

2014 People Who Care Award – Sue Digre

Karen Ervin Presenting

Awarded February 5, 2015

I am honored to present our first 2014 People Who Care recipient, former Mayor and current Mayor pro Tem, Sue Digre.

Sue was born in Youngstown, Ohio to her parents, Bill and Anne Lockard. Her father was in the Navy stationed aboard a ship that eventually brought them to Williamington, North Carolina where began school in Williamington and as an only child in the first grade she told her mother she was lonely so they got a dog which became Sue's great pal. It was not long after that that a couple in the community with seven children realized they did not have the resources to care for all their children. Sue and her parents went to visit the family and when they entered the home a small five year old boy ran to Sue and hugged her, not letting go. It was not long after that they adopted the boy and Sue had a brother. He now lives in Los Angeles so is relatively close by.

The family travelled the world moving every two years or so as her father's assignments changed. They were stationed at v bases all over the continental United States, Hawaii and did two tours in Japan. Each time they moved Sue, along with her brother, established a new community of friends. I am sure that is why Sue is so open, friendly and enjoys meeting and talking with people.

Eventually her father retired after 30 years in the military and her parents chose the San Francisco Bay Area as the place where their family would live. Sue graduated from Notre Dame High School in Belmont and continued her education at the College of Notre Dame achieving a bachelor's degree with a double major in biology and philosophy along with a teaching credential. Sue began her teaching career with 2nd and 3rd graders at the Sisters of Notre Dame School in Belmont where she also taught 6th and 7th grades. She also taught in Salinas, Santa Barbara and Burlingame.

The Pacifica chapter of Sue's life began when she met Erick Digre in 1975 while horseback riding in the Quarry. They married in 1979 and moved to Pacifica in 1990 to raise their four children. Erick taught at Carlmont High School for many years and is now a Water Shed Ranger with the San Francisco Water Department, covering the Peninsula and Bayside areas. He is probably best known for his longtime service as a Red Cross volunteer having served on disaster relief teams all over the United States.

Sue and Erick instilled the family tradition of public service in their children. Their daughter Colleen is a nurse who has been instrumental in developing the palliative care program at Stanford and Valley Medical Center Hospitals. Palliative care is an approach to medical care that improves the quality of life of patients and their families facing problems associated with life-threatening illnesses. Two of their sons, Sean and Michael, made the decision early on follow in their grandfather's footsteps and join the military serving in the National Guard. Sean serves as Special Forces Medic and Michael is a Black Hawk helicopter rescue pilot, both having served tours of duty in Afghanistan. Their service of course led Sue to her one of her major community service projects, the Pacifica Military Moms, more about that later. Sue and Erick have five grandchildren who they adore.

Their fourth child, Scott, is probably the one we all know and love. He is the smiling face we often see with Sue as she visits community programs and events and attends meetings. He graduated from Terra Nova High School and has been active with PARCA, the Parents Association for Retarded Children, which provides a wide range of high-quality services to people with developmental disabilities including independence training for adults and family support services that include information, referral, recreation and social gatherings, advocacy and support groups. In fact, if you visit the PARCA website you can see Scott's smiling face at the top of the home page. Scott is actively involved with HOPE Services on the Coastside which provides educational, community service and work experiences and, in

fact, you can find him maintaining Rotary Plaza at the Performing Arts Center on the first Tuesday of each month.

It was Scott who, in 1999, took Sue to PARCA to inquire about their services. When she walked in the receptionist asked if she was there for the interview. Wondering, Sue asked which position and when the receptionist said it was for the Director of Family Support Services, Sue said, "Yes," she was interested! Sue has been with PARCA ever since, providing practical and moral support for clients and their parents and has been an advocate for 100's of persons with developmental disabilities and their families on issues such as health, education, employment, transportation, housing and aging. She brings her educational background and her own experiences with Scott to the table every time she advocates with a teacher about an IEP for a developmentally disabled child or each time she works with a client needing housing or transportation services. She provides educational resources and speakers so that parents can be more effective in ensuring that their child has the best educational and support services available.

Sue is probably best known in Pacifica, besides serving on the City Council, for her efforts in establishing the Pacifica Military Moms. As a military mom herself she had heard about military moms groups and after 9/11, with two sons soon to be assigned to duty, she put an article in *The Pacifica Tribune* inviting other military moms to meet with her at Mazzetti's Bakery. The first meeting brought 2 other moms and the group expanded from there, collecting and sending packages of goodies to military personnel overseas during that post 9/11 time. The group provided support for those going through difficult times as their children were deployed to the battle fields and in harm's way. Sue's initial efforts in forming Pacifica Military Moms have grown to an active county-wide organization supporting military personnel and their families. Although her sons are home and safe, she continues to meet with the Pacifica group to support those who currently have children in the military.

Sue worked with the youth group at Good Shepard Church who wanted a place to "hang out." The group identified and worked on a variety of community needs which led to transportation services and development of the city's Youth Advisory Commission and other youth serving programs.

As a city council member in her third term she has previously serve as Mayor twice and currently serves as Mayor pro Tem. She has been a champion for the environment, worked on a variety of council and county-wide committees including congestion management, airport noise abatement and transportation. Her focus as a council member is always to encourage maximum public participation and transparency to ensure that we have an active citizenry. There is no better example of Sue fulfilling her commitment to an active citizenry than her early morning visits to talk with community residents at Mazzetti's Bakery!

Sue is committed to community service, ensuring that all citizens have opportunities, and, above all, is a genuinely caring person. It is with great pleasure that the Board of Directors of Pacificans Care presents the 2014 People Who Care Award to Sue Digre for her outstanding, caring and compassionate service to Pacifica and its citizens.