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MONDAY PROFILE



DAN ROSENSTRAUCH/STAFF

CINDY GERSHEN, owner of Sunrise Bistro in Walnut Creek, challenges area restaurants to eliminate trans fat, reduce high fructose corn syrups and offer healthy options.

Bistro owner serves up ways to eat, live healthy

By Theresa Harrington
STAFF WRITER

WALNUT CREEK
Cindy Gershen is a petite dynamo.

She is sweeping up people in a monumental cause — to transform the way people eat, exercise and think about health and wellness.

"It's very exciting to see it taking off," Gershen said, during a break at the Sunrise Bistro restaurant, which she owns and operates. "I'm an agent for change."

She speaks rapidly, emphatically and from the heart. Her dark brown eyes, determined facial expressions and enthusiastic body language come on strong, yet leave listeners eager to help.

"I'm really inspired by her passion, energy and commitment," said Walnut Creek Transportation Commission Chairman Kish Rajan, who wants to extend Gershen's walking programs for children and seniors to residents throughout the city. "There are really only a few people who step up in communities and are really tireless to find vehicles to make positive change. She's motivated me to reach out to my peers to find a way to do this."

In the past few years, Gershen has had a similar influence on dozens of people. She dreams big and is not afraid to ask people to join her quest to leave the world a healthier place for the children who will inherit it.

"She's dynamic and able to bring so many talents together," said Vinita Ramsay, who is working with Gershen on a pilot nutritional food program in the Acalanes school district, based in Lafayette. "I don't think anybody can argue that she can make things hap-

HOMETOWN HEROES

CINDY GERSHEN

■ **AGE:** 52

■ **HOMETOWN:** Born in Oakland; lives in Walnut Creek

■ **OCCUPATION:** Executive chef and owner of Sunrise Bistro

■ **COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT:** Spearheaded Walnut Creek Wellness City Challenge and Healthy Restaurant Association

■ **DETAILS:** Wellness challenge, 925-943-7862 or www.wellnesscitychallenge.com

■ **QUOTE:** "I'm an agent for change."

Hometown Heroes, a partnership between Bay Area News Group-East Bay and Comcast, celebrates people in the Bay Area who make a difference in their communities. In addition to highlighting remarkable individuals, the Hometown Heroes feature aims to encourage volunteerism, raise visibility of nonprofits and key causes in the area and create a spirit of giving.

Read about a new Hometown Hero every other Monday and watch the program on Comcast on Demand at Channel One > Bay On Demand > Hometown Heroes.

Developed in partnership with BayAreaNewsGroup and Comcast

pen. She's just a wonderful asset to the community and I think people take her seriously, because she's been through a lot herself, so people respect where she's coming from."

The vivacious, joyful woman whose zeal spreads

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Treasury, Fed rescue U.S. mortgage giants

■ Freddie Mac and Fannie Mae will receive relief from government in move seen as signal to investors

By Jeannine Aversa
ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — The Federal Reserve and the Treasury announced steps Sunday to shore up mortgage giants Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, whose shares have plunged as losses from their mortgage

holdings threatened their financial survival.

The steps are also intended to send a signal to nervous investors worldwide that the government is prepared to take all necessary steps to prevent the credit market troubles that started last year from en-

gulfing financial markets and further weakening the economy and housing markets.

The Fed said it granted the Federal Reserve Bank of New York authority to lend to the two companies "should such lending prove necessary." They would pay 2.25 percent for any borrowed funds — the same rate given to commercial banks and big Wall Street firms.

The Fed said this should help the companies' ability to "promote the availability of home mortgage credit during a period of stress in financial markets."

Secretary Henry Paulson said the Treasury is seeking expedited authority from Congress to expand its current \$2.25 billion line of credit

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DOUG DURAN/STAFF

WITH WINE comes the truth, and the truth is Livermore Valley wineries are taking root and doing brisk business despite the harsh fiscal climate. San Ramon's Phil Long, above, opened Longevity Wines with his wife, Debra, on Friday in Livermore.

Economy can't cork wine business

■ Livermore Valley entrepreneurs producing barrels and selling bottles, some without owning a single vine

By Jeanine Benca
STAFF WRITER

LIVERMORE — The withering economy has not soured business in Livermore's bur-

geoning wine country, where six wineries have opened in the past year.

Business continues to pour in, as evidenced by a growing

number of small but tenacious startup wineries that have taken root in the area. The region now boasts 44 wineries.

Meanwhile, the area's older wineries are finding innovative ways to stay fruitful, despite the less-than-fertile economy. High gas prices and other

stressors are actually helping some businesses, insiders say.

At six-year-old Tenuta Vineyards, customers get rebates on bottles of wine if they show their gasoline receipts at the tasting-room counter.

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Budget may hinge on charm

■ Senate leader Perata can be sour or sweet depending on dealings, Capitol observers say

By Steven Harmon

MEDIA NEWS SACRAMENTO BUREAU
SACRAMENTO — Senate President Pro Tem Don Perata has what experts say is a textured approach to dealing with his Republican foes on the budget.

The Oakland Democrat si-

multaneously plays villain and confidante, foe and pal. He's a partisan flamethrower who takes his rivals to breakfast.

Take last week, when Perata's opening budget negotiation move — demanding higher taxes on the wealthy and corporations — had the effect of casting Republicans as heartless country clubbers. Even as he attacked Republicans for failing to empathize with the little guy, though, he promised the wine would be flowing freely as budget nego-

tiations got under way.

Soon — perhaps after next week — he is expected to send home senators so he won't have to deal with a rebellious GOP caucus as he tries to woo the minority leader, Sen. Dave Cogdill, R-Fresno.

"He is incredibly smart as a tactician," said Darryl Sragow, a Democratic political consultant. "He can play many steps ahead, and he can play at multiple levels, making several

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MIKE LUCIA/STAFF

COWBOYS TRY TO rope a calf as part of the Bill Pickett Invitational Rodeo, which celebrates black Western heritage.

KNOWING THE ROPES

THE BILL PICKETT INVITATIONAL RODEO in Castro Valley celebrated black cowboys' contributions to the West with six events, a lesson in unheralded history and plenty of food. The rodeo's namesake was the first African-American elected to the ProRodeo Hall of Fame and is credited with inventing steer wrestling. Pickett would jump off a horse, tackle a steer and bite its lip to subdue it. Page 3

Weather

SUNNY
Highs 80s, Lows 60s
Forecast: Page CL14



BART extension on track

■ Transit agency preparing to spend millions of dollars buying land to reach lines to Livermore. Page 3

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Insurgent attack

■ Nine American soldiers die in Afghanistan, the deadliest day for U.S. troops since 2005. Page 8



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Wine

FROM PAGE 1

"People love that," owner Nancy Tenuta said of the gimmick. Profits are better than ever at her winery, and Tenuta thinks it's because local folks have been cutting down on travel to save money, and are enjoying the wine country closer to home.

"Why go to Napa, why go to Sonoma with gas prices being what they are? People still want to have fun, but within reason," Tenuta said.

Some of the area's most robust wine producers are also benefiting from the economic slump.

The weak American dollar has helped raise export sales in Europe for 120-year-old Concannon Vineyards, the Livermore Valley's second-largest winery after Wente Vineyards, said Concannon General Manager Jim Ryan.

"Any economies where the dollar is stronger, it really helps," Ryan said.

And tight budgets are not preventing wineries from opening, either.

In recent times, some ambitious novices in the Livermore Valley have caught on to a growing trend in the wine world that saves millions of dollars: They are starting wineries without owning a vineyard.

Longevity Wines, a husband-and-wife-owned winery, opened Friday in Livermore. It is the latest so-called "urban winery" to materialize in the Bay Area.

There isn't a grapevine within sight of Longevity, which is tucked in a light industrial park not far from the city of Livermore's wastewater treatment plant. The 1,000-square-foot tasting suite hardly fits the traditional image of a country winery.

Founders Phil and Debra Long said they are following the lead of dozens of passionate, limited-production winemakers in Berkeley, Oakland and other urban areas who buy grapes from established vineyards, and produce their wine wherever

LIVERMORE AREA WINERIES

■ The Livermore-Amador Valley is home to 44 wineries, six of which opened in the past 12 months.

■ The region has more than 5,000 acres of vineyards.

■ Wineries vary in size from limited release, 100-case producers to the largest winery in the East Bay, 125-year-old Wente Vineyards, which produces 400,000 cases annually.

■ The Livermore Valley is one of California's oldest wine regions. This year, growers will make their 159th annual grape harvest.

■ In the 1840s, pioneers looking for vineyard sites began planting grapes in the region. Robert Livmore planted the first commercial vines in the 1840s. Pioneer winemakers C.H. Wente, James Concannon and Charles Wetmore founded their wineries in the early 1880s.

Source: Livermore Valley Winegrowers Association

they can find space.

"The first thing people ask us is, 'How much is a vineyard?'" Phil Long said. "We don't have a vineyard. You don't need one; you can make wine anywhere."

Though they had always enjoyed wine, the Longs said their love for it grew when they moved to the Bay Area from Southern California about six years ago. They started a monthly wine club, which led them on excursions to dozens of Northern California tast-

ing rooms. Everywhere they went, they learned another winemaking tip, made another contact.

"I walked around with a notebook," Phil Long said, describing one of his first conversations with a wine consultant he met in Concord. "I said, 'I'm thinking about making wine. I just want to learn, but I don't think I'm going to be ready for crush.'"

It didn't take long before the couple were picking their own grapes from the vineyard of a grower they found in Oak-

against Sen. Jeff Denham, R-Merced. Still, in a gesture intended to lift the cloud over budget negotiations, he aborted the recall campaign shortly before the June 3 election. At the time, Cogdill said the move eased tensions.

Perata can also disarm his foes with charm and wit that often isn't on display in the partisan-charged public persona he carries.

Sen. Dick Ackerman, R-Tustin, a former minority leader who worked with Perata in several budget negotiations, said the Democrat was not the

been portrayed as by his opponents.

"The times it was just Don and I were the best," said Ackerman, who was replaced earlier this year by Cogdill. "You could be perfectly frank and get things done quicker."

Last year, Ackerman was having difficulty getting his calls answered by Perata, but when the Democrat heard how frustrated his Republican counterpart was, he scheduled a breakfast for the two.

Ackerman takes credit for starting Perata's tradition of serving wine — he favors red

"We were stuck on one of the issues in negotiations, and I said, 'You got any wine?' and he said, 'Yeah,'" Ackerman explained. "After that, things started moving, and I said, 'We've got to do this more often.'"

Other Republicans had a distinctly different take on whether Perata could seduce his way to a budget deal.

"Don Perata might be the single worst schmoozer in legislative history," said Dan Schnur, a Republican political consultant who was former Gov. Pete Wilson's commu-

ney. They rented a wine press, bought a 30-gallon barrel and made their first wine in the garage of their San Ramon home.

"You learn by the seat of your pants," said Phil Long, creative director for the retail display company Rapid Displays. His "day job" pays the bills, but winemaking is his passion.

His wife, Debra, described the evolution of their admittedly expensive pastime: "You start accumulating stuff over time. Instead of buying Christmas gifts, you buy a barrel," she said.

Recently, they leased the suite on Rickenbacker Circle in Livermore. After jumping through all the licensing hoops required to sell wine, they are open for business. The goal is to produce 500 cases in 2008, Phil said. He added that his dream is to one day purchase a vineyard.

"I think you're going to find that not only are urban wineries growing, but they're probably in the greater scheme of things representing well over 30 percent of

(wineries)," said Jim Frost, another urban winery entrepreneur in the Livermore Valley.

Frost, who owns three-year-old Hidden Creek Vineyard & Winery, makes his wine out of an industrial space in Pleasanton and sells it from a tasting room in bustling downtown Livermore. This is the first year he expects to make a profit, said Frost, who after spending more than 20 years in biotechnology, "took the plunge" and opened a winery in 2005.

"No normal person can afford to open a vineyard and do the whole thing. But if you can rent a space for a couple thousand a month you can start immediately," he said. "The vast majority of people I've talked to who are in the urban winery setting have no intention whatsoever of ever buying a vineyard."

About the economy's effect on wine sales, Tenuta said, "The good news about the wine industry is that when people are happy they drink wine — and when people are depressed they drink wine."

Budget

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moves simultaneously.

"If you're trying to get somebody to do something they may be reluctant to do, personal relations matter a great deal," Sragow added. "Don likes to develop relationships with people he's negotiating against. That's the way he functions."

His relationship with Republicans has been complicated by hardball political tactics he has employed — such

opposing legislators has never been a particularly strong suit of his. He's usually the obstacle, not the deal maker. He's spent many years in the Legislature making more enemies across the aisle than friends."

Whatever energy he has put into gaining Cogdill's trust — they've met regularly since May, when Cogdill took over — it may be the action of a few stray Republicans that gets the job done. Senate Democrats, who hold a 25-15 advantage, need two votes to reach a two-thirds requirement on the budget and tax increases.

San Luis Obispo, could provide a yes vote on the Democrats' budget plan, observers said, as a way of repaying Perata for discouraging Democrats from running against Maldonado this fall. Another vote could come from someone like Sen. Roy Ashburn, R-Bakersfield, whom observers said is still rankled over being replaced as vice chairman of the Senate Rules Committee by rival Jim Battin, R-Palm Desert.

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