

AnzaXchange interviews Graffiti Coffee's Leash family

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The creators of the new Graffiti Coffee shop in Anza were interviewed by the AnzaXchange podcasters on the shop's grand opening day Saturday, Nov. 18.

AnzaXchange is an online streaming service that produces podcasts with information, interviews, local news, current events schedules, entertainment and education in the Anza Valley. Patrick Vesey, Andrew Carey, Matt Maulding and Joseph Wittenberg make up the group, having met as part of the startup group for Anza's KOYT-FM 97.1 radio station.

"Part of the drive of AnzaXchange is to showcase talents and skills of the people here in the Anza Valley and to promote Anza as a place of commerce and business and livelihood 'on the hill,'" Vesey said.

That Saturday morning, their focus was on the brand-new Graffiti Coffee shop, and they had a warm interview with the Leash family, discussing how the idea for a coffee shop came about and how that idea was implemented. Steve Leash, Leonella Leash, Sarah Tinsley, Elizabeth Leash and Roberta Leash were all present to share their story. "We're really excited to bring this to our community," Roberta Leash said.

The coffee shop has been the realization of a 10-year dream of the Leash clan. They wanted to have a business venture that the whole family could partake in, and they came up with the idea of a drive-thru coffee shop. After scrimping, saving, learning and attending seminars and classes, the shop has finally become a delicious reality.

They worked with the Small Busi-

ness Administration, the California Indian Manpower Consortium and the Barista Academy, to learn and tap into grants, loans and information to help start the business.

The Leashes also had to become immersed in the coffee business, learning and becoming adept at all things coffee, from how the beans are roasted to creating the popular drinks offered at the shop. They have put many hours of study into the preparation for grand opening day.

Steve Leash found the kiosk shop building itself in Colorado, bought it and transported it to its current location just north of the Lake Riverside Drive gate on state Route 371.

"Did anyone try to buy coffee from you while you were actually going down the road?" Carey asked. No one did, but Steve Leash laughed and said that he received a lot of stares as he went down the road. Overpass clearances were also a concern, as the tiny building was 14 feet tall and not the easiest thing to transport.

Site preparation took some time, and the family used local contractors exclusively. Community is important to the Leash family.

"We really want to focus on name recognition, drink recognition. We want people to feel really welcome...our coffee shop, not just 'the' coffee shop," Tinsley said. "We really want to appreciate the community. We want to take time out of our day to connect with people, really appreciate people and do that one cup of coffee at a time."

Expanding is also one of their goals. A lounge is planned as friendly place for people to relax, socialize and use the internet.

The family pays specific attention to the quality of the ingredients



The AnzaXchange crew, from left, Joseph Wittenberg, Matt Maulding, Patrick Vesey and Andrew Carey, pose for a picture with Sarah Tinsley, Leonella Leash, Steve Leash, Elizabeth Leash and Roberta Leash at the AnzaXchange podcast interview at the Graffiti Coffee Shop grand opening, Saturday, Nov. 18. Diane Sieker photo

used, right down to the special locally roasted beans provided by Idyllwild Roasters.

"Even the coffee bean is local," Vesey said.

"And certified organic," Tinsley said.

Their menu is extensive and creative. The discussion shifted to the clever names of the drinks, from the "Dust Devil," a chocolate concoction with hazelnut flavoring to the "Overcast," made with macadamia nuts and white chocolate, both drinks can be served as espresso or frappe, hot or chilled.

Tinsley said the "Oh My Gosh" coffee drink came about from her

own experience reading coffee menus.

"I've seen a lot of menus," Tinsley said. "I'm reading the ingredients, and I'm like 'Oh my gosh!' the smallest drink has four shots of espresso in it with Irish cream and half-and-half in it versus the 24-ounce which has six shots of espresso, so I was like 'oh my gosh! Who would do that to themselves?' So Steve says, 'That's my kind of drink!'"

Graffiti Coffee even offers kid-friendly drinks and food items like cinnamon rolls, doughnuts and bagels.

Steve Leash explained the origin

of the store name, "Graffiti Coffee." "I enjoy the art when it's done right, art for the sake of art," he said.

He said they will feature well-known graffiti artists on their website and have a wall by the shop for the artists to express themselves.

"Our communities need art," he said.

To listen to the AnzaXchange podcast, visit <https://soundcloud.com/user-369887050/graffiti-coffeeemp3>.

For more information, visit Graffiti Coffee at www.graffiticoffee.com or on Facebook.