



Ojai BUSINESS JOURNAL

The Official Newsletter of the Ojai Valley Chamber of Commerce

Volume 12 | Issue 3 | June / July 2016

“WE LOVE OJAI AND REAL ESTATE”

AN INTERVIEW WITH CHERYL & RAY DECKERT, BROKER ASSOCIATES AND MARIA DEPAOLA, REALTOR ASSOCIATE OF DECKERT/DEPAOLA - KELLER WILLIAMS REALTY IN OJAI, CALIFORNIA

The Deckert/DePaola real estate team is part of Keller Williams Realty. Along with Maria DePaola, Realtor Associate, the Deckerts represent buyers and sellers in the Ojai Valley and in Ventura and Santa Barbara Counties. They have sold homes throughout Southern California from Santa Barbara to San Diego.

Their business' core value: “We truly believe in serving our clients' needs first and foremost.”

The Deckerts have been Ojai residents since 2005. Cheryl Deckert has been selling real estate since 1980, working as a Premier Manager with Coldwell Banker and managing offices in the Los Angeles and Orange County area.



Deckert/DePaola: Ray and Cheryl Deckert, Broker Associates and Maria DePaola, Realtor Associate; Keller Williams Realty, Ojai, CA.

Ray Deckert worked for Kemper Insurance until Cheryl convinced him that real estate would be a better fit for his personality and professional skills. With 45 years of combined real estate brokering experience between them, the Deckerts' knowledge and expertise helps them provide excellent service.

Their offices are located at the Keller Williams office at 109 N Blanche Street Ojai, Ca 93023. Phone: the Deckerts: 805-649-4443 or Cell: 805-272-5221; email: rayandcheryl@kw.com. Maria DePaola: 805-689-9164; email:

MariaDePaola@kw.com. Websites: <http://www.bestbuysinojai.com>; and <http://www.deckertanddeckert.com>.



THE INTERVIEW:

OJAI BUSINESS JOURNAL: What is the most important thing you want Ojai Business Journal reader's to know about your business?

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The Ojai Art Center Presents

Art in the Park
2016

Art in the Park Enjoys a Festive Memorial Weekend

The Ojai Art Center's 39th Annual Art in the Park drew thousands to Libbey Park on Memorial Day Weekend.

With almost 100 artists who come from as far away as Idaho and the Bay area; as well as local artists, the quality and diversity of art offers an art experience like no other show. Set against the backdrop of beautiful Libbey Park, the artists display a wide variety of art ranging from watercolors to woodcrafts. Music and food add to the festive atmosphere.

This year six artists received cash awards for their work. Awards were also given to three high school students. The pictured artists are Iris Williams and Peter Buchan.





Ojai Valley Green Coalition Hosts a Successful Green Living Tour and Home Show

The Ojai Valley Green Living Tour & Home Show was first introduced by the Ojai Valley Green Coalition back in 2008. The purpose of the tour is to introduce people to resources that can help in building and / or remodeling a green home or office.

This year's tour featured a tiny house and a tiny office. The tiny house movement is a return to simple living and homes of less than 400 square feet.

Also featured was a home in Meiners Oaks, that was transformed into something extraordinary. Some of the green features in this home include formaldehyde-free insulation, cork flooring, natural wool, jute and seagrass rugs, wood fireplace converted to gas and a native and drought tolerant landscape.



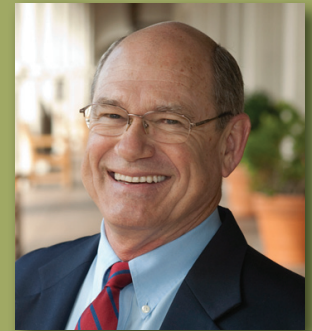
Photos by
Logan Hall
Photography



CEO'S FILES

June / July 2016

SCOTT EICHER, *Chamber CEO*



Two Initiatives:

Short Term Rentals and

1/2 Cent Sales Tax Increase

Here we go again, a summer that will be filled with campaign ads for the November elections: from Presidential candidates all the way down the chain to local City Council and Mayoral candidates. Mixed in with all of these will be the plethora of initiatives that have become a part of California's political landscape. Two of those initiatives will have a direct impact on Ojai residents. One will ask us to increase our sales tax countywide to improve our transportation infrastructure; one will ask Ojai residents to legalize short term rentals.

"Plan Don't Ban" Initiative

The so-called "Plan Don't Ban" initiative wants to legalize short term rentals (STR's) within the city limits of Ojai. The real question for Ojai voters is whether doing so, and specifically doing so under the auspices of this initiative, will irrevocably change Ojai for the worse or not. Certainly if this passes, the zoning ordinances in Ojai will need to be re-written to come into compliance with the new ordinance (as it would become if passed).

There are points in the "Plan Don't Ban" initiative that could easily provoke legal challenges, including limits on the number of STR's, where

CONTINUED ON PAGE 5

CITY OF OJAI statistics

TOT STATS



TRANSIENT OCCUPANCY TAX FOR FEBRUARY 2016: \$206,564
(15% Decrease over February 2015)

TRANSIENT OCCUPANCY TAX FOR JANUARY 2016: \$158,809
(5% Increase over January 2015)

TRANSIENT OCCUPANCY TAX FOR DECEMBER 2015:
\$215,748 (7% Increase over December 2014)

TOTAL Transient Occupancy Tax
Jan. - Dec. 2015: \$3,079,056
(9% Increase year over year 2014)

SALES TAX

Sales Tax Collection • 2015

July 1 – Sept. 30 ~ \$263,389
(210% Increase Q1 FY 14-15)

FY 2014-2015 ~ \$1,096,755
(17% Decrease year over year FY 13-14)



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Deckert / DePaola Interview

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CHERYL DECKERT: We have a passion for helping people sell their property or buy the right property to meet their needs and desires.

RAY DECKERT: We treat every client equally, whether they're buying or selling a \$30,000 mobile home or a \$3 million estate.

OBJ: Who is your target client?

RAY: Anyone who wants to buy or sell a home.

CHERYL: People looking for a real estate broker, and those who want to be treated with respect and fairness.

OBJ: What should a buyer know about buying a home in the Ojai Valley this year?

RAY: It's not strictly a seller's market anymore; the prices in Ojai have begun to level off. Buyers are beginning to resist higher prices.

CHERYL: But I think it's a good trend overall. We don't want to see the huge price jumps we saw leading up to the 2007 real estate crash and recession.

OBJ: What should sellers know about selling a home in the Ojai Valley this year?

RAY: There are still lots of buyers out there. Prices are still going up, but they've tapered off. The market is getting very active. Sixty-four new listings came on the market in March, more than in any other month over the last 14 months, and it does not appear to be slowing down.

CHERYL: There's more inventory, so buyers have more choices. Buyers are realizing they don't have to pay a premium for a property. Sellers who overprice their property will have to pull back their expectations a little.

OBJ: What is happening to the selling prices of homes in the Ojai Valley?

RAY: Prices are still going up, but at slower more normal rate.

OBJ: What about short sales and foreclosures?

RAY: Very few buyers ask about short sales or foreclosures anymore.

CHERYL: We're seeing less of those. In fact, I would say short sales are rare now. That can be attributed to the lending sector of the industry. The lenders have adjusted the criteria to get a mortgage loan, making the requirements much more stringent.

RAY: The Federal Government's loan forgiveness program is over. Because home prices have been going up, many people are waiting out the market in hopes of seeing the value of their home begin to appreciate.

OBJ: Is there still affordable housing in Ojai?

CHERYL: Yes, compared to much of Santa Barbara, Los Angeles and Orange County and parts of southern Ventura County.

OBJ: What's the biggest challenge facing your business this year?

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Don Felder, a Former Eagles Lead Guitarist, to Headline Health System Benefit Concert

Community Memorial Healthcare Foundation and Ojai Valley Community Hospital Foundation has announced Don Felder, a former legendary guitarist with the Eagles, will be performing at this year's "At The Bowl" benefit concert on Oct. 22 at Libbey Bowl.

Felder, who played lead guitar with the Eagles for 27 years, originated the music on numerous Eagles milestones and co-wrote their biggest hit – the iconic "Hotel California."

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The Ojai Business Journal is a bi-monthly publication of the Ojai Valley Chamber of Commerce which is solely responsible for its contents. Information for issues should be dictated to:

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MARK YOUR CALENDAR

JUNE 2016

Thursday, June 23

Chamber Mixer @ BookEnds Bookstore

110 S. Pueblo, Ave., Meiners Oaks

5:30-7PM • 805.646.8126

Friday, June 24

Ribbon Cutting, 11:15 AM

East End Restaurant & Bar, 914 E. Ojai Ave.

Join in the festivities, all weekend, June 24-26.

Dishes will be served on color coated plates and include a coupon for a future visit.

For more information call East End at 805.272.8935

JULY 2016

Monday, July 4th



Independence Day! Annual Parade, Concerts & Fireworks -- come out & celebrate!!

Wednesday, July 6, 20

Morning Business Referral Group Meeting

@ Eggs N Potatoes 7:15 AM

Lunch Business Referral Group Meeting

@ Ojai Community Bank, Noon to 1:00 PM

Tuesday, July 12

City Council Meeting • 7:00 PM

Council Chambers, City Hall, 805.646.5581

Thursday, July 14

Chamber Board & OVB Meeting

@ Ojai Music Festival Conference Rm.

Noon; 646-8126

Wednesday, July 27

Chamber Breakfast Presentation:

State of the City, State of Education

8:00 - 10:00 a.m., 646-8126

Thursday, July 28

Chamber Mixer @ Azu

457 E. Ojai Ave. • 5:30-7PM, 805.646.8126

Deckert / DePaola Interview

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RAY: We're really busy, so every day is a challenge. We'd be working 16 hour days without Maria on board. In fact, prior to a photo shoot I did this morning on a new listing, I spent an hour cleaning and vacuuming the property beforehand. It's all hands on deck!

CHERYL: Our challenge is taking care of the clients we have. We go the extra mile for our clients. For instance we go to home inspections, but many brokers don't. Ray once drove five hours round-trip to Irvine to deliver closing paperwork so a client's home would close on Friday instead of the following Monday.

MARIA DEPAOLA: We're always looking for new ways to streamline our systems so we can get it all done.

OBJ: What sets your real estate business apart from others in the Ojai Valley?

RAY: Our website (www.bestbuysinojai.com) attracts many buyers. We average a mix of 40% buyers to 60% sellers as clients. Many of those buyer clients eventually become seller clients later on.

MARIA: We give special attention to the details and to going the extra mile for all our clients, whether they're buyers or sellers.

CHERYL: We listen to our clients and take care of their needs. We're especially good at hand-holding for first-time buyers; it's all part of the service we offer our clients. Many of our friends are past clients. We play team trivia every week and virtually the entire table of 10 people are all past clients!

OBJ: Is there anything else you'd like to add about Deckert/DePaola that we haven't covered?

CHERYL: We raise tomato seedlings every spring and give them to our present and past clients. When the seedlings are big enough, we transplant them into cups. Then one weekend in spring we let our clients know they can come to the office and get their tomato plants.

RAY: We have clients calling every spring and asking if we're going to be doing the tomatoes again. We obliged them again this year at the end of April.

OBJ: What one thing would you like readers of this interview to remember about Deckert/DePaola?

CHERYL: We treat every client like they're our only client.

RAY: ... And we have fun doing it.

MARIA: ... Quirky fun.

Felder

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In addition to performing this song, he will be showcasing many Eagles hits in a specially crafted concert entitled "Don Felder, an Evening at the Hotel California."

The funds raised by this event will support Community Memorial Health System construction projects – the building a new Community Memorial Hospital in Ventura and a new Continuing Care Center in Ojai.



General admission tickets and sponsorship packages are available at www.cmhsatthebowl.org. Or call 805-667-2881.

Community Memorial Health System is a not-for-profit health system which is comprised of Community Memorial Hospital, Ojai Valley Community Hospital, as well as the Centers for Family Health, serving various Ventura County communities.



CEO'S FILES CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

they will be allowed, who can own them and where the owners must reside. If any or all of these limits are thrown out by a court's decision, and the rest of the initiative is allowed to stand as drafted – as its language actually reads - then Ojai residents could end up with very little, if any, regulations pertaining to the short term rental business within the Ojai city limits. Furthermore, having no restrictions on the number, location or ownership of STR's would necessarily bring an immediate change to the character of the residential zones within the city limits and the overall character of the city and Valley as a whole. This initiative only requires a 50% plus one vote to pass and become the law of the land.

Ojai's hotels are full almost every weekend, and especially so on national holiday weekends and other weekends when we have festivals, tennis tournament and independent school graduations. Ojai is a small town with limited resources and a limited infrastructure. This must be considered when we think about allowing non-regulated short term rentals to proliferate. Tourism supplies the bulk of our income as a city. People come here for the quiet, natural beauty of this valley and to see what a true community is like. If our residential zones become over-run with short term rentals, we will no longer be what visitors come here to see. The Chamber has repeatedly spoken at City Council meetings concerning the issue of short term rentals, and we have said we believe that strictly regulating them through city ordinances and zoning restrictions is the best solution. However, this initiative is a bad solution to the issue. If this initiative is passed, the city will not be able to pass any ordinances that conflict with it. Any changes to the initiative will have to be passed by a vote of the residents of Ojai. In essence the city will lose all control of the short term rental issue going forward. See the PDF file of the initiative at the end of this page.

1/2 Cent Sales Tax Increase Initiative

Ventura County is the only county in California that does not have a transportation infrastructure supporting tax. All the counties surrounding us do, but we do not. According to the Ventura County Transportation Commission (VCTC), voting in this 30-year increase will cost each person about \$1 per week, but it will raise approximately \$3.3 billion over 30 years, plus whatever matching funds we will receive from federal and state programs. Half of the funds raised will be devoted to local streets and roads. Ojai will receive about \$500,000 annually, based on the percentage of lane miles within the city limits. This would be in addition to any funds

the City of Ojai dedicates to improving our own streets. If the City can continue to spend \$1,000,000 for street repair and maintenance each year, and also receive another \$500,000 from this tax increase, we might have nice streets all over town within a few years.

Though the Chamber is generally against any new taxes, we know our transportation infrastructure needs to be addressed, and the county is leaving millions of dollars in matching funds on the table every year by not having this funding source. This initiative requires a 2/3 majority of votes cast to pass.

For the specifics on how the collected funds will be spent and the oversight of those expenditures see the PDF file below.

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California Resources Corporation is proud to support the Ojai Valley Chamber of Commerce and their support of the business community.



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New CHAMBER MEMBERS

Haney Landscaping

Randy Haney
513 Pleasant Street
Ojai, CA 93023
(805) 640-8607
randy@haneylandscaping.com
Home & Garden

Ojai Education Foundation

Therese Hartmann
P.O. Box 1769
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Annual Golf Charity Raises Money for the Youth of the Ojai Valley

This year's Golf Classic Charity Event was hosted at Soule Park Golf Course.

A grand total of \$15,000 was raised and will be split between the Ojai Education Foundation and the Ojai Valley Youth Foundation.

This event has historically been held at the Ojai Valley Inn and Spa. The decision to move it to Soule Park Golf Course was a collective one made by the board of the Ojai Education Foundation and the Ojai Valley Youth Foundation, the two benefitting non-profits.

A diverse group of golfers and supporting sponsors helped to make the event successful and fun!

The Ojai community once again came together to raise money for the youth of the valley. With the help of local sponsors and The Rotary of Ojai-West which provided a delicious B-B-Que dinner, Lorraine Lim Catering which donated the mouth watering desserts and the Nordhoff Jazz Band, it truly was a fun and festive day.



Golf Classic Committee Members

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2016 State of the City & State of Education

On Wednesday morning, July 27, Ojai Mayor Paul Blatz and Ojai Unified School District Superintendent, Dr. Hank Bangser will give their respective presentations on the State of the City and State of Education. This is an annual event produced by the Chamber so our members and others can learn what challenges and opportunities are in store for the City's and the School District's coming 2016 – 2017 fiscal year.

This will be the last year an appointed mayor will speak for the City of Ojai because

starting with the November 2016 election, we will elect our mayors going forward. Mayor Blatz will discuss the upcoming budget, how the ½ cent sales tax could impact Ojai, and he will answer questions from the crowd for a few minutes following his presentation.

Dr. Bangser will undoubtedly speak to the still unresolved budgetary problems that continue to beset the OUSD, his pending retirement and the passing of the torch to Andy Cantwell. There will be time for questions following the presentation.

The presentations will be at Soule Park Golf Course Banquet Room. Tickets are \$25 each in advance (until midnight Friday, July 22nd). Ticket price will \$30 there after. Admission includes a buffet breakfast. Doors open at 8:00 a.m.; breakfast buffet will be ready at 8:15, and the presentations begin at 8:30, with a scheduled ending of 10:00 a.m.

For advanced reservations, call the Chamber office at 646-8126 or register online at www.ojaichamber.org

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CHAMBER M I X E R



Ross Falvo and Bret Bradigan



Kathy Hartley, left, owner of the The Lavender Inn was host to the last Chamber Mixer.

Ojai Education Foundation Board Members, Therese Hartmann and Laura Denne, right accepting their new member plaque.



INTEGRITY AND STRENGTH

with a local focus



Photograph by Michael McFadden



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*Congratulations
to All the Nominees!*



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CHAMBER M I X E R

Nathan Kaehler, left
pictured with a friend.



Olga Jones, Board
President, shown
with Anna Nozak.



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Keller Williams Realty, Ojai, CA

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Thank you to those who have trusted us with their real estate portfolios!



- Cheryl, Ray & Maria

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