

Life after the Massage Parlors

By Sophie Braccini



Carlos Gomez, Marilyn Chalmers and Nancy Katz in front of the renovated storefront. Photo Sophie Braccini

It was a sad sight along Mt. Diablo Boulevard, where Carlos Gomez' tailoring business, Moises Gomez and Associates, was withering, surrounded by massage parlors of ill repute. Now driving to the corner of Mt. Diablo and Willow Drive, one might not recognize the place. The trees have been trimmed and the Spanish-style gate that marks the entrance to the Willow neighborhood is visible.

The storefronts on Mt. Diablo

look completely different: neon signs and dark windows have been replaced with bright, large windows exposing the new private gym, Chalmers Fitness; and less prominent, but equally important, the back massage location has also been completely remodeled and is now home to the French school, French for Fun.

Last February, after Willow neighbors took matters into their own hands and the Lafayette Police Department cracked down on the illegal activity,

the massage parlors that surrounded Gomez's business vanished. The area revitalized, Carlos Gomez is happy to introduce his new neighbors, Marilyn Chalmers and Catherine Jolivet.

Jolivet, owner of French for Fun for 15 years, had been looking for a new place for her school for a long time. "Finding this little cottage is a miracle," says the energetic business woman. "I had been looking for a year and all the commercial real estate brokers I worked with told me to give up and move my business to Walnut Creek. But for me, it was either Lafayette or retirement." The husband of one of her teachers saw a Craigslist posting for the space and Jolivet made an offer. "The location was perfect. Of course, it looked awful inside, but we are creative and not afraid of work; we knew we could make something charming of it."

Marilyn Chalmers said exactly the same thing. She had been operating a small gym nearby where she of-

fered private lessons and was looking for something bigger. When she saw the space along Mt. Diablo Boulevard she immediately loved it. "My husband thought it was awful, but I saw what it could become," she said. Her husband Don Chalmers also teaches at the new studio.

Now the three business owners work together. "Carlos (Gomez) and I used to be neighbors when I first opened my French school," remembers Jolivet, "and Marilyn is so professional and charming. Every time I come to the new place (where she plans to move at the beginning of January), I see people I know going to Carlos' business."

Gomez already has flyers from Chalmers' practice on the desk of his tailoring business. "I want everyone here to be successful," says Gomez, who has already seen a change in his business since the massage parlors vanished in July. "My customers are coming back," he says looking at the

chart of his increasing sales.

Chalmers is also experiencing increased activity in her bright new studio. "Now I can offer group classes, on top of my individual training practice," she says. "I love coming to this place," adds Nancy Katz, one of Chalmers' clients. "It feels like Marilyn (Chalmers): energetic, fun and inspiring." Chalmers, who says that she works with clients at any level of fitness, offers Functional Fitness training classes, TRX, stretch classes and boot camp.

Grand openings of the new businesses should happen soon. You can find more information about Chalmers Fitness at www.chalmers-fitnessusa.com and French for Fun at www.frenchforfun.com. For information about Moises Gomez and Associates, call (925) 283-6755.

Lamorinda Weekly business articles are intended to inform the community about local business activities, not to endorse a particular company, product or service.

business briefs



Michael from Doorstep Farmers delivers to Joe and Shirley Towbis' home in Orinda. Photo Sophie Braccini

Doorstep Farmers Now Delivers to Lafayette and Orinda

(925) 349-4568, www.doorstepfarmers.com

The organic fruit and vegetable delivery service started two and a half years ago by Michael Wedgley has expanded delivery service from Lafayette to Orinda, and promises to include Moraga soon. Wedgley became interested in the distribution of local organic products at age 26, and decided to create Doorstep Farmers to allow anyone to have access to great produce, whatever their income level or their mobility. "I'm working with a network of farmers all located in Contra Costa County," he says. "The purpose is to get people a great variety of fresh fruits and vegetables when they are in season and at their peak of nutritional value and taste, while supporting local farmers." The service is flexible, allowing clients to customize their weekly basket online, prior to delivery. Orinda resident Shirley Towbis discovered Doorstep Farmers at the Lafayette Health Fair, and immediately came on board. Towbis says they've eaten all of the persimmons, kale, pears, salads, oranges, etc. they've received – and enjoy having it delivered to their doorstep. "It's like Christmas once a week," says Towbis' husband, Joe. "And since we've started, I have lost weight." The Orinda resident attributes this outcome to cooking soups more often. There are four box sizes, which include enough produce to feed one to five people; delivery can be scheduled every week or every other week.

Les Trois Bisous – Joan Edelson Goes Online
(510) 409-6141

www.lestroisbisous.com

Moraga lawyer Joan Edelson, whose passion for cooking drove her to compete in the California State Fair and who won numerous prizes for her jams and desserts, finally gave in to her friends who wanted to get more of her delicious treats and started an online patisserie – a bakery specializing in French pastry. She recently launched the

website Les Trois Bisous – the three kisses – where she sells what she makes. "Everything is homemade by me in small batches," she says. "I buy only the best ingredients, experiment to get the taste we love and cook for my clients like I do for my family and friends." She adds that anyone in need of any pies, tarts, cookies or other treats for the holidays, or for their own personal dinners, may get in touch with her. Visit www.lestroisbisous.com for more information about her products.

Care Indeed

61 Moraga Way #9, Orinda

(925) 402-4411, www.careindeed.com

Care Indeed, a well-known provider of home care services, recently received its CAHSAH Certification as a Home Care Aide Organization. The certification was awarded in recognition of Care Indeed's efforts in providing the highest quality services. CAHSAH was established in 1966 with a mission to promote quality home care and enhance the effectiveness of its members.

Cloud 9 Organic Salon Re-Opens, Correction

1 Orinda Way, #3, Orinda

(925) 258-9811, www.cloud9organictherapy.com

In our Dec. 5 issue we printed that Cloud 9's owner was Cindy Nguyen. The rightful owners are Alyssa Renteria and Leah Crane Kao. "We offer the finest non-toxic polishes (there is no true organic nail polish designation), organic soaks/scrubs/moisturizers and clients do indeed leave feeling relaxed and revived," wrote Cloud 9 co-owner Crane Kao. "Furthermore, we exceed the sanitation guidelines set forth by the California Board of Barbering and Cosmetology regarding our instrumentation. We offer waxing services and are excited to announce that we are now a full service hair salon."

News from the three Chambers of Commerce Lafayette

Entrepreneur's Club at 8:30 a.m. Thursday, Dec. 20 in the Lafayette Chamber Conference Room.

Moraga

The Chamber is accepting nominations for Business Person of the Year. Names can be emailed to kathe@moragachamber.org. A vote to select among the nominees is scheduled for January and the awards dinner will be in February.

Orinda

Mark your calendar for this luncheon tribute to Dick Heggie, first mayor of Orinda, from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 16 at the Orinda Country Club. Cost: \$25 per person, reservations online at www.orindachamber.org.

If you have a business brief to share, please contact **Sophie Braccini** at sophie@lamorindaweekly.com

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