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New executive director of Orinda Chamber of Commerce is a familiar face

By Sora O'Doherty



Cindy Powell Photo Sora O'Doherty

Cindy Powell, an Orinda icon, has taken over the job of executive director of the Orinda Chamber of Commerce from Sophie Braccini, who moved to a job at UC Berkeley. Powell had been sharing the office with Braccini. While Braccini handled the Chamber, Powell was often handling calls for the Orinda Association's Seniors Around Town transportation service. When Braccini convinced Powell to apply for the job, and she was hired, she needed only to move from one chair to another to take up her new responsibilities. Since she started the new job at the beginning of October, she occupies both chairs, at different times.

Powell, who has lived in Orinda for over 30 years and raised her three children here, has been active in several local organizations over the years. In the early days, she commuted to downtown San Francisco, where she enjoyed working for Crocker Bank as a middle market lender. A banker who loves numbers, Powell also loves to preserve food; Powell is known as the Green Bean Queen. She makes hundreds of jars of jams and pickles every year and won award after award from the Orinda Association until the end of its program. The awards may have ended, but Powell continues to love canning and pickling. Every year she enters the Mixology competition. This year her cocktail was based on her Mandarin Orange

Marmalade. In November she was busy canning her ginger cranberry sauce.

After the canning awards program ended, Powell joined the OA and has been very active in the association, assisting with the Fourth of July Parade, and rising through the ranks to OA president. She has been a board member since 2004.

Last year the Orinda Junior Women's Club gave Powell a big party and a pin to celebrate her 25-year membership. Powell loves the organization, noting that she has "met more wonderful smart women from all over the world" in the local small service group, and she still sits on its board.

Powell grew up in San Diego, but moved to Orinda in 1983; her family purchased their first home in Orinda in 1988. Her three children all attended Miramonte High School. Her oldest went to Glorietta, then, when they opened Wagner Ranch, her other two children went to that elementary school where Powell worked while her children were attending. Now they are grown and gone, and she has more time to devote to Orinda in other areas.

Powell is now turning her attention to Orinda businesses. She has spent time talking to Orinda City Manager Steve Salomon and Finance Director Paul Rankin, brainstorming ways to build up business in Orinda. She is planning lots of new, fun events to promote Orinda businesses, and believes that the new business registration program will help. Powell is excited that Dec. 1 is Shop Orinda day, and has helped organize some incentives to get shoppers to go local. For example, Orinda Chevron will give away free shopping bags, and the Village Inn Caf  will be open for extended hours to serve hungry shoppers.

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