

## **P2C is the new kid on the block**

By Nanci L. Valcke, Contra Costa Times, 7 January 2010

There's a new business and community group, Passport to Communities Foundation or P2C, in town, and its arrival appears to delight many.

"The more the merrier," said John Canesa, owner of Canesa's Brooklyn Deli. Canesa, a member of the Clayton Business and Community Association, added, "I don't see it taking anything away."

"I think it's a great thing. CBCA needs a little competition," said John Rubialos, immediate past president of CBCA.

P2C was officially launched New Year's Day and although there was no drum roll, businesses are hailing its arrival and signing on the dotted line to become a partner. Some signed up even before the official kickoff.

"Not one business we have spoken with has declined (joining) because they can do it at no cost," said Joseph A. Medrano, a city councilman.

The business, community 501(c)(3) nonprofit was created by Medrano, an insurance business owner, and his partner, Ted Meriam, who is a city planning commissioner, Clayton Historical Society president, member of the garden club and a professional with Microsoft.

The two men said they saw the need and deliberated on solving the problem of both promoting and assisting Clayton businesses, as well as raising funds for charities and special community needs.

CBCA current president Ed Hartley said he doesn't have an opinion of P2C yet.

"They haven't done anything except launch a Web site," he said. "I'm not going to (judge) it until I know what their track record is."

While CBCA centers on promoting community events, the primary purpose of P2C is promoting businesses — a reason business owners say they've joined.

Accurate Business Services owner Sue White, a 15-year member of CBCA, is now also a P2C member.

"They're two completely different organizations," White said. "P2C is more focused on business owner than on community. I, as a business person, would like to market my business a little more."

White is a bronze-level partner and as such, pays nothing for her partnership. However, bronze passport holders donate a tax-deductible \$100 and receive discounts or free items from all P2C bronze members.

White gives a 10 percent discount for secretarial services and notarizations. The passport may be used as many times as the holder wants throughout the year of purchase.

The other two business partner levels are gold and platinum. Partners at these levels must match passport holders' donations of \$550 per year for the gold and \$1,000 for the platinum.

The cost is greater for both the business owner and passport holder, but so are the benefits.

For example, these passport holders receive complimentary ride service for a night on the town from 5 p.m. to 2 a.m. on any Thursday, Friday or Saturday. Platinum members can use the service for a party of up to seven for a trip to Napa for wine tasting. There are also several planned events for members during the year.



Along with the special perks for the gold and platinum passport holders, P2C partners receive more marketing through a variety of methods above the standard P2C's Web site tool.

Money raised from the passports is added to funds raised from special events held throughout the year, such as a fine dining/wine auction, a golf tourney with a \$10,000 prize for a hole-in-one, and others.

Money is then distributed to charities, such as the Make-a-Wish Foundation, American Cancer Society, Clayton Historical Society, Clayton Library Foundation, Clayton Valley High School and Children's Hospital.

Medrano and Meriam also encourage community groups to apply for grants, as this is a part of P2C's philosophy of giving back to the community.

In addition, gold and platinum passport holders may designate 20 percent of their donation to an approved charity of their choice.

Medrano said P2C has enough Clayton business partners that it is more actively marketing passports. Meriam said many have already agreed, but need to send in their check. Both believe the Passport to Clayton idea is a good one and people will agree once they try it.

"We will definitely promote it," said Canesa. "We will definitely let our customers know about it."