

# business briefs

## Jamie Westdal is Delighted with Her New Location

### Jamie Westdal Studio,

323 Brookwood Road, Orinda, 254-9689

Bay Area photographer Jamie Westdal recently moved into her colorful new studio next to Loard's Ice Cream in Orinda. After 16 years in Theatre Square, Jamie's growing volume of new and repeat customers mandated the search for a larger location. "This is a beautiful space, with lots of light and room to welcome clients. I'll be able to more comfortably shoot large groups, and help my clients select from dozens of gorgeous custom-made frames for their portraits," says Westdal. She has photographed hundreds of families, babies, teenagers, grandparents, dogs, brides and professionals in Lamorinda.



**Got Signs?**  
The draft for the new Moraga Sign Ordinance is on the agenda of the Town's Council for discussion on October 24th. Interested parties should come to Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School at 7:30p.m.

### Lafayette's New Bank Names New CFO

#### California Bank of Commerce, 270 Lafayette Cir, Lafayette

283-2265 - www.californiabankofcommerce.com/



Left to right as you look at the picture: Tom Park - Executive Vice President, Mark DeVincenti - Chief Marketing Officer, John Rossell - President & CEO, Roxy Klein - Director and Chair of the Investment Committee, Virginia Robbins - Chief Administrative Officer, Steve Shelton - Executive Vice President  
Photo Katy Dyer

On October 11th, John Rossell, the Bank's CEO, announced the appointment of Randall Greenfield as Chief Financial Officer. Since August, Thomas Byrom had been acting in a consulting capacity and has been part-time CFO. Rossell pointed at Greenfield's 30 years of commercial bank finance experience. In his previous positions, Mr. Greenfield has served as CFO for several successful commercial banks, including most recently at Diablo Valley Bank in Danville. (Diablo Valley Bank was acquired in June by Heritage Commerce Corp., the parent of Heritage Bank of Commerce) California Bank of Commerce opened in June and expects to move to its permanent Lafayette's offices in the Mercantile on Mount Diablo Blvd. by the end of the month.

### Chambers of Commerce:

#### Lafayette Chamber of Commerce,

100 Lafayette Circle, Lafayette - www.lafayettechamber.org

Last month, the Chamber revived the Business Issues/Governmental Affairs Committee. At the September meeting many topics were brought up. They included (among many others): Downtown Strategic Plan, Measure "J", Regional Housing Needs, Could we ever support a sales tax increase? New Mercantile, Failed Roads Measure, and Woodbury and Lafayette Park Terrace projects. On October 25th at 8 a.m., the Committee Chair, Larry Blodgett, will decide with participants on which projects to work on and they will be assigned to members for research. The purpose is to get the business community involved in community affairs. The October meeting is open to all.

The Lafayette Chamber will participate to a joint Business Showcase with the Pleasant Hill, Concord and Hispanic Chambers on November 8th. This event is co-sponsored by the Lafayette, Pleasant Hill, Concord and Hispanic Chambers. Reservations are now being accepted, applications can be found on the Chamber's website, www.lafayettechamber.org. Last year over 600 visitors and 140 vendors participated. Hurry, this event sells out.

#### Chamber of Commerce of Moraga

www.moragachamber.org

Chamber meeting on October 26th, at 8:00 a.m. at Terzetto Cuisine, 1419 Moraga Way in the Moraga Center. Everyone is welcome.

#### Orinda Chamber of Commerce, 24 Orinda Way, Orinda

www.orindachamber.org:

After Hours Mixer, Tuesday, October 23rd, 2007 - 5:30 to 7:00pm. Location: Park Place Wealth Advisors, 18 Orinda Way, Orinda. A great opportunity to meet Chamber members, open to all.

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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## 2 Years Later: Assessing the Impact of OSH on the Local Retail Scene

My most valuable assets are my customers and my employees. I can only hope our customers appreciate the benefits we provide to the communities we serve."

Snider gives every impression he's a fighter who trusts the high level of service his staff provides and the quality of merchandise he sells is making a difference. Across the Way carries moderate to high-end furnishings and accessories for the home and garden. "OSH has had little impact on our lifestyle store," added Snider. He believes this is an encouraging sign local residents value great customer service and high quality products above other transient considerations.

Another local merchant who might have been seriously impacted is Kenny Murakami, owner of Moraga Garden Center. Indeed, Murakami faced a 16% decrease in business the first 2 quarters following OSH's opening. Now, after 2 years of competing with OSH, Kenny has recaptured all of his lost business. "I can't say I'm happy about OSH coming to town," comments the master gardener, "but at

the moment, I'm more concerned about the weather than I am about OSH." Murakami believes that his ability to recapture business is the result of OSH's focus on quick turn over plants, such as inexpensive annuals. Murakami sees himself in the business of making people better gardeners, which emanates from his deep knowledge of plants and the endless variety of what he has to offer.

As for local customers, they seem to be equally opportunistic. Kathy, a mother of two young children reported to prefer shopping at OSH because she can use a shopping cart to sit her children. Nancy, a busy working mother just refuses to go North of Moraga Way and stops at OSH when she's in need of colorful flowers for her garden. Others are avid supporters of the locally owned businesses, "when you want expert advice on plants and vegetables, there is no place like Kenny's," confides Rob, an amateur Moraga gardener. Jennifer, a Moraga resident for 8 years, wouldn't go anywhere else than to Snider's shops: "there's always somebody to

give me the expert advice or tip I need and I often go to "Across the Way" for gifts."

Beyond Moraga, the impact of OSH on local retailers is minimal and no other nursery or hardware stores reported any significant loss of business. It is quite understandable when looking at the OSH store's demographics. OSH store customers are roughly 50% Moraga residents, 15% Orinda residents, 20% Lafayette residents, and the rest are contractors that come from further away. This could be a weakness of this store in that it has difficulty reaching customers beyond the Moraga borders. One might wonder if our small suburb can sustain a 33,000 square foot store like OSH.

Other ways local stores contribute to the community are local jobs and contributions to community organizations and non-profits. Evensen's OSH store belongs to a corporate group with a set of established policies and procedures and he sometimes has to wage an uphill battle to be able to contribute to local organizations and events. He was happy last year to have been able to

## ... continued from page 7

secure a \$1000 grant in plants for the Camino Pablo School garden and his store now supports a local baseball team as well.

On the other hand, locally owned Moraga Hardware & Lumber has had to significantly curtail its once very generous donation policy to local sports teams, all Eagle scout projects, the Moraga Education Foundation, Lamorinda schools, and local charities. "My ability to give back to the community we serve is directly related to the support I receive from our customers. When people support locally owned and operated stores, business owners have the opportunity to give back to the community they belong to and they love to do it!" says Snider, who has lived in Moraga since 1989 and has two children in local school districts. "Locally owned and operated businesses can do more for their community than chain stores owned by publicly traded companies because we are loyal to our community, not a group of shareholders. If we have the community's support, we will give back!"

## Tom Frainier: Character Wanted!

### By Sophie Braccini

When I met Tom Frainier he was wearing a paper hair bonnet that made him look quite friendly and approachable, in spite of his towering height. As CEO, co-owner and "Chief Boot Licker" of Semifreddi's breads (as reads his business card) he runs one of the most successful businesses in the East Bay, in partnership with his brother-in-law. But this Moraga dad is not your traditional successful businessman and there's more than one facet to his portrait.

Frainier joined Semifreddi's, the family business, after interrupting a promising career at the Clorox Co. in 1988. "I am interesting in controlling my own life," he affirms, and being part of a big company, even at the executive level, wasn't giving him that kind of freedom. Now, almost 20 years later, the company has grown to \$10.5M in revenue, 120 employees and 350 grocery accounts.

With his partners, Frainier developed a marketing strategy that uses no advertising dollars but relies on what he calls "gorilla marketing." For years, Frainier wore a "SemiFreddi's" shirt at all times. When he started with the firm as a delivery person, he would randomly give out loaves of Semifreddi's bread to passing motorists. At Halloween, instead of passing out candy, he'd give out bags of Semifreddi's croissants. "You can conquer your customers through word of mouth," believes Frainier. In the early days it was not rare for him to work 90 hours a week. "You need to have high energy to run your own business," explains Frainier, "but I've mellowed down, now I'm like all my managers, I do not work more than 45 hours a week, 30 hours in Emeryville and 10 to 15 at home in Moraga."

In fact, Frainier reduced his hours at Semifreddi's when he took on his second job of being a full time "mom" to his two school age daughters during the school year. He says that he had to work even harder to get that position. When the mother of his children decided to return to her native England, he decided to seek custody of his daughters. Up to this point it was very rare for a father to obtain custody of his children in Contra Costa. But Frainier did prevail, and though painful on many levels, the situation brought a whole new dimension to his life and a fatherly fulfillment he hadn't anticipated.

Frainier loves taking care of

his daughters as he prepares meals, helps with homework and manages the house with only a minimum of help. This will be his 10th year coaching soccer for LMYA, he volunteers in his daughters' classrooms and often goes on fieldtrips. This is what he calls "his labor of love," and he still has time for his "fabulous girlfriend."

This unique situation has made him a better CEO, he believes. "I see myself more as a mentor than a boss," he declares. "My interest is in having highly motivated employees who wouldn't want to work anywhere else. The key is to treat each person with respect, give them flexibility in their schedule so they can have a balanced life, and provide them with opportunities to learn and grow." This explains the very low turnover rate in his organization and the large number of resumes Semifreddi's receives weekly.

Reflecting on where he is today, Frainier believes that he couldn't have done it without the support of the community he resides within. Local parents have commended him for his daughters' wonderful attitude and he thinks that the teachers at Camino Pablo Elementary in Moraga have had a great impact on their development. "They were all wonderful, M. Adler, Ms. Elliott, Mrs. Scott, Mrs. McCormack, Mrs. Laughland and of course Mr. Jennings, the principal."

This over-achieving father has adopted one of the teacher's motto to raise his girls: "doing your best is always good enough" (Mrs. Laughland, 2nd grade teacher). "I'm very proud to be a Berkeley Alumni, but I won't tell my girls

they have to get there, or Stanford, or an Ivy League University. It doesn't matter that much in the long run anyway. I want them to find what they love and see them pursue it with passion. That's what I do, even though it took me a few years to discover what that passion was."

For more information about Semifreddi's, go to [www.semifreddis.com](http://www.semifreddis.com).



Tom Frainier, "hands on" in Semifreddi's bakery in Emeryville Photo Sophie Braccini

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