



Don Leach/The News

Dave Blodgett, Leisure Worlder of the Month for April, holds a Laguna Laurel information poster. Blodgett was in the forefront of the effort both to raise money to save the canyon, and help put the CalPaws initiative on the June ballot.

Champion of special causes

Working to solve impossible tasks are his forte

By Cheryl Walker
The News

Knowing Dave Blodgett's record of activism in this community, it's hard to believe that before moving here in 1982 his main extracurricular activity was two decades of singing in church choirs.

The last 12 years have been decidedly different. With no 9-5 job to tie up his time, Blodgett has dedicated his waking hours to giving new meaning to the words "total commitment," championing special causes in and for Leisure World.

The more difficult the cause, the happier he is. Says Blodgett, "When people say it can't be done I love that kind of challenge."

That's why the Leisure World Historical Society named the second vice president of the Leisure World Community Association as April's Leisure Worlder of the Month.

People who have worked with Blodgett can't say enough about the man who modestly describes himself as a mere "foot soldier."

Co-worker and former Golden Rain Director Doyle Selden calls Blodgett simply "the tops."

"I first met him working to

get out the vote on new CC&Rs then watched him work on the cityhood campaign, the Rossmoor Business Park, Laguna Laurel ... almost any issue that calls for long-term commitment and massive follow through you'll see Dave Blodgett on it. If we had a couple of dozen people like him this place would really hum!"

Former Golden Rain President Al Hanson, in a letter of thanks to Blodgett following his work on the cityhood campaign, commended the man as being always willing to do more than his share.

Wrote Hanson, "Not only did .. (he) go beyond the call of duty in canvassing the community, but ... (his) handling of the advertising and publicity for the Leisure World Residents for Laguna Hills was absolutely flawless: ... (his) boundless energy in our fight for cityhood was an inspiration to all."

Mary Fegraus, campaign director, and Michael Pinto, president, of the Laguna Canyon Foundation singled him out for his "unwavering attention to the Laguna Laurel preservation campaign: Leisure World is very fortunate to have a champion of special causes

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CEREMONY FACTS

Who: David Blodgett
What: Leisure Worlder for April
When: 10 a m., Wednesday, April 6
Where: Clubhouse 6
Sponsor: Leisure World Historical Society

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and we feel very privileged to have the joy of working with him."

Background: Blodgett, a native of the land of "Cows, Colleges and Contentment," Northfield, MN., learned how to take command of difficult situations at an early age.

His father died at the age of 47. Blodgett, then 17, became the sole supporter of his family yet was able to get his bachelor's degree in economics from Carleton College, honorably serve in the U.S. Navy during World War II and meet and marry his spouse, workmate and occasional editor, Jean.

He excelled in a career in sales then segued into marketing, advertising and public opinion researching.

After retirement, he moved to Leisure World, the land of the four Cs—Consideration, Cooperation, Courtesy and Concern, but continued to work freelance, specializing in turning around difficult and complex projects in record time.

Stepping into the fray:

Blodgett credits Leisure World resident Irene Puhlmann with sparking his interest in community affairs and former Channel 6 employee and activist Carolyn Wood as being his mentor in effective campaigning. Then, he says, "the issues came along."

Meeting the challenges of those issues, Blodgett served as secretary/treasurer of Mutual 78, member of Third Mutual's nominating committee, program chairman and newsletter editor of Leisure World's Writers Club, board member and newsletter producer of the Community Association, leader of Laguna Hills cityhood campaign and coordinator of a CC&R

(covenants, conditions and restrictions) ratification campaign.

By his own count, Blodgett participated in more than 100 public and private meetings on the Rossmoor Business Center and organized an army of community volunteers to get the California Parks and Wildlife Initiative (which earmarks funds for the fifth and final parcel of the Laguna Laurel purchase) on the June, 1994 ballot. He founded Leisure World Residents to Save the Canyon, too.

He now serves on the Golden Rain Laguna Laurel Information Task Force, is a member of other clubs and organizations and, when he has a moment free, enjoys a round of "recreational" golf.

Fighting the odds: Blodgett says working to obtain goals is a rewarding but frustrating experience, particularly when even worthy goals can be a long time coming, like, he notes, the acquisition of a bus for residents with disabilities.

Yet, he adds, quitting is not in his nature and he will continue to negotiate for fair solutions. "I won't give up, I can't give up: it's an internal, obsessive/compulsive thing; I have got to

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have my dragons out there to battle."

Blodgett said his main focus right now is making sure the Laguna Laurel purchase is completed not just to preserve the quality of life and health of Leisure World residents but to defuse the conflict and confrontations among residents that, he feels, are tearing the community apart.

He notes that the goal of preventing the Irvine Co. from

building 1,504 homes and extending Santa Maria to Laguna Canyon Road is one issue that appears to have gained near universal consensus among residents.

Blodgett sees this as a good sign that common ground can once more be found and cultivated for the betterment of Leisure World. "My fondest hope is that we can come together again as a community with harmony and good will.

"Negotiation beats confrontation every time."

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