

Community Comment
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Community Service

Growing up in the fifties, in my blue collar family, having and keeping a job that could feed and shelter a family was as much as my parents could expect or strive for. My dad had a fourth grade education which limited his opportunities. But, he was hard working and loyal which served him well in the work place. He learned machine skills during the war years and did shop work the rest of his life.

Looking back, it's not surprising that the subject of community service never came up. As first generation Italians, we were always helping family and friends that were more in need than we were. Now, community service is required in some high schools and colleges and classes are offered in the topic.

My first choice of giving back to the community came when I was a student at Humboldt. As a member of the forestry club, we were interested in developing a nature trail in the Arcata Community Forest. We approached the city and they liked the idea. The trail would use all of our new knowledge and skills. We would identify the path, decide what to point out to hikers, build a walking surface, clear dangerous brush and trees, and build necessary stream crossings to protect the environment. We worked for 18 months on the trail, mostly on week ends. The city provided tools and secured donations of woodchips and gravel. Faculty provided advice and guidance. It was an amazing experience.

In 1984, around the time that I was Mayor, my idea of community service consisted of volunteering my professional skills to the planning commission and running for and winning a seat on the council. Then I was asked if I was interested in joining Rotary. To be honest, I couldn't see it. My image of Rotary was that of a bunch of aging business owners having lunch together and playing golf. But the late Gerry Hansen invited me to lunch. My view was correct at first glance. But then I learned the depth of their commitment to this community and the world around us. I was truly impressed. I am thirty years into this global organization and am still surprised and impressed by all the good works that Rotary does.

Rotary is not the only service club. There are many opportunities to give back. And the friends you make are priceless. We have come a long way in the simple awareness of the opportunities for helping make our community and our world a better place.

On Saturday, March 21, the Arcata Rotary club will hold our annual Wine Festival at HSU. It highlights local wines and offers food and entertainment. It is our biggest fundraiser of the year. We raise money to do the projects we think are important. From exchange students to water projects, economic development in the high country of Costa Rica, to a park on south G street, we do our best to improve the quality of life for people

here and around the world. Your contribution to this fundraiser makes this possible and you will have a good time.

Community service comes in many shapes and forms. I've found what works for me. How can you help?

This has been Sam Pennisi for community comment.