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**‘Selfless’ Volunteer Judy Dinkle is Moraga Citizen of the Year**

By Sophie Braccini



Judy Dinkle is Moraga's Citizen of the Year.

Photo Sophie Braccini

Judy Dinkle is an unassuming woman who says she feels more comfortable in the background, but the licensed general contractor, entrepreneur and volunteer extraordinaire couldn't hide her achievements indefinitely, as she was selected as the 2016 Moraga Citizen of the Year.

Since 2001 she has volunteered in the town, serving on the board of the Park Foundation, then helping in the creation of the Hacienda Foundation. She has spearheaded many projects for both groups.

It seems as if Dinkle is everywhere, serving food on the Fourth of July, Cinco de Mayo and at other local celebrations, lending an enthusiastic hand whenever she can. What people don't always see is that Dinkle

has also been working hours on the preparation for these events.

"I was raised in a Connecticut family where serving the community was the norm," Dinkle says. "My father served on the city council and my mother was involved with the Juniors, the garden club, and other local groups."

With a full time job on top of being a mom, she was already very busy in the community. When her progeny prepared to leave for college, she decided to engage more time in the town's affairs and take on more responsibilities.

"I joined the Board of the Moraga Park Foundation in 2001," says Dinkle. That group is known for raising money and funding the ever-popular free summer concert series. Dinkle has been in charge of selecting and contracting with the bands for years. "Going to the park on summer night and seeing all the families (at the concerts) is just a wonderful experience," she says.

Her biggest love affair in Moraga is with the Hacienda de las Flores. An art major and teacher when she started her career, Dinkle has always had a flair for aesthetics and was attracted to the charm and serenity of the Moraga jewel. When the town asked volunteers to serve on a Hacienda committee in 2005 she was selected. The committee recommended the creation of a Foundation that would raise \$1.2 million to repair the Hacienda. Dinkle was instrumental with other committee members and friends to start the foundation's fundraising efforts.

Many projects have been undertaken

by this group. Bob Reynolds, Moraga Park Foundation Board member, recalls the renovation of the kitchen. "Judy was an absolutely critical and instrumental part of the team that initiated and executed the remodel of the Hacienda kitchen," he says, adding that for him Dinkle represents talent coupled with dedication.

Everyone who worked on these projects with her, either remodeling, repairing or putting on events to make the Hacienda a more popular venue rave about her can-do attitude.

"Her expertise in matters of construction and design has made her a most valuable asset to our parks-related projects," says Claire Roth, a member of the Hacienda Foundation Board of Directors. "She is selfless, talented, hardworking, and exceptionally productive."

And she is a delight to be around, adds Reynolds.

After 10 years on the Hacienda Foundation Dinkle has timed out. "I am very hopeful about what the town is doing now with Gould Evans to develop the property," she said, "I'm sure that a restaurant would do very well there." She also believes that a public-private partnership could allow development there.

A dinner to honor Dinkle will be held on April 29 at the Soda Center on the St. Mary's College campus. The event will start at 6 p.m. with a social hour, followed by a buffet dinner at 7 p.m. and the recognition program beginning at 8 p.m. Tickets are \$55 per person. Reservation deadline is Monday, April 25, 2016. Purchase on line at www.moraga-chamber.org.

**Best Heirlooms on Sale at Moraga Garden Farms**

By Sophie Braccini

Since the mid-1990s Moraga Garden Farms has sold its produce to the best local restaurants, from Chez Panisse in Berkeley to Postino in Lafayette. The heirloom tomatoes that the farm grows from seeds are among the favorites.

Local foodies will rejoice that through April 24 farm volunteers are selling the same plants to the public that local chefs seek. The proceeds help fund the group, which also gives its surplus to those in the area that most need it.

"We have used their tomatoes for many years," says Beth Wells, head chef at Chez Panisse in Berkeley. "We try to buy as much local and organic produce as possible. Their tomatoes are great!"

Deva Rajan, founder and director of the farm, confirms that Heirloom tomatoes are the most popular items.

"Star Grocery loves our hybrid tomatoes also, especially the Early Girls," Rajan said. "We are also delivering fresh summer squash and cucumbers."

Farm volunteer Claire Curtin says that there are four restaurants in Lamorinda that are buying the produce:

Postino, Metro Lafayette, The Rustic Tavern and the Moraga Ranch Cafe on School Street. She adds that in Berkeley and Oakland there are several:

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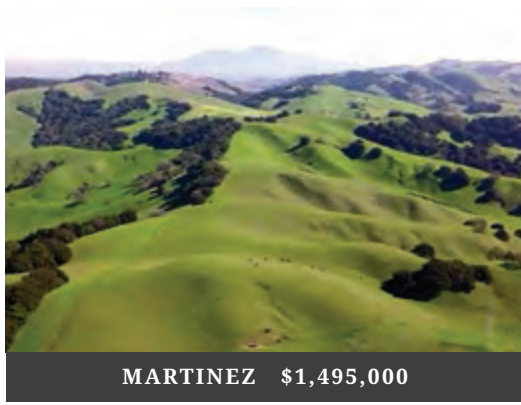
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