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Hacienda Foundation Receives Champion of the Community Award

By Sophie Braccini



Jay Ingram, Hacienda Foundation VP Sharon Metcalf, President Claire Roth, and past president Judy Dinkle in the recently renovated Ladies' Lounge at the Hacienda de las Flores. Photo Sophie Braccini

Claire Roth was caught completely off-guard when she was told she was going to Sacramento on March 11 to receive the Champion of the Community Award on behalf of the Hacienda Foundation. Roth, the Foundation's president, was not aware that Moraga Parks and Recreation Director Jay Ingram nominated the Foundation to the California Park & Recreation Society (CPRS). As for Ingram, he thought that the Moraga non-profit would compete with parties coming from same-size jurisdictions, and he was pleasantly surprised to hear the Foundation won one of only 10 awards given in the state regardless of size.

Founded in 1946, CPRS is a nonprofit, professional and public interest organization with more than 4,000 members. The Champion of the Community Award goes to an individual, agency, community organization, foundation, business or educational institution chosen based upon their significant efforts to influence and improve the quality of their community through parks, recreation and community services. "The Hacienda Foundation of Moraga brought community-wide events back to the Hacienda, truly creating community," said Ingram, "To observe a small board of dedicated individuals that do so much for the community has been a true joy." Ingram said that in 20 years in the profession he has never seen such a dedicated and creative group.

The Hacienda Foundation was created in 2006, but saw its operations really take off in 2009. Its mission is to "Enhance, Protect and Preserve the Hacienda de las Flores." Ingram believes the Foundation has made a real difference in the town's perception of the Hacienda. "The building was always considered the jewel of the community," he says, "but it was too much of a 'hidden jewel.' Many residents didn't know it existed, or where it was, and they never came here."

Ingram recalls that at the last Breakfast with Santa, organized by Parks and Rec, he heard a father enticing his kids out of the car on the cold winter morning, "You know this place," said the father, "it's where we come for Cinco de Mayo and Oktoberfest." Right then, Ingram knew that the Foundation was fulfilling its mission and making the Hacienda a real community center.

To support the yearly events that attract hundreds to the grounds of the Hacienda and have become Lamorinda traditions, the Foundation mustered hundreds of volunteers. The 12-member Board also took charge of major renovations to the public property.

Using labor provided by the Moraga Valley Kiwanis Club, the Foundation renovated most of the lower level of the community center, including the Dance Room, Fireside Room, and Ladies Lounge (where brides prepare for their special day.)

As the Foundation starts preparing for the next Cinco de Mayo, new renovation projects are getting underway to the unisex bathroom, the floors throughout the ground floor, and La Sala.

Other improvements are needed for the facility - some of them are of very large scale, such as a drainage upgrade to the grounds around the Pavilion which is needed to fully develop the potential of that elegant building. The area that once served as the Town's corporation yard has been vacated; it offers direct access to Moraga Road and will be fitted out as an overflow parking lot.

With so much to do, the Hacienda Foundation is continuously on the lookout for help. For more information, go to haciendafoundation.org.

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