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Fourth Anniversary of New Rheem Theatre

By Sophie Braccini



Cliff Dochterman gets a lift.

Photo Sophie Braccini

Derek Zemrak and Leonard Pirkle greeted a group of about 30 supporters who came to celebrate the fourth anniversary of the New Rheem Theatre in Moraga last week. Zemrak recalled the trials and tribulations they have endured over the last four years, from outdated material that fell apart, such as projectors and the lift, to new studio requirements for digital projectors in order to continue to get new releases, to a lawsuit. The team that took over the theater, after the previous operator threw in the towel, at times wondered what kind of misadventure it had stepped into.

But now after four years, with the continued support of the community and the annual film festival going strong, Zemrak and Pirkle feel good about their enterprise. "We have secured two major sponsors for the festival that have committed \$10,000 each for the next five years, Republic Services and Wells Fargo Bank," said Zemrak. "We now run the two theaters of Moraga and Orinda as a six-plex, and we feel an enormous gratitude toward the community." Zemrak and Pirkle have their own fulltime careers outside of running the theaters; for them, the Lamorinda theaters are a labor of love.

Councilmember Dave Trotter presented the theater owners with a certificate of recognition from Assemblymember Joan Buchanan that read, "As part of the cultural landscape of Moraga for over 50 years, Rheem Theater will continue to be a well-loved and supported institution in the county."

The event included the dedication of the new ADA lift and Moraga's Citizen of the Year, Cliff Dochterman, took a ceremonial first ride.



Happy Fourth of July!



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