

# 'Magic Penny' adds to magical Orinda awards night

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"Love is something if you give it away ... You end up having more," she sang, as she accepted the award with her husband, Andy Amstutz. Bill Hudson was honored with the 2018 William Mott Jr. Environmental Award and Andy Radlow and Bobbie Landers were honored with the 2018 Orinda volunteers awards.

More than 180 people were in attendance for the dinner and awards presentation at the Orinda Country Club on Sunday evening, March 10. Previous dinners had not had more than about 100 people in attendance. Attendees enjoyed a three-course dinner, and the person at each table with a birthday closest to the date went home with the beautiful floral centerpiece prepared by mother-daughter floral arrangers Gail Emmons and Lisa Hallahan of the Orinda Garden Club.

Opening and closing remarks were offered by Richard Westin, vice president of the Orinda Association, and the awards were presented by Carlos Baltodano, president of the Orinda Association and former Orinda mayor Sue Severson. Additional proclamations were presented by current Mayor Inga Miller and Vice Mayor Darlene Gee, by Assemblywoman Rebecca Bauer-Kahan, who also presented proclamations from California Sen. Steve Glazer, and by Jill Ray on behalf of Contra Costa County Supervisor Candace Andersen.

There were many former Citizen of the Year award winners present; the award has been presented for the past 70 years. Landers, who



2018 William Penn Mott Jr. Environmental Award. Winner William Hudson, center, with his wife, left, and his mother, right.

was a joint winner in 1994, was awarded one of the two Orinda volunteer awards, the other going to Radlow for his work on the Fourth of July Parade.

Landers said that her entire family does volunteer work, naming, among other projects that they volunteer to help, the Friends of the Moraga Adobe and Concerts in the Park. She mentioned that her niece is the president of the Orinda Garden Club. A former mayor of Orinda, Landers was instrumental in the incorporation of the city and was a member of the first city council. She continues to be involved with the Orinda/Tabor Sister City Foundation and the Friends of Joaquin Moraga Adobe. Radlow has managed the Fourth of July Parade for the last five years. He coordinates over 100 volunteers and has spent thousands of hours each of those years making the Orinda Fourth of July Parade a successful event.

Hudson accepted the en-

vironmental award with thanks and humility. He noted that he has been fortunate to work on two major projects: Save Open Space, led by Mimi and Pete Wilson, who won the Volunteers of the Year award in 1998, and the Friends of the Wagner Ranch Nature Area, led by Kathy and Reg Barrett, winners of Penn Mott Jr. Environmental award in 2007. Save Open Space led to the preservation of 1,300 acres in conjunction with the development of Wilder. Part of the land is now EBMUD watershed and 640 acres are becoming part of Sibley Regional Park.

Hudson's works on the Nature Area with others, including Toris Jaeger, winner of the first Mott Award in 1993. Since passage of the recent school bond, the Orinda Union School Board is working to expand the Wagner Ranch Nature Area and open it to more students.

Connecting children to nature is also a high priority



Photos Sora O'Doherty

Volunteer of the Year. Bobbie Landers accepts award from Sue Severson, both former mayors of Orinda.



Volunteer of the Year Andy Radlow accepts award from Carlos Baltodano for his work on the Fourth of July Parade.

of the winners of the 2018 Citizen of the Year award, Carole and Andy Amstutz. Their children attended all three Orinda schools. Carole taught music at Glorietta, as she demonstrated with her song, which charmed all in attendance. Their volunteer efforts have benefited the Na-

ture Area, as well as the Orinda Garden Club and Lamorinda Village, a volunteer organization that helps seniors. In addition to musical talent, there must be literary talent in the family too, as their son Paul honored his mother with a poem.

# ConnectOrinda reaches project selection stage

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The six projects that received the most favorable comments were creating a plan for creek access (143 positive comments, 10 negative), creating a pedestrian-friendly alley at Vashell Way near Moraga Way (98, 9) moving the eastbound access ramp to Highway 24 (91, 28), enhancing the walking route between BART and the Theatre District (81, 5). Creating direct pedestrian linkages between the Village and the Theatre District garnered 84 positive responses, but also 33 negative responses. The only

other project to receive the same number of negative responses was calming Moraga Way, which received 62 positive responses.

Another project that received many negative responses, was enhancing the north end of Orinda Way for flexible uses and improve walkability from Avenida de Orinda to Camino Pablo (37, 32). The remainder of the projects were, in order of the highest positive responses, creating gateways to Theatre District; inviting people into Theatre District from BART; improving walkability in middle portion of Orinda Way from Santa Maria Way to Avenida de Orinda; enhanc-

ing civic-area outdoor spaces for flexible uses; improving roadway bike facilities along Camino Pablo; re-envisioning public spaces in the Theatre District; making south end of Orinda Way pedestrian friendly; providing access to de Laveaga Trail; providing direct street level path to and from the Village and improving the casual carpool waiting area.

The projects are broken down both by whether they are short-term, long-term, and by estimated cost. A popular project that could be completed quickly within six months to a year, and at a relatively low cost of approximately \$10,000, is the pedestrian-friendly alley at Vashell Way, while moving the eastbound Highway 24 on-ramp to the intersection of Camino Pablo and Brookwood or long-term ways to connect the two sides of downtown Orinda could take from five to 10 years and cost from \$5-15 million. Although it is considered a short-term project, planning and preparing for creek restoration is estimated to take one to three years at a cost of over a half million dollars.

Many Orinda residents were present at the meeting to express their opinions. Council Member Dennis Fay estimated that the cost of studies alone on changing the eastbound freeway access could cost half a million dollars or more. However, he thought that an additional on-ramp would be a benefit for fire safety. Council Member Amy Worth suggested that the solution would be to open an additional on-ramp, but not to eliminate the current one, which serves a portion of Orinda. Council Member Nick Kosla agreed that it wouldn't be the plan to close the exist-



Images provided

ing on-ramp.

Vice Mayor Darlene Gee emphasized that small steps headed in the right direction toward downtown development is the best approach, and once again wondered if it would be cost effective to hire a grant consultant. "I'd love to get started with the low-hanging fruit," she said, suggesting that projects that could be completed quickly are the Vashell Way alley and the use of the library terraces, which was mentioned as a short-term project that could be accomplished within six to 12 months at low cost. The suggestion was that the library terraces had originally been intended for some use, such as small shops, whereas they currently are just part of the landscaping. While Gee believes that the cost of a project to widen the underpass under Highway 24 would be high, she suggested that there might be funds available from Measure RR to open an additional access

point to the BART station. Planning Director Drummond Buckley agreed, and said that he had done a three-hour walking tour with BART personnel to point out all the matters relating to the station that could be quickly fixed, such as lighting and access for the disabled.

The council also discussed, at the suggestion of City Manager Steve Salomon, the idea of installing a sound wall to protect the Theatre District from the noise of Highway 24. Worth favored plantings in lieu of a wall, while Gee thought that a wall would be not a lot of effort. Fay pointed out that, in his experience, trees do nothing to deflect sound. Some issues to be considered that were mentioned were whether the wall would go up only to come down later as part of the highway on-ramp project, and whether or not it would in any way impede the view of the iconic Orinda Theatre.

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