

## Lawyer's music binds her to friends

### San Ramon resident produces musical gift card suitable for girlfriends

By Michelle Fitzhugh-Craig, STAFF WRITER – Tri Valley Harold - March 7, 2006

SAN RAMON — Michele Lane is proud to say she gets by with a little help from her friends.

Through constant moves as a child, a rocky first marriage, a divorce, working full time while going to law school at night, opening a private practice and even through the struggles of being a single mother, her friends stuck by her.

It was their dedication that prompted her to write a special song to them. This particular song I wrote in 2000 for my high school girlfriends and some other friends of mine who helped me along the way, Lane explains.

Its really about how all along the way, they were there. And no matter how old you get or how fat you get or whatever is happening in your life, they're there.

To help solve problems ... and go shopping, she adds with a smile. Understanding the special bond girlfriends have with one another, the San Ramon resident decided to turn her song into a musical gift card that women everywhere can share with their own girlfriends. I think it is a way to celebrate those special friendships that women have with one another that can't be duplicated with any other relationship, says Lane, 56.



MICHELE LANE holds one of her musical greeting cards at Belinda M Designs in Walnut Creek. (Michael Lucia - Staff)

The CD, *Girlfriends*, is an upbeat jazzy tune that touches the heart, puts a smile on the face and causes feet to start tapping. The card includes the songs lyrics, space to write a personal note and comes in a uniquely designed package that is a self-contained mailer so a woman can send it to her friends as is. The greeting card recently was made available to the public through Lanes Web site, <http://www.girlfriendsmusic.com>, and at two local shops; *Girlfriends* in Danville and *Belinda M Designs* in Walnut Creek. The cost of the musical gift CD varies by location, but runs about \$10 each.

I was amazed at the concept. ... It was wonderful, says Belinda McNeely. The owner of *Belinda M Designs* hadn't even listened to the CD until after she agreed to sell it in her women's apparel and accessories shop. Women buy gifts for other women all the time, and they have a great deal of respect for their friends. Aside from the concept of girlfriends, I was so impressed with this ladies talents.

Always having been a car and shower singer, Lane says she didn't sing in public until 1998. It was prompting from her second husband, Duane Schmidt, to sing at his company's talent show that got her on stage. She agreed before realizing that the little talent show turned out to be at the Ronald Reagan International Trade Center in Washington, D.C., in front of about 2,500 people. She got through her first solo performance wearing a costume resembling the company's logo and was an instant hit.

Lane began rewriting songs for special occasions. As her confidence grew, she began singing in public more, performing at special events and writing her own material. Today, when a new melody or words come to mind, Lane gets help from her arranger to create a song. Her debut CD, *Letting Go*, her lifes journey to this point through song, also is available on her Web site.

A San Ramon attorney who specializes in employment law with an emphasis on training and enforcement of discrimination law, Lane also wanted to recognize her friends who are breast cancer survivors and those who lost their lives to the disease. A portion of CD sales goes to the American Cancer Society, designated specifically to help fund breast cancer research.

It's a way that, when people buy these, there is a contribution that can be made. ... It's a better way of supporting breast cancer (research) than I just could by writing a check based on what I do for a living, says Lane.

When he is not at his day job as a software salesman, Schmidt serves as his wife's business manager. He says he enjoys experiencing his wife's second career. I think it's wonderful, it's a great joy, says Schmidt, his eyes getting misty as he glances at his wife with pride. It brings tears. ... What I see in her (when she sings) is her heart comes out.

Lane says her other biggest fans include her 27-year-old son, who lives in North Carolina, and daughter, 20, who attends Chico State. Lane and Schmidt say they wish they could quit their day jobs and focus on the music they both say is a blessing.

I do love what I do with the law, Lane says. It gives me an opportunity to allow people to feel heard, work through their emotions and still keep the workplace safe. But I love to write music. For me, if I could sit at a little piano someplace ... I would love to be able to do more of these gift cards for people and occasions and write songs that make people think and cherish their relationships. I'm just going to follow the spirit and see what happens in the future. If I can contribute to raising, elevating the one song to be a little more healing, loving and fun, then that's what Id like to do.