

## The Lark

## The Mark West Area Business & Community Newsletter

Published by the Mark West Area Chamber of Commerce & Visitors Center

## **NEW MEMBER SPOTLIGHT**

The Mark West Area Chamber of Commerce welcomes two new members: BC Engineering and Next One Staffing! Get to know our new members below via our Q&A.

## BC ENGINEERING GROUP, INC.



William Billeter, President/CEO of BC Engineering Group, Inc. Photo credit: BC Engineering Broup, Inc.

BC Engineering Group, Inc. provides services for civil engineering, planning, landscape architecture and land development. Our team serves residential. commercial, and agricultural communities in Northern California. Our professional project experience includes grading, drainage, wastewater, site master planning, landscape design, roadway design, vineyard development, permitting, winery and brewery development, project management, construction

management, erosion & sediment control.

Q: What interesting project(s) has your company worked on locally and/or regionally?

A: Mark West Springs Road Sidewalk Improvements, Michele Mutual Water System, Habitat for Humanity Sebastopol, Donum Estate Winery.

Q: What is the first thing your company asks a new customer/client when they walk in the door?

A: What are your goals and desired achievements for your project, and how can we best achieve those?

Q: Permitting plays a large role in your industry – what is the key ingredient in successfully obtaining permits for projects?

## **NEXT ONE STAFFING**

Next One Staffing is an **Executive Search Firm** headquartered in Santa Rosa. Our offices are on Round Barn Blvd. overlooking the city. We have highly skilled recruiters who work consistently to place executives, accountants, and financial professionals in a variety of industries. We value all our candidates and strive to find them fantastic and rewarding positions in Sonoma County and across the United States.



Ryan Buxbaum Owner, Next One Staffing. Photo credit: Next One Staffing

Q: What makes your company stand out from others?

A: Our company has recruiters working in shifts, 24 hours a day. This enables us to be three times faster than our local or national competition. We also guarantee every placement for five years.

Q: How long have you been in your industry?
A: I've worked in staffing for 10 years. I started Next
One three months before the COVID lockdown (great
time to start a business!) We are now finishing up our
fourth year and have clients across the United States.

Q: Why did you join the Mark West Area Chamber and what do you hope to get out of it?

New Member Spotlights continue on page 8

# MULTI-CHAMBER LUNCHEON JANUARY 18 FEATURING SUPERVISOR JAMES GORE

**Get your tickets now** to attend a very special multi-chamber luncheon on January 18 featuring Supervisor James Gore. Co-hosting the luncheon will be the Windsor, Healdsburg, Geyserville, Cloverdale, and Mark West Area chambers of commerce. The luncheon will be held at Vintners Inn. The cost is \$45 including a gourmet lunch. This is one luncheon you don't want to miss! Supervisor Gore will provide an update on County of Sonoma services and answer questions from our business community. Buy tickets online; visit the Chamber home page at https://markwest.org/ to find a link for purchasing tickets.

Questions? Contact Johnathan Williams, Mark West Area Chamber Staff, (707) 578-7975

Supervisor James Gore. Photo Credit: James Gore.



#### **Our Mission:**

The Mark West Area
Chamber of Commerce
is organized to advance
the economic wellbeing and uniqueness
of the Mark West Area
so that its citizens and
all areas of its business
community shall prosper.



Brad Sherwood President

## **CHAMBER EVENTS**

The Mark West Area Chamber of Commerce invites all members of the community to attend our events.

# **Board of Directors meetings**Every second Tuesday of each month at 11:30am.

## **Business After Hours Socials**

Have some snacks, win some prizes, make connections! Second Thursday of each month from 5:30pm – 7:30pm at a different business each month.

#### Luncheons

Quarterly luncheons with a featured speaker discussing hot topics and issues. Our next luncheon is on January 18 with Supervisor James Gore. Go to markwest. org to get your luncheon tickets!

## **Community Business Faire**

An annual event, this will return in fall 2024. Stay tuned for more information.

#### **Next Socials**

#### January 11

The Lodge at Piner Road

## February 8

Treasure House Fine Home Consignment Shop

#### March 14

W Real Estate (Todd Walling, Sonoma County Airport Office)

For a full listing of events, please visit our home page https://markwest.org/ and scroll down to News & Events.

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Looking back at 2023, the Mark West Area Chamber of Commerce celebrates our members and their business achievements. The Chamber is grateful for our members and everything they do for our community, their employees, and our economy. Our community thrives because of our local businesses. Local businesses not only bring jobs and services into our community, but also a sense of pride. Supporting local businesses is critical to their success and the success of our community.

The chamber will continue to support our local businesses as we move into the new year. This new year, 2024, the Chamber will focus on accomplishing our mission and goals set forth in our new strategic plan, as well as having fun.

How will we have fun? We are bringing back our quarterly luncheons and community business fair next fall. We will continue to host monthly socials and encourage every member to attend for great networking opportunities. We encourage your active participation in helping organize these and other chamber activities – that is really where the true fun happens! Please contact us if you want to help!

Visit our website (markwest.org) to read our new strategic plan and stay up to date on our calendar of events. Thank you to our members for supporting your local chamber and we look forward to seeing you at our next event. Have a successful 2024!

Brad Sherwood, President

# MARK WEST AREA MUNICIPAL ADVISORY COUNCIL (MAC) UPDATE

The MAC is an advisory council to the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors. In our case, the Mark West Area MAC provides community input and feedback to District 4 and Supervisor James Gore, for the area covered by the Mark West Union School District.

The MAC's volunteer members are appointed by the Board of Supervisors and the MAC currently has 2 vacancies as the Board of Supervisors expanded our MAC membership from five to seven members. Two members are recommended by the Mark West Area Chamber of Commerce (currently, Willie Lamberson and Heidi Would). One member is recommended by the Mark West Unified School District (currently, Victor McKnight). One member represents the Fulton area (currently, Stephanie Bisordi). And one member is an atlarge member appointed by Supervisor James Gore (currently, Karen Fies). The two new members will also be at-large members appointed by Supervisor Gore.

If you are interested in participating on the MAC, please go online to https://sonomacounty.ca.gov/boardsandcommissions to apply.

Please feel free to attend the MAC public meetings on the second Wednesday of each month at 6:00 pm at the Learning Center located at the Mark West Union School District office, 315 Mark West Springs Rd. Come and learn what's happening in our community!

For more information please visit www.markwestcac.org.

Contributed by Karen Fies, Chair, Mark West MAC



Karen Fies. Photo credit: Karen Fies.

## MARK WEST UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT UPDATE

In November, the staff and students of the Mark West Union School District were able to enjoy time away with family and friends as they celebrated the Thanksgiving Holiday. As a district, we have much to be thankful for: a supportive community, a passionate staff dedicated to providing the best for every child, a school board that prioritizes the needs of our staff and students, enthusiastic students, and an unsurpassed parent community.

Beginning December 4, 2023 at 5:00pm, the District began accepting TK/ Kindergarten Online Enrollment applications for the 2024-2025 school year! Information regarding age requirements, access to online enrollment, and information regarding the submission process may be found by going to www.mwusd.org on December 4. Parent tours are also available by contacting the school office manager at our elementary school sites.

In prioritizing the needs of our staff and students, the Mark West Union School District continues to provide engaging and enriching development opportunities for our staff. Students continue to participate in rigorous academic programs



Dr. Rachel Valenzuela, Superintendent. Photo credit: Mark West Union School District.

complemented by a focus on the whole child through social emotional learning. Our Board approved curriculum represents core instruction, district wide, and is enhanced with correlating creatives, field trips and a desire to support the whole learner. Multiple Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) provide the foundation for our educators to identify student concerns and rapidly implement a proactive, direct support and solution process.

As we reflect on all that we have to be thankful for, the Mark West Union School District was proud to partner with the Mark West Area Chamber of Commerce in welcoming the holiday season at the annual Holiday Tree Lighting on Wednesday, December 6 at Mark West Elementary. Local business partners including Molsberry's Market and COOKIE...take a bite! provided special treats, and the talented music and choral students of the Mark West Union School District performed. Thank you to everyone who attended this festive community event!

On behalf of the Mark West Union School District staff, students, and families, we wish our local businesses and community partners a prosperous and healthy holiday season.

Contributed by Dr. Rachel Valenzuela

## MARK WEST AREA PARK UPDATE

The Mark West Area Community Fund continues to move forward with purchasing property for our new Mark West Area park located near the intersection of Old Redwood Highway and Mark West Springs Road. Officially, the Fund will take title to the property in spring 2024. In the meantime, the Fund has been busy working with Community Soils, a local non-profit, to design the park thanks to the great ideas of our local school children and community. Most recently, the Fund raised the American and California flags at the park site and decorated the park with holiday lights. A ribbon cutting celebration will be announced soon along with additional ways the community can help build our new park together.

To stay updated on the park, please visit www.markwestarea.org.

Continued... See a photo on page 7.

# SHERIFF'S OFFICE LAUNCHES RECRUITMENT WEBSITE

Like many of your businesses, the Sonoma County Sheriff's Office is facing a serious staffing shortage. An initial staffing shortage, coupled with the inability to hire during COVID, has created a staffing crisis that impacts our employees, their families, and the people we serve. This is why we are pleased to announce the launch of our recruitment website, www.joinsonomasheriff.com. You can hear from our employees, learn about job opportunities and hiring bonuses, connect with a recruiter, and submit a job application. It's the onestop-shop for prospective applicants. On a personal note, I truly enjoy working at the Sheriff's Office. It's incredibly challenging and rewarding. I earn a



Misti D. Wood, Sonoma County Sheriff's Office. Photo credit: Sonoma Co. Sheriff's Office.

good salary with excellent benefits. And my team and I make a real difference, from helping folks prevent crime in their neighborhood to saving lives. I hope you'll share our recruitment website with your friends and family. You never know who might be looking for a new opportunity.

Contributed by Misti D. Wood, Sonoma County Sheriff's Office





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MONTHLY SOCIALS HOSTED BY PACIFICA SENIOR LIVING, HAMPTON INN SANTA ROSA, ANYTIME FITNESS

## Pacifica Senior Living and Hampton Inn Santa Rosa host October Social

The hosts for the October social were Phyllis Sutter of Pacifica Senior Living, and Debi Dobley of Hampton Inn Suites. At Pacifica Senior Living, their mission is to provide compassionate, personalized care services with dignity and respect. Pacifica Senior Living warmly welcomes each resident to their Pacifica family and views it as a tremendous honor that they can meet their needs — ranging from independent living and assisted living to memory care. Pacifica is still in the process of constructing their new facility located at 3737 Airway Drive. Visit www.pacificasantarosa.com to take a tour of their facilities and meet a friendly sales team member.

Debi, meanwhile, told the Chamber about Hampton Inn's amenities and discussed the success that they have had since their opening in 2022. Located along Highway 101, Hampton Inn is only two miles from the Charles M. Schulz Museum and Research Center and a short drive from downtown Santa Rosa. Amenities include a pool, gym, business center, meeting rooms, bar, and much more. Hampton Inn is part of the Hilton family and booking a room is easy on Hilton's website. Or just Google Hampton Inn Santa Rosa. The hotel is located at 3815 Airway Drive, Santa Rosa.

Following the hosts' speeches and announcements, Paul Peck, the evening's MC, announced upcoming Chamber events and started the raffle drawings for the evening.

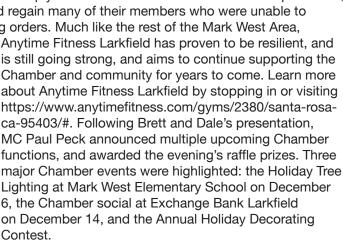
## **Anytime Fitness Larkfield Hosts November Social**

As the weather started to cool, the Mark West Area Chamber of Commerce took its November social indoors to Anytime Fitness Larkfield. Our hosts for the evening were Brett

Livingstone, owner of Anytime Fitness Larkfield, and Dale Rowley, manager for Anytime Fitness Larkfield. Together, Brett and Dale told the crowd of Chamber members about what Anytime Fitness Larkfield offers and the current state of things. At Anytime Fitness Larkfield, located at 620 Larkfield Center in the Molsberry Shopping Center, the support is real and it starts the moment you meet their staff. Their coaches don't have one plan that fits everyone; they develop a plan that fits you – a total fitness experience designed around your abilities, your body, and your goals. Their staff will develop a fitness plan that will contain a 360 degree approach to your health and will cover important areas other gyms simply can't. In the time since the COVID-19 pandemic, Anytime Fitness Larkfield has managed to rebound and regain many of their members who were unable to attend the gym during the shelter-in-place and masking orders. Much like the rest of the Mark West Area,



Photo credit: Steve Plamann.





Continued on page 7

# CHIEF HEINE ADDRESSES FIRE DISTRICT UPDATES, MARCH BALLOT MEASURE AT OCTOBER LUNCHEON

The Mark West Area Chamber of Commerce in October held a membership luncheon featuring Sonoma County Fire Chief Mark Heine. At the luncheon, thirty Chamber members gathered to hear from Chief Heine about the evolution of the Sonoma County Fire District (SCFD) and learned about a sales tax measure on the March ballot to bolster fire prevention measures in our area.

The SCFD serves the Town of Windsor, Larkfield, Wikiup, Mark West, Mountain Volunteer, Middle Rincon, Bennett Valley, Bellevue, Graton Casino, Fulton, Forestville, Guerneville, Rio Nido, Bodega Bay, and the surrounding unincorporated areas. The men and women of the SCFD serve our communities with pride, integrity, and an unwavering commitment to excellence, as they have done for so many years. The District is a modern "all risk" fire district, meaning they will respond to the needs of the community regardless of the nature of the incident, and begin the process of solving the problem to lead to a positive outcome.



Chief Heine (center at rear, highlighted) joins chamber members for a group photo after his discussion. Photo credit: John Nelson

Of special note, Chief Heine discussed SCFD's new helicopter, call sign "Sonoma County 1!". In partnership with REACH Air Medical Services (REACH), SCFD announced that its new public safety helicopter base, located at the Sonoma County Airport, is now in service. The Airbus H135 helicopter is operated as part of a public-private partnership agreement between the two organizations. Beginning immediately, the new base will provide aerial fire reconnaissance, search and assist capabilities, and critical care medical transport to Sonoma County and the surrounding areas. The operation will expand to include aerial firefighting utilizing a helicopter bucket system.

Chief Heine also discussed a March 2024 half-cent sales tax ballot measure for enhanced fire protection, paramedic services and disaster response. If approved by a majority of voters in the March 5 primary, the initiative would raise approximately \$60 million annually, divided by 31 Sonoma County fire agencies. Those agencies could spend the funds according to the expenditure plan, which outlines six program categories:

- Wildfire prevention, preparedness, emergency response, and vegetation management
- Recruitment and retention of local firefighters
- Updates to essential equipment and facilities
- Transfer of funds among designated local agencies or entities
- Implementation costs
- Countywide expenditures, as more fully described in the expenditure plan.

We greatly appreciated Chief Heine's informative luncheon presentation. To learn more about the sales tax ballot measure, visit https://markwest.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Tax-Measure-Flyer.pdf.

Monthly Socials, continued from page 5

## Exchange Bank and Molsberry Market host December Social

Our December Social set another attendance record. The event was an amazing combination of good food and drink, business to business mixing and holiday cheer. Exchange Bank and Molsberry Market cohosted our December Social at Exchange Bank, in Larkfield Center. Exchange Bank donated a beautiful gift basket as a business card drawing prize. Happy Holidays!

Contributed by Johnathan Williams





Above: Our December Social set another attendance record. The event was an amazing combination of good food and drink, business to business mixing and holiday cheer. Photo credit: Steve Plamann.

Left: Molsberry Market co-hosted our December Social at Exchange Bank, in the Larkfield Center. Pictured are Molsberry family members and some of their employees. Photo credit: Steve Plamann.



Exchange Bank, co-host of our December Social, donated a beautiful gift basket as a business card drawing prize. Deborah Pulido, from Treasure House, was the lucky winner. Photo credit: Steve Plamann.

## Mark West Area Park Update, continued from page 3 Dmitri Menzel, member of the Board of the Mark West Area

Community Fund, installed the flag at the site of the future Mark West Area park. A scissor lift from Chamber member Aaction Rents was just the thing for safely reaching the tip of the pole. Watch for more news about the park in future issues of the Lark!



# lablo Español



Veronica Garcia-Rincon Vice President Branch Manager

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522 Larkfield Center, Santa Rosa 707/546-0307 New Member Spotlight, continued from page 1

## BC Engineering Group, Inc.

A: Proper planning and knowledge of applicable codes and regulations from the start to the end of a project and maintaining positive working relationships with regulatory agency staff.

Q: Why did you join the Mark West Area Chamber of Commerce and what do you hope to get out of your membership?

A: To become more involved with our surrounding community. We hope to establish new relationships with other local businesses and the Mark West community.

Q: Tell us an interesting factoid about yourself or your company.

A: We are a family business with a total of 5 family members working within the company. We strive to keep a fun working environment and do monthly recreational events as well as community outreach projects.

For more information about BC Engineering Company, Inc.: https://www.bcengineeringgroup.com

### **Next One Staffing**

A: My family recently moved to Larkfield (Sadddlebrook) and we love the Mark West area. It's important for my wife and me to become involved and contribute as much as possible to the area in which we live.

Q: Tell us something fun about yourself.

A: I love playing golf often. However, I am a terrible golfer.

Q: Staffing tip - What is a good tip for a business looking to hire a new employee?

A: ALWAYS CHECK REFERENCES. I am constantly surprised that employers skip this step. References will usually be positive but negative references should be a major red flag.

For more information about Next One Staffing: https://www.nextonestaffing.com

## HALLOWEEN DECORATING CONTEST WINNERS

Congratulations to our 2023 Halloween decorating contest winners and thank you to our gift card sponsors!

- 1st Place: Eicken Family (\$100 gift card to Molsberry Market)
- 2nd Place: Wolter Family (\$50 gift card to Panera sponsored by the Lodge at Piner Rd)
- 3rd Place: Piloni Family (\$25 gift card to COOKIE...take a bite! sponsored by Lescure Engineering)

Categories:

- Cutest: Miller Family
- Most creative: Duffy Family
- Scariest: Fies Family

Thank you to everyone who participated and to our gift card sponsors! See you next year!

The Eicken Family won first place this year.







## MJ GIRARD JOINS CHAMBER BOARD OF DIRECTORS

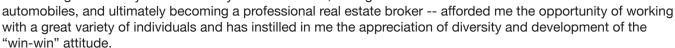
The Mark West Area Chamber of Commerce is pleased to announce our newest board member, MJ Girard. Learn more about Director Girard in this Q&A:

Q: Where were you born, and tell us something interesting about your background.

A: As far as lives go, I must admit that mine has been quite the journey. Adopted at birth into a wonderful family of Ukrainian heritage, reared in San Francisco until my early teenage years, then moving to a small town in Mendocino county onto a working farm where I helped my dad maintain a walnut orchard and milked our goat Daisy every morning before school. Simpler times for sure, and it seems a lifetime ago, which it was!

Q: How many hats have you worn in your career?

A: Having worn many "hats" over my lifetime -- radio, selling





A: I entered radio broadcasting as a summer internship during my senior year at Potter Valley High School in nearby Ukiah at a "daytime" station, "KMSL 1260 on your radio dial!" The "K missile" (as we called ourselves) blasted off every morning at dawn. Our FCC license allowed us to be on the air from dawn to dusk only, but it was enough for me to learn the basics and develop my natural skills of rapport with my audience. I advanced my skills in the coastal city of Fort Bragg at KDAC radio, before joining the military and becoming an enlisted member of the Public Information Office where I conducted interviews of soldiers returning from Vietnam, sending the taped messages back to their hometown radio stations. From Fort Hood, Texas, I was sent to Saigon to continue working in the military broadcasting field. Once released in 1972, I rejoined the civilian broadcasting industry as an announcer with ABC Radio affiliate KTON in Belton, Texas, where I had worked part time during my active service in the Army.

Q: How were you impacted by the Tubbs Fire?

A: Lynda and I are survivors of the Tubbs inferno, having awakened at one o'clock in the morning to our home in flames. We literally raced out into the surrounding countryside and drove through the tunnel of fire of Mark West Springs Road to Sutter Hospital, while watching the advancing wall of flames throwing embers onto the hospital grounds. We decided to drive to our house in Ukiah, only to find the Redwood Valley Fire at our doorstep! Immediately I hosed down the roof as we prayed that we would be safe from a second catastrophic inferno. By the Grace of God we were saved a second time. The ensuing years brought more fires as we returned to living in an apartment near Lynn's employment at Sutter during the tedious rebuilding process. We are not alone in these issues, as so many have experienced these and other catastrophic disasters during their lifetimes, most recently in Maui County, Hawaii, where my sister and family reside. Our collective hearts go out to those affected.

Q: What does joining the Chamber board of directors mean to you?

A: After rejoining the Mark West Chamber recently, I was enthralled with the prospect of participating with the community commitment to develop an area park from the ashes of the Tubbs firestorm. Whenever such a disaster can be turned around to provide a positive outcome, I'm all for it!

Speaking of the Chamber, its members are the most welcoming group I've ever had the pleasure of working with. Our goal is to encourage participation in shopping and socializing within our district, one that shares a deep sense of history and fellowship.

As I have always held to be a truism, "Many hands make light work!"

Q: What keeps you busy these days?

A: Most recently, I have returned to the airwaves as the host of the retrospective music program the "Roots of Rock" broadcast live every Sunday morning at seven over KOWSfm.com. The studio is located in the historic Cherry Street neighborhood of Santa Rosa. Hopefully you will tune in. As a community radio station we host an eclectic mix of programming as well as offering the opportunity of hosting your very own show!

As Lynda and I enjoy our retirement, we travel and enjoy the peace and quiet of our new home here in the Riebli Valley district, contributing to the community through the Sunrise Rotary Club of Santa Rosa and the friendship of our neighbors at the Chamber. We believe that every day is a gift... that's why it's called the present.



MJ Girard. Photo credit: MJ Girard.

## **HOLIDAY TREE LIGHTING**

Students and staff of the Mark West Union School District, and the Mark West Area Chamber of Commerce, held their annual tree lighting on December 6. The choir sang, the band played, and Supervisor James Gore addressed the crowd. A great way to welcome the holidays!



Photo credits: Steve Plamann





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.



WE KEEP LIFE FLOWING™

#### MARK WEST AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE & VISITORS CENTER

The Lark Newsletter is published quarterly under the direction of:

The Mark West Area Chamber of Commerce & Visitors Center 4787 Old Redwood Hwy, Suite 101, Santa Rosa, CA 95403 707-578-7975 office@markwest.org www.markwest.org

ADVERTISING: 6 months business card ad: \$107.50; 1 year \$200.00

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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.

## **CONTRIBUTE** your article to The Lark!

Contact our Content Coordinator for requirements and deadlines.

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office@markwest.org

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## **MEMBERSHIP SERVICES & DEVELOPMENT**

Monday - Friday, 10:00am - 3:00pm

office@markwest.org

707-578-7975 office@markwest.org

## JOIN THE CHAMBER

## **Standard Dues**

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You can pay online at https://markwest.org/membership-dues/ Application: https://markwest.org/membership-application/

## **OFFICERS**

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VP Government Affairs
Position Open

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## Mark West Area Chamber of Commerce and VISITORS CENTER



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

## **BRINGING BUSINESS & THE COMMUNITY TOGETHER!**

## CHRISTMAS LIGHT CONTEST **WINNERS**

If the quality and quantity of holiday lighting and decorating are any measure, then it seems holiday cheer was in abundance in the Mark West region this year. Many practitioners of seasonal illumination participated in our first-ever Christmas Light Contest, and we got some good ones! Congratulations to all our winners and thank you to our prize sponsors!

- First Place: Thomas Family, 59 Noonan Ranch Circle
- Second Place: Piloni Family, 105 Eton Court
- Third Place: Preston Family, 275 N Dover

See the lights while they last! Visit the Chamber home page at https://markwest.org/ to find a link to a tour map of our contest entries.



At right, our first place winner with the prize: a \$100 gift certificate to Molsberry Market.

Thank you to everyone who participated and to our gift sponsors! See you next year!

## Thank You to our Platinum Sponsors













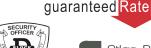
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THE WINDSOR TIMES



















