

Fashion and Arts

J. Colleen Boutique opens in Lafayette

By Sophie Braccini



Julie Colleen Rubio in the garden at her boutique. Photo Sophie Braccini

under their wing since I am starting my business," she says. The metal gate to the garden, the mirrors, velvet fabric, and some vintage clothing also come from the showroom. A lot of accessories such as the display cases or even the hangers are refurbished quality items and have been chosen by Rubio with a desire to express quality and timelessness. The side patio is a little sanctuary full of flowers with lounge chairs for people to hang out.

The boutique is composed of a series of specialty rooms: designer clothes, jewelry, shoes, gifts, and a vintage room. Some of the designers Rubio has chosen for the boutique are people she met in her travels or through her family. Her mother used to own a fashion store in Los Angeles where she taught Rubio how to choose and buy.

A big part of her family is from Hawaii and the island style is a big part of who Rubio is. "It's in Hawaii that I first discovered Indah, a designer from Bali that I am featuring in my store," she says. "I will also have the high-end clothes from Gucci and Versace. Not everybody wants to drive to Walnut Creek for a dress, or to see art, or watch a short film."

Rubio will also sell hats, bags, pillows, Coola organic sunscreen, and her own line of scents, J. Colleen Blue Lani. Shoes are consignment and vintage, and of course there is a lot of jewelry. "I have silver, pearls from Tahiti, and Michelle Mirkovich will be presenting her creations, all made with real gems," she says. "We'll have some expensive pieces and some that are very interesting and aren't expensive. You can mix it all up."

Additionally Rubio wants her place to be a platform for artists. "We need to be exposed to more art in the East Bay," she says. "For example, Jen Johnson is an artist from Hawaii who I love, but I'm open; if someone wants to email me and show me what they are doing, I am interested." On the walls, she's also displaying edgy creations, like pictures of the art she filmed in her documentary, "Everything Is Temporary," that will be featured at the Mill Valley Film Festival.

The grand opening reception Sept. 7 will begin at 6 p.m. and will include a fashion show.

"We'll have a stage here (the back parking lot), about 100 chairs around it, we'll show everything from our new designers, such as the Vitamin A bathing suits, and some of our vintage pieces," Rubio says. "We'll be serving wine and cocktails, we'll have art on display, live music. It's going to be a real party."

For more information, visit www.jcolleen.com.

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

Julie Colleen Rubio thinks that Lamorinda women are an enigma. "They are seen walking around town in their yoga clothes during the day and may seem very casual," says the new business owner, "but come the night, they go the city, to parties, and they like to dress, and they know how to dress as their social life requires."

Rubio, who has lived in Orinda for 14 years, thought that a store for the discriminating and creative woman was needed here. She thought of the concept of her first boutique, J. Colleen, as a place where women will come to choose unique attire, enjoy art, or simply muse in the flowery patio. An artist herself, this professional filmmaker loves creators and has selected a small group of fashion designers for her store. The grand opening on Sept. 7 will be done in style.

The boutique is located at 261 Lafayette Circle, where Queen Bee used to be. "We want to honor the heritage of that store and have a place for gifts in here," says Rubio.

Entering the space, you get the feeling that it has been decorated by someone who really wants to make the place her own, infusing each object, each accessory with her personality. Nothing is done haphazardly or cheaply; the chandeliers come from Jessica McClintock's showroom that's closing. "I met with her brother and they took me

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business briefs

Business Briefs
Rob 'The Realtor' Pushes Veterans' Loans
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Robert Jacobus believes that he is one of the few, if not the only real estate agent in Lamorinda who is also a veteran and has taken the training and earned a VApro designation to help and support U.S. veterans obtain Veterans Administration Loans. Jacobus joined the U.S. Army in the late '80s and went to the U.S. Military Chaplain School in New Jersey. He was assigned to the 352 EVAC hospital in the Oakland Army Base where he assisted the head chaplain. After he was discharged, he participated in veterans' groups and is doing what he can to support veterans. "We owe them a debt we can never repay," he says. "The least we can do is help those veterans who are out there get into a home that they want and are qualified for." According to Jacobus, VA loans are not very common in Lamorinda. "One of the reasons is that they became almost extinct in California," he says, "but they are making a strong comeback; they've become more attractive than most conventional loans." Jacobus explains that in the past it took a long time to obtain those loans and the seller had to pay the closing costs. He says that these negatives have been eliminated. "Those loans generally have a better interest rate, the VA guarantees a percentage of the loan so the veterans do not have to come up with a down payment, and they can be re-issuable to almost anybody." The realtor adds that veterans who buy a home have some of the lowest rates of default. "There are also misconceptions about the value of the homes that can be financed with VA loans," said Jacobus. "Almost any home in Lamorinda is eligible for such a loan, as long as it is safe and in livable condition." Jacobus says that the activity on these loans has recently picked up and since the beginning of the year he's worked with two families who got the loan, with three others pending.



Rob 'The Realtor' Jacobus Photo provided



Moraga Rotary president Nora Avelar, Sandi Kent, State Farm agent Tom Sepe and Moraga Chamber vice president Kevin Reneau. Photo provided

"She is always pleasant with customers and they love working with her, even when dealing with unpleasant losses or difficult situations. She's not only reliable, but she will always stay late to help a customer, even if it is past closing time." Kent is the 18th recipient of the monthly employee award, sponsored by the Rotary Club of Moraga and the Chamber of Commerce. In winning the award, the Rotary and Chamber presented her award and gifts at the Moraga Rotary luncheon on Tuesday, Aug. 20.

News from three Chambers of Commerce

Lafayette
 Ribbon Cutting for the new business Lafayette Beauty Store & Salon at 5 p.m. Thursday, Sept. 5 at 3606 Mt. Diablo Blvd.

Chamber mixer at Blodgett's Abbey Carpet & Flooring from 5:30 to 7 p.m. Wednesday, Sept. 11 at 3291 Mt. Diablo Ct.

Save the date for the 18th Annual Lafayette Art and Wine Festival, Saturday and Sunday, Sept. 21-22.

Moraga
 Moraga businesses can present their services to new students during Saint Mary's College Welcome Weekend from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Thursday, Aug. 29. For more information, contact Kathe Nelson at Kathe@moragachamber.org.

Orinda
 Mark your calendars for "September in Orinda," a series of classic local events. The Orinda Classic Car Show Weekend, Sept. 20-22, begins with the pre-show party Sept. 20, the Car Show Sept. 21 and the Sunday Movie night on Sept. 22. More info and tickets are available at OrindaCarShow.com. On Tuesday, Sept. 24, Orinda will celebrate its restaurant row with the 6th Annual Restaurant Tour.

Sandi Kent Named Moraga Employee of the Month for August
 Sandi Kent, who has been assisting State Farm Insurance customers for the past 14 years, has been named the Moraga Employee of the Month for August. Kent's warm personality has been a mainstay of the State Farm office on Rheem Boulevard, under the direction of owner Tom Sepe, who appreciates her dedication to her customers and notes that she has only had one sick day in her 14 years on the job. "Sandi is just an exceptional employee," said Sepe.

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