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business briefs

Elmwood Stationers and Ware Designs Celebrate



There will be a ribbon cutting on July 16 for one new and one re-located business in the Happy Valley Shopping Center near Trader Joe's in Lafayette. Elmwood Stationers, at 3543-D Mt. Diablo Blvd., is new to Lafayette. Ware Designs is moving from the Forge to 3643-A Mt. Diablo Blvd. The party starts at 5:00 p.m.

New Tenants in Rheem Center Building

Lamoreem Classics Gymnastics and Curves will move into the former home of 24-Hour Fitness in the Rheem Center stand-alone building that sits on Moraga Road in the coming weeks. Both are moving only a short distance and will gain much better visibility. Lamoreem Gymnastics is a long time favorite for gymnastics education for children and owner Wayne Clark always has long waiting lists for his classes. His studio was located in the back of the Rheem Center, a large facility that had no parking or windows. (More about the Lamoreem Gymnastics transition in a subsequent issue). Curves is the last of its kind in the Lamorinda area after the closing of both the Orinda and Lafayette franchises. It was tucked in the main Rheem Center building near Lamorinda Pizza. For owner Dave Reynolds, the new space will be more convenient and appealing to his growing customer base. The building the two will occupy belongs to Angelos Markets, a Modesto company, while the majority of the shopping center is owned by Kimco Realty.

Rubens Nunnemaker LLP Moves to Lafayette

1020 Aileen Street, Lafayette, 444-4026, www.RNCPAs.com
Rubens Nunnemaker LLP is a Certified Public Accounting and Consulting firm now located in Lafayette. Sharon Rubens and Steve Nunnemaker have more than 30 years of combined industry experience.

Frank Chao Seeks Fudge Fan

376 Park St Moraga, 376-1003
Frank Chow, the owner of Fudge Alley in Moraga's Rheem Center, would like to retire soon. The 80-year old recently hired CM Realty to help him find a business person interested in continuing the Fudge Alley tradition. Frank has served the young and old of Moraga and Lamorinda for decades. He has continued to nurture the business and keep the doors open, but he needs a new generation to pick up where he leaves off. "This place is my baby," said Frank, I want to go back to my native Taiwan, but I don't want to see Fudge Alley disappear." Interested parties should contact commercial real estate broker Dave Schnayer, DSchnayer@cmrealty.com.

Wine Thieves Celebrates 10th Anniversary - July 11

3401 Mt Diablo Blvd, Lafayette, 299-9070, www.winethieves.com
Congratulations to Jim, Rod and Bennett as they celebrate 10 years in Lafayette. "Wine Thieves has been one of those special businesses that always find a way to give back to the community," said Chamber of Commerce CEO Jay Lifson, "the company has been involved with practically every school and non-profit in Lafayette." To celebrate their anniversary, they have teamed with the Lafayette Arts and Science Foundation. The anniversary party will be held on Saturday, July 11 from 1:00 -4:00pm behind the Wine Thieves store at 3401 Mt. Diablo Blvd. A \$10.00 donation at the door enables guests to try some wonderful wines, enjoy food pairings and help contribute to Lafayette schools. Call 299-9070 for details. Everyone is welcome.

Ward-Young Architecture & Planning Receives Top Ranking

3435 Mt. Diablo Blvd. Suite 200, Lafayette, 283 3278, www.wyarch.com
This Lafayette architecture firm was ranked the most qualified firm to provide architectural services for upcoming State Parks projects by the California Department of Parks and Recreation. Ward-Young was selected from over 70 firms submitting qualifications from around the state and country. The firm, based in Lafayette and Tahoe/Truckee, offers multidisciplinary expertise in the fields of architecture, land planning, landscape design, and land use entitlements.

News from the Three Chambers of Commerce Lafayette:

- Lafayette Chamber of Commerce Entrepreneur's Club, Thursday, July 16, 8:30am at the Chamber office.
- Green Committee, Wednesday, July 15, 11:45 am (bring your lunch) Chamber office.
- Business Issues Meeting, Friday, June 26, 8:00am, Chamber office.
- Mixer, July 8 from 5:30 p.m. to 7 p.m. at Lafayette Tree and Landscape, 1024-A Walnut Drive. No mixer in August.

The Lafayette Chamber office will be closed from Monday, June 29 through Friday, July 3 in celebration of July 4th.

Moraga:

- July meeting Friday, July 31, 7:30 a.m.-9 a.m. at the Hacienda de las Flores.

Orinda:

- Chamber breakfast meeting on Thursday, June 25 from 8:00 a.m.-9:00 a.m. at Village Pizza, 19 Orinda Way Orinda. Cost is \$10.00 at the door. This is a relaxed coffee hour in which Chamber members can mix and mingle, share ideas, and exchange business cards.

If you have a business brief to share, please contact **Sophie Braccini** at sophie@lamorindaweekly.com

Where Are They Now?

... continued from page 1

"They are lucky to be in Lafayette, other markets in the Bay Area, including Walnut Creek, are much more impacted."

Powell's Sweet Shoppe, for example, is doing very well. "People can still afford to come here and treat themselves and their kids," says owner Zeina Hissen, "we feel very fortunate." The former French teacher who fell in love with the Powell's concept is even considering opening a second store in Contra Costa County.

Lamorinda restaurants offer a more contrasted picture; some new restaurants didn't make it, like Gigi's in Lafayette and Nino's Bay in Orinda. Others such as Metro Lafayette, Kopitiam, Yankee Pier, Knox, Chevalier and Asia Palace have endured.

"We saw the economy going down and we understood that people didn't want to spend as much," explains Jack Moore, owner of Metro, "so we adapted our menus, especially our lunch menu to make it a good deal." Moore reports that the number of people who come to the restaurant stayed the same, even if the amount per person went down. Moore feels lucky to have started his business in 2007, when business was still good, "we established our base line and then adapted to what the customers

want; we were lucky."

According to Semmelmeier, a recession serves the same purpose as a forest fire - it's a great way to get rid of the dead wood. "The businesses that will survive in this environment are the ones that bring something special to the community and have good management practices," he believes.

Many service businesses seem to have found the right recipe. Paperweight, the luxury stationary store that started two years ago at 3678-A Mount Diablo Boulevard, is doing well. "We've established a loyal customer base," says co-owner Karen Brickman, "we felt a crunch with the economy, but people are happy to shop locally and things are picking up again." Creativity, customer service and adaptability have been the keys to that success.

Peter Goldie of Sewnow fashion studio, which specializes in fashion design, sewing lessons and camps, has the same perspective. "We have grown very fast our first year, and this summer we've felt a bit of a slow down, so we've adapted and created more flexible programs for people," he said.

Canetti's Bookshop owner Jeff Koren, who set shop at 39 Moraga Way in Orinda, did not choose the easiest business niche, selling

used books in a brick and mortar store, but the young man is pleased with his first year. "The store is really catching on with the community, people enjoy the bookshop, and even the bookshop cats," he said.

One recession-resistant business is senior services; recession or not, we are all getting older. According to Kevin Reneau, who started Senior Helpers in Moraga in 2007, his business is doing well because it is not a luxury. "People sometimes try to delay making the decision, or contract for a lesser number of hours, but what we offer is what they need to continue to live safely and healthily in their homes," says Reneau, who also recently created a senior discount card for members of the community.

This article would not be complete without mention of your friendly neighborhood newspaper, the Lamorinda Weekly. "Our business plan helped us to understand the worst and the best scenarios," says Andy Scheck, founder and publisher, "knowing cost and expenses was key for our success. Our business is improving as I speak. We believe we developed a vibrant and valid product for our customers and the community."

Reporter's note: This article was not intended to be a complete list of all the businesses that opened within the past 2 1/2 years, just a visit with a few that we have featured. If you have a business perspective you'd like to share, please contact sophie@lamorindaweekly.com

Kirin Sushi Opens in Moraga

By Rosylyn Aragon Stenzel



Sushi Sam uses a torch to demonstrate Tataki, meaning grilled on the surface. This brings out the flavor in the fish being cooked on the outside and raw on the inside

New to the restaurant scene in Moraga is Kirin Sushi located near the Rheem Theatre in the Rheem Valley Shopping Center. Kirin Sushi opened on May 28th, and the name Kirin is in reference to the Kirin dragon, a mythical creature symbolizing prosperity in Asian culture. Sam Xu or better known as "Sushi Sam" is owner and solo sushi chef.

Sushi Sam brings with him over 25 years of experience in making sushi. Originally from Hong Kong, he trained in Japan to become a sushi chef. After working in New York, he came to the Bay Area in 1991 and began working as a consultant helping to set up sushi restaurants, most recently in Mountain View and Palo Alto. After helping start up a Moraga restaurant, Sushi Sam decided to open up his own sushi restaurant in Moraga. When asked why he chose Moraga he says, "The location is good, nice neighborhoods, and people are so friendly." He marvels that many have stopped by to welcome him as he was setting up his restaurant.

Besides sushi, Kirin Sushi offers a variety of traditional Japanese dishes including entrées such as Beef Teriyaki, Chicken Katsu, Udon (noodles) and Shrimp Tempura plus a long list of

appetizers. Also there is a good selection of Japanese wine, beer and Sake. But there is no question that sushi is the specialty of the house. Kirin Sushi is different than most sushi restaurants in that Japanese Fusion Sushi is featured, blending new and traditional ideas in making and creating sushi.

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