

## Local Business: What to Expect in 2013

By Sophie Braccini

It's often said that "all politics is local," a phrase coined by former U.S. Speaker of the House Tip O'Neill, but so is economics. Here, on the ground in Lamorinda, is where 2013 will hit the mark or flop. We asked local business owners for their thoughts. What we heard is that even though most are worried about the consequences of going over the fiscal cliff – which many economists predict could derail the U.S. recovery – they want to view 2013 with optimism.

Papillon, at Fiesta Square, is the favorite cafe of many and has been owned for the last 15 years by Lafayette residents Chanbopha Oum (Brenda) and Savuth Chea (Tom). "In 2012 business was a little better," said Brenda Oum. "We expect to have a good year in 2013." Papillon made some changes to its menu to satisfy Lamorinda's discriminating palate. This local focus has made the cafe a continuing success, despite the big-name coffee shops that abound nearby.

Even more unexpected in today's online world is the success of Canetti's Bookshop in Orinda. "We have a carefully curated selection of books, not only new ones, but most that are gently read in excellent condition," said owner Jeff Koren. "And if it's not in our collection we can special order. Our books are of high quality and quite affordable. It's definitely a place for people who love books." Like the owners of Papillon, Koren offers his clients an experience that's not formatted to please a larger audience, but rather something uniquely Lamorinda.

Next door to Canetti's, Morrison's Jewelers will celebrate its 90th anniversary this year. Morrison's also ward off the tough times that hit the jewelry business particularly hard. Fourth-generation owner David Berryhill is reasonably optimistic for this year. He described 2012 as a

roller coaster, but they finished the year on a very positive note. "This December, the average price of sales was much higher than what it was last year; this gives us some level of confidence about what lies ahead," he said.

Unpredictability in the level of activity, and all the complications that creates in terms of inventory and purchasing management for a business owner, was also reported in Moraga—in the completely different field of auto repair. "In 2012 business was fair," said Moraga Motor's owner Ron Schumaker. "The flow of work has become more unpredictable from one week to the next." But Schumaker is confident that 2013 will see improvement over the last three years.

Also in Moraga Chong Bo Kim, who has managed the Moraga Clean Express in the Moraga Center for 15 years while living in Orinda, says that 2012 marked a small improvement over the previous three hard years. "We remodeled the inside of the store, changed the counters," he said. "We want our customers to have a very pleasant experience." Kim owns a similar dry cleaning service in San Jose and he says that the two locations follow a similar business pattern. He hopes that the slow recovery he observed in 2012 will continue and strengthen in 2013.

Some Lamorinda newcomers are also expecting 2013 to be very successful. Itrim U.S.A. C.E.O. Jill Kinney, who opened the Swedish company's first American facility in Lafayette this summer, is one of the most optimistic businesspeople we talked to. "We are very pleased with our first results in Lafayette," said Kinney. "Our objective was 500 members by the end of the first year and we've reached 300 now, a little above our projections." 2013 will be a key year for Itrim. The Lafayette store should reach its objective of 500 members, and Kinney plans to add

eight new locations to the three current ones (after Lafayette, Itrim opened in San Ramon and San Francisco). "We should hire about 150 new people in 2013," she said.

Another indicator of recovery is the housing market. Village Associates broker Tara Rochlin has an optimistic perspective on Lamorinda real estate for 2013. "The inventory is low, which drove the prices up in 2012," she said. "I think that more homes will come to the market in 2013." While noting there are still economic uncertainties, she said, "I believe that the worst is behind us."

"People are very interested in becoming homeowners, and often at a higher price point than before," added Ben Olsen, who has observed that new families coming to Lamorinda are often buying their first homes at the \$1 million-plus level. "These are professionals with postgraduate degrees and often a dual-income. They come with young children and both parents are career-oriented."

Both real estate professionals think that 2013 will be a dynamic year, seeing upsizing and downsizing – new higher-density developments may offer opportunities for older residents, and sales of luxury homes such as those at Wilder could bring added benefit to the local economy.

Contractor Kari Grosz, of Lamorinda Construction, says her company has been busier than it has been in a long time. "The quality and size of the projects are increasing," she said. "This was the first December in years that we were inundated with work. We are very optimistic that 2013 will be the best year since the recession."

As confidence in our economic future grows, local businesses hope that everyone will remember to shop Lamorinda first.

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



Brenda (standing) chats with a customer at Papillon in Lafayette.

Photos Mina Lucacher



Clients exercise at Itrim under a trainer's supervision.



Leslie Hampton greets customers at Sweet Dreams at Orinda Theatre Square.

## THE APP RAP

By Alex Pawlakos

**App:** Dropbox, by Dropbox Co.  
**For:** All smartphones  
**Price:** Free

Whether it's a laptop or a notebook, anything bigger than a smartphone is cumbersome for most people to carry or transport. But what if you need your laptop or notebook regularly because you have files on your computer that you must access? A really clever app that is simple to use is called Dropbox. Download Dropbox on any personal device, including smartphones, computers, or notepads and you have full control over your uploaded files anywhere, anytime. Save anything you may want to access at a later time to the Dropbox folder. For example, on your personal computer you can save documents, pictures, videos, and text files into the Dropbox folder. This "cloud" storage by the Dropbox Company saves your data safely and quickly. You can use your smartphone to access anything that you have saved in that folder. You can also save things from your smartphone to later access on your personal computer from the Dropbox

folder. If you are working on a project with others, it's helpful to create a password protected Dropbox folder that you all can share and access. It's especially handy with large files that cannot be sent via email. Dropbox has become a "must have" download for thousands of happy clients, and it's absolutely free!



Alex Pawlakos enjoys biking, weightlifting, and tutoring in his spare time. He is a reporter on Express Yourself!™ Teen Radio.

## business briefs

**Servers at Si Si Cafe Collect Tips for Sandy Hook**  
910 Country Club Drive, Moraga  
(925) 277-1908



Servers at Si Si surround Ally Weber (center, white sweater): Cynthia Corsi, Carlos Bermudez, Renee Gomer, Cara Freccero, Megan Verries and Alex Friedman.  
Photo Mina Lucacher

A sign went up Dec. 18 at Si Si Café in Moraga informing customers that 100 percent of all tips received that day would go to Newtown, Conn., to provide services to families and the community following the tragedy at Sandy Hook Elementary School. "It was Ally Weber's idea," said Si Si owner Cathy Corsi. "I just felt like doing something, and this was the least we could do," explained Weber, who is a local student heading for DVC while working part time at the café. "When some patrons saw the sign they left \$20 bills," said Corsi; together they raised more than \$350. According to United Way, the fund established at Newton Savings Bank had received \$3.5 million in donations as of Dec. 26. For more information, go to [www.uwwesternct.org](http://www.uwwesternct.org).

**Moraga's Employee of the Month for December**



From left: Frank Melon, Frank May, Keisha Iwayemi and Bill Phelps  
Photo by Kevin Reneau

Keisha Iwayemi has been a care manager at Aegis of Moraga for the past three years. "Keisha (Iwayemi) is a tremendous employee and goes out of her way to make every resident and every visitor feel like they are part of

our family," said Bill Phelps, Executive Director of Aegis. "She just brightens everybody's day and all of our residents love her." Sponsors Moraga Rotary and Chamber of Commerce presented Iwayemi with the award, along with a \$50 Safeway gift card and a \$50 gift certificate to Chef Chao Restaurant, at the Moraga Rotary luncheon Dec. 18.

**News from the three Chambers of Commerce**

**Lafayette Chamber**

**Business Person of the Year**

Congratulations

to Lamorinda

Music's Colleen

McCormick,

Marquis Business

Person of the Year. Mc-

Cormick and her

husband, John,

opened their

family business a

few years ago

with the simple

philosophy that

music is fun and

a music store

should be fun,

too. Lamorinda

Music is now one

of the cornerstones

of Lafayette Circle.

The annual Business

Person of the Year/

Mayor's State of

the City address/

Installation of the

2013 Chamber Board

of Directors Dinner

will be held Feb. 1.

Details coming

soon.

**Moraga Chamber**

The Chamber is

accepting nominations

for Business Person

of the Year. Names

can be emailed to

Kathe Nelson at

[kathe@moragachamber.org](mailto:kathe@moragachamber.org). A

vote to select among

the nominees is

scheduled for

January and the

awards dinner

will be in February.

**Orinda Chamber**

Mark your calendar

for the luncheon

tribute to Dick

Heggie, first mayor

of Orinda, Jan. 16

from 11:30 a.m.

to 1:30 p.m.

at the Orinda

Country Club. Cost:

\$25 per person,

reservations online

at [www.orindachamber.org](http://www.orindachamber.org).

## Motivational Presentations by Cynthia Brian

Hailed as an expert in lifestyle, teens, gardening, and personal growth, New York Times Best Selling Author, Media Personality, & Coach, Cynthia Brian empowers audiences to find their inner star.



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Marsh Engle, Founder of Amazing Woman's Day

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[Cynthia@Star-Style.com](mailto:Cynthia@Star-Style.com), [www.Star-Style.com](http://www.Star-Style.com)

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