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## Community involvement helps bring outdoor creakside seating to Genuine Goodness

By Sora O'Doherty



Genuine Goodness owners Donna Pickthale and Diane Eames enjoy their new outdoor seating area. Photo Sora O'Doherty

An outpouring of community support has given Genuine Goodness a new outdoor seating area, located below the small restaurant down beside San Pablo Creek in Orinda. Genuine Goodness co-owners Donna Pickthale and Diane Eames spoke with Orinda Senior Planner Adam Foster about the idea of providing outdoor seating and found the city to be enthusiastic and cooperative. When they were wondering how to organize funding to get the dining area set up, it was suggested to them that they just ask, because there was so much love for them in the community. Both materials and labor were supplied to them by donations and volunteers, and the seating area is now ready for business.

After talking with Foster, the co-owners did a Zoom meeting with the city council and got the approval of their landlord. Architect Lara Dutto volunteered her work to help them create a plan. Orinda residents and customers, including neighboring businesses provided tables and chairs, huge sun umbrellas, outdoor rugs and

planters and plants. They volunteered to put the furniture together and fill the planters.

The Friends of Orinda Creeks were very enthusiastic, according to Pickthale and Eames, and provided lists of appropriate native plants to landscape the creakside where last year Pacific Gas and Electric Co. took down large trees. Friends volunteered to clear the wilderness of weeds that had grown up after the trees were removed, and Girl Scouts volunteered to plant the new plants.

Rising Miramonte senior Reese Whipple organized a large mural on a canvas tarp which was painted by local children. Whipple helped them paint the riparian scenery and animals that can be found in creeks. She blocked out the basic structure of the mural, the creek and plantings, then helped the children to fill it in. The mural is done in an impressionistic style and was completed over a number of weekends.

When coronavirus and shelter-in-place orders hit suddenly last March, business owners were unprepared for the sudden shift in how they could conduct their businesses, if at all. The owners of Genuine Goodness say that they did what they always do in a crisis: they sat down and came up with a creative solution. Seeing what was going on with the restaurants in other cities, they launched their "take and bake" menu, providing ready to cook meals for families who were suddenly busy being teachers, housekeepers and daycare, all while often working from home full time. With children back at school, the owners hope to offer a special kids' lunch menu soon.

They are highly concerned about their own health and safety, and have been doing most of the work alone, with only one staff member to help. The exigencies of the pandemic have made their work exhausting, but they are proud of what they have achieved. The restaurant will soon have a new website, and customers will be able to order online, by telephone or in person, then grab their food and eat it down beside the creek.

Security cameras will guard the new furnishings, and the Orinda Police Department will be driving by to check things nightly. The co-owners have a message for Lamorinda: little things can improve the appearance of the community and help businesses thrive.

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