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"Under the Marquee" events are one way Orinda Theatre owner Derek Zemrak keeps revenue and interest flowing.

Photo Derek Zemrak

## County move to level Orange not a respite for Orinda businesses

By Sora O'Doherty

Even though Contra Costa County loosened COVID-19 controls on businesses, owners in the city of Orinda weren't celebrating. And the move to the California orange tier was quickly toned down with additional restrictions as Contra Costa County's COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations have shown a marked increase each day since moving to the orange tier.

Some of the hardest hit businesses are gyms and dry cleaners. Tristan Tool, owner of In Forma gym in Orinda Village, said the fitness industry has

been hit very hard. The gym was closed down for almost seven months. The gym reopened about three weeks ago, when it was allowed to have 10% occupancy. Now allowed up to 25% occupancy, Tool says it doesn't matter. "People are afraid to come back in," he said, "and they won't return until there is a vaccine." But Tool has invested a lot in the business since he bought it in June of 2019, so he's all in, hoping for a return to normal.

Jami Edgell, the General Manager of Anytime Fitness in Theatre Square said that the change to orange has helped a little bit, but volume remains pretty low. The gym reopened as soon as they were

allowed, on Sept. 30. She is maintaining a positive outlook and believes that it will be a great opportunity once people are aware that the gym is open.

Derek Zemrak, owner of the Orinda Theatre is not planning to reopen the theatre for general business anytime soon. "It's not worth it," he said. "We want to be safe and there's no need to rush." Zemrak is grateful for the successful GoFundMe campaign for the theatre which provided funds to sustain the business until March.

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## Lafayette honors Veterans



Photo Pippa Fisher

Lafayette Rotarians raise the first of the many United States flags Nov. 6 that fly downtown to honor all veterans, in what they hope will become a new tradition for the city.

By Pippa Fisher

The Lafayette Rotarians have started a new tradition that they hope will continue for years to come, as downtown Lafayette businesses proudly fly the United States flag to mark Veterans Day.

When Rotarian Mary Lou Till first approached the city council a few weeks ago, it was with the request that the Rotarians be allowed to fly their flags on the city-owned Plaza. After consultation with the city attorney, the council advised her that the city would not permit it, but from that conversation came a suggestion by Mayor Mike Anderson that perhaps they could get businesses to display the flags on private properties instead.

And that is how a group of Rotarians, fueled by Johnny's Donuts came to be assembled on a recent blustery November day in the McCaulou's parking lot as they started the process of hanging all the flags from the Safeway/Wholefoods parking lots to La Fiesta Square, The Mercantile, and the CVS and Trader Joe's parking lot.

Till gives special appreciation to Steve Cortese, Joan Bruzzone, Diablo Foods, Bill Eames, Trader Joe's, Bank of the West, The Wayside Inn, and Richard Whitmore for their help, along with Ace Hardware who was an integral partner in providing flag poles and hardware.

Veterans Day, originally called Armistice Day, is always marked in the United States on Nov. 11 to commemorate the armistice signed at the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month in 1918, at the end of the First World War. The day honors all of those who have served the country.

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