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Article Text:

Tiburon firm helps to settle farmworker suit

A lawsuit against the nation's largest artichoke producer over unpaid worker time was settled yesterday with the help of a Tiburon law firm.

Thirty-seven current and former employees of Sea Mist Farms and Sea Breeze Harvesting, both affiliated with Ocean Mist of Castroville, will receive \$181,669 in compensation for time they spent traveling to and from Monterey County fields in company vehicles.

The farmworkers were represented in part by the **Talamantes** and **Villegas** law firm, which specializes in labor cases, in the Monterey County Superior Court lawsuit.

A state Supreme Court decision in 2000 established that time spent by a worker in compulsory travel in an employer's vehicle counts as hours worked. In this case, the workers were bused from a parking lot to the fields but were not paid for travel time.

"Our purpose is to compel farmers and farm operations who require workers to work for their benefit to pay those workers for all the time and energy the workers put into that job," said Virginia **Villegas**, an attorney for the workers.

Art Barrientos, vice president of harvesting for Ocean Mist, said buses were provided as a courtesy for the workers but are no longer used.

Ocean Mist settled the lawsuit to avoid costly litigation, Barrientos said.

Experts offer financial workshop for women

"Roadmap to Financial Freedom," a workshop for women, will be offered Feb. 21-23 at the Courtyard Marriott at 2500 Larkspur Landing Circle.

Personal coach Helen Attridge Green and financial consultant Virginia Harrison will lead the seminar.

The event is for those seeking investment strategies, to stretch existing incomes and to stick with a budget.

The workshop is 7 to p.m. on Feb. 21 and 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Feb. 22 and Feb. 23. The fee is \$495.

For more information, call 888-202-9290 or visit www.roadmaptofinancialfreedom.com.

Corte Madera cookies get their own Web site

Paul Patrikus, owner of Eat My Kookies in Corte Madera, launches www.eatmykookies.com on Saturday.

The new Web site will feature the shop's cookie varieties. Patrikus has operated the store at 209 Corte Madera Ave. for 15 years.

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