

# Civic News Moraga



Public Meetings	
<b>Town Council</b>	Saturday, January 8, 8:00 am Hacienda de las Flores, 2100 Donald Drive Town Council Goal Setting Workshop
<b>Town Council</b>	Wednesday, January 12, 7:30 pm Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School, 1010 Camino Pablo
<b>Planning Commission</b>	Tuesday, January 18, 7:30 pm Moraga Library, 1500 Saint Marys Rd
<b>Design Review</b>	Monday, January 24, 7:00 pm Moraga Library, 1500 Saint Marys Rd <i>Monday, January 10, has been canceled</i>
<b>Liaison</b>	Friday, January 14, 8:00 am Fire Station, 1280 Moraga Way

Check online for agendas, meeting notes and announcements  
 Town of Moraga online: [www.moraga.ca.us](http://www.moraga.ca.us)  
 Chamber of Commerce: [www.moragachamber.org](http://www.moragachamber.org)  
 Moraga Citizens' Network: [www.moragacitizensnetwork.org](http://www.moragacitizensnetwork.org)

**• Police Report •**  
 Police Blotter will be back next time.

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**New winter sessions of classes start this week and next. See all our offerings, including SMC enrichment classes, at [www.moraga.ca.us](http://www.moraga.ca.us)**

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## From Queen in Sebastopol to Mayor of Moraga – The adventures of Karen Mendonca

By Sophie Braccini



Karen Mendonca Photo Clay Serrahn

**K**aren Mendonca was 16 years old when she was crowned Sebastopol's Queen of the Festa do Espirito Santo in 1970. The pretty teenager led the procession that Americans of Portuguese descent have held annually for 100 years in Sonoma County to celebrate the merciful Queen Isabella of Portugal, who gave back so much to her people in the late 13th century. This sense of community involvement and leadership has been the signature of the woman who was elected Moraga's mayor for 2011.

After a successful career in higher education and with the support of her husband of 27 years, Clay Serrahn, Mendonca stepped up to her new role as mayor with a calm and assured demeanor and set an ambitious to-do list on behalf of the little town she has made her home. "I have no personal agenda other than what is best for the town," Mendonca states, "I hope to be a positive facilitator for the Council to make progress toward our goals." (See our Dec. 22 issue for a list of Mendonca's goals, <http://www.lamorindaweekly.com/archive/issue0421/Moragas-New-Town-Council.html>.)

On the day that Mendonca was elected to Moraga's top Town Council post, her family was in

the audience. Her mother and sister still live in Sonoma County where she grew up. This proximity allows the Mendoncas to maintain their strong family ties.

Mendonca's parents came from immigrant families and were in the first generation to be born in America. Her father's family came from the Azores, a volcanic Portuguese archipelago located some 1000 miles off the Portuguese coast. The family settled near Sebastopol, where a large Portuguese community still resides. Mendonca's mother is of Austrian descent (from what is now Slovenia). "My parents were always giving back to their community," says Mendonca, "it was just their way to live their lives."

Mendonca was the first in her family to go to college. She started close to home at Santa Rosa Junior College then transferred to the California State University (CSU), Chico, to get her Bachelor's Degree, her K-12 teaching credential and first Master's Degree. Since she wanted to teach, counsel or administer she got a second Master's Degree in Counseling and Educational Psychology at the University of San Francisco.

Mendonca started work at Santa Rosa Junior College as a counselor, but when Proposition 13 passed, many such positions were cut. For a while she taught 8th grade math in Sebastopol. "It was a lot of fun teaching where I grew up," says Mendonca, "and I was on the same faculty as my former third grade teacher." She continued counseling part-time in Santa Rosa until she was of-

ferred a position as Assistant Director for Career Development at CSU Stanislaus.

In that post she was offered many opportunities for career growth, including executive fellowships, and she decided to complete her PhD at U C



Karen Mendonca Photo provided by Sebastopol Holy Ghost Society

Berkeley. "I did my research in the Graduate School of Education's Program in Policy and Management Research," she says, "it was a terrific program that combined policy, law, micro-economics, finance, management, and political science."

Mendonca's dissertation studied the careers of female presidents of universities across the United States. Mendonca interviewed many of these 43 Presidents (1991). "They were very

generous women," remembers Mendonca, "all of them infused with an incredible passion for what they were doing. They all knew they had a special place and a purpose to fulfill."

From 2000-2004, Mendonca held appointments at the CSU Monterey Bay campus, first as Associate Vice President for Budget and Planning, then as Associate Vice President of Academic Affairs. "Clay and I had a commuter marriage, seeing each other only on weekends," she says, "so when I had an opportunity for early retirement, I took it."

Mendonca wanted to give back to Moraga, where she and Clay had a home since 1991, and it was not long before she applied for a seat on the Parks and Recreation Commission. She says she soon started receiving calls from residents asking her to run for Town Council. "I was not really willing to do it," says Mendonca, and it was her mother who convinced her. "She said, 'whatever they throw at you, you can handle it, and you could really help,'" Mendonca recalls.

"I come from a very tight knit community with a culture of long term friendships," says Mendonca, "and to this day I'm in touch with friends from both elementary and high school. Clay and I love Moraga because it is a very similar community. It has so much potential and the residents also are the same type of generous people who want to give back."

## Moraga Royale Supports Rescue One

By Sophie Braccini



From left: Fire Chief Randall Bradley (holding the new Lifepak 15), Linda Borelli, Gene Gottfried, and Dianne Wilson Photo Andy Scheck

"I was astonished when Dianne (Wilson) gave us a check for \$2,700.00," said Rescue One Foundation Board Member Linda Borelli. Wilson, the executive director of Moraga Royale, an assisted living facility, spearheaded the facility's Christmas tree auction to benefit Rescue One. "This will be a great help in our fundraising efforts," stated Borelli.

Established in 1977, the Rescue One Foundation receives and administers contributions in support of the Moraga-Orinda Fire District's (MOFD) paramedic program; over the last 33 years, Rescue One has contributed \$300,000 worth of equipment to MOFD.

Rescue One's latest purchase is a new monitor/defibrillator called the Lifepak 15. MOFD is the first fire district in the East Bay to get the newer, lighter unit. "This unit checks 15 different vital signs and transfers the information directly to the emergency room even before the emergency vehicle reaches its destination," explained Borelli. "Rescue One was very proud to finance one of these units for MOFD a month ago. We hope to get a second unit in the near future, and Moraga Royale's donation will help us get there."

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