

Man Cave Authority

By Sophie Braccini



From left: Brad Cogswell and Logan Franey Photo provided

John Gray would approve of Man Cave Authority; some 25 years ago the author of “Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus” theorized that when men’s tolerance to stressful situations is exceeded, they go spend time in their “caves.” Two young Lamorinda men agree and feel that men deserve a service that caters to their primordial need to build such

a cave. Brad Cogswell and Logan Franey, who met at Campolindo High School and are now in their mid-20s, launched Man Cave Authority, an online community site where cool caves are featured and where they sell most everything a man might need to design the cave of his dreams.

Cogswell is a University of Southern California alumnus with di-

verse professional experience. He worked in commercial real estate after graduation, built a gym in Thailand, and started an online business selling saddles. Man Cave Authority is a partnership with his friend Franey, based on a concept they both love. “We do not have man caves yet,” says Cogswell, “but Logan and I remember the ones our fathers, and friends’ fathers, had. We were always attracted to those places that were for men only.”

“Logan is the creative writer of our team,” explains Cogswell. “He writes interviews with people and posts on our blog.” Creating this online hub is key to their business model. “This is a topic people are very passionate about and want to showcase,” he says. “There are also people looking for information and tips; not everyone has thousands of dollars to spend on their caves.” At www.mancaveauthority.com, people can find examples and tips for budget-conscious cave building.

Some of the caves featured on the website are striking. The Oct. 3 blog entry features a hunting and fishing man-mansion that includes a billiard room, arcade, and full bar. There’s also a Toronto Maple Leaf man cave, and a movie and battle station man cave. The most fascinating aspect is the attention paid to detail and the collection of memorabilia that some of these men have lovingly gathered,

whether their caves consume an entire floor or just their garages.

The list of products that can be ordered is vast. It includes some very nice beer dispensers (Kegeators), bar stools, and wine racks; all types of seating – home theater seats, recliners, racecar seats; game supplies and equipment such as pool tables and darts; and smaller ticket items including manly lighting, wall art and clocks.

“Some of the more popular categories are the sports man caves,” explains Cogswell. There is a whole section on the website that focuses just on furniture and accessories emblazoned with sports team logos and colors. “You can order recliners with the colors and emblem of your favorite team,” says the young businessman. The 49ers recliner, for example, comes in either black leather or red microfiber with the team’s logo emblazoned on the seat-

back and footrest.

“It was not easy to convince some of the manufacturers to let us be resellers of their products,” explains Cogswell. With a proliferation of pay-per-click sites, manufacturers are wary of young sites that don’t have a long history of service. But the team put together a solid presentation. “I believe that focusing on the stories and the blog, and being very active online, convinced them that we had the right business strategy. Our sales are doing very well, even for a very young site,” he says.

Cogswell is still a local guy, but not for long – he landed at his parents’ house in Moraga upon returning from Thailand and is planning a move to San Francisco. Take the website for a spin at www.mancaveauthority.com.

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

business briefs

Orchard Nursery Wins National Award
4010 Mt. Diablo Blvd., Lafayette
(925) 284-4474, www.orchardnursery.com

Lafayette’s Orchard Nursery recently won the Dick Morey Retailer of the Year award, given each year by Nursery Retailer magazine in honor of the magazine’s founder. Tom Courtright and Jacquie Williams-Courtright traveled to Chicago to receive the honor.



Tom Courtright at his nursery. Photo Andy Scheck

Union Bank
140 Brookwood Road, #101, Orinda
(925) 253-8980, www.unionbank.com

MUFG Union Bank, N.A., announced that Maria Cristales has joined the community banking team as manager of the Orinda branch. Cristales is responsible for supporting the bank’s existing customer base and developing new relationships with consumers and small businesses.

Business Anniversaries



Photo provided

GNU Group Celebrates 40 Years
3445 Mt. Diablo Blvd, Lafayette
(925) 444-2020, www.gnugroup.com

The GNU Group marks its 40th year of practice in 2014. The venerable environmental graphics and architectural signage design firm celebrated the occasion with a festive open house for over 300 clients, employees and friends. “Our birthday party was a wonderful opportunity to observe the legacy of four decades, reminisce about our history and acknowledge our clients and collaborators who have contributed so much to our success,” said Martin Kindred, GNU’s director of business development. The informal gathering was punctuated by a heartfelt presentation by CEO Phil Murphy, who described his path to leading GNU through the past 20 years while expressing his appreciation to Richard Burns, the firm’s founder and president through its first two decades. The GNU group’s story is linked to that of three men – Richard Burns, who founded it and led it for 20 years; Philip Murphy, who bought it 20 years ago and now serves as president/CEO; and Tom Donnelly, who started his career as a graphic designer at GNU before leading his own firm, Donnelly Design, which he later merged with GNU where he now works as principal and is heavily engaged in signage and way-finding projects for airports such as Miami International, New York’s JFK International and Los Angeles International. GNU’s culture is client-centric; Dickson Keyser, director of design, says, “Believe it or not, the greatest design tools we use at the GNU Group are not our computers, it’s our ears.”

News from the Chambers of Commerce

Lafayette
Trick or Treat Street will be from 4 to 6 p.m. on Friday, Oct. 24 in downtown Lafayette along Mt. Diablo Boulevard from Dewing Avenue to First Street, Lafayette Circle and La Fiesta Square – participating merchants will greet young visitors with candies and treats to celebrate Halloween. Bring a treat-or-treat bag! Go to www.lafayettechamber.org the day of the event for a list of participating merchants.

Orinda
“Fall into OctoberFest” chamber mixer from 5:30 to 7 p.m. on Thursday, Oct. 23 hosted by Land Home Financial at 2 Theatre Square, Suite 146.

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

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