

HOME & REAL ESTATE

INSIDE:

■ Classified Marketplace, page 64

■ Puzzles, page 65

Also online at www.PaloAltoOnline.com
**OPEN HOME
GUIDE, PAGE 58**

Home Front

FABMO ART EXHIBIT ... The inaugural FabMo Art Exhibit and Sale will be held **Saturday, Oct. 24**, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the Quadrus Conference Center, 2400 Sand Hill Road, Menlo Park. Artists and craftspeople will display and sell projects they've made mostly from the treasures they've collected at FabMo distribution events. (FabMo collects discontinued designer fabric, wallpaper and trimming samples and gives them out to artists and crafters for free.) The sale will include a raffle of donated items made by FabMo participants. For information, e-mail fabmoartexhibit@hotmail.com.

BASIC DESIGN ... Kit Davey, interior designer and Palo Alto Weekly columnist, will teach "Basic Design for Beginners" on **Saturday, Oct. 24**, from 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at De Anza College, Room E-33, 21250 Stevens Creek Blvd., Cupertino. Topics include selecting a color scheme, re-arranging furniture, area rugs, lighting, wall colors and wallpaper. Fee is \$65, plus a \$7 materials fee payable to the instructor in class (parking requires \$2 in cash). For information, call 408-864-8817.

CONTAINER GARDENING ... Landscape consultant Susie Mader will teach a class on "Container Gardening" on **Saturday, Oct. 24**, from 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at Common Ground Educational Center, 599 College Ave., Palo Alto. The class will focus on principles and techniques, as well as how to choose containers and plants. Cost is \$30. For information, call 650-493-6072 or visit www.commongroundinpaloalto.org.

HOLIDAY ARRANGMENTS ... Sara Rouhani of Colorburst Flowers, Palo Alto, will demonstrate holiday arrangements, from simple to sophisticated, at the next meeting of the Garden Club of Los Altos on **Tuesday, Oct. 27**, at 1:15 p.m. The group meets at Christ Episcopal Church, 1040 Border Road, Los Altos. Free for members, \$10 for guests. For information, call 650-964-7614.

SEASONAL GARDEN MAINTENANCE ... UC Master Gardeners will give a free talk on what to do

(continued on page 52)



Seeking the 'just right' mattress

**Downtown stores find niche
despite intense competition**

Bare mattresses, above, can be sampled at the McRoskey Mattress Co. in Palo Alto; customers can check out the outside, below left, and inside, below right, of a McRoskey mattress.

by **Royston Sim**
 photographs by **Veronica Weber**

Luxury mattresses count among life's indulgences. And with a third of our lives spent in bed, some are willing to spend for an enhanced night of sleep.

Downtown Palo Alto is home to two upscale mattress stores — Duxiana on Bryant Street, and McRoskey Mattress Co. on Hamilton Avenue. The mattress market gained another player when The Natural Mattress Store opened its doors early August, but it's not quite "mattress wars" yet.

Though direct competitors, McRoskey and Duxiana actually refer customers back and forth when one is unable to satisfy a customer's needs or preferences. Besides manufacturing differences in their products, DUX mattresses are softer but also cost more than McRoskey's.

"A lot of businesses in Palo Alto do that all the time," said McRoskey sales representative James Christiansen. "We're all in business together, and it's part of the village camaraderie here."

Customer satisfaction takes precedence over pushing a sale, especially in this industry, which relies heavily on referrals and repeat business. "We don't take the used-car approach and employ high-pressure sales tactics," Christiansen said.



Duxiana's Pascal System, with its three zones offering soft, medium and firm support, can be seen in a floor model.

Natural Mattress manager John McMahon said his company has already carved out its niche by selling organic mattresses made of organic wool and latex, manufactured without any chemical processes. People who come in often already intend to purchase an organic mattress, and Natural Mattress boasts 22 different selections to meet those needs, McMahon said.

These mattresses aren't cheap — Natural Mattress is at the low end of the spectrum, with prices for its Eco-Cloud queen bed starting at around \$1,200. A McRoskey queen set that includes a box spring retails for \$3,900, and a DUX queen bed starts at about \$4,980.

Luxury mattresses are worth the money because they alleviate common sleep discomforts people face, such as back pain and soreness, said Beverly Eden, manager at Duxiana.

"People know these are good, quality beds," she said. Eden likened buying luxury mattresses to making an investment — in this case, towards better sleep. Christiansen referred to the McRoskey label as a "quality, old-fashioned spring mattress," instead of luxury. McMahon eschewed that label altogether, though all three felt their

(continued on page 51)

Mattress

(continued from page 49)

products were value for money compared to most mattresses.

For one, they last longer and provide both comfort and support. DUX beds are touted to last a lifetime, due to the thousands of springs in each bed that increase durability. McRoskey and Natural Mattress products are said to last upwards of 20 years without wearing down or leaving body impressions.

These mattresses are also made without chemicals, which reduces allergic reactions such as coughing and sneezing. McMahon said dust mites, a common cause of bedroom allergies, could not survive in latex.

Each noted common questions they ask every time an individual comes to buy a mattress: one's preference for a hard or soft bed, sleeping position and any sleeping problems they have. Lying on a mattress to try it is a must.

A mattress that is too soft or firm forces the body to adapt to it, instead of it conforming to each individual's sleeping posture. The spine will be curved into an unnatural position, creating pressure and back pain. Those who sleep on their back often prefer firmer mattresses, while softer mattresses are recommended for side sleepers so less pressure is placed on their shoulders.

A common misconception is that a firm bed equates to more support, Christiansen said. Soft mattresses can still provide ample support if they compress and conform to an individual's body but not sag under that weight.

All three companies also customize their mattresses to order, whether to fit an antique bed frame, a small loft or even deluxe beds dwarfing a California king-size bed.

DUX ships all its mattresses from Sweden and sells them in stock. McRoskey mattresses are manufactured after purchase in San Francisco, while Natural Mattress makes its beds to order in Novato, Calif.

Christiansen recalled a baseball player who wanted a mattress large enough to fit his entire family so they could all read newspapers in bed together on Sundays. When finished, the mattress was practically equivalent to four king beds in size. That order cost about \$20,000. Eden estimates her most expensive sale to exceed \$30,000, when a client bought several beds at one go.

What happens when two people who share a bed do not share mattress preferences? The three stores each provide a different solution.

McRoskey offers "split comfort mattresses" — basically two separate mattresses put side by side and covered with a sheet so it looks like one bed. This allows each mattress to be different and eliminates interrupted sleep from motion transfer when one person shifts or gets out

of bed.

The Natural Mattress Co. can vary latex density in its mattresses so one side is firmer than the other. McMahon said disturbed sleep through movement or shifting is minimal as latex does not move much, unlike springs, which are bouncier.

Duxiana circumvents the problem with its Pascal System: an interchangeable top layer of six thin spring cassettes, three on each side of the bed with different densities from soft to firm. Unzip the bed and shift the cassettes around to customize the level of support.

The economic slump has scathed these stores as well, but not drastically. Duxiana had struggled but saw its sales rebound after offering an ongoing 25 percent discount on its beds. Christiansen from McRoskey said business "could be better, but it could be worse as well." McMahon said his business has been pretty steady since opening day.

Downtown Palo Alto seems large enough to accommodate these three mattress stores. What keeps their customers coming back is satisfaction with their mattresses.

"It's about knowing what you're selling," McMahon said. ■

Editorial Intern Royston Sim can be e-mailed at rsim@paweekly.com.

DUX beds, which offer luxury and comfort lasting a lifetime, are shipped from Sweden.



107 O'Connor St, Menlo Park



Beautifully and extensively remodeled and upgraded in 2001, this comfortable two story family home in The Willows is a unique combination of style and substance. Features include energy saving amenities and systems including solar electric, tankless water heater, dual paned windows and floor, wall and ceiling insulation.

- Entryway with travertine floors
- Living room with granite hearth, custom lighting, built-in bookcases and leaded glass windows
- Kitchen features oak cabinets, granite counter tops, travertine floors, high end appliances
- Dining room with custom lighting, built-in speakers and French doors to patio
- Ground floor bedroom and bath
- Large master suite with bay window, central air conditioning, separate heating system, built-in speakers
- Luxurious master bath with Jacuzzi tub, marble floors and counters, double marble shower with gold fixtures, tub with Swarovski crystal faucet handles
- Third bedroom/media room with custom oak cabinets, surround sound and 1/2 bath
- Salt water lap pool with stained glass waterfall and turn marker, new pump and pool sweep, remote control
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