

business briefs

New Businesses and Ribbon Cuttings:

Mike Rosa State Farm Agent, 1042 Country Club Dr., Suite 2D, Moraga; 376-2244

Mike Rosa is a new State Farm Agent who recently opened an office in Moraga. He provides insurance and financial services. Rosa was appointed by State Farm to replace retiring Agent Rob Mc Spadden who had been servicing the community for many years.

Diverse Business News:

Oakwood Athletic Club, 4000 Mt Diablo Blvd, Lafayette; 283-4000
The Club is sponsoring "Celebration of Life", a day open to the public where members and non-members alike can come enjoy a whole variety of classes for the price of a donation. All proceeds will be given to the National Ovarian Cancer Coalition (NOCC). The club will be open from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.; the minimum donation is \$25. More strenuous classes will be held in the morning and more meditative ones in the afternoon. Lunch will be served around noon. Star spin instructor Jennifer Sage is coming from Colorado especially for the event, which is part of a partnership between the Club and Clock's Etc. Both businesses will be selling raffle tickets through the month of September.

Moraga Hardware and Lumber, 1409 Moraga Way, Moraga; 376-3600
The hardware store is running a PG&E-sponsored program to promote the use of Compact Fluorescent Light (CFL) bulbs in the home. These lights are believed to use 75% less energy than their standard 100w counterparts and to have a life expectancy of 10,000 hours (5 times as much as their incandescent competition). The store sells the box of 4 BulbStar CFL for \$2.99 and will continue the program as long as the inventory provided by PG&E lasts. CFL bulbs contain mercury, so they need to be recycled.

Nation's Giant Hamburgers, 400 Park St., Moraga; 376-8888
The restaurant that got damaged in a fire last spring and reopened at the beginning of the summer is closed again for remodeling. The owners are planning to install a bigger grill and a more convenient working area for the employees. They expect to be ready for a grand re-opening in the second half of September.

New from the Three Chambers of Commerce:

Lafayette Chamber of Commerce - www.lafayettechamber.org:
250th Birthday of the Marquis de La Fayette. Opening night of the Jazz in the Plaza season, on September 7th from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. at the corner of Mount Diablo Blvd. and Moraga Rd. Listen to the Fred Johnson Combo; at the intermission a cake will be shared to honor the memory of the Revolutionary war Hero. Thank you to Catherine Jolivet, owner of French for Fun, for planning this event with the Lafayette Chamber.

12th Annual Arts and Wine Festival on September 15th and 16th. Over 50,000 visitors are expected this year for one of most sophisticated street fairs in the East Bay. Come, stroll among stalls of art and handmade crafts, sample foods from top local restaurants, and enjoy quality wines and microbrews. Non-stop musical entertainment on three stages throughout the weekend will help spark the block party ambiance. Check the Chamber's web site for the entertainment schedule, names of merchants, road closures, etc.

Chamber Mixer, Wednesday September 12th at 5:30 p.m.; Bentley School, 1000 Upper Happy Valley Road, Lafayette
Chamber of Commerce of Moraga - www.moragabiz.com:
Chamber meeting on September 28th, at 8:00 a.m. at Terzetto Cuisine, 1419 Moraga Way in the Moraga Center. Everyone is welcome.

Orinda Chamber of Commerce - www.orindachamber.org:
Chamber Luncheon: Friday, September 28th, 12:00 noon to 1:30 p.m. (arrive early to network). Location: Orinda Country Club, 315 Camino Sobrante, Orinda; Keynote Speaker: Riley Etheridge, Certified Financial Planner, Certified Financial Analyst, Merrill Lynch Northern California Director; Topic: "Six Scintillating Steps to Retirement." Cost: \$30.00 per person (everyone is welcome).

If you have a business brief to share, please contact Sophie Braccini at sophie@lamorindaweekly.com or contact Lamorinda Weekly at 925-377-0977.

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Rheem Center Woes

...continued from page 3



Empty storefronts at Moraga's Rheem Center

Lisa Taapken, who owns "Mia and Friends," a creative specialty clothing store for girls, left the Center a few months ago. "The side of the Center where my store was is totally distressed," says Taapken. "We've seen depredation from teenagers, and many times I had to call the police," she adds, "and still we, the tenants, had to pay for any damage." Taapken now runs two "Mia and Friends" stores in Walnut Creek.

White also points out that not all Moragans are supportive of their local stores. Lori Stubblefield, of Lori's Perfect Tan, agrees: "We have as much selection and quality products in our stores than any Walnut Creek retailer, and for off-season swimwear people come from Blackhawk to shop here, but some local people just don't want to shop in Moraga." For Stubblefield, who has been building her business for eleven years, the next challenge will be the renewal of her own lease at the end of the year. She fears that if she has to face a 25% increase, Lori's Perfect Tan will be history.

Is the Rheem Center getting the wrong end of the stick in the revitalization of Moraga? The Moraga Economic Development Advisory Committee (EDAC), a group appointed by the Town to help energize business, sees a mixed picture at Rheem. EDAC points out that some businesses have been doing very well for years at the Center, but suggests that it is in the best interest of all if rents remain at fair and reasonable levels for big and small businesses alike. EDAC has hired a retail consultant, MapInfo, that will make recommendations on an economic strategy and on the types of businesses needed for both the Rheem and Moraga Centers.

Phil Vince, Moraga's Town Manager, is a strong supporter of the Rheem Center although he agrees that the

Moraga Center has been higher on the Town's priority list than has Rheem: "We have 177 acres of vacant space (at the Moraga Center), versus 7 at the Rheem Center," explains Vince, "and the Bruzzone family, which owns the Moraga Center, has been working with us for years, with experts, on the development of that space."

We made several attempts to contact Kimco for this article, but received no response to our calls inquiring into plans for revitalizing the Rheem Center, which is one of hundreds of shopping centers owned by Kimco in the US and Canada.

Buff the Nails? And the Car?

By Sophie Braccini



Professional Automotive co-owners Dave Watson and Scott McKenzie with Pinkies' Nail Salon Megan Dryden renew their agreement

Photo by Sophie Braccini

Bonnie Watson is a very practical woman who likes things done with style and efficiency. About eighteen months ago, the wife of Professional Automotive's owner Dave Watson asked the no-nonsense question: "Can I get my car washed while my nails are done next door at Pinkies?"

Why not? Furthermore, thought Dave, shouldn't anyone be able to get the same time-saving treat? So Professional Automotive and Pinkies Nail Salons got together and worked out a synergistic arrangement: while Pinkies' customers relax for a treatment, their cars are equally pampered next door. The car facility, that filtrates and recycles water, provides a detailed, by-hand cleaning of cars, including windows, stain removal and tire cleaning. The cost of the special Pinkies' car wash is \$30; the nail treatment's cost depends on the services selected.

The two stores are neighbors in Lafayette; Professional Automotive is located at 3331 Mt. Diablo Blvd. and Pinkies' at 3333 Mt. Diablo Blvd. Every day, one to three customers come for the joint service. For Watson, that has meant hundreds of new customers for his business and by the same token, the automotive facility refers customers to Pinkies.

Professional Automotive specializes in collision work, auto body and classic vintage restoration for all makes and models. The company contributes to schools and non-profit auctions and sponsors the Happy Valley baseball team.

Pinkies' owns stores in Lafayette, Danville, San Ramon, Los Altos, Burlingame and San Francisco. The salon offers a full line of manicures, pedicures, waxing and tinting treatments.



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