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COMMUNITY HALL- LAFAYETTE LIBRARY & LEARNING CENTER  
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**Celebrating Citizen of the Year Marechal Duncan**

By Cathy Tyson



Marechal Duncan Photo John Otto

History buff Marechal Duncan has secured an official place in Lafayette's own history, becoming the 2015 Citizen of the Year, thanks to his long and varied track record of donating countless hours for the good of the city. With wife, Doris, the young couple settled in Lafayette about 60 years ago, and like many, bought a shiny new ranch house and raised their family here.

Now 93, Duncan is consistently positive, engaging and interested in a host of senior-focused issues. His fans speculate that his pleasant demeanor and inquisitiveness contributes to his good health and longevity.

"We're his girlfriends," said Mary McCosker at the Historical Society office, calling Duncan, who serves as vice president of the organization, charming and handsome. All the ladies who work there - Judie Peterson, Jeanine Kikkert, Laura Torkelson, Sande Hubbs, Nancy Flood, Ruth Bailey and McCosker - have nothing but kind words about this courtly gentleman and his warmth, honesty and great sense of humor. He works there every Saturday.

Upstairs at the library, Duncan created and donated a unique piece from the 1830s - a pair of branding irons with a hide bearing the brand of early Lafayette settler Elam Brown, along with official paperwork about the property purchase from Contra Costa County. Senior Community Library Manager Vickie Sciacca describes the heartfelt welcome Duncan gave her during a presentation about the library at the Senior Symposium when she was the newly appointed librarian. "It made me feel already home," she said.

"Marechal has been an unfailing cheerleader for the library," explained

Anne Grodin, former mayor and city council member, and one of the founders of the Lafayette Community Foundation. When talking about the fundraising campaign and the planning for the new Lafayette Library and Learning Center, she said, "He always looked toward the future and what his beloved community could be."

Duncan was instrumental in getting the now annual Senior Symposium off the ground, as a co-chair of the event through the Lafayette Community Foundation's Liaison Committee for Seniors. He and others visualized an event where expert speakers would discuss the many aspects of aging. The event, now going on its seventh year, continues to be a great free resource for many seniors and their families, especially those interested in aging in place.

As part of his Eagle Scout project, then Acalanes High School senior Aaron Miller became a member of the Lafayette Community Foundation's Senior Liaison Committee and partnered with Duncan to work on the Senior Symposium. The two - being the oldest and youngest in the group - hit it off. Both were involved in local Boy Scout Troop 204, Miller as a current member, and Duncan as a troop leader ages ago when his kids were Scouts. Miller calls him a "straight up boss," a powerful teenage compliment.

As a passionate advocate for seniors, he's been involved since the beginning with the Lamorinda Village, a nonprofit community-based organization that endeavors to help seniors remain in their homes. He was also on the team that got Lafayette's first motorized fire engine, "Old Betsy," that served the town in the 1920s and 1930s running again. He was co-chair of the Sesquicentennial Celebration, also known as the town's 150th birthday party. And the list goes on.

"In the end, it's not the years in your life that count. It's the life in your years," said Abraham Lincoln almost 150 years ago. Duncan has clearly made the most of his retirement years, squeezing in lots of life and joy - and Lafayette is better for it.

He'll be celebrated at a dinner in his honor on Friday, March 27 at the Lafayette Park Hotel. Reservations are required; contact the Lafayette Chamber of Commerce for details at (925) 284-7404.

**Gas Leak at Burton Valley Elementary School**

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Burton Valley Elementary is one of five schools on a combined 80 acres of land that make up the district. It "represents a significant public investment," said School Board President David Gerson. "The district wants to be a prudent property owner."

With tight budgets since 2008, due to state cutbacks, the entire district reigned in costs and lived within its budget, explained Gerson. There just wasn't the capacity to spend additional funds on deferred maintenance, but now it's time to address those issues.

The district already has the initial version of a report, the Facilities Master Plan, which assesses infrastructure needs - everything from roofs, windows, grounds, plumbing and more - and will prioritize repairs. Some work has been done at all of the dis-

trict schools over the years, and all the campuses have solar panels to help defray utility costs.

With only about \$3 million in a special account for maintenance, Zinn stated, "It's very clear that won't meet our needs." The district is "exploring all possibilities" for funding to accommodate necessary upgrades. Once the Facilities Master Plan report is complete, a revenue committee will recommend a plan of action that will go before the school board.

Repairs at Burton Valley Elementary are expected to be complete in the near future. The gas will remain off until the contractor as well as PG&E fully test the lines. Unfortunately, expensive, unfunded infrastructure repairs will likely be a common theme in Lafayette and beyond as schools continue to age from sea to shining sea.

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