

# 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. 9 am - 4 pm

[www.markwest.org](http://www.markwest.org)

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[office@markwest.org](mailto:office@markwest.org)

**The Lark**

December 2016  
Volume XXX Issue 12

## JANUARY BUSINESS LUNCHEON STATE OF SONOMA COUNTY REPORT

**Wednesday, February 1, 2017**

11:30 am - 1:00 pm

Speaker: **James Gore**, 4th District Supervisor

Location: Best Western Plus Wine Country Inn & Suites  
870 Hopper Ave. Santa Rosa CA 95403

Lunch is a low \$15 per Chamber Member or \$25 for non-members.

Includes a delicious box lunch provided by Molsberry Markets!



*James Gore, Sonoma County  
4th District Supervisor*

### RSVP

to the Chamber office at  
**707-578-7975**

or

online at

[www.MarkWest.org](http://www.MarkWest.org)

**Space is limited to 30!**

**We suggest you  
RSVP early.**

We will be having our first luncheon of 2017 on February 1st with an eye towards the future.

A very special presentation will be given by James Gore, our 4th District Supervisor. James will be telling us about the State of our County 2017 and how it will affect our businesses, with special emphasis on the Mark West Area community.

There will be plenty of time for questions and answers. What a great opportunity to ask him questions and find out some of the inside information about what is happening in our area.

*December Social  
hosted by  
Larkfield Exchange Bank  
and Molsberry's Market  
See p3*

**UPCOMING EVENTS: next AFTER HOURS BUSINESS SOCIAL**

*Hosted by*

**Anytime Fitness**

490 Larkfield Center, Santa Rosa

Thursday January 12, 2017

5:30 PM - 7:30 PM



Steve Plamann  
Aaction Rents  
President

*Our Mission:  
The Mark West Area  
Chamber of Commerce  
is organized to advance  
the economic well-  
being and uniqueness  
of the Mark West Area  
so that its citizens and  
all areas of its business  
community shall prosper.*

## CHAMBER MEETINGS

### Board of Directors

Second Tuesday  
Of Each Month  
11:30 am - 1:00 pm at  
Best Western Plus Wine  
Country Inn & Suites  
870 Hopper Av. S.R.

### Ambassadors Mtg.

Second Thursday  
Of Each Month  
4:00 pm - 5:00 pm  
At the Chamber offices

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE: GREAT MOMENTS IN CHRISTMAS TREE HISTORY

- The use of evergreen trees to celebrate the winter season occurred before the birth of Christ.
- The first decorated Christmas tree was in Riga, Latvia in 1510.
- The first printed reference to Christmas trees appeared in Germany in 1531
- Besides evergreens, other types of trees such as cherry and hawthorns were used as Christmas trees in the past.
- Using small candles to light a Christmas tree dates back to the middle of the 17th century.
- Thomas Edison's assistant, Edward Johnson, came up with the idea of electric lights for Christmas trees in 1882. Christmas tree lights were first mass-produced in 1890.



*We had a great crowd at the annual Tree Lighting on December 8.  
Read the rest of this article for details.*

- In 1900, large stores started to erect big illuminated Christmas trees.
- In 1856 Franklin Pierce, the 14th President of the United States, was the first President to place a Christmas tree in the White House.
- President Coolidge started the National Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony on the White House lawn in 1923.
- 98 percent of all Christmas trees are grown on farms, while only 2% are cut from the wild.
- More than 2,000 trees are usually planted per acre. On average 1,000-1,500 of these trees will survive.
- It takes six to ten years of fighting heavy rain, wind, hail, and drought to get a mature tree.
- Approximately 50 million Christmas tree seedlings are planted by U.S. growers every year.

Well, there you have it. Everything you ever needed to know about the Christmas tree. I always buy my Christmas tree from a local vender. I try to do all my shopping locally, especially at Christmas when our local merchants are counting on a good end to their year. Walking in the rain and freezing weather this year, we spent most of our money for gifts in small locally owned shops. The service

*Continued on page 5*



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Sample Imported and Domestic Cheese*

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**David Hartman**

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707-546-5717  
FAX 707-546-0902

## DECEMBER SOCIAL HOSTED BY LARKFIELD EXCHANGE BANK & MOLSBERRY'S MARKET

Our annual Holiday Season Social took place on December 8 in the Larkfield Exchange Bank office. We had a big friendly turnout and we were happy that a few folks were there who we have not seen in a while. It was certainly no trouble to find someone interesting to talk with; these socials are great visiting and networking opportunities.

Laura Buhner, Assistant Vice President and Branch Manager at Exchange Bank, welcomed us all to Exchange Bank. She said a few words about the Exchange Bank commitment to the community, and how their services are customized to the needs of local homeowners and businesses. It's hard to get that kind of personalized attention from a national corporation that has to fit everyone into a relatively few financial plans.

Brian Molsberry introduced the core Molsberry Market crew. Many of the immediate Molsberry family were there as Brian explained how the business was founded by his grandparents in 1959, back when there was a walnut orchard where the parking lot currently is. The business has continued to be run by Molsberry family members right up to the present. There have been six generations of Molsberrys working the store, including thirteen family members today. All told there are 65 people working at Molsberry Market.

We also thank Molsberry Market for providing the food and wine. It was of course up to their usual high standard.

### Winners for the Evening:

The Pot of Gold was up to \$240, but the winner was not there to claim it. It rises to \$260 in January, so be sure to join us at Anytime Fitness for the next Social!

Lois Casper of Exchange Bank won the 50/50 drawing and went home \$73 richer. Congratulations Lois!

Markell Incorporated provided several powerful and compact Streamlight flashlights as gifts for the drawing. Winners of Streamlights included Larry Gilbert of Legal Shield, Jason Riggs of Extended Child Care, Steve Plamann of Aaction Rents, Shawna DeGrange of Cloverleaf Ranch, John Essman of SonomaCONNECTION, and Laura Buhner, our host at Exchange Bank.

Todd Anderson of Best Western Wine Country Inn & Suites won tickets from Sonoma County Airport Express, and Terry Morgan of Loughlin Marketing won a one-cup coffee warmer plus coffee mug. Tony Gerald of Sonoma County Airport Express and the Markells of Markell, Incorporated won bottles of wine.

It was a very fun and friendly evening, and a great garnish to the entire holiday season. See you next year!

*Contributed by Peter Loughlin, Loughlin Marketing*



*The entire core Molsberry family was present, along with key personnel from their business.*



*Left to right: Margaret DiGenova of California American Water, Laura Buhner of Exchange Larkfield Branch (and our host for the evening!), Terry Morgan of Loughlin Marketing, and friend of the chamber Millie Cantu.*



*At left, Mary Markell demonstrates one of several Streamlight flashlights donated by Markell Incorporated as door prizes. Chamber president Steve Plamann looks on at right, hoping to win one. And fortunately for him, he did!*



*Left to Right: Amy Markell-Rose, and Guy Markell, of Markell Incorporated.*

## MOLSBERRY FAMILY RECEIVES SPIRIT OF SONOMA COUNTY AWARD

The Annual Spirit of Sonoma County Award luncheon honors those who contribute to the economic development of the communities in which they live and work through donations of their time and expertise in support of local business and in helping others. This year, at a ceremony on December 9 at the Doubletree Hotel, the Mark West Area Chamber of Commerce honored the Molsberry family, locally famous for Molsberry Markets, Inc. and for their continual contributions to the betterment of the Mark West Community.



*The Molsberrys and representatives of the Mark West Area Chamber of Commerce at the Spirit of Sonoma County ceremony.*

Milt and Tress Molsberry moved to Santa Rosa in 1939. Milt and sons Rick, Tim and Robert built Larkfield Super Market in an empty field in the Mark West Area. The store opened in 1959, is successfully operating today, and is surrounded by many other businesses. Six generations of Molsberrys have managed the now-named Molsberry Market. Today 12 Molsberrys are among the store's 65 employees. Dean Molsberry said, "It is nearly impossible to calculate how many Sonoma County residents had their first job working for us". Tina Molsberry said, "Our relationship with our customers and the Sonoma County community is what we are all about". The Molsberrys often deliver groceries to sick and disabled customers. Molsberry's Market was recognized by the North California Independent Groceries Alliance as the independent grocer of the year in 2006. On the 50th anniversary of their Larkfield store, the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors recognized the family for their positive contributions to Sonoma County.

Dean, Brian Tina, Lori, and Joe Molsberry all live in the Mark West/Wikiup area, and are very active locally. With an emphasis on giving back to youth of their community, family members have coached various youth sports including Little League baseball, soccer, and flag football. They have volunteered at the local fire department and annually donate to local schools, sports teams, community Bar-B-Que's, non profits and local charities. For many years every first grade class in the Mark West School District has taken a tour of the store to learn about operating a supermarket. Family members have held seats on the Mark West Area Chamber Board of Directors with Brian Molsberry formerly Chamber President and currently the chair of the Mark West Citizens Advisory Board.

Joe Molsberry stated, "The family feels it is important to give back to the community because if you take care of them...they will take care of you". Dean Molsberry said, "We firmly believe we are blessed to live and work here in Sonoma County. Our neighbors are an extension of our own family". When learning of past Sonoma County Spirit Award recipients, Lori Molsberry said, "It is such an honor to be part of a list of such accomplished and important people who have contributed so much to Sonoma County".



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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE CONTNUED FROM PAGE 2

is always better and more personal when the store owner is part of the local community. We all benefit by shopping locally.

We had two really fun Chamber events in December: the Christmas Tree Lighting at the Lakefield Shopping Center sponsored by Molsberry Market and our Christmas Social at Exchange Bank, co-sponsored by Molsberry Market. Both events were well attended and filled with the Christmas spirit of giving, sharing and enjoying each other's company. We were treated to Mark West school kids singing Christmas carols and playing violins at the tree lighting. The hot chocolate kept us warm while we waited for Santa's arrival. At the Christmas Social we enjoyed holiday cheer, great food and many opportunities to win a prize. Thanks again to our hosts Laura Buhner, Assistant Vice President and Branch Manager at Exchange Bank, and Brian Molsberry of Molsberry Markets, Inc.

Our New Year's Party and next monthly After Hours Social will be January 12th, hosted by Anytime Fitness in Larkfield Center, Santa Rosa. It starts at 5:30pm and ends around 7:30pm. Please join us and help us welcome in the New Year. It's a great opportunity to blow your own horn and start the year off spreading the word about who you are and what you do at your business.

Our next Mark West Chamber Luncheon will be on Wednesday, February 1st at Best Western plus Wine Country Inn and Suites. Our guest speaker will be James Gore, our 4th District County Supervisor. He will give us an update on the major issues in our area. You can sign up for it online at [www.markwest.org](http://www.markwest.org). The cost is \$15 for members and \$25.00 for non-member. This includes a sandwich and a drink. Be sure to sign up early, as we have limited seating. The event starts at 11:30 am and should end by 1:00 pm.

We all have much to look forward to going into the New Year. There will always be challenges, but at least our economy is predicted to stay strong. According to Forbes magazine even taking into account the election, there are four leading economic indicators that separately and collectively suggest things are tracking positively for a better year ahead. Wage growth is beginning to pick

## UPCOMING BUSINESS SOCIALS

Thursday, January 12, 2017  
Chamber Business After Hours Social 5:30-7:30pm  
Hosted by **Anytime Fitness**  
490 Larkfield Center, Santa Rosa

Wednesday February 1, 2017  
**Chamber Business Luncheon** 11:30am-1:00pm  
Topic: State of Sonoma County Report  
Speaker: 4th District Supervisor James Gore  
Hosted at Best Western Plus Wine Country Inn & Suites  
870 Hopper Ave, Santa Rosa

### President's Message Continued from previous column

up, consumers are increasing their confidence levels, and the industrial and manufacturing sides of the economy are also showing shifts in the right direction. While we shouldn't be expecting drastic growth, things are slowly but surely looking better. And even more good news, wage growth is increasing faster than inflation, representing a real increase in spending power. With more money in consumers' pockets, an uptick in consumer spending is also likely. We are seeing continued improvements in employment as well, both in terms of the number of people employed and how much they are getting paid.

Increasing employment, accelerating wage growth, and improving consumer sentiment, cumulatively result in the perfect formula for increased consumer spending/retail sales, which accounts for approximately 70% of U.S. economic output. The Conference Board's Consumer Confidence reading shows that consumer confidence has been generally increasing since May of 2016. Furthermore, this is a leading indicator of consumer spending by 9 months, suggesting an increase in consumer spending in early 2017.

I hope your New Year is off to a great start and I hope to see you soon at one of our monthly socials or our quarterly luncheons.

Steve Plamann, President

Interested in joining our Ambassador Club?  
Contact the Chamber at  
[office@markwest.org](mailto:office@markwest.org)  
707-578-7975



To host a Ribbon Cutting, contact...  
Aggie Maggio  
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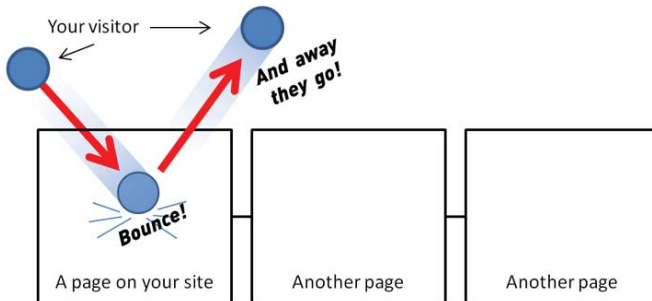


Keep abreast of important information pertinent to local business issues: <http://edb.sonoma-county.org/>

## “HELP! MY BOUNCE RATE IS REALLY HIGH”

People often talk about their “bounce rate” when discussing website performance. But bounce rate can be a little slippery to understand.

Put simply, a “bounce” occurs when a visitor lands on your website and leaves again without doing anything. They hit your site and bounce away. The “bounce rate” is the percentage of visitors who bounce like this. So if 41 out of every 100 site visitors go away without interacting, you have a bounce rate of 41%.



*A “bounce” is when they land on your site and leave immediately, without looking at other pages.*

Here are some common reasons for bounces, and what you can do about them.

\* **Your site did not provide the content they expected.** Perhaps you bought a Google Adwords ad to promote a sale on ugly Christmas sweaters. But instead of linking that ad to your page full of ugly Christmas sweaters, you linked your ad to your home page which shows a broad range of your products. Your potential buyer is thinking, “Hey, where are those awesome ugly Christmas sweaters? I don’t see them and I don’t have time to search this site!” And away they bounce. The solution is to link your ads and other promotions directly to the goods those ads promote. Seems obvious, but many companies make this error. If people see what they expect, they tend to stick around and not bounce.

\* **Spambots.** Believe it or not, there are automated programs that do nothing but travel around the web, land on websites, and then go away again, kind of like flies on potato salad. Spambot behavior is too complex to explain in this article. But the result is that spambots artificially inflate the number of sessions and visitors, and they inflate bounce rates too. The solution is to tell Google Analytics to “exclude all known bots and spiders” and to build a filter in Google Analytics to eliminate data from those that get through. This won’t eliminate their visits, but it will eliminate the record of their visits in your data and give you a more accurate account of your bounce rate.

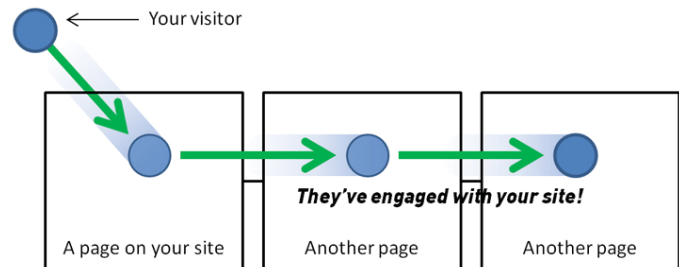
\* **Sometimes a bounce is a GOOD thing.** Suppose you put out a promotion for a special event, like the Mark West Harvest Faire. Your customers think, “Sounds good! I’ll go! Where’s it located?” They click on your ad and land on your page where you’ve posted a map and a printable coupon. They print it, and then close their browser. They don’t stick around to read additional material because they already know you. But because they saw only one page their visit counts as a bounce. That was a “good” bounce, because you gave them precisely what they needed in one click.

Google Analytics gives you the tools you need to understand all this, by revealing where customers come from, which campaigns they clicked on, and where they go on your site. A little analysis in Google Analytics can help you find patterns in your data that tell you how well your website is working and what you can do to increase its effectiveness.

*Contributed by Peter Loughlin, Loughlin Marketing, [peter@loughlinmarketing.com](mailto:peter@loughlinmarketing.com)*

A high bounce rate is generally a bad thing, because it means your website did not interest them. They came, they saw, they clicked away. They did not stick around to buy anything, read your other pages, fill out a contact form, or what have you. In web-speak, they did not “engage” with your site.

The cool thing about a tool like Google Analytics, which is the leading web analytics platform for small business, is that it can reveal why these people left your site so quickly.



*Engagement is good. Engagement is when they land on your site and then click through to other pages.*

**MARK WEST AREA COMMUNITY INFORMATION**

AREA POPULATION - within a 3 mile radius - 20,000  
 ELEVATION - 160 feet above sea level  
 BOUNDARIES - Area approximately bounded by:  
 Shiloh Road - North Piner Road - South  
 West Olivet Road - West Lodge on Mark West Springs Rd - East

*The Lark Newsletter is published monthly under the direction of:*  
 The Mark West Area Chamber of Commerce & Visitors Center  
 4787 Old Redwood Hiwy, Suite 101, Santa Rosa, CA 95403

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 You can pay online at <http://markwest.org/payment>

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Deadline for publication is the 3rd Wednesday of the month.  
 Please email your materials to info@markwest.org

*Promote your business with  
 your flyer in the Chamber newsletter.  
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**CHAMBER MEMBERSHIP DUES**

*Effective May 1, 2006*

Standard Dues		Non-Profit Dues
\$125.00	Business (1-5 Personnel)	\$110.00
\$175.00	Business (6-10 Personnel)	\$155.00
\$245.00	Business (11+ Personnel)	\$215.00
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