

# Life in LAMORINDA

## Lamorinda Businesses Catch the WiFi Wave

By Jennifer Wake



Ruben (19), searches the Internet at SiSi's Caffé, Moraga



Wi-Fi sign at MacDonld's in Lafayette



Panache Café in Lafayette offers free Wi-Fi

With the explosion of wireless Internet use, local restaurants and businesses have been expanding operations into the Ether, adding WiFi networks – which provide wireless, high speed connectivity for computer users – to their businesses to attract new customers.

When the owner of SiSi's Caffé, Cathy Corsi, decided to upgrade the computer system at her Moraga café two months ago, the technician suggested she add the WiFi component.

"I thought, 'Why not?'" she said. "We have been wanting to do it for a long time, but never got it done." Corsi now sees patrons conducting business meetings or doing homework on their computers both inside her café and outside on her patio tables.

The difference with SiSi's Caffé, however, is that the connection is free. Although there are many establishments in the Lamorinda area that offer WiFi connection, such as the Starbuck's in Orinda's Theatre Square, many of them charge for the service.

Panache Café in Lafayette, which also offers free WiFi access, installed the system to attract customers to their shop near Trader Joe's. "We hoped people would come in to use the Internet and stay to buy some coffee," said one employee.

The idea is working.

On a quiet Wednesday morning, Training Coordinator Laura Duede sat at a corner table, files surrounding her open laptop, a steaming cup of coffee close within reach.

"I was in the area and looking for an Internet café," Duede said. "My friend from Lafayette told me to come here. When I do work remotely, it's better than working at home. I get a lot more done at coffee shops."

And it's not just cafés that are catching on. In the past few years, WiFi connections have been popping up at locations throughout the United States, including bus and airport terminals, local McDonalds restaurants, and even campgrounds in obscure locations like Columbia Falls, Montana. Cities like Pleasanton and parts of the Silicon Valley have installed WiFi transmitters to provide free network access for outdoor seating at downtown businesses.

Saint Mary's College has WiFi systems in their library as well many classrooms and other areas on campus. They intend to include WiFi in all of its dorms by next year.

For SiSi's Caffé employee Ali Drury, who attends UC Davis, having WiFi as a college student is vital. "I can bring my laptop to campus and get work done between classes," she said. "We had to have wireless in our apartment. We have six people, and

that's six computers." The trick is making sure the connection is strong enough for the demand. Some business owners in cities offering the free service complain about spotty access to the Internet from sidewalk cafes and in dining rooms, and Jet Blue has had complaints by passengers who were unable to log on to the airline's free service because of an overloaded system. For now, Lamorinda cities are taking a wait-and-see approach before installing the service on a broad scale, relying on individual business owners to take the lead. For Corsi, it's all about stepping into the 21st century. "I'm so excited about doing this," she said.

For a partial list of WiFi locations in the Lamorinda area, visit [www.wi-fihotspotlist.com](http://www.wi-fihotspotlist.com).



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## Keeping Cool in Lamorinda, from page 1

By Sophie Braccini

Lamorinda is usually blessed with mild weather; it's rarely too hot to move or too cold to even consider leaving the warmth of our homes. But on those several days that seem to come each summer when the mercury rises above our comfort level, a cool splash in the water is a welcome relief.

It can be hard to find a public place in Lamorinda to frolic in the water. Our area is strewn with private clubs, from the low key "Cabana" of the Campolindo Homeowners Association to the posh Orinda

Country Club. But for those who do not own a pool and are not "members," splashes are scarce.

For the kids, Moraga Commons, at the corner of Moraga Rd and St Mary's Blvd, offers a fun sprinkler-like experience where your little ones can delight themselves for hours. Kids have also been seen splashing gleefully in public fountains, but this is not really the purpose for which these decorative structures were intended.

For public swimming, your only option is the Soda

Aquatic Center, behind Campolindo High School on Moraga Rd; a lap swim can be purchased a ticket at a time. Hours until August 17 are Monday to Friday 7:00-9:30am 12:00- 2:30pm and 11:30 to 2:30 on weekends. There is no recreational swimming at this time, but... stay tuned!

And don't forget the old Slip 'N Slide that can refresh children of all ages, including parents who don't mind the added benefit of providing a source of endless amusement for their neighbors.

## Town Takes Over This Summer's Concerts from Foundation

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With the nuisance exemption stalled and the concerts continuing, the Foundation brought the issue to a head by requesting that the Town agree to defend the Foundation and hold it harmless from any future lawsuits. The Town's liability attorney rejected that proposal on the theory that the Foundation, not the Town, controlled the concerts. The Foundation responded by offering to assign the band contracts, the sound equipment, and the supervision of the concerts for the rest of

the season to the Town, except that the Foundation would continue to operate the snack bar.

The Council unanimously accepted the Foundation's assignment agreement with several amendments proposed by Councilmember Dave Trotter, including requiring the Foundation to pay the Town \$5,000 for the assignment. Trotter said the money would cover the remaining payments due to the bands plus \$750 for additional costs the Town would incur to supervise the

concerts.

Foundation President Howard Harpham said after the meeting that he was happy with the outcome and that the Foundation would accept the amendments, including the \$5,000 payment. Foundation representatives told the Council that the Foundation would be happy to resume supervising the concerts if the nuisance exemption is adopted. Without that exemption, however, the future of next year's concerts remains uncertain.

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