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Vet's Building Re-Branding Itself as Events Center

By Cathy Tyson



Veterans Memorial Building Photo courtesy Ed Stevenson

Opened just six years ago, the Veterans Memorial Building is now known as the Lafayette Events Center at the Veterans Memorial Building. New marketing efforts call it simply the Lafayette Events Center. Although Contra Costa County owns the building, the Veterans lease it and had been responsible for booking events as well as all the upkeep. The 9,500 square foot building replaced for two now-demolished crumbling Veterans buildings - one in Walnut Creek and one in Lafayette.

The name change is meant to reposition the facility as a great location for weddings, bar mitzvahs and corporate events. Ed Stevenson, former Marine and now Building Manager, said Lafayette War Veterans, Inc., a non-profit organization that manages the Veterans Memorial Building determined veterans "grossly underestimated" the costs associated with the sleek award-winning facility. "We needed to learn some lessons," said Stevenson, who gleaned life skills serving in Vietnam, but had no experience as an event planner.

About two years ago Lafayette War Veterans decided that they needed experienced marketing professionals and event planners to maximize usage and income. They went

through a selection process, interviewing potential candidates and eventually found a winner in Fraiche Catering - pronounced Fresh. Although Fraiche is now permanently renting the kitchen at the Veterans Memorial Building, outside vendors are an option for clients who would like to use the facility. "We wanted to be flexible and available to the community," said Stevenson.

Veterans groups like the American Legion, the VFW and Marine Corps League still regularly hold meetings and dinners there. They all still get first dibs on booking events.

Locals may be more familiar with Fraiche's previous incarnation, Patrick David's restaurant. The restaurant is still open in Danville, but not associated with former head chef Patrick David Schoolcraft.

"There was a big misconception," said Laura Schoolcraft, Fraiche Catering Director of Business Development. "You don't have to be a veteran to use the veterans building." That's the theme behind the re-branding effort. Since they have come on board, "The business has changed drastically," said Schoolcraft, "My goal is to help keep the building solvent and support the Veterans." Her husband, Patrick David Schoolcraft, is the Executive Chef; he's owned and operated a variety of restaurants over the past thirty years.

So far Stevenson says the Fraiche team is doing a terrific job, the quality of events has greatly improved and the food is absolutely delicious.

Right now Fraiche is working on developing a logo for the Events Center; they already have a website, lafayetteeventscenter.com. Fraiche Catering can be reached via their website www.fraichecater.com. The original Veteran's Memorial Building still has a website at www.lafayetteveterans.org. For engaged couples looking to tie the knot, all the highlights and services of the Lafayette Events Center can be found at www.herecomestheguide.com

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