



LEISURE WORLD NEWS

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Making a life that really counts

By Cheryl Walker
The News

"You pass through once, make it count," is Molly Blank's motto.

And the Historical Society's first Leisure Worlder of the month in the new century has truly lived up to that standard. Her life has been filled with sharing time and talents with the sick, suffering and those in need of a boost to set them on their feet and on their way.

"She's just an incredible lady - intelligent, completely unassuming, a remarkable business acumen, but very soft and generous to a fault," says Blank's friend, Shirley O'Connor, a former colleague in the Senior Corps of Retired Executives, an alliance of retired executives who mentor new entrepreneurs.

"Molly is a very special individual, a great humanitarian and a philanthropist who gives so much of herself: it's a pleasure and honor to know her," adds Molly Plotkin, a colleague of Blank's in her support of City of Hope.

"Through her generosity, Mrs. Blank has brought hope to countless families and smiles to all the individual children who have benefited from the excellent care and positive, family-centered environment at the Molly Blank Pediatric Clinic," says Elinor Gilbert, on behalf of the City of Hope.

Blank says modestly, however, that she was always just encouraged to make the best of her abilities.

Background To fully appreciate Blank's achievements, one must return to the past when Blank was born in New York City to Austrian immigrants who may not have had much but there was always an extra chair at the table for someone in need.



Rod Veal/The News

A busy schedule doesn't keep Molly Blank from volunteer duties. Blank is Leisure Worlder of the Month for January, 2000.

Blank had artistic aspirations, as a sculptor and dancer, but fell in love with a tall, handsome entrepreneur named Max with a dream of making a success in the generic pharmaceuticals business.

The couple married, started a family and then tragedy struck: Max died leaving Blank with two young sons, Arthur and Michael, and a fledgling business.

The young sculptress soon learned that art was not all she had a knack for. The business did so well after she took it over, that in 13 years her Sherry Pharmaceuticals, made the New York stock exchange and was acquired by a conglomerate.

Arthur and Michael followed in their mother's footsteps, the former becoming the president and chief executive officer of Home Depot in Georgia and the latter a consultant in the pharmaceutical industry and vice president of Steris Laboratory in Arizona.

Ceremony facts

Who: Molly Blank
What: Leisure Worlder of the Month, January, 2000
Where: Clubhouse 6
When: Wednesday, Jan. 5, at 10 a.m.
Sponsor: Leisure World Historical Society

Blank, now remarried to her favorite dancing partner Wayne Mitsch, is an active participant in clubs and organizations, among them Temple Judea, the Jewish Community Center, Opera 100, the Theatre Guild and Roundaliers, but is a life member and supporter of Hadassah, ORT, the National Council of Jewish Women, the Anti-Defamation League of Orange County, the Leisure World Foundation and Florence Sylvester Senior Center.

At the senior center she donated the Arts and Crafts Room, and taught sculpture to adults suffering from Alzheimer's, Parkinson's and other forms of dementia.

But even that's not all, she's responsible (as already noted) for the Molly Blank Pediatric Clinic at City of Hope and is funding the Molly Blank Learning Resource Center at the National Jewish Medical and Research Center in Colorado. She is also a recipient of numerous awards from Israel.

At the Orange County Bureau of Jewish Education she created the Blank Adat Noar scholarship to allow 9th graders regardless of their parents' financial status to take part in educational/cultural programs.

And further she's participated in SCORE, provided exercise equipment to Heritage Pointe home in Mission Viejo and contributed to other organizations too numerous to mention.

Though her largesse has been enormous and the spotlight on her contributions vast, Blank says her modus is simple: she sees a need and asks what she can do to make it better.

And what satisfaction does Blank get? Simple things: the look of accomplishment as an Alzheimer patient completes a tiny sculpture, the smile on a sick child as he goes through treatment in surroundings that make him feel comfortable.

These are payment and more, says Blank. "Like the title of my book says, we only live once, we must make it count."