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## Aquariums and fish are family's passion

### Aquarium shop to host student tours

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**BAITING CUSTOMERS**—Andrew Bunya-Ananta is the owner of the **Agoura Hills-based Aquarium Connection**. A new showroom in **Simi Valley** recently held its grand opening. The ghostly creatures are moon jellyfish in an aquarium. **RICHARD GILLARD/Acorn Newspapers**

For Andrew Bunya-Ananta, working with fish is a family tradition.

His father, Peter, ran a tropical fish store for 35 years. And his great-grandfather, Kit, used to import marine tropical fish.

Bunya-Ananta said he basically grew up in his dad's **Simi Valley** store, where as a middle schooler, he learned about aquariums and the business aspect of owning a shop.

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“For as long as I can remember, I’ve always been a part of (the fish and aquarium) business,” the 29-year-old **Simi Valley** resident said. “(My father and great-grandfather) laid out the groundwork, and I’m taking over the business segment. I’m

picking up where they left off.”

In 2007, Bunya- Ananta opened his own business, the Aquarium Connection, which is headquartered in **Agoura Hills** and specializes in aquarium design and maintenance. His company has built aquariums for **Hollywood** movies, commercials and TV shows including “CSI: **NY**,” “Bones” and “The Hills.”

This past summer, he opened a new showroom at 1663 E. Los Angeles Ave. in **Simi Valley**. The shop followed with a recent grand opening.

"This store is much bigger and much more modern as far as being energy-efficient, with LED lighting and energy-efficient pumps," Bunya-Ananta said, comparing the new [Simi Valley](#) location to his former shop in [Thousand Oaks](#). "It's very eco-friendly."

## Filling a niche

The Aquarium Connection is the only store in [Simi Valley](#) that specializes in aquarium design and creating specialized aquatic environments, according to Bunya-Ananta.

"I've found my niche in doing aquariums and design," he said. "We know there's a reason we've withstood all the (recent economic) hardships."

During the recent recession, Bunya-Ananta figured the Aquarium Connection would be better off as a mobile business while waiting for the U.S. economy to bounce back. He used the time during his slow move to [Simi Valley](#) to revamp the company image as well as rewrite a business plan for longterm growth.

"Now we're finally introducing our showroom once again," he said, noting the new location is only one aspect of his revamped business. "We're kind of just scratching the surface with the kinds of things that we want to do."

Bunya-Ananta has a few creative ideas up his sleeve.

First, he will add an educational segment to his store, which, if all goes to plan, will provide tours for nearby schools so students can get a firsthand look at marine science.

"I know that a lot of the times the public schools don't have the budget to go to [Long Beach](#) or Monterey Bay, so I wanted to be the pioneer," Bunya-Ananta said, adding that students will eventually be able to take field trips to his shop. "I want to try to find creative grants and donations to fund (the tours) because we plan on making this public."

Bunya-Ananta and future education leader Jana Goldsworthy will give the guided tours, which are slated to take place in the mornings throughout the week.

"I want to create a business that is going to impact the community," Bunya-Ananta said. "That's why I'm so driven right now. I want this store to be a retail store, but I also want people to gain a sense of education when they come in."

Besides adding the educational element, the Aquarium Connection will soon provide leasing options for customers. Even inexperienced fish owners will be able to have a properly functioning tank without having to worry about complicated aquarium care because equipment, livestock, chemicals, food and round-the-clock care will all be included, Bunya-Ananta said.

"Everything will be included and guaranteed, which is huge because nobody is doing this in the industry," he said.

"You'll be able to pick your price point on how much you want to spend on a monthly basis."

The entrepreneur gives fair warning to potential customers who are expecting to come in and find an average tropical fish shop: "It's not just an aquarium store, it's an aquarium experience."

The Aquarium Connection has special offers, entertainment, vendor giveaways and a jellyfish viewing throughout the holidays.

For information, visit [www.theaquariumconnection.com](http://www.theaquariumconnection.com).

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