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Two Orinda Residents Honored at Contra Costa Council Philanthropy Awards

Submitted by Molly Walker



Kay Aaker Photos Robert Temple Photography

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More than 310 people attended the Contra Costa Council's 2012 Contra Costa Philanthropy Awards breakfast celebration Nov. 8 at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Concord to honor eight award recipients, including Orinda residents Kay Aaker and Judy Lazarus.

Aaker, who was awarded Outstanding Volunteer of the Year, has been volunteering with Hospice of the East Bay over the past 28 years, clocking more than 750 volunteer hours since 2004. A retired grade school teacher for over 40 years, she has also volunteered for Meals on Wheels, Caring Hands at John Muir Hospital and the American Cancer Society. "She positively and creatively impacts at least one other person's life every day, and she does it with dignity, grace and style," noted the Council at this year's event. Last year, Aaker earned an award from the Culture to Culture Foundation for extraordinary voluntary service within Contra Costa County.

Lazarus, who was presented with the Lifetime Achievement Award, founded the Xenophon Therapeutic Riding Center in Martinez in 1993, moving to its present location in Orinda in 1996. Serving Alameda and Contra Costa counties, the center offers therapeutic horseback riding for children with disabilities. She started the program at a borrowed barn on borrowed horses, with only two students and herself as the instructor. Through 18 years of commitment and energy, the center now has seven part-time instructors, a licensed physical therapist and five program-owned therapy horses. It serves 48 students each week, with a wait-list for services. More than 120 volunteers work at the center weekly, including many teens whom Judy has recruited from area high schools.

Contra Costa TV will air the awards breakfast program at 8 p.m. Thursday, Nov. 22 and Monday, Nov. 26. For more information about the Contra Costa Council, visit www.contracostacouncil.com.



Judy Lazarus

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