



Hosterman gives Mayor's Award to Friends of Kottinger Creek

Grassroots organization earns wide applause at Monday night dinner for \$1.3-million project

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The prestigious Mayor's Award for 2007 was given Monday night to Friends of Kottinger Creek, a nonprofit, grassroots committee that persevered in gaining approval by the City Council for a \$1.3-million project to restore Kottinger Creek.

Those on the committee who shared in the award Monday night were Tom Gallagher, Mark Smith, Ron Taylor, Mary Smith, Earl Mincks, Cheri Puls, Pat Griffin, Phil Filbert and George Reid.

Mayor Jennifer Hosterman announced the award at the Mayor's Award dinner, held each year to honor individuals and groups that have contributed to the overall good of Pleasanton. More than 300 elected and appointed officials and volunteers turned out for the festive event.

In making the award, Hosterman said the group's effort goes back seven years to a morning when Earl Mincks went out into his yard on Kottinger Drive, looked across the street to the creek that flows through the neighborhood, and saw that many of the trees that were alongside the creek were now only stumps. He learned that city crews had dug out part of the area to improve water flow along the entire 1,820 creek.

"As you might expect, I was livid," Mincks said.

Winning the support of his neighbors, including his daughter Cheri Puls and neighbor Pat Griffin and 450 others, Mincks formed the Friends of Kottinger Creek, a nonprofit, grassroots committee that became part of the Alameda Creek Alliance. The groups advocated for the restoration and preservation of the creek, which is a tributary of Pleasanton's Arroyo Valle, which flows into Arroyo de la Laguna and Alameda Creek.

The Friends group gave tours City Council members and won the support of former Mayor Tom Pico and current Mayor Jennifer Hosterman. It was Pico who, after a tour, concluded that hydrology and ecology studies to assess the situation were in order. The restoration of Kottinger Creek was under way.

"It was a really great lesson in the value of democracy and the ability of people to affect that," Puls said

"We wanted Kottinger Creek to be something we felt we would be happy with and proud of, and in turn, the city of Pleasanton would be proud to have," Mincks added.

The project included a complete new irrigation system for the park and creek to maintain the plants, removal of invasive species and planting new native plants and trees. Also added were a small foot bridge and other small amenities such as a picnic area, clean-up area and an access ramp that allows handicapped access.

The restoration met much opposition when the projected cost went from \$30,000, the city's original cost of maintenance, to the full project cost of \$1.3 million.

Parks and Recreation Commissioner Jerry Pentin said: "Our biggest concern was the escalating price. I'm sure for the residents that use that park, it will be a great amenity and a great improvement. Absolutely repairing the stream to its natural state is wonderful."

The Mayor's Award was initiated by the late Bob Reid, who presented it to William Herlihy in 1971 for his work in securing property from the federal government that is now our Sports Park. Through the years, the award has gone to individuals for their exemplary work in the nonprofit and the unpaid public sector.

Not all recipients got their award for late night meetings on one of the commissions. Joe Callahan and Mark Sweeney were honored for their "contribution" in building Hacienda Business Park. In 2000, retiring Mayor Ben Tarver gave the Mayor's Award to Councilman Tom Pico, the only sitting council member to ever receive the award, and a move that generated some grumbling back then. In 2004, Pico again broke with tradition and gave his award to the Cultural Arts Council instead of to an individual.

In her three years as mayor, Hosterman has continued those kinds of choices, including Monday's award to the Friends of Kottinger Creek.