

Julie Voice uses art, coffee, radio and music to promote Vallejo



Moschetti Coffee head of hospitality Julie Voice (right) chats with Vallejo fibert artist Julia Smith (left) during the weekly Saturday morning "Moschetti: Pairing Coffee and Community" events she helps to host. The events include coffee, arts and crafts vendors and live music.

By Sarah Rohrs/Times-Herald staff writer /

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When it comes to Vallejo, don't even think about raining on Julie Voice's parade.

Unabashedly proud of her town, Voice is on a mission to promote the city with determination, flair, a big smile and lots of creativity.

Using several artistic platforms, Voice is the Moschetti Coffee head of hospitality, and radio personality, "Serial Mom," on Ozcat radio where she talks with local women artists and explores women's health issues.

She also will be a featured speaker to kick start the Vallejo chapter of The Enchanted Woman & A Few Good Men, a group designed to inspire, empower and educate. In addition, she runs a show featuring local bands at the Townhouse Bar on the third Friday of every month.

Besides her individual efforts, Voice has joined with downtown Vallejo activists and artists working to revitalize that area and the city as a whole.

"We should be proud" of Vallejo, she said. "I've made it my unofficial goal -- I'm going to make Vallejo a cooler place," she said.

Voice knows all about the bad rap her town often gets, but that makes her more determined to highlight the beauty and talent often waiting to be discovered within its borders.

Voice left town in her early 20s but she always wanted to return. After living in Fairfield with her now ex-husband, the couple divorced and Voice moved back with her boy, Owen, now 7. She found herself back in her hometown, "seeking its motto sake, in this 'the city of opportunity,'" she said.

Voice eventually found her calling at the Saturday morning (9 a.m. to 1 p.m.) coffee tastings at Moschetti Coffee in South Vallejo. Located at 11 Sixth St., Moschetti Coffee is an independent coffee roaster and seller. The firm also designs and rents espresso machines and other coffee equipment.

She said she tasted her first cup of Moschetti's while working as head server at Glen Cove Marina Grille, a short-lived venture on the waterfront, adding she couldn't believe such great coffee was roasted in Vallejo.

Besides performing as the friendly head of hospitality, Voice also does social networking, computer work and administrative tasks for business owner Fabrice Moschetti.

Since Voice came to Moschetti's three years ago, she's helped expand the Saturday morning "Moschetti: Pairing Coffee and Community" events to include arts and crafts vendors, live music and an open mic.

These days, the events draw a small crowd and numerous local artists. People gather outside under tents or indoors in the cafe-like setting to talk and sip freshly roasted coffee from Ethiopia, Guatemala or other countries, or browse around the booths.

On a small stage, singer Aria DesJardins (or other Vallejo musicians) often perform. Then, either DesJardins or Voice usually run the open mic, encouraging others to showcase their talents.

"I love it here," said painter and jewelry-maker Evelyn Ricon. "Julie is the reason why I'm here. She encouraged me to come out."

Painter Haley Musher credits Voice and Moschetti for inspiring her to get her work out at other locations, too, while fiber artist Julia Smith said she appreciates the creative, ebullient energy Voice pours into her work.

Voice said she feels honored to serve as host. "Earlier this year a regular guest of Saturdays at Moschetti gave me a wonderful compliment that sums up the honor that has been bestowed upon me -- 'Julie, you are like Julie from The Love Boat for Vallejo.,'" she wrote in a short bio.

Voice said the events fulfill something she craved, and she is grateful Fabrice Moschetti recognized that in her.

"He liked the passion I have for Vallejo and he saw that I craved community, and all that I needed was someone who could give me an opportunity," she said.

Voice has also branched out, attending other events including the Seattle Coffee Fest in October. There she passed out dozens of Moschetti Coffee post cards, and talked to many people about Vallejo. She also took note of independent coffee roasters around the country and felt proud her city had such a business.

"I saw so many people doing what we do at Moschetti but we have the added cache of doing it longer."

As Voice devotes her creative energy to promoting Vallejo, she often calls herself an artist in her role. "You have to be creative to entice people to come to Vallejo. It's a difficult, uphill, task," she added.

Above all, Voice is working toward the day more local youth will want to either stay or return to the town as well-educated professionals ready work hard on the city's behalf, helping bring about something she first heard of in grade school -- Vallejo's potential.

In her youth, Voice accomplished much and grew to love her city -- playing on the PAL Soccer League, and being a competitive figure skater at the Sun Valley Mall ice rink in Concord while a very young girl. She was also a Vallejo Shark.

She graduated in 2001 from Jesse Bethel High School, the school's first graduating class, and was part of the original crew at Rasputin Music that same year.

People can count on it that Voice will keep talking treasure, not trash, about her town, and doing what she can to bring out its diamond in the rough.

"I've always been one of those crazy people who love Vallejo," she said with a laugh. "I won't hide my pride."

Voice's radio show which she co-hosts with artist Katy Ramsden (radio name Miss Demeanor) is called The Mothership and airs 5 to 6 p.m. Saturdays on Ozcat Radio 89.5 FM, or at ozcatradio.com.

Contact staff writer Sarah Rohrs at srohros@timesheraldonline.com or (707) 553-6832. Follow her on Twitter @SarahVTH.

Julie Voice

Age: 30

City: Vallejo since 1987

Family: Son, Owen, and mother and father, Laura and Ed Voice.

Occupation: Hospitality director at Moschetti Coffee

Quote: "We should be proud (of Vallejo.) I've made it my unofficial goal -- I'm going to make Vallejo a cooler place."