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One Game You Won't Want to Miss: Lafayette-Opoly

By Sophie Braccini



The LASF committee working on Lafayette-opoly (L to R): Gina Dawson, Mary Bakos and Barbara Serwin Photo Sophie Braccini

she plans to sell the game in the store.

The Lafayette Park Hotel and Diablo Foods were among the first businesses contacted by LASF, who knew they could count on their most faithful supporters. "Mike Reardon at Oakwood Athletic Club was also an enthusiastic early supporter," says Serwin. Besides purchasing a square, the Club's General Manager proposed organizing a "game-day" at the Club to kick-off the game sales and inform people of what LASF accomplishes.

But large and established businesses are not the only ones to contribute to the game (look for a square featuring your friendly neighborhood newspaper). Colleen McCormick of Lamorinda Music decided, with her husband John, to put her new business on the board. "It allows local small businesses to help LASF in a way that increases awareness for their business and serves as a reminder for people to shop locally," says McCormick, "Lafayette-opoly will be a wonderful keepsake for our children as they play the game in years to come with their own children and share stories about growing up in this charming community."

Lafayette Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Jay Lifson thinks that the board game will become a collector's item one day. "The Lafayette Chamber bought square number one," says Lifson, "LASF has found a unique, fun way to fundraise. The businesses buying a square will pay for the production costs and most of the money paid to buy the games will be resources going straight to our schools."

That concept fuels the energy of LASF's committee as they work hard to make this happen. "The company that will manufacture the game, Pride Distributors, Inc., developed the 'Your Town-opoly' program as a fundraiser for community organizations more than ten years ago," says Bakos, "the concept is that we order a fixed number of games which they will produce, then we sell them for the amount we want." The group is thinking about ordering 1,500 to 2000 games that will be sold at \$30 apiece. Selling of the squares to businesses should be complete by the end of March; then production will start and the actual games should arrive over the summer, "In time for back-to-school," says Dawson. LASF anticipates distributing the games through the five Lafayette public schools, as well as at some local businesses and on its website, www.lasf.org.

One big item has not been purchased yet; the cover of the game. Dawson, Bakos and Serwin plan to contact prominent community entities that have the desire and the means to support the Foundation at a significant level. Businesses interested in sponsorship should contact Dawson at gdawson@gmail.com or Bakos at mlbakos@yahoo.com.

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The idea came, one day, to Mary Bakos as she was looking for something special for the Lafayette Arts and Science Foundation's (LASF) annual event: a special edition Monopoly game, to be sold as a fund raiser, on which actual Lafayette businesses would be featured. Since the end of last year, the small committee formed by Bakos, LASF President Barbara Serwin, and Gina Dawson has been contacting businesses to make this happen. "We wanted to give businesses more of an opportunity to advertise their presence and their support of our schools," says Serwin, "and we have been overwhelmed by their support."

The first task of the group was to find more than 40 sponsors. "What was fun was to brainstorm which businesses would best fit in each category," says Bakos. For Tony Eichers, General Manager of the Lafayette Park Hotel and Spa, the most natural square to sponsor was 'The Park.' "This is one of the most expensive pieces of real estate on the board," says Eichers, an LASF supporter, "nothing would have been a better fit for our beautiful hotel."

"We wanted to be the 'Start' point on the game," says Diablo Foods' Connie Collier, "because our store is where your day should start." The daughter of founder Ed Stokes, who has put her kids through the Lafayette schools and is also a supporter of LASF, Collier says