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Looking Good in Lamorinda: Holiday Chic

By Moya Stone



Cass Clutch and accessories in Sonoma Wine. Photo provided



Holiday jewelry from Natasha Grasso. Photo provided

It's been over a year since Lafayette resident Debra Szidon launched her line of handbags called The Cass Clutch. Inspired by her love of vintage, Szidon recreated a 1970s handbag that she found in a San Francisco secondhand shop. The versatile bags in suede are a chic option for women on the go.

"The Cass Clutch has become my everyday bag," says Szidon. "For work it holds my laptop, for daily use it's a catch-all and in the evening, folded over it becomes an elegant clutch." The Cass Clutch has been selling well both here and internationally. There are now six color options, with two new colors: Tahoe Blue and Sonoma Wine.

For each sale of Sonoma Wine, \$50 will be donated to The Sonoma County Resilience Fund in support of people affected by the recent fires. There are accessories, too. Laptop sleeves, card cases, pencil holders, and zippered pouches perfect for popping into The Cass Clutch. The entire line is locally crafted and the accessories are made from scraps. Holiday gifts? Stocking stuffers? For ideas, check out thecassclutch.com.

Local jewelry designer Natasha Grasso says she's been inspired lately by the various shades of woody greens and browns she sees on the drive from her home in Orinda to her shop in Moraga. Those rich colors have found their way into rings, earrings, bracelets, and delicate pendants. Grasso works with stones and gold-filled metal or vermeil (14k gold over silver). "I like to use stones in their natural forms." Among her favorites are green agate, tourmaline, and rough cut emeralds. Don't miss the upcoming holiday sale and soiree from 5 to 8 p.m. Dec. 6, 386 Park Street, Rheem Shopping Center. "Door buster deals from 5 to 6," says Grasso.

'Tis the season of cashmere and we are lucky to have pop-up shop, The Cashmere Sale. Each year the New York-based company sets up business for the

holidays. In the past they've called Lafayette home but this year it's Danville. Find them at 409 Railroad Avenue.

A fond farewell to two fashionable mainstays of the Lamorinda area: Mycro Pac in Moraga has closed and Specialtees in Lafayette will close the end of December. We will miss these popular go-to shops but I hear that Ann from Specialtees is planning to stay in the biz doing charity events and shopping parties. Stay tuned.

As old friends move on, we make new ones. The Piece Store, located in the Lafayette Clock Tower Building, offers casual chic options for women who want something different. The look is comfortable with a touch of edgy urban. Included are designers from New York, Los Angeles and San Francisco, as well as a few European designers. About half of the labels are made in America. In stock now are trousers, chunky sweaters, quality T-shirts, skirts, and the trend of the year – sneakers.

"Experiences" are on many a holiday list and one experience that I recommend is Couture Korea.

Three years in the making, Couture Korea is the first major exhibition of Korean fashion in the United States and exclusive to San Francisco's Asian Art Museum. On now through Feb. 4 this fashion exhibit explores traditional Korean clothing from the Joseon Dynasty (1392-1910) to the present. Included are reproductions and reinterpretations of traditional clothing as well as original modern works by top Korean designers (<http://www.asianart.org/>).

Happy Holidays and remember to go forth in style! (Moya Stone is a fashion writer and blogger at www.overdressedforlife.com.)



Urban edgy looks available at The Piece in Lafayette. Photo Moya Stone

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Lamorinda golfers take advantage of class offerings off the course

By Jon Kingdon



Tom Rezendes works with a client at NorCal Golf Academy. Photo provided

As a golfer, living in the Bay Area has many advantages. Weather permitting, one can conceivably play golf 12 months a year. Unless you belong to one of the two very fine private clubs in the Lamorinda area, The Orinda Country Club and The Moraga Country Club, one is forced to find a course to play or practice outside of the immediate area. The nearest driving ranges are at Tilden Park in Berkeley, Buchanan Fields and Diablo Creek, both in Concord.

However if you are looking for a more local opportunity to take lessons or just practice and learn with video cameras and computer analysis, there are two options: NorCal Golf Academy, which is just west of Lafayette at 2094 Mt. Diablo Blvd. in Walnut Creek and is run by long-time Orinda residents, Tom and Kjersten Rezendes, and East Bay School of Golf at 3330 Mt. Diablo Blvd. run by Dave Gannon and Mark Majers, both of whom live in Lafayette.

NorCal Golf Academy has been in operation for several years. With three practice bays and two practice putting greens, Rezendes employs two other teaching pros: Curtis Rhoads and Jenny Park Choi. Rick Eisenhour, the head golf coach at Carondelet High School, exclusively teaches the Aim Point Technique in putting. Rezendes brings a mechanical background along with a lifetime of golf experience, having worked for a top fuel drag racing team. With a true love of golf however, he committed himself to golf instruction, saying: "I just wanted to teach and improve the way people played golf. I believe that I have created a clean welcoming environment for

golfers where they will receive lots of feedback from trained, certified instructors."

Rezendes, a certified PGA teaching pro since 2004 who has appeared on the Golf Channel in a teaching segment last year and will be on their morning drive in late November, and was recently named 14th among the top 50 instructors in California by Golf Digest, relies on cutting-edge technology in teaching his students who range in age from 10 to 80. "Utilizing TrackMan radar technology, Swing Catalyst Balance Plate and GEARS Motion Capture I can measure every facet of my student's motion and give quantifiable data on what needs improvement and what is working properly," he says.

The improvement in golf technology is constant. According to Rezendes, "You can tell within the thickness of a piece of paper how much a golf shaft is bending, the exact body position of the golfer and where the ball hits on the club face. This equipment is being used by the professional golfers as well." NorCal also utilizes SAM putt lab to help the golfers improve their putting technique.

Over the past five years, NorCal has seen thousands of students, ranging from beginners to scratch golfers, ages 8 to 80. They have students that are now playing at Pepperdine and Yale and a student that qualified for the Drive, Chip and Putt tournament at Augusta. Rezendes philosophy is "to gear each lesson to the golfer's specific needs."

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