

# Lamorinda Wine Growers Mean Business

By Sophie Braccini

You could say that Susan Captain and Carol Haag are nothing short of powerhouses. These two women, recently elected the new President and Secretary, respectively, of the Lamorinda Wine Growers Association (LWGA), are taking on the mission to make Lamorinda the next wine destination in the East Bay, with the support of the group's board and membership. Both professionals and well connected, Captain and Haag understand what it takes and are gathering the means to reach their ambitious goal.

"It has always been in our mission statement that one of our association's objectives was to 'promote the Lamorinda community and its status as a winegrowing region, enhancing the marketability of Lamorinda-grown grapes and Lamorinda-made wine,'" said Captain a few weeks after her election as President of LWGA, "but along the way, the social aspect of the group took over and we lost sight of how important it is to market the unique persona of our region." She believes that the new Board is reaffirming the original idea now that the size of the group makes the objective more realistic.

"Our group has grown so much over the past few years," says Haag, "We now have five bonded wineries (licensed facilities where harvest is turned into wine that can be sold under its own label), one more in process, and two have licenses to sell their wine." That will soon make eight different Lamorinda wines sold to the general market. The group as a whole counts 75 members, all grape growers with properties ranging in size from less than half an acre to 10 acres.

The first step is to get a new logo and slogan that will, according to Haag, give the group a fresh look. "We also want to showcase the Moraga Barn (at the corner of Viader and Country Club Drive in Moraga) as a destination for people to participate in local wine tasting, meet the winemakers and growers and purchase local



Chris Avant discussed future plans for The Barn at a recent open house. Photo Sophie Braccini

wines," she adds.

LWGA will continue to be part of local events, including the Moraga Pear and Wine Festival on September 24. The new Board plans to consistently reach out to community groups such as garden clubs and chambers of commerce to find synergies and establish partnerships. It plans to work with cities to continue to be valued members of the community and good neighbors.

The ultimate goal of the new Board is to establish Lamorinda as an American Viticulture Area (AVA), a federal designation. "If we can get this, it will change everything," believes Captain, "An AVA would really brand our wines and grapes and increase the value of land in the area. But it is a long and complex process that needs to be documented. We have started to work on it."

The specificity that the group is planning to highlight in their application is the unique Lamorinda climate - with less lingering fog than on the other side of the tunnel, and cooler summer temperatures than neighboring Walnut Creek. "We need a wine climate specialist from UC Davis to conduct the study," says Captain adding that the group has already started to talk to the university and people are getting involved and offer-

ing help. "This is not going to happen overnight," warns the new President, who is nonetheless infused with enthusiasm for the project.

There are other aspects to LWGA's mission. "We need to educate our growers on best practices to grow sustainably," says Captain, "for example, the hills and the soil here are perfect for grapes; it does not need to be flattened or fertilized." The whole membership meets quarterly to listen to an expert in one of the different aspects of making wine. "We want to encourage suburban wine grape growing in Lamorinda," she adds, "we are part of this community, we want to participate in its beauty, and by promoting the most environmentally and economically safe farming method, we will also improve the overall grape quality and flavor."

The group also continues to maintain a strong tradition of social activities. "Once a month, we meet at the Moraga Barn, taste wines, mingle and discuss some of our every day issues," says Haag, "for example, how to grow grapes with the abundant wildlife in the area!"

For more information, go to [www.lamorindawinegrowers.com](http://www.lamorindawinegrowers.com).

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

## Get Clean.

**Total Clean 376-1004**  
For your home.

## Providing Insurance and Financial Services

It's no accident more people trust State Farm.



Mike Rosa, Agent  
Insurance Lic. #: 0F45583  
1042 Country Club Drive, Moraga  
925-376-2244

LIKE A GOOD NEIGHBOR STATE FARM IS THERE.®

PO40036 02/04 State Farm Mutual Automobile Insurance Company (Not in NJ), Bloomington, IL



LICENSE NO. 525400

Specializing in Remodeling and New Construction  
Kitchens Baths Additions

For a **FREE** estimate call us today!

Working in the Lafayette, Orinda and Moraga area since 1990

Tel: (925) 566-4990  
Garyatadvance@aol.com



Ware Designs  
Fine Jewelry since 1977

3645 Mt. Diablo Blvd., Lafayette  
between Trader Joes & the Post Office  
283-2988  
www.waredesigns.com

50% off Watch Battery  
Now \$5, Reg \$10  
1 watch battery per person. Exp. 9/30/11. Usually installed while you wait. W/coupon. Restrictions apply.

Tuesday-Saturday 10-6

If you have a business brief to share, please contact **Sophie Braccini** at [sophie@lamorindaweekly.com](mailto:sophie@lamorindaweekly.com)

## business briefs

### Chef Chao Expands and Renovates

343 Rheem Boulevard, Moraga, 376-1740

Chef Chao is a popular Chinese restaurant located near 24 Hour Fitness in Moraga. Recently, the adjoining space was vacated and offered for sale. Henry Chao and his father, Hsin Ming Chao, decided to expand and buy that space. "We are not sure what we are going to do with the empty space yet," said Henry Chao, "Chef Chao is going to be remodeled and totally upgraded starting in September. We hope that our customers will love the new look and feel of the restaurant." Among the possible uses for the added space could be to accommodate very large parties and banquets.

### News from the three Chambers of Commerce

#### Lafayette

- Monthly Mixer, Wednesday, September 7, 5:30pm at Yankee Pier Restaurant, 3593 Mt. Diablo Blvd.
- Ribbon Cutting, Thursday, September 8, 5pm for Deena's Nail Care & Foot Massage at 3330 Mt. Diablo Blvd., #100.
- Shop Lafayette Meeting, Tuesday, September 13, 12pm in the Chamber Conference Room
- Entrepreneur's Club, Thursday, September 15, 8:30am in the Chamber Conference Room
- 16th Annual Lafayette Art & Wine Festival on Saturday, September 17 & Sunday, September 18. This event is one of the largest outdoor festivals in Contra Costa County. In 2010, over 100,000 people strolled among the stalls of art, handmade crafts, sampling foods from top local restaurants and enjoying quality wines and microbrews, pausing to enjoy continuous music from the two main stages. The Festival has a website, [www.lafayettefestival.com](http://www.lafayettefestival.com)
- Gorilla Marketing Workshop on Friday, September 23, 11am-1:30pm at the Lafayette Library and Learning Center. Chamber members will gather to explore the world of "unconventional" marketing, learn how to create a "BUZZ" about them and their business. The workshop's keynote speaker is Tom Frainier, owner and "Chief Boot Licker" of Semifreddi's Bakery. Cost: \$45 (chamber members) which includes lunch. Register online or call the Chamber office at 284-7404.

#### Moraga

Moraga Pear and Wine Festival on Saturday September 24, 10am-4pm at the Moraga Commons Park. After 13 years, the Moraga Festival is changing its name from Pear Festival to Pear and Wine to recognize the rapidly expanding Lamorinda Wine Growers Association. The day will include something for all ages. Activities include food, pear pies, wine tasting, inflatable 'jumpsies', artists and a business fair.

#### Orinda

Orinda Business Neighborhood Watch on Thursday, September 8, 8-9am at Citibank, 37 Orinda Way, Orinda. This group of merchants takes action in becoming proactive against crime. They work together with the support of the Orinda Police Department and share some ideas about making things better.

Orinda's Longest Weekend, September 23-27. Starting with 'Dancing With The Cars' on Friday, September 23, Orinda Annual Classic Car Show on Saturday, September 24, and the Orinda Restaurant Tour on Tuesday, September 27. Go to [www.orindacarshow.com](http://www.orindacarshow.com) and [www.orindachamber.org](http://www.orindachamber.org) for more info and tickets.

925-377-8733



**EAST BAY TREE SERVICE**  
Professional Tree Care

- Complete Tree Removal (Large and Hazardous Tree Removal)
- Trim; Reduce weight/height
- View Enhancement
- Lot Clearing (Brush Chipping)
- Stump Grinding/Removal
- 24 Hour Emergency Service

**377-TREE**

[www.eastbaytreeservice.com](http://www.eastbaytreeservice.com)  
Licensed, insured & bonded Lic.#805794  
Locally owned and operated

**\$30.00 OFF\***

**Tree Service**

**FREE ESTIMATES**

\*1st Time Customers Only

Present Coupon with Payment

# ROOFING/RAINGUTTERS

New Work and Repairs  
All Types of Roofs and Gutters  
Clean/Screen, Roof Powerwashing.  
We do it all!



Over 20 Years Experience  
We'll Beat Any Written Estimate  
**All Raingutters Systems, Inc.**  
925-381-7620

Lic #793315