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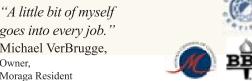
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# Local Women Taking Charge of Their Lives

By Sophie Braccini



he hardest lesson I

learned is that I'm the

one in charge of my life," said

Leilah Douglah, of Douglah De-

sign, "Others can help, but you

have to take charge and go with it."

The Women's Empowerment

Forum was a panel discussion or-

ganized by the Lafayette Chamber

of Commerce and Mechanics

Banks on October 19, featuring a

dozen seasoned local business

women. In Lamorinda, many women take charge of their lives

and change their career paths to ac-

commodate their family life or to

adapt to a change in circumstance.

years raising her sons and volun-

teering for the Orinda community,

and then wanted to start a business

of her own. She settled on a con-

cept, but life threw her a curve ball

 she was diagnosed with breast cancer. "My silver lining showed up

at a most unlikely moment," said Di

Stefano, founder of Susan's Silver

Lining, "It came to me right after I

was handed an old hospital gown

with a tear in it and was told to 'un-

dress and put this on.' Before her

next appointment, she pulled out a

pajama top, cut open the back and

sleeves, and sewed in silk ribbons.

The next time she went to the doc-

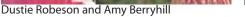
tor, with her own hospital gown to

change into, she felt less exposed;

more herself and stronger. Her doc-

Susan Di Stefano spent 20

Their stories are empowering.



Lynne Navone

Di Stefano realized that she

tors agreed there was no reason she

could create hospital gowns for oth-

ers as well, in cheerful and fun fab-

rics, and she made several prototype

gowns that tied at the side instead of

the back. Nurses offered sugges-

tions and at each visit she took her

note pad and jotted down ideas.

"That was what kept me going last

year," said Di Stefano, who is now

cancer-free. "I've been asked to

have some gowns in hospital gift

stores," she says, "and if my gowns

can make a sick woman feel a little

better and stronger, that's what will

make me happy." The gowns come

in different fabrics, from leopard

print, to French country, to cup-

cakes, and are made locally of high

quality cotton. They can be ordered

pened in the lives of Dustie Robe-

son and Amy Berryhill. It was

meeting each other through a friend

that was the catalyst to switching

from corporate careers to their pas-

sion-become-business: organizing

other people's space. "During a

company meeting we asked each

other what would be our dream

job," said Berryhill, an Orinda mom

who was then in sales and market-

ing for a pharmaceutical company,

"and I said: professional organizer!"

son, their common love for build-

When Berryhill met Robe-

Nothing that dramatic hap-

online at susansilverlining.com.

should not wear her own gown.

ing efficiency brought them together and their complementarities

They acknowledge that getting organized can be a very emotional process and that no system works for everyone. They believe that being a team makes them more creative and efficient. They specialize in residential organizing, love working with kids, families, and home-based businesses. They can be reached through their web site at SpiffyChicks.com.

make their business a success.

The transition from the corporate life to mother/entrepreneur has gone smoothly for the Spiffy-Chicks. Lynne Navone hopes for an equally straightforward ride. The Moraga mom just launched 24/7, a Personal Assistant service. Navone used to be an administrative assistant, 'before kids,' for Gumps in San Francisco, and the Sierra Club. She's since volunteered in the community, but it's been 20 years since she left the corporate world.

Navone needed to invent a new role for herself. "One day, when I needed to be at two places at the same time, it dawned on me that we sometimes have a need for a personal assistant, someone you know and trust, and can free up some time." Navone runs errands for her clients; around the home she supervises repairs and deliveries, organizes photos and scrapbooks,

and helps with clutter. In a home business setting she manages emails, phone calls and correspondence and makes travel and business arrangements. She provides "concierge" services and helps with holidays and special events planning. Finally, courtesy of her Italian roots and family tradition of homemade dinners, she plans and cooks for everyday meals or special occasions. For more details, her web site is www.twentyfoursevenhelp.com, or call 876-7314.

The owners of the three businesses featured here were part of the Lafayette forum and they embody the words of wisdom that were shared there. "If you don't love what you do, you should be doing something else," said Chevron executive Sheila Taylor during the event, who realized one morning that her passion for her job was waning and she became an owner of the Wine Country Trekking company.

"Flexibility is key to be able to transition," said Anne Grodin who, among many other careers, was a key player in the establishment of the Lafayette Community Foundation. Professionals, volunteers, Chief Domestic Officers -Lamorinda women certainly tally a variety of experience. Like Susan, Dustie, Amy, Lynne, Leila, Sheila and Anne, all they need to soar is to discover their passion and act on it.

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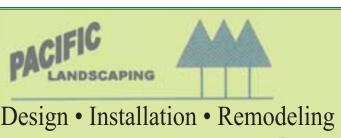
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# business briefs

### Pizza Anyone?

Two New Gourmet Pizza Restaurants Coming to Lamorinda

Pizza lovers will soon have more interesting choices as two new pizza restaurants are getting the last details taken care of before their grand openings. Bonfire Pizzeria in Theater Square (across from Repub-



lic of Cake) boasts local, organic ingredients. The restaurant's website is http://www.bonfirepizzeria.com/.

In Lafayette, Patxi's Chicago Pizza (pronounced cheese) is set to open at 3577 Mt. Diablo Blvd. The company is privately owned and has three other restaurants. They offer Chicago style



deep-dish pizza. Their web site: patxispizza.com. Both restaurants are scheduled to open early 2011. We'll keep you updated on details as the openings near.

#### Caldecott Properties Comes to Moraga 370B Park Street, Moraga (Rheem Shopping Center) (925)376-4000, www.Caldecott.com

Lamorinda native Andy Read, co-owner of Caldecott Properties which employs several Lamorinda residents, has moved in a few doors down from the New Rheem Theatre. The intent of establishing Caldecott Properties was to create a full-service brokerage specializing in sales, rentals and property management on both sides of the tunnel. With over 315 sales totaling more than \$170 million dollars in Alameda County, Caldecott Properties was named one of the 25 largest residential real estate firms in the East Bay. A portion of the company's proceeds are donated to various non-profit groups, including the East Bay Humane Society, the Bay Area's only nokill shelter.

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

### Trick or Treat



The ladies at CC & Co Hair Design in Moraga showed that Halloween fun is not just for the kids. Eloisa Avitia, Renee Deshung, Terry Wolff Stratton and Cathy Corsi dressed up as a fortune teller, Hot Lips Houlihan, Mrs. Robinson, and Madame Dracula.

### **News from the three Chambers of Commerce**

Green Committee Meeting on Wednesday, November from 17 in the Chamber Conference Room.

Entrepreneur's Club on Thursday, November 18 starting at 8:30am in the Chamber Conference Room.

Ribbon Cutting at Tara Natural Medicine on Thursday, November 18 from 5:00pm at

3186 Old Tunnel Road, Lafayette.

31st Annual Community Thanksgiving Breakfast on Friday, November 19 starting at 7:00am. Reservations required! Join the Friendly Chamber for the 31st annual Community Thanksgiving Breakfast and take the time to savor the beginning of the holiday season. The annual event will be held this year at Our Savior's Lutheran Church, 1035 Carol Lane, Lafayette. A catered breakfast will be offered by Green Lantern Catering Co. The cost is \$15 per person. Reservations can be made by calling the Chamber offices at 284-7404, or via email: Karen@lafayettechamber.org.

### Moraga

General Chamber Meeting at the Hacienda de las Flores on November 19 from 7:30 – 9am. Meet and Greet, Coffee and Hot Muffins, starting at 8:00, introduction of new Chamber businesses.

## Orinda

Chamber November Mixer at Orinda Motors on Thursday, November 11 from 5:30-7:00pm, at 63 Orinda Way, Orinda. Join your fellow Chamber members and guests for an evening of fun and networking at Orinda Motors.