Celebrating 15 Years on Stockton Ave.

Supervisor John Gioia congratulates Jenny K. along with Kevin O'Neal and Al Miller at a February 9th anniversary party marking 15 years doing business on El Cerrito’s Stockton Avenue.

BY CHRIS TREADWAY

In celebrating 15 years on Stockton Avenue, the Jenny K. Gifts shop is also bucking a national trend by going from online startup to mom-and-pop, brick-and-mortar business. Their secret?

“She has the most friendly business in town,” said a woman bringing her father to the Jenny K. gift shop (www.jennyk.com) on a cold but sunny Friday in February.

Married entrepreneurs Jen Komaromi and Kevin O’Neal specialize in friendly and neighborly at their storefronts on Stockton Avenue, which include the gift shop, Well Grounded Tea & Coffee Bar (www.well-grounded.com), and their latest venture, a co-working space.

The gift shop opened on Valentine’s Day in 2004 and just celebrated its 15th anniversary. The coffee shop began in January 2005. All three are in the same building, with other storefronts sandwiched in between.

“I can’t believe it,” Komaromi said looking back 15 years. “I don’t know if I ever thought about it. We never thought of failure as an option. It just evolved. Time goes by very fast.”

So fast that the couple’s two children grew up in the coffee shop starting as babies. Jack, now 12, and Exie, almost 9, now know the routine.

“Both have been here since they were three weeks old,” Komaromi said. “They know how to ring up on the...