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“The Way of the White Tiger” – East West Kung Fu of Lafayette

By Sophie Braccini

Richard Lee’s East West Kung Fu, which opened its doors in Lamorinda last February, is a haven for champions. The nine world champions and 20 national champions who work there practice six hours every week with Grandmaster Lee himself, in the system he invented – Bok Fu Do, ‘the way of the white tiger.’ Bok Fu Do is a synthesis of the four major schools of martial arts, Chinese, Japanese, Okinawan and Korean, that Lee studied all over the world. A trainer and teacher for 50 years, Lee’s had schools in several locations, and opened the Lafayette school to accommodate a growing number of Lafayette students. Grandmaster Lee is world renown figure in his field, yet he is very approachable, calm and warm; a perfect embodiment of his 3000-year-old art.

Grandmaster Lee’s story is a tale



Grandmaster Lee with Meghan Mannion-Gray, a first degree black belt (right), and Anna Winder, a second degree brown belt.
Photo Sophie Braccini

of epic proportions, impossible to summarize in a few words. It starts with an impoverished family and an abusive father who was a semi-professional boxer in Connecticut, then moves to California where a teenage Lee trained as swimmer while dreaming about the martial arts he had discovered by accident in the 1950s. It continues with his pursuit of martial arts, first with Al Tracy in the early 1960s in San Jose and with Kenpo legend Ed Parker, then to the growing success of his own school that he opened in Castro Valley upon becoming a Kenpo master himself in 1967. But Lee was not satisfied with the commercial success that his school immediately found and he continued his search for perfection, embarking on a quest for knowledge that took him all over the world (visit his website, www.bokfudo.com, to read about his journeys.)

It is hard to pinpoint the root of Lee’s motivation and determination. “My motivation is to become the best martial arts teacher in the

world,” says Lee, “when my students participate in a World Tournament they know that they deserve to win, because they have been through such an incredible training program.” His staff and students boast impressive records, including his general manager, Morgan Newman. “I have been World Champion three times in a row,” says Newman, “These championships happen every three years in a different country. Each country sends its 17 best martial artists, who are selected during national championships.”

The school is welcoming to people of all ages and aspirations. “Our students are adults and children alike,” says John Buckley, a student of Lee for 25 years, now a Master himself and the trainer of the U.S. team, “It has something to offer to everybody in a friendly and congenial atmosphere. The vast majority of our adult students have families and careers, they look for a positive outlet and can come for as little as once a week to once every day; they study

at their own pace and the teachers respect that.” Buckley explains that the technique is not abrasive to the body, it promotes flexibility, strengthens muscles, takes the student on an incredible emotional journey and stimulates the brain. “You feel cleansed,” says Buckley, “you are mentally and emotionally rewarded.”

East West Kung Fu offers classes six days a week to children, adults and families. The first trial class is one on one and free, from there potential students decide what they want to pursue.

Richard Lee’s East West Kung Fu
3684 Mt. Diablo Blvd, Lafayette
(925) 283-2021
www.bokfudo.com

Lamorinda Weekly business articles are intended to inform the community about local business activities, not to endorse a particular company, product or service.



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business briefs

Grand Re-Opening of Orinda Theater on May 14th

Beau Behan, the General Manager of both the Orinda Theatre and the New Rheem Theatre, is working hard on a grand re-opening event at the Orinda Theater that will involve the whole community – Behan hopes to demonstrate that the California Independent Film Festival Association (which operates the New Rheem and recently assumed operation of the Orinda), is there to become an active part of the Orinda scene, contributing to its creativity and vitality. “Rich Little, ‘The Man of a Thousand Voices,’ is our special guest for the evening,” says Behan, “We are now planning with the City of Orinda, the Chamber of Commerce and the Orinda Arts Council to include local artists in the celebration.” For event details go to www.theorindatheatre.com.

ECOLunchboxes Goes Even Greener



Sandra Ann Harris with some of her EcoLunchboxes Photo provided

Sandra Ann Harris, Lafayette mom and founder of the Lafayette-based sustainable lunchware company ECOLunchboxes, announced that the business she started three years ago is now a Certified Green Business with the Contra Costa County Green Business Program and has been accepted into Venture Greenhouse’s accelerator program for sustainable businesses. “The Contra Costa County Green Business Program sets standards for sustainable business practices and ECOLunchboxes successfully demonstrated good environmental practices to win the certification,” says Harris. The local business owner was also very excited to have been accepted into the Venture Greenhouse accelerator program. “Venture Greenhouse is run by the Green MBA Program at the Dominican University in San Rafael,” she explained, “it seeks to leverage the success of small, sustainable businesses in the San Francisco Bay Area and support the growth and jobs-generation of these businesses.” For more information, go to www.ecolunchboxes.com.

‘Market Moraga’ Becomes ‘Student Deals’

Two months ago, Saint Mary’s student Matt Lebel launched Market Moraga, with the support of the Moraga Chamber of Commerce, a website and Facebook page dedicated to students wanting to get good deals in town. “We analyzed the performance of our

‘Market Moraga’ two-month pilot and rolled our conclusions into a new program that we feel will better connect St. Mary’s students/faculty/staff with Moraga businesses,” says Lebel, who is renaming the program ‘Student Deals.’

Dana Green Team Announces Affiliation with Pacific Union International (925) 339-1918, www.danagreenteam.com

“It always amazes me how life comes full circle,” says Dana Green, “I started my real estate career with Pacific Union when they were independently owned. In 2009, Pacific Union was purchased by a local real estate entrepreneur, Mark McLaughlin, and again all 18 Greater Bay Area offices are privately held.” The company has committed to opening a new Lafayette branch so Green will continue to work and live in her community. “I look forward to helping launch this office; along with my long-time manager, Ellen Anderson,” she added.

News from the three Chambers of Commerce

Lafayette

- Big Band Ballroom Dance on May 6 at the Veteran’s Memorial Building in Lafayette, 3780 Mt. Diablo Blvd. Dance Lessons from 7-8pm are provided by Gail Enright. Live music by The Big Band of Rossmoor from 8-10pm. Tickets are \$10.00 and can be purchased at the Chamber office or by calling 284-7404.
- Monthly Mixer On May 11, 5:30-7pm at Clocks, Etc., 971 Moraga Road, celebrating Clocks Etc.’s 35th anniversary.
- 9th Annual “Taste of Lafayette,” Tuesday, May 17, sponsored by the Lafayette Chamber of Commerce and the Lafayette Community Foundation. Taste of Lafayette is a tour of Lafayette’s finest eateries that lets you sample the signature cuisine of each restaurant. Tickets will be available online on the Chamber web site at www.lafayettechamber.org

Moraga

5th Moraga Community Faire on Saturday, May 14th from 11am-5pm at the Rheem Shopping Center, sponsored by the Moraga Chamber of Commerce. There will be great bands (noise level lower than last year), food, wine, climbing wall, jumpies for the kids, and a classic car show. A total of 80 booths are scheduled to feature many of the Moraga retailers, organizations, sports groups, and artists. An added bonus: Saint Mary’s basketball players will sign autographs for the young and old alike!

Orinda

After-hours mixer on Thursday, May 19, 2011, 5:30-7:30pm at Union Bank of California, 140 Brookwood, #101, Orinda.

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