

LAGUNA WOODS

GLOBE



Laguna Woods Village resident Larry Strauss has been named the honoree for the month of February by the Historical Society of Laguna Woods. Strauss, 71, who suffers from Parkinson's disease, has taken over the Parkinson's "Can Do Club" to help others in the community who suffer from the disease. > CLAIRE WEBB, STAFF

CAN DO

LARRY STRAUSS WILL BE HONORED ON FEB. 2 BY THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY FOR GIVING THE PARKINSON'S GROUP A NEW PURPOSE.

PAGE 3

Proactive Parkinson's patient honored



Laguna Woods Village resident Larry Strauss has been named the honoree for the month of February by the Historical Society of Laguna Woods. Strauss, 71, who suffers from Parkinson's disease, is being honored for his contributions to the community in helping those with the disease have a can do attitude.

**BY CLAIRE WEBB •
LAGUNA WOODS GLOBE**

Larry Strauss stands up from his dining room table in his home in Laguna Woods Village, sets his walking cane aside and marches about two dozen paces into the living room.

He sings the Bee Gees tune as he walks.

"Bump, bump, bump, bump, stayin' alive, stayin' alive," Strauss says.

The 71-year-old resident of the retirement community, who was diagnosed with the neurological disease nearly seven years ago, demonstrates the secret to walking unaffected by the symptoms of Parkinson's Disease – pretend it's a dance.

Strauss helped transform a support group for Parkinson's patients at Saddleback Memorial Hospital into the Parkinson's Can Do Club. He took charge of the group a year ago, renamed it and made it a club that focuses on helping

members discover what they can do in spite of the disease instead of dwelling on what they can't do. Strauss said monthly meetings that had roughly 10 people each month have grown to about 50 people.

"I made it interesting and fun," Strauss said.

Strauss will be honored in February by the Historical Society of Laguna Woods for his contributions in the retirement community – namely giving the Parkinson's group a new purpose.

"It gives my life value," Strauss said. "It feels good to point to something and say, 'I did good.'"

Strauss said he was eager to use his longtime passion for swing dancing and salsa. After retiring from a career selling cat litter for what is now the Scoop Away brand, he auditioned to be a dancer in the 1997 movie "Out to Sea" starring Jack Lemmon and Walter Matthau. He spent the next 15 years working as a professional dancer and actor in more than 50 television shows, films and commercials.

Strauss has also continued to act and produce shows in the community as part of the Old Pros Theatre Group and hosted a television show on Channel 6 called "Entertainment News, Reviews and Interviews," where he helped spotlight local talent.

The Can Do Club is where his focus has been during the past year. Strauss has put on benefit shows like "The Golden Age of Dance," which he said has raised more than \$13,000 for the club and local Parkinson's events in the last year. The club uses the money to hire dance instructors, sculptors, writers and speakers for the monthly meetings.

"As long as I have people to look to me to be their champion, their example, then I find the courage," Strauss said.

Strauss will be honored at a ceremony at 10 a.m. on Feb. 2 at Clubhouse 7.