

Hometown owner cares for Phairs

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Joanna Guidotti outside Phairs building in Orinda. Photo Sora O'Doherty

Having run Churchill Manor for 28 years with her husband Brian Jensen, Guidotti is now ready to turn her attention to the town where she grew up. As a tax attorney and investment banker, as well as a successful property owner in more than one state, Guidotti has expertise in a number of related fields.

Not only did Guidotti transform a historic inn in Napa, but her family was involved in the rebuilding of San Francisco after the 1906 earthquake. Her grandfather, an Italian stonemason who settled in Barre Vermont, the self-proclaimed granite capital of the world, was brought out to work in San Francisco after the earthquake and resettled in the Bay Area. Aldo Guidotti was born in Oakland and his law

practice was in the Temescal district, but he wanted his daughter to go to the good schools of Orinda, so he moved the family there when Guidotti was 5 years old. She attended Del Rey Elementary School until she transferred to Sleepy Hollow, then Pine Grove Intermediate School and Miramonte High School. She was in the first class at Saint Mary's College after the college opened to women.

Joanna Guidotti later graduated from the University of San Francisco Law School and obtained a master's degree in tax law from New York University, which is, she explained, rated the number one tax law school. There were only 5 percent women in her class. After graduation, she went to work

for Bank of America in San Francisco, becoming a vice president of investment at the age of 29. She met her husband and they closed escrow on the old Churchill home on New Year's Eve, 1987. Since 1988 the two have been running the historic inn together, with Jensen as chef.

When she looks at the Phairs property, she sees a place in a quiet neighborhood, with beautiful views, ample parking, and plenty of space. The old Phairs building comprises 10,500 square feet downstairs and 2,500 square feet upstairs. Guidotti looks at the broad flat roof and imagines, maybe, a rooftop restaurant overlooking the tranquil views of the Orinda Country Club on one side and San Pablo Creek on the other. She aspires to use the property in a community-based, family friendly way. Perhaps part of the property could house an upscale grocery, one that also has prepared foods that could be picked up on the way home for an impromptu dinner. When she looks at another part, she enthuses, Wouldn't this make a great yoga studio?

Guidotti is already working with an architectural firm and having conversations with the Orinda Planning Department. She would like to do something quickly, as opposed to the type of development that could take years to clear regulatory hurdles and building challenges. Living in Napa, she knows that the tourist trade supports developments such as the Oxbow, but, she says, Orinda is not Napa, and she doesn't think that the city wants to be, either.

Amigos fundraisers help send volunteers to Latin America

By John T. Miller



Amigos volunteers unload product in November for the annual fundraiser. Photo provided

In an annual ritual dating back to 1975, truckloads of grapefruit and holiday poinsettias arrived in Moraga recently to signal the beginning of this year's Amigos de las Americas fundraising drive.

The Amigos program, as it is commonly known, is a nationwide organization established in 1968. Volunteers are sent to Latin American countries to help with projects such as community health, equality through sports and teamwork, and environmental preservation. In addition, each pair of volunteers works in collaboration with community members on projects the community needs, whether it be building a covered bus stop, a soccer field, or painting the local school.

The Ruby Red grapefruit is shipped directly from Texas, with about 20 grapefruit per box and a price of \$25 each.

Poinsettias are deep vibrant colors of red and green and are

approximately 15-inches tall, providing attractive holiday ambience. The cost is \$15 each.

The program also recently added organic, fair trade coffee to the list of items for sale, purchasing the product from the Santa Cruz Roastery and selling it for \$15 a pound.

The Amigos program purchases the products at wholesale prices and uses the profit to fund their programs. It is also a test of the trainees' commitment to fund their own volunteer experience.

All total, the East Bay Chapter - with 28 trainees this year - will sell 1,400 boxes of grapefruit, 1,176 poinsettias, and 1,008 pounds of coffee.

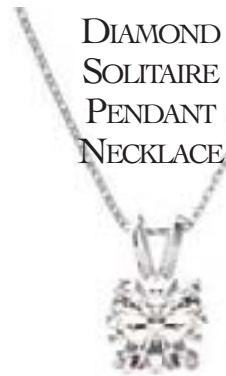
Parent coordinator Mary De Luna said, "We are close to sold out but we still have some product left." To order, contact them through their website at <http://www.eastbayamigos.org/buy-products>.

Happy Holidays

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