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Lamorinda Village honors Lafayette resident Suzy Pak

By Pippa Fisher



Suzy Pak is this year's Ed Stokes Volunteer of the Year award recipient. Photo provided

A global pandemic isn't going to deter one of Lamorinda's most proactive seniors organizations from celebrating the year and honoring all the volunteers on whom they rely. This year the Ed Stokes Volunteer of the Year award went to Suzy Pak at the meeting held over Zoom Jan. 14.

This was the sixth year for Lamorinda Village's event known as the Afternoon of Gratitude. The special award was inspired by and is given in memory of Diablo Foods founder Ed Stokes who was very involved with the community throughout his entire life. Diablo Foods remains very committed to its partnership with Lamorinda Village.

More than 200 shopping trips for seniors who are sheltering in place for groceries and prescription pickups, averaging at least six deliveries a week, earned Pak the award along with a proclamation read out by Lafayette Mayor Susan Candell.

Pak, who also serves on the Lafayette School District Board of Governors, and volunteers for the Spirit Van program, was characteristically modest, saying it was her privilege and that it helps her to be able to give back during hard times, working hard in memory of her own parents.

The nonprofit organization also honored volunteers Andy Nguyen, and Andrea Appleton who volunteers with her teen daughter Avery, for their work.

Board President Larry Toy said that when the pandemic started LV stepped up and proved what they could do together. Serving a membership of 300 seniors, helping them to remain in their homes in various ways, LV started the year with 40 volunteers and now has around 200.

They started doing "check-in" phone calls to seniors and have started many friendships. Working with the National Charity League, they provided over 200 emergency go-bags, and now hold meetings over Zoom, including meditation classes and chair yoga classes. The village is currently partnering with several other organizations to bring COVID-19 vaccines to their members (see story, page A1).

LV Operations Manager Kathryn Ishizu says that facing the difficulties together has added a new level of genuine camaraderie amongst their members.

"Zoom has enabled us to be a close virtual village," says Board Member Andy Amstutz. "Lamorinda Village has matured into a real community, and the fundamental village concept has been demonstrated and proven."

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