

Mark West Area Chamber of Commerce and VISITORS CENTER

BRINGING BUSINESS & THE COMMUNITY TOGETHER!

4787 Old Redwood Highway, Suite 101, Santa Rosa, CA 95403
Visitors Center: Mon. - Fri. 10 am - 3 pm www.markwest.org

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The Lark

May/June 2022
Volume XXXVI Issue 3

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE FROM UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE JARED HUFFMAN

On July 6th 2022, the Mark West Area Chamber of Commerce was able to welcome United States Representative Jared Huffman for a community sit-down. This sit-down allowed the congressman to both provide



Congressman Jared Huffman (far right) speaks to Mark West Area Chamber members on July 6. Photo: Steve Plamann.

an update on current legislative action and field questions from concerned citizens in the community. Though the session was brief, it allowed for many pressing issues in the community to be addressed.

The afternoon began with a brief opening from Rachel Valenzuela, then Assistant Superintendent of the Mark West Union School District. After introducing Congressman Huffman and his major areas of focus, Assistant Superintendent Valenzuela welcomed the Congressman to the front to speak to the gathered crowd. Beginning shortly after noon, Congressman Huffman was able to speak and field questions for over an hour.

To begin, Congressman Huffman expressed his gratitude at being able to return to and interact with the communities he represents. With elections on the horizon, Congressman Huffman acknowledged that the United States Congress needs to turn its attention to major issues in the community. One of the major areas Congressman Huffman believes Congress needs to focus on is rethinking the United States' dependencies on certain supply chains, especially with world events showing what can happen when the current chains are disrupted. Additionally, Congressman Huffman is also focused on the ongoing Budget Reconciliation for the current fiscal year.

Congressman Huffman then proceeded to discuss more local issues, including the \$11.5 million that has been raised for community support. He has also continued to strive to help Sonoma-Marín Area Rail Transit (SMART) achieve its goal of extending northward and eventually reaching Cloverdale, with funding for the extension to Healdsburg finally being acquired.

Congressman Huffman then opened the floor to field questions from the attendees. Among the questions asked was a status update for the House Bill that would exempt fire survivors from certain taxes. Congressman Huffman is currently working with several other members of Congress, including Representative Mike Thompson, in order to pass said bill. Congressman Huffman also emphasized the importance of getting allies from other states to support the bill, as the bill would be able to help more than just fire survivors, but also survivors of other disasters.

Other topics included local issues on transit, especially in regards to electric vehicles; the Koi Casino land use situation, including agricultural concerns; the defeat of the coal train; and money to support

Continued on page 3

PROMOTE YOUR BUSINESS: HOST A SOCIAL

The Mark West Area Chamber of Commerce is here to help members promote their business to the local community. You have a great opportunity to do this by hosting a Business After Hours Social which brings many local business owners and residents to your location for an evening of fun and networking. We will assist with your event and publicize it before and after on social media, through email, and in The Lark, our local newsletter. If you are interested in hosting a Social contact us at office@markwest.org.





Steve Plamann
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.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

2nd Tuesday of Month

11:30 am - 1:00 pm

Contact the Chamber for links and attendance information

To host a Ribbon Cutting, contact office@markwest.org



Interested in joining our Ambassador Team? Contact the Chamber at office@markwest.org

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

I'm rollin' and tumblin' into the future, hoping life gets back on course. The Mark West Area Chamber is moving forward with our monthly Socials, our quarterly luncheons and Ribbon Cuttings.

We know you need to promote your businesses in every way you can and we can and will help with that. It has been a tough five years of fire disasters in our area, topped off with a worldwide pandemic. Many of our businesses need help. Certainly, shopping local, eating or ordering out locally, and entertaining yourself locally will help. We believe that active promotion and involvement with the local community can really make a difference, especially in tough times. The Mark West Area Chamber is here for you.

Reach out to us and schedule a Social or a Ribbon Cutting. We can also come to your facility and do an interview for the Lark newsletter or a video and pictures for our Facebook page. We are committed to using all our resources to helping your business and all our chamber members' businesses in the Mark West and surrounding areas. We are ramping up our staff and forming a team of volunteers to get the job done. Please attend our events and tell us what we can do for you.

We had great socials at Atlas Pavers in June and Bisordi Ranch & Vineyards in July; see the full articles on pages 8 and 9. Thank you to the owners and staff of both businesses, who made these such beautiful evenings. It was great to see so many people to share these events with! Plenty of people won gifts in the various prize drawings... including me! I am always amazed at the connections I make at these Socials and how close we all have become. It is such a pleasure spending time with so many caring and professional folks. And we all made four new friends, as our membership keeps growing.

We have many great events planned for the future. You have the opportunity to be a part of all of them and connect with many other business owners in our area to promote yourself and your business.

We also had a presentation at a Luncheon by congressman Jared Huffman, where he addressed our chamber members and their concerns. We will follow all this with further socials and other events. Details for all events will be published as soon as we have them.

Stay safe and shop local.

Steve Plamann, President

ENJOYING SUMMER WITHOUT LEAVING A TRACE

As we're exploring parks and beaches this summer, let's embrace the Leave No Trace principles that help keep landscapes clean, wildlife safe and visitors happy.

Trash your trash: A key tenet of Leave No Trace is "trash your trash," which means properly throwing away or packing out what you bring into a park. The summertime litter we see most often includes food waste, cans, bottles, fishing line, pet waste and inflatable rafts and tubes. While it may be tempting to leave something in the park if you're not near a trash can or the can is full, that litter adds up and harms the environment and the visitor experience. Learn how you can practice Leave No Trace principles tailored for Sonoma County.

Sign up for the Steelhead Hot Spot: Regional Parks and the Leave No Trace Center of Outdoor Ethics are co-hosting Aug. 4 cleanups on and along the Russian River to help reduce summer recreation impacts at this visitor "hot spot". We'll launch kayaks from Steelhead Beach, paddle to Sunset Beach to pick up litter along the way and shuttle back to Steelhead. Sign up for a kayaking spot, or if you prefer to stay on shore, sign up for a land-based cleanup at Steelhead or Sunset.

Kids can learn Leave No Trace too: Bring the kids to the Environmental Discovery Center at Spring Lake any weekend this summer for crafts and activities that will introduce them to Leave No Trace and what responsible recreation means for families.

Earn your Leave No Trace Certificate: Join a us for a day at Doran Beach to look at the park with a Leave No Trace perspective. You'll gain a larger understanding of visitor and environmental issues and earn a Leave No Trace Awareness Certificate.

Contributed by Meda Freeman, Sonoma Co. Regional Parks Communication Manager

MAY NEW MEMBERS SOCIAL

The Mark West Area Chamber of Commerce hosted a New Members Social this May. Taking place in the parking lot at the Chamber office, the social was a grand time for all. Food was provided by Molsberry's Market, and assistance for setting up was provided by Stephanie and Robbie Bisordi of Bisordi Ranch and Vineyards.

This social was an opportunity for current Chamber members to welcome new and prospective members. At the same time, these new members were able to interact with current members in a meaningful way, helping them learn what the Mark West Chamber is like and introducing them to the networking opportunities afforded by being a member. On top of this introduction to the Chamber, new and old members alike were able to regale each other with stories and learn about each other's businesses.



New, old and prospective members talk during our May Social, hosted by the Mark West Area Chamber and Molsberry's Market.

drawing. Winners were able to pick from a variety of prizes, including wine from Molsberry's Market. Two of the winners were the Chamber's new and prospective members, Ramona Maurer and Shawn Hansen, which allowed them to learn about the various raffles and drawings the Chamber holds at each social.

All in all, the New Members Social was a delightful opportunity for members to begin gathering once again at a Mark West Area Chamber of Commerce social. It had been many months since the previous social, and this new opportunity allowed for much-needed social interaction between members who had not seen each other for a long time. Now that socials have returned on a regular basis, the Mark West Area Chamber of Commerce is glad to welcome its members back to the events that they know and love so much.

Contributed by Johnathan Williams



Doug Williams draws the winning business card at our May Business After Hours Social

Though a quieter setting than most standard socials, the smaller scale made the interaction feel that much more meaningful. New members Ramona Maurer of Assisted Living Locators and Shawn Hansen of the California Employment Development Department were able to learn much from current members, and had the opportunity to meet several long-term and recent members.

In addition to the good conversation and good food, the Chamber also held a small business card



Lauren Hull, owner of Windsor Connection Magazine, receives her membership plaque from Head Ambassador Paul Peck.

Jared Huffman, continued from page 1

firefighting, including resilience grants. On a national and global scale, Congressman Huffman focused in particular on low-income issues, a need for taxes on oil and gas profits, and the importance of protecting Ukraine.

In closing, the congressman thanked all those in attendance for asking their questions and supporting his efforts. Following a few parting words from Assistant Superintendent Valenzuela, the meeting concluded.

In the end, the update from Congressman Huffman was able to provide many members of the Mark West Area community with some assurance that efforts are being made to help them. Homeowners, and fire survivors in particular, were able to gain some assurance that they have not been forgotten about in the political sphere. Moving forward, Congressman Huffman hopes to be able to continue supporting them to the best of his ability.

Contributed by Johnathan Williams

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KOI CASINO PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD EXTENDED

Many local residents are concerned about the Koi Nation Shiloh Resort and Casino Project planned for the Larkfield area and have expressed their feelings about it. A few weeks ago, the chamber received many comments from chamber members concerned about citizens not having enough notice and time to make their comment to the Bureau of Indian Affairs. There was a very short and not well advertised public comment period for this project in late June. Most people assumed that was their only opportunity to express how they feel about this proposed casino project. I reached out to Chad Broussard, Environmental Protection Specialist for the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Pacific Region.



An architect's rendering of the proposed Koi Nation Shiloh Resort and Casino Project. Provided by San Francisco Business Times.

The following is his email response to my inquiry.

Steve:

Thank you for your comment on the scope of our environmental review for the Koi Nation Shiloh Resort and Casino Project. Your input is one of many comments that we have received to date, all of which will help us ensure that our environmental review is comprehensive and in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). In the interest of efficiency for an environmental review process that is just beginning, we will not be extending the scoping comment period beyond June 27, 2022. Note that neither the issuance of a Notice of Preparation nor providing a scoping comment period are required at this stage of the NEPA process.

We do want to emphasize, however, that this is not the last opportunity for public review and comment on this project. When you submitted a comment, you were added to our public notice list and will be notified when the Environmental Assessment is available for review. The Environmental Assessment will provide more detail on the proposed project and will include our assessment of environmental impacts resulting from the project. A public review and comment period will be afforded at that time, which will include a Public Hearing. We look forward to continued public participation in this process and thank you again for your comment.

Sincerely,

*Chad Broussard
Environmental Protection Specialist
BIA Pacific Region
2800 Cottage Way*

Contributed by By Steve Plamann, Chamber President and Company Ambassador for Aaction Rents

THANK YOU MILLIE GIBSON

The Mark West Area Chamber of Commerce would like to thank Millie Gibson of Postal Plus for serving as the Chamber Treasurer and as a member of our Board of Directors for two years. We would also like to announce that she has been replaced on the Board of Directors by Head Ambassador Paul Peck, and the position of Treasurer was taken over by current Board member Doug Williams.

The Chamber board, our members, and I personally thank Millie for all her contributions.

Contributed by Steve Plamann

NEW SUPERINTENDENT FOR THE MARK WEST UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT

The Mark West Union School District has a new Superintendent after twelve years of great leadership from Ron Calloway

Dr. Rachel Valenzuela joined the MWUSD in 2013. The former Assistant Superintendent of Educational Services, Dr. Valenzuela now begins her tenure as the Superintendent of the Mark West Union School District. She provides leadership and guidance for student programs in the district, including curriculum and instruction, assessment, special education, Section 504, counseling/SEL, attendance, categorical programs, and parent education. She is an educator with 30 years of experience. Her experience includes classroom teacher, bilingual school psychologist, private practice educational consultant, elementary school principal, and student services director. Rachel earned her Bachelors of Arts degree in Psychology from the University of California, Berkeley. She holds an Administrative Credential from Sonoma State University, a Master of Science in Counseling & School Psychology from CSU Los Angeles, and is a California-licensed Educational Psychologist.

Adapted from an article provided by the Mark West Union School District. Photo provided by the Mark West Union School District.



CHANGES IN THE WORKS FOR MARK WEST CITIZENS' ADVISORY COUNCIL

The Mark West Citizens' Advisory Council (MWCAC) was established to advise the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors on local planning and management decisions relating to the Mark West Area and to provide a regular forum for communications and outreach with residents.

The MWCAC has been working to improve safety in the area. In the next several months, look for new sidewalks on both sides of Mark West Springs Road (to Riebli Elementary) and a pedestrian-friendly "hawk light" at the crosswalk in front of Molsberry's Market as results of our efforts. The MWCAC is also looking to expand its outreach and oversight beyond the California American Water District boundaries.

We have five subcommittees working on a variety of issues:

1. Grants: We provide grants in the Cal Am Water District zone to improve neighborhoods.
2. Rebuild/Fire Mitigation: We work with stakeholders and other professionals to examine ways to mitigate future fires and rebuild our community.
3. Wikiup Open Space: We are working with County reps to try to establish open space in the old Wikiup golf course.
4. General Plan: We are working with the County on the next general plan.
5. Community Services District: We are examining the pros/cons of pursuing the Mark West Area as its own Community Services District.

If you want to learn more, please check out our website at <https://markwestcac.org> or on Facebook under Mark West Citizens Advisory Council.

Contributed by Karen Fies, MWCAC Chair

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JUNE SOCIAL REPORT

The Mark West Area Chamber of Commerce was able to host the first full social of the year this June. The social was hosted outdoors by Atlas Pavers at their showroom in downtown Santa Rosa, on a windy but otherwise pleasant evening. The evening began with Paul Peck, Head Ambassador for the Chamber, giving a brief introduction to the host, Annie Barber of Atlas Pavers, who then took over to give information on the business to the crowd.

After Annie finished discussing Atlas Pavers, Paul announced several upcoming Chamber events, such as the monthly socials for July and August, and the July luncheon with United States Representative Jared Huffman. Paul then welcomed up Lauren Hull of The Windsor Connection magazine in order to recognize her new member status. Though Lauren has been a member since 2021, the inability to meet in person meant that an official plaque presentation was not possible until this social.

The Pot of Gold, 50/50 Drawing, and Business Card Drawing returned in their usual fashion, and there were enough prizes for everyone in attendance to walk home with at least one item.

The Pot of Gold prize was \$280, and the winner was BoDean Company. As BoDean was not in attendance, the money returned to the Pot of Gold and increased to the cap of \$300 for the next social.

The next Drawing was the 50/50 raffle. The prize was \$40, which was won by Johnathan Williams, Office Manager for the Mark West Area Chamber of Commerce.

The final Drawing was the Business Card Drawing, which had enough prizes that everyone in attendance was able to receive one. The prizes were:

- A bottle of wine donated by the Mark West Area Chamber of Commerce, won by Carmen Rodriguez of Atlas Pavers
- A bottle of wine donated by the Mark West Area Chamber of Commerce, won by Heidi Would of Corcoran Global Living
- A gift card for COOKIE...take a bite! donated by Atlas Pavers, won by Sue Brooke of Alignable
- A gift card for Starbucks donated by Atlas Pavers, won by Paul Peck of Operational Driven Sales Systems
- A teddy bear donated by Atlas

Pavers, won by Richard Maas

- A teddy bear donated by Atlas Pavers, won by Wayne Keagan
- A cat-lover's bag donated by Aaction Rents, won by Cherri Pedrioli of Custom Plumbing
- A COOKIE...take a bite! gift card donated by Atlas Pavers, won by Steve Plamann
- A COOKIE...take a bite! gift card donated by Atlas Paves, won by Johnathan Williams
- A Starbucks gift card donated by Atlas Pavers, won by Doug Williams

All in all, the Mark West Area Chamber of Commerce June 2022 Social was a welcome return to the regular monthly socials. With good weather, good food, and good drinks, the night was enjoyable for all. The following month's social was hosted on July 14th at Bisordi Ranch and Vineyards.

Contributed by Johnathan Williams



Atlas Pavers' beautiful outdoor display area made a perfect place for our June Social. Photo: Steve Plamann.



Chamber member Heidi Would wins some wine. She is also a member of the Mark West Citizens Advisory Council, and represents the Chamber. Photo: Steve Plamann.



Atlas Pavers donated two stuffed bears for our business card drawings. Photo: Steve Plamann.

JULY SOCIAL REPORT

On July 14 2022, Bisordi Ranch and Vineyards hosted the Mark West Area Chamber of Commerce as the Chamber celebrated its monthly business social. The evening weather was comfortably mild, and the Bisordi family provided a wonderful spread of food from Mary's Pizza Shack. With around 25 attendees, the July social was a great chance for members both new and old to meet and interact with each other. Following the opening words from Head Ambassador Paul Peck, Rob and Stephanie Bisordi were able to share about their business with the gathered crowd.

Following the Bisordis' introduction to their farm and its services, Paul proceeded to discuss upcoming Chamber events, including the next month's social. Following the announcements, multiple new members of the Chamber were welcomed by Paul and Chamber President Steve Plamann. Ramona Maurer of Assisted Living Locators, Richard Maas, and MJ Girard of KOWS 92.5 FM were all awarded with their new member plaques. While Ramona and Richard are brand new to the Chamber of Commerce, MJ is a returning member from years past.

With the new member plaques handed out, the time arrived to begin the monthly prize drawings. As usual, the Pot of Gold, 50/50 Drawing, and Business Card Drawing were all carried out for those in attendance. Though some guests unfortunately had to leave before the drawings, those who were able to stay were rewarded.

This month, the Pot of Gold hit its max of \$300. Due to the absence of the would-be winner, however, the money returned to the Pot of Gold. Attendees of the August Social will have a chance to win it.



Great food and drink were provided by Bisordi Ranch. Photo: Steve Plamann.

won by Tracy Hinman of Alegre Home Care

- A bottle of wine donated by Ancient Oak Cellars, won by Tracy Mattson of COOKIE...take a bite!

- A box of cookies made and donated by COOKIE...take a bite!, won by Melissa Moholt-Siebert of Ancient Oak Cellars

- A gift certificate for Café Mimosa donated by Ramona Maurer of Assisted Living Locators, won by Paul Peck

- A bird house made and donated by Robbie Bisordi, won by Pete Lescure of Lescure Engineering

- A bottle of wine donated by the Mark West Area Chamber of Commerce, won by MJ Girard of KOWS 92.5 FM

With the night concluded, everyone went home satisfied. With a large crowd and great conversations all around, the July social was a great success. The August social is currently being arranged, and is expected to take place at Grohe Florists, near the Larkfield Shopping Center.

Contributed by Johnathan Williams



We had a good turnout of our members on this beautiful evening. Photo: Steve Plamann.

The 50/50 Drawing followed immediately. The \$50 prize was taken home by Tracy Hinman of Alegre Home Care.

Finally, the drawings concluded with the Business Card Drawing. With 10 prizes to give out, winners were plentiful. The winners and prizes were:

- A box of cookies made and donated by COOKIE...take a bite!, won by Brian Molsberry of Molsberry's Market
- Fresh eggs donated by Bisordi Ranch and Vineyards, won by Ramona Maurer of Assisted Living Locators
- A bottle of wine donated by the Mark West Area Chamber of Commerce, won by Steve Plamann
- A gift bag donated by Tracy Hinman of Alegre Home Care, won by Richard Maas
- A 9-inch bird feeder and seed bag donated by Friendly Feed,



Tracy Hinman from Alegre won \$50.00 in the 50/50 cash drawing. Photo: Steve Plamann.

DROUGHT CONDITIONS CONTINUE FOR SONOMA COUNTY

We at the Mark West Area Chamber of Commerce are very concerned about the current water situation in Sonoma County. February, March, April and May of 2022 have been the driest in Sonoma County in 128 years, with rainfall 19.81 inches below normal. The Russian River watershed is entering a third consecutive year of below-average rainfall. As a result, water supply levels at Lake Mendocino and Lake Sonoma remain at historic lows. Sonoma Water is a wholesale water supplier to nine cities and water districts that serve more than 600,000 residents in Sonoma and Marin counties.

In response to regional water supply conditions, including historically low reservoir storage, the City of Santa Rosa continues to require a 20 percent mandatory community-wide reduction in water use, which effects all Santa Rosa residents and businesses. Other water restrictions from Sonoma Water include:

- Limit outdoor watering to two days a week, Tuesday and Friday, between midnight and 6:00 AM, or between 8:00 PM and midnight.
- No using hoses without a shutoff nozzle to wash cars.
- No irrigating outdoors during and within 48 hours following measurable rainfall.
- No washing sidewalks, walkways, driveways or other hard surfaced areas with a hose.
- No irrigation runoff to streets and storm drains from overwatering or sprinkler-overspray of landscapes.
- No using potable water in decorative water features that do not re-circulate the water.

Sonoma Water and its partners in the Sonoma Marin Saving Water Partnership (SMSWP) urge our community to keep up the great work and effort – water saved now, is water we can use later. We all need to make changes to our everyday habits to eliminate water waste and preserve water supply. Every drop saved helps.

For additional water saving tips and resources, please visit the Sonoma-Marín Saving Water Partnership website.

Contributed by By Steve Plamann, Chamber President and Company Ambassador for Aaction Rents. Some information in this article was obtained from the Sonoma Water website.



Desperate times call for desperate measures. This streamside plant has sent vines several feet towards the running water, and then grown roots off those vines and dangled them in the water.

GOT LEAKS?

At California American Water, we're here to help you conserve water INDOORS so you can use less and save water and money on your water bill. Here are some simple tips:



Install aerators on kitchen and bathroom faucets: Check for worn washers and gaskets that might cause drips. Aerators add air into the water stream so you can use less water noticing a difference in water flow.



Replace old, non-efficient toilets with a new, high-efficiency models: A leaking toilet can double the total monthly water usage by the whole household. Save water and money with every flush.



Regularly check your toilet, faucets and pipes for leaks: Download our free leak detection kit at californiaamwater.com > Conservation > Detecting Leaks. If you find a leak, have it fixed as soon as possible.


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The Lark Newsletter is published monthly under the direction of:

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The Lark Newsletter is emailed to member businesses each month.
For more information, contact the Chamber office at 707-578-7975.

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Please email your materials to office@markwest.org

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