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Social club aims to bring Alamedans together

By Janet Levaux
Correspondent

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Alamedans know how to appreciate life on the Island. But they don't always get as many opportunities to meet community members around town as they'd like to have.

That prompted Sanford Marshall, head of the Wedding Coach and SanMan Productions, to launch the Alameda Social Club, which is hosting a kickoff event in sync with the Thiel Family Wines on Tuesday at Pappo Restaurant.

"I really wanted to see more chic events that people could go to without leaving the Island," Marshall said.

He met with John Thiel, owner and chef of Pappo Restaurant, to discuss the idea.

"He's the first person I thought of when planning a kickoff event. We share the same philosophy of what we'd like to see in Alameda," Marshall said.

"It's great to offer events that people can walk to," Thiel said. "Affordable fun that's close to home."

As the idea for a social club on the Island came together, Marshall also worked with some professional colleagues, Martin Gheraty and Rusty Porter with Black Velvet Brands, to get some details ironed out late in 2009.

"We want to help people build relationships and enjoy their time out as a couple, family or a single adult," Marshall said.

This first event will feature several wines by Thiel's winemaking venture. For these wines, Thiel partners with Matt Smith of Blacksmith Cellars in Alameda and Loren Tayerle of the Tayerle Wine Group of Oakland.

As Marshall hopes to do with future events, the

social club will give some of its proceeds for this first event to a local charity. But rather than donate funds directly to an organization, the group will work with local merchants to maximize the impact of what it does, he says.

"We want to work with local businesses and ask them what they can do to help us be as effective as possible," he said.

The group will take some proceeds from Tuesday's event and then ask several merchants to help it purchase food donations for the Alameda Food Bank.

Future events could include a music festival.

"It's exciting," Marshall said. "This is what the folks of Alameda have been consciously and subconsciously seeking."

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