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New Owner

Lafayette Massage Practices Struggle to Overcome Negative Stigma

By Sophie Braccini



Heather Schlachter in front of Somatic Therapy Associates in Lafayette.
Photo Sophie Braccini

About a year ago the story of brothels masquerading as massage parlors exploded in Lafayette. The city reacted sending in undercover officers who arrested some 'masseuses' and adopting regulations that now require all massage practitioners to be certified. But uncertainty remains, and legitimate practices are

suffering. On a recent Tuesday night at Busy Stix in Lafayette, several ladies sat around the large oval table and chit-chatted while knitting. Heather Schlachter of Somatic Therapy Associates, which is located in the cottage next to the yarn boutique, came with a massage chair to give those who

needed it relief from the shoulder tension that can build when knitting.

"The ladies started to talk about the massage places in Lafayette," said Busy Stix owner Marcia Brenning, "and said that they had such a bad reputation that they would be afraid to go to one of them." They even feared being sexually abused.

Schlachter was distressed to hear this, but not that surprised. "We've had new clients that indicated that they had been very hesitant to come because of the bad reputation of massage practices in Lafayette," she said. "The other day, a gentleman came in and after talking with a massage therapist said he was relieved that we were legitimate."

Schlachter, who has been operating in her cute little cottage for more than 10 years, said that this year business was significantly slower than previous years. She now places her coupons for distribution in Walnut Creek. "There are too many rumors in Lafayette," she said.

Lafayette Community Services Officer Cathy Surges-Moscato says that these fears are unfounded. "We meet every week to discuss the situation of the massage practices in Lafayette," she said. "All the massage practices have to

apply for a license and we do check them when they do. Many existing ones have come forward, and at this time everybody is in compliance." Surges-Moscato added that the Lafayette Police make unannounced visits to ensure everything is what it is supposed to be. Unfortunately, the bad reputation has continued.

Massage Cottage owner Jana Lynn has been practicing since 1988 and was very surprised last week when a sales representative working for the Yellow Pages told her over the phone that she would not know where to go for a massage in Lafayette because the city had such a bad reputation.

"The wide media coverage inflamed people's opinions," said Lynn, "but we are all professionals here and we are ready for business."

Each massage establishment is required to have a California certification for each of the professionals working there. They in turn get a certificate of registration with the city that patrons can ask to see.

But the process isn't always simple. Schlachter had problems getting her California certification since the place she graduated from, the Sacramento Massage School, is now

closed. "When I started there was no state certification and I didn't keep all of my transcripts," she said. Of the five therapists who work with her at Somatic, she said the younger ones had no problem getting their licenses, but the older and more experienced therapists had more difficulty. But she feels it's worth going through a longer process if it can reassure potential clients.

Currently, there are about a dozen massage practices in Lafayette. The only problem is finding the place that's right for you.

"Most people ask their friends or colleagues for a referral," said Robyn Scherr, a craniosacral therapist who operates Living in the Body. "Would you go to a dentist without a recommendation?"

If you can't find a referral, check with the Lafayette Chamber of Commerce, visit the massage practice's website, read online reviews, or check the masseur's credentials.

But have no fear. With Mother's Day right around the corner, Lafayette is a great place to unwind with a fantastic massage.

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

New Florist in Clocktower
3581 Mt. Diablo Blvd., Suite C, Lafayette
(925) 310-4546, www.floretlafayette.com



Michael Wolf Photo Sophie Braccini

Floret, the new flower shop in the Clocktower in Lafayette, is the flower version of Ali Baba's treasure trove. But there is nothing intimidating about the place; it is bright, open and familiar, yet is filled with unusual and interesting plants and flowers. "That's our vision," says owner Michael Wolf, "to get people excited about flowers and what they can do with them." The boutique located in the alley that connects Mt. Diablo Boulevard and the back parking lot is a rainbow of fresh colors. Patrons will immediately spot a nice collection of orchids, delicate green mums, steghead ferns that are mounted on a wooden wall frame, delicate fritillarias, dogwood branches, or the vertical succulent gardens. Wolf comes from the event-planning world and Floret is his first business. He uses his procurement experience to select gifts that will complement the flowers. Already in the store are vases and candles, and Wolf was excited to have just signed an agreement with Rachel Dunn Chocolates. Flower arranging classes will also be held at the store. Floret had a soft opening last month, with the grand opening scheduled after Mother's Day, but orders have already started coming in--the Lafayette Juniors asked Wolf to provide flowers for some of the kitchens on their upcoming tour and teenagers are buying their Senior Ball boutonnieres and corsages.

Free Pilates Day at Absolute Center
3658 Mt. Diablo Blvd., Lafayette
(925) 299-9642

Absolute Center in Lafayette will host Pilates Day May 11 with a morning of free classes to discover the different aspects of Pilates. New visitors and patrons can take a class of Balanced Body Bare, Pilates Reformer, Pilates Mat and Chair Classes. All are welcome,

but reservations are required. Refreshments will be served. For details, visit www.absolutecenter.net.

The Treasure Trove Relocating
(925) 283-2252, www.treasuretroveinteriors.com

The Treasure Trove, a custom interiors studio specializing in window treatments, wallpapers, upholstery, bed coverings, decorative pillows, slipcovers, cushions, carpeting, and other home furnishings owned by Ann Webb, will be following Storyteller to the shopping center near Whole Foods and McCaulou's, in the courtyard behind Peet's Coffee. Other tenants such as P&L Framing, Twigs Floral & Art located in the vintage area of Lafayette next to defunct Petar's on Lafayette Circle are also looking for new locations.

Coldwell Banker Honors Successful Agents
5 Moraga Way, Orinda
(925) 253-4600



Lana Fitzpatrick Lynn Oaks Vlatka Bathgate

Coldwell Banker Residential Brokerage recently honored some of its most successful agents. Lana Fitzpatrick, a sales associate in the company's Orinda office, has earned membership in the company's International Diamond Society; membership in this elite group is achieved by the most talented and knowledgeable real estate professionals in the industry. Lynn Oaks, sales associate with Coldwell Banker Residential Brokerage's Orinda office, has been awarded membership in the company's International Sterling Society, an honor bestowed upon the top Coldwell Banker sales associates worldwide. Vlatka Bathgate, sales associate with Coldwell Banker Residential Brokerage's Orinda office, has earned membership into the company's International President's Circle, a prestigious honor bestowed upon the top Coldwell Banker sales associates worldwide.

April's Moraga Employee of the Month

An enduring friendly face among Moraga's business world, John Spazek has been named the Moraga Employee of the Month for

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

April. Spazek has served the local community as the CVS photo department manager for almost 24 years, beginning with the store in 1989 when it was Long's. He has helped countless customers over the years. His customers point out his calm personality even during stressful situations and his ability to multi-task. "John has been here for over two decades and he is like an icon in our building," said CVS store manager Mike Lawrence. "He always takes the time with our customers to make sure they get great service and he has a very loyal following." The Moraga Rotary and Moraga Chamber of Commerce will award Spazek with a \$50 gift card to Safeway at the Rotary luncheon Tuesday, May 7. From left, Chamber President Frank Melon, John Spazek of CVS, CVS manager Mike Lawrence and Rotary President Frank May.



News from the three Chambers of Commerce Lafayette

Chamber Mixer at 5:30 p.m. Wednesday, May 8 at the Acalanes Fellowship Lodge, #480, 925 Moraga Rd.

Ribbon Cutting for the new Storyteller Bookstore at 5 p.m. Thursday, May 9 at 3506-E Mt. Diablo Blvd.

Workshop LinkedIn 2013 at 8 a.m. Wednesday, May 15 in the Chamber of Commerce Conference Room. For reservations, email workshops@lafayettechamber.org.

Entrepreneur Club will meet at 8:30 a.m. Thursday, May 16 in the Chamber Conference Room.

Ribbon Cutting for Rustic Tavern at 5 p.m. Thursday, May 16 at 3576 Mt. Diablo Blvd.

Taste of Lafayette, the great foodies' night on Lafayette's restaurant row starts at 5:30 p.m. Tuesday, May 21 at the Lafayette Plaza. Tickets at LafayetteChamber.org.

Ribbon Cutting for Floret at 5 p.m. Thursday, May 23 at 3581 Mt. Diablo Blvd., Suite C.

Coffee with the Mayor at 8 a.m. Friday, May 24 in the Chamber Conference Room.

Moraga

7th Annual Moraga Community Faire will be held Saturday, May 11 in the Rheem Valley Shopping Center. This annual event is planned and organized by the Moraga Chamber of Commerce. The core of this community gathering is its businesses, coming out to meet and greet the public. (More details on the Spring Events page, B2)

Orinda

2nd Orinda Restaurant Tour Planning at 3 p.m. Wednesday, May 8 at La Piazza Restaurant, 15 Moraga Way. All members are welcome.

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