

# Staffing shortages, COVID restrictions challenge coffee houses, other businesses



Photo J. Wake

Papillon in Lafayette's La Fiesta Square has weathered the pandemic with small adjustments.

By M.D. Jones

The pandemic has affected businesses in many ways, like shortened hours recently announced at Moraga Hardware & Lumber and Across the Way to due to severe staffing shortages and ongoing health and safety concerns – and our local coffee shops are no exception. There was a recent stir on social media about limited hours for the Moraga Starbucks coffee shop as well as it being closed for a few weeks in January. According to Shift Manager Maricella Quintero, Starbucks has strict pandemic protocols to protect staff and clients. Every day, employees must have their temperature checked, fill out a COVID questionnaire and

have signature confirmation by themselves and their manager to screen out people who might have COVID-19 before they can start their shift. Twice this past January the location had to shut down for the county's required 10 days because of potential COVID-19 exposure.

As staff slowly returned based on their timeline for exposure, the coffee shop had limited hours – sometimes closing as early as 1 p.m. "In this situation Starbucks feels bad they can't provide the customer service they want to but we want to make sure people stay safe in the community. It may be hard for customers to understand we are doing this for their health," Quintero said. "We

have had to adjust in the moment. If 2 to 3 people show up with symptoms that's half our staff and so we would have to do things like close the café for walk-ins and only service the drive thru." Making things more difficult during the virus surge "some people will not wear a mask at the drive thru which makes it hard for us to mitigate the risk of our employees picking up the virus," Quintero said. "Fortunately, we can handle things better because we are corporate and can have employees cover from other stores versus a mom and pop who might not be able to have extra coverage that Starbucks has as a company."

Across town at Si Si Caffé in Moraga, owner Cathy Corsi

noticed that business went up about 20% while Starbucks was closed. "We knew they were Starbucks customers by the way they ordered their drinks. They'd say 'I'd like a grande such and such,'" said Corsi. Because of COVID, Si Si has had to close the inside of their café to the public but was lucky enough to have windows that open outside to the front of the café where drinks and food continue to be ordered and served. In the back of the café is an outdoor seating area which was also able to remain open through the pandemic.

When asked about recent inflation as the pandemic subsides, Corsi stated that the costs of supplies are up a good 15-20% overall but "we try to be sensitive to our customers and keep our costs the same or go up in small increments if we have to." As far as having the staff needed to run the café, Corsi stated, "Luckily we're a family run business so we didn't need to rely as much on outside help. We also have Saint Mary's students working for us. We're fortunate that Si Si's Caffé has had such a loyal following, like kids from JM who use the Si Si's gift cards and hang out in the back."

Local Lafayette café Papillon was also able to stay

open through COVID. Owners Sam and Betty Sukh did not notice a huge difference in traffic during the pandemic and couldn't shut down because "Lafayette rent is super high." Even so, they had to limit hours to between 6 a.m. and 1 p.m. for about six months during the pandemic because of difficulty finding employees. They are now back to being open 6 a.m. to 4 p.m. on weekdays and 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. on weekends.

"The biggest change we have seen is the cost of our supplies," Sam Sukh said. "Some supplies have gone up about 50%. Boxes of 1,000 coffee cups used to be \$50 but now they are \$75 to \$80. It's double now for plastic cups. Suppliers have said prices will come down but I don't see when that will happen. Sixteen-ounce coffee cups are almost impossible to find in the Bay Area. Still, we don't increase our prices until we absolutely have to and are waiting another month or two before we reevaluate our menu prices."

Even with the higher cost of running the business, things are looking better. According to Sukh, Papillon has recently hired a new person and is getting ready to hire one to two more employees by summer.

## Lions and Leos donate \$4K to fire victims



Photo provided

Lioness Karen Kalvass delivers crab dinners and door prizes.

Submitted by Robert Murtagh

The Moraga Lions Club and Campolindo High School Leo Club hosted the 40th Annual

Crab Feed Jan. 22 at the Holy Trinity Serbian Church in Moraga. Due to COVID restrictions the event was drive-thru and traditional activities, such as auctions and raffles, were canceled.

A total of 320 crab dinners were prepared and delivered to cars as they arrived in the parking lot. In addition, each car was presented a door prize and asked to make a donation to help 2021 California fire victims. The Lions Club offered to match all donations and all Lions clubs are required to donate 100% of all donations to charity. Crab Feed customers donated almost \$2,000 in cash and checks and Moraga Lions will send a check for \$4,000 to the California Lions Foundation with instructions to distribute the funds to fire victims.

For more information about the Lions Club, Leo Club or making a donation to the California Fire Victims contact Lion Ray Casabonne, rpcasa94@gmail.com

## St. Patrick's Day Celebration returns to SMC



Photo provided

Dancers from the Rohan Murphy Irish Dance Academy

Submitted by Millicent McCormack

After having to cancel last

year's event due to the pandemic, the Saint Mary's College Guild will be hosting its St. Patrick's Day Celebration Fundraiser benefitting its Student Scholarship Fund from 5 to 9 p.m. Saturday, March 12 at Saint Mary's College Soda Center. The popular annual event will feature The Frank O'Connor Band and the Rohan Murphy Irish Dance Academy as well as a delicious Irish dinner (or pasta) plus raffle baskets filled with exciting Irish treasures.

Masks and proof of vaccination and booster will be necessary for admittance. Tickets are \$60 per person (includes wine at dinner). Make checks payable to: St. Mary's College Guild. Provide your name, guests' names, number of guests in your party and a telephone number and mail with the check by March 5 to Donna Jollymour, 387 Calle la Montana, Moraga, CA 94556. Contact Jollymour with any questions at (925) 299-1651.

**Community Service:** We are pleased to make space available whenever possible for some of Lamorinda's dedicated community service organizations to submit news and information about their activities. Submissions may be sent to [storydesk@lamorindaweekly.com](mailto:storydesk@lamorindaweekly.com) with the subject header In Service to the Community.



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In Memory

Charlotte Angela Pagani Savinovich

Nov. 18, 1934 – Jan. 24, 2022



Charlotte passed away peacefully in her sleep, following her battle with Alzheimer's disease.

Charlotte was born to Charles and Marguerite Pagani. She was the middle child, and grew up a farmgirl on Sonoma's now historic Pagani Ranch. Throughout her life she was close to her

sisters, Marie Meursing and Norma Amantite. After Marguerite passed when Charlotte was 6, her Aunt Olive and Uncle Lou Pagani helped raise the girls as they worked incredibly hard on the ranch and family winery, alongside their uncle and father. With her large green eyes, she was given the lifelong nickname, "Googie."

Smart and athletic, Char attended Dunbar Elementary, Sonoma Valley High School '52, and UC Berkeley '57 earning a BA in Social Welfare. The bonds she forged with her Sonoma friends and college roommates were lifelong and as close as family. Very involved in school activities and community volunteering, she applied her strong work ethic to a 34-year career in Social Work for Alameda County. Char was close to her co-workers in Oakland as she caringly handled difficult cases, during turbulent times.

Charlotte married Samuel George Savinovich (1932–2002) of Pittsburg, Calif., on Nov. 25, 1961. They moved to Lafayette, Calif., where Charlotte resided for over 50 years. Charlotte is survived by her sons, Samuel and Michael, her grandchildren Alyssa, Mathew, Grace, Luke and Elisha, Sam's wife Lisa, and her sister Norma. Char is also survived by many beloved nieces, nephews, godchildren and very close friends. Charlotte's joyous caring nature, her generosity, her thunderous laugh, and her legendary cioppino will be missed and forever remembered. "Ciao Googie, Arrivederci!"

In lieu of flowers, please donate to the Alzheimer's Association on behalf of Char. A private family funeral service was held at Holy Cross Cemetery.