

Bursting With Ideas and Creativity, Here Comes The New Art Room

By Sophie Braccini

The talented artist who took over The Art Room at 50 Lafayette Circle (across from Chow), Carrie Klein, has the desire and creative energy to offer an array of art classes and collaborative working opportunities using a wide variety of media for all ages and avenues of life.

"When Gigi (Voris) had to sell The Art Room to move north and proposed it to me, I hesitated," remembers Klein. "I have been an art teacher, an artist, but never a business

person. But then I thought about all I could do with it."

Klein has a real passion for teaching. She wants her students to enjoy expressing their inner voice, whatever their ability level and learning style. She says that art is about the process. "Art has its own language," she says, "and I feel that when a child or an adult is able to be enriched by that process, if they want to stretch it further and be more technical, then they will seek that. But it is important to

let them be experimental and exploring."

She thinks that sometimes in classes students are afraid to make mistakes, but if they are allowed to go with the process and not worry about making a perfect scene and really enjoy what's happening, then they start taking risks. "I can come up and give an example, but I try to give only a small one and then stop, so they create their own voice."

Klein honors her students' way of developing. "You have to read where the students are, let them try different approaches, so they find what will allow them to progress," she says.

As an artist, Klein was trained at the California College of the Arts in Oakland where she studied photography, sculpture, welding and glass. She incorporated glass into sculpture, weaving and mixing it with metal. She has been teaching for 15 years.

Students at The Art Studio range in age from 4 to 80. Klein wants to take what already exists in different directions. She'd like to add "messy art" for preschoolers, for example. The teen studio is very successful, and there is an adult studio offered on Wednesday nights. But Klein would like to add more evening adult classes, such as visiting artist workshops.

"People love hands-on classes with resident artists," she says. Klein wants to incorporate digital photogra-



Carrie Klein and Gigi Voris

Photo Andy Schreck

phy as art, using it as mixed media; she also wants to add 'claymation' (an animation process using clay figures) and classes for short movies, "something the teens are asking for," she says.

Another of Klein's projects is to start a class for special needs children. "My brother John works with special needs kids in San Francisco; we are collaborating on designing that project together," she says. She wants to be able to seek grants or financial aid so she can offer classes to people without much money, and would also like to develop opportunities for local artists.

"Since I've taken over, many artists have come in wanting to know

where the other artists are on this side of the tunnel because they all want to be together." Her dream is to add an annex or studio to The Art Room for glass and the steel works, and maybe large ceramics, creating a place for collaborative work. "We are creating an avenue for art here, also with music (Lamorinda Music is close by)," she says. "It exists in San Francisco and the other side of the tunnel, but not as much here."

Visit The Art Room website at www.theart-room.com to find new class listings or to sign up for updates.

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Eileen Alford motivates a group of clients on a frosty Moraga morning next to Si Si Caffè. Photo Sophie Braccini

Eileen Alford opened a new personal training studio Jan. 14 in Moraga, near Si Si Caffè on Country Club Drive. The Moraga mother of three is a certified trainer who's worked many years in that field, for other clubs and for individual clients, and decided it was time to have her own place. "There was a niche for this kind of place in Moraga," she says, "something centrally located, convenient and friendly, where people can come for individual training or group classes and that does not require a membership." Alford teaches personal training and some of the classes; she is also partnering with other professionals for specific classes such as yoga. Her highlight classes are Tabata, high-impact interval training that involves 20 seconds of quick intense movements followed by 10 seconds of rest – an excellent way to improve cardio and strength, according to Alford – Body Sculpt that blends pilates and barre work, a boot camp, and a TRX/cycle combination class. Classes start at 5:30 a.m. for those who want to train before work, the last group classes start at 6 p.m., and the gym closes at 8 p.m. Her clients range in age from 30 to over 70.

Barbacoa Adds Standard Fare to Menu

2 Theatre Square, #30, Orinda

(925) 254-1183

barbacoaorinda.com

Barbacoa, the new Mexican restaurant that opened at Theatre Square last year, started with a very innovative menu for Lamorinda. Centered around authentic Mexican cuisine and techniques, it did not offer what many Californians equate with Mexican food. Recently, restaurant owners Michael and Victor Ivry decided to add standard "Mexican" fare like quesadillas, burritos, enchiladas and fajitas to the menu. Patrons can still find Barbacoa's authentic food on the menu under "Mexican Specialties." The duo also introduced Littles and Middles menus for kids and teens.

Buckley Joins Coldwell Banker's Orinda Office

5 Moraga Way, Orinda

(925) 253-4600

Kirsten Buckley has joined Coldwell Banker Residential Brokerage as a sales associate in its Orinda office. "Kirsten is bright, energetic and works tremendously hard to meet and exceed the expectations of homebuyers and sellers," said Valerie Cook-Watkins, manager of the company's Orinda office. Prior to joining Coldwell Banker, Buckley worked as a marketing coordinator for the Elena Hood Real Estate Group. Buckley is an active member of the Moraga community and has served on many boards, including Moraga Education Foundation, Camino Pablo PTA and the Campolindo High School Sports Boosters. Buckley may be reached directly at (510) 612-6173 and via e-mail at Kirsten@Orinda.com.

Home Expo

The second annual Home Expo is scheduled for Sunday, Jan. 27 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Veterans Memorial Building, 3780 Mt. Diablo Blvd. in Lafayette. The event is free and open to the public. For information, visit www.lamorindaweekly.com/homeexpo.com.

News from the three Chambers of Commerce

Lafayette

During the holiday season the Chamber and the Try Lafayette First committee encouraged residents to shop locally and take a chance at winning cash prizes. "Many of our neighbors participated by spending at least \$150 at three different kinds of businesses," said Chamber's Executive Director Jay Lifson. "They turned in their receipts that came from over 175 different local merchants. Congratulations to our winners!" Kathy Korpell was the winner and received a \$500 visa card to be used in Lafayette. Over the holiday season, Korpell shopped at Open Sesame, McCaulou's, Clocks Etc., Tulip, Bedazzled, Wine Thieves, Sharp Bicycle, Hank and Frank Bicycles, Papillon, Storyteller, Way Side Inn Thrift Shop, Trader Joe's, Elmwood Stationers, Artisan Bistro, Pizza Antica, Amarin Thai, Postino and Chow. Lea Mason won second prize and a \$250 card, Rebecca Ayverdi took third place and left with a \$100 card. "Shopping local supports the culture of a vibrant downtown filled with a wide variety of unique businesses and boutiques," added Lifson. "It creates local jobs, keeps our tax-base strong by circulating money in our town versus sending it elsewhere, supports businesses that generously donate to local schools and non-profits, and reduces the carbon footprint."

Moraga

Congratulations to Bill Snider, owner of Moraga Hardware and Lumber, the newly-elected Business Person of the Year. A celebratory dinner will be held in February.

General membership meeting at the Hacienda at 7:30 a.m. Saturday, Jan. 26, starting with breakfast in the Mosaic Room. Meeting starts at 8 a.m. and will feature Assemblyperson Joan Buchanan. Buchanan will also meet with interested residents at 10 a.m. that day at Terzetto, by reservation only. For reservations, contact Assemblymember.Buchanan@assembly.ca.gov.

Orinda

Orinda In-Home Business Owners Reception
The first Orinda In-Home Business Owners Reception will be held from 5:30 to 7 p.m. Feb. 5 at Citibank, 37 Orinda Way in Orinda. "This is the first time we are focusing on business people who work from their home," said Sue Breedlove, former Chamber president. "It is a new year and we want to involve different kinds of people, getting to know them, understand what they need and hear their ideas about moving businesses forward in Orinda." The Chamber is partnering with Rotary for outreach and with Citibank to host the meeting. Breedlove said the hardest part was identifying the business owners; a license is not required in Orinda, but the Chamber managed to put together an invitation list of 75 people. Anyone who fits the category of in-home business owner is invited to join this free meeting. "I hope everyone will get the opportunity to introduce themselves and give their 'elevator speech,'" said Breedlove. "There will be nibbles and drinks. We will have a good time."

The Orinda Chamber elected a new president, Sylvia Jorgensen, Financial Advisor with the Hurd Jorgensen Group/Merrill Lynch Wealth Management.

If you have a business brief to share, please contact **Sophie Braccini** at sophie@lamorindaweekly.com