from her Miramonte days.

In her 2014 campaign, Ms. Phillips ran on a platform of addressing Orinda's traffic problems, protecting Orinda's semi-rural, small-town atmosphere, and supporting the city's schools.

On workday evenings between 5:00 P.M. and 6:00 P.M. Camino Pablo, one of Orinda's main streets, can be very congested. Often one sees long lines of cars between the Orinda BART station and Miner Road, a distance of about two miles. Traveling from the BART station to Miner Road can sometimes take 20 to 30 minutes.

In written statement, Dr. London said that he has "no ties to any business or group that will profit financially from work performed in Orinda."

In his interview, Dr. London said he believes that city-council members should have no conflicts of interest. He said that if a donor offered him money in exchange for support of a special project, he would reject the contribution. "I intend to set a standard," he said.

Election day is Tuesday, November 8.



Bruce London, MD

Disclosure: This reporter is a supporter of Dr. London's campaign for the Orinda City Council. ■

# Restaurant Review: Yanni's Gyros & Burgers

By Richard Eber

Every September, my family looks forward to attending the Contra Costa Greek Food and Wine Festival sponsored by the St. Demetrios Greek Orthodox Church in Concord. We gorge ourselves on gyros, roasted lamb, dolmas, spanakopita, tzatziki sauce, kalamata olives, baklava, and all the other great stuff we get at this three-day event.

Unfortunately, when the festival at St. Demetrios concludes, my family and I have not, until recently, found a local eatery that satisfies our cravings for authentic Greek cuisine. True, there are a few Mediterranean and Afghan restaurants that come close, but they are not the real thing. Recently this sad case of culinary disappointment has ended with the opening of Yanni's at 1960 Concord Avenue (near Salvio Street) in Concord. Tel (925) 446-4665.

This semi fast-food restaurant is a virtual clone of Yanni's Greek Café at 6635 Alhambra Avenue in Martinez. The Martinez venue features a similar menu of Greek delicacies.

Yanni's eateries, which began operations in 2008, is named after the nine-year-old son of the owner, Voula. Voula carefully guards her family's recipes because they are unique to Yanni's.

Voula, who toiled for seven years at the famous Greek restaurant, Kokkari, (200 Jackson Street in San Francisco), relies on utilizing fresh ingredients, which she uses in her diverse menu. The standard bearer of the Yanni's eateries is their flagship gyros.

The gyros come in several varieties, but I prefer the plain ones made Greek-style. They feature flat pita bread, which, like a taco, is stuffed with lettuce, tomato, white onions,

tzatziki sauce, and, of course, gyro meat. This consists of a mixture of 80% ground beef and 20 percent lamb, which is seasoned and frozen. It is then cooked on a spit with fat dripping off the sides. When done, thin slices of meat are cut off and stacked inside the warm flat bread. Yum!

A cousin to the gyros is the falafel – a vegetarian concoction, which is a mixture of chick peas, tahini, spices, egg, and garlic. The falafel is rolled into a golf-ball shape and fried in oil to a crisp. Yanni's falafels are not only delicious but healthy. And they taste really good.

Another house specialty of this little Greek café are the lamb dishes. They are pricier than the other offerings on the menu but are worth it. Voula uses marinated tenderloin, which begs to be cooked medium-rare to take in all

of the subtle favors. They also make lamb chops, which I have not tried, because I am hooked on so many of their other dishes in my comfort zone.

For those who do not want to try Greek food (hard as it is for me to imagine) Yanni's also offers excellent burgers. In ordering a Greek burger, I found it to be juicy and full

of favor. Again, with me, if it moves, it grooves. Thus, I had mine on the rare side. They also have different toppings available including mushrooms, bacon, pastrami, and cheese.

Going along with their burgers, gyros, and falafels, Yanni's has some excellent sides. Their fries are fresh and prepared in hot oil. The onion rings are my favorite, and the fried zucchini is cooked to order. They go perfectly with their secret – don't call it ranch – white dipping sauce.



Yanni's Gyros and Burgers is at 1960 Concord Ave., Concord.

## Editorial

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Orinda's voters. But she is only one vote among five council members.

In short -- and excluding Ms. Phillips -- the city council that has been in power from 2004 to the present time has brought Orinda to the brink of ruin.

Ms. Phillips, alone, has tried to put Orinda on a different course. She needs help.

That help can come from Bruce London, MD, a retired radiologist and 32-year Orinda resident.

Dr. London is committed to preserving ICON

Orinda's semi-rural environment, keeping the city's school excellent, and adhering to the city's 35-foot height for buildings.

Moreover, Dr. London is not a candidate a special interests -- like those interests that want more real-estate development in a city that is full.

Dr. London stands for openness and candor in Orinda's dealings. He wants public safety to be a top priority. He opposes mandates placed on Orinda by unelected, unaccountable bureaucrats. He wants the city council to hold more town-hall meetings and press conferences. He believes the city council needs to commu-

In addition to their varied menu of pita bread sandwiches, Yanni's also offers melitzanosalata dip made up of eggplant garlic, and evoo. Naturally, they also do a pretty decent version of hummus and tirokafteri spicy feta dips which were meant to be spread on warm pita bread. There is also a respectable spanakopita (spinach, herbs, feta, and phylo) that Yanni's offers.

Since there are so many dishes that one can crave at Yanni's, most of the time I come with guests. The custom is to split several appetizers and salads between or among us. These splits go well in accompanying a sandwich or entrée for all of us. One small plate that I always order is their combination of ripe, sliced tomatoes, feta cheese, and kalamata olives covered by a light vinaigrette.

With this being said, I am still looking forward to attending the Greek festival at St. Demetrios from September 16-18th this year. In addition to the type of fare that Yanni's offers, the ladies of the church make their own home-made delicacies, which are found nowhere else. As always, customers should look forward to the Greek cookies, pastries, and coffee.

One small request. Last year was the first time at St. Demetrios that the festival did not offer lamb shanks. Please bring them back in 2016. Since Yalla's restaurant in Concord moved to Danville several months ago, this craving of mine has been left in limbo. In the meantime, I am dreaming in blue and white -- the colors on Greece's flag -- and looking forward to the festival later this month.

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*Richard Eber is a local writer whose work appears in The Contra Costa Bee and Diablo Gazette. With the Contra Costa Wine Group, he is an award-winning home-wine maker. He is an avid cook who loves to use fresh ingredients grown in his garden. ■*

nicate more effectively with the city's residents.

Dr. London is not an opponent of changing Orinda's downtown look. He wants to refresh downtown in an environmentally sensible manner, much as the man-made Golden Gate Bridge enhances the Bay Area's natural beauty.

Dr. London is running an honest campaign, a campaign which refuses to take money from special interests.

To bring reform and transparency to Orinda, Dr. London needs your vote.

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### **Editorial**

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### **ANNOUNCEMENT:**

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