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Lamorinda Chambers of Commerce Step Up to Help Schools

By Sophie Braccini



The Moraga Chamber gives a check to MEF (L-R): Chamber board member Grant Stubblefield, Chamber President Edy Schwartz, MEF President Shari Simon, MEF Chair of Business and Community Relations Eric Andresen

Photo Sophie Braccini

Businesses across Lamorinda proudly display the little plaques that local sports teams, schools and foundations have given them in thanks for their support. But that is not the only way the business community comes through for the schools. As the education system suffers financially due to deep cuts to State funding, the local Chambers of Commerce, which have long understood that schools are part of the system that sustains them, are strengthening their efforts to support our schools.

The Lafayette Chamber of Commerce has been donating proceeds from its signature business events to the Lafayette Arts and Science Foundation (LASF) and the Lafayette School District for many years. "When we started the Art and Wine Festival fifteen years ago, LASF was the only beneficiary of the event," recalls Jay Lifson, the Chamber's Executive Di-

rector, "since then we've added other recipients, but the Foundation has remained the primary beneficiary." Last year the Chamber gave \$8,500 to LASF and Lifson believes that over the years the Chamber has contributed nearly 70,000 to LASF in addition to a dozen other charities that benefit from the festival.

The second big Lafayette Chamber fundraiser that benefits the schools is the Lafayette Reservoir Run. "Each year the Chamber is able to donate \$15,000-\$20,000 to the PTAs at each of our five local schools," adds Lifson.

For Lifson, giving to the schools is a natural act. "We live and work in this incredible community of Lamorinda and the base for it is education," says Lifson. "We live in a symbiotic relationship with the schools and it is not only the money that makes the relationship so wonderful, it is the vol-

unteers who create the kind of community we live in."

Lifson is aware that local home values are linked to the quality of the public schools, and so is Edy Schwartz, the President of the Moraga Chamber of Commerce. "We all know this and our realtors confirm it; the first reason people move to our communities is the school districts," says Schwartz, "and with the extreme cuts from the State, it is most important to give to the schools." Sue Breedlove, President of the Orinda Chamber, agrees with her, "It's more imperative than ever to help our schools when funding is becoming so difficult to get," says Breedlove.

As a result, the Orinda Chamber of Commerce will donate some of the proceeds from the upcoming Live at the Orinda, an evening of comedy at the Orinda Theater, to the Educational Foundation of Orinda (EFO). "For the last two years the Chamber has held the Orinda Restaurant Tour and more than 30% of every ticket sale went to EFO," adds Breedlove, "In 2008 we donated \$2500 and in 2009 \$2100. Most likely, we will do the same thing this fall."

In Moraga, the Moraga Education Foundation (MEF) is a member of the Chamber of Commerce. Until recently, the support of the business community had primarily been through generous business owners contributing directly to school auctions and the MEF. But this year the Chamber Board felt that the situation was so critical that it had to do something more, and in January it decided to donate \$1,000 to MEF. "Now more than ever it is vital that Moraga's parents and citizens, schools, and businesses join forces to support and maintain our community," said Eric Andresen, the chair of the MEF Business and Community Partners Committee upon receiving the check, "Our property values, our community and even our cherished way of life depend upon the continued success of our businesses and upon the unparalleled reputation of our schools. We're all in this together, and working together we can and will maintain what we've all come to know and love as our home."

business briefs



Photo Sophie Braccini

Jack in the Box Closed By Environment Health Services

During a routine inspection on February 1st, the Environmental Health Division of Contra Costa County Health Services observed three major violations at the Jack in the Box restaurant located at 1440 Moraga Way in Moraga. The violations were: lack of diligent preparation practices, major improper disposal of liquid waste and unapproved unclean floor surfaces. The fast food restaurant was ordered to close until the sanitary conditions are restored. Moraga Senior Planner Rich Chamberlain confirmed that the restaurant had a drainage problem with their sewer system. Chamberlain indicated that he had been contacted by the operator of the restaurant, and that the operator claimed plans to conduct improvements to the restaurant as the repairs were done, such as installing an ADA compliant bathroom.

Lafayette Car Wash & Detail Center Celebrates 20 Years of Business

3319 Mt. Diablo Blvd., Lafayette, 925-283-1190
 "We would like to thank our customers for all of their support over these past 20 years," said Jess Wellan, Owner of the Lafayette business. The company was cited in "The Pipeline," EBMUD's newsletter, as a car wash that recycles 50 to 60% of its professional water use. "We understand the importance of being a 'green' business and we are constantly striving to diminish our carbon footprint", says Wellan.

New Short Sale Specialists

Lisa Hoctor and Frith Wiggins, Prudential California Realty, have completed the required curriculum to earn the National Association of Realtors (NAR) new designation of certified Short Sale and Foreclosure Resource specialists. Ms. Wiggins and Ms. Hoctor work as a team to provide their services to those who find themselves in a possible hardship situation. You can contact Lisa Hoctor and Frith Wiggins at their Prudential Realty office in Lafayette or by calling 925 698-5752.

AmberPoint bought by Oracle

Oracle announced at the beginning of February the acquisition of the Oakland-based company AmberPoint, founded by Orinda resident John Hubinger and Danville resident Paul Butterworth. The Oracle announcement can be found at <http://www.oracle.com/us/corporate/press/048842>. Over the years, Butterworth and Hubinger have brought a great deal of business to the East Bay. With their lead-

ership at Ingres, Forte and, most recently, AmberPoint, they are responsible for bringing several hundred jobs and hundreds of millions of dollars of revenue to the East Bay.

News from the three Chambers of Commerce Lafayette

- Big Band Dance on Friday, February 19 starting at 7:30 p.m. at the Veterans Memorial Building. Tickets \$10 available at the Chamber of Commerce and the Lamorinda Music Store.
- Ribbon Cutting with the Chamber for Roy's Garlic Garden on Thursday, February 18 starting at 5:00 p.m. 3576 Mt. Diablo Blvd, Lafayette
- Cloud Computing Seminar, Friday, February, 19, 9:00a.m., Chamber Conference Room
- "Green Your Business" Workshop offered by the Lafayette Green Committee on February 23rd from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. at the Chamber. Green Committee volunteers will be on hand to help you get started, evaluate current practices and help GREEN businesses. In 15 minutes, they can evaluate a business and determine if it qualifies as a Lafayette Green Business. Refreshments will be served. This event is free. Businesses that have already "pledged" to be a Lafayette Green Business should complete their checklist by March 20th. They will be recognized at the Earth Day Celebration on April 25th.
- Business Issues/Government Affairs Committee Open Meeting on February 25 at 8:00 a.m. at the Chamber office.

Moraga

The Chamber held a meeting to brainstorm the future of the Chamber over the next several years in preparation for the development of a formal business plan. Subjects covered were our two websites, www.moragachamber.org and www.shopmoragafirst.com, membership growth, management and volunteer needs, annual sponsored events and any miscellaneous topics the group wished to brainstorm. "Eleven groups of three to five Chamber members each produced a plethora of ideas, suggestions and solutions," said Larry Tessler, Chamber Vice-President, "Interestingly there was little duplication of ideas, indicating the broad perspective brought to the table by this diverse group of business operators, town government officials, individual citizens and leaders of various interest groups." Ideas ranged from money raising opportunities to producing an event calendar to social networking to bumper sticker marketing and more. The Chamber Board will attempt to establish priorities within each category for presentation to the membership in March for further refinement.

Orinda

The Orinda Chamber of Commerce proudly presents a new event in 2010: A champagne-splashed evening of live professional comedy in conjunction with Tommy T's Comedy House of Pleasantry, and the Lamorinda Film and Entertainment Foundation. The whole community is invited to fill the 750 seat Orinda Theatre to laugh until your sides hurt. 17 and over. Friday March 5th, Orinda Theatre, Theatre Square. Make your reservations online at orindachamber.org.

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

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