

Senior Editor/Business: James Meier • (760) 778-4623 • business@thedesertsun.com


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All ABOUT BUSINESS



debra gruszecki & k kaufmann

Town Hall offers up a sweet little extra treat

Valet with a touch of class.

Renaissance Esmeralda Resort & Spa put a chocolate-on-the-pillow twist to those attending the **Indian Wells 2011 Town Hall Series**.

There, on the dash, after a night with award-winning author of "The Glass Castle" **Jeanette Walls**, was a ribbon-wrapped candy box packed with two chocolate-mint meltaways, and a thank-you note for attending.

Small bottles of water were also left in each car to quench after-show thirst.

And it doubled as a smooth advertising piece for **Cafe Chocolat**, a Palm Springs business that prepared the candy-coated treat. Its address and phone number was listed on the bottom of the box.

Dance fever

The eyes have it.

Virginiah Vadeboncoeur, a professional Palm Springs dancer who teaches Middle Eastern belly dance at **Palm Springs Healing Center**, and offers one of the hottest aerobic workout sessions in the Los Angeles area at **Gold's Gym** and the **Spa Resort**, has just had her flashdance with fame.

She was tapped to do a belly dance in **Bahman Nassiri's** film "The Golden Veil." Discovered while dancing at a former Greek restaurant, the producer's mother told her, "You dance like an angel." And, in her seconds-long performance wearing Isis goddess wings, she did.

Virginiah bats her almond-shaped eyes behind an exotic veil and appears in a shimmer of silk and organza swirl in an opening scene of a film that tells the story of an American journalist and CIA agent in Iran who meets, falls in love with and is led out of the country around the time of the Iranian hostage crisis.

The film has not only gained an online DVD-buying audience, and poster sightings at stores such as **Palm Springs Tobacco**, it's given Virginiah, who also starred recently in an edition of "Extreme Home Makeover" for ABC, an added dance class following.

Shop 'til you drop

If you like to do as the cover for **Fashion Week El Paseo 2011** says — Dress to Thrill — then this escapade will surely delight.

El Paseo merchants participating in the event have banded together to create a "Shopping Passport Extravaganza" that offers a clever way to get shoppers and tourists to stop in to as many as 40 participating retail stores.

Store stoppers, armed with a pass-

Please see BUSINESS, D5

Board ratifies CVEP business plan

But wants \$500,000 in new revenue

BY DEBRA GRUSZECKI

The Desert Sun

The Coachella Valley Economic Partnership's business plan has been unanimously ratified by its governing board.

The plan is a living document, CEO Thomas Flavin says. It:

- Creates priority lists for blueprint strategies to build a diversified, year-round economy and develop a

well-trained, educated workforce.

- Identifies goals and objectives through fiscal year 2014.

Benchmarks noted for fiscal year 2011-12 alone will have CVEP generating 260 leads and following up on 120 prospects, opening 35 client cases, increasing support for workforce excellence programs and dealing with 620 scholarship and college applicants.

The economic impact generated by this activity was set at \$82 million.

CVEP's business plan, while adopted unanimously, also listed the need to develop \$500,000 in new revenue to support CVEP's mission over the next three years.

That called attention to funding uncertainties, particularly if lawmakers approve Gov. Jerry Brown's effort to eliminate redevelopment agencies across California.

The proposal was one vote shy of passing the Assembly last week; the

legislative proposal is expected to surface again.

Desert cities, particularly those making one-year commitments, advised it could be difficult to commit funding going forward if redevelopment agencies disappear.

Clifford Daniels, who chairs CVEP's executive board, said work has already begun to identify a diversified and sustainable revenue stream for the organization.

One revenue stream informally

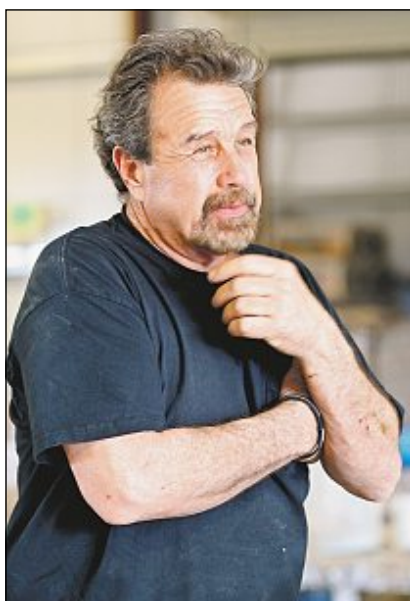
Please see CVEP, D5

TALKING BUSINESS WITH... DAVE BOGGS



PHOTOS BY CRYSTAL CHATHAM THE DESERT SUN

Decorative sculptures made from concrete and crushed glass are seen in the outdoor yard at Greenday Precast in Indio.



Greenday co-owner Dave Boggs

Glass is key to green products

Company crushes and recycles it

BY JOHN HUSSAR

Special to The Desert Sun

Recycling glass bottles into cash isn't new, but turning crushed glass into park benches and trash cans, fireplace mantles and garden planters?

That is the dream and soon to be a greater reality for Dave Boggs, co-owner of Greenday Precast LLC of Indio with Nicholas Panzarini.

The entrepreneur developed a proprietary bonding method of using crushed glass with concrete instead of sand and concrete to make myriad "green products."

By June, Boggs and Panzarini hope to have their state-of-the-art glass crusher system in place to begin accepting recycled glass from consumers as well as Burretec waste disposal and landfills.

"Turning Trash Into Treasure" is their tagline.



Colored glass in these planters is made from concrete and crushed glass.

Boggs figures Greenday Precast might be the only company in California to be a licensed recycler and to make an end product like statuary at their 22,000-square-foot facility on two acres near Interstate 10.

Please see GREENDAY, D5

LGBT events a boon for valley business



JAY CALDERON DESERT SUN FILE PHOTO

Women enjoy themselves during last year's Dinah Shore Girl Bar Party at the Wyndham. Several area hotels are fully booked for this year's Dinah Shore Weekend. Casitas Laquitas in Palm Springs has been booked since last year.

BY DEBRA GRUSZECKI

The Desert Sun

Prepare for sellouts.

That's the claim from promoters of the Dinah Shore Week and White Party events and Coachella Valley hospitality leaders as the internationally known LGBT events are ready to descend on Palm Springs.

Entire hotels and reserved room blocks from the Riviera Palm Springs, Hilton and Hotel Zoso to the Hyatt Regency Suites, Renaissance Palm Springs and Ace Hotel & Swim Club are booked or at capacity levels for the Dinah.

Guests have already checked in for six- to seven-night minimum stays at Casitas Laquitas, a boutique hotel in Palm Springs that caters to lesbians, co-owner Joanna Funaro said.

"We've been booked since last year,"

she said. "We're lucky to have a lot of return guests for Dinah — most coming from Canada, who come down, and actually watch the golf."

A top executive with San Francisco-based Community Marketing Inc. predicted the 2011 events from Club Skirts, Girl Bar and White Party will ensure Palm Springs continues to rank well among national gay and lesbian travelers.

"It's one reason Palm Springs' gay leisure travel market is ranked No. 8 in the U.S.," Community senior programs manager David Paisley said.

"Palm Springs has held its own, and done pretty well through the recession, considering the downturn we saw in other places," Paisley said.

"They're faring well, actually, while gay and lesbian business travel fell off

Please see DINAH, D5

BUSINESSFACT

Electric rates

Valley electric rates are higher than national average.

Electric rates, cents per kilowatt hour

Residential Commercial
 So Cal Edison

14.62
 15.25

Imperial Irrigation District

12.85
 13.21

San Diego Gas & Electric

15.49
 17.39

California

15.43
 13.65

United States

11.96
 10.19

SOURCE: COACHELLA VALLEY 2010 ECONOMIC REPORT THE DESERT SUN



CRYSTAL CHATHAM THE DESERT SUN

Greenday Precast LLC co-owner Dave Boggs talks about his company and product line inside his facility in Indio.

GREENDAY: Process begins with consumers selling their glass

Continued from D1

"Just think, you can bring us a bag of glass, we pay you the CRV (California Redemption Value) for your bottles, crush it here and turn it into a product," Boggs said. "That is about as green as you can get."

He said aluminum and other plastics brought into the facility will be shipped to other processors for recycling. California also pays Greenday to take in the glass for recycling.

The trick to making glass the new standard, Boggs said, was finding a way to mix crushed glass with concrete that would be cheaper than using the traditional method of sand.

Boggs said he has been working on this glass and concrete concept for about two years after talking with some friends who were trying to use crushed glass.

"They were talking about using crushed glass and putting it into asphalt in the street. It is actually too smooth to adhere like with rock. You can only use a little bit.

"When we started using glass, it was pretty expensive. It was probably five times as expensive as sand," he said.

Making it stick

To make it work more cost-effectively, Boggs said Greenday developed a proprietary bonding-like cohesive for using crushed glass with concrete. There was trial and error before coming up with the formula that worked.

"Mixing with cement doesn't work unless you can make it stick together, with recycled products. Bonding turns it into waterproof product, almost glass-like. This makes our products 80 percent sustainable," he said. "It is difficult to make 70 or 80 percent sustainable products."

Boggs said the process can even make plaster using glass instead of sand.

"We need to get that cost in hand to compete with sand and gravel so we can plaster houses, pour foundation



CRYSTAL CHATHAM THE DESERT SUN

Greenday Precast LLC manufactures products with recycled glass.

slabs, sidewalks, almost anything."

Like his grandfather and father, the 60-year-old Boggs is a plasterer by trade, operating his plaster business in Indio for 15 years.

He said plastering walls with finely crushed glass into a paste is a reality, as well as making lots of other home products such as decorative beams that can even be arched like wood, patios, roofing material, mortar and bricks. Greenday makes its own product molds.

"We figure you use 25 tons of sand in a regular house; we picture that using 25 tons of glass to plaster it," he said.

"We have used our products in homes like Indian Wells and (they) look great."

These building products like patios don't burn and are not affected by termites. No warping and no sap, either.

Making glass concrete products has already been a hit with several Coachella Valley cities, notably Indian Wells, Palm Desert and Palm Springs.

"Indian Wells more than any other city is really involved in recycling," Boggs said. "The whole deal is getting price competitive so the cities love it."

Some examples:

■ Indian Wells uses Greenday products for bus stops.

■ Palm Desert uses glass-concrete trash cans at Freedom Park. Each uses about 900 glass bottles in construction.

■ The Living Desert uses Greenday products for its statues and planters.

■ Ornamental columns were used in Desert Hot Springs.

■ An Indio restaurant uses Greenday for nine outdoor benches (42,000 bottles were used).

Boggs said some people like the idea of products with small flecks of glass chips showing, although, "We can bury the glass in the concrete because not everyone wants to see glass."

There seems to be an endless list of products using glass and concrete beyond the dozens of decorative home and garden products Greenday makes now.

How about playground sand? Yes, Boggs said.

"It's not toxic like the silicate sand sold now. You won't notice the difference in how it feels," he said.

John Hussar is a public relations/media consultant and freelance writer in Palm Desert. Have an idea for "Talking Business With"? He can be reached at john@prnewsworks.com

DINAH: Hotels seeing sell-out reservations

Continued from D1

the roof — as much as 15 percent in urban markets."

Hotels filling up

Mariah Hanson, promoter of Club Skirts, calls the Dinah a gargantuan celebration of "Girl Power."

"Ticket sales are through the roof," she said, citing sellouts at the headquarter hotel — the Riviera — and near sellouts of 50- and 100-plus room blocks at the Shilo and Hilton. "I'm seeing the same numbers I did in 2009, when I booked Lady Gaga and Katy Perry."

Class A talent is booked again this year, Hanson said of the Club Skirts event that controls more than 550 rooms alone.

"It has to do with the belief that, in a recession, businesses that take a deep breath and take a plunge in offering customers even more value are businesses that thrive," she said.

That's the formula for Girl Bar as well.

Sandy Sachs, Girl Bar co-promoter for Dinah Shore Week, which has joined forces with The Truck Stop Girlz, has ramped up the action in its all-hotel booking of the Hyatt Regency Suites on Palm Canyon Drive as the host hotel.

"It's a win-win," said Hyatt Regency director of sales Dael Strange. "It gives Girl Bar a good, stylish image," adds to traffic flow in downtown Palm Springs and guarantees the city considerable hotel and sales tax revenue.

White Party Palm Springs producer Jeffrey Sanker said he's already added the Zoso and Hilton to the go-to list given the sellout at the Renaissance Palm Springs — the host resort for the world-renowned gala that follows one week later, April 8-11.

Boutique hotel bookings are pacing stronger than 2010 as well, said Michael Green, co-owner of Triangle Inn and president of the Desert Gay Tourism Guild.

Sanker senses a turn in the economy.

"Having 'Housewives Atlanta' air to 1.9 million viewers helped create more awareness of White Party in Palm Springs," he said.

"Social media networking has helped, too. We're big on Facebook and Twitter. My website's getting 10,000 hits a day."

Attendance has ranged from 20,000 for the White Party prior to the recession to a low of 10,000-12,000. Last year, Dinah Shore Week promoters put attendance at 15,000-plus.

That puts Dinah Shore Week among Palm Springs' top three events, Hilton general manager Afab Dada said.

"White Party ranks in the Top 5," Dada said.

"Dinah and White Party bring in thousands, if not tens of thousands of new people who are here to have fun and spend money," said Kerry Hendrix, executive director of Desert Business Association.

"Our restaurants will be packed to the rim, and it's not just the downtown that will be busy."

The business bump

Events that play to Dinah Shore weekend, besides Club Skirts and Girl Bar, include:

■ Kraft Nabisco Championship Tournament at Mission Hills County Club in Rancho Mirage

■ The inaugural "High Heels Poker Tour" on Saturday, co-hosted by the Agua Caliente Casino Resort Spa, Rancho Mirage. Founded by Lauren Failla on the East Coast, the internationally known event is open to women poker players who pony up \$150 to get in the game.

■ Ace Hotel & Swim Club, Palm Springs, has taken on a Mardi Gras-theme with New Orleans-styled music and a Masquerade Ball fundraiser for the Preservation Hall Foundation.

Palm Springs ranking

The Palm Springs destination is ranked:

■ No. 8 overall for gay and lesbian leisure travel in the nation.

■ No. 8 for gay men, ages 36 to 54.

■ No. 4 for gay men, ages 55-plus.

SOURCE: Community Marketing, Inc.

Learn more about the events

■ Club Skirts, www.clubskirts.com or thedinah.com

■ Girl Bar, www.girlbar.com

■ White Party Palm Springs, www.jeffreysanker.com

A definitive room sale count linked to Dinah Shore Week and White Party is difficult to gauge because many attendees stay in condos, second homes, leased homes, RV resorts or with friends.

Sanker has said the White Party event alone generates more than \$1 million in sales and hotel tax.

Stores prepare, too

Retail businesses are already decorating store windows to draw sales in. For the first time in years, a gay business district on Arenas Road has 100 percent occupancy.

Tony Gallardo, owner of Leon's Bar & Grill, has taken over the space of the long-shuttered Rainbow Cactus venue on Arenas to open his third restaurant, Rainbow Bar & Grille.

Its opening is tied to expectations of a strong turnout this year for Dinah and White Party and a more robust tourism economy.

To David Hunsaker, it was a symbolic sign that the economy is stabilizing.

"I was with the last crew when the original Rainbow closed on March 17, 2008," said Hunsacker, who has worked in other venues since. "When I heard Leon's was opening this, I wanted to come home."

Other businesses along Arenas expect bigger gains in 2011.

Since the recession, Roger Gregg of Palm Springs Piercing Co. said business has trended up as much as 40 percent.

"We're almost back to normal."

Debra Gruszeczi covers tourism, CVEP and Indian gaming for The Desert Sun. She can be reached at Debra.Gruszeczki@thedesertsun.com or (760) 778-4643.

BUSINESS: Still time to have Fashion Week fun

Continued from D1

port, who collect 20 stickers from participating stores through Monday qualify for a drawing to win a \$3,500-plus shopping spree. While the week is winding to a close, some of the stores on the list will offer refreshments, discounts, free consultations and giveaways.

Divots and pivots

For the horsey set, there continues to be plenty of action in the Coachella Valley.

Today, **Martha's Village & Kitchen** will benefit from the **2011 MVK Polo Champions Cup** event that's being sponsored by the **Amidei Roman Group Merrill Lynch** and the **Patrick M. McCarthy Foundation** at the **Empire Polo Club in Indio**.

Guests participating in the fundraising event get a formal lunch, provided by **Crayons Catering**, and can partake in a raffle half-time divot stomp with complimentary Korbel champagne and a contest for those wearing the best polo ground hats.

Spectators are encouraged to bring nonperishable food to donate.

Equestrian-themed play to raise money for charity continues with "**A Day at the Races**" luncheon fashion show to benefit **Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Desert**.

The April 2 event at Renaissance Esmeralda includes a silent auction, fashion show by "Bigs" and "Littles" who're already practicing their pivots wearing garments from **The Gardens**

on El Paseo and El Paseo Village.

Like the polo event, the odds-on favorite will be the array of Derby Day Hats the ladies and gents will wear while experiencing thrills of the track with video horse racing.

Changing of the guard

Bob Allen, executive vice president and general manager at **Gulf-California Broadcasting Co.**, which operates **KESQ-TV**, the ABC-affiliated station for the Coachella Valley, will retire in June after 51 years in broadcasting.

Moving into his slot is **Mike Stutz**, now serving Gulf-California as corporate director of news.

Stutz, who began his career as a reporter at WITI-TV in Milwaukee, Wis., has held news director, station operation manager or news manager posts at KGTV-TV, San Diego; WJXT-TV, Jacksonville, Fla.; WTMJ-TV, Milwaukee; as well as television stations in St. Louis, Mo., and Denver, Colo.

While congratulating Allen on his retirement, Stutz said he will be a hard act to follow.

"I am humbled and honored to be offered this opportunity to manage such a great group of stations in one of the best places to live in the country."

Allen will continue to serve the **News-Press & Gazette Co.** subsidiary that also operates KDFX-TV,



COURTESY PHOTO

Virginia Vadeboncoeur, who teaches belly dance at Palm Springs Healing Center, was chosen to dance in Bahman Nassiri's film "The Golden Veil."

KCWQ-TV, KUNA-TV, KUNA-FM, kesq.com and kunamundo.com as a consultant.

Gassed up, ready to go

As the temperature rises, it's time to roll down the windows and hit the highway.

That was the saying when gasoline prices were at \$2.78. Now that it's costing roughly \$4 a gallon for a fill, hotels like **Riviera Palm Springs** are getting creative.

It's rolling out a "Free Gas Pass"

For more information

■ Renaissance Esmeralda Resort & Spa, 44-400 Indian Wells Lane, Indian Wells. (760) 773-4444. Web, www.marriott.com

■ Cafe Chocolat, 515 N. Palm Canyon Drive, Palm Springs. (760) 320-8889.

■ Gold's Gym, 4070 Airport Center Drive, Palm Springs. (760) 322-4653.

■ Virginia dance class information. Website, www.virginiahdance.com

■ Shopping Passport Extravaganza, www.fashionweekelpaseo.com

■ Empire Polo Club, 81-800 Avenue 51, Indio. Cost to attend the 11 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. MVK Polo Champions Cup fundraising event: \$150 per person; \$250 adult couple; \$75 per child; \$45 per tailgating vehicle for contest entry.

■ "A Day at the Races," a Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Desert event, (760) 568-3977. Reservations for the event costing \$85 per adult and \$40 per child requested by Tuesday, visiting www.BBBSDesert.org

■ Crayons Catering, 1115 N. Palm Canyon Drive, Palm Springs. (760) 778-6077.

■ Riviera Palm Springs, 1600 N. Indian Canyon Drive, Palm Springs. (760) 327-8311.

program through May 26 for drive-in vacationers to receive complimentary valet parking, as well as a \$25 gas credit. To get it, mention the "Free-GasPass" promo code at check-in.

There are two caveats: It can't be combined with other promotions.

And, there are blackout dates: April 1-3, 8-9, 15-17.

CVEP: User tax not officially discussed yet

Continued from D1

mentioned was a user-tax, such as one that metro areas have tacked onto the sale of gasoline, alcohol, cigarettes or tourist and visitor fees like taxi service.

Nothing has been officially discussed, however.

"We need some means by which we don't have to rely so heavily on financial participation by municipalities on an annual basis," Daniels said.

Lee Morcus, who serves on governing boards of CVEP and the Palm Springs Desert Resort Communities Convention and Visitors Authority, where the meeting was held, said his sense is one can't touch money that's already committed.

Nonetheless, Flavin and Daniels said diversifying the revenue base has to be a top priority going forward.

A goal of the business plan is to strengthen support from the private-sector community, Flavin said, and it's tied to revenue enhancement. Presentations to achieve those goals are already being prepared.

The nonprofit organization also plans to open a regional business center in Palm Springs, an economic development office in Indio and maintain a workforce excellence office at UC Riverside-Palm Desert.

Debra Gruszeczi covers tourism, CVEP and Indian gaming. She can be reached at Debra.Gruszeczki@thedesertsun.com or (760) 778-4643.