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BIZ BUZZ

Carrying On A Family Tradition

BY BRANDI BUCHMAN

Andrew Lieb, the managing attorney at his family-owned law firm, Lieb at Law on Main Street in Center Moriches, is ready to share a few secrets with the community.

Mr. Lieb will lead a free seminar instructing people on how to grieve their property tax assessments on Thursday, April 29, at 7:15 p.m., at the Center Moriches Free Library on Main Street. The presentation is a joint effort between Mr. Lieb's firm and the Chamber of Commerce of the Moriches.

Mr. Lieb explained that it's a simple process to grieve one's tax assessment, the process in which taxpayers file a request with the Brookhaven tax assessor's office to reduce the amount the town says their homes are valued at, and thus reduce their property taxes.

"Homeowners should only pay taxes commiserate with the fair market value [of their homes] and people don't realize that you don't have to be a lawyer to grieve your own property taxes. It's only a four-page form and it's basically fool-proof," Mr. Lieb said.

At the free seminar next week, Mr. Lieb will distribute grievance forms and discuss the finer points of a grievance—namely, what to do if the town denies the request. Residents can file suit in small claims court asking a judge to reduce their assessment, he said.

"We want to empower people with the knowledge they need to save time and money," Mr. Lieb's wife, Lauren, said of the idea to offer free tax counseling. "We want to humanize the experience."

That sentiment may be indicative of a down-to-earth culture of the company that Mr. Lieb said was initiated by his grandfather, Harold Lieb, who ran a drugstore, Ace Pharmacy, in the building that now houses the law firm begun by Mr. Lieb's father, David Lieb.

In 1951, Harold Lieb brought his family from New Jersey to the sprawling duck farm landscape of Center Moriches.

"My father," the elder Mr. Lieb explained, "had his choice of three locations when he decided to open the pharmacy, Port Washington, Huntington and Center Moriches."

Mr. Lieb decided not to follow in his father's footsteps.

"I was more interested in law than chemistry," he said. "So I earned my law degree, and in 1977, I made a decision."

The decision was to establish Lieb & Lieb, a venture David and his brother Joseph Lieb entered jointly. Eventually, the siblings went their separate ways, and Joseph opened a small firm in Patchogue.

And then a few years ago, Andrew entered the family business.

"I was studying Public Health at Indiana University," he said. "But I was meant to be a lawyer. I wanted to work in a position where I had the power to make a positive change, to make a difference."

Because of his family's long connection with Center Moriches, Mr. Lieb believes that the firm's ability to provide excellent service should be an easy sell.

"I want the vibe here to be as it was when my grandfather ran the pharmacy," he said. "I want people to feel comfortable enough to drop in any time, if just to say hello, and as needed, find legal guidance."

Mr. Lieb's wife Lauren simplifies the idea a step further, "Basically, it's nice to be nice. If you treat people with respect, talk to them openly and provide the service they need in the meantime, you can't go wrong."

Offering free advice for neighbors in a pinch isn't limited to providing tax information. Lieb at Law also offers free real estate classes and certification courses.



Father and son team David and Andrew Lieb offer a variety of legal services at their family-operated law firm, Lieb at Law, on Main Street in Center Moriches.

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This series of free courses, Mr. Lieb admits, may initially raise a few eyebrows.

"Traditionally, brokers and agents pay out of their own pocket to maintain licensure or to update their accreditation," Mr. Lieb explained, "Nowadays, particularly in the real estate industry, it's beneficial to offer these services for free."

Mr. Lieb, who moved to East Moriches with Ms. Lieb in 2007, has poured his energy into participating in several community organizations. He currently sits on the Board of Directors of Colonial Youth and Family Services of Mastic, works closely with the Chamber of Commerce of the Moriches and sits on the Business Advisory Council for Center Moriches High School.

Years ago, before the Liebs finalized plans to move to the area, the couple met with Mr. Lieb's sick grandmother, who offered some sage advice.

"You will never regret living here," she told them. "You will love living in a small town."

"It's true, when it comes to Center Moriches, we're extremely proud to be here," Ms. Lieb said. "You would be hard-pressed to find a better community to serve or to live and work in."