

# MORGAN HILL TIMES

## Community leadership honored

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By Marilyn Dubil

Because of her many years of dedicated community service, Morgan Hill resident Sherry Hemingway was honored Saturday evening with the 2008 Leadership Excellence Award.

A former reporter and public relations professional, Hemingway is used to shining the spotlight on others and not particularly comfortable with having it turned on her.

"This is really about Leadership, not so much about me," she said. "I'd like the community to know more about the group, it is something so strong and vibrant."

Board Chair Roger Knopf said Hemingway was a natural choice for the honor, which was presented to Hemingway Saturday evening during a sold-out awards dinner at Coyote Creek Golf and County Club.

"She outstandingly represents the Leadership graduates who have fulfilled the promise of the program by making a difference in the community," Knopf said.

Knopf also said Hemingway could be credited with saving the organization after several challenging years, including founding the fundraising dinner that honors the award recipient. She not only saved it, but increased the quality and effectiveness through the establishment of an independent board of directors for the non-profit hat has taken a hands-on approach to the program curriculum, Knopf added.

Hemingway's journalism degree is from Kent State, and she also has a master's in public administration from Harvard University. She is a marketing and public relations consultant and volunteers with Rotary Club of Morgan Hill



Sherry Hemingway accepts the award Saturday at Coyote Creek Golf and Country Club as Mayor Steve Tate, left, and past recipients Mike Rubino and Dennis Kennedy, right, look on.

Photo by: Special to The Times

and other non-profit organizations.

Hemingway and husband, John, moved to Morgan Hill from Seattle in 2000. After they had been in their new home for several months, she said, she realized that she had met no one in her new city except neighbors. After a trip to the Chamber of Commerce's Web site, she applied to participate in a Leadership Morgan Hill class.

"It turned out, I was the only applicant that no one knew," she said with a laugh. "They actually sent someone out to my house to find out more about me. They sent Michael Brookman, whom I now consider a good friend."

Brookman is a corporal with the Morgan Hill Police Department and has served as president of the Leadership Morgan Hill board.

Hemingway became a part of the Leadership class of 2001, along with Christine Giusiana, who is now president and CEO of the Morgan Hill Chamber of Commerce; Jack Dilles, who is director of finance for the city; Dennis Brown, principal of the Community Adult School; Lori Escobar, director of the El Toro Youth Center; David Swing, commander with the Morgan Hill Police Department; and many others.

"My class was very important to me," she said. "They still are. There's a reason why so many community leaders stay involved with the organization long after they have graduated, it's because they see what it is doing for the community, they believe in that mission. People like Del Foster, Dana Dittmore, Lorraine Welk and many others, they continue to stay active because they know the value of Leadership."

Leadership Morgan Hill was established in 1995. Approximately 250 people have graduated from the annual nine-month program designed to provide educational opportunities and experiences for citizens and employees in the public, private and non-profit sectors who will become future leaders. The mission of the organization is to provide insight and tools that enable and inspire participants to give back to the community through service.

The most valuable thing about the organization, Hemingway said, is something that is not readily apparent.

"It's completely invisible, a fiber, a network that runs through the community," she said. "People from a variety of ethnic backgrounds, of varying ages and occupations and economic status come together and are bound together by Leadership. It's overarching, it keeps the fiber of the community intact."

She said Roger Knopf has eloquently stated the impact the organization has on the community. If it folded, the city might not notice its absence the first year, or maybe the second year, but by the third year, the community would

miss it.

The Leadership Excellence Award was established to honor individuals whose vision and leadership advance the spirit of community and charity, reflect courage and insight and inspire others in a like manner.

According to information from the group the award may recognize one outstanding moment that manifests clear and defined leadership skills or it may capture a long period of continuous and meritorious leadership activities.

### **Past recipients**

- Roger Knopf
- George, Jr., Gene and Gary Guglielmo
- Mike Rubino
- Dennis Kennedy