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HOLLY HENKEL
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business briefs

Tick Tock Store in Moraga

Rheem Shopping center (by the Rheem Theatre) 354 Park Street 376 1888 Brian Nguyen knows about clocks and about hard work. He's been running a clock store in Walnut Creek (by Lunardi's) for 8 years, and opened on May 11 a new store in Moraga. In order to minimize overhead, he mans the Moraga store mostly week-ends and evenings and can be found in Walnut Creek the rest of the time. Nguyen's specialty is clock and watch repair, antiques as well as new ones. He will take care of replacing the battery of your wrist-watch as well as resuscitating your 18th century grandfather clock. The Nguyens have been in this business for three generations, and Brian learned the craft from his grandfather and father. The Moraga store is open on Sunday and Monday and evenings Tuesday to Saturday 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. "I'm very excited to do business in Moraga," said Nguyen. "I knew the town because I had many customers from Lamorinda that I can now serve locally."

Mosaic Financial Partners, Inc

Mosaic will hold a ribbon-cutting ceremony for on June 11 at 4:30 pm with the Lafayette Chamber of Commerce. Meet at 3620 Happy Valley Rd., Suite 100.

Brittany Comes to Shore in Orinda

Laurent Le Barbier makes traditional crepes to order at the Orinda Farmers' Market. "Bretons" are a people of peasants, fishermen and merchants. Their culinary tradition mixes hearty dishes and seafood, that is both simple and very tasty. Le Barbier comes from generations of "Bretons" who used to make crepes in the fireplace and worked markets around the Golf du Morbihan. At the market, he serves salty Savory crepes (organic buckwheat flour, gluten free) with a variety of toppings including the traditional "complete" Ham & Cheese & Egg, vegetarian options like the Brie-Pesto & Tomato, or seafood treats like the Smoked Salmon-Crème Fraiche-green onion & dill. For desert, ask for the sweet crepes (all purpose flour) with butter, sugar & lemon or apple confit with caramel sauce among other specialties.

Rubens Nunnemaker LLP moves to Lafayette

1020 Aileen Street 444.4026 www.RNCPAs.com
Rubens Nunnemaker LLP is a Certified Public Accounting and Consulting firm. Partners Sharon Rubens and Steve Nunnemaker have more than 30 years of combined industry experience and have earned a reputation for providing quality service over the last two decades. Sharon Rubens grew up in Lafayette and Steve Nunnemaker lives in San Francisco. Rubens Nunnemaker LLP offers experienced service in all matters of accounting and taxation, IRS problem resolution, estates and trusts, business formation, financial planning and investment, real estate and business sales. "We have always had many clients who live in Lafayette and Lamorinda," said Lisa Silva, who works for the company, "as our firm evolved, we found ourselves working with more clients in Lamorinda. Lafayette is the perfect central location for our client base. We also feel that Lafayette has sophisticated individuals and businesses that we can really help."

French For Fun Featured on Local TV

3468 Mt. Diablo Blvd., Suite B100 283.9822 www.frenchforfun.com
The French immersion school was nominated and selected by the Best of the Bay TV production of channel 4. A crew of 4 cameramen and interviewer spent 5 hours at FFF on Friday March 20th to shoot a presentation of the school. "Since we wanted to showcase our students, we had invited all our classes from the baby circle to the literature club to participate," said head-mistress Catherine Jolivet, "the teachers and I had prepared various activities, plays, songs, etc...The filming was very organized, the kids were very excited as well as the parents." The video aired 3 times on the Best of the Bay on May 21st, 23rd and 28th. It can be viewed online at Best of the Bay TV for one year.

Patti Camras Organizes Speed-networking for Women

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On May 8 Patti Camras organized her first speed-networking for women, an event where she invited women with whom she had been doing business on a regular basis and would gladly refer. "I wanted to create an environment for networking so that these terrific women professionals could find out about each other," said Camras, "I strongly believe that people who own their own businesses understand the benefit of networking, and now more than ever, we need each other to keep our businesses vital in today's economy." "The event was fun and very well organized," said Wendy Scheck from Lamorinda Weekly, one of the 24 women who attended the event," She had us talk with each other and move around every 5 minutes. It was kind of an enterprising thing to do." Camras plans to host another event in September after the school year starts.

News from the Three Chambers of Commerce Small Business Awards



The Small Business Award recipients and Chamber officials (left to right): Carlos Rangle, Candy Kattenburg, Javier Galdon, Edy Schwartz, Ron Palsa (second row), Jay Lifson, Steve Palsa
Photo courtesy of Moraga Chamber of Commerce

Three Lamorinda businesses were recognized at the Contra Costa Council's 9th Annual Small Business Awards:

Minuteman Press, Moraga UPS Store and Shelby's.

On May 15 the Contra Costa Council gave business awards to 10 Contra Costa small business owners, all nominated by their local Chamber of Commerce. The awards recognize the business owners' success in developing an outstanding business and their contribution to the community.

"Ron and Steve Palsa moved their business, Minuteman Press, from Walnut Creek to Lafayette about 6 years ago," says Jay Lifson, Lafayette Chamber CEO, "they took a chance on Lafayette and bought the building next to the Lafayette Park Hotel & Spa on the East end of Mt. Diablo Blvd. What happened next was a partnership that resulted in one of Lafayette's most successful businesses and a community member that has never stopped supporting our city."

"A few years ago, with a dream to own their own business, Javier and Jacqueline Galdon searched for an affordable franchise opportunity in the Bay area, and they happened upon the Mailboxes Etc/UPS Store in Moraga," says Edy Schwartz, President of the Moraga Chamber of Commerce, "with no background in shipping or retail, but with a lot of support and guidance from the previous owner and the franchise, three years later, the UPS store has become an indispensable 'office' for many home based businesses in Moraga." "The Orinda Chamber unanimously chose Shelby's to receive this award," says Candy Kattenburg, Executive Director of the Orinda Chamber of Commerce, "it's not unusual that when you walk into Shelby's you are greeted by the owner Carlos Rangel and if you glance over to the kitchen area you can wave hello to (the other owner) Chef Arno Kober. It's Orinda's local 'hang out' and if you haven't tried Shelby's you should stop by on a nice day to sit outside and experience great dining."

Lafayette Chamber of Commerce

- Top Ten Small Business Trends for 2009 - Friday, May 29 - 12:00 p.m. The Lafayette Library and Learning Center Foundation and the Lafayette Chamber of Commerce invite the business community to attend a special luncheon with featured guest speakers Steve King and Carolyn Ockels. For registration to this event, please visit www.lafayettechamber.org. Cost is \$25 and space is limited.
- Try Lafayette First Thank You Party - Friday, June 5 - 5:00 pm - 8:00 pm - Plaza Park. (see story page 1)
- Shop Lafayette Working group, Tuesday June 9 at 8:00 a.m. in the Chamber offices
- Chamber mixer on June 10 from 5:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. at Pizza Antica, 3600 Mt. Diablo Blvd. in Lafayette.

Moraga Chamber of Commerce

- Chamber meeting on Friday May 29 from 7:30 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. at the Hacienda. Members of the Union Bank of California will be speaking on issues directly affecting the local business climate

Orinda Chamber of Commerce

- May 28, Orinda celebrates Cal Shakes 35th anniversary and throws a big party, from 5:30 p.m. to 7 p.m. at Theater Square in downtown Orinda. The free event is opened to the public and will offer a whole array of attractions.
- Chamber breakfast meeting, on Thursday, June 25 from 8:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. at Village Pizza 19 Orinda Way Orinda. Cost \$10.00 - at the door. This is a relaxed coffee hour in which chamber members can mix and mingle, share ideas, and exchange business cards.

If you have a business brief to share, please contact **Sophie Braccini** at sophie@lamorindaweekly.com or call our office at 925-377-0977.

Mycra Pac Designer Wear Creating Clothes in Moraga

By Sophie Braccini



Customers in Mycra Pac coats "fight" over a bag, as Sharon Huebschwerlen (left, in yellow) looks on
Photo Sophie Braccini

When Sharon Huebschwerlen walks around her building in the Rheem Center, she makes it a point to greet each and every one of the 21 team members of her "business family." They are all busy creating and marketing the line of Myra Pac outerwear that's put Moraga on the fashion map.

A graduate of Miramonte High School and UC Berkeley, Huebschwerlen spent most of her professional life in the fashion industry as a buyer for large companies such as Casual Corner and Macy's. When the company she was with moved its headquarters to New York, she decided to stay in the Bay Area and create her own trademark. Her idea was to design a high-end travel wear line that was elegant, reversible, water-repellant, and wrinkle free. That was Mycra Pac, and the year was 1991.

Now Huebschwerlen travels the world, studying trends and looking for innovative fabrics. "I create the models, with the team," says the business woman, "and we can count on our suppliers to produce our exclusive brand." Mycra Pac's line is one of the last to be completely manufactured in the US. "Twenty years ago many brands were made in the U.S.," says Huebschwerlen, "we continued that tradition because it allows us to be on top of the quality of the products we manufacture." The colors and prints are made to order by Milliken in North Carolina out of a fabric manufactured by Dupont; the fabric is cut in San Francisco and eleven sewing shops in the Bay Area assemble the garments and accessories.

All in all, 180 jobs rely on Huebschwerlen's business acumen. Mycra Pac offers five different lines a year and participates in fashion trade shows in nine different US locations. Huebschwerlen's biggest customers are Nordstrom's in the US, Holt Renfrew in Canada, Selfridges in England and Isetan in Japan. Mycra Pac can be purchased on-line and in a network of smaller specialty stores all over the country.

At this time, Mycra Pac is working on its Spring 2010 line. "We love colors, innovative designs and creative patterns," says Huebschwerlen, as she shows some of her new creations such as an elegant black faux-fur coat on one side, raincoat on the other, a shocking pink raincoat and one of her best selling items, a long raincoat with a pleated hood. Huebschwerlen believes that what makes her brand unique is the mix of quality and creativity of the offering. "When we sell a coat, it is guaranteed for life," says Huebschwerlen, "we have a few coats come back every year and we're happy to replace them. But our quality is such that we can stand by our products and make this kind of promise."

Like the whole industry, Mycra Pac has now entered the troubled waters of an economy in recession. "The women who buy our products continue to travel and want to do it in style," says Huebschwerlen, "but our small retail stores are hurt by the credit crunch, they lose their lines of credit and we are concerned about the survival of some of them who have been doing business with us since the beginning."

Huebschwerlen is not worried about her own firm. The whole team is getting ready for the semi-annual sale that attracts to Moraga customers from all over California. "I do not want to see my production in discount stores," says Huebschwerlen, "we'd rather sell our previous season's items at a discount to our neighbors and friends."

This year, the spring sale will start on June 10 and last five days. 5000 coats and accessories will be offered at a 20%- 60% discount from 1 p.m. to 7 p.m. on Wednesday and from 11a.m. to 4 p.m. the four other days.



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