



# Earth Day 2008

Special GREEN issue to celebrate local and global efforts toward conservation

Watch for this symbol for conservation information



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WEEKLY NEWSPAPER OF THREE RIVERS AND SEQUOIA~KINGS CANYON NATIONAL PARKS

## Working toward an earth-friendly 3R

By JOHN ELLIOTT

In any movement there are pioneers among the doers. Among those who pioneered going green in Three Rivers was James and Bettina Birch, who two decades ago moved to the North Fork and established FLORA BELLA FARM.

"Back in 1989, the Birch family came to Three Rivers and offered locally grown, certified organic fruits and vegetables to the community," Bettina said. "[The produce] was locally grown with no carbon imprint... organic, no pesticides, herbicides or fungicides, yet many in the community preferred to drive to the big city to purchase their produce."

In retrospect, Bettina offered that perhaps green was not the "in" thing to do in 1989. James Birch has continued to offer locally-grown, certified-organic fruits and vegetables that are now available at Village Market.

There is no doubt that supporting local businesses is key to building an earth-friendly community. But there are several factors that discourage many from joining the movement, not the least of which is added cost.

The SEQUOIA NATURAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION (SNHA)



announced recently that they are no longer offering the traditional, disposable shopping bags and are replacing the former bags with new green, reusable bags similar to what grocery stores offer.

These new bags will sell for \$1.95 and eventually there will be several sizes. The idea, according to Mark Tilchen, SNHA executive director, is that the customer can use these bags when they go shopping anywhere.

The dilemma for all businesses, Tilchen said, is that while a greening world works to get people out of the "must have a bag habit," most businesses realize that they must cater to their customers. SNHA is looking at other products that also decompose faster and are more earth-friendly.

For customers who experience anxiety about the use of plastic bags, Tilchen said, there is a product made from corn.

These bags actually have a dated shelf life as they start to decompose immediately, Tilchen said.

It's becoming the norm in America, Tilchen recently told his sales staff, not to ask the customer if they want a bag when making a small purchase. Now cashiers are waiting for the cus-

tomers to request a bag.

It's practically a given that nonprofits like SNHA should be on the forefront of going green but for private businesses that must also weigh the upside versus the bottom line, there can be a costly learning curve.

THE GATEWAY RESTAURANT, after attending several industry trade shows, voluntarily implemented some green measures upon learning about new green standards being implemented in urban areas.

Glenn McIntyre, owner of the local eatery, said besides the obvious environmental benefits, he believes that discriminating patrons feel better about eating out at an establishment that is making an effort to do their part.

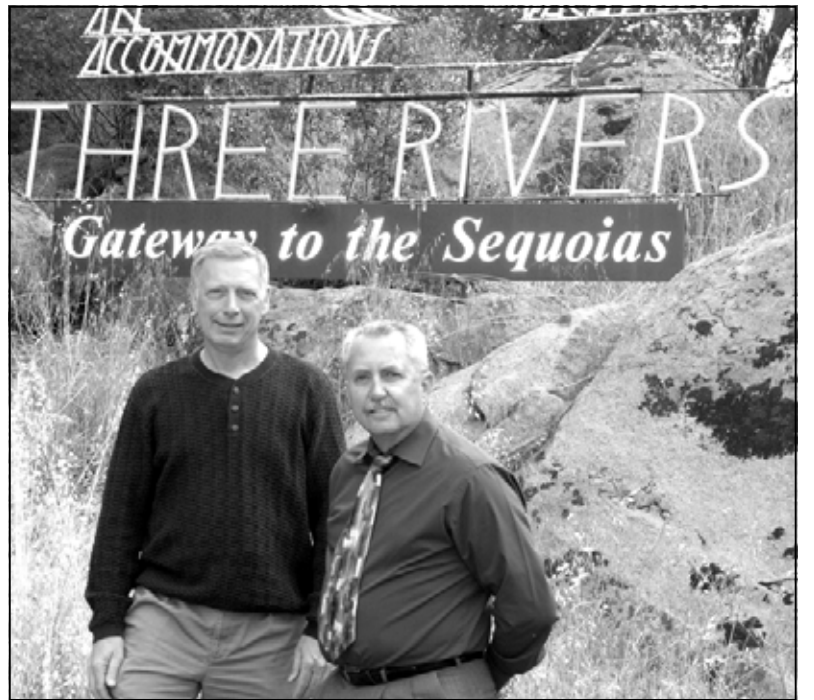
"I want to eliminate the use of Styrofoam completely," Glenn said. "Our to-go platters are made from compostable sugar cane but they aren't cheap," he said. "We charge 50 cents extra for a to-go order, but so far the feedback from our customers has been all positive."

In-house diners can still request a free doggie bag, Glenn added.

"We have also switched our industrial cleaners to a citrus-based product that is earth-friendly," Glenn said. "But there were some unforeseen costs in the learning curve of that product."

What he was referring to is an incident that occurred shortly after the first 30-gallon drum of the natural solvent was delivered to the parking area adjacent to the rear door of the kitchen. A marauding bear treated the all-natural product more like food and pushed over the container,

—see GREEN, page 5



LAW AND ORDER: Chief John Zapalac (right) and his campaign manager Gary Schulz during a visit this week to Three Rivers.

## Chief Zapalac enters sheriff's race

Woodlake Police Chief John Zapalac has accomplished a lot in his more than three decades of law enforcement. He's been a deputy sheriff, SWAT officer, a detective, a sergeant at Bob Wiley Detention Center, a violent crimes unit supervisor, and since 1997, the chief of the Woodlake Police Department.

In 2006, after running a hard-fought, albeit unsuccessful, campaign for the office of Tulare County's top cop against incumbent Bill Wittman, he knew he was in for a tough row to hoe. Undeterred, he is committed to running again because meeting difficult challenges head on are nothing new for Chief Zapalac.

Chief Zapalac's strategy this time around is to start his campaign sooner and work even harder, hence last Tuesday's visit to the Sequoia Cider Mill Restaurant in Three Rivers to kickoff the 2010 campaign.

"When I look at what's going on in the unincorporated areas like Three Rivers, I see there is a whole lot of room for improvement," Chief Zapalac said. "When a citizen reports a crime and they are told that no officer is available until the next morning that is not acceptable."

During his recent visit to Three Rivers, Chief Zap, as he is known to his multitude of friends, said that response times and river trespassing will be his top priorities.

—see SHERIFF, page 5

## NOTICE

A meltdown in *The Kaweah Commonwealth's* email inbox resulted in the deletion of all emails that were being saved there as pending work. If you submitted something in the past few weeks that you don't see appearing in the newspaper in a timely fashion, please contact us or resend it immediately.

## • KAWEAH COUNTRY OUTLOOK: three rivers • lemon cove • woodlake •

| Saturday, April 19     | Sunday, April 20       | Monday, April 21                | Tuesday, April 22               | Wednesday, April 23    | Thursday, April 24     | Friday, April 25       |
|------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
|                        |                        |                                 |                                 |                        |                        |                        |
| Sunny<br>Hi 72 • Lo 40 | Sunny<br>Hi 65 • Lo 38 | Clouds and sun<br>Hi 69 • Lo 40 | Clouds and sun<br>Hi 74 • Lo 45 | Sunny<br>Hi 79 • Lo 47 | Sunny<br>Hi 83 • Lo 50 | Sunny<br>Hi 84 • Lo 52 |

## WEATHER WATCH

Cooler temperatures will prevail throughout the start of the work week, then the mercury will gradually rise into the mid-80s. No rain is in the immediate forecast but there is still the chance for showers to bring some May flowers... to the higher elevations. In the past seven weeks, there has been just a half-inch of rainfall, well below normal.