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AAUW OML Empowers and Celebrates All Women

Submitted by Chris Laszcz-Davis



From left: Sandra Fox-Sohner, chair, Tech Trek Initiative, and Mary Bonilla, last year's Distinguished Award winner. Photo provided

The Orinda-Moraga-Lafayette branch of the American Association of University Women (AAUW) celebrated its busy year with a May 20 luncheon at the Orinda Country Club. The theme for the day was "Empowering and Celebrating All Women!" Members and guests gathered to acknowledge various members' contributions to the organization and to install the 2014-15 executive board.

The branch awarded Sandra Fox-Sohner with the 2014 Distinguished Woman award. Elise Fox, Fox-Sohner's daughter, introduced our 2014 honoree, sharing stories about the impact her mother has had on her life. Fox-Sohner's theme for her talk was: "You can learn anything from a book." She shared personal anecdotes about growing up and how she used books from a very early age to learn about things. She described learning to swim using the book "Learn How to Swim," and practicing on her bed. She put herself through college graduating from UC Berkeley with degrees in evolutionary biology and German literature. She then earned a graduate degree in education and taught math and science in high school and junior high school. While raising three children, she earned her MBA at UCB and started her own company, HighTech Business Decisions, a market research and consulting firm focused on biotech manufacturing technologies and drug discovery technologies.

Over the years Fox-Sohner served on the Livermore Recreation and Parks District board of directors, was active in the League of Women Voters and the National Organization for Women, and volunteered for the Child Abuse Prevention Council. She has been deeply committed to equity for girls and women throughout her life. Nominating letters described her keen intellect, thoughtful leadership skills, her grace, enthusiasm, and creativity. She has certainly distinguished herself in terms of leadership, creativity, initiative, and friendship in every endeavor in her community, profession, and AAUW.

Muriel Fry, a member of the Pleasant Hill/Martinez Branch installed OML's executive board for 2014-15, with Karen Mankowski re-elected as president of the branch. Fry reminded the audience that everyone needs to get involved and support our leaders.

Members were acknowledged for their contributions to AAUW Funds. A total of \$6,976 was donated in 2013. This year's Branch-Named Gift Honoree was Lana Reichick, acknowledging her many years of service to OML, her years of work on its fundraising efforts, her tenure as the OML vice president of the Legal Advocacy Fund, and her tireless efforts on AAUW-OML local philanthropies, especially Tech Trek.

For more information about the organization, go to oml-ca.aauw.net.

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