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A Private Magazine for the Residents of Portola Valley and Woodside

MOUNTAIN HOME

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AARON ALVAREZ MENDOZA

Karen Berner

Welcomes You to the
49th Annual
Rotary Fine Art in the Park
August 10-11

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Karen Berner

Welcomes You to the 49th Annual Rotary
Fine Art in the Park August 10-11

By Abbie Burgess | Photos by Aaron Alvarez Mendoza



On August 10th and 11th, you'll find Woodside resident Karen Berner at the World Community Service committee booth at the Los Altos Rotary's Fine Art in the Park event. "Every year during this event, I look forward to meeting like-minded people in our community who are looking for ways to give back," she says of the charity art show. "The sheer number of people who share similar interests and values is incredible. Visitors stop by our booth to see the personal and direct ways our Rotary Club can improve the lives of men, women, children, and entire communities in a variety of projects around the world. It's inspiring to be a part of such an impactful program."

Karen grew up in Pittsburgh (she's a lifelong Steelers fan!) and graduated from the University of Pittsburgh with a degree in public relations and a minor in Japanese studies. In the early 90s, she lived in Osaka, Japan for four years working as an editor for a trade show and translation company. "I loved my time there and gained an appreciation of cultural differences from both sides. I made great lifelong friends with whom I maintain close relationships."

Traveling remains an important part of her life, especially visiting her family who all live outside of California including her adult daughters. "New York City is one of my favorite

places to stay because of its vibrancy. But I also enjoy spending time in Carmel and Monterey,” says Karen, adding that she has close friendships that feel like family both in the Bay area and in Monterey County. In celebration of her 60th birthday this year, she is heading to Iceland!

Karen moved to Silicon Valley in 1998 and worked in public relations at a small agency in Campbell. While her twin daughters, Marisa and Claire Berner, were growing up, Karen was a busy mom. She started a scout troop, ran the PTA, led the high school STEM program, and ran for city council. “When the girls were looking at colleges, I decided to reinvent myself and went back for my MBA in entrepreneurship. I graduated from Pepperdine with my EMBA in 2018, started a company, and have been having fun ever since.” Previously, she has also worked in event planning and had a start-up. In her spare time, she plays both harp and piano.

In 2018, she moved to Woodside, with a fresh MBA in hand and two daughters off to college on the East Coast. Her companions in Woodside are her dogs Copper and Brynja, who love exploring their favorite Woodside trails.

“My property has a sweet guest house, which I rent out occasionally to visiting professors because of its proximity to Stanford. And because they have regular travel here, they’ve become good friends over the years. So, since moving to Woodside, not only have I gotten to meet some incredibly thoughtful and hardworking neighbors, but I have also met some dynamic and lovely individuals from all over the world – literally in my backyard. Only in Woodside!”



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Moving into a home with a guest house right before the pandemic was timely, she adds, since it could function as a safe haven for people wishing to isolate. "Now, I enjoy sharing my space with good friends who want to teach their kids to swim and have a place to just run around in nature. It gives my home good energy."

As a lover of the outdoors, Karen says she can't believe she's lucky enough to live amongst Woodside's incredible natural beauty. "Redwoods, live coastal oaks, beaches – and the variety of flowers and wildlife in this area is unending," she says. "In addition to the close proximity to horses, mountain lions, and coyotes, we also have a great variety of birds. I was never really into birds before moving here, but now I have a clear bird feeder on my family room window to get familiar with the types of birds who live here. I've collected fallen feathers from Cooper's Hawks, downloaded the Merlin bird ID app and can identify the specific owl that lives in the tree nearest my house. There is so much to appreciate and learn about in this area."

Karen is on two HOA boards. "Shortly after moving to my neighborhood, I drew the short straw and became president of my HOA," she jests. "It got me up to speed quickly with what the town needs, what my neighbors need, and I started to get everyone on our street involved with disaster preparedness. I took the emergency prep course offered by the Woodside Fire Department (which I think was great), and I also encouraged my neighbors to actively understand defensible space for fire protection. It helped me understand more about the Woodside community too, and how to energize families to be more aware."

World Community Service

Upon moving to Woodside, Karen had already been a member of Los Altos Rotary for two years. She's been involved with the Rotary's annual Fine Art in the Park event since her first year with the club. Through the World Community Service committee at the

Los Altos Rotary Club, she enjoys learning how advances in technology such as solar cooking and telehealth can improve lives in extremely rural areas. "By increasing access to medical specialists, replacing dangerous wood-burning stoves to eliminate burns and smoke inhalation, and so much more, the projects are often multifaceted and can solve several problems at once," she says. "I learn so much from each person proposing a new project that I am inspired anew each time. These Rotary projects bring people together to solve human problems sustainably."

Her committee will have a booth at the event, which showcases the various local and international projects they support. "I enjoy working at this booth and sharing ideas with visitors on how to improve upon what we are doing, how visitors can become involved in an area of their own passion, and bring people together to make good things happen."

Karen is currently Director of International Service for the Los Altos Rotary Club board, serves on the Grants Review

Committee for Rotary International District 5170, and is past chair of the Los Altos Rotary Club's World Community Service committee. Outside of Rotary, she serves on the development committee for the Morgan Autism Center.

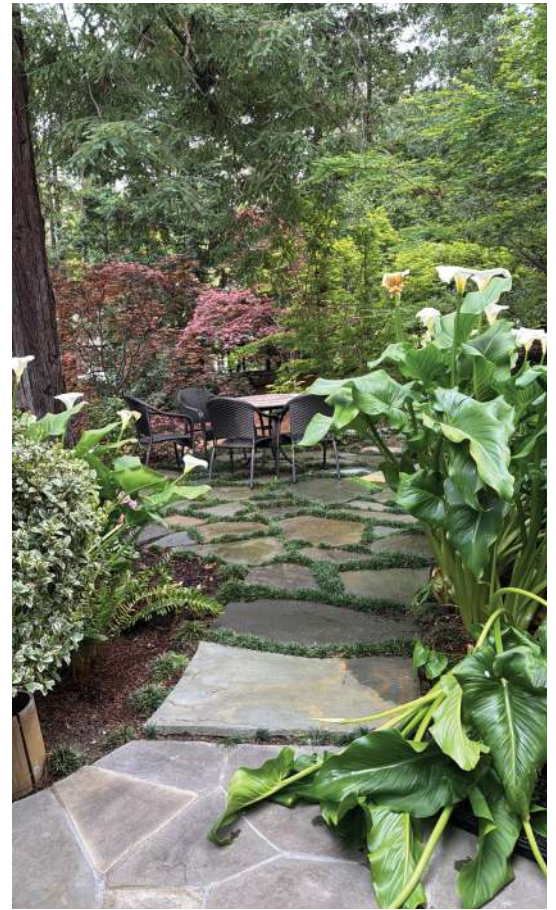
Karen and the other Los Altos Rotary members are excited to welcome visitors to this year's Fine Art in the Park event. For more information visit www.rotaryartshow.com.

Event Information

Each year a team of volunteers from the Los Altos Rotary Club presents Fine Art in the Park – one of the Bay Area's premier open-air art shows, featuring original, juried works by some 150 artists. Fine art pieces range from paintings and sculptures to ceramics, jewelry, and unique gifts. Entertainment, food, and beverages make this an ideal occasion for shopping and family fun.

As you stroll through the lovely park, viewing first-rate art, know that your purchase supports a great cause. All proceeds of the Rotary Fine Art in the Park show go to support a wide range of community service agencies in the Bay Area and support international development projects around the world. "Most of these focus on education, economic development, maternal and child health, water/sanitation, or some innovative ways to combine these," Karen says. "It is inspiring to see the creative ways these projects can be combined to make them even more successful and sustainable."

The August 10-11 show is open daily from 10 am to 5:30 pm in Lincoln Park, Los Altos.






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