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Pleasanton Announces 2017 Community of Character Award Recipients

Juanita Haugen Awards Luncheon on May 24

PLEASANTON, Calif. — The Pleasanton Community of Character Collaborative is pleased to announce its 2017 Juanita Haugen Awards recipients, who exhibit the values of the Community of Character through their great examples of service, while living the values of Responsibility, Compassion, Self-Discipline, Honesty, Respect and Integrity.

Gary Howell has been volunteering with the Meals on Wheels program for the past 15 years and was one of the very first volunteer drivers to sign on. Meals on Wheels is a program of Spectrum Community Services. He never misses his Tuesday assignments and brings a level of compassion, respect and kindness to the people to whom he delivers. He also volunteers at ValleyCare hospital on Wednesdays. In 1998 Gary experienced a stroke. After his stroke, he decided to sell his business and since he was fortunate enough to recover his health, he felt it was his duty to give as much back as possible to the community where he had lived for 42 years.

Meals on Wheels recipients are seniors who are homebound, many with chronic illnesses, severe mobility issues, dementia and loneliness. Gary acts as a friendly face they can see and chat with every week. He always brings brightness with him as he delivers a hot meal and a friendly visit.

Rachel Carpender of Spectrum Community Services says of Gary, “He’s someone I know I can always count on when I need him. He brings a level of compassion, respect and kindness to the other volunteers and the seniors on our program.” Respect and compassion are two of the important values of our Community of Character.

Bruce Bird was born in Idaho of goodly parents that taught their children the value of work, being responsible, honesty, integrity and helping others. Bruce tries to give his all to whatever he is involved in. His life has revolved around his family, church and community service. He and his wife Marianne have raised four children in Pleasanton and have twelve grandchildren. He has been active in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints serving as a missionary for two years, a bishop for five years, a counselor in the stake presidency for 10 years and many youth leadership callings. His church leadership roles lead him to be involved various community volunteer efforts including American Red Cross blood drives, Open Heart Kitchen, East Bay Stand Down, Dublin Pride and other service projects.

As their children became involved in school so did Bruce. He served on some city committees and he was appointed the project manager for the snack bar and bathroom facility built by the Amador Valley Athletic Boosters with completely volunteer labor. He is currently chairman of the Alameda County Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (ALCOVOAD) an organization for emergency preparedness, which helps coordinate relief efforts between voluntary agencies, faith-based groups, and government organizations involved in disaster response. The efforts of Open Heart Kitchen to feed the hungry of the Tri-Valley have found a place in his heart and he is currently on the board of directors.

He has served on the Community of Character scholarship committee for several years and is grateful to have known Juanita Haugen and live in a community that promotes and teaches the Community of Character values of responsibility, honesty, compassion, self-discipline, respect and integrity.

Ruth McAninch grew up in Miami, Florida, and has lived in California for the past 36 years, the last 22 in Pleasanton. She retired in 2012 after 30 years as an air traffic controller. Don't be surprised if she answers you with "roger" or "say again" as both she and her husband Kurt, as well as her dad were air traffic controllers. And yes, they did say "affirmative" rather than "I do" at their wedding. After retirement, she signed up for Leadership Pleasanton in 2013. She was involved in the startup of Blue Oaks Church and is now a board member and has led out in efforts of the church to provide service to the community, working closely with the PUSD to provide Christmas gifts for the needy, the Hanger program and tutors for children who may not be able to afford one.

She has helped institute and participates in senior centers, assisted living centers, "Kids Against Hunger," and Open Heart Kitchen. Last summer, she and Kurt had the opportunity to travel to Ecuador and Peru and sponsor a young man through Compassion International. She and Kurt are studying Spanish to enable better communication on their next trip to Ecuador. Pastor VanCleave says of Ruth, "She's not just the most generous person I know, she's irrationally generous. She gives until it hurts. As for kindness, she embodies the word. My kids think she's the most loving

person in the world. Our staff believes Ruth is one of the best examples of a Christ-centered life. I can't say enough about her."

Ruth adores her dog Toby, likes to cook, loves dining out, enjoys travel and embraces exercise. She believes God is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in love and faithfulness. Ruth seeks to live out these attributes in her interactions with others.

Open Heart Kitchen (OHK) was the culmination of years of work by the interfaith community of the Tri-Valley citizens and city officials, who saw the rising tide of hunger in our communities, and wanted to respond to it. Ever since it's official inception in 1995, OHK has been committed to finding resources – staffing, financial supporters, facilities and volunteers – to find creative ways to push back against hunger in the communities of Dublin, Livermore and Pleasanton.

For more than 20 years, Open Heart Kitchen has been serving prepared, nutritious meals free of charge to the hungry people of the Tri-Valley area. Recognizing that hunger does not discriminate, OHK committed to pushing back against hunger by serving meals to students through its bag lunch program; hot meals at sites in Livermore, Pleasanton, and Dublin; and discounted meals for senior citizens at senior center sites in Livermore, Pleasanton, and Dublin. They now serve more than 350,000 meals a year. The majority of volunteers live right here in the Tri-Valley. Whether one is receiving a hand up or giving back, OHK is a true community and neighborhood affair. Pastor John Bost of Holy Cross Lutheran Church states that "Open Heart Kitchen, simply put is Tri-Valley residents caring for Tri-Valley residents, strengthening the bonds of one another."

The Juanita Haugen Community of Character Award is named in honor of a longtime Pleasanton Unified School District Board Member and community volunteer, Juanita Haugen. Juanita, co-founder of the Pleasanton Community of Character program, believed that part of Pleasanton's success is due to its compassionate citizens and those people who volunteer throughout our community. Her vision was to remind people to model ethical standards of behavior within their communities, businesses and homes and to extend these traits outside our community as they travel and meet other people throughout the world.

This year's Juanita Haugen Community of Character Award recipients will be honored at the Wednesday, May 24, 2017 Luncheon 11:30 a.m. at the Pleasanton Veterans Hall. The luncheon reservation form is available online at the Chamber of Commerce website www.pleasanton.org. Cost of the luncheon is \$35 and is open to the public, friends of the recipients are encouraged to attend and support the recipients.

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