

# business briefs

**New Businesses and Ribbon Cuttings:  
Gigi, 1005 Brown Ave., Lafayette  
962-0882**

Chef and owner Jeff Amber wanted to start a new adventure in an educated and sophisticated community. For his first restaurant, he acquired and renovated the cottage that was once home to Kaffee Barbara. Prior to starting Gigi, Amber worked at Moose's in San Francisco and Chow. Amber uses fresh, local ingredients to create his unique Northern California cuisine, in dishes such as stuffed globe squash with oregano prawns and sweet roasted corn cream.

**Nino's Bay Restaurant, 2 Theater Square, Orinda  
253-1327**

The restaurant that just opened in Orinda Theater Square has created a new Mediterranean-inspired menu with salads from Greece and Italy and an assembly of familiar dishes such as veal scaloppini or crab cakes with peppered aioli. Nino's offers a sports bar featuring a variety of appetizers and assorted beer, wines and liquors, both domestic and imported.

**Kopitiam, 3647 Mt. Diablo Blvd, Lafayette  
299-1653**

In Singapore and neighboring countries the term Kopitiam means "coffee shop," and the Lafayette version offers breakfast, lunch and dinner to-go accompanied by a traditional hot beverage. This Malaysian/Singaporean restaurant offers several unusual dishes, including interesting vegetarian options such as the "silken cloud" made with soft tofu, greens, a zesty sweet and sour sauce and crushed peanuts. Many traditional Singaporean dishes with chicken are also available. The lunch menu is very reasonably priced and dinner dishes are "to-go" only. Kopitiam is conveniently located next to Trader Joe's.

**Diverse Business News:**

**Meridian Consulting, Inc., 44 Heather Lane, Orinda  
258-0304 www.meridianconsulting.com**

Angela Gonzalez has been named the 2008 President-Elect of the Northern California Chapter of the Professional Coaches and Mentors Association (www.pcaonline.com). She is currently the President and a co-founder of Meridian Consulting, Inc., and is an Executive Business Coach who brings more than 20 years experience to her clients in leadership development, coaching and training. She specializes in helping clients build constructive business relationships at all levels of the organization.

**Coldwell Banker Residential Brokerage, 5 Moraga Way, Orinda  
360-1177 coldwellbanker.com**

Coldwell Banker Residential Brokerage, the largest provider of residential real estate services in Northern California, announced it is launching a unique new certification program for Spanish-speaking agents designed to increase customer service levels for the region's fast-growing Latino community. In Orinda, two Spanish-speaking agents will be trained to become "Casa specialists."

**Lafayette Tree & Landscaping, Inc., PO Box 1116, Lafayette  
284-7816, www.lafreetree.com**

Thomas Raeth, president of Lafayette Tree and Landscaping, was awarded the California Landscape Contractors Association (CLCA) Award at the San Francisco Flower and Garden Show for its "Martini Modern" display garden, designed by Michelle Swanson of Cultivate Art Design in Santa Cruz. The company also received two first place awards in June's CLCA Bay Area chapter Beautification Awards, one for Medium Residential Installation (Laufenberg Residence) and the second for Landscape Renovation Installation (Hogland Residence).

**News From the Three Chambers of Commerce:**

**Lafayette Chamber of Commerce -  
www.lafayettechamber.org;**



Total Eclipse  
Rocked the Plaza  
last Friday

Last Rock the Plaza performance by "Stage Frite" on August 24th. Don't forget your picnic! Show begins at 6:00pm. The Jazz in the Plaza Series, free every Friday night in September, 6:30-8:30, kicks off on September 7 with the Fred Randolph Combo.

Save the date: Lafayette Art and Wine Festival on September 15th and 16th.

**Chamber of Commerce of Moraga -  
www.moragabiz.com;**

August 25th from 5 to 10 p.m., the Chamber of Commerce of Moraga invites the community to an authentic Hawaiian "Luau" with live entertainment and Hawaiian buffet. Advance tickets are \$45 for adults and \$10 for children 6-12 (children under 6 are free). For more information, go to www.moragalauu.com or call (925) 262-4277.

**Orinda Chamber of Commerce -  
www.orindachamber.org;**

If you have a business brief to share, please contact  
Sophie Braccini at [sophie@lamorindaweekly.com](mailto:sophie@lamorindaweekly.com) or  
contact Lamorinda Weekly at 925-377-0977.

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**The Apple Doesn't Fall Far from the Tree in Lamorinda's  
Intergenerational Family Businesses** ...continued from page 5

For Sarah McDonnell of Orinda's McDonnell Nursery, a family business started by her Grandfather in 1933 in Oakland, after working for years behind the scenes in their Moraga Way location she knew she loved the business. "I wanted to get more experience," she says, "and I wanted to make 100% sure if I joined my Dad, who's been running the business since 1980, that it was right for me."

After getting a Business degree from Cal Poly in Agricultural studies and an MBA from St. Mary's, Sarah moved to San Francisco and worked for a graphic design firm. "I didn't want to see the nursery leave the family," she says. "I never felt any pressure from my Dad to join him. The decision had to come totally from me and it did. When I told him I was ready, he said, "When do you want to start?"

**The Challenges**

As harmonious as it all sounds, these business families cited several areas as needing careful attention. New ideas recommended by family members joining long running intergenerational businesses don't often meet with enthusiastic reception. Smooth transitions are worked out while exercising caution when bringing in new family members, and include consideration of the impact on the rest of the employees and on loyal customers and clients.

When Dan Stokes wife, Siobhan, decided that the Floral Department needed improvement, she offered to come in and give it some attention. Within a short time the department was honored by Floral Management magazine. "I was a little nervous having my wife coming in and telling us what to do," he says. "But she worked with us for eight years and made us all look good."

Kosich and Callahan agree a smooth transition depends on going slowly, staging interviews between new team members and clients and allowing time to help new relationships form.

Joining Dad had a few struggles at first "like any family working together," Colleen Callahan says. "You have to be sensitive to different management styles and generational experiences, along with men and women's perspectives. "We had our ups and downs in the beginning as we adjusted to roles of Agent and Boss from Daughter and Dad."

Younger generation family member all admitted the need to prove themselves to non-family employees comes with added pressure. Requirements of working hard for the same or more hours in many positions, learning every area and knowing it takes time to earn respect were echoed by everyone.

Different generations often look at ideas from very different perspectives. At Diablo Foods, Dan Stokes is eager to put in a Sushi Bar and introduce new food products to satisfy changing customer food tastes. His Dad, Ed, says, "I'm not in favor of it and they know it." With Ed it's clear, his opinions may be strong, but not irreversible, and he proudly points out his Daughter, Son and Grandson run the popular food store and he stays away from meetings about controversial ideas like the new Sushi Bar (scheduled to

With Sarah McDonnell's previous marketing experience, she's created the first website for McDonnell's Nursery, branded the nursery with a graphic logo now embroidered on employees' shirts, and she's instituted customer rewards programs and educational workshops. Embracing new ideas, when the old ones "work just fine," is a challenge for her Dad. "She wants to put in a POS system but I'm resisting," he says. "I don't want anything that might take



Sarah & Dan McDonnell, McDonnell Nursery

away from customer service and make our customers a number."

**Looking Ahead**

All three businesses have succession plans in place and agree that passing along the legacies that launched their successful family businesses is integral. Work ethics and personal customer service rank at the top of everyone's list as to what sets them apart from their competition as well as being able to easily adapt services and products to meet changing needs.

Sarah McDonnell says many of their customers are first time gardeners and need education on what plants suit their settings. She urges her nursery staff to take whatever time is necessary to ensure customers know how to maintain green and growing gardens.

Greg Kosich, who will take over his Dad's insurance services someday, he says he won't change anything but may introduce technology, update procedures and institute time saving policies. "I grew up with technology," he says. "I wouldn't change much but if I can find a way to save five minutes with a more efficient system, I'll do it."

Will succession come easily or quickly?

Starting with a few days off and a few more golf games, transitions most likely will come slowly with no pressure from younger generations. Ed Stokes and his family hope it won't be anytime soon. "He's our spark

plug, the engine that runs our machine," says his son Dan. As for Ed, he says he loves their customers so much he hates to be away from the store.

When Dick Callahan thinks about stepping down, he says he's worked for forty years and he's not ready: "I still feel like a kid in a candy store."

There may be no set time yet for retirement, but with all the harmony, congeniality and respect, one thing's for sure. The apple didn't fall far from the tree. The products may change, but the service and attention we enjoy today will stay just the way we like it.

**Colleen Callahan's  
Tips for Success in  
Intergenerational  
Family Businesses**

1. Agree there are times to wear different "hats" and clarify your needs before a discussion. (e.g. "I need a Dad's advice" or "I need you to be a sales agent." This helps to separate the roles for getting targeted answers.)
2. Schedule time outside of work to get together when work related topics are not allowed. Family trips, outings or gatherings for example.
3. Transition the business management/ownership when the senior person is ready and desirous of giving up the leadership role. The junior person taking over may be ready and eager earlier, but should not "grab" the reins before the older generation is prepared to let go.
4. Have a clear and concise timeline of when a succession/transition will happen, how you will handle the change and what the roles will be.

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**Gerard Rose Makes Move with Dodge**  
*Former Butler-Conti Dodge sales professional moves with franchise*

WALNUT CREEK, CA—Gerard Rose served Butler-Conti Dodge's loyal customers for over 14 years. The news of the dealership closing came as a shock to him because Butler-Conti had been an integral part of Lafayette and the surrounding community for years. Fortunately, the Dodge franchise found a new home with another longstanding member of the community: Michael Stead's Walnut Creek Chrysler Jeep.



Gerard Rose can offer his clients even greater prices and benefits now that he is at Walnut Creek Chrysler Jeep Dodge.

"If it were not for Stead's tremendous reputation in Contra Costa, I might have looked elsewhere," confessed Gerard. "As it turns out, I now have the opportunity to continue serving my former clients, work with some great new clients, and offer them all some services I wasn't able to in the past."

Now officially Michael Stead's Walnut Creek Chrysler Jeep Dodge, the dealership is an award-winning business with a state-of-the-art Service Center and a much larger inventory of vehicles than Gerard was able to offer at his prior location.

"I love the Dodge product, and they have some fantastic new models," shared Gerard, "but I'm really impressed with the Chrysler and Jeep lines."

**"Walnut Creek Chrysler Jeep Dodge  
is allowing Gerard pricing incentives  
throughout August"**

Walnut Creek Chrysler Jeep Dodge's General Manager, Judy Dobbert, wasted no time in making sure Gerard felt secure in making the move. "We made him a Fleet Manager, which gives him significant control over how he prices vehicles for his clients."

To welcome Gerard's clients from his days at Butler-Conti, and to introduce him to his new customers, Walnut Creek Chrysler Jeep Dodge is allowing Gerard pricing incentives throughout the month of August. Please feel free to contact him with any questions at his new location.

Michael Stead's  
**WALNUT CREEK**  
CHRYSLER Jeep DODGE

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**(925) 937-5060**  
[www.steadauto.com](http://www.steadauto.com)