

# Lafayette's Artisan Walk displays the best of local business and art

By Elaine Borden Chandler



Photo Elaine Borden Chandler

**Shoppers walk down Mount Diablo Boulevard and stop at Susan Goldie's booth at the Lafayette Artisan Fair, Saturday, May 11.**

On the hot and sunny Saturday afternoon of May 11, Lafayette's downtown was bustling. Shoppers chatted with local artisans displaying their crafts in booths that dotted Mount Diablo Boulevard and wandered into local businesses showcasing locally sourced goods. A knot of women laughed together with Susan Goldie in a booth full of her paintings at Abode Flooring and Finishing, while a father and his son studied Jeff Heyman's photographs in front of Reasonable Books. Teenagers goggled at a mass of Mother's Day bouquets inside Floral Arts Florist and Arlynn Bloom painted vibrant watercolors in front of Hollie's Homegrown. People called out to friends they hadn't seen since before Covid. Rhoda Larner and her friend Adrienne Jones came from out of town to do some Mother's Day shopping. "We're excited about the brand-new vintage store, Vintage Vida, that just opened on Tuesday," said Larner. The cause of the all this exuberant activity was Lafayette's inaugural Artisan Walk.

The idea for the Artisan Walk came from the first meeting of the Retail Committee, a new sub-committee of the Lafayette Chamber of Commerce. They wanted their kickoff event to be a downtown walk where participating businesses would each have a partnered artist or artisan, and would either display the artist's products and art inside the store or have the artist themselves with their products at a table at the business.

Many of the local businesses collaborated with artists with whom they already have ties. Fleurette Sevin of Artglass displayed her jewelry and art in front of Lamorinda Music. "I make things out of recycled musical instrument keys and I'm a musician so I've known them for a while," she explained. In Broadway Plaza, Jeff Kent of Enumero Cribbage Boards had a booth in front of Sharp Bicycle, from whom he and his wife bought a tandem bicycle in 2004. "When I heard Matt and Sally had an opening in front of the shop I asked and they were gracious enough to say 'Sure, no problem'," he said. Not all businesses had a connection with an artist and in-

stead asked the Retail Committee to set them up with one. Some forged new connections and some ended up re-vealing old, unrealized connections. When paired together, photographer Juleen Lapporte of Studio Jule and Leah Hendrickson of Wax A Peel realized that they share mutual friends.

The committee hoped not only to motivate more shops to collaborate with artists throughout the year, but also to encourage residents to shop locally instead of online. "It's so easy to just buy on Amazon. We need to bring the awareness that there's benefits to shopping here and meeting the business owners, meeting the kids or retirees that work there, so the employees and the business owners are your neighbors and community members," said Holly Sonne, the Communications Director of the Lafayette Chamber and coordinator of the Artisan Walk. "It's very easy to get stuck online these days," Sara Regan, Executive Director of the Lafayette Chamber of Commerce, expanded. "But we need a vibrant downtown in order to sustain and keep Lafayette where it is."

According to Regan, the response across the board has been very positive. They are already thinking about how to improve next year, like getting more shoppers to the more remote stores. The Lafayette Retail Committee plans on this being the first of many Artisan Walks and will soon be meeting to plan events in the summer and fall that will support local small businesses and nonprofits.



The aurora borealis glowing in the sky, seen from the hills of Lafayette on May 10. This rare display was caused by the most powerful geomagnetic storm to hit Earth since 2003. —Elaine Borden Chandler



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