

Senior profile: Local senior Kathy Sullivan helps lead Morgan Hill Historical Society

Board president seeks to ensure the future of museum

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By Robert Airoidi

Kathy Sullivan used the persistence and tenacity that got her a job at Apple in the 1980s to help the Morgan Hill Historical Society become what it is today.

What was once an old building in west Morgan Hill has in the past two decades become much more.

With the help of the dozen or so members of the society's board of directors, the group — with financing from the city — moved the museum to its current location in 2005 to Monterey Road where the 2.5-acre Villa Mira Monte property now includes the Hiram Morgan Hill House — the home of one of Morgan Hill's founders — and the museum building.

"History is created every day," Sullivan, 72, said of the importance of maintaining a connection to the past. "We're making history today and that needs to be chronicled for tomorrow."

The work completed after the move was done thanks to a lot of generous people and companies in Morgan Hill, she said. Since then the society has raised money to preserve, maintain and operate the site with all volunteers and no paid staff. But it's time for that to change, she said.

They have plans to add a pavilion, catering kitchen, bathrooms and multi-purpose room to host events — and all those improvements will cost several million dollars. What the society really needs is an endowment to preserve and maintain the property and continue its mission, Sullivan said.

Born in Waynesville, Missouri, Sullivan graduated from Eastern Michigan University where she earned a bachelor's degree in secondary education and a masters in consumer management. She began teaching in 1965, but when her husband Brian, whom she married in 1973, was transferred, the couple moved to California in 1980.



Photo by Robert Airoidi
Kathy Sullivan on the steps of the Hiram Morgan Hill House.

Shortly after moving she was introduced to a head hunter whom she eventually started working for placing candidates. While doing that, she began reading about this new company called Apple Computer.

Knowing they wouldn't hire a home economics teacher, she put together a marketing plan to get their attention. Every day she sent a letter to the top four or five people at the company. The first was "I have my eyes on Apple," and she signed her name.

Eventually, "two of them said they'd love to hire me but I didn't have the experience," she said. "They told me to go work at a computer store."

So in about 1982, she went to the Computerland store in San Jose, walked in and told them Apple told her to get a job at a computer store. They interviewed her that day and offered her the job.

She eventually took a job with Pickett Sales, the representatives who sold Apple products.

When Apple took the sales of their products in house, Sullivan joined the computer company and eventually became a training organizer for the entire Northwest. She worked at Apple from 1984 to 1992.

She scaled back her lifestyle and moved to Morgan Hill with Brian in 2000.

"I was just going to relax and live in this nice, quiet community and not get involved," she said. But when the wife of one of her husband's business colleagues asked her to help out with the quilt association, she volunteered to install the group's display at the annual Taste of Morgan Hill.

From there, someone asked her to help out as a docent at the Morgan Hill Historical Society's Museum in 2006.

Now president of the board, she's looking to scale back and is searching for someone with the organizational skills and a passion for history.

"I would stay involved working on my projects," she said, referring to the new plans to develop the back of the property and working to ensure the society has funds to continue operating the property.

"There will always be questions about the people who came before us," she said. "History tells our past and helps prepare us for the future."