

Main story: Couple will be honored as Leadership MH award recipients

Brian and Kathy Sullivan volunteer with nonprofits that promote local history and preserve public safety

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Photo by Marty Cheek

Brian and Kathy Sullivan take a moment to pose in front of the Hiram Morgan Hill House at the city's historic Villa Mira Monte estate.

By Marty Cheek

When Brian and Kathy Sullivan went to an intimate holiday party in December, shortly after the appetizers and wine were served, they received an early holiday surprise. The Morgan Hill couple learned from former mayor Steve Tate they would be honored as the 2022 Leadership Excellence Award recipients.

Both retired, the Sullivans have spent the past two decades giving of their time to the community as volunteers and philanthropists. Kathy has been active for many years in preserving local history as a board member and president of the Morgan Hill Historical Society, a nonprofit that maintains the Villa Mira Monte home and history museum. Brian is deeply committed to helping protect local residents' safety through his involvement in the Community Law Enforcement Foundation (CLEF), a nonprofit that raises money to supplement the needs of the Morgan Hill Police Department.

The couple will receive Leadership Morgan Hill's high honor Sept. 17 during an outdoor evening gala at Guglielmo Winery. This year's theme is "Preserve and Protect."

The annual Leadership Excellence Award event helps raise funds to pay for a nine-month education program to train local men and women to build their leadership skills for community benefit.

The annual Leadership Excellence Award Dinner (LEAD) recognizes the vision that advances the spirit of community and charity, said LMH Board President Sandra McNeal. It also reflects the courage and insight leaders need to inspire other residents to step forward in roles that benefit the South Valley.

"The board is excited about the Sullivans' selection," she said. "Their extensive community support perfectly reflects the values of the Leadership organization. They fully appreciate and support the LMH mission."

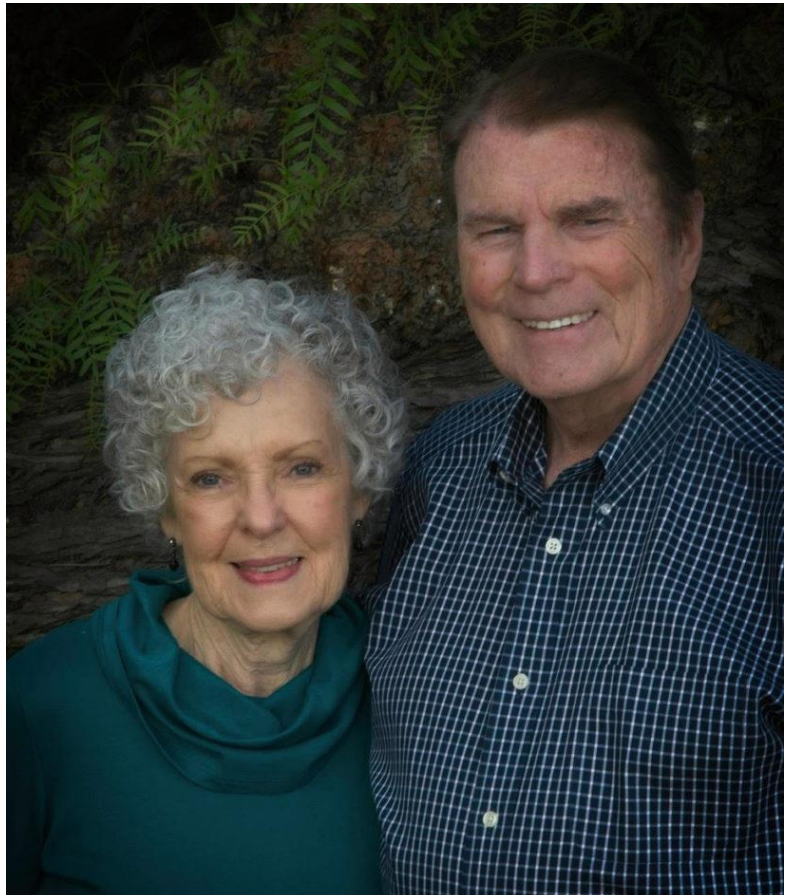


Photo courtesy Chris Foster/Leadership Morgan Hill
Brian and Kathy Sullivan are this year's LEAD recipients and will be honored Sept. 17 at a gala at Guglielmo Winery.

Brian and Kathy are the first couple to jointly receive the LEAD award. Brian is in this year's Leadership class, the first time a current class member is being honored.

Award honorees are selected by a blue-ribbon panel of community leaders featuring former Leadership Excellence Award recipients. At the gala, the Sullivans will receive specially designed medals presented to them by past honorees.

Brian was born in Buffalo, New York. As a teen, he moved to Detroit and, after graduating from high school, served four years in the U.S. Air Force. For more than 25 years, he worked for various companies in an electronics sales and management career, which in 1980 brought him and Kathy to Silicon Valley.

Kathy was born in Waynesville, Mo. After graduating from college with a bachelor's degree in home economics, she later earned a master's degree in education and became a teacher. After the move to Silicon Valley, she worked for a firm representing Apple Computer, then in 1984 was hired by the Cupertino-based company as a sales trainer. Later, Apple promoted her into training management.

Brian and Kathy first met in their Michigan apartment complex. Her school principal advised them to get married and they found themselves tying the knot in a garden wedding at Brian's sister's house. The couple's daughter, Stacey, who lives in Oakland City, Ind., has given them two grandkids and one great-grandchild. Their son, Jared, and daughter-in-law, Nikki, live in Ann Arbor, Mich.

The Sullivans moved to Morgan Hill in 2000 expecting to relax in their retirement years. But they soon found themselves stepping into leadership roles as they grew more involved with the community. In 2018, the two received the Chamber of Commerce's Man and Woman of the Year awards for their dedication.

In their free time they enjoy spending time with friends and staying active. Brian skies and golfs. Kathy was an avid skier until an accident on the slope forced her to give up the sport. She enjoys creative pursuits including baking and solving puzzles. The couple also stay involved in local government activities, attending city council and commission meetings to keep themselves informed about local issues impacting the community. The Sullivans both have dedicated themselves to continue being involved with the community, but several years ago decided to scale their volunteering back to focus on their health and to travel more.

Over the past two decades, Brian's service to the Morgan Hill community has been extensive. After he and Kathy moved to the South Valley, he joined several boards. His volunteering included serving as board presidents at the Charter School of Morgan Hill and the Morgan Hill Chamber of Commerce. He is now the CLEF board president, frequently doing ride-alongs and sitting on interview panels for potential police officers. Money raised by CLEF has been used to purchase and train K-9 units and also create educational programs to help citizens get involved in promoting public safety.

"I've always had a passion for police because many of my relatives (in New York) were police," he said. "I think the police in this town do a great job with limited resources . . . I think we've done a great job in hiring — we've got great officers and great leadership."

Kathy's volunteer service has included being an organizer of the South Valley Quilt Association shows and the Morgan Hill branch of American Association of University Women's Wildflower Run. In 2020, she stepped down as the president of the Morgan Hill Historical Society, staying on the board to promote the group's various projects through publicity and marketing endeavors. Maintaining the Victorian home built by Hiram and Diana Hill in 1886 is vital to ensuring residents better understand and appreciate the city's story, she said.

"This is one of the few cities in the country that still has a home built by its namesake that is functional," she said. "Most of them have become old and they're falling down."

Brian describes his leadership style as bringing people of diverse backgrounds together in endeavors that make a difference in the quality of life of local residents.

"I like working with teams and getting different opinions and making progress from a community standpoint and enhancing the charter of a particular organization," he said.

A puzzle solver, Kathy's leadership style is about finding creative ways to implement positive change in the community.

“I don’t seek leadership positions, but so many times in my life these doors open in front of me — these opportunities,” she said. “I like to solve problems and make things better. That’s pretty much what has led me. I like the logistics of looking at the details.”

The honorary committee for the LEAD event is being chaired by Dennis Dal Poggetto, a close friend of Brian and Kathy’s who was the Chamber of Commerce’s 2015 Man of the Year. LMH Board members Cinda Meister and Darcy Foster are leading the gala’s event committee.

Leadership Morgan Hill is a nonprofit educational organization that is now in its 26th year of building community leadership. The annual program provides insight, tools and training that enables and inspires leaders in all walks of life to give back to the South Valley community through service.

“LMH graduates are found in leadership positions throughout the community in government, education, business and nonprofit organizations,” said Steve Tate, a Leadership alumnus.