

Novato civic organization names retired architect as citizen of year

Alan Dunham cited by civic organization

By Stephanie Weldy, Marin Independent Journal

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Hearing his name called as Novato's 2015 Citizen of the Year came as a surprise to 43-year resident Alan Dunham.

Dunham, 78, had no idea he had been nominated for the recognition months earlier — and that his wife was in on it from nearly the beginning.

Dunham received the honor Friday during the annual city birthday celebration organized by Paint the Town Red, a nonprofit civic group.

“I look at people that have been selected over the past and many of them I know and respect highly,” he said. “I feel very honored to be part of that group — my goodness.”

Dunham, a retired architect, was selected for his work as a youth advocate and volunteer project designer. He designed, at no cost, structures such as the announcer's booth at San Marin High School and the gatehouse at Stafford Lake park.

“He's one of those who can't say no to people,” said his wife Roberta Dunham. “So he's done a lot and it's great to have him recognized for it.”

Dunham, a former Oakland resident, took a job in Novato as a civil engineer in 1970. He moved to the city three years later.

Dunham said he wanted to contribute to the Novato's small-town flavor.

“It's been my home,” Dunham said. “I feel very close to it.”

As a volunteer, Dunham and his Rotary Club helped fund a new patio area at the Hamilton Field History Museum. He also served as a paid architect for the Nova-Ro senior housing complexes, which he considers to be among his greatest accomplishments.

“We've got 126 units that have housed a lot of people over the years and a lot of people who are able to stay in town and live an independent life comfortably,” he said. “I'm always proud of that.”

Youth supporter

Dunham, who served on the city's Design Review Committee from 1977 to 1991, also helped construct the Novato Youth Center and served on its board of directors. He remains a member of its advisory board.

He also helped raise more than \$11,000 for Rotary Club grants, scholarships and other academic projects and helped start the club's monthly youth program, Books and Arts Around Town. He said he goes to Lynwood Elementary School once a month to listen to children read.

He has also helped build housing for families in Mexico and worked to provide clean water to the Mactan region of the Philippines through a community service project he initiated through the Rotary Club.

Dietrich Stroeh, chairman of the city's Citizen of the Year Committee, said Dunham has left quite a mark.

"He has leadership in a lot of different ways. He does it quietly. He's not an elected official and is not involved in politics, but he's involved in what the community is doing on a lot of different levels," Stroeh said.

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