

✓ Relocated merchants report *EARTHQUAKE '89 - Santa Cruz County* 'brisk' recovery from quake

By KEITH MURAOKA
Sentinel staff writer

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CAPITOLA — With the holiday shopping season down to today, several businesses forced to move due to earthquake damage are doing surprisingly well in their new locations.

All but one of the five business owners contacted by the Sentinel said they were doing brisk business in this first holiday shopping season in new locales.

The exception is Lorraine Johnston and Associates Interior Design, one of several businesses displaced from historic Aptos Village by the Oct. 17 quake. Johnston is now operating out of her home, but says her business has dropped about 75 percent.

The earthquake proved a double whammy for Johnston. She had opened just three weeks previous to the temblor.

"The Soroptimists were going to welcome me, but we never even made it to our grand opening," Johnston says. "It was my dream to open my own business. I had three weeks to live out that dream."

One of the owners of a former business on the Pacific Garden Mall in downtown Santa Cruz says he's heard whispers behind his back that he was a "traitor" for relocating to Capitola Mall.

Robert Severini — owner of Robert's Leathers, formerly located on the Pacific Garden Mall — doesn't consider himself a traitor. In fact, he loves downtown Santa Cruz and still plans to reopen there.

However, Severini also loves Capitola Mall and the distinct advantages it provides, such as expanded night and weekend hours.

Despite being in his new location for less than six weeks, Severini

says business is already better than it was in Santa Cruz. He estimates that 75 percent of his business is first-time customers.

"Honestly, I'd say 40 percent of the county likes this mall and doesn't like downtown (Santa Cruz), and 40 percent likes downtown and not this mall," Severini says. "The other 20 percent likes both."

Kim Baskett, owner of another Pacific Garden Mall business — Pacific Pack and Pants — has moved to Aptos Center on Soquel Drive. Three weeks after its opening there, the store's business is about 75 percent of what it was in Santa Cruz.

"I'm really pleased because a lot of people don't even know we're here," Baskett says. "About 80 percent are first-time customers. I view it as a real positive move."

However, like Severini, Baskett hopes to reopen on the Pacific Garden Mall. "I wanted to remain loyal to downtown Santa Cruz and even wanted to rent space in one of the temporary 'Phoenix Pavilions,'"

she adds, "but there wasn't enough space."

Howard Miller, owner of the former Colonial Barber in Aptos Village, has moved just around the corner to Scarlett O'Haira's.

"I'm not quite back to where it was," he says, estimating patronage about 80 percent of normal. "My customers are still finding me. But I was lucky to find a location so close to my shop."

Meanwhile, Pretty Mama's clothing store has just reopened its Pacific Garden Mall location, but has also opened a temporary store just off 41st Avenue in Capitola.

Eleanor Bachli, store personnel administrator, says the Capitola store has been doing a "very good volume of business." At the same time, she concedes, "It would be vastly different if we had our downtown (Santa Cruz) store open for the entire Christmas season."

Bachli says Pretty Mama's owner has not yet decided whether to keep the Capitola store open permanently.