

## Edy Schwartz: Working Together to Find Solutions

By Sophie Braccini

**E**dy Schwartz is the new "Person of the Year" elected by the members of the Chamber of Commerce of Moraga. Chamber President Jenny Boyd presented her with a certificate on Thursday November 8th, at the end of Mayor Metcalf's "State of the Town" address.

Schwartz's recognition was due to her role in expanding the reach of the Chamber of Commerce and starting the "Shop Moraga First" movement. Schwartz and colleague Ellen Bean personally visited all the town's retailers to urge them to join the new Chamber. The results speak for themselves; over a one-year period the Chamber membership increased from 40 to 100 members.

Schwartz moved to Moraga with husband Jeff, her high school sweetheart, in 1967. Here she raised her two children, John and Cathy.

An educator by training, she substituted both at Rheem and Los Perales. She was involved in the incorporation of Moraga, the founding of the library and many of the groups that make raising children in Moraga such a great experience: Brownies, Lafayette-Moraga Youth Association, and the School Site Committee. She got involved as well with citizens' movements in the Bay Area that work on educating people on sociological and global issues. There she refined her organizational skills and developed her vision of the power of education to make the democratic process effective.

In 1985 she went back to school and got a Masters degree in Psychology and Counseling and operated a private practice for five years in Lafayette. After twenty years of intense activity, Edy decided to take a break. She wanted to bring balance to her life and assimilate what had been learned along the way. Three years ago, she heard President Bush talk about the importance of democracy in the world and asked herself how participative democracy was doing at home. She contacted a core group of twelve friends and formed the Moraga Citizens Network, an association that aims at disseminating information about town's issues and encourages Moraga residents to get involved and let their voices be heard. MCN has now more than 500 members and can be credited for improvements in the participative process in Moraga politics.

During one of the meetings Edy attended, she learned about the sales tax deficit Moraga suffers from and decided to join the Chamber of Commerce as a private member. She was struck by the small number

of retailers that were members at the time, and thought that creating a more vibrant business community around the Chamber would help. But that wasn't enough.

If Moragans do not shop in town it's because they have the perception that there is not much choice there, and if new businesses don't want to come it's because they feel the amount of local shopping is weak. She felt that this "Catch 22" condition should be broken first in the minds of residents and that's how "Shop Moraga First" started. The group comprising Schwartz, Bill Snider, Grant Stubblefield, Craig Lazarus, Janet Forman, Ellen Bean and Andy Scheck created the concept and went to the Chamber of Commerce for support.

"Edy is the type that leans forward and doesn't give up, she gets things done," says a fellow chamber member. "Edy is unfailingly cheerful; she has one of the greatest positive attitudes I've experienced," adds Boyd. "She has a lot of passion for our town and brings people together in a very supportive way," says long time friend Ellen Bean, "I've never worked with somebody that's quite as reliable, present, able to go with the flow and operate without judgment. In recent years she has learned to balance activities and stillness."

Edy now has the pleasure of seeing her first two grandchildren grow up in Moraga. She is a member of the American Association of University Women, and promotes the annual "Sister to Sister" summit. She also makes sure she finds time to smell the roses.



Edy Schwartz, Person of Year



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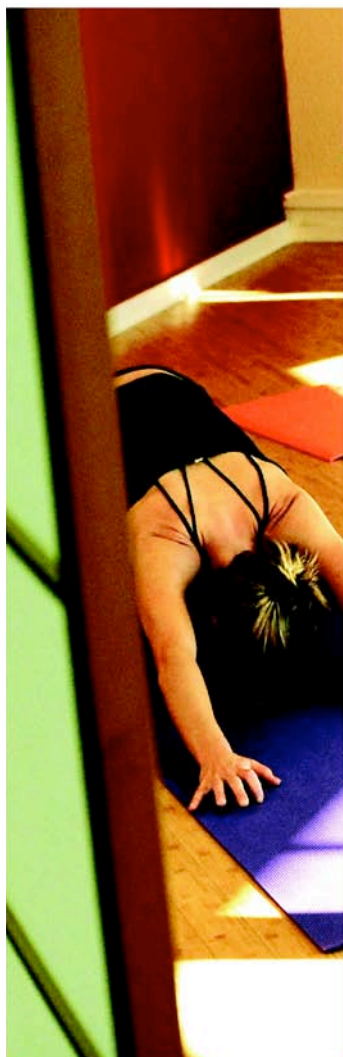
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