

Designing woman: Local entrepreneur opens new shop in Lafayette

By Sophie Braccini



Leslie Price in front of her new store.

Leslie Price began her design career 17 years ago, while raising her two sons in Moraga. She started in real estate staging houses. Wanting to work with her hands, she developed an upholstery and a cushion making enterprise in her garage, before embarking in the next phase of her business life just a few weeks ago as she opened her first store front: Price Style & Design in Lafayette.

Price explains how as she staged homes, buyers would sometimes ask her to create their newly purchased home's décor. Word of mouth was all it took to grow her interior design practice.

Remi Vranesh hired the interior designer for the front of her home,

kitchen, living room and dining room, and says that she could not imagine hiring anyone else. Vranesh believes that hiring a professional saves you from making mistakes, and ends up not adding to the final cost since professionals get wholesale prices. She qualifies the quality of Price's service as unprecedented.

Maura Richards, another client, adds that Price worked within their budget to redo all their painting, window treatment and furnishings. Both she and Vranesh say that Price has created beautiful spaces that their whole family, children included, enjoy everyday.

Price says that the passing of her mother was a turning point

in her life. Her mom had been a painter all her life as well as an art collector. When she died, Price and her brothers spent time together going through their mother's work and collections, reminiscing and sharing their joyful childhood memories, with art all around them. Price says that this was a defining moment for her, when all her professional experiences came into perspective and gave her a clear focus for what would be next for her: creating happy places for people around the art that inspires them.

When the opportunity to get a space to show her designs and work on clients' proposals appeared, she decided to take the plunge.

The intimate showroom-atelier is an upbeat yet peaceful and inviting space that the businesswoman created as an inspiring workspace for herself and her clients. Furniture, light features, objects and of course art create an engaging sense of place.

She displays paintings by Bridgette Thornton, a young local artist. Thornton now lives and works in Los Angeles, but it is on the walls of Campolindo High School that Price first spotted her work. She saw it again on Serena & Lily's website — a well-known site focusing on home décor and original art — and she reached out to the young woman.

"Her work is so happy," says Price. She showed Thornton schemes for her space and the young artist painted the pieces now in Price's space. The businesswoman adds that Thornton also does commission art if people want different color schemes.

Price also displays in her space couches by Robin Bruce, an American manufacturer that Price considers a well-priced quality manu-

facturer. She wanted to have a line people could get a feel for on the floor.

The designer has surrounded herself with orange and pink because those are the colors that make her happy, but when she works with clients she starts with what appeals to them, with the art and the colors that inspire them and their family.

Price finds the Lafayette location convenient to reach her clients who are located all over Lamorinda and in Walnut Creek. She says that she loves to work in a space that is

not her own house, that she appreciates being able to invite clients in, and also being able to have space to store her inventory of designs.

On top of interior design, Price does paint color consultation, upholstery, art curation and styling services. She loves working with people in the middle of a remodel. Price Style & Design is located at 3439 Mt Diablo Blvd. in Lafayette.

More information at www.pricestyleanddesign.com. More on Thornton's art is available at www.bridgettethornton.com.



Earth Day Festival

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With youth specifically in mind, there will be an environmentally themed scavenger hunt and a "Safe Moves Bike Rodeo" where participants can learn about bike safety and Boy Scouts can work towards a biking merit badge.

For Lafayette's creative youth, there will be an adventure playground where children can use their imaginations to make their own creations using recycled materials. Global Student Embassy will lead a community participation art project using plastic straws collected locally to educate community members about waste created by single-use plastic straws.

Additionally attendees have the opportunity to help Orinda artist Lara Dutto finish an art piece that will feature a functioning rain barrel,

created with discarded materials collected by students at Stanley Middle School. The six-foot by six-foot structure will ultimately be placed in the Lafayette community garden.

Plenty of healthy food choices will be available along with live music and screening of environmentally themed films produced by local youth.

The annual Lafayette Awards of Environmental Excellence will be announced at the festival.

Attendees are encouraged to find alternative modes of transportation to the festival since there is limited parking. Those driving to the event are encouraged to park at Stanley Middle School. For those who bike to the festival, there will be a free bicycle valet hosted by a local Cub Scout troop.

Take action on Earth Day in Orinda



From 9:30 a.m. to noon on Saturday April 22, the City of Orinda will be beautified and cleaned during the ninth annual Orinda Action Day of Community Service by residents and friends of all ages.

Check-in time is 9:30 a.m. at the Orinda Library Plaza on 26 Orinda Way in Orinda. The first 300 volunteers will receive a free tee-shirt, snacks and coffee upon registration. The town's D.J. and "Voice of Orinda" Steve Harwood will be presenting prizes for unusual "finds" and pizza is served.

For more information regarding the event and those interested in being a project manager, please visit the OCF website, orindafoundation.org, or inquire at orindafoundation@gmail.com.

Lynn's Top Five

Realistic Steps for a Successful Career Change

By Lynn Ballou

Sometimes making a career change makes sense, and sometimes it's financially reckless. Whether starting on a new career path or starting your own business, how do you know if this is the right move for you financially? And of course what's really at stake is not just your financial stability — it's your lifetime happiness.

In writing this column I turned to local Orinda Certified Business Coach Paul Wildrick for his wisdom and inspiration. Now a very successful business coach with ActionCOACH, he knows and shares a lot about this topic, having made successful and strategic career moves himself multiple times, including as an entrepreneur. Here are a few important ideas for your consideration.

1) Study and research: Don't just jump into something on a whim. Be real about the new professional path you are contemplating including the time involved to be a success. "Re-tooling yourself can often take several years, whether it involves taking courses, getting certifications or degrees or even researching ideas for new companies," Paul advises. He notes that the internet is an unlimited resource of free information. Everything from who is currently engaged in the business you are interested in to what they charge, their customer base and your own potential earning power in this field, will help you think through your options.

2) Informational interviews: Paul and I are both big believers in the power of the informational interview. Don't be shy about sending an email to someone you feel could really help you narrow the scope of your business ideas to what's workable for you. The right influ-

ences can save you time, allowing you to learn and explore what works and what might not from those who have been there and done that. Sometimes you might even find a mentor in this person. There's no greater joy than to be a mentor and a supporter of someone who is interested in moving their life forward, so know that mentors abound!

3) Understand the accounting, tax and legal issues: Even if you have a brilliant business vision, you will need help from a qualified tax and accounting professional to decipher the accounting and tax matters involved. And if you are starting a business, your need for experienced legal counsel is paramount. How are you funding your career change or business start-up? What are the tax and accounting rules and choices? Which entity makes the most sense? Need capital? Do you borrow from others or use your own resources? You should do your own preliminary research, but when the time comes to make the move, you should already have retained an expert team as you begin first steps.

4) Can I afford to make this change? Working with your financial advisor, create a few forecasting models that illustrate several different approaches and strategies. For example, if your business plan could take several years to start paying off, maybe you think about phasing in vs. a cliff approach. Also pay attention to your capital burn rate. How much asset base can you afford to use and what happens to you and your future financially if your new path doesn't provide a successful business outcome? And although we all wish for a financially successful result, make the tough choices before you launch to be sure you can weather possible financial adversity you might

face.

5) Keep it real and stay on track with professional coaching: I definitely owe much of my business success to excellent coaching. Whether you need someone upfront to bounce ideas off of to be sure you have a viable idea and business plan or you are already successful but want to take it to the next level, the power of a great coaching relationship can be your key to unlocking new horizons.

It's scary to embark on new career and business paths, but don't let fear stymie you. Paul reminded me of a great proverb about motivation and moving your idea forward: "When is the best time to plant a tree? 20 years ago. Second best time? Right now!" Put in the time, do your homework, and maybe we'll all be enjoying that forest you create! If you have any questions for this column's guest, Paul Wildrick, you can reach him via email at paulwildrick@actioncoach.com or by phone, 925-963-9665.



Lynn Ballou is a CERTIFIED FINANCIAL PLANNER™ Professional and Regional Director with EP Wealth Advisors, a Registered Investment Advisory Firm in Lafayette. Information used in the writing of this column is believed to be factual and up-to-date, however, we do not guarantee its accuracy. This column does not involve the rendering of personalized investment advice and is not intended to supplement individualized professional advice. A financial, tax and/or legal professional should be consulted before implementing any of the strategies directly or indirectly suggested and discussed. All investment strategies have the potential for profit or loss.



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