

# Candle store lights up SV shopping center

Scotts Valley, 2000

## IF YOU GO

WIX

**WHAT:** A studio where customers make their own candles and soaps. Parties and events for all ages are available by appointment. Pre-made candles are also available for purchase.

**WHERE:** King's Village Shopping Center, 218-E Mount Hermon Road, Scotts Valley

**WHEN:** 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., Monday to Thursday; 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. Friday to Saturday; closed Sunday.

**INFORMATION:** Call 454-8296 or visit [www.wixinc.com](http://www.wixinc.com)

By **KIRSTEN FAIRCHILD**  
[newsroom@santacruzsentinel.com](mailto:newsroom@santacruzsentinel.com)

**SCOTTS VALLEY** — Like many people who've been affected by the economic downturn during the past couple of years, Laura Lemus couldn't find a job.

Lemus said she had been working on contract in lease management in the real estate department at Cisco Systems Inc. in Milpitas, but was laid off in September 2009 when the company moved her position to Pittsburgh.

After continuously coming

up empty on her job search, Lemus, 41, was faced with the challenge of reinventing herself.

Good thing for Lemus that she was raised by a "crafty" mother, Barbara Menicucci of Saratoga.

On June 5, Lemus opened Wix, a do-it-yourself candle and soap-making studio in the King's Village Shopping Center in Scotts Valley.

"It was the 1970s, and my mother was totally into making candles," said Lemus, a 1987 Archbishop Mitty graduate. "She knit, she crocheted and she used to make

candles at home."

Lemus inherited her mother's fondness for arts and crafts. Whenever she had some free time, Lemus taught the craft of making candles to her three sons, Andrew, now 14, Nicholas, 13, and Benjamin, 10.

After months had passed and she was unable to secure employment, Lemus decided to take her hobby and turn it into a business.

A Scotts Valley resident, Lemus had looked for commercial space in Santa Cruz,

SEE WIX ON B3

Rikki Radliff enjoys a soap-making party at Wix in Scotts Valley.



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## WIX

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but opted for the King's Village Shopping Center when a 1,600-square-foot space opened up.

"I put in hardwood floors, baseboards, painted, built the counter and display cases all by myself or with my brother," Lemus said. "I had never done anything like that before. I had to learn because I didn't have the money to pay anyone to do it."

Lemus said she uses 100 percent paraffin-based wax at her studio and wicks that are all-cotton core. The scents are essential oil based while the soaps are glycerin based.

Lemus said business has been good thanks to a busy holiday season and a growing reputation as a location to hold birthday parties for all ages. She is her lone full-time employee, although her business and life partner, Esther Moomjian, fills in on occasion.

Lemus recently hired a part-time employee, so Wix may open for Sundays, beginning March 6.

On a recent Saturday, Wix was booked for three birthday parties and experienced walk-in business as well.

Watsonville resident Karen Dyck had noticed the new store on an errand in Scotts Valley over the summer. When her daughter, Emily, turned 10 at the end of January, Karen Dyck knew just the place to take her daughter and nine of her friends.

"I had made candles when I was a Girl Scout," Dyck said. "We've had birthday parties for Emily at home or McDonald's or at the bowling alley, but this is allowing her and her friends to use their own creativity. Even my 15-year-old son Jeffrey is having a blast."

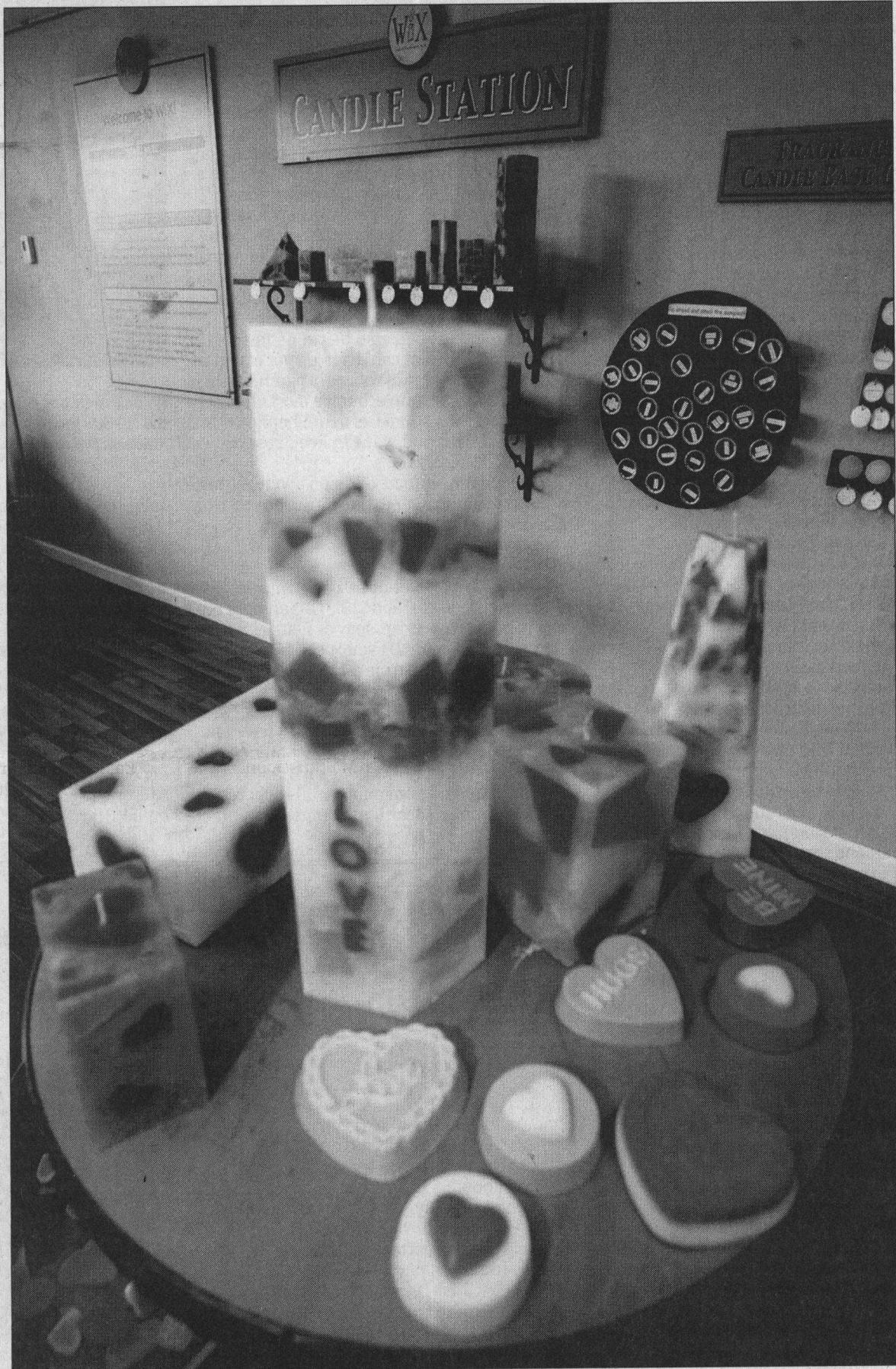
Emily chose a star mold for the design of her candle. The scent she selected was a mango-papaya blend with a base color of green.

"I think it was a really cool idea coming here," said Emily, who shared that art and music were also interests of hers. "More kids should come here and try making candles and soap because it's a really fun place."

Not only has the transition to small business owner allowed Lemus to pay her bills, it has given her a satisfaction she never experienced while working for a large corporation.

"I measure Wix's success by people's reactions," Lemus said. "I literally have kids jumping up and down when they're done making their candles or soaps."

"To see their expressions when they come in to pick up their candles or soaps, it's remarkable. It's just great."



A Valentine's Day candle display sits on a table at the Wix store in Scotts Valley.

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