

Mark West Area Chamber of Commerce and VISITORS CENTER



BRINGING BUSINESS & THE COMMUNITY TOGETHER!

4787 Old Redwood Highway, Suite 101, Santa Rosa, CA 95403
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The Lark

February 2019
Volume XXXIII Issue 2

HOME BUILDING, REBUILDING SET TO ACCELERATE, SONOMA COUNTY OFFICIALS SAY

Adapted from a story on the Northbay Business Journal website by Chase DiFelicianantonio & Cheryl Sarfaty, February 25, 2019,

As work progresses toward replenishing the more than 5,300 homes lost in the 2017 North Bay wildfires, builders and government officials in Sonoma County also are developing plans for new housing to ease the ongoing shortage.

Even before the fires, there already had been a decades-long slowdown in housing construction because of the economy and real estate development challenges. That led to a shortfall of about 30,000 homes just in Sonoma County after the wildfires, according to a county report. Sonoma County reported that, so far, 42 rebuilds have taken place in the unincorporated areas and 633 are under construction.

On the permits front, Sonoma County has made progress in eliminating red tape to allow building projects to go forward, Tennis Wick, director of Permit Sonoma, said in the Feb. 19 Sonoma State University Economic Outlook Conference and Housing Summit, hosted by the Business Journal.

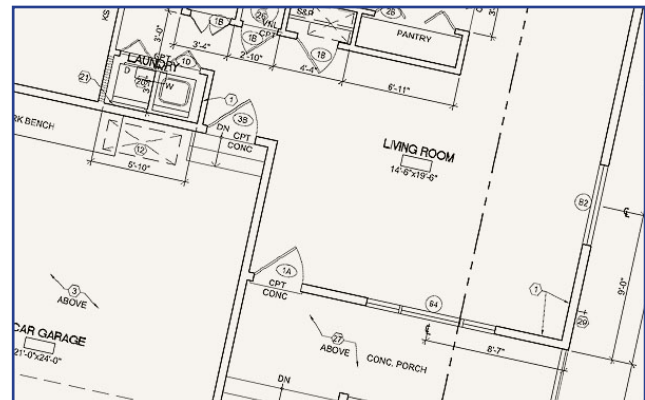
"It's been a banner year," Wick said, noting his agency had issued more permits overall in 2018 than in any past year. Permit Sonoma statistics show the agency issued 9,978 permits in 2018 versus 8,543 in 2017 and 8,241 in 2016.

Permits for constructing accessory dwelling units, or "granny units," built on existing home properties has become an "over-the-counter" process Wick said, making it easier for homeowners who want to expand on their existing property.

According to Permit Sonoma, the county has reduced development-impact fees for the units on a graduated scale effective June 7, waiving traffic and parking mitigation fees for units smaller than 750 square feet and reducing them by half for units between 751 square feet to 1,000 square feet. Units over 1,000 square feet would require the full cost of fees.

Asked what the ideal housing scenario in Sonoma County looks like, Wick said the optimal benchmark would be "people aren't spending more than 30 percent of their income on housing." Wick said another post-fires challenge facing developers continues to be the price of housing materials.

Read the entire story on the Northbay Business Journal website at <https://www.northbaybusinessjournal.com/northbay/sonomacounty/9304288-181/sonoma-county-housing-construction>



February Social hosted by
Rodan + Fields Independent
Consultants and Bisordi Ranch
and Vineyards, LLC
See p3

UPCOMING EVENTS: next AFTER HOURS BUSINESS SOCIAL

Hosted by

Todd Walling Real Estate, Keller Williams Realty Thurs. March 14, 2019

3562 Round Barn Circle, Ste. 200, Santa Rosa

5:30 PM - 7:30 PM



Steve Plamann
Aaction Rents
President

*Our Mission:
The Mark West Area
Chamber of Commerce
is organized to advance
the economic well-
being and uniqueness
of the Mark West Area
so that its citizens and
all areas of its business
community shall prosper.*

CHAMBER MEETINGS

Board of Directors

Second Tuesday
Of Each Month
11:30 am - 1:00 pm at
Best Western Plus Wine
Country Inn & Suites
870 Hopper Av. S.R.

Ambassadors Mtg.

Second Thursday
Of Each Month
4:00 pm - 5:00 pm
At the Chamber offices

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

I have the sad duty of informing you that Don Wilson, longtime member of the Mark West Area Chamber of Commerce, has passed away after a long illness. He and his wife Barbara were familiar faces at most Chamber events over the last two decades. Don was also a Director for the Rincon Valley Fire District Board from 1994 to 2013. He and Barbara were voted honorary lifetime members of the Mark West Area Chamber of Commerce by the Chamber board, after many years of service as Ambassadors of the Chamber. Don was a good friend to us all and he will be missed. Our condolences go out to his wife Barbara, daughter Tracey, and the rest of his family. A service for Don will be held on March 16th at 12:30 pm at St. Rose Catholic Church, 398 10th St., Santa Rosa. A Celebration of Life will follow immediately afterward.

How Small Business Can Compete with Amazon

I have been doing some reading and research on how a local small business can better compete with retail giant Amazon. Their last reported income was \$178 billion in 2017 and that was a big increase over the 2016 amount of \$136 billion. Yes, they are growing and affecting many more small businesses each year. So what are the best marketing strategies we can all use to combat this? Well, here are a few good ideas*.

I would say, because of the huge increase in younger generations of shoppers, a great website is essential. Statistics indicate that as many as 90% of all shoppers will check online for product information and pricing before buying. You need an online presence with a website that **informs and impresses**. It should also have your "how to buy" information and your store location at the viewer's fingertips, with attractive pictures of your store and showroom. You should also try to utilize all of the other social media options that the young adult population uses daily, to help promote your business.

The next opportunity you have is what Amazon can't offer... **show off your uniqueness**. Make your business look specific, inviting, fun to be in, and give very personalized and friendly service. Make sure you display your products in an eye catching manner. Allow customers to touch, hold, get a feel for and try on

Continued on page 6



Don and Barbara Wilson at their accustomed spot at a Chamber Social, welcoming members and guests.



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David Hartman

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FEBRUARY 14 SOCIAL

This social was quite the Valentine affair. Co-Hosts Scott & Tracey Mitchell, Independent Consultants for Rodan + Fields and Robbie and Stephanie Bisordi, Bisordi Ranch and Vineyards, were very welcoming to the members who showed up. Tracey, Scott, Stephanie and Robbie certainly shared the love with us. They had a wonderful spread of wine, water and food, both sweets and hors d'oeuvres, enough to fill our bellies with plenty of love.

Scott and Tracey are independent distributors of Rodan+Fields. Tracey told us that it is the #1 skin care company in North America. She offered the group a 20% discount for anyone who purchases the product through them vs. going online and purchasing directly from the company.

They had a nice display of products to view and invited everyone to a Product/Business Presentation on February 26 at Oxford Suites, Rohnert Park, 6:00 to 8:00 pm. Please RSVP to her, if you are planning on attending.

Bisordi Ranch and Vineyards is a fifth generation sustainable farming operation. They started in 1898, and are currently operated by three generations. At the ranch they have wine grapes, livestock, and tree nuts. They sell their grapes to Kunde Family Wines and Martin Ray. Kunde sells the wine through Costco. It is Old Vine Zin with the Kirkland brand. Martin Ray sells it as Martin Ray Bisordi Ranch Chardonnay.

Gilbert Hawkins, California Hawk Wealth Management, was introduced as a returning member. Welcome back Gilbert.

Paul Peck announced that there would be a 60 unit assisted living home, built by Pacifica Senior Living next year here in Santa Rosa.

Donors & Winners

The first business card drawing was a \$50 gift card for Rodan + Fields products, donated by our hosts Scott and Tracey Mitchell. The 50/50 drawing was \$53, won by Paul Erickson. The Pot of Gold was \$100. Wikiup Tennis & Swim Club was drawn. They were not in attendance so another \$20 goes into the pot for next month. Whenever there is no winner of the Pot of Gold, local writer Johnathan Williams will interview the host business and write an article on them. Either way, we get a winner! So watch for Johnathan's articles about Rodan + Fields and Bisordi Ranch soon.

Paul Peck won a box of See's candy donated by KG Phillips (Key Properties). Sally Crain (Century 21 Alliance) won a Rodan + Fields pack donated by Scott and Tracey.

Several gifts were donated by Bisordi Ranch. The winners were:

- Gilbert Hawkins (California Hawk Wealth Mgmt) - bag of walnuts
- John Essman (Sonoma CONNECTION) - homemade bird house
- Paul Erickson (Paul Erickson Real Estate Appraisals)- box of candy
- Doug Williams - heart made from wine barrel ring

Contributed by Aggie Maggio, Realtor @ Coldwell Banker



Scott and Tracey Mitchell, Independent Consultants for Rodan + Fields, were two of our hosts for the evening.



Stephanie Bisordi (left) and Robbie Bisordi (center) were our other pair of hosts. JoEllen 'Jodie' Priest Williams is at right.



Steve Plamann of Aaction Rents (left) with Johnathan Williams. Johnathan is a new contributor to The Lark, providing the monthly Business Spotlight articles. Thank you Johnathan! His dad is Doug Williams, longtime Chamber member and Past President.



Paul Peck of Carlton Senior Living (left) shows off the box of candy he won in the door prize drawing. He's shown with Steve Plamann of Aaction Rents.

BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT

EXCHANGE BANK: STALWART AND SURE

No matter how constant a business may be in a community, there is a chance that that business may close or relocate, leaving room for the next business to take over. But for some businesses, this fate is avoided entirely. They remain a constant in their community for years on end, enduring everything that life may throw at them. Such is the case for Exchange Bank, a bank that has been a part of Larkfield since 1964.

Founded in the 1890s, Exchange Bank has long been a part of Sonoma County history. Priding itself on its commitment to community, the bank has dedicated itself to providing a high-quality experience to its customers. This commitment has continued to develop as the years have gone on, and one of the best examples of that commitment can be found at the Larkfield branch, located right next door to Molsberry's Market.

The Larkfield branch of Exchange Bank has been a continuous presence in the Larkfield Shopping Center since 1964, opening in November shortly after that year's devastating Hanly fire. In the 55 years since, the bank has continued to offer its services to the community without losing any of the traits that made Exchange Bank so welcome in the first place. Customers are welcomed in and treated like family, and the staff does all they can to provide services that fill the customers' needs. These practices have allowed the branch to maintain relations with many long-time customers, with some of those customers having banked with Exchange Bank since before the Larkfield branch even opened.

While the Larkfield branch of Exchange Bank has been a constant in the community, there have been changes among the staff over the years. The total staff at the Larkfield branch tends to remain at around 10 people, and promotions and advancement are common. Those can often send members of the staff to other locations. But, despite these changes, the flow of excellent service has not ceased. Some have been part of the staff for over a decade, such as Laura Buhner, who has provided her services to the Larkfield branch as vice president and branch manager since 2008. Since joining, Laura has worked hard to ensure that the team environment has been maintained and strengthened, even when new members are brought into the fold, such as Mindy Smith, Retail Service Manager, who joined the Larkfield branch in 2015.

The Larkfield branch has also been a part of the Mark West Area Chamber of Commerce since nearly the beginning. This partnership is what Laura refers to as "two-way teamwork," with both the Chamber and the bank reaping the benefits that such a partnership brings. Laura, in particular, appreciates the many events that the Chamber of Commerce has to offer, allowing the bank to display its active participation in the community. This year, Exchange Bank will be assisting Molsberry's with their 60th anniversary celebrations in June. "The Molsberrys keep the shopping center together, even from their name alone," Laura and Mindy say.

However, as with most businesses in the Mark West Springs area, Exchange Bank was affected by the Tubbs fire in 2017. Customers and employees alike lost their homes, and the bank was closed until the Tuesday after the fires, reopening along with Molsberry's.

Continued on page 6



Larkfield Exchange Bank Branch Manager Laura Buhner (right) and Branch Manager and Vice President Steve Schofield (left) at the December holiday party/social at the Larkfield branch office.

Interested in joining our Ambassador Club?
Contact the Chamber at
office@markwest.org
707-578-7975



To host a Ribbon Cutting,
contact...
Aggie Maggio
aggiemaggio@icloud.com



Keep abreast of important information pertinent to local business issues: <http://edb.sonoma-county.org/>

UPCOMING EVENTS

Thursday, March 14, 2019
 Chamber Business After Hours Social 5:30-7:30pm
 Hosted by **Todd Walling Real Estate, Keller Williams Realty**
 3562 Round Barn Circle, Ste. 200, Santa Rosa

Thursday, April 11, 2019
 Chamber Business After Hours Social 5:30-7:30pm
 Hosted by **Johnson Pool and Spa**
 4731 Old Redwood Highway, Santa Rosa

Thursday, May 9, 2019
 Chamber Business After Hours Social 5:30-7:30pm
 Hosted by **The Fountaingrove Club**
 1515 Fountaingrove Parkway, Santa Rosa

Thursday, June 13, 2019
 Chamber Business After Hours Social 5:30-7:30pm
Open Date - Please contact the Chamber office at 578-7975 or email us at office@markwest.org to host this social

Thursday, July 11, 2019
 Chamber Business After Hours Social 5:30-7:30pm
 Co-hosted by **A M Maggio & Associates** and **Aggie Maggio, Realtor, Coldwell Banker**
 345 Mayfield Drive, Santa Rosa

Thursday, August 8, 2019
 Chamber Business After Hours Social 5:30-7:30pm
Open Date - Please contact the Chamber office at 578-7975 or email us at office@markwest.org to host this social

Thursday, September 12, 2019
 Chamber Business After Hours Social 5:30-7:30pm
Open Date - Please contact the Chamber office at 578-7975 or email us at office@markwest.org to host this social

Wednesday, September 26, 2019
29th Annual Wine Country Business Showcase
 The Luther Burbank Center for the Arts
 50 Mark West Springs Road, Santa Rosa



This free event showcases businesses while you enjoy complimentary food and Sonoma County wines and beverages.

Thursday, October 10, 2019
 Chamber Business After Hours Social 5:30-7:30pm
Open Date - Please contact the Chamber office at 578-7975 or email us at office@markwest.org to host this social

Friday, October 25, 2019
Chamber 38th Annual Installation Dinner
 6:00 - 9:00pm
 Hosted at Charlie's Restaurant at the Windsor Golf Club, 1320 19th Hole Drive, Windsor

Thursday, November 14, 2019
 Chamber Business After Hours Social 5:30-7:30pm
Open Date - Please contact the Chamber office at 578-7975 or email us at office@markwest.org to host this social

Wednesday, December 4, 2019
Holiday Tree Lighting - Community Event 6:00pm
 Hosted by Molsberry Markets, Inc.
 522 Larkfield Center, Santa Rosa

Thursday, December 12, 2019
 Chamber Business After Hours Social 5:30-7:30pm
 Co-hosted by **Larkfield Exchange Bank** and **Molsberry Markets, Inc.**
 500 Larkfield Center, Santa Rosa



**Sonoma
 CONNECTION**

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BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT, EXCHANGE BANK, *Cont. from page 4*

For the first six months after the fires, emotions were high among the customers and staff. Stories and struggles were shared, and together the community and the bank were able to provide one another with support, even up to helping those who lost their homes find housing. To Laura and Mindy, the aftermath of the fires also provided the staff an opportunity to become even better at helping customers, reminding them to take time to listen and encourage.

While the fires did see some customers depart from the Larkfield branch out of necessity, others were able to remain with the bank despite having moved to other locations in Sonoma County. Others were forced into a temporary hiatus, and the bank staff is overjoyed to welcome them back.

Indeed, a return to “normal” is what Exchange bank hopes can happen. Along with the knowledge gained from dealing with the fires, the bank intends to carry on, with the biggest changes being whatever new technology is introduced to make the banking experience even more streamlined.

All in all, Exchange Bank’s Larkfield branch has continually demonstrated that it is a community stalwart, remaining a part of the Mark West Chamber of Commerce and the Larkfield community even to this day. As they move forward into 2019, they hope to continue partnering with the community and the Chamber to be the best that they can be. In parting, Laura and Mindy have this to say: “It’s nice to see the Chamber members and to get to know them. Thanks for the long-term relationship and continued good will!”

Contributed by Johnathan Williams, Freelance Writer

PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE, *Continued from page 2*

your products if necessary. Many people still prefer the experience of seeing and touching items in person before buying.

Studies of customer shopping preferences have always shown that if a business is **involved and supportive of the local community** it makes that business look more desirable to the customers in the area. Joining local groups like the Mark West Area Chamber, supporting local sports teams or fundraisers, advertising with local media, and purchasing your supplies from other local businesses all make you a preferred place to shop. There are many ways you can communicate this to potential customers and I would suggest using as many as you can... people love to hear about a local business supporting their community.

And of course, nothing beats old fashioned great customer service from a friendly, knowledgeable and smiling person. **So impress, inform, be unique, be involved and make buying easy with a smile!**

The Mark West Area Chamber appreciates your membership and involvement. If you are like me you can see all the benefits from being a Chamber member. I enjoy the connections I make while networking with other members and guests at our monthly Socials and all the other promotional opportunities like the member directory, yearly trade show, and the website.

We had a real fun Social February 14th, on Valentine’s Day. See Aggie’s article on page 3. Thank you Scott and Tracey and Rob, Robbie and Stephanie for a night of fun and networking! Our special thanks also go out to Todd Anderson at Best Western for providing the space for the event.

Our next Social will be March 14th at 5:30PM and is hosted by Todd Walling Real Estate, Keller Williams Realty. The event will be held at 3562 Round Barn Circle, Ste. 200, Santa Rosa CA. This is an excellent opportunity to support another new member. Please join us for food, wine, fun, prizes, money giveaways, and many business connections with great people.

The annual Rose Parade in Santa Rosa is May 18. Join us by walking the route while you promote your business to thousands of onlookers. This is a really fun event and a huge promotional opportunity.

Steve Plamann, President

MARK WEST AREA COMMUNITY INFORMATION

AREA POPULATION - within a 3 mile radius - 20,000
 ELEVATION - 160 feet above sea level
 BOUNDARIES - Area approximately bounded by:
 Shiloh Road - North Piner Road - South
 West Olivet Road - West Lodge on Mark West Springs Rd - East

The Lark Newsletter is published monthly under the direction of:
 The Mark West Area Chamber of Commerce & Visitors Center
 4787 Old Redwood Hiwy, Suite 101, Santa Rosa, CA 95403

ADVERTISING: 6 months \$107.50; 1 year \$200
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 You supply a .pdf version of your 8.5" x 11" flyer to info@markwest.org
 You can pay online at <http://markwest.org/payment>

The Lark Newsletter is emailed to member businesses each month.
 For more information, contact the Chamber office at 578-7975.

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Deadline for publication is the 3rd Wednesday of the month.
 Please email your materials to info@markwest.org

*Promote your business with
 your flyer in the Chamber newsletter.
 You supply the flyers - We do the work!*

CHAMBER MEMBERSHIP DUES
 Effective May 1, 2006

Standard Dues		Non-Profit Dues
\$125.00	Business (1-5 Personnel)	\$110.00
\$175.00	Business (6-10 Personnel)	\$155.00
\$245.00	Business (11+ Personnel)	\$215.00
\$625.00	Corporate Sponsor	
\$ 95.00	Individual (no business affiliation)	

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*VP Membership
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Mark West Area Chamber of Commerce and VISITORS CENTER



4787 Old Redwood Hwy, Suite 101
Santa Rosa, CA 95403

AFTER HOURS BUSINESS SOCIAL

Thursday March 14
5:30 - 7:30 pm

TODD WALLING
REAL ESTATE,
KELLER WILLIAMS
REALTY

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THE WINDSOR TIMES

