**\$** 925-377-0977

# **Business Person of the** Year – Leila Douglah

By Cathy Tyson



Leila Douglah in her Douglah Designs showroom in Lafayette. Photo Cathy Tyson

fter arriving from overseas in her pocket, to successful business owner Leila Douglah is now living the American dream. It's no wonder she was recently voted the Lafayette Chamber of Commerce Marquis Business Person of the Year. She'll be honored on Jan. 30 Park Hotel.

Although she was born in Minnesota, Douglah moved to Baghdad 8 years old and stayed there for the with a consistent work schedule. next 16 years - through high school mother worked at the United Nations and her father was a professor at the university. After attending international school the first year of her stay, her parents decided that ect. she and her two siblings should attend a regular local school to learn working, as the business continues to about the culture and master Arabic. She describes the first few years there as very challenging: "sink or swim."

Knowing there were virtually no opportunities for women in Baghdad due to political and economic constraints, this eager and studious young woman, upon receiving her degree in architecture, was hungry to get back to the States.

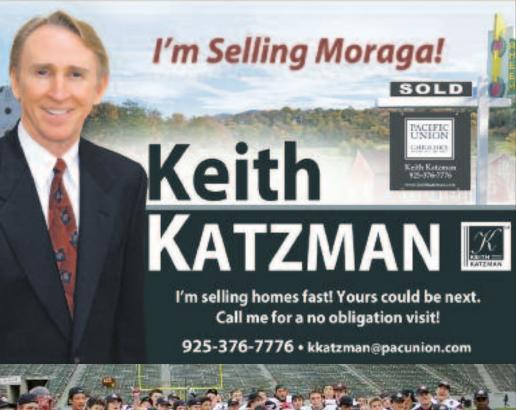
Armed with her degree, and a can-do attitude, she relocated at age Douglah also has generously sup-24 to Lafayette and quickly landed a ported a number of organizations injob as an assistant kitchen designer at cluding Habitat for Humanity, a large home improvement store. Lafayette Partners in Education, Shel-From there, she started her own inte- ter Inc. and the Lindsay Wildlife Murior designer business, working out of seum. She's a fantastic example of her condominium. Then in 1997 she doing well by doing good. opened a full service interior design and build business in the Clocktower the Year annual dinner is scheduled to building. Unfortunately she lost her lease when a new building management team took over, which in hindsight ultimately was a blessing as she moved directly across the street to a space with much more visibility on Mt. Diablo Boulevard. In 2014, she opened a second location at La Fiesta Square that serves as a retail showroom featuring plumbing fixtures, tile and lighting.

As locations expanded, so did the A fresh out of college with \$500 business's repertoire. Just a couple of years ago, Douglah obtained her contractor's license, so now the business offers clients luxury design-build remodeling, complete with an in-house construction staff. "Everyone is cross-trained," said Douglah, so the person who installs tile can also install at a special dinner at the Lafayette cabinetry and countertops and more; most importantly, "we can control the quality." All of her two dozen employees enjoy medical, dental and viwith her family when she was just sion benefits and paid holidays along

Douglah credits her upbringing and college at the University of for valuable lessons on learning to Technology in Baghdad. Her adapt, to look at the big picture and to not sweat the small stuff. After 24 years in the business, she knows there are constantly what she calls "little surprises" with any remodeling proj-

> Her philosophy is obviously blossom. "She's always looking for ways to improve," says office manager Diane Smith, adding every client is different, but the staff takes ownership and is accountable, and everyone works well together. "Leila knows that happy employees help grow your business," said assistant Nancy Glieden, explaining that's the key to any successful business. "She takes great care of us."

Grateful for life's opportunities,





From my family to yours...I want to personally congratulate the Campolindo Varsity football team on a fantastic year and winning the State Championship game. You've made Moraga proud. Congratulations to each and every one of you!!





The Marquis Business Person of start at 6 p.m. Friday, Jan. 30 at the Lafayette Park Hotel. The Chamber of Commerce sponsored event also features the introduction of the 2015 board of directors, incoming President Debbie Cooper from Mechanics Bank and the "State of the City" address by Mayor Brandt Andersson. Reservations can be made online or by calling the Chamber at (925) 284-7404.

### Do you have a person in mind for the City of Lafayette to honor as 2015 Citizen of the Year?

#### Criteria are as follows:

- Must NOT be a current *elected* or *paid* member of any city council, school board or commission;
- Must be a current Lafayette resident;
- Must be someone who has given of their time, money or energy to help make Lafayette a healthy community, where people will want to live, work and shop;
- Must be someone who models excellence in everything they do;
- Must be someone who brings this community together and/or makes us proud to be a member of the community.

A celebration dinner will be held on Friday, March 27 at the Lafayette Park Hotel & Spa to honor the winner! The deadline for submitting nominations is Friday, Feb. 13.

The 2015 Lafayette Citizen of the Year Award is co-sponsored by the Lafayette Chamber of Commerce and Lamorinda Weekly.

#### Please send your nomination to Lafayette Chamber of **Commerce Executive Director Jay Lifson**

Email: jay@lafayettechamber.org

Mail: Lafayette Chamber of Commerce Attn: Lafayette Citizen of Year nomination 100 Lafayette Circle #103 Lafayette, CA 94549



## Alhambra Valley 5103 Alhambra Valley Road, Martinez

Set in the hills of Alhambra Valley amidst a quiet setting sits this delightful 3521+/- sq. ft., 4BD/4.5BA 2-story home on 2.64+/-ac. The fluid floor plan includes an eat-in kitchen open to a large great room, a formal dining room & a spacious living room. An unfinished 755+/- sq. ft. bonus room is an ideal space for an office, game room or in-law/au pair quarters.

Sold for \$1,100,000





Reliez Valley

3234 Del Mar Drive, Lafayette

This wonderful updated ranch home is located

Valley area. This home enjoys a great flow with

kitchen. The flat backyard has ample play area

3BD/2BA, 1687+/- sq. ft. and a remodeled

on a great corner lot in a fantastic Reliez

space and is ideal for the garden lover.

Reliez Valley 3258 Surmont Drive, Lafayette

The sweeping views from this home are captivating! This 3,750+/- sq. ft., 3BD/3BA home is located on a .81+/- acre lot with 180° views from the Benicia Bridge to Mt. Diablo and beyond. Completing this home is a large master suite, a bonus/game room and an expansive deck for entertaining.

**Off Market Sale** 

Lisa Brydon 925.285.8336 | Kristi Ives 925.788.8345

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