

Published September 16th, 2009

Town/College Economic Partnership Growing

By Sophie Braccini



SMC students wearing the new t-shirts at a Women's Soccer game last Sunday. Left to right: Lacey Olson, Sarah Randall, Christina Katsaris, Aaron Jones Photo Andy Scheck

offers and/or contests for game goers. With this promotion, they can display a banner at the game and are asked to show their support of the Gaels in their store. "Becoming a promotional sponsor during one of the SMC home games is an opportunity to get Moraga businesses in front of Saint Mary's College students for a minimal cost," commented a very positive Schwartz.

To further the good relationship, McSherry offers special treats for Chamber members, such as the recent \$2 tickets to any game during Labor Day weekend. When the previous sponsor of the Gael Force T-shirts declined to renew its sponsorship, the Athletic Department turned to the Chamber to see if it could fill the gap. The year-long sponsorship places the sponsor's name on the back of the shirts that the 200 Gael Force students wear at the games. This year the shirts read, "Shop Moraga First," and the names of the four businesses that joined the Chamber in sponsorship: Pennini's, Lori's Swim and Sun, Union Bank and 5A Rent-A-Space.

"This is the beginning of a paradigm shift," said Schwartz, "we are building relationships that will endure and expand. This is part of Moraga becoming more of a college town, for the benefit of both entities." Schwartz is now cultivating relationships with the Performing Arts Department, the Hearst Gallery and the Weekend College. "I feel excited about working with the people at Saint Mary's. They are talented and very experienced in their fields and we are finding creative ways to work together," says Schwartz.

Schwartz is not the only one in town to have this vision. Moraga's Revenue Enhancement Committee (REC) has also suggested better integration of the college to improve the economic vitality of the town. "One of the large ideas of the Economic Development Subcommittee is to maximize the Saint Mary's College linkage," said REC Chair Dick Olsen during his preliminary report to the Town Council on September 9th. He indicated that the subcommittee was looking at ideas such as relocating the college bookstore to the downtown area, developing other college-oriented facilities (such as a sports bar and a sports clothing/equipment shop) and implementing a shuttle between the College and the town's two shopping centers.

Neal McSherry is very passionate about what he does. As the Director of Ticket Operations for Saint Mary's College (SMC), he is charged with getting students and the surrounding community out to the school's various games and athletic events.

McSherry is very imaginative when it comes to finding new ways to achieve his goal. When he reached out to Moraga's Chamber of Commerce he found someone just as passionate and imaginative as himself, Chamber President Edy Schwartz, who shares an interest in increasing the communication between town and gown. After a year of hard work, the two are now implementing programs that support both the College and local business; and Moraga's Revenue Enhancement Task Force is not far behind. Over the past several months, Schwartz and McSherry have met every other week to work on their strategy. "We want to put into place win-win actions that benefit both the community and the campus," says Schwartz. "One of my tasks is to generate excitement for home athletic events," said McSherry, "so we called on local businesses for help." McSherry proposed that retailers provide promotional



Neil McSherry and Edy Schwartz at a Moraga Chamber of Commerce event Photo Sophie Braccini

Reach the reporter at: sophie@lamorindaweekly.com

Copyright © Lamorinda Weekly, Moraga CA