

business briefs

Decadent Ribbon Cutting, Anyone?

The French Bakery, 71 Lafayette Circle, 283-0224

The French Bakery will hold a Ribbon Cutting Ceremony on August 28th at 4:40 p.m. A place for afternoon tea, lunch and deserts, located in the charming white bungalow on Lafayette circle. Business hours are Tuesday to Friday 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Cell Phones for Soldiers

Prudential California Realty, 999 Oak Hill Road, Lafayette, Contact: M'lissa Cassidy, 283-7000

The Lafayette office is proud to announce that they are an official drop-off location for the Cell Phones for Soldiers Program. With the combined efforts of the Bergquists, and ReCellular, every used cell phone donated will provide one hour of free talk time to soldiers serving abroad. Every 16 months, U.S. consumers retire an estimated 150 million cell phones and less than 10 percent of those phones are recycled. ReCellular pays Cell Phones for Soldiers enough to provide an hour of talk time per phone for soldiers abroad. Cell Phone for Soldiers was founded by teenagers Robbie and Brittany Bergquist from Norwell, Mass. Since the beginning, they have raised enough money to send 500,000 prepaid calling cards to soldiers serving overseas. ReCellular works with a recycling partner to reclaim materials from every component that is donated.

In Lafayette, agent Barbara Harkins brought the flyer into the office and the group decided to collect phones at work. To participate, simply drop off your used phone to the Prudential Office any weekday between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. or call M'lissa Cassidy to arrange for a pick up. "We just want to help our troops and their family," says Cassidy, "it's an easy thing to do, and we want to keep it going as long as possible."



Barbara Harkins (left) and M'lissa Cassidy get ready to send a phone Courtesy of Prudential Realty

SZFM Design Studio Wins Awards

Sudhish Mohindroo and Eric Maltman are proud to announce that SZFM has received three awards from the Pacific Coast Builders Conference 2008 Gold Nugget Awards Program: Grand Award for Shuey Podva Building in Danville; Award of Merit for Lafayette Mercantile; Award of Merit for Salvio Pacheco Square in Concord.

SZFM was the architect partnering with developer Steve Cortese to design the Lafayette Mercantile located on Mt. Diablo Blvd between Lafayette Circle and Dewing Ave. "Our primary focus was how the building would integrate within the framework of the public space," said Mohindroo, who has a wealth of experience in urban planning and esthetics. He believes that a timeless and elegant design is the key for a development to be successful and last. "The upper floors where the offices are provide the classical frame that supports the creativity and life brought by the retailers at the street level," adds the architect. The star theme that runs all over the buildings adds to its appeal and cohesion.

Garden Lights Landscape & Pool Development (254-4797) Wins 8 Awards at Annual CLCA Chapter Banquet

Orinda business owner Steve Lambert of Garden Lights Landscape Development received eight top honors at this year's "Beautification Awards" presented June 7th at the Pleasanton Hotel by the CLCA's (California Landscape Contractors Association) East Bay Chapter President. The awards include: Judges Award "Best of the Best" - Large Design/Build, Bluford Residence, Orinda; First Place - Medium Residential Installation, Shellenbeck Residence, Moraga; First Place - Small Design/Build Installation, Vega Residence, Moraga, First Place - Special Effects Lighting, Dunne Residence, Orinda. "It's really rewarding to have your work recognized by your peers in the industry," said Lambert.



"Best of the Best" - Large Design/Build, Bluford Residence, Orinda

Lafayette Chamber of Commerce

- No mixer in August
- Wednesday August 21st, Entrepreneur Club meeting, starting at 8:30 a.m. in the Chamber's office
- Rock the Plaza continues at the corner of Mt Diablo Blvd and Moraga Rd. On August 8th come and hear Stagefrite, on the 15th the Ramblers and on the 22nd the Spazmatic. Concerts are free of charge, food sold by Lafayette Rotary Club.

Moraga Chamber of Commerce

- The August Chamber meeting day and time was changed. Chamber members and their spouses are invited to participate in a Barbeque on Tuesday, August 26th at the Moraga Commons Park from 6 to 7:30 p.m.
- Aug 28th the Chamber will be present at the St Mary's fair for new students from 9:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. 600 to 800 new students will be present on campus with their parents. Anybody interested in participating needs to contact Edy Schwartz at Edy321@comcast.net before August 10th.

Orinda Chamber of Commerce

- Chamber Breakfast Meeting 8:00 a.m. - August 28th at Shelby's Restaurant -Theater Square. Cost \$10.00 (paid at door). The guest Speaker will be Tom Chen of the Subcommittee for Emergency Preparedness. He will address the following topic: "Is Orinda Ready?"
 - Major natural hazard impacting Orinda businesses
 - Local and regional response capabilities and resources
 - Structural and infrastructure vulnerabilities affecting Orinda business
 - Mitigation alternatives and recommendations
 - Getting Orinda businesses prepared

Lafayette Entrepreneurs Club Returns To Its Roots

By Sophie Braccini

The July 17th session was as packed as usual. Thirty to forty local business owners filled up the meeting room of the Lafayette Chamber of Commerce for the monthly meeting of the Entrepreneurs Club. The group, which is sponsored by the Chamber, has recently adopted a mission statement and decided to re-center on what members feel is the core mission: providing practical business advice to members. The networking part of the group is still present, in the same friendly and informal manner that's one of the attractive features

of the group.

The new mission statement is: "A Chamber sponsored program where small business owners and managers can share ideas and solve problems that are specific to their business. Practical lessons and information are presented for personal development. Connections and alliances are made creating an ongoing learning community."

"We wanted to make sure that the members understood that this was not a networking group," says Jay Lifson, Lafayette Chamber Executive Director. "There were

some people showing up with the mission of trying to sell their service or product to the others in attendance. We needed to make clear that is not the purpose of the meetings."

The room was filled that day with experienced professionals who were ready to help each other. Many business cards were exchanged as people thought of possible synergies. The next meeting will be on Thursday August 21st at 8:30 a.m. at the Lafayette Chamber offices, 100 Lafayette Circle.

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Handlebar Toys Has New Owners

By Andrea A. Firth



Lance Ghulam and Sara Casey at work and at play at Handlebar Toys in Lafayette

Photo Andrea A. Firth

Lance Ghulam and Sara Casey are continuing to mind the shop, the shop being Handlebar Toys in Lafayette, which is something that they have been doing together for many years. The difference now is that Ghulam and Casey recently became the new owners of Handlebar Toys having purchased the store from the family of longtime proprietor Freda Challis who passed away in the spring.

"It was really like a passing of the baton," explains Ghulam who started working at the toy store ten years ago as a temporary stint but

then never left. "We had talked about taking over the store for a while. It's really how it was meant to be," adds Casey, who started working at Handlebar 15 years ago while she was still in high school.

Lafayette natives and self-described best friends, Ghulam and Casey each bring a unique experience and perspective to their business venture. Ghulam's many years of retail experience with the Disney Store has proven invaluable as he has worked to update the look of Handlebar Toys. And, Casey, who has a family of four children between 6

months and ten years of age, provides a real-world testing ground for new toys. "If it doesn't work in Sara's family, it won't be in the store," states Ghulam.

This toy store duo has no plans to tinker with the successful formula that Handlebar Toys has followed for the past four decades. "One thing will always stay the same," states Ghulam, "We will always carry quality, hard-to-find toys. We will carry action figures and Barbie's, but the bulk of our inventory will be toys that you won't find at the [local discount retailer]."

However, Ghulam and Casey do plan to do more. They want to have special purchase days (where a percentage of sales receipts will be donated to local schools) and birthday clubs (that will help parents to buy the right gifts for the right kids). And, they continue to work on the store design and displays to create a more inviting shopping experience.

"We want to be more than just a toy store," states Casey. "We want the store to be a destination—a place where both a child and a grown up can have a good time," adds Ghulam finishing Casey's thought as these best friends often do.

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If you have a business brief to share, please contact **Sophie Braccini** at sophie@lamorindaweekly.com

or call our office at 925-377-0977.

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