

Spa owner makes Broadway place to be

Sidney Cramer's ability to bring people together as president of the On Broadway Merchant Association has brought change.

By Karen Robes Meeks, Staff Writer

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Sidney Cramer not only runs Spa Sidney Beauty Lounge on Broadway in Long Beach, his stint as president of the corridor's merchant association is credited with the group's revival and an increase in neighborhood traffic. He's also expanding the organization's scope by working with other groups. (Jeff Gritchen, Staff Photographer)

LONG BEACH — Two years ago, the business association along the Broadway corridor was on life support, and the meeting before going dark for the holidays was likely its last "unless someone picked up the baton," recalled business owner Sidney Cramer.

Slightly reluctant but not wanting to see the group fall apart, the Spa Sidney Beauty Lounge

owner said, "Well, I'll lead the next meeting."

"That evolved into becoming the next president after three meetings," he recalled, chuckling. "I have a way of falling into these positions."

Cramer, 42, will be the first to say he's not the kind of leader who holds political rallies, but his ability to bring people together and organize unique events as president of the On Broadway Merchant Association has brought change along a street often overshadowed by Belmont Shore's Second Street or Retro Row's Fourth Street.

"He's doing an amazing job," said Eric Davis, general manager of Paradise Piano Bar and Restaurant. "The association was around years ago and then it sort of fell through for several reasons, and he put the energy and the passion into re-creating it, and I sort of jumped on the bandwagon."

"Both of us said Broadway is going to be our charity and making it a destination spot and a place like other stronger boulevards."

Cramer — whose business was voted spa of the year by French company Guinot and whose clientele has included celebrities such as Jane Seymour and Angela Bassett — set up shop at 3519 E. Broadway six years ago after several years in Rancho Palos Verdes.

"One big reason why I like having my business here was I wanted to work in the community that I lived in," he said. "Being a business owner here,

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I always wanted to get involved and the first three years that I was here there wasn't much going on. I knew about the (former) Broadway Business Corridor Association but there wasn't a lot of activity."

After becoming president, Cramer reached out to merchants, slowly assembling a list of more than 100 contacts.

"A lot of people don't realize how much time he puts into this," Davis said of Cramer. "All that takes energy and he's using that towards helping other businesses on Broadway. I think in the two years he's accomplished a lot. He has a core group of people that meet monthly and that's orchestrated by his leadership."

Cramer also walked the entire street, visiting business owners and taking a good look at what Broadway could offer.

What he found was a street of diverse restaurants and retail, many that have been struggling in a down economy.

"This is an independent row," he said. "We don't have big chains. We have owners who live in the area. I really want to get that message out there because I think Broadway is a great community and it definitely needs the support of the local community."

One way is to create activities that merchants can do as a group, a way to coordinate events and cross-promote businesses.

Last June, the association parlayed Barbie's 50th anniversary with events ranging from Barbie-themed manicures and pedicures to a "Ken's Last Call" Barbie drag contest. In November, the group put on a Discovery Tour that featured late-night open houses, special offers and a tour of Broadway on the Big Red Bus.

"The events have been a big part of the lifeblood that's kept the street alive," said Sasha Witte, owner of Sasha's Living With Style. "It gives people a reason to come out, especially this last year when people were feeling a little more conservative about their spending."

This year the association will present Day of Design, a March 27 event from 2 to 7 p.m. featuring owners from Sasha's Living with Style, Red Door Living and David Galindo Home and other vendors. They'll host free home improvement and decorating workshops.

And On Broadway has teamed with Long Beach Heritage to host an April 25 Historical Walking Tour, which will begin with a 10 a.m. presentation about the history of Broadway, followed by a docent tour of historic landmarks.

And the business group is planning to expand its scope, as well. The association is partnering with the [Belmont Heights Community Association](#) to help develop a vision for the neighborhood. To weigh in on the plan, visit the association's Web site.

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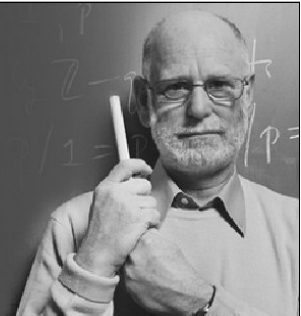


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"Last year was about events; this year it's improving our relationships with the neighborhood associations," Cramer said. "We can't do it alone."

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