

Published April 25th, 2012

What Keeps Ellen Beans Going? Moraga's 2012 Citizen of the Year

By Sophie Braccini



Ellen Beans at a CERT training session in Gordon Nathan's home. Photo Sophie Braccini

led by Schwartz.) "Ellen wanted to stay in the background," remembers Schwartz, "but she has developed her leadership skills over the years."

Moraga Mayor Mike Metcalf has also known Ellen Beans for some years. "Since she first started coming to Council meetings she's always worked on increasing transparency in local government," says Metcalf. "Then she started working with Edy Schwartz on the economic development of the town, with the Shop Moraga First movement, reviving the Chamber of Commerce, and in leading the yearly Community Faire." Metcalf, who works side-by-side with Beans on the Revenue Enhancement Committee Outreach to Neighborhoods (RECON), adds that he enjoys working with her and appreciates her sense of humor.

Beans is currently at the helm of the Moraga Citizens Network (www.moragacitizensnetwork.org). Town Manager Jill Keimach, who met Beans only recently, says that she is a quiet leader who is all about letting residents know about every aspect of what is happening in Moraga. "She puts that before any of her own interests," says Keimach. "She communicates, she listens, she shares, and she works tirelessly to make Moraga better and more community oriented."

Gordon Nathan, last year's Citizen of the Year and a Community Emergency Response Team instructor knows her in that capacity. He was also struck by her enthusiasm, hard work and desire to communicate with others. "She came to the CERT training, did some research on her own, and followed up by organizing information sessions with her neighbors," he remembers.

"My motivation is sharing information and creating connections with the community, bringing people together," says Beans. "In this town of Moraga, I love to work with so many wonderful people to make Moraga an even more vibrant community."

There are different nicknames that suit Moraga's 2012 Citizen of the Year, Ellen Beans. To many, she is 'the quiet leader,' because of the way she takes charge of things when the need arises without ever putting herself in the forefront. But to her longtime friend Edy Schwartz, it should be Beans' legal first name, Grace, "because this is the way she goes through life, does things and is with people," she says.

"When I think of Ellen I remember that her father was a minister and that her service to the community is in a very broad sense carrying on his ministry," says Janet Foreman, another longtime friend. "She serves with great caring, great respect, and with very hard work. I think that it was Maya Angelou who said that 'we often don't remember what a person said but always remember how they made us feel.' When I'm with Ellen I always experience being heard and seen for who I really am and the feeling from that experience is extremely satisfying."

Beans says that she was fortunate enough not to have to work once she began raising her family and she's always serving a cause, a community. "Whatever I have done I have always done 100%," she says. "It is intense, fulfilling, and challenging and it has allowed me to discover parts of myself that I ignored, and I have matured immensely."

Schwartz has watched Beans' transformation since the 1970s (when Beans' daughter belonged to a Girl Scout troop

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