



LEISURE WORLD NEWS

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David E. Caballero/The News

Aaron Kaplan with his dog "Minnie," is part of the Flying Doctors who treat poor people in Mexico.

People's pharmacist gets Society's April nod

By Cheryl Walker
The News

Saving people appears to have been the business of Leisure Worlder Aaron Kaplan's family.

By age 6, the native Chicagoan's mother had rescued him twice - from drowning in the Fox River and from falling down an elevator shaft.

And his father, a pharmacist, helped thousands in decades of owning and operating a drug store.

Little wonder that Kaplan, a pharmacist, enjoys nothing better than using his time and talents to volunteering with charitable organizations such as Share Our Selves, which provides medical care to Orange County's poor, and the Flying Doctors, which does the same for the poor in Mexico.

And also little wonder

considering those credits, and his active participation in Leisure World clubs and organizations, that the Historical Society decided he was the right choice to be Leisure Worlder of the Month for April.

Although Kaplan feels he is being honored for what comes naturally, ("I'm an extroverted person, I've got to talk with people,") his colleagues feel the selection is right on target.

"He's a delightful man, very intelligent, and deserves being Leisure Worlder of the Month," says PC Users Group Founder Joe Schwarz.

"It's long overdue," says Audubon Society President Manny Ackerman, adding that Kaplan and his wife Selma, through their sponsorship of interesting and enjoyable trips, literally breathed new life into the Audubon Society when it had fallen on hard times.

"He's a wonderful person and writer and I think it's great he's going to be Leisure Worlder of the Month," says Canine Club President Alice Lehmann.

"He's one of the backbones of our club (the Hikers) - he helps everybody, a first class individual, and I can't speak highly enough of him," says Michael Graff, Hikers president.

See SOCIETY, page 5

Ceremony facts

Who: Aaron Kaplan
What: Leisure Worlder of the Month for April
Where: Clubhouse 6
When: 10 a.m., Wednesday, April 7
Sponsor: Leisure World Historical Society

SOCIETY

From page 1

Background: Kaplan attended the University of Chicago, served in the Army during World War II and entered the family business when peace was restored.

After 34 years, he sold the pharmacy and, following a brief stint as chief pharmacist in a clinic, bought a manor in Leisure World and worked at the U.S. Navy Hospital until the end of the Gulf War.

He got interested in Share Our Selves after taking items collected by the National Council of Jewish Women (in which he is an honorary member) to the clinic. That association led him to become a member of the Disaster Medical Assistance Team of the U.S. government (an on-call group of medical personnel utilized in times of disaster) and the Flying Doctors where he and a team of medical personnel fly to San Blas, Mexico the first weekend of every month except summer, to assist 400-600 patients per three-day trip.

In addition to his charity work, he and his wife Selma, a travel agent, help arrange and

conduct trips for the Leisure World Hiker's Club and the Audubon Society.

They are members of the Canine Club (where they love to show and talk about their 2-year-old Shih Tzu Minnie). They volunteer as ushers for the Barclay Theatre and South Coast Repertory.

He also writes the Audubon society's newsletter and a column for the PC Computer Users Group.

When asked if he plans to ease off on his activities in the coming years, Kaplan replies that he finds immense satisfaction in finding solutions to people's problems or easing their confusion and pain.

For example, Kaplan like other members of the Flying Doctors team, must contend with primitive conditions, little sleep, long hours on each on their monthly trips, which are self financed.

Yet, says Kaplan, "the fun of the trip is not in it being a vacation but seeing the appreciation expressed by the patients who sometimes have to stand in line for 12 hours waiting their turn to come through the clinic - our patients know that we will not stop our work until the last patient is seen on a clinic day."