



PLEASANTON
CHAMBER of
COMMERCE

May 2006

Business. Connection

Partnering to Open Doors for Business!

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Chairman's Circle

Recognition, Visibility, Opportunity

Platinum Level
Tri Valley Internet
Black Tie Transportation

Gold Level
Hoge, Fenton, Jones & Appel
Pleasanton Garbage Service
Sallmann, Yang & Alameda
UNCLE Credit Union

Silver Level
Bank of Walnut Creek
Mt. Diablo National Bank
Poppy Ridge Golf Course
Stoneridge Shopping Center

Bronze Level
Atkinson, Andelson, Loya,
Ruud & Romo
Data Processing Air Corporation

Pleasanton: traffic is our number one issue



DON
ODELL

I had an epiphany the other day. It was an amazing thing and I marvel at it even now. The light finally came on for me on an issue that I had struggled with for some time. I could almost see the GE light bulb above my head. No, I didn't suddenly find the meaning of life. I still can't untie the Gordian knot, and I still don't understand why my wife and now my three daughters like shopping so much. The shopping thing is genetic, that much I believe I know. But my epiphanies were much more mundane, and forgive me if this bores you: it had to do with the relationship between affordable housing and traffic congestion. Yes, I know, who thinks about this stuff? Well, sadly, I do.

For the last 15 years as a commuter, first from Antioch and now from Orinda, I have seen the flow of traffic on our highways slow to a crawl. Now, don't get me wrong. When my wife and I moved from New York to California in 1991, I was a seasoned commuter,

having averaged three-hour-a-day commutes for years. In fact, after I began working in Pleasanton in 1997, I was taken by surprise when a coworker and friend complained to me one morning that the City of Pleasanton had installed a new stop light on Hopyard Road. Apparently she had been stopped by the light on her way to work and was annoyed at the amount of time it added to her commute. As she explained, by hitting the light, it had taken her almost a full minute more than usual to get to work. I didn't mean to be rude when I slammed my office door in her face, but I had little sympathy for her after having spent the last hour driving from Antioch to Pleasanton (45 minutes of which were on I-580 alone).

As I follow the growing issues of traffic congestion in the Bay Area, I have become more sympathetic to my friend's complaints. I now understand that for her, a minute to her commute increased her total commute time by twenty percent. Unfortunately, from that day to now, everyone who lives outside of Pleasanton has seen his or her commute increase at about the same rate.

Commuting is not new to the Bay Area; what is new are the numbers of us who are commuting and the distances that we commute. The increased num-

ber of commuters, coupled with the dramatically increasing cost of housing in the Bay Area, is forcing more and more of our employees—and even many of our small business owners—to the edges of the Bay Area and beyond in search of affordable housing. This has had a serious impact on our businesses and the quality of life of our employees.

Unless we can adapt our business or reverse these trends, the cost of doing business in Pleasanton and, in fact, the entire Bay Area, may become too much for many of us to survive.

Let's look at the facts. Between 1995 and 1997, 31,107 housing units were built in the Bay Area; this was an increase of 1.3% over 1995 numbers. However, during those same two years, the number of jobs increased in the Bay Area by 9.5%. Simple math tells us that the disparity between job growth and housing left many of those new workers without local housing. Statistics show that the jobs have continued to surpass housing in the area nearly every year since 1997, leaving us with an estimated shortfall in housing today of nearly 1,000,000 units. Those people with local jobs but no housing are necessarily forced to look elsewhere for housing and to commute to work.

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Business Spotlight: Sterlent Credit Union, Garcia Law Group, Laugh-A-Lot Productions, and Sola-Brite

Each month in the Business Spotlight, we introduce you to a sampling of some of the Chamber's member businesses.

Sterlent Credit Union



Benoit Roure,
Sterlent's Pleasanton Branch Manager

Sterlent Credit Union™ is celebrating 70 years in business. The corporate office, located almost in the heart of Pleasanton at 7180 Koll Center Parkway, is a full-service financial institution specializing in low-rate loans and higher rates on deposits. Sterlent has five branches to serve members throughout the Tri-Valley area, including Sacramento. "We are very happy to be part of the Pleasanton community. Our staff pride themselves on the quality service you can only receive at our credit union and the variety of products and services we offer," stated John Wagner, President/CEO.

If you live, work, or worship in Pleasanton, Castro Valley, Livermore, Alamo, Concord, Danville, Dublin, Hayward, Oakland, Sacramento, San Ramon, or Walnut Creek, then you're eligible to join. For more information, please contact a Member Service Center Representative at 1-866-STERLENT, or visit our website at www.sterlentcu.org.

Garcia Law Group

Garcia Law Group formed in 2005, and is a team of skilled business and real estate attorneys. We provide legal services to small- to medium-sized companies. The firm's practice includes: Corporate mergers and acquisitions, Intellectual Property including Non-Disclosure Agreements, Employment Agreements and Employee Issues, General Business Formation and Compliance, Real Estate Transactions and Litigation, and Business Succession Planning.

Garcia Law Group is committed to community involvement in health, arts, and service organizations. In addition to financial contributions, the firm's attorneys and staff provide time and *pro bono* services to the Tri-Valley Area's non-profit organizations.

In 2005, the *East Bay Business Times* named attorney Melinda Garcia one of its "Top 40 under 40" business profes-

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sionals in the San Francisco Bay Area. Attorney Juliet MacMillin recently received an AV rating (Martindale's top rating) for excellence as an attorney. Attorney Nicole Mills recently obtained a favorable settlement in a hotly contested real estate litigation matter.

The firm is committed to providing business and real estate services to small business owners and individuals in the San Francisco Bay Area and the Los Angeles Area. Contact the Garcia Law Group in Pleasanton at (925) 468-0400, or visit us online www.garcialawgrp.com. The Pleasanton office is located at 6160 Stoneridge Mall Road, Suite 210.

Laugh-A-Lot Productions

John DeKoven of Laugh-A-Lot Productions began the business over a year-and-a-half ago but has been doing stand-up comedy for five years. A tortuous divorce that took longer than the marriage itself propelled John into the world of comedy. Not only was comedy

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Pleasanton: traffic is our number one issue

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The solution to this problem in principle is simple: Build more houses locally. This will increase the number of available housing units and at the same time decrease the cost of housing, allowing more people to live and work locally and decreasing the number of people who would have to commute. However, in practical application, this solution is not feasible for many reasons, not the least of which is that collectively we are unwilling to allow additional residential growth in the area. As a result, we are left to deal with a growing traffic problem, and an escalating cost of housing, by addressing the problem regionally.

It is now time that we start to look at the entire region as one neighborhood. If Pleasanton is going to be the premier business center, then let's accept East Contra Costa County and the Central Valley as our residential neighborhoods and work to make it easy for people in those neighborhoods to get here.

work?" I think that we will all agree that the answer is, "Not long."

The City of Pleasanton has proposed such things as "workforce housing" as a method of addressing some of these problems. Other suggestions such as "transit-oriented housing" have also been floated. While these are novel ideas with noble intentions, they will not resolve the problem. It is time to recognize the problem for what it is and to change the way we deal with it.

We need to accept that a commuter workforce is a reality, and make every possible effort to make our employees' commute as easy as possible. Here are

some of my thoughts on how to do this:

- Work with your employees to establish flexible hours where possible, so that they can avoid the heavy commutes of rush hour;
- Make your voices heard at the city, county, and state levels, demanding improvements to our highways—including I-580, I-680, and 84—and let our City know that we want people commuting into Pleasanton;
- Educate yourselves on the current road improvement proposals, and get involved in lobbying for those improvements.

Talk to your friends, neighbors, and fellow businesses about the problems, and get them involved as well.

Our collective voices can bring the improvements that we need to our roads. Let yours be heard; both your employees and your bottom line will benefit.

How long can we continue doing business if it is taking longer and longer for our employees to get to work?

The majority of our employees who can't afford to live locally are forced to either find work elsewhere or join the growing ranks of commuters traveling from East Contra Costa County or the Central Valley. In 1980, the average one-way commute in Alameda County was 24.6 minutes. By 2000, the time had increased to 30 minutes, and today, a commute of one hour or less is considered acceptable.

The question that we as business men and women should be asking ourselves today is: "How long can we continue doing business if it is taking longer and longer for our employees to get to

work?" I think that we will all agree that the answer is, "Not long."

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Business Spotlight on Chamber members

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a fun pursuit, but it was a lot cheaper than therapy. There is no truth in the rumor that his ex-wife asked for half of his jokes. Besides performing stand-up, he also produces comedy shows through his company Laugh-A-Lot Productions.



John DeKoven

front, to assisting with the marketing, to setting up the venue, to picking the perfect comics for the event, to coordination on the day of the show. We want to ensure that every show is a success and that people are talking about it. We have a great reputation with not only our clients, but the comedian community as well, and they love working for us.

For more information about Laugh-A-Lot Productions, contact John DeKoven at (925) 264-4413, or visit us online www.laughalotproductions.com.

We produce comedy shows and book comedians for restaurants, bars, hotels, non-profit fundraisers, and private events. We are very involved in every show we produce from start to finish, from asking the important questions up

Sola-Brite

Sola-Brite is the premier Solatube dealer serving Alameda, Contra Costa, and San Francisco counties. We service both residential and commercial clients. We exclusively sell and install Solatube's

product line, which includes Solatube Tubular Skylights and accessories as well as Solar Star Attic Ventilation Systems. Tubular Skylights are available in 10", 14", and 21" sizes. Accessories include incandescent and fluorescent light kits, daylight dimmers, and bathroom ventilation kits (10" only).

Sola-Brite has been in business for three years, and we pride ourselves on service and quality. We chose to sell and install Solatube's product because of the exceptional quality, unique energy-efficient design, its Energy Star rating, and its patented high-tech reflective system. Additionally, all of our installers are employees who are trained and certified by Solatube International.

We welcome you to visit our showroom and "Let Us Brighten Your Day!"



A solatube light is a simple way to brighten up any room.

or contact us to schedule a free in-home consultation. Sola-Brite in Pleasanton is located at 5729 Sonoma Drive, Suite H. Contact John Izzo of Sola-Brite at (925) 600-1400, or visit www.solabrite.com for more information.

Pleasanton's call to leadership

Continued from Page 2

program participants. For many years, the City of Pleasanton has been a major sponsor of the program, and for good reason (as you'll read about later in this column). Local businesses contributing both monetarily and in-kind are Black Tie Transportation, Hilton Pleasanton at the Club, *Tri-Valley Herald*, Farmers Insurance Group, and Cabana Dave's Catering.

Leadership success stories

Many alumni of the Leadership

Pleasanton program have gone on to apply what they've learned through the program, not the least of which is a great deal of enthusiasm for making a difference in their community. For example, **Arne Olson** (Class of 2005) was recently appointed to the Planning Commission by Mayor Jennifer Hosterman, and **Ted Kaye** (Class of 2006) was appointed by the mayor to the Tri-Valley Community Television board of directors. Also, **LaVerne Spotorno** from this year's class has volunteered to serve on the Senior

Support Services Commission based on her experience with the program's Health & Human Services Day.

Leadership Pleasanton is an excellent program for anyone wanting to know more about their community. Oftentimes, it provides a "call to action" for those who want to get more involved and just aren't sure where they might fit in best.

And what a unique partnership, bringing together the leadership of the

business community (Chamber of Commerce) and civic leaders (City of Pleasanton), to provide a dynamic program that is open to any interested resident.

I hope some of you reading this will consider joining the Class of 2006-07 and see what Leadership Pleasanton can do for you, both personally and professionally. For more information about the program, visit the Chamber's website at www.pleasanton.org, or call the Chamber office at (925) 846-5858.

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