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## Families Are Good for Business

By Sophie Braccini



Stevie Coyle and Colleen McCormick Photo Sophie Braccini

There are people in Lamorinda who refute the idea that one should never mix business and family. Colleen McCormick and her uncle, Stevie Coyle; Lane Nemeth and her daughter, Tara Nemeth, have found motivation and synergy working together. The mother-daughter team started a new jewelry company, The Ultimate Sparkle, while McCormick asked her uncle to join in the expansion of her business, adding access to high-end luthier-made acoustic guitars to Lamorinda Music with the opening of Mighty Fine Guitars next door. The family ties, made of common roots and values, are helping the businesses grow.

When McCormick opened Lamorinda Music in Lafayette three years ago, she said that music was a family trait. At the time she didn't mention her uncle, Stevie Coyle, singer and co-founder of the Americana band the Waybacks, who released his solo album *Ten-In-One* in 2010. But when her business expanded and the property owner said McCormick could have more space, she thought of Coyle.

"We expanded our studio to be able to offer more classes, but there was definitely room for more, so I contacted Uncle Stevie (Coyle)," says McCormick. The musician was getting ready to settle down a bit. He lives in

Marin and his lifestyle over the past 20 years had been "on the road again."

"I felt it was time for me to anchor somewhere and go further into my passion for beautifully made guitars and for teaching," he says.

Coyle's new spot, Mighty Fine Guitars, is adjacent to Lamorinda Music. The musician consigns and sells unique acoustic instruments. He believes that the passionate musicians who crowd the Healdsburg Guitar Festival every two years will like having a Bay Area store that carries the treasures they seek.

Coyle's new space includes a completely soundproof lesson studio. "I've been giving fingerstyle guitar lessons for years and years and I still find that hugely satisfying," says Coyle. Four additional soundproof studios were also added as part of Lamorinda Music's renovation, as well as a beautiful performance room, The Big Room, where Coyle recently performed.

"We can have gigs in that room, and it will also be used for performances by Renee DeWeese and Rena Wilson who operate the Lamorinda Theater Company (see the business article in the May 9 issue) above us and with whom we also partner," adds McCormick. This part of Lafayette Circle is really starting to become a small performing arts quarter.

### Family Jewels

While McCormick expands her business with her family connections, Nemeth wanted to create something new with her daughter, Tara. The business woman is not starting her first venture with jewelry and The Ultimate Sparkle. An early childhood educator by training, she started Discovery Toys in 1978 and sold it to Avon in 1997. The distribution system used then for toys is the same for jewelry now: direct sales through a network of consultants who organize parties to present the merchandise.

"We wanted to do something that would be creative and fulfilling together," says the mother. "We've traveled everywhere to find the right jewelers who could create the exclusive jewelry that we love and that women will love."

The collection is unique and very diverse, made of metal with semi-precious stones, wood or even fabric. Some pieces are quite striking and ornate, while others are more modern and simple.

"We have something for everybody," says Nemeth's daughter, Tara, "and the prices are in the \$20 to \$80 range." As they display the pieces on a long table in her mother's home in Lafayette's Happy Valley, the two women share their joy and passion for enhancing women's glamour with necklaces, bracelets and earrings and rings.

The mother-daughter duo started their new company a few months ago, and they are in the process of building their network of consultants. They are also looking for local ladies who would like to host a 'Jewelry Party' - a nice way to have a fun moment with friends and get jewelry pieces at a discount.

For more information about The Ultimate Sparkle, you can visit [TheUltimateSparkle.com](http://TheUltimateSparkle.com). For more information about Mighty Fine Guitars, contact [Stevie@mightyfineguitars.com](mailto:Stevie@mightyfineguitars.com).

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