

business briefs

Supreme Tutors Open Shop in Orinda

1 Orinda Way, Orinda, 918-2882, www.supremetutors.com
 On January 10th, Supreme Tutors founder Albert Lee cut the ribbon of the Smartlounge, the first brick and mortar location for his growing tutoring service. A Cal graduate, the young man started tutoring students from 6th-12th grade five years ago and recruited fellow graduate students along the way as demand grew through word of mouth. "We have high standards for ourselves and our students," says Lee, "we expect students to focus and work on assignments. Lee hopes that Smartlounge will be used as an alternative to going to students' homes, and "since it is located right next to the Orinda BART station, it makes it convenient for tutors who would like to take public transit," adds Lee. Subjects currently available are math at all levels, chemistry, physics, statistics, biology, economics, history, English, foreign languages and writing. The group is developing SAT prep classes as well. The rates are \$65 for individual sessions and \$35 for groups.



Albert Lee cuts the red ribbon of the new home for his Supreme Tutors, Smartlounge in Orinda
 Photo Sophie Braccini

New Restaurant to Replace a Lafayette Favorite: Goodbye, Gigi – Hello, Artisan, 1005 Brown Ave., Lafayette

Gigi, a sophisticated and high-end restaurant that opened about two years ago in Lafayette, is closing the doors of the cottage on Brown Ave. for financial reasons. Jeff Amber, the young chef who had created there his first personal venture, had met previously with success and praises running successful places such as Moose's and XYZ in San Francisco as well as the three Chow's. The spot will be taken over in mid February by another Bay Area favorite chef, John Marquez of San Francisco's Fringale. Fringale has a reputation as a reasonably priced French bistro offering Basque-inspired cuisine. The new restaurant will be called "Artisan."

Bellingham Painting Moves to Moraga, 247-0092

After 22 years of business in San Francisco, Mark Bellingham has moved with his family to Moraga and is looking forward to providing painting services at a fair price to Lamorinda residents. Bellingham provides the following services: Interior and exterior painting, Waterproofing, Wood deck cleaning and restoration, Water damage repair, Light carpentry. The company paints entire buildings but can be hired to do just a room, a wall or a ceiling. Bellingham prides himself in providing highly personalized service, he is a working owner and maintains control of the job to insure quality work.

"Try Lafayette First" Update:

The Lafayette Chamber of Commerce promised to give out \$1000 worth of gift cards and prizes to one lucky Lafayette resident who pledged to Try Lafayette First for their holiday shopping. As it turned out, merchants were so excited about participating in the program and thanking their customers that they donated \$2000 worth of gift cards. "We got so many gifts from our merchants that we will probably be able to draw another winner," says Chamber CEO Jay Lifson. The first "Try Lafayette First" campaign was a winner as well for the 100 or so merchants who participated in the campaign. "I got 14 new clients who came just because of the campaign," said Antony Ruiz of Fast Frame. Handle Bar Toys believes that it's thanks to the campaign that they had the best Christmas season ever. "This drive was just a first step," said Lifson, "and we are working on other ways to get more business to our local merchants, as well as training them to be better business persons and improve the Lafayette shopping experience." One of these next steps will be working with "Yelp," an online referral business service.



Fast Frame's Anthony Ruiz is pleased with the results of Shop Lafayette First
 Photo Andy Scheck

News from the Three Chamber of Commerce

Lafayette Chamber of Commerce

- Tom Courtright, Orchard Nursery, 2009 Business Person of the Year, will be honored at the Installation & State of the City Dinner on Friday January 30, 2009, starting at 6:00 p.m. at the Lafayette Park Hotel & Spa. Tom bought Orchard Nursery in 1971. He was Lafayette's Citizen of the Year in 1989. "Tom has not only managed a very successful business in Lafayette," says Jay Lifson the Chamber's CEO, "he has been given his time, money and energy to help make Lafayette a place where people want to live, work and shop." Call 925-284-7404 for reservations. Registration forms are available on the chamber website www.lafayettechamber.org.

Moraga Chamber of Commerce

- Chamber Mixer, Friday January 30th starting with coffee at 7:30 a.m. at the Hacienda de las Flores. This meeting will feature Stu Carty, Regional Development Director of Constant Contact, an email marketing program, who will come to speak to Chamber members. The Chamber wants to help its member get through this tough economic time and a good marketing plan helps. Carty will speak to how email marketing can help you reach more people with your message, create email campaigns that get results, get your emails opened and read and more. Carty will speak twice, once at the chamber regular meeting on January 30th and once at a workshop in mid February. At the workshop in February Carty is going to focus on getting started with Constant Contact. He will give specific (product) training. Each lecture will cover different information.

Orinda Chamber of commerce

- Wednesday - Jan. 28, 2009 Noon to 1:30 p.m. Mayor's Luncheon. The Orinda Rotary Club & the Orinda Chamber of Commerce will host the Mayor's Luncheon. This event will introduce Orinda new Mayor, Sue Severson, who will be giving the State of the City Address. The event will take place in the Orinda Community Center, 28 Orinda Way. The cost per person is \$20.00. Purchase your admission online by going to the Chamber's web site orindachamber.org/events.php

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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Growing Your Business in a Tough Economy

By Sophie Braccini



Jackie Lopey
 Photo courtesy of Spin Decorating

Jackie Lopey is the owner of Spin Decorating, has been a marketing executive for seventeen years and is a crusader for her fellow small business owners. With the support of the Lafayette Chamber of Commerce, she designed a free workshop for business owners titled "Growing Your Business in a Tough Economy." A group of eight business owners met once a month for three months and built a hands-on marketing strategy, each tailored to his or her own company.

Lopey believes that a support group is very useful for small business owners. "When you have your own business you have to do everything yourself and marketing is one of the tasks that might fall into the cracks," explains Lopey. The workshop utilized the book "Word of Mouth Marketing," by Andy Seronovitz, with hands-on case studies. The participants were a diverse group, including David Selvig Construction, White Song US-China Marketing and Rob the Realtor.

The first meeting was dedicated to identifying each business' Unique Purchase Appeal, or UPA. A UPA is the exclusive characteristics that will set any business apart from its competition. An effective UPA is the first communication tool; it has to be credible, quantifiable and sustainable over time. "To say 'Simply the best quality' doesn't work," explained Lopey, "you are not proving anything in your sentence." On the other hand say-

ing something like "10% off for every day late" is measurable.

In order to define their own UPA, Lopey had participants call their customers and ask them three simple questions: 1) Why do you do business with us? 2) What do you like best about what we do? and 3) What things don't you like about our competitors?

David Selvig found the exercise of calling his customers very useful. "We found why they chose us, they valued the attention we pay to details, our honesty, our respect for their budget and our friendliness," he said. Selvig wanted his UPA to include "customer service, reliability, honesty." Lopey recommended adding a guarantee or a third party endorsement to make it more credible, "quantifying your UPA is very important, it has to be independently verifiable," she insisted.

Once the UPAs were finely tuned, the group focused on how to get the word out about their businesses. Lopey recommended the first step, to form a mental image of their typical customer, "you need to know the demographic elements (age, income...), the psychographics (attitude, life style...) and the needs and wants of your targeted customers," she said, "then decide on the type of campaign that will be adapted to them and most cost effective."

Song White found this advice very useful. "Before, I focused more on doing/delivering my translation work (English-Chinese) than communicating with my customers," says the Chinese-American business woman, "the importance of understanding the customers is obvious, but how to understand them is another thing. Jackie and other members at the workshop shared different ways of how-to's that were very helpful."

As a case study, the group brainstormed how to use the tradition of Holiday Appreciation Gifts to further their businesses. "If you decide to send your customers a gift at the end of the year, be sure to

send a message that will be supporting your UPA," advised Lopey. She recommended that each advertising or marketing campaign have a financial goal attached to it and that business owners track the results. She also presented some word of mouth marketing tactics with which each participant was encouraged to experiment before the next session.

When she came back for the last session on December 17th Tamara Selvig talked about the "Try Lafayette First" campaign that she and her husband had decided to participate in as a word of mouth marketing tactic. Rob the Realtor had started experimenting with a blog, giving free advice to customers, and others mentioned donating supplies to Habitat for Humanity.

The bulk of the meeting was spent defining the elements of a marketing plan for 2009. "You can picture your marketing plan as a funnel," said Lopey, "at the top is the larger market and at the exit are your customers. The funnel represent the sales cycle, it's a machine unique to each business that needs to be tweaked all the time." The machine can be as simple as this: how many people do you need to talk to have one lead, then how many leads do you need to sign one client? Tracking is the key to fine-tuning the funnel.

To conclude, each participant developed a marketing plan for 2009. First they defined a sales and revenue goal, then they quantified how they were going to reach that goal (marketing, PR, advertising, sales) and established a time and dollar budget associated with meeting those goals.

The participants said the workshop changed their vision and motivation to create and monitor their marketing plan, and thanked Lopey for her efforts. "I enjoy positive actions and working with the group," said Lopey, "I believe that if you help other people it will come back to you, not necessarily directly but it does come back."

Correction to issue date 01/07/09, "Toot Sweets Says Goodbye:"

Marcy Wheeler's correct email address is marcy@marcywheeler.com and her first Berkeley business was Edible Complex (not Edible Express).

Addendum to issue date 12/24/08, "Lamorinda Restaurants to Ring in the New Year:"

Roos Pal of Terzetto's in Moraga was surprised to learn from our article that her restaurant was under "relatively new ownership," as she has been the owner for seven years. Time being relative, contributing writer Linda U. Foley has been a Lamorindan for significantly longer than that. We did not intend to cause alarm - rest assured that Terzetto's remains under Pal's competent care.

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NEW LISTINGS - COMING SOON:
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