

2012 Celebrate Morgan Hill Awards

Nomination is for Category: Woman of the Year

Nominee's Name: Loritta Bonfante Johnson

Years in Morgan Hill: lifetime

Occupation: Retired Teacher

This Nominee deserves the Salute Award for this reason: Loritta has tirelessly served this community for more than half a century, both as a teacher in MHUSD, and as an active volunteer in a wide variety of organizations that benefit all of us in Morgan Hill.

List nominee's affiliation and years served with each organization and community involvement:

Loritta has been active in a wide variety of local organizations most of her adult life, but since her retirement in 2006, she has become a "Superstar" volunteer. She is a longtime member of Gamma Alpha, a sorority for professional educators. This organization participates in numerous projects in our community. Loritta organizes fundraising, assists in providing supplies for the women's shelter and supports literacy programs for students. As part of the literacy program, Loritta recruits volunteers to read with children residing at the Boccardo Living Center, a shelter in San Martín for women and children.

Loritta is very active on the Board of the Live Oak Foundation. This organization raises substantial funds each year that are given as grants to classroom teachers throughout the Morgan Hill Unified School District. In addition, she is in charge of the awards presentation, which she decorates and caters with extraordinary flair. Every year she steps forward to plan and organize the celebration for retirees from MHUSD.

Loritta is a member of the Board of Directors of the Morgan Hill Historical Society. She sets up displays, arranges for speakers, and helps with fundraising events. Just this past year, Loritta assisted in planning field trip activities for the Morgan Hill Historical Museum. They have now had over 400 students and parents participate in their "Look Back in Time" field trips to the Acton House, Centennial Gardens and Morgan Hill House all at Villa Mira Monte. Loritta helped recruit docents who in costume, help reenact life in the 1880's Victorian Era. Loritta's educational background and knowledge has provided a huge benefit to our local historical society.

Loritta again shows her tireless devotion to education with her support for the Teacher's Aid Coalition. This group collects donations and raises funds to provide basic classroom resources to teachers in the Morgan Hill Unified School District. Here again she helps plan the group's fundraising event (wine and chocolate party anyone?) and helps organize the distribution of supplies and funds that support both students and teachers in this time of unrelenting budget cuts to public education.

Loritta has always supported teachers in our community. After retiring, she did the necessary research to start up a chapter of the Morgan Hill Federation of Teachers for retired teachers. She helped write the charter, recruited members, and coordinates this new network for retired teachers. Loritta continues to be actively involved with the

Morgan Hill Federation of Teachers by attending school board meetings and organizing events for teachers throughout the year.

Loritta's outstanding service throughout her career as an educator that spanned more than 40 years was recognized in 2004 when she was recognized as "Teacher of the Year" for MHUSD. Many of her colleagues were present to see her receive this award at a large event sponsored by the Santa Clara County Office of Education.

Since she was a teenager who excelled at ballet dancing Loritta has displayed a great devotion to the arts. For years she has volunteered in many capacities with South Valley Civic Theatre, the resident theatre company of the Morgan Hill Playhouse. This includes serving on the SVCT Board of Directors as well as planning and catering Opening Night Galas and producing shows.

Just this past month, when a friend held a fundraising event for the Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research, Loritta stepped forward to coordinate a raffle to raise additional funds for the Foundation. She gathered donations of goods and services from individuals and organizations in our community that had a retail value of nearly \$3500.

Loritta is a whirlwind of energy. Her love for the children and community of Morgan Hill is evident in all that she does. She is an amazing example of tireless devotion to the many organizations and causes that she supports. I highly recommend her as Woman of the Year for Morgan Hill in 2012.

This nomination is submitted by:

Teresa Sage, Teacher at Sobrato High, MH chamber of commerce "Educator of the Year 2009", President of the Morgan Hill Federation of Teachers

Terri Eves Knudsen, Librarian at Sobrato High, MHFT Staff

Gemma Abels, English teacher at Live Oak High, MHFT Vice President,

Steve Spencer, Speech Language Pathologist retired from MHUSD