

# business briefs

## Lafayette Farmers Market?

People are brainstorming in Lafayette to see if a farmers' market could be possible in town. Sustainable Lafayette and the City's Environmental Task Force are at the fore front of the effort. A meeting is scheduled for business owners/managers on Tuesday, June 23, 6:00pm at the city offices, 3675 Mt. Diablo Blvd. in room #240 to discuss the topic. Attendees will discuss the possible merits or issues that a Farmer's Market might bring to the community. The business community is invited to join this group for an informal meeting and weigh in on with their thoughts. Can't make the meeting? Please email your comments to Janet Thomas at [jthomas@silcon.com](mailto:jthomas@silcon.com).

## Entrepreneurial Youth in Lamorinda

Taylor Smith, a junior in the Industrial Engineering and Operations Research Department at UC Berkeley, is running an exterior painting business in the Lamorinda area for the summer. He started his sales and marketing effort at the beginning of May and plans to go into production in June. This endeavor is a business management internship supported by College Works Painting. The company gave Smith a \$6,000 line of credit to start his business. The student placed an ad on Craigslist to recruit painters and got 800 responses. After interviews, screening and checking references, he constituted his team. Smith's revenue will be the profit generated by the business. On top of that, if he earns 100% customer satisfaction, College Works will give him a scholarship. "I always wanted to run my own business," says the Engineering major. He has set a goal of 25 homes to paint over the summer and has booked 13 so far. Smith can be reached by phone at (650) 773-1035 or [ttmsmith@berkeley.edu](mailto:ttmsmith@berkeley.edu).

## Subway in Moraga is Getting a Facelift,

396 Park St, Rheem Center, 376-2959  
The store will stay open, and contractors will work thru the night for the next two weeks to completely revamp the store.

## News from the Three Chambers of Commerce

### Lafayette Chamber of Commerce



Lafayette Town Manager Steve Falk celebrates businesses at the Try Lafayette First party on June 5 Photo Sophie Braccini

Lafayette Chamber celebrated the Try Lafayette first campaign on June 5th and thanked the community by treating residents to a free barbecue and concert. A very large crowd gathered on the soft lawn of the downtown Plaza to hear the Buzztones play classic and fun rock and roll. Jay Lifson of the Chamber of Commerce was delighted with the great attendance. "I hope our campaign is helping our merchants," says Lifson, "people have started to realize that shopping local makes sense on many levels, it supports a vibrant downtown filled with a wide variety of unique businesses and boutiques, it reduces our carbon foot print, and saves gas by shopping in town, it keeps our tax-base strong by circulating money in town versus sending it elsewhere, and it supports businesses that generously donate to local schools and non-profits."

- Green Committee, Wednesday, June 17, 11:45am, Chamber Office
- Entrepreneur's Club, Thursday, June 18, 8:30am, Chamber Office
- Martini Contest, Monday, June 22, 6pm, Lafayette Park Hotel & Spa
- Business Issues Meeting, Friday, June 26, 8:00am, Chamber office
- Mixer, July 8 from 5:30 p.m. to 7 p.m. at Lafayette Tree and Landscape, 1024-A Walnut Drive.

### Moraga Chamber of Commerce

• At its May meeting, Moraga Chamber of Commerce Board member Dimitri Bokman, Manager of the Union Bank in Moraga, organized an educational session about the current economic situation and how small businesses owners can cope financially. Bokman invited Mark Sweetland of The Hartford Financial Group to talk about the present economic situation. "He explained how the present situation was different from the 1929 great depression and that we will get out of it over time," said Chamber member Jeff Schwartz. The second presenter was Taylor Bell, small business development Officer at Union Bank. Bell made a very detailed presentation of everything small business owners need in order to get financing in these difficult times.

• Mixer on June 23 at the St Mary's College Rheem campus with Parkmon vineyard. Tasting of Lamorinda wines and wine pairing by Dave and Shari Parker. The mixer will start at 6 p.m., cost is \$5 per person, spouses and significant others are invited along with Chamber members. The campus is located at 380 Moraga Road.

### Orinda Chamber of Commerce

- Grand Opening "Mixer" and Ribbon Cutting to celebrate the Pizzeria Amoroma Restaurant opening in Orinda. Tuesday June 16th 5:30 to 7:00 p.m., 65 Moraga Way, Orinda (next to Peet's Coffee). Restaurant phone : 925-253-ROMA (7662). This free event is sponsored by owner Michele Lavecchia, and manager Libby Havlicek.
- Chamber breakfast meeting, on Thursday, June 25 from 8:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. at Village Pizza 19 Orinda Way Orinda. Cost \$10.00 - at the door. This is a relaxed coffee hour in which chamber members can mix and mingle, share ideas, and exchange business cards.

If you have a business brief to share, please contact **Sophie Braccini** at [sophie@lamorindaweekly.com](mailto:sophie@lamorindaweekly.com)

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## Lamorinda Entrepreneurs Find Recipes to Beat the Recession

By Sophie Braccini



Steve Benjamins playing a Baby Grand in his new Lafayette location Photo Sophie Braccini

What is bad news for some is an opportunity for others. In spite of the gloom, entrepreneurs continue to launch new businesses in Lamorinda. From frozen yogurt, to repair shops, to stationary, they are ready to work hard to benefit from new consumer trends or position themselves to take advantage of the recovery, when it comes.

"It can seem counter-intuitive to open a new stationary store in times like these," says Andrew Han, the owner of Elmwood Stationers in Berkeley who will open a second store in Lafayette in July, "but it is a good time to negotiate advantageous terms with property owners, to rationalize business practices, and if we can make it through this difficult time, we will be better positioned when the recovery comes."

Han has been very successful on College Avenue selling the beautiful specialty stationary items he loves, such as high quality journals, paper invitations and note cards, as well as business supplies. He knew the owner of the previous Lafayette stationary store and was aware of his inventory issues. "With two stores we can transfer inventory back and forth and try new things," adds Han, "and since we'll buy larger quantities, we will get bigger discounts." Han is expecting his new Lafayette location to open on July 13.

The two frozen yogurt shops that opened in May in Lafayette are banking on the fact that people want to indulge, but for a reasonable price and possibly in a healthy way.

The first one to open is located inside Flippers at 960 Moraga Road; it's a MYO Pure Frozen Yogurt franchise. Molly and Paige Meyer started this business in Walnut Creek. They claim to offer only fresh yogurt with live culture in a wide variety of flavors and toppings that is sold by the weight. "For a few dollars people can get a treat that's healthy and delicious," says Paige Meyer. The location, which is close to both an elementary and a middle school, has been doing well.

A few blocks away at 3518-A Mt. Diablo Blvd, Yogurt Shack, which operates under a similar business model, is off to a successful start. The

store sells yogurt by the weight with a large choice of toppings. For the Coccimiglio's it is a family affair with parents and daughter running franchises in Danville and Lafayette. In all their locations, the mix of healthy and affordable treats is a winning ticket. Last April, Time Magazine reported that chocolate sales all over the planet seemed to be immune to recession and continued to grow. A customer summarized the trend that seems to work in Lafayette as well, "We may not be able to buy luxuries any more, but we can still splurge on small pleasures like chocolate," or yogurt!

Repair service is another good niche for tough times. It appeals to people who want to spend less and to those who want to waste less. Three businesses have recently opened or moved to Lamorinda that focus on this market trend.

Tick Tock in Moraga is a clock and watch repair shop (read details in our May 27 issue at <http://www.lamorindaweekly.com>) and the second store for its owner.

Richard Yom, on the other hand, repairs cell phones.

At 3541 Plaza Way he opened Prostar - Sprint PCS store where he will sell what he believes are the best value networks in town and to further serve his clientele he will replace that broken screen on an out of warrantee phone or change a broken port. "I took a

special training in phone repairs," explains the former software engineer, "because I saw that phones were getting more and more expensive and people were in need of repairs." A Moraga resident, Yom moved his business from Vallejo to Lafayette to work closer to home.

Another repair shop expanded in Lafayette recently, Restoration Piano by Benjamins Piano Tuning opened a large warehouse at 3434 Golden Gate Way in Lafayette. Business owner Steve Benjamins tunes, repairs, restores, rents and sells pianos on consignment. "I can do anything that has to do with a piano," says the man who can play at events as well. But for him, it is not the repairs that are keeping his business afloat. "It might be that new place where

I can warehouse pianos that will save my business," says Benjamins.

Benjamins explains that when people are losing their jobs, their homes, piano are hard to move and there's a hemorrhage of free pianos on Craigslist. "The only part of my business that's growing is the consignment sales," he says, "I can pick and choose remarkable instruments. For those who have money, it's a great time to buy a piano." His large warehouse features baby grand and uprights from different centuries. "This is a tough time for musicians," admits Benjamins, "but we live in a community with a lot of very talented adult and youth and it will always be my joy to see kids grow and families change because they have found the right piano."

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