

15 MINUTES

Holy matrimony

In the front yard of ordained minister Lisa Holeman's quaint home hangs a large silver wind chime crafted by former Chico artist Gregg Payne. While the striking object attracts impromptu photo shoots from passersby, its main function is to provide peaceful melodies to newlyweds who've just been married in Holeman's lush backyard sanctuary, Windchime Chapel. For 20 years, Holeman's business, As You Like It Weddings, has provided ministry services to over 2,000 weddings all over California, many of which have been performed in her own intimate backyard setting. For more information, visit windchimeweddingchapel.com.

How did you get into this business?
I had been living in Japan, and I came back here and told everyone I was looking for work, because there weren't a lot of jobs available. There was a woman who was doing this [officiating weddings] and she needed help. After working my first wedding, I was so passionate about it and I thought, *Oh, this is my calling!* So I purchased the business from her. That was around '95.

For the weddings you don't officiate at your chapel, where do you go?
We go to country clubs, the CARD Center, The Palms ... a lot of people have them at ranches and their backyards. I've seen



PHOTO BY RACHEL BUSH

everything; people have arrived in limousines and carriages, and others show up in their work boots and Big Gulps in their hands. It's so fun to see all the different visions people have for uniting.

Your backyard chapel is very charming. What kind of work went into creating the space?

The redwoods were planted many years ago, after I'd first moved to this house, and then we made a creek-like water feature. It's very intimate and cozy. If you love the outdoors, you'll love it. People have always just loved it. And the wind chime is a pretty cool feature.

What's your favorite part of this job?
Sometimes it's like looking at the face of God. People are so vulnerable and their hearts are right out in the open and it's so intimate, and I feel like it's an honor to be in the presence of that.

Are there any ceremonies that were particularly memorable?

There's one that sticks out. The bride was from Japan and the groom was American. They had a very intimate, small wedding here at the chapel with just their families. Each family stood in a circle, and neither spoke each other's language, so the bride had to translate everything. I held a giant candle and everyone lit their taper candle from mine, while saying what they were going to bring to the union. I thought it was so profound because not only were they merging cultures, but they were also expressing that marriage is more than two people, and that it's valuable for families to support this love in any way they can. Today's America needs that kind of love, where we ask, "What can we bring?" Bring your light and love, and not your judgment.

—RACHEL BUSH

THE GOODS

Downtown gets gift cards



by
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I grew up in St. Louis, Mo., in the golden age of the shopping mall (remember the board game Mall Madness?). For special occasions, I'd always receive gift certificates to the Galleria, our biggest, coolest shopping center. It was great, because I could use them at any store; it was a one-size-fits-all solution to gift-giving.

I learned last week from **Anika Burke Rodriguez Kronmiller**, owner of the **Anika Burke** clothing store, that downtown Chico now has its own version of that, a **Downtown Chico Gift Card**. They're available at \$25, \$50 and \$100 values and can be purchased at the **Downtown Chico Business Association** office (330 Salem St.) or **Diamond W Western Wear** (181 E. Second St.). Participating businesses (some 50 of them!) can be found on the DCBA website and include retailers (**Bird in Hand**, **Kirk's Jewelry**, etc.) and restaurants (**Crush**, **Parkside Tap House** and more).

I'd been in contact with Rodriguez Kronmiller regarding the **Downtown Chico Shoppe Hop** that she and **Kim Columbo**, owner of **3 Seas**, had organized for last Thursday (Dec. 12). She said they'd put that event together in response to customer complaints of having missed **Christmas Preview**, which this year was combined with the **Tree Lighting**. They got two dozen-plus businesses involved and offered a \$100 gift card to one shopper who made purchases at three of them that evening. I wasn't able to attend, but I hear it was a success. The coolest part, Rodriguez Kronmiller told me, was seeing so many downtown businesses working together.

MORE CLOSURES 'Tis the season, I suppose. I've learned recently of several more Chico establishments calling it quits. **Heavenly Blue Fine Lingerie**, on the second floor of the **Grandview Building** downtown, is one of them. Apparently owner **Ellen Stephens** is ready to retire. The store opened in 2010 and has the cutest little mascot, **Chewy**. Everything is on sale, so go use up gift certificates and store credit if you've got 'em.

Also retiring is **Dovie Detches**, owner of **Dove's Gypsy Heart Boutique**, which relocated to the **Chico Mall** after the Camp Fire. "You know, I've had stores in Chico and Paradise for the last 33 years and am so grateful to have had this great career in retail," Detches told me. "It's a great time to retire." She'll be selling inventory through the 31st, then fixtures in January. There'll be an art and wine event Jan. 17 (tickets \$45). So, get on over and say farewell.

I happened to stop by **The Buzz** last week for a breakfast burrito and was sad to learn that it'd be serving its final Sunday brunch Dec. 15. I'll miss the tri-tip Benedict and housemade corned beef, to be sure. And, just down the road at Fifth and Cedar streets, **Tacos Pepe**, the little hole in the wall with the well-seasoned taco grill with a "moat," also has closed. I'd gone a few times at Arts Editor Jason Cassidy's recommendation, and was not disappointed. But all good things must end.

Happy holidays!

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