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Tom Steuber Named Lafayette Citizen of the Year

By Cathy Tyson



Tom Steuber Photo provided

Doing good deeds seems to come naturally to longtime Lafayette resident Tom Steuber, who has served for a dozen years and counting as scoutmaster for Lafayette's Troop 204.

Thanks to his dedication to the community and beyond, Steuber was named Citizen of the Year and will be honored at a dinner at the Lafayette Park Hotel on March 18.

An avalanche of letters was received to support his nomination, all with glowing praise. "I have seen firsthand how Tom helps guide boys into productive and caring young men with patience, respect and determination," wrote Mary Newman. "So many young men have benefitted having Tom take the time to be involved with their lives and often difficult journeys as Boy Scouts. He has taught each boy to honor himself, his family and the role as a citizen of the world."

Past president of Boy Scouts of America and Lafayette resident Rick Cronk calls Steuber "inspirational, truly remarkable," and wrote that he is a world-class scoutmaster, mentoring over 100

Eagle Scouts during his tenure, which is nearly unheard of.

Scores of local families know Steuber best as a legendary scoutmaster. He describes himself as an unlikely candidate at first blush, having never camped as a kid, and with no prior experience as a Boy Scout. "I started at the bottom and worked in most every position," recalls Steuber, admitting that he was "very apprehensive" about taking on the role.

The family's male babysitter, a rarity especially in those days, was kind enough to invite Kirk Steuber, who was then in fifth grade along with dad, Tom, to a Troop 204 meeting.

The outgoing scoutmaster saw that with three sons spanning a fairly broad age range, Steuber could offer continuity, along with honesty and enthusiasm for many years to come. Kirk Steuber is now almost 26 years old, daughter Katherine is now 24, Justin, 20, is now a sophomore at University of Nevada, Reno and youngest son Jared, 14, is in eighth grade.

Being scoutmaster is quite a time commitment. Every Monday evening during the school year, you can find Steuber at the historic log cabin built in 1948 on School Street in Lafayette. The cabin was sinking due to age, the soil and the type of original foundation, but thanks to fundraising and an Indiegogo campaign, the cabin was raised with jacks and a new flat solid foundation was installed in 2014. Steuber calls it a central part of local Scouts' identity and the ultimate kids' clubhouse.

In addition, there are also regular meetings with parents, along with the monthly boys' leadership meetings, one big activity every month, along with the Camporee and the major event of the year - the Eagle Court of Honor, which happens to fall on the day after the Citizen of the Year dinner

event. Just last month, Troop 204 went snow camping in the Sierras and built cave-like snow shelters.

As the name suggests, the popular "50-Miler" backpack trip every summer is no walk in the park. Scouts from sixth to 10th grade, along with dads and, of course, Steuber, hike 50 miles over eight days.

The goal of all the meetings, activities and outings is to develop leadership skills, be comfortable in the wilderness and, most importantly, gain a "perspective beyond yourself." Overall, Steuber says being scoutmaster "has just been a great experience for me." He credits the support of fantastic parents.

With a high percentage of the Lamorinda Scouts earning the top rank of Eagle Scout, a very energetic senior patrol - there are seven patrols within troop 204, each with eight to 10 boys, and an active alumni group - Steuber is now working on a gradual exit strategy. He figures he has two years left as scoutmaster, then anticipates a transitional year as the next official scoutmaster gets up to speed.

Of course all this scouting community service is squeezed into his "free" time, when he is not busy as president of Associated Services - an office refreshment business started by his parents, Hal and Diane Steuber, back in 1972. The business now has 6,000 customers and 130 employees.

Aside from his many responsibilities as scoutmaster, under Steuber's leadership Associated Services has given away over \$100,000 through its Classroom Scholarship Program over the past seven years. The program gives grants for school supplies for teachers to use in underprivileged classrooms and offers funding for field trips in schools from San Jose to Santa Rosa to Sacramento.

Hard to imagine anyone more deserving than hometown hero Tom Steuber, who will be given the special Citizen of the Year award by the Lafayette Chamber of Commerce with co-sponsor, the Lamorinda Weekly.

The Citizen of the Year celebratory dinner will be held Friday, March 18 at the Lafayette Park Hotel where friends, family, neighbors and former Scouts are welcome. Cocktails are at 6 p.m.; dinner is at 7 p.m. Reservations can be made at the chamber office or by phone at (925) 284-7404.

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