

Mark West Area Chamber of Commerce and VISITORS CENTER



The Lark

October 2015
Volume XXIX Issue 10

BRINGING BUSINESS & THE COMMUNITY TOGETHER!

4787 Old Redwood Highway, Suite 101, Santa Rosa, CA 95403
Office Hours: Tues. - Thurs. 10 am - 3 pm www.markwest.org

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SMART TRAIN REPORT:

MARK WEST CHAMBER QUARTERLY LUNCHEON, MATT STEVENS, SMART TRAIN OUTREACH PROGRAM

For the past two generations, Sonoma County has been without passenger trains. The passenger trains all stopped due to fires, floods, economics, cars and freeways. There were a few tourist trains operated by Northwestern Pacific here and there, but nothing you could really call passenger service.

But that's about to change. Now SMART (Sonoma-Marín Area Rail Transit) owns the tracks and the rails are being rebuilt, and trains are being built. Both will have the latest and greatest technology. Everything in the system is state of the art. The rails are built for trains traveling up to 100 mph.

Sumitomo Corporation of America in Illinois is building the trainsets. The plan was to make the trains "sexy" as Matt put it. They are inviting and the ride is very enjoyable. The train cars have leather seats and huge windows. There are racks for 24 bicycles, wheelchairs and/or strollers. They will also have tables, most likely a wine & beer bar, and possibly even food vendors. Food and beverage availability is under discussion.



Guest Speaker Matt Stevens, SMART Train Community Education & Outreach. Matt has worked for SMART since 2001 designing and facilitating community outreach programs. He has a Masters Degree in Organizational Psychology and long experience as a consultant.

Train Facts

Top speed is 79 mph, with an average speed of 40 mph. There will be 30 trains per day, 15 in each direction. They will be coming through every half hour during peak busy periods. They now have six two-car trainsets. The noise level is about 70 decibels 50 feet away from the train. That's pretty quiet for a train. These trains are clean burning, showing a huge reduction in greenhouse gas emissions over less advanced technologies.

The complete system uses Positive Train Control, a set of computerized systems that allow Central Dispatch to stop the train. Dispatch sees all. For instance, if a train is travelling faster than the designated safe speed for a particular area, Dispatch can override the driver and safely bring it to a stop. It takes 800 to 1,000 feet to stop a train traveling at 79 mph. This will prevent many accidents before they happen, which is far better than reacting to them afterward. All incidents will be recorded and dealt with accordingly. There will be a dispatcher at Airport Blvd.

Continued on page 4

Wine Country Harvest Faire Report - Another Great Event! See p3

UPCOMING EVENTS: *next* **AFTER HOURS BUSINESS SOCIAL**
Hosted by **Exchange Bank, Larkfield Branch** and
Molsberry Markets, Inc.
500 Larkfield Center, Santa Rosa

Thursday December 10, 2015
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

As we all head into the Holiday Season please support your local businesses by shopping locally. This busy time of year is truly the best time to show your support to the local merchants who are there for you all year long. The convenience of not having to travel all over the area saves you time and money and also impacts our environment less. There is also the personal side of buying things from people you know and who share in the desire to keep our community strong. These are the merchants who also provide local jobs for many people you may know. After all, local businesses are the largest employer in the nation. The more business they do the more local people they will hire. And your sales tax dollars they collect go right back into our community to benefit us all.

Please join the Mark West Chamber in supporting our local merchants.

WOW, the 2015 Wine Country Harvest Faire and Business Showcase was a huge success. It was the chamber's 26th annual trade show. Truly, the dedicated effort by many caring Chamber members made the evening special and embodied the spirit of this beautiful area. All the booths were well decked out and the food, wine and beer made it a real party. What a great time and fantastic promotional opportunity. We had a steady crowd of guests, auctioned off some great gifts at very low prices, and gave away a \$200 shopping spree at Molsberry Market for our grand raffle prize. What a meaningful community minded event and one that I enjoy and look forward to every year.

On Wednesday October 28th The Mark West Area Chamber hosted another important and informative Business Luncheon. The Best Western Plus Wine Country Inn and Suites at 870 Hopper Avenue in Santa Rosa provided a great venue as usual, and the topic was a Smart Train update provided by guest speaker Matt Stevenson. See the detailed report by Aggie Maggio starting on page 1.

The Mark West Area Chamber of Commerce participated in a seven-chamber event at Francis Ford Coppola Winery in Geyserville on Thursday, November 5. It was a very well attended event, with a couple hundred attendees. Our regular monthly Social was at 24 Hour Fitness in the Larkfield Center, on November 12th. Watch for a review of the November 12 social in our November issue.

Well the Christmas Season is just around the corner and the Mark West Area Chamber of Commerce will again be bringing you another family oriented event on Tuesday December 1 at Molsberry's Market. We will present our yearly Christmas tree lighting ceremony with Mr. and Mrs. Claus. They will arrive on a firetruck provided by the Rincon Valley Fire District. Refreshments will be offered and the Mark West Area Union School District children's school choir will perform Christmas songs, directed by Kara. It begins at 6:00 pm and goes until 7:00 pm. Everyone in the Mark West Area is welcome to attend. Please come and bring your children.

Have a safe and happy Holiday Season.



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REPORT FROM THE HARVEST FAIR

A great time was had by all who attended and exhibited at our 26th Annual Wine Country Harvest Faire and Business Showcase on October 7. There were 45 booths, and 41 Silent Auction items to choose from. Steve Plamann of Aaction Rents won the \$200 Grand Prize Raffle. A huge thank you and congratulations to the many Chamber volunteers who helped produce this very special community event! We're looking forward to seeing you again next year!

Comments from the Front Desk

Aggie and Anthony Maggio staffed the Welcome Desk at Harvest Faire, and had this to say:

What a great spot the Welcome Desk was! We were able to meet and greet so many positive people coming through. Everyone came in with great expectations of a good show, mostly based on their experiences with our past shows. We handed out 233 bags with water and advertising pieces from some of our members, one for each group that came through. Without exception, attendees were grateful to get them, along with their one free raffle ticket.

Those whom we spoke with on their way out without exception gave us positive reports. There were a lot of very appreciative comments about the wonderful food provided by Molsberry Markets, Inc., and the great variety of items available through the silent auction.

Anthony and I noted that it was nice to see repeat vendors with tables. It created a very friendly and festive atmosphere.



QUARTERLY LUNCHEON REPORT, CONTNUED FROM PAGE 1

The first phase, which has been very much controlled by the economy, will put trains on the rails from the airport in Santa Rosa to the center of San Rafael. They also now have half the funds they need to get to Larkspur. They are optimistic for more.

There are three stations in Santa Rosa: Railroad Square, Guerneville Road, and the Sonoma County Airport. Others are in Rohnert Park, Cotati, Petaluma, Novato and San Rafael.



An employer driven shuttle service is being put in place for all stations.

There will be bike/train synergy paths. These will be recreational paths for all users as well as those going to and from the trains. So far, 42 miles of these paths have been built.

The plan is currently for Airport Boulevard to have its first train of the day start at 5:00 am and San Rafael will send out its last train at 8:30 pm. There are no plans for express trains at this point.

“Clipper Card” payment cards will be available. You will load it, tag it, and go. They will also interface with the bus system. Ticket vending machines will be available.

SMART Train is working to help build rail-safe communities. They have been working with Safety Pals, the fire department safety program, for four years. They work in collaboration with students and teachers in the community. The goal is to get people to think “See track? Think train.” Sometimes the trains will be coming through every 15 minutes, so awareness by motorists, pedestrians, and bicyclists will be vital.

What's next?

Testing every part of everything. In fact it has already begun. Every part and every system on the rails, on the trains themselves, and at the stations will be tested. In June they will run mock service as though passengers were on the trains.

- There was a great Question & Answer period, which rendered up these facts.
- There is no bus service to the areas served just yet, but they are working on it.
- Ridership is expected to be 6,000 to 6,500 riders or more per day.
- The trip from Airport Boulevard to San Rafael will take about one hour and five minutes.
 - Rails are shared with freight and, yes, they do foresee an increase in freight trains.
 - They will be hiring around 100 train operators and maintenance personnel and will be looking for people with experience.
 - Security on the train: two employed personnel, who are cross trained in law enforcement practices, will be on the trains and police will be on and around the tracks.
 - SMART has a grant to purchase three C cars, to fit in between existing cars when service increases.
 - Cloverdale: They don't know when they'll get there. It is heavily dependent upon finances, but is definitely the next location slated for connection. They are talking about an express bus to Airport Boulevard in the meantime.

Smart Train Is On Track! All of us at the Mark West Area Chamber of Commerce thank Matt Stevens, SMART Train Community Education & Outreach, for speaking with us at the luncheon.

Contributed by Aggie Maggio, Realtor @ Coldwell Banker

UPCOMING BUSINESS SOCIALS

HOLIDAY TREE LIGHTING

Tuesday, December 1, 2015 6:00pm
 Location: **Molsberry Market,**
 522 Larkfield Center, Santa Rosa

Thursday, December 10, 2015
 Chamber Business-After-Hours Social 5:30-7:30pm
 Hosted by **Exchange Bank, Larkfield Branch**
 and
Molsberry Markets, Inc.
 Location: 500 Larkfield Center, Santa Rosa

Below: It's Tree Lighting Time again! Join us Wednesday, December 1, at 6:00 pm in front of Molsberry's Market in Larkfield Center, for holiday cheer, music from local schoolchildren, and an early glimpse of Santa and Mrs. Claus!



2016 SOCIAL SCHEDULE NOW BEING PLANNED

The Ambassadors are in the process of putting together the 2016 Socials schedule. If you are interested in hosting one of our events next year contact Ed Whitt or one of the other Ambassadors with the month you would like to host your event. You will be contacted to find the date that's right for you. Remember, if you do not have a brick & mortar setting you might be able to co-host an event. Let us know what you need and we will try to make it work for you.



If a social isn't in your plans, but you would like to announce a new product, have a grand re-opening, or something else, the ambassadors want to work with you to get your business known. Contact us with your idea and let us go to work for YOU.

Thank you, from
 Your Ambassadors

Interested in joining our Ambassador Club?
 Contact Ed Whitt
 Valley Yellow Pages
 707-322-8770
 edward.whitt@myyp.com



To host a Ribbon Cutting, contact...
 Aggie Maggio
 Realtor @ Coldwell Banker
 707-486-1303
 aggiemaggio@icloud.com



Want to keep abreast of important information pertinent to local business issues? Visit: Sonoma-county.org/edb



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PRESS DEMOCRAT EDITORIAL: A ROSY OUTLOOK DESPITE IT ALL

In spite of all the worry about drought, homelessness and housing — and a temperamental stock market — the economy is doing just fine here on the North Coast. And the future is looking bright, at least for the next two years.

That was the rosy picture painted by economist Chris Thornberg before a crowd of some 450 people gathered at the Vineyard Creek Hyatt Friday [October 30]. Among the many forecasts that Thornberg, founding partner of Beacon Economics, has delivered over the years, this was one of the most optimistic. “You have a wonderful two years ahead of you,” he told those gathered at the Economic Development Board’s annual breakfast.

And why not?

The county’s jobless rate has dropped to 3.8 percent, the sixth lowest in the state. The cost of living, although high for many who struggle to stay here, is more that 52 percent less than in San Francisco, and tourism, a key driver of the local economy, is soaring. Occupancy rates for the county are upwards of 80 percent. “Time to get some new hotels, folks,” Thornberg said.

And as Susan Gorin, chairwoman of the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors, said, the county is in the 95th percentile of counties in the nation in terms of wage growth. Joblessness is down not because people are leaving the labor markets but because they are finding decent jobs.

In addition, the region benefits from positive news on the national front, helped by low energy costs, increased retail and industrial activity and a “modest, solid expansion” of the economy. Thornberg rejected contentions that the nation might be back where it was in 2006. Some credit issues remain, but there’s no housing bubble, he said. “It’s not even close,” he said. “Housing is still a great deal. Go buy.”

Yes, America has some concerns about a “frothy” stock market, continued uncertainty over state and local budgets, and concerns about the global economy. “But none of these are a recession-causing event,” he said.

There remain some real concerns ranging from wealth inequality — 1 percent of the world’s population currently owns 50 percent of the wealth — to college debt, which averages close to \$30,000 per graduate now. But Thornberg dismissed any suggestion that going to college may not be worth the cost anymore. “Getting a college degree is the best investment you will ever make,” he said.

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<http://www.pressdemocrat.com/opinion/4686635-181/pd-editorial-a-rosy-outlook?newsletter>

HOST A BUSINESS AFTER HOURS SOCIAL IN 2016 AND GET...

- PUBLICITY
- CUSTOMERS
- THE APPRECIATION OF YOUR PEERS

You know those fun “Socials” we’re always going on about? They’re a great way to showcase your business, your services, and your products. Sign up now, and your event will appear on the Mark West Area Chamber of Commerce website and in this newsletter for months on end. It’s “searchable” text which means it can help online shoppers find you! Plus, you’ll get an enviable reputation as a party-thrasher *par excellence*, which can’t be bad. There is no cost except for whatever food and beverage you choose to provide. Contact ambassador Ed Whitt, Valley Yellow Pages, at 707 322-8770 or edward.whitt@myyp.com to schedule.



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
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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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4787 Old Redwood Hwy, Suite 101
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AFTER HOURS BUSINESS SOCIAL

Thursday
December 10
5:30 - 7:30 pm

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