

## Senior profile: Local senior was instrumental in starting Morgan Hill AAUW chapter

AAUW charter was signed on her kitchen table

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*By Robert Airoidi*

If it wasn't for a sexist math teacher at San Jose State University in the late 1950s, Marilyn Gadway may have never changed her major and found her true passion.

She was studying to become an occupational therapist, but early in her studies she changed her major to architecture. That was when the math professor told her "you're not going to pass this class, lady," she said, seated at a dining room table in her southwest Morgan Hill home. "He wasn't going to help me in any way pass that class." She refused to walk out and survived the class with a D grade, but realized she needed to change her major. She chose recreation because she'd been working at it and loved what she was doing.

"I was working with children at a park in San Jose at the time and it was in a very poor economic area and I found that I could help bring some joy and purpose to the under privileged kids," she said. "I have always enjoyed people and working with others to accomplish a goal."

With her passion discovered, she graduated in 1960 one day and got married the next.

She and her husband Stanley lived in San Jose while he finished college at SJSU and she worked as a supervisor in the recreation department for the city of Palo Alto where she was responsible for supervising programs.

"I had done my fieldwork in the Recreation Department in Palo Alto and was hired when I graduated from college," she said.

Born in Freeport, Ill., she was about 6 when her parents moved to Oregon because she was a severe asthmatic.



Marilyn Gadway in the front yard of her southwest Morgan Hill home where she and her husband have lived for more than 30 years. Gadway helped start the local chapter of the American Association of University Women and was instrumental in starting the Wildflower Run, the group's largest fundraiser.

*Photo by Robert Airoidi*

Her father worked as a millwright in sawmills before he got his teaching credential for the state of Oregon. They moved from town to town while her father moved from sawmill to sawmill. He eventually earned his degree, then taught English and history and rose to the level of principal. Now, she and her husband have a son who is a high school English teacher in Roseville.

She grew up in Oregon until she was 16, then her asthma returned and the family picked up and moved to Barstow. There, her father ran a military base and Marine Corps Depot.

After graduating from high school, there was always an assumption she and her two sisters would go to college, but they had very little money. She'd saved \$400 from odd jobs and at the time wanted to be an occupational therapist. The two colleges that offered the program were SJSU and UCLA. She went to San Jose because she had to work for her room and board and needed the least expensive college that offered occupational therapy.

Her oldest son Dean was born in 1965 and she had to quit because the city of Palo Alto at the time did not allow pregnant women to work.

They had another son in 1967, but he died two days later. A third son Scott died in a skydiving accident in 1996 when he was 27.

After years in the San Jose area, the couple thought of moving somewhere more serene.

Stanley is from Nebraska where he grew up on a farm. He wanted to get out of the rat race of the area. He was a general contractor at the time.

"I didn't want to come here," she said. "I wanted to move to Los Gatos."

But they drove through the area of Paradise Valley in southwest Morgan Hill and fell in love with it. She said they know they should downsize but "we can't make ourselves do it."

Now retired, Gadway spends her mornings going to 24-Hour Fitness where she enjoys riding the stationary bicycles.

She said the family rarely spend money on vacations, instead saving the money for a vacation home.

They always wanted a home on a lake, and in 1976 found a mobile home at Lake Tulloch. "We'd go there on weekends and during the summer," she said.

They still own the home, but demolished the mobile home and built a new home on the property in memory of their son Scott.

"That's probably my favorite place on Earth," she said. "It's just so peaceful, especially in the winter."

The couple, both of whom graduated from SJSU, remain very active. Stanley serves on the board of the Spartan Foundation.

Marilyn helped start the YMCA in Morgan Hill in the early '80s. She also served on the board of the organization for years.

She also volunteers for the American Association of University Women and was a charter member of the organization, the charter of which was signed in her home. She also helped start the organization's largest fundraiser, the annual spring Wildflower Run.

When looking for a fundraiser, she thought something active would be best since her background is in recreation. Thus the run was created. At first it was for women only and they had about 100 runners that first year in the early '80s. Long's Drug Store gave them \$1,000 and they were amazed.

"We didn't think we'd get anything that first year," she said. "It's amazing how much it's grown and I'm very proud." Today it is their only fundraiser and raised \$40,500 last year, the most ever.

"That's one of the beautiful things about Morgan Hill," she said. "Everyone here helps each other."