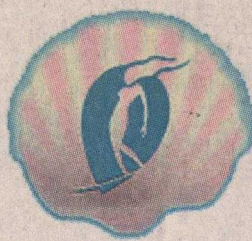


WOMEN OF THE WAVES



Pleasure Point's
Paradise Surf Shop
caters to a side
of the sport that's
often overlooked



Sally Smith,
Kristina
Marquez,
Alayna
Schiebel and
Sara Bray (not
pictured)
started the
Paradise Surf
Shop a year
ago. The store
caters
exclusively to
women wave
riders.

Dan Coyro/Sentinel

Store's success is 'a dream come true'

By **DARREL W. COLE**
Sentinel staff writer

PLEASURE POINT

LIKE A SURFER looking for that perfect wave, the women of the Paradise Surf Shop have found their niche.

The by-women, for-women surf shop on Portola Avenue near 41st Avenue has ridden the market past the first anniversary, proving there is a place for women in surfing and in the surf equipment and apparel business.

"It's a dream come true but there are new lessons every day too," said Sara Bray, one of four women owners who opened the shop in November, 1997. "Our business has been real good, better than we thought."

The shop's most popular items are its surf apparel, which sports the business' name and logo. But the store also features board

shorts and wet suits made for women's bodies and has become a big player in the used surfboard business.

The logo draws a lot of attention. It was designed by Stan Foster and depicts a woman cruising along on a board, hair flowing behind her.

Shop owners Bray, Kristina Marquez, Alayna Schiebel and Sally Smith, all surfers themselves, say they are pleased to have helped boost the popularity of surfing among women and are proud that they also have developed some male clients as well.

"Every time I go (surfing) I see more and more women and girls out there," Schiebel said. "And I like to think that Paradise has increased the trend. We're really doing great and we really want to thank the community for their support."

Jack O'Neill, the local surfer whose own surf shop has been an international success,

said his company also is seeing significant growth in sales of women's surf gear. The United States remains the No.1 seller of women's board sports equipment and clothing, followed by Brazil, Australia and Europe.

"It just continues to be a steady increase and the women are really coming into their own," O'Neill said. "I can remember when you'd go out surfing and you knew all the women because only a few did it. Now they are out in force."

O'Neill said the Paradise Surf Shop is a welcome addition to the surf industry in Santa Cruz.

"I know those girls and really like them, and the business they have. I want to see them do well because I think it's good for the industry."

Please see WOMEN SURFERS — BACK PAGE

Women surfers

Continued from Page A1

He said the shop meets a need. "They are helping raise the interest of women's surfing. Women bring a welcome presence on the waves too."

The industry is surely booming. Of the nation's 3,000-plus surf shops, more than 90 percent now devote floor space to women's technical surfwear, where just years before only 10 percent did so, according to Forbes magazine.

Paradise's owners expect their business to continue growing but don't want to open other stores just yet. For now, Bray said, the focus is on selling more apparel through a new on-line catalogue (www.paradisefur.com).

"Rather than on-site expansion, we are hoping to expand our international wholesale base," Bray said. "We've already received lots of requests from people all over the world, like Germany and Canada for clothes with our logos on them."

Bray said their start-up challenges were relatively few and relatively minor. While at first they couldn't get ac-



Dan Coyro/Sentinel

Sara Bray, Sally Smith, Kristina Marquez and Alayna Schiebel formed Paradise Surf Shop for women.

cess to certain products, vendors are now knocking on the door, they said.

"Other shops are telling us that we'll get to a point we will have to turn some

The industry is surely booming. Of the nation's 3,000-plus surf shops, more than 90 percent now devote floor space to women's technical surfwear.

away," Bray said.

The four have remained a team through the year, with each filling a certain role that helps the entire operation run smoothly.

Bray is the public relations and Web site manager; Marquez is the general buyer and floor sales manager; Schiebel handles advertising and the girls' youth surf squad; and, Smith is the business-savvy one.

"We've all been surfing a long time and we've all got a little bit of ourselves here," Smith said.