

LAMORINDA **WEEKLY** **SHOW**

Bring a picnic
Lafayette Reservoir
Sat., July 14, 5 PM
Big Band of Rossmoor
FREE EVENT

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FREE



Bill Lew, 2018 Veteran of the Year, (second from right) enjoys the patriotic music at a previous "Tribute to the Troops" event. Photo provided

Annual twilight concert honors active and former military

By Pippa Fisher

One of the best times to support and honor active military, reserves, veterans and Gold Star Families is on the heels of America's most patriotic of holidays, when the country celebrates its independence. And what better venue in which to honor them, surrounded by community, than the Lafayette Reservoir during the annual "Tribute to the Troops" concert and picnic on July 14?

The concert is hosted by the Rotary Club of Lafayette and will take place, as in previous years, at the Lafayette Rotary stage and picnic area overlooking the beautiful waters of the reservoir, a short way east of the parking lot. Golf cart shuttles to the stage area will be available for those who need assistance. Residents are encouraged to bring a blanket or lawn chairs and a picnic and enjoy the free musical event in the

cool of the evening. The 32-piece Big Band of Rossmoor, established 26 years ago comprising musicians aged 14 to 93, will be providing the big band sounds. Joining them will be special guests The High Water Line – a bluegrass band from San Francisco, featuring fiddle, banjo, guitar, bass and mandolin.

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ADA complaints and lawsuits on the rise in Lafayette

By Nick Marnell



It all starts here Photo Nick Marnell

Lawsuits against Lafayette businesses for violations of accessibility regulations have increased over the past two years, but there is one relatively simple fix a business can implement in order to decrease the odds of a complaint that could cost thousands of dollars, or even force a shutdown.

The Americans with Disabilities Act is a federal civil rights law that prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities, and requires all facilities and accommodations used by the public to be accessible to individuals with disabilities.

Since 1992 all new construction, additions and alterations are required to comply with ADA standards. Failure to comply or maintain compliance leaves a business vulnerable to a discrimination claim filed by an individual who is denied access to the business or facility. If a business is found liable, it will be responsible for paying the plaintiff's attorneys fees in addition to statutory damages of \$4,000 per occasion.

"The number of lawsuits in our community has really escalated," said Jay Lifson, executive director of the Lafayette Chamber of Commerce. Lifson listed Lafayette businesses that have been cited in the past two years, including the Rustic Tavern, Bistro Burger and the Lafayette Park Hotel.

Rick Bowles represents business clients out of his Walnut

Creek law office.

"Law firms have clients who go around looking for ADA violations," said Bowles, who noted that the first thing they look for is a handicap parking sign. If there is no sign, it's a good indication there are more problems. "If your parking is right, and other obvious things in the front of the building are OK, they will move on," Bowles said.

These people are not below sending someone in to try to use the bathroom, added Bowles. And the minute that a business lets anyone from the public use its bathroom, the facilities become public, subject to ADA regulations.

"That's where it gets out of control. They file a complaint to get their foot in the door. Then an inspector comes in and finds hundreds of things. The legal process runs up fees, plus \$4,000 in fines per visit regardless of damages. It's free money for them," Bowles said. "It's a frustrating area of the law."

Bowles urges business owners to have their property inspected for potential problems. Kim Blackseth, a consultant in Napa who uses a wheelchair, specializes in ADA inspections.

"There is not a business open today in which I could not uncover an ADA violation," Blackseth said.

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