

15 MINUTES

## Ready, set ... throw

Arianna Mathiopoulos moved to Chico from San Diego last December, looking for a slower pace. She quickly noticed a lack of evening entertainment outside of going to the bars. Having experience in the business realm, including working in the insurance and restaurant industries, Mathiopoulos started brainstorming ideas for the Chico market, and eventually landed on the idea of ax-throwing. She taught herself the basics of opening a business and got her first business license last month to open The Hatchet House. After an Oct. 19 grand opening to chop out the kinks, the business is now open Wednesday-Sundays. Check it out at 845 Cherry St. or call 715-7547 or visit hatchethousechico.com for more information.

### Are you a big ax-thrower yourself, or is it just about the business?

I think it's a little bit of both. It's more of a business, and I just wanted to create something new in Chico. But once I started to throw axes, I got why people enjoyed it. It's actually fun. It's an odd stress relief.

### How did you find this location?

I was out to sushi one night with a buddy, and I was venting about how difficult it had



been [to find a place], and he said, "Let's go drive around." So we were driving and there's a location like four blocks down the street ... and there was a hole at the top, so we backed up his truck to see what was in it and the owner came up and thought we were trying to break in. He was like, "What are you doing? Get down from there! Explain yourself!" He was super hot about it, but we started talking and I told him what I was looking for and he said he had a property down the street and to go check it out. I did, and to me this is the perfect space.

### What were renovations like?

My 70-year-old dad ... actually built all of this himself. I was still working full time in insurance and would come help after work.

And on the weekends my brother and my mom, my nephew and sister-in-law would come here and paint and be other hands for my dad. It probably took three weeks to get everything up and standing, but I primarily have to give my dad the credit.

### What do you do to make sure it stays safe?

I put a 5-foot barrier between the first bar to divide the audience, and you need to make sure you step in front of the line to throw. You have to make sure that nobody is throwing in the other lanes when you go to retrieve your axe. I put hay bales at the bottom to stop bounce back. Make sure your eyes are forward. Be alert, be aware, and no visibly intoxicated people.

—JOSH COZINE

PHOTO BY JOSH COZINE

## THE GOODS

## Retail roundup



by  
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As we head into the holiday season (yes, I know, it's too soon!), retail businesses start to ramp up their sales and advertising to pull up their bottom lines. There's always a bit of action around this time, with openings and closings, and since I haven't taken the pulse of the retail market lately, I took this week to get caught up.

I got word that **H&M** is moving into the **Chico Mall**. Of course, with **Forever 21** leaving, there will be a niche to fill there—Sweden-based H&M specializes in clothing, and also features men's styles. The new store will only be about 15,000 square feet, much smaller than the current Forever 21 footprint, so my guess is the mall is going forward with dividing that anchor space into multiple stores. (Spokeswoman **Lynette Myers** said she couldn't divulge the plan for H&M.)

I came to that conclusion after perusing a map of the mall on the website of its parent company, **Ethan Conrad**. It shows the Forever 21 space divided into three spots and, curiously, **Planet Fitness** in the back quarter or so of the food court. Some other indicators as to what the mall's up to came up at the city Architectural Review and Historic Preservation Board meeting earlier this month. It's hoping to erect a big, lighted sign visible from Highway 99, and on the sample marquee: **H&M**, **Planet Fitness**, **HomeGoods** and **Petco** (which would presumably move from its spot by Barnes & Noble). No love for any of the current tenants, I guess!

**MORE MUSINGS** Turns out a number of big retailers have announced store closings this year, and many of them have locations in Chico. Here's the quick and the dirty, according to Moneywise.

We all know **Kmart** has been struggling for a while now. Chico may get a reprieve because the Paradise store is still shuttered, but for how long is anyone's guess. Women's clothing store **Chico's** will be closing at least 250 stores over the next three years. **CVS** and **Walgreen's** are both closing stores—46 and 200, respectively. **GameStop** will be closing 200 stores, as it struggles to compete with downloadable games. **Pier 1 Imports** announced it'll close 140 stores, and **Bed, Bath & Beyond** 60. Other struggling stores to keep an eye on: **Office Depot**, **Lowe's** and **Victoria's Secret**.

These are all big companies, but at least they employ local folks. So, when it comes to holiday shopping, remember that—and that sales tax dollars stay in our community—and when you're not shopping mom-n-pops, at the very least keep your money in town.

**LEAVING THE STATION** At its last regular meeting Oct. 15, the Chico City Council approved amending the lease agreement for the train depot to allow other uses for the railcar out front. Apparently **Great Northern Coffee Co.** isn't making enough money for the **Chico Art Center**, which runs the space. It's a shame—the ambience was quirky and fun. I look forward to seeing how they reimagine it.

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