

## Business

# Two Businessmen Start a New Chapter of Their Lives in Lafayette

By Sophie Braccini



Farshid Ramani at Red Carpet Flooring  
Photo Sophie Braccini



Abdullah "Zee" Azizi and his father (standing) at Ace Auto Care  
Photos provided

Abdullah "Zee" Azizi and Farshid Ramani recently opened new businesses on opposite sides of Mt. Diablo Boulevard. To the east, Azizi purchased Ace Auto Care at the end of 2014. While Ramani, to the west, opened Red Carpet Flooring in March. Azizi is fresh out of the military; Ramani is a seasoned business owner. Both chose Lafayette to start new chapters in their lives.

Azizi, 27, returned to the U.S. in 2014 after begin stationed in Afghanistan. A month later he bought Ace Auto Care. He thought owning a business would help him readapt to civilian life. "The two worlds (military and civilian) are

very far apart," he says. "Many people think that (the military) is very stressful, but it's not. Everything is set for you. You know what's next. The struggle is different. There, it is very basic; you try to survive as a human being. Here, the struggle is trying to make a living. It is more stressful."

Azizi moved from Afghanistan to the U.S. with his family in 2007. A year later, after finishing high school, he joined the military, where he put his love of languages and linguistics to good use. "I loved being in the military; you are exposed to many different cultures," he says. "For me, being so new to this country I met with

Americans from all over, not just California, and in Afghanistan I met people from all over the world. Of course, it was dangerous where I was," he says, "but it's human nature, you adjust, and you do get used to it. You accept your situation; anything in your life you accept it."

The military reinforced the family values that he already had, he says, and he is bringing them to his business. "What we do defines us," he explains. "When you are deployed you can lose your life any second; what is left of you is what you did." In the auto shop, he believes that the same values of dignity and truth are just as important. "To me it is important to tell the truth so I can go to sleep at night," he says. "It's how I prioritize my life."

Azizi partnered with his father, who is an experienced mechanic, as was his grandfather. "All the technicians who work here are certified," he says, "and all our repairs are guaranteed for one year or 12,000 miles." He offers discounts to students, seniors and military personnel.

Close to Postino, on the western side of Mt. Diablo Boulevard, Ramani operates his flooring company with a similar ethic. When difficult economic times hit, Ramani decided to move his Concord business and his 20 years of expertise closer to his Moraga home and opened Lafayette's Red Carpet Flooring.

"I wanted to be part of the community

here," he says. "There are certain values that people take seriously here that match the way I've always worked." For example, Ramani goes beyond legal recycling requirements when replacing old flooring. He seeks economical brands that have environmentally friendly surfaces that are going to be safe for children. He also gives 1 percent of his profits to the Lamorinda school districts.

"I work with businesses, apartment managers, as well as individual homeowners," he says. He often offers design ideas to his clients since the array of choices for flooring nowadays is so vast, from hardwood to recycled wood, scratch-resistant laminate to natural or water-resistant LVT tiles.

The showroom on Mt. Diablo Boulevard opened in mid-March and gives clients a good idea of flooring options. "My wife has been a real estate agent in Orinda for many years," he says. "For us, having repeat customers and growing our businesses through word of mouth is the way to go."

Ace Auto Care – 3430 Mt. Diablo Blvd., Lafayette – (925) 284-5550 – [aceautocare.net](http://aceautocare.net)  
Red Carpet Flooring – 3561 Mt. Diablo Blvd., Lafayette – (925) 691-9000 – [redcarpetfloorings.com](http://redcarpetfloorings.com)

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## business briefs

### Two New Restaurants in Lafayette

**Rancho Cantina:** 3616 Mt Diablo Blvd., Lafayette - <http://www.ranchocantina.com>

**The Hideout Kitchen & Cafe:** 3400 Mt Diablo Blvd., Lafayette - (925) 900-8861



The front patio of Rancho Cantina in Lafayette

Photo S. Braccini



JB Balingit and wife, Astrid, in front of their new restaurant, The Hideout.

Photo provided

Lafayette continues to provide new culinary experiences for Lamorinda patrons. Two new restaurants opened recently that are worth a stop. Next to Jennifer Perlmutter Gallery, across from Diablo Foods on Mt. Diablo Boulevard, Rancho Cantina has an original Californian flair. The owners chose a mix of the Spanish, Mexican and native Californian influences that gave birth to Rancho style cooking. Some dishes come directly from the adobe brick oven to the table, such as the house special chicken. Patrons will also find some Mexican restaurant favorites such as carne asada or enchiladas. Take a short drive east on Mt. Diablo

and you'll reach The Hideout Kitchen & Cafe, not far from Brown Avenue in the former Giardino's location. Enjoy brunches including waffles, sandwiches and omelets; lunch items such as pulled pork sandwiches, salads and other entrees; and dinner options including a rack of lamb or wild mushroom Bolognese.

### Creekside Partners Joins Forces with Wiiken & Gorman

775 Baywood Drive, Suite 306, Lafayette

(925) 284-1260 - [www.creeksidepartners.com](http://www.creeksidepartners.com)

Creekside Partners, an independent, boutique wealth management firm based in Lafayette, announced it has joined forces with investment advisory firm Wiiken & Gorman. Creekside Partners now has five senior-level investment experts: Rick Ashburn and Andy Hempeck, who founded Creekside Partners, as well as Paula Wiiken, Michael Gorman and Teresa Coleman of Wiiken & Gorman. The firm offers expanded financial planning expertise, enhanced portfolio management expertise, and new investments in technology, resulting in improved communication and reporting to clients. Creekside Partners will continue to have office locations in Lafayette and Petaluma.

### Moraga Employee of the Month Kim Polen



From left: Kathe Nelson, Kevin Reneau, Kim Polen and Roger Gregory  
Photo provided

Kim Polen, who has been serving Lamorinda and other East Bay seniors for the past six years as a caregiver for Senior Helpers, has been named the Moraga Employee of the Month for March. Polen's regular duties for her clients include driving and cooking, medication reminders, housekeeping and assisting with ambulation and exercise. For many clients she also provides assistance with bathing and dressing and other personal care. She has worked with several notable Moraga clients in-

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

cluding Bruce Cunningham, a former Moraga Citizen of the Year who passed away in 2014. "Kim is not just competent and compassionate, but she's also very, very reliable," said Kevin Reneau, owner of Senior Helpers. "Her clients know they can always count on her and she has become part of so many families because of the love she shows to their family members." Polen will be presented with her award and gift cards to Safeway and Ristorante Amoroma in Moraga at the Moraga Rotary luncheon on April 21.

### Shelby's Celebrates Anniversary

2 Theatre Square, Suite 152, Orinda - (925) 254-9687

In March, Shelby's restaurant in Orinda celebrated its 10th anniversary under new management, and 20 years in Theatre Square.

### News from the Three Chambers of Commerce

#### Lafayette

Save the date for Earth Day in Lafayette from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Sunday, April 26 sponsored by Sustainable Lafayette, the Lafayette Chamber of Commerce, the Lafayette Library and Learning Center, and the City of Lafayette. This year's theme: transportation. For more information, visit <http://www.sustainablelafayette.org/our-events/earth-day-festival>.

#### Moraga

Moraga Chamber Mixer at 5:30 p.m. April 28 at the Serbian Church, 1700 School St., sponsored by Moraga Rotary, the Lion's Club and RecycleSmart.org.

#### Orinda

Orinda Trivia Bee at 5 p.m. Friday, April 24. Orinda Rotary and Orinda Chamber of Commerce jointly sponsor the Trivia Bee. Teams of six compete for the title in a multiple round trivia competition. Attendees come dressed in costume and decorate tables in keeping with the chosen theme for their team. The event takes place at the Orinda Masonic Lodge, 9 Altarinda Rd. in Orinda. For information, contact Candy Kattenberg at [info@orindachamber.org](mailto:info@orindachamber.org).

The State of the City Luncheon is scheduled from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Wednesday, April 29 at the Orinda Country Club. Orinda Mayor Steve Glazer will provide an update on all of the latest issues facing the community. For information, visit [orindarotary.org](http://orindarotary.org).

## Stunning Contemporary Sleepy Hollow Home

PACIFIC  
UNION

CHRISTIE'S  
INTERNATIONAL REAL ESTATE



28 Via Callados, Orinda • Offered at \$1,495,000 • [28ViaCallados.com](http://28ViaCallados.com)

**New Listing!** This beautiful Sea Ranch style home in the desirable Sleepy Hollow area of Orinda offers architectural interest with many classic original details including a loft style master suite with barn door window coverings, walls of windows and easy indoor/outdoor living. This stunning rustic modern home features an open floor plan with 4 bedrooms, 2.5 bathrooms, a light-filled living room with soaring ceilings, an updated chef's kitchen, a spacious master bedroom level with office and a hobby room, a lower level family room with private deck and a 2-car garage with workbench and storage area.



Nancy Rothman  
Dan Walner  
510.701.0230 or 510.205.7159  
[nrothman@pacunion.com](mailto:nrothman@pacunion.com) | [dan.walner@pacunion.com](mailto:dan.walner@pacunion.com)  
License #: 01016626 | 01915545

2 Theatre Sq, Suite 117  
Orinda 925.258.0090  
[pacifunion.com](http://pacifunion.com)