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Community converges for Rheem Theatre reopening

By Sophie Braccini



Bottom, from left: Bob Moore, Tom Schnurr, Eric Dausman, Edy Schwartz, Andy Scheck, Cathy Dausman; on ladder: Wendy Scheck and Sue Olsen. Photo Heidi Schoenberger

Services gave a huge free dumpster for all the debris, carpet cleaning was done by Diablo Valley Carpet Care, which was also provided free of charge. Owner Gregg Eckstein said, "I want to help you and wish for a great opening night."

Moraga resident Tom Gieryng from TG Hardwood Flooring refinished the dance floor, and many other local business owners stepped up to offer discounts for products or services. Bob Moore and Andy Scheck from the MCF board installed new floors in the office and the kitchen and painted the concession stand, MCF board member Sue Olsen arranged to replace lighting and the refinishing of the terrazzo flooring, and Tom Trainier, CEO of Semifreddi's and also an MCF board member provided food and music for all the hard workers.

Vice Mayor Teresa Onoda gave some of her time and energy to do the hard work along with other locals. Mayor Dave Trotter came by and promised to be there on opening night.

Derek Zemrak, the operator of the Rheem with Leonard Pirkle, remembers that he said nine years ago during his first meeting regarding reopening the Rheem, that for independent movie theaters to survive, they need to be owned by a nonprofit or the municipality. He is proven right today. While the theater is not yet a town asset, it is the logical outcome of the memorandum of understanding that was signed between the town and the property owner.

Trotter noted, like Schnurr, that the reopening would not have been possible if the town had not signed an MOU with the owner.

Zemrak said that the June 14 Opening Night will start at 5:30 p.m. with a reception, auction and announcements. Tickets for the reception and movie, which is a fundraiser for the Moraga Community Foundation, are \$40. Movie only tickets are \$12.

Movie tickets can be purchased at www.lamorindatheatres.com; event tickets must be purchased at either the Orinda or Rheem box office.

The Rheem Theatre is once again rising from the ashes and will reopen on June 14. Pixar has done the local historical venue a favor by releasing the movie "Incredibles 2" in Moraga one day ahead of the official June 15 opening date - and Paul Mendoza, Orinda resident, and Pixar supervising animator on "Incredibles 2," will introduce the film.

This time around the Rheem is on its way to becoming a town-owned asset, which could finally be the winning formula to secure its future.

The much-anticipated movie is a great opening idea, according to Moraga Community Foundation president Tom Schnurr who is very excited to come to the June 14 premiere. He noted that about 50 people came to the theater on June 2 to clean up the venue and that he was enthused by the positive energy that filled the place; it was truly a community affair. Parents came with their children, senior citizens gave of their time, and many local entrepreneurs contributed as well. Republic

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A Superman exhibition will also start on June 14 at the Rheem Theatre.

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