

CONTRA COSTA TIMES

ContraCostaTimes.com

Lafayette Citizen of the Year: Karen Mulvaney's 'fundamental cornerstone' service

By Deborah Burstyn
Correspondent

Posted: 03/10/2011 12:32:36 PM PST

Updated: 03/10/2011 12:32:36 PM PST

When Lafayette Citizen of the Year Karen Mulvaney was just a kid on her high school yearbook staff, the yearbook cover she helped create featured only one word: Community.

That word, and all it stands for remains a core value for Mulvaney. It is a thread that runs through her life and ties together her activities and interests into a unified whole that serves an overall purpose -- community.

The goal of being of service to the community is one that Mulvaney, a member of the board of the Lafayette Library and Learning Center Foundation, shares with her husband Tom. Recently retired from a long, successful career in business, he serves as a board member of the Acalanes Union High School District.

Now as their nest has emptied, the Mulvaney's with their resources and vitality could be living a life of ease on a sunny golf course anywhere on the planet they chose. Instead, they choose to remain in the same Lafayette home they purchased as young parents in 1986 because of their connection to the community, to the neighborhood where they raised their family and to Lafayette, the town they consider their permanent home.

"We want to give back. We're both 'doers,'" Mulvaney explains. "And we both believe that schools and the library are the fundamental cornerstones of a community. Without those, what is a community? What do we have? Just businesses? We need community focal points and gathering places such as what our new library has

become."

For the nearly quarter century she's lived in Lafayette, Mulvaney has been a doer. When her children were small, she was on the board of their co-op preschool, the Lafayette Nursery School. What followed were years of involvement as a PTA leader at Happy Valley Elementary School, Stanley Middle School and Acalanes High School.

"After Columbine happened, we worked very hard at Stanley to create a program called Day of Respect," she recalls. "It is a day all about the school community coming together to learn about respect, integrity and responsibility. I am very proud that 12 years later it is still going."

As her children's school days drew to a close, Mulvaney was approached to serve on the library foundation board. "At first I thought I wasn't a board person. But I have found out that I am. And that is because this board is a working board. For the new library we held huge fundraising events, organized hard-hat tours and even helped choose the fabric for the furniture."

These days Mulvaney helps write and design the library foundation's communication materials, a task she also takes on for Youth Homes, Inc., a local organization that assists abused and neglected foster youth.

Next Mulvaney plans to learn more about website design to help enhance her volunteer communication efforts. "We have very talented people who bring a lot to the table," she says, "but if I understood the web design software it would make it all more fun."



DIRECTV has more of what you want to watch!

Switch today!

1-888-778-0985

**NO EQUIPMENT TO BUY!
NO STARTUP COSTS!**

Offer ends 3/31/11. Credit card required (except in MA & PA). New approved customers only. Taxes required. \$39.95 Handling & Delivery fee may apply. Applicable use tax adjustment may apply on the retail value of the installation. Call for details.

Print Powered By  FormatDynamics™

CONTRA COSTA TIMES

ContraCostaTimes.com

Studying software may have to wait. Right now Mulvaney is busy producing a special community event on a subject of tremendous personal significance. On April 17, Mulvaney and her husband are sponsoring a special program featuring Louis Zamperini, the 94 year-old World War II hero commemorated by Laura Hillenbrand's new bestseller "Unbroken."

Like Zamperini, Mulvaney's father was a World War II fighter pilot who was shot down and taken prisoner behind enemy lines. Both endured horrific mistreatment as POWs. Mulvaney's father recently died and when she read "Unbroken" Mulvaney said it brought back her father's voice and his war stories to her. But she also wanted others to hear and be inspired by the story of survival and resilience voiced by Zamperini, a former Olympic runner before he enlisted and who was awarded three purple hearts.

"His story is the embodiment of every kind of struggle," she said. "I hope it will inspire people to realize that they too can overcome obstacles in their own lives. The fact that the event will benefit the library foundation is fitting. Our libraries are the essence of freedom; the unfettered access to information and the freedom to discover whatever you want. "

#



Send flowers
for any occasion
Bouquets
from \$19⁹⁹_{+s/h}

ProFlowers[®]
Offer ONLY available at:
proflowers.com/happy
or call 1.877.804.1133

Print Powered By  FormatDynamics™