

Morgan Hill Woman of the Year

By: Marty Cheek for the Morgan Hill Times
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Chamber of Commerce gives Carol O'Hare its
Woman of the Year Award

Morgan Hill – Carol O'Hare stepped into to
the Morgan Hill Chamber of Commerce office
on Dec. 8 expecting a meeting to discuss its
Education



Morgan Hill resident Carol O'Hare is recognized for literacy

Council. What she got instead was a special surprise from Executive Director Dan Ehrler.

"It was totally unexpected when he came out with a big bouquet of flowers and announced that I was the Woman of the Year," said O'Hare in describing the moment. "I was overwhelmed, that was my initial reaction."

Nominated by Morgan Hill resident Elena Moreno, the chamber chose O'Hare to receive the Woman of the Year Award as one of its annual Salute Morgan Hill honorees. She and other 2007 recipients will be officially conferred their awards on Feb. 3 at a chamber dinner and ceremony at the Morgan Hill Community and Cultural Center. They will also be given recognition by riding as dignitaries in the community's Fourth of July parade.

"She's really made a major contribution to the community through the American Association of University Women (AAUW) and the Friends of the Library," Ehrler said. "Carol's genuine passion for literacy and the community through her work is really astounding."

Moreno said nominating O'Hare for the honor was an easy decision. "It's so visible to me that she is just accomplishing things in Morgan Hill all the time, just being helpful everywhere," Moreno said. "I think Morgan Hill is very fortunate that she came here to make her home."

Moreno added that O'Hare's positive attitude and die-hard determination to get results makes community leaders enjoy working with her. "She's extremely friendly, cordial, outgoing and she always has a kind word for everybody," she said. "You never hear a negative word from her."

When O'Hare moved to Morgan from Sunnyvale with her husband Bud O'Hare in February 1999, she knew few people other than Bud's daughter Molly Edgar who had come here earlier. But she quickly got involved as a volunteer with some of the city's various non-profit organizations. In the last seven years, she proved herself a real dynamo as a mover and shaker.

Her community involvement list runs long but O'Hare believes she is best known in her role for the past three years as the president of the Friends of the Morgan Hill Library, speaking before the city council members on many occasions to promote the construction of a new community library.

In the past year, she has also chaired the Friend's Beyond Books Campaign with its goal to raise money for art and furnishings for the new library. Her hard work helped the campaign bring in almost \$100,000 toward raising a total of \$250,000.

"We're relying on donations from individuals, organizations and local businesses, and so far our fund-raising has come in from \$25 to \$10,000 donations," she said. "We're close to half way to our goal. Although the city is constructing the building, there are no funds for art and there's still a need to supplement the city budget for some furnishings for the library."

O'Hare believes her dedication to the Morgan Hill Library was the main reason she received the Chamber's Woman of the Year honor.

She also co-chaired for Morgan Hill the Santa Clara County Library Parcel Tax Campaign.

Among other volunteer activities, she is a past president of the AAUW and stays active with its various events including helping with the annual Wildflower Run.

"That raises money for women and girls' scholarships," she said. "The next one is April 1, 2007. We'll give them a plug."

The past year, she also actively participated in the Morgan Hill Centennial Committee, working hard in the development of its new History Trail at the Villa Mira Monte home of Hiram Morgan Hill. She's also a member of the local Historical Society.

O'Hare's dedication to the Morgan Hill community also extends to volunteering with the Poppy Jasper Film Festival. And her dedication to making sure everyone has an opportunity for quality learning has kept her busy with the Chamber's Education Council.

Originally from Minneapolis, Minn., O'Hare earned her masters degree in social work from Boston University. She continued to live in Boston for several years while working for the Harvard School of Public Health on a heart attack prevention research study. She later moved to Palo Alto where she met Bud during a group bike ride. The two married in 1983. O'Hare has a son named Chandako (now a Buddhist monk formerly known as Jim Reynolds) from a previous marriage.

When she's not involved with the library and her various community projects, O'Hare works part time at the downtown BookSmart book store where she's been employed for 7 years. Always thinking of other people in Morgan Hill, she said she wanted to make sure this article mentioned the business. "It's always nice to give the bookstore a plug," she said.

Ehrler said he felt impressed with O'Hare's unselfish commitment to the Morgan Hill community, a quality she showed as soon as she arrived here.

"She gives every sense that she's a home-town girl," he said. "It's a real tribute to her how she's embraced Morgan Hill. It is now her hometown in many ways."

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