

Straight FROM THE Street

The Newsletter of the Park Street Business Association

April 2010

Customer Service Customer Service Customer Service

“Customer Service” PSBA’s Secret Weapon

There is no denying these recent economic times have been hard on most PSBA members. High unemployment, dropping property values, rising health care costs, and the unsettled economy in general are all factors effecting our members.

However, PSBA has a “secret” weapon that’s not so secret. Our members can, and in most cases do, provide superior and excellent customer service. From water and chips on the table before you even sit down at La Piñata, to the guys at Pillow Park delivering your new bed, hauling the old one away and, oh by the way, moving your old sofa for you while they’re at it, our members go that extra yard for their customers.

Let’s face it, there are literally thousands of establishments to shop and eat throughout the greater Bay Area. I know it’s hard to believe but many folks in Alameda will actually go off the island to shop. It’s our job to make them stay on the island, spend their money on the island, and keep their sales tax dollars on the island.

PSBA members have a couple of major points in their favor. In this cookie cutter mall and rubber stamp retail world we live in today, our members offer unique stores with unique goods. The other point most definitely in our favor is customer service.

Our stores are intimate, well staffed, and offer one on one shopping experiences that most retailers can’t offer today. Our restaurants also offer unique dining experiences, food and service, that almost all chain type restaurants can’t come close to.

Customers have become desensitized to the lack of customer service today. They have become accustomed to ill trained apathetic staff ignoring them. Our members offer the absolute opposite experience and that impresses customers today more than anything else.

We want to commend the many PSBA members that already offering the finest customer service. We also want to encourage all of our members to do a self assessment. Is your business providing the

(Continued on page 2)

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522-8811

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523-5717

Customer Service

(Continued from page 1)

absolutely best customer service possible.

Remember one of the most effective marketing/promotions strategies is word of mouth. When one customer has a wonderful shopping or dining experience at your establishment he/she is going to tell all their friends what a great time they had at your place. This goes both ways, they're going to tell all their friends if they have a less than fantastic time in your business. So it's up to you to ensure your employees and you provide the type of one on one, personal service customers can't get at larger retailers and restaurants.

The PSBA Membership Committee is planning to offer workshops on how our members can provide excellent customer service, create exciting window and store displays, and we're currently working with the City of Alameda to provide a workshop for our restaurant owners. Make sure you watch the newsletter and any flyers passed out to let you know when these workshops are scheduled for in the near future.

This really is a "no brainer". Excellent customer service should be the norm and exceptional customer service the goal of every member of PSBA. Remember it could make all the difference to you, your employees, and your business.

So, keep up the good work and let us know how we can help you provide the type of customer service people expect of us.

March Mixer

We want to extend our sincerest thanks to Melanie Hartman and the whole crew at Barcelona Café for not only hosting a terrific mixer but for stepping in with very little lead time. It was a great touch serving corned beef and cabbage on St. Patrick's Day. It was big fun and if you didn't make it to the mixer, you missed a fun time.

Thanks To:

Alameda Theatre and Cineplex,
Bank of Alameda, Blue Rectangle,
Dan's Fresh Produce,
Dawna Doudell, and Scott's Shoes
For Providing Raffle Prizes

Next PSBA Mixer

April

Churchward Pub

1515 Park Street

Wednesday, April 21, 2010

5:30 p.m - 7:00 p.m.

Meet Mayor Bev Johnson

(Schedule Permitting)



No Host Bar - Hors D'oeuvres

Please remember to bring a business card for our door prize drawing. To donate a door prize, please bring it to the meeting or call the PSBA office.



Plan Now for Unexpected Early Retirement



None of us can see what the future holds for us. But you have to make certain assumptions if you're going to create a strategy for building the resources you'll need for a comfortable retirement. But what happens when those assumptions prove unrealistic?

Unfortunately, many people are wrestling with this very problem. Specifically, they plan to work until a certain age — but they leave the work force earlier. Obviously, this can have a big effect on a variety of other retirement income factors, such as the amount of money they need to put away each year while they're still working and the age at which they should start collecting Social Security and begin tapping into their IRA, 401(k) and other retirement accounts.

Just how big a problem is this? Consider the following statistics from the Employee Benefit Research Institute's 2009 Retirement Confidence Survey:

- 47 percent of retirees left the work force earlier than planned.
- Of that total, 42 percent did so because of health problems or disability, 34 percent left due to their employers' downsizing or closure, and 18 percent left to care for a spouse or another family member.

So here's the bottom line: Even if you *think* you're going to work until, say, 65, and you *want* to work until 65, you may be forced to quit at 62, 60 — or even younger. And during those years you won't be working, you're not just losing out on earned income — you're also *not* contributing to your 401(k) or other employer-sponsored retirement plan, and you might lose your ability to contribute to your IRA as well. At the same time, your retirement lifestyle expenses have begun earlier than you anticipated — and many people find that these costs aren't much, if any, lower than the expenses they incurred while working.

What can you do to help avoid coming up short of the income you'll need during your retirement years? For one thing, don't spend a lot of time focusing on those things you *can't* control, such as downsizing or an unexpected health crisis or disability. Instead, concentrate on those factors over which you have power. Consider the following:

- *Maximize your contributions to your 401(k) and IRA.* Each year, put as much as you can afford into your IRA and your 401(k) or other employer-sponsored retirement plan.
- *Invest for growth.* Include growth-oriented investments, such as stocks, in your balanced portfolio if appropriate for your objectives, risk tolerance and time horizon. While it's true that growth vehicles will fluctuate in value, you can help reduce the effects of volatility by buying quality investments and holding them for the long term.
- *Create alternative plans.* While you may want to construct an investment strategy based on retiring at a certain age, you'll also want to come up with some alternative scenarios based on different retirement ages and corresponding differences in other factors, such as amounts invested in each year, rate of return, age at which you begin taking Social Security, and so on. A financial professional can help you develop these "hypotheticals."

You can't predict the future. But you can at least help yourself prepare for those twists of fate that await you as you plan for retirement.

Alameda Museum Lectures 2010

- ◆ **Thursday April 29, 2010:** Architect-preservationist Richard Rutter: "History of the Alameda Naval Air Station." Underwritten by Judith Lynch, member, Historical Advisory Board.
- ◆ **Thursday May 27, 2010:** Glassmaster Ken Matthias: "Taking Panes: Glorious Glass in Alameda." Underwritten by Ginger Schuler, member, Alameda Museum Board; Realtor, Harbor Bay.
- ◆ **Thursday June 24, 2010:** Authors-*Alameda Sun* executives Dennis Evanosky and Eric Kos: "The Oakland Estuary: Its Role in Alameda History." Underwritten by Dennis Reno, Vice-President, Oracle; member, Alameda Museum Board.
- ◆ **Thursday July 29, 2010:** Art historian Colette Collester: "Van Gogh and his Encounter with France," just in time for the big show opening at the DeYoung featuring French Impressionist paintings on the loose from the d'Orsay Museum in Paris. Underwritten by Peter Fletcher, Real Estate Broker, Windermere Real Estate.
- ◆ **Thursday August 26, 2010:** Author-historian-gadfly Gray Brechin: "A New Deal for the East Bay: Excavating the Buried Civilization of the Great Depression." Underwritten by Janelle Spatz, Realtor, Bayside Real Estate.
- ◆ **Thursday September 30, 2010:** Author-historian Richard Schwartz with a new edition of *Berkeley 1900* featuring many new images. Underwritten by Diane Coler-Dark, Past President, Alameda Museum.

NOTE: All lectures start at 7:00 p.m. at the Alameda Museum, 2324 Alameda Avenue near Park Street. No reserved seats; come early to save a place and enjoy the exhibits in the History Hall and the Art Gallery. Admission is free for Museum members and \$5 for others. Topics may change without notice. For lecture information leave a message at 748.0796 or check alameda-museum.org.

Enjoy fine dining at the many restaurants in the Park Street District before or after the lecture. We cater to many different tastes and we're sure you'll find something to your liking. If you'd like a Park Street District 2010 Shopping Guide please call the Park Street Business Association office at 523-1392. We'll be happy to send one out to you.

Coral Reef Inn & Suites Great Deals for PSBA Members

Tucked in a quiet suburb off the main thoroughfares, adjacent to the spectacular San Francisco Bay, the only hotel located on Park Street, **Coral Reef Inn & Suites** has been serving the community for the decades. As per serving our community more, **offering special rate for all PSBA members of \$59.00 until May 10th (standard rooms only).**

It has become "Home Away From Home" for the business and leisure travelers. We have rooms featuring kitchenette with stove, refrigerator, microwave and coffee maker. Therefore, you can relax and enjoy the comforts of home. Some of the rooms even overlook lagoon that rejuvenate your mind after tiresome day. Newly remodeled Alameda town center, Park Street theatre, bay area's best restaurants and other recreational activities are just steps from the Inn.

Unwind at the end of the day with a leisurely stroll along the shore as you watch the setting sun etch San Francisco's unique skyline in amber. You can even spend relaxing moments in swimming pool or on your private patio or balcony which either overlook park-like grounds or lagoon.

We do offer complimentary breakfast, free wireless internet, fitness center and free parking, business center and laundry facilities. We also have state art of meeting room with overhead projector and screen for your meetings and other occasions which can accommodate 30-35 people **for \$49.00 per day.**

For more information go to www.coralreefinn.com or call (1800) 533-2330/(510)521-2330.

ALAMEDA BUSINESSES CAN SEE BIG SAVINGS WITH reAMP

You can save green by going green. And Alameda Municipal Power's new reAMP program is here to help.

ReAMP is an energy-efficiency program that offers high rebates and low installation costs for energy-efficient lighting projects. These upgrades can cut 25% or more off your electric bill and make your business a more comfortable and efficient place to be.

ReAMP is unique in offering higher-than-normal rebates, and AMP has retained a contractor to install upgrades at a significant discount.

While all commercial customers are eligible, the **reAMP program runs only through the end of June**, so businesses should act now.

It all starts with a free lighting energy audit, after which, you'll receive detailed information on what measures are appropriate for your business, including project costs, the reAMP rebate, your savings, and the estimated payback.

The program truly is a win-win proposition. When you upgrade your lighting, you're saving money on your electric bill, as well as lowering lower AMP's costs, and we all decrease our carbon footprint. ReAMP offers a convenient way for you to enhance your facilities with minimal effort and expense.

To schedule your free energy audit, call Bill Garvine, Senior Customer Programs Coordinator on 748-3913.

This article was provided by Alameda Municipal Power.

Editor's Note:

We urge you to contact Bill Garvine to schedule your energy audit right away.

In these days and times, any opportunity to cut your costs (energy in this case) is worth looking into.

Along with the savings, installing and using more energy-efficient lighting is not only good for you but good for the environment.

Silk Road has Relocated

Silk Road has relocated from Santa Clara Ave. to 1412 Park Street. They're very excited to be on Park Street and to be in a larger store.

They will be having a welcoming party during April. Look to the PSBA web site for day and time of their welcoming party. We wish the folks at Silk Road only good luck in their new location.

Feel Good Bakery Expands

Our friends at Feel Good Bakery located in the Marketplace have expanded their operation. Not many details were available at press time, but they have expanded and we'll have more details next month. In the mean time drop by the Marketplace and take a look at the new bakery operation and all the other great businesses operating inside the Marketplace.

For All Your Printing Needs

When ever you have need for printing or copies, make sure you stop by and see our friends at Alameda Printing Service located at 2408 Lincoln Ave.

If they can make this newsletter look good, think of what they can do for your printing needs. Go see Wayne and Vickie. They'll take good care of you.

CERT Still Needs Your Donation

CERT needs all of our assistance so that it may offer assistance to us in time of disaster.

What is CERT? CERT stands for Community Emergency Response Team. It's a great program coordinated by the Alameda Fire Department. Volunteers from the community are trained how to respond to disasters.

When the big one hits, and it's going to hit some day, these dedicated well trained volunteers will help assist people in Alameda, residents and businesses, address real problems like turning gas mains off, tending to the injured and being a big part of any search and rescue operations. These CERT volunteers go through a very extensive and comprehensive training course conducted the Alameda Fire Department.

We're asking you to make a donation to the CERT program, specifically to provide the back pack kits for the volunteers. We have been assured that all of the donations will go directly to the CERT program for the kits.

Captain Sharon Oliver, who is the new CERT Coordinator, assured PSBA 100% of the donations will be placed in a special fund that is for the CERT program and only the CERT program.

The Spring Festival Is On the Way

Come one, come all to the 10th annual Spring Arts, Crafts, and Wine Festival May 8 & 9. The Festival will run from 10:00 a.m. until 6:00 p.m. both days.

We'll have lots of vendors, three beer/wine booths, a kids' area on Alameda Ave. and this year there will be two music stages. One at Encinal and one at Lincoln. Last year over 50,000 visitors toured the District during the weekend.

We urge our members to take advantage of this unique opportunity to put your best food forward.

Put inventory on tables in front of your place, do a new special window, run Festival specials, and make sure your employees offer the very best customer service (see front page article). Many members tell us every year how many people come back to their places days and weeks after the Festival to buy things. Remember, just because they don't buy something during the Festival, if the potential customer has a good experience in your store they're likely come back and buy from you.

If you have any questions about the Festival please call the PSBA office. Robb or Bettie can answer any questions you might have.

Classic Film Series

March 31 & April 1
Citizen Kane

April 7 & 8
The Birds

April 14 & 15
Wizard of Oz

April 21 & 22
Some Like it Hot

April 28 & 29
Maltese Falcon

The "Classic Film" Series at the historic Alameda Theatre is offering something for everyone in April.

One of my favorite movies of all time (Wayne and I will be going over the rainbow but I guess Vickie won't be joining us), one of the scariest movies ever made (the only good bird is on a platter with steam rising from it), the movie destroyed in newspapers about newspapers (at least Hearst newspapers) Curtis-Lemon & Monroe at their funniest, and Bogey. What more could you ask for? The best popcorn around. You got it at the Alameda Theatre.

Go to Shopparkstreet.com (Alameda Theatre page) for show times.



**"Are You Reading
The Newsletter Quiz?"**

Answers to last month's questions:

1. Lincecum/Zito 2. AT&T Park 3. Bill Rigney
4. Bob Kennedy 5. Oaks 6. Billy Beane

"In honor of the 6th Annual Circus for Arts in the Schools at Kofman Auditorium on Sunday, April 18th, we have a quiz devoted to the Circus. For more information about the show, go to www.circusforarts.org."

1. Who billed his Circus as "The Greatest Show on Earth" in 1872?
A. Al Ringling B. P.T. Barnum C. James Bailey D. Bozo the Clown
2. In which Canadian city is the headquarters of Cirque du Soleil located?
A. Toronto B. Vancouver C. Montreal D. Calgary
3. Which favorite circus food dates back to about 400 BC?
A. Popcorn B. Cotton Candy C. Red Ropes D. Ice cream bars
4. Circus performers consider the hair of which animal to be lucky?
A. Horse B. Tiger C. Lion D. Elephant
5. How many Ringling Brothers were there?
A. 7 B. 8 C. 9 D. None. Ringling Brothers was the stage name of P.T. Barnum and James Bailey.
6. Which famous brothers starred in the 1939 film "At the Circus?"
A. The Ringling Brothers B. The Marx Brothers
C. The Wayans Brothers D. The Baldwin Brothers

Good luck to all of you. Entries with all the answers correct will receive a gift certificate from Fudgelato.

Everyone who submits answers will be entered into a drawing for a PSBA gift certificate. So, even if you don't have all the answers, please email, fax, or deliver to the PSBA office by April 16.



Good Luck!

Phone Numbers & Addresses To Remember

PSBA Office
523-1392
Fax: 523-2372
email:
parkstreet1@comcast.net

Police Department
337-8340

Fire Department
337-2100

Mayor Beverly Johnson
747-4701

City Council Members
747-4800

Sue Russell
Economic Development
747-6894

Public Works
749-5840

Maintenance Services
747-7900

Planning Department
747-6850

Building Department (Permits)
747-6800

Main Library
747-7777

Alameda Municipal Power
748-3901



PSBA Calendar Of Events - April 2010

April 6 Econ Revi Committee
8:30 a.m. - PSBA Office

April 6 City Council
7:00 p.m. - City Hall

April 13 Membership Committee
Noon - PSBA Office

April 20 City Council Meeting
7:00 p.m. - City Hall

April 21 PSBA Mixer
5:30 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.
Churchward

April 22 Promotions Committee
8:30 a.m. - PSBA Office

April 28 PSBA Board Meeting
8:15 a.m. - PSBA Office

May 8 & 9 Spring Festival
10:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.



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