

HopSkipDrive is a Driving Force in Lamorinda for Kids and Youth

By Cathy Dausma



HopSkipDrive driver Amy Morosini. Photo Cathy Dausman

Lamorinda parents of young children have their driving work cut out for them, and Amy Morosini is no exception. But the Moraga mother of three has made local pickups and delivery of other people's children her job, working as one of the first area drivers for

HopSkipDrive, an app-based ride company service designed for children age 6 and up.

To help her family stay within budget, Morosini began to consider what kind of part time work she could get "with my crazy schedule." This job allowed her the flexibility to begin after her sons left for school and decide for herself how late she would accept her last fare.

"I won't drive at night after the sun goes down," Morosini said.

The field of technology-based ride company programs designed for children is growing rapidly. A quick online search revealed companies with names like Ridezum, Kangadoapp, Kidzjet, Zemcar and Pogorides scattered throughout the Bay Area and across the country. HopSkipDrive requires their drivers to be finger printed and pass TrustLine certification, which Morosini did through the Moraga Police Department.

After obtaining additional in-

urance Morosini donned the company's distinctive orange shirt this past summer and began delivering her young clients to summer camps, day care and tutoring sessions. Unlike adult ride companies HopSkipDrive requires parents to book their child's transportation 12 hours in advance and select a code word the driver shares with the child at pickup.

Morosini says school staff and volunteers have begun to recognize her, and the children she picks up "know me now."

"I don't just drop off and zoom away (either)," she adds. Although the driver's children are not al-

lowed to accompany her, Morosini says her sons think her job is "cool," adding that this is a service she would definitely use "for my own kids."

For now her workload is light but regular; she averages one pickup per day about three days per week. Demand for the service lessens on weekends so Morosini switches to adult fares. "My husband watches college football, and I really enjoy driving," she said with a smile.

For details, go to www.hop-skipdrive.com.

Other child-specific ride-sharing service apps and their base of operation. Some of these will be expanding to the East Bay:

www.ridezum.com/	(LA/San Bernardino County)
www.kangadoapp.com/	(San Francisco area)
www.kidzjet.com/	(San Francisco-south bay)
www.zemcar.com/	(Massachusetts)
www.pogorides.com	(Seattle)

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Business Bites

By Paula King

Toffee and Caramels and Chocolates, Oh My!

Just in time for the holiday season, Hofssi Chocolates is setting up a Holiday Store Nov. 25 through Dec. 23 at Lafayette's La Fiesta Square, 3541 Wilkinson Lane. Seasonal shoppers will be able to purchase Hofssi's signature premium confections including chocolates, toffee, caramels and gianduja, a sweet chocolate spread.

The locally made items make an elegant gift and are made with mostly organic, local and sustainable ingredients.

Hofssi founders Linda Hofmeister and Susan Rossi started the Moraga business and they are certified chocolatiers.

The temporary store will be located in the Alicia Klein Studio. Its hours of operation will be weekdays from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. and weekends from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Fitness for All Ages

If you need a new fitness regimen to work off those holiday meals, Karate & Fitness Place USA is open again after a hiatus in operation since February. After closing in Moraga, the long-time karate studio is back in Lafayette at 3413 Mt. Diablo Blvd.

Under the direction of Sensei Thomas Westernoff, Karate & Fitness Place practices traditional Shito-Ryu karate and welcomes people of all ages, levels and abilities. For more information about their classes, program and philosophy, call 925-376-3667 or visit www.kfpusa.com.

New Digs and a Birthday Party

Even the littlest of tykes can find a place to break a sweat! For more than 20 years, children under age five have been hitting developmental milestones and having a blast at the same time inside the walls of Gymboree Play & Music-Lafayette and on Nov. 5 a grand re-opening and 40th birthday for Gymboree Play & Music was held.

The free event featured play, music and art activities in addition to raffle prizes and gift bags. Now located at 3450 Mt. Diablo at Second Street, Gymboree is in Merrill Gardens, an assisted living facility location.

"This is a wonderful pairing between our littlest community members and our oldest. It is retail space meets living space," said owner Katie Bidstrup. "Our location in Lafayette has been a mainstay of local families for more than 20 years and we're excited to move in to this new facility for the next 20, interacting with the community and educating our little ones."

For more information about Gymboree, call 925-283-4896 or visit www.facebook.com/GPM.Lafayette.

October Employee Honoree



From left, Wendy Scheck, Pilar Norleen, Brandy Ford, Kevin Reneau. Photo provided

Universal banker Pilar Norleen at Mechanics Bank was named Moraga Employee of the Month for October. Working in the Moraga branch since 2009, Norleen handles typical banker duties and also acts as manager when the branch manager is gone.

"Pilar has an amazing attendance record and is always looking for the best interest of our customers," Mechanics Manager Brandy Ford. "Her customers always get great service from Pilar."

As the 57th recipient of this monthly employee honor from the Rotary Club of Moraga and the Moraga Chamber of Commerce, Norleen will receive gift cards from Safeway and Ristorante Amoroma. She will be honored at a Rotary luncheon.

If you have a business brief to share, please contact storydesk@lamorindaweekly.com.

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Celebrating an Anniversary?

If your business is celebrating a significant anniversary (5, 10, 20 years or more ...) send us a photo of your business, the owner(s) or the staff with specific information about your business and what you're celebrating, and we'll include it in an upcoming issue.