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New Year, New Businesses, and for Store Owners, New Adventures

By Sophie Braccini



Milena Mitkin in Tiny Shoes

Lamorinda may not be immune to the economic crisis—a few businesses have closed and we've seen some home foreclosures— but for the most part, the three communities remain active and vibrant. Sales tax revenue is showing modest improvement and some local stores are doing very well. Featured here are a few businesses that recently opened in the Lamorinda area, and there are more.

Tiny Feet
2 Theater Square, Orinda
317-3062

Milena Mitkin just opened Tiny Feet in Orinda's Theater Square with her husband, Marko. Nicely located across from Sweet Dreams, the tastefully decorated boutique offers a selection of quality and creative infant and children's shoes from all over the world, with brands such as Chooze, Garvalin, Primigi, and the adorable American-made Joyfolie Shoes. "We wanted to bring high-end kids shoes to Lamorinda," says Mitkin.

This business is the couple's first retail venture. He is an attorney, she was in the insurance business, and they are raising their two young boys in Moraga. "We were

welcomed and supported by Theater Square's management as soon as we presented our project," says Mitkin, "everyone believes that there is a need for such a store, that savvy and sophisticated parents are looking for the durable and unique selection we offer here."

Glamorous
1048 Brown Avenue, Lafayette
284-5636

In Lafayette, Eliza Jambokian just opened her first fashion boutique. Glamorous is a special occasion and cocktail dress store where mothers-of-the-bridal and women who want an elegant look can find an assortment of shapes, fabrics and colors that will accommodate many tastes. An Acalanes graduate, the young woman's shop is next to her father's Creative Alteration and Dry Cleaning at 1048 Brown Avenue. "There is a good synergy between our two businesses," she says, "and the business community on Brown is growing, creating a very good environment for retail." The seasonal boutique is currently offering a collection geared to the holidays and the cold weather. "Come February I will have bridal dresses, then I will add the spring and summer fashions in the same spirit of special occasions," says Jambokian, who was a design specialist at Nordstrom, and worked for five years as a visual merchandiser and manager in retail stores. For her own store she's done extensive research into brands that would appeal to local women; tailored, classy outfits with a bit of sexiness, and she tried to keep it reasonably priced. She carries brands such as Due Per Due and Sangria, among many others. "As soon as I started bringing dresses into my father's store, even before I could open my own, they started selling," says Jambokian. "I am very excited for my first business—I am expressing my creativity here and believe it will be very successful."

L Silhouettes
518 Center St., Moraga
247-5098

A few doors from TJ Maxx, a new gift/toy store, L Silhouettes, opened just in time for the Christmas season. Owner Lulu Torres' brother, Gabriel, was in the store when we paid them a visit. "The Christmas season has been good for the business," he said, "it was like we were the talk of the town!" The store is quite large and still has ample room for more merchandise. "We wanted to have more things for Christmas, but we were so new that we couldn't get all we wanted," says Lulu Torres. Right now the store has a nice assortment of games such as Legos, stuffed animals, porcelain collectibles and jewelry for different age groups. "We've had parents coming in for gifts for teens and tweens and we suggested Hello Kitty jewelry, or some of our very nice watches," says Torres, adding that many people are asking for more toys and that she's happy to hear suggestions from customers. "We are getting Japanese crystal 3D puzzles in the coming days, and more. People should check us out and we'll get what they want if we don't have it already!" says the eager young businesswoman who, with L Silhouettes, is starting her first business in Moraga.

Wonderful Spa

450 Center St., Moraga
376-9988

Open for just a few months, Wonderful Spa is already creating a customer base with clients such as Orinda resident Joel Schaffer. We found him conversing in fluent Mandarin with owner Coco Zhang after a relaxing treatment in the little massage parlor nestled between TJ Maxx and Tuesday Morning in the Rheem Center. "We have quite a lot of foot traffic from people who come to the big stores," says Zhang, "and we are growing from repeat customers and word of mouth." This Moraga business, which is not affiliated with the Wonderful Spa Center in Orinda, does have a sister establishment located in Danville. Wonderful Spa specializes in foot massage, also known as reflexology, as well as full body massage. The cost for an hour of reflexology is \$25 and for a full body massage, \$40.

Lamorinda Weekly business articles are intended to inform the community about local business activities, not to endorse a particular company, product or service.



Eliza Jambokian in Glamorous



Gabriel Torres in L Silhouettes



Coco Zhang and Joel Schaffer in Wonderful Spa Photos Sophie Braccini

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