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business briefs

Amorama Adds a Location in Orinda with Grill and Pizza, 65 Moraga Way, Orinda
The four partners who run Amorama restaurant in Moraga had been looking for an opportunity to expand in the area and the occasion came when Orinda House closed. Around mid-May the team will open "Pizzeria Amorama," a family oriented Italian restaurant with entrees priced around \$12. Besides the traditional thin crust Italian pizza, the restaurant will serve a range of hot and cold small plates, salads, and since the restaurant has a large grill, the menu will include a variety of skewered and grilled entrees. "We wanted to grow and propose new interesting things," says partner Michele Lavecchia, "we are looking forward to becoming an integral part of the Orinda culinary scene, as we did and will continue to do in Moraga."

Yogurt Shack to Open in May in Lafayette, 3518 Mt Diablo Blvd
The business located in Danville, Concord, Davis and Clayton is now opening a location in the Lafayette Shopping Center where Toot Sweets was located. The store will offer a variety of choices, ranging from regular frozen yogurt to a non-dairy fruit and ice product. Yogurt will be offered in a wide variety of flavors such as Cookies 'N Cream, Golden Gate Chocolate, Vanilla Crème, Irish Mint, Lemon Tart or Root Beer Float. The way the other Shacks have been operated is partly self-serve. Customers place their own toppings on their yogurt, and the price is then determined by weight. 25 different types of toppings will offered, including fresh fruit.

Zeeba Cuts The Red Ribbon With The Lafayette Chamber of Commerce, 3547 Mt Diablo Blvd
Thursday April 30th at 4:30 p.m.

Chow Bella, a Moraga Caterer at The Farmers' Market, Starting May 10th, www.chowbella.net
Elaine Smit is a stay at home mom and longtime Moraga resident who has always been passionate about culinary arts. Cooking is a hobby she decided to turn into a business. She works with her foodie friends Katy Simpson, Colleen Wheaton, Rebecca Sullivan and Julie Monasch. Chow Bella offers catering and personal chef services. "It is a collaborative effort of all of us, and we all help each other out in all the range of operations," says Smit. Chow Bella's main office and commercial kitchen facility are located in Moraga so it seemed natural to Smit to start selling the baked goods at the Moraga farmers market. "Starting Mother's Day, Sunday, May 10th, we will be selling old-fashioned cupcakes and cookies, baked by Katy Simpson, the most amazing baker ever," says Smit, "Katy, Colleen, Rebecca and I plan on being at the farmers market to pass out samples, sell our baked goods and answer questions about Chow Bella's culinary services."



Chow Bella ladies: (sitting left to right) Elaine Smit, Colleen Wheaton, (standing left to right) Rebecca Sullivan and Katy Simpson Photo Linda Miller

Lafayette Car Wash Recognized by EBMUD for its Recycling Operations, 3319 Mt Diablo Blvd, Lafayette, 283-1190, www.lafayettecarwash.com
In "The Pipeline," EBMUD's newsletter, the Lafayette business was recognized as a car wash that recycles 50 to 60% of its professional water use. Lafayette Car Wash only uses about 25 gallons per wash because of its highly efficient equipment. Using a professional car wash that recycles the water not only saves water, it also prevents sending harmful detergents to our ground water and storm drains, a common occurrence when washing cars in front of homes.



Lafayette Car Wash on Mt. Diablo Blvd. Photo Wendy Scheck

Kattenburg Architect Celebrates 100 Buildings in Lamorinda, 11 Moraga Way, Suite 3, Orinda, www.kattenbugarchitects.com
On Thursday, April 23rd, Kattenburg Architects, with offices directly across from the historic Art Deco Orinda Theatre, celebrated its completion of over 100 built projects in the Walnut Creek/Lamorinda corridor. The event attracted more than 80 people, clients, friends and supporters of the business. The crowd enjoyed a party and "open studio" with an exhibit of the architect's work. Kattenburg Architects, founded in 1981, is a full service award-winning architectural firm specializing in residential projects. Rick Kattenburg is currently serving the Orinda business community as Vice President of the Orinda Chamber of Commerce and is a new member of The Lafayette Chamber of Commerce.



Rick and Candy Kattenburg (left)

News from the Three Chambers of Commerce

- Lafayette Chamber of Commerce**
- Lafayette Chamber and Keiretsu Forum cordially invite the business community to join the upcoming CEO Academy on May 13th from 8am to 11am at the Lafayette City offices on the topics "Funding Alternatives for Your Business' Growth." The first part of the seminar will address business positioning and strategic direction, depending on different types of firms. The second part will address funding alternatives, studying both internal and external sources of money. Keiretsu Forum is a Lafayette based angel investor in operation since 2000. Registration is \$75 and is available at <http://may13academy.eventbrite.com/>
 - Big Band Ballroom Dance featuring the Rossmoor Big Band, on Friday May 1st 7:30 p.m. to 10 p.m. at the Rheem Theater, 350 Park Street in Moraga, CA. For tickets call 284-7404 or visit the chamber web site www.lafayettechamber.org.
 - Taste of Lafayette Coming up on May 19 from 5:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. A fun opportunity to taste about 20 Lafayette restaurants signature's cuisine for \$45 per person. The tour starts at Lafayette Plaza, a free shuttle bus sponsored by Diablo Foods will loop constantly. Call 284-7404 or go to the Chamber's web site to register, the number of tickets is limited.

- Moraga Chamber of Commerce**
- Community Faire Saturday May 9th 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Rheem Shopping Center. Local music groups, including Little Dog 2 and the jazz bands from both Campolindo High School and Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School; rock climbing, sidewalk chalk art contest starting at 11 a.m., bounce house and other children's activities, opportunities to buy arts, crafts and jewelry from a wide variety of artists; sample food from local restaurants and wine from five or six area vintners. A car show will highlight classic cars owned by Lamorinda residents. Local retail and businesspeople will present their offerings.
 - May Chamber Mixer Friday, May 29, 7:30 a.m. at the Hacienda de las Flores, Fireside Room.

- Orinda Chamber of Commerce**
- Orinda Celebrates Cal Shakes 35th anniversary and throws a big party, on May 28, from 5:30 p.m. to 7 p.m. at Theater Square in downtown Orinda. The free event is opened to the public and will offer an array of attractions. L. Peter Callender from Cal Shakes will be the Master of Ceremony. He will introduce performances by OIS students, Music by Sure Fire and, as one of the highlights of the evening a 30 second Shakespeare competition between the three Lamorinda Chambers of Commerce. Orinda's Shelby's and Lafayette's Yankee Pier will cater the food and all will be able to share in the 35th birthday cake. Cal Shakes will sell specially priced tickets to the opening night of Romeo and Juliet, the play that will be on stage at the Festival from May 27 to June 21.

If you have a business brief to share, please contact **Sophie Braccini** at sophie@lamorindaweekly.com or call our office at 925-377-0977.

What Are They Doing Here? A Story of Building Innovation in Lafayette

By Sophie Braccini



Home built with ICFs in Lafayette; (left to right) Marty Diefenbach, Gary and Rica LaVerda (property owners), Jeff Barrett and John Campaglia (project manager with Diefenbach and Barrett) Photo Sophie Braccini

Rica and Gary LaVerda get it all the time, people walking the Moraga-Lafayette trail, passing their home and stopping to ask, "What are you guys doing here?" The home they are building does not look anything like the wood frame skeleton we're used to seeing. The white block structure has been drawing so much attention from passers-by that the LaVerdas have printed a flyer that explains why they're using ICFs to build their new home.

ICFs are Insulated Concrete Forms. Imagine hollow polystyrene blocks, interlocking together like Lego pieces, reinforced with steel rebar and filled with concrete, and you'll have an idea of how to build an ICF wall. The technique was created in the 60's in Canada and has been used in the United States for about twenty years.

"We had been living in our Lafayette house for thirty years," explains Gary LaVerda, "and when we decided to rebuild it we met with Marty Diefenbach. He introduced us to the concept of ICFs." The LaVerdas were particularly impressed by the durability of the material, its thermal and acoustic insulation performance, and by its safety both from a fire and earthquake points of view.

"These homes made with ICFs are built to last 300 years," says Marty Diefenbach, partner in Diefenbach and Barrett, the contractor building the Lafayette home. "They are resistant to fire, don't attract termites, resist mold, provide superior sound insulation and keep the house cool or warm." The LaVerdas worked with Energy-Wise, a consultant specialized in sizing and saving energy for family homes and as a result they ordered heating and cooling equipment sized for a 1200 square foot home, when theirs will be 2800 square feet.

"The insulation rating of a home built with ICFs is R60, compared to a R13 for a wood home," claims Diefenbach. In fact the insulation is so good that a special automatic ventilation system has to be installed to make sure the house is properly ventilated.

"That may be one of the disadvantages of the ICFs," says Chris

formance, ventilation, no emissions and use of local material (in the concrete).

Besides the thermal performance, what sold the LaVerdas is the safety aspect of this type of construction. "Both wood based homes and our ICF homes are engineered to maximize occupant safety in an earthquake," says Juhl, "a wood frame will twist and shake but shouldn't collapse. ICF frame doesn't twist; it rides the earthquake like a wave and won't collapse." According to Juhl, both types of homes are safe but the ICF ones won't require as much repair. With fire, he is even more convinced of the advantage of his product. "Our system helps with compliance to the new fire codes," he said, and added that when all the wooden homes burn down, the concrete homes remain standing.

If you want to take a peek at the ICF blocks being installed in Lafayette, you'll have to hit the trail quickly. Once built and covered with whatever finish they choose the LaVerda's home will look like everyone else's. "We've chosen a craftsman style looking house that will be classic in looks but will incorporate 21st century technology," said the LaVerdas.



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