

LOS GATOS

An exclusive magazine serving the residents of Los Gatos
The Heart of Los Gatos

Living



UNITED WE STAND
IN GRATITUDE

in Los Gatos



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Cover photo by Dave Lepori, Lepori Photography



Above from LEFT to RIGHT: John Lochner, Allie Chee, Tim Du Clos, Chuck Swan, Duino Giordano, Diane Chandler, Celestine Chee, Vice Pres. George Hall, Tom Griffin, Michael Frangadakis, President Kent Hillhouse. Jackie Rose, missing from above photo, but present on cover photo.

UNITED WE STAND IN GRATITUDE

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By Genevieve Laucher, Photos by Dave Lepori

Throughout the history of Los Gatos, residents have shown that they honor and respect our veterans. Los Gatans have participated in every military conflict, many have given their lives for our freedom, and there are presently at least eighty members of our community on active duty. There has been a park, a plaque, and even a memorial library in years past. For these reasons, it is surprising that, unlike our neighboring towns, Los Gatos does not currently have a Veterans memorial. In 2012, Michael Frangadakis began the process of changing this.

At a Town Council meeting in 2012, Mike brought it to the Council's attention that Los Gatos did not have a Veterans memorial. The next day, the mayor, Steve Rice, called him and asked him to start a foundation, and that is how the Veterans Memorial and Support Foundation of Los Gatos began. The Foundation's board now has fourteen members, plus a dozen volunteers, called committee members. The board intends to not only build a memorial, but also support veterans and first responders in perpetuity.

Many, but not all, board members are veterans. Mike, the Founder and Chairman of the Board, is a Vietnam vet who served in the 44th Medical Brigade in the highlands of Vietnam and continues to serve America through his active reserve duty. John Lochner, the Board Director and Co-Chair of the Building and Maintenance Committee, served our country during the Korean War in the 118th Combat Engineer Battalion as Sergeant First Class, serving in Germany during



Above: George Hall, John Lochner, Ellen Manzo, Kent Hillhouse



Celestine Chee

the Berlin Airlift. The president of the Foundation, Kent Hillhouse, is a retired Major General who served in Vietnam.

After having nine artists submit their designs for the memorial, narrowing it down, and holding many meetings with Town stakeholders and public input to agree on a final design, the board recommended the award-winning designer, illustrator and portrait artist, Frank Kocian Morris. The Town Council agreed and the goal is to begin construction early next year, although this depends on fundraising. The memorial, *The Flame of Liberty*, is a glass sculpture of an eternal flame inspired by the Statue of Liberty. The interior of the flame sculpture is open, and nestled inside is a second, smaller bronze sculpture of a “Soldier’s Cross,” a nationally recognized symbol in the form of a helmet resting on an inverted rifle and a pair of boots, representing the service and ultimate sacrifice of America’s Fallen military members. In addition, the historic fire bell, which was previously in the town plaza, will be given a place of honor recognizing the first responders.

The board is now discussing how to most effectively fundraise and raise awareness. Those who donate will have bricks, pavers, stones, or benches with their names incorporated into the memorial. The board is also thinking of ideas such as hosting a movie night at the Los Gatos Theater, a night out at Campo di Bocce, or a dinner at Testarossa. They are also working on getting involved with organizations that provide grants, and talking with Veterans Memorial Foundations in Cupertino and Campbell to see what strategies worked best for them. Campbell has been especially helpful, acting as a sister foundation to Los Gatos. Jim Free, their founder, also serves on the Los Gatos Foundation’s board.

In addition to the memorial, the Foundation hopes to have a section in the Los Gatos History Museum dedicated to veterans. The Foundation supports Veterans Affairs hospitals throughout Santa Clara County and the Fisher House Foundation, which supports and houses the families of Veterans being treated in VA hospitals. The community has already been immensely supportive in these efforts. Round Table Pizza of downtown Los Gatos recently donated twenty pizzas to the



VA Palo Alto Polytrauma Rehabilitation Center, giving wounded veterans, their families, and the hardworking staff a well-deserved pizza party.

One member of the board, Thomas Griffin, lives in Monterey and puts together a program for homeless veterans held each year at Ford Ord called Stand Down. This event supports homeless veterans from five counties, helping them find housing, legal assistance, employment, clothing, counseling, and veterinary service for their pets. The goal is to bring homeless veterans back into society and help them in any way possible. Another annual event, which Mike Frangadakis has been participating in since 1970, is to bring cards to Fisher House families and the Polytrauma Center on Christmas Day.



John Lochner, Mike Wasserman

The Veterans Foundation board members love being part of Los Gatos community. Mike, whose background is in real estate appraisal, is familiar with all of Santa Clara County but knew that he wanted to settle down, raise a family, and spend his life in Los Gatos. Born in San Francisco, Mike moved from Cupertino to Los Gatos in 1977, got married shortly after, and raised his three children here. John Lochner moved to Los Gatos from New York in 1954. He joined the Lions Club and Chamber of Commerce and has been involved in the community ever since. In 1972 he was elected to Town Council and served as mayor in 1975 and 1980. In 1970, he started the tradition of singing Christmas carols in the plaza and has not missed a year since. John also raised his five children in Los Gatos and now has five grandchildren.

Mike, John, and the rest of the members of the Veterans Memorial and Support Foundation want the Town of Los Gatos to be aware of what they're doing and why they're doing it, and hopefully gather a lot of support from the community. Veterans and first responders have done so much for us; they deserve our tribute, and certainly a memorial.

To learn how you can support our veterans and become members of the Foundation, contact Mike Frangadakis at mikethegreek@earthlink.net and visit honoravet.org. The board meets regularly every Monday at 3:30pm in the council lobby, and invites interested veterans or other residents to join them.

MISSING members from the cover photo:
Ellen Manzo, Gil Decker, Rick Lore, Rex and Barbara Naden,
and BJ Tucker, Treasurer.