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Champagne Design Named Moraga's 2015 Small Business of the Year

By *Sophie Braccini*



XFrom left: East Bay Leadership Council CEO Kristin Connelly, Kathe Nelson and Lynn McAuliffe Photo provided

she intended to go back to work, but when the daycare faulted, her husband recommended she start her own business. "That's what you've always wanted to do," he said. She chose to use "Champagne," her maiden name, for her business.

"My business grew quickly from my first client," she remembered. Mary McElhiney was the marketing director of ERS Inc. at the time, and she brought McAuliffe on board to create all their marketing materials, trade show signage, and other support graphics. From that first contract and through referrals, she obtained big corporate clients in the communications industry, and during the tech boom, she expanded rapidly. Then in 2007, the family moved from Alameda to Moraga "for the schools," she said. At first McAuliffe was quite distressed because most of her corporate clients were on the other side of the tunnel "and here we were, in the middle of nowhere," she said with a smile.

For McAuliffe, the breakthrough happened as soon as she joined the Moraga Chamber of Commerce and began offering her graphic design services pro-bono for the local organization. "Edy Schwartz was the president at the time, and she became a big advocate of mine," she said. McAuliffe also expanded her marketing graphic design business to the online world and to web design, something she considered a natural extension. At first she conceived the visual and functional aspects of the sites, while she worked with contractors for the technical aspects of development. She now does some of the development herself.

The majority of Champagne Design clients are small and medium-sized local businesses. "For example, I did all of Stat Med's graphic, print and web design," she said, referring to the emergency medical service that opened two years ago in Lafayette. McAuliffe said she likes working with new businesses and concepts, because she can create a very homogeneous image that can be incorporated into all of the company's visuals, either online or in print. "Lynn helped me design our Stat Med logo, as well as set up and launch our website, and designed graphics for our signage," said Dr. Samaniego, founder of Stat Med. "She has a creative insight, and a wonderful way to guide you to a professional product. She is easy to work with, and full of great creative ideas."

Champagne Design is Moraga "momprenuer" Lynn McAuliffe's company, creating everything graphic for other businesses, from marketing materials to print media and websites. The mother of two Campolindo High School students created the business 17 years ago after her first child was born and the daycare center she arranged to take care of her baby dropped the ball. Since then, the creative, artistic and tech-oriented businesswoman has made Champagne Design her livelihood. Since she moved to Moraga in 2007, the business has grown organically thanks to the Lamorinda business community. The Chamber of Commerce named her the 2015 Moraga Small Business of the Year.

McAuliffe started her career in the printing industry, working for a promotion agency. "I've always been interested in the technical side of design," she said. "I know what is needed to make materials print-ready, and this is a knowledge I continue to use." After the birth of her first child

McAuliffe also works with social media for some clients, even with app creation such as the upcoming "Explore Orinda" app for the Orinda Chamber of Commerce that will allow people to instantly check everything that's happening and available in the city at any given time.

"I continue to volunteer for the Moraga Chamber of Commerce and also for Town Hall Theatre in Lafayette," says McAuliffe, who loves theater and is presently working on THT's next season brochure.

Champagne Design is not McAuliffe's only business. With business partner Sue Tenerowicz, she created Spell-It-Out-Photos, a service that allows people to create displays using pictures of natural elements that represent letters. Then even more recently she started Walls of Quotes, where people can order famous quotations printed on hangable wood panels, with a wide choice of formats and colors.

McAuliffe was honored on May 8 at the East Bay Leadership Council's 15th Annual Small Business Awards Luncheon.

Champagne Design: champagnedesignco.com, phone: (925) 377-1997

Spell-It-Out-Photos: spellitoutphotos.com

Walls of Quotes: wallsofquotes.com

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