



EXPERIENCE MATTERS

Linda Ehrich
Realtor
93 Moraga Way
Orinda, CA 94563
925.698.1452
Linda@LindaEhrich.com
www.LindaEhrich.com
DRE# 01330298



LINDA EHRICH



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Local businesses weather residual effect of coronavirus fears



Sign posted at Rheem CVS

Photos Vera Kochan



Toilet paper and paper towels nearly gone at this grocery.

By Vera Kochan

Amid nationwide fears, event cancellations, stock market plunges and lower than average patronage of retail businesses the week of March 9 Moraga's merchants were weathering the residual effects of the coronavirus with positive attitudes and a range from small to major dents in customer activity. What a difference a week makes.

Bartender/waiter for Pen-nini's Restaurant, Wyatt Miskel said, "It's been a little bit slower than usual during lunch, but nights are a lot slower. The bar is doing really

well."

Now, following a decree by Gov. Gavin Newsom on March 15 all bars, wineries and brew-pubs in California will be temporarily closed. Bill Chao, a manager at Chef Chao, is extremely disappointed with the loss in diners during recent weeks. "Business is very, very slow. Regulars are still coming in." Restaurants must now limit customers to 50% capacity.

Rheem Theatre Assistant Manager Tiffanie Cone said weekends were still busy, but said "it could be that we've begun alcohol service and that's a disinfectant. Our \$5 Tuesdays are also busy." So far, movie

theatres remain open, but so-cial distancing is recommended.

CVS in the Rheem Shopping Center posted a handwritten sign on bright orange paper at their entrance door letting customers know what items are out of stock. Shipments of zinc, toilet paper, hand sanitizers, rubbing alcohol, masks, gloves, disinfectant wipes and sprays are not expected to arrive at the store until St. Patrick's Day. One clerk commented, "We're out of everything - it's crazy."

Rheem Starbucks Assistant Manager Jackie Bassett said mornings were as busy as usual the week of March 9, but

now the store is limiting purchases to mobile and store pickup only.

Long lines greeted customers at Diablo Foods in Lafayette and other grocery chains over the weekend, with certain sections of the store's shelves nearly empty, especially bread, paper products and hand sanitizers, baby diapers and other childcare products, where items would normally be fully stocked.

Empty shelves had handwritten signs tacked to them, explaining how purchases are limited to between one or four per customer.

According to one store employee, even canned goods and

nonperishable food items sold at a higher rate than normal.

Licensed Professional Counselor Bill Prasad breaks down the psychology behind bare store shelves. "This is very much at times a lot about copy-cat behavior. If you see someone in the store stocking up on toilet paper, you're thinking, 'OK. I should do that. That seems to be a good idea. I'll do it.'"

Prasad said that this type of behavior is also about control. "Stocking up on things may make you feel better, because you feel like you are taking some kind of action. For some people, just washing their hands, they feel like that's not enough, they have to do more." He advises people to just take what they need, because even though "stocking up on things may feel good, it could be harmful also because it could create shortages."

Moraga Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Kathe Nelson said, "Moraga retailers, restaurants and organizations have been quite transparent with the precautions they are taking to follow the guidelines presented both by the state of California and the CDC in regards to the COVID-19 virus. ... It is important to continue supporting our local businesses. They remain operational to serve us, the community."

Moraga welcomes new Chamber president



Brandy Ford

Photo Vera Kochan

The Moraga Chamber of Commerce has selected Brandy Ford as the new president of the chamber's board of directors. Ford has served on the board for approximately four years and is currently Mechanics Bank's branch manager. Ford stated, "The main reason I wanted to volunteer for the position is to continue to make an impact on the community." - V. Kochan

Storm drain easements

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The resolution also clarifies that the town will only take responsibility for easements that have been accepted by the council. Any easements offered to the town that haven't been accepted by the council will be the

responsibility of the property owner. The council additionally allowed for a process and established an acceptance prioritization whereby the town can accept easements of dedication in the future if any funding becomes available.



Town Council

Wednesday, March 25, 7 p.m.

Council Chambers and Community Meeting Room, 335 Rheem Blvd.

Planning Commission: Monday, April 6, 7 p.m.

Council Chambers and Community Meeting Room, 335 Rheem Blvd.

Park and Recreation Commission: Tuesday, April 21, 7 p.m., Council Chambers and Community Meeting Room, 335 Rheem Blvd.

Moraga School District Board Meetings : Thursday, April 14, 7 p.m., Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School Auditorium, 1010 Camino Pablo, Moraga www.moraga.k12.ca.us. See also AUHSD meeting page A2



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