



AT THE LIBRARY

By Julie Winkelstein
October 5, 2007

“The Chamber’s mission is to maintain a terrific business climate in Albany, to represent and assist our members, and help build a better community for everyone.”

-From Albany Chamber of Commerce Mission Statement (www.albanychamber.org)

I recently attended my first Albany Chamber of Commerce mixer. These bi-monthly events take place at various venues around the city and are held, according to the coordinator Arlene Nizenski, so local business people can network and get to know each other. This one was at the San Pablo Ave Kingman’s Ivy Room, which has recently been renovated and redecorated by the new owners.

I had a good time and probably did network, although I didn’t know it at the time. I went as a representative of the Albany Library and I am glad I did. It is important for librarians to play an active part in the community in as many ways as possible. The Albany Library is a member of the Chamber, as well as the Solano Avenue Association. This is good not only for the library, but in addition it benefits the business community. The Urban Libraries Council report, “Making Cities Stronger: Public Library Contributions to Local Economic

Development,” emphasizes this aspect when they say: “In smaller communities, libraries are a principal source of information to area micro-, small, and mid-sized businesses.” The report lists some of the kinds of information we provide, such as access to databases and other resources; technical assistance for start-ups and micro-enterprises; and, technical assistance to existing businesses. Our presence at a business social helps remind the local businesses that we are there to help them.

Besides the people I already knew from the Friends of the Albany Library and the Albany Youth Task Force, I saw several I didn’t recognize. And much as I dislike wearing a nametag, I have to say I appreciated the information displayed on each person.

One business owner I chatted with was contractor Dana Milner, who has been working on a house right next door to the Albany Library. Every work day for the last

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many months I have been able to watch the transformation as it has gone from a small quiet house to a larger cheerful one. Milner and I talked about building “green” and solar panels, which I would like to know more about. My biggest question was how can someone in Albany – where it seems like the sun fights the fog most of the time – have solar panels? Apparently it’s possible, since Milner has them and, according to the Chamber website, at least three other people do, too.

In addition, I talked to someone from Tucker Graphic Design, a new shop on San Pablo, and Serena Leung, who is opening A Different Day Gallery on Solano Avenue. As she explained to me, her particular interest is in bringing together emerging artists and those who appreciate art. Her gallery opening reception is on Saturday October 6, from 4 to 7 p.m.

According to the Chamber’s website they have 260

members. About 60 came to the mixer and I socialized with at least twenty-five of them. So, as far as networking goes, I think I did fine.