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Moraga Lions and Muffin People honor volunteers during pandemic

Submitted by Bob Murtagh



From left: Lion Bill Hansen, Lion Rich Laufenberg, Jack Dice (Muffin People), Lion Ray Casabonne and Lion Dan Hagan Photo provided

In 1988 several members of the Men's Club at St. Monica Catholic Church in Moraga volunteered to collect from the food stores in Moraga to supply St. Mary's Center, Oakland. It soon became obvious that more food was needed so collection was expanded to six days a week.

In the beginning much of the donations were bakery products. One day at St. Mary's Center, upon seeing their van, one of the women clients called out, "Here come the Muffin Men," and the name stuck. As the program grew to include not just St. Mary's but also St. Vincent de Paul dining room and the Emeryville Community Assistance Program, more volunteers were needed and ladies joined the ranks, so the name became the Muffin People. Each of the three sites provide meals and food products to hundreds of needy individuals and families every day.

Presently the Muffin People collect all manor of food stuffs from all three Lamorinda Safeways, Trader Joe's, Diablo Foods, and Whole Foods in Lafayette as well as Lunardii's in Walnut Creek. It is estimated that the total value of the donated food exceeds more than \$1.4 million annually. Trader Joe's in Lafayette donates about \$850,000 each year.

Jack Dice, of St. Monica Men's Club, is the program coordinator and schedules the daily pickups. Since four of his drivers, Ray Casabonne, Rich Laufenberg, Dan Hagan and Bill Hansen, are members of the Lamorinda Lions Club, the Lions decided to assist this program by giving a small gift of encouragement and appreciation to the heroes who work these food banks. During Christmas week Messrs. Dice and Casabonne awarded the staff and volunteers at St. Mary's Center, St. Vincent de Paul and ECAP with 65 gift bags to recognize their service during these difficult times.

Lion Bill Ridle, the Lions District Governor for Alameda and Contra Costa counties, has recently presented an award to the Lamorinda Lions Club and these four Lions for their efforts in preventing hunger.

For more information about the Muffin People, contact Jack Dice at (925) 376-7189. For more information about the Lamorinda Lions, contact Ray Casabonne at (925) 376-3078.

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[back](#)

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