

Elk Grove Citizen ONLINE



LIFESTYLE

EGUSD – Super Grads, part 1

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Two weeks ago, I wrote about my new plan of identifying outstanding men and women who graduated from our schools. Who are our Super Grads? What are they doing now? Which ones have contributed or are contributing to the quality of life in our great city of Elk Grove and in our surrounding communities? Which ones are making a difference in California and in the nation ... and even in the world?

The list that I started out with is getting bigger every day, and I thank the Citizen readers for responding so quickly. Super Grads do not have to be as well known as Ramin Manshadi (Class of 1982, EGHS) is for his stature in the medical world or athletes like Lance Briggs that we closely follow in the newspapers. They can be your sons and daughters who are making a difference, and if you see them as Super Grads, so do I!



I will be doing in-depth features on many of our Super Grads but, for starters, here are some of note who have been in the news very recently:

- * Frank Maita, Paula Maita, and Lynden King –These three Super Grads were on the front page of the Citizen last week as recipients of the Eagle Award for community spirit. This was in recognition of their efforts and dedication to Old Town/Main Street Elk Grove. They all went to our schools – Paula and Lynden graduated from EGHS, and I also consider Frank as one of our Super Grads even if he missed his senior year in Elk Grove because his family moved.
- * Steven Wright (EGHS Class of 1976) – Steven was also in last week’s Citizen for his dedicated community service, along with his 25-year battle with multiple sclerosis that ended in 2008. A Bruceville Terrace fundraiser is being held in Steven’s honor.
- * Richard Samra (EGHS Class of 1976) – Richard was installed as Chair of the Elk Grove Chamber of Commerce Board Saturday night. He has been involved in agricultural pursuits including wine grapes, and is the owner of Samra Investments.
- * Guy Rutter (EGHS Class of 1960) was elected to the Board of the Cosumnes Community Services District (CCSD). He is well known for his involvement with fire prevention and has the distinction of being in the first graduating class of the unified Elk Grove district.
- * Jim Entrican (EGHS Class of 1960) is the new president of the Elk Grove Historical Society, so he and Rutter are both from that first EGUSD class. Jim has been actively involved in the community for many years and now has taken on the super challenge of leading the society into its next era of preserving history.
- * Bob Lent (EGHS Class of 1963) – Bob and Lisa are Elk Grove’s Citizens of the year for 2008, and their list of community involvement activities is immense. You also probably saw him as Santa Claus for Jessie Baker kids in December, an event that he participates in every year.

That is just a sprinkling of who has been in the news in the past few weeks, but my list is long and it goes on and on. Thanks to Cathy Guy and her staff at Elk Grove High, I was able to obtain a list of these Super Grads, all of them superb community leaders over the years. Their names were all placed in the school’s “Hall of Fame” that was established in the 1980s.

* Jessie Cumpston Baker (Class of 1920) – Yes, she is the lady for whom Jessie Baker School is named. She became known across California and the nation for her work with children of special needs and her advocacy for them. In 1965, she was recognized as Elk Grove’s Citizen of the Year.

* Beth Murphy Engs (Class of 1926) – Mrs. Engs, who grew up in Sloughhouse, was involved in a variety of community activities, but what she will forever be known for is one of the key people who arranged for the moving of the Rhoads School from Sloughhouse Road to Elk Grove Park. The school provides hundreds of young people with a taste of living history.

* Henry Kloss (Class of 1931) – He is best known as the supervisor of the 5th District of Sacramento County (before Toby Johnson and today's Don Nottoli). Mr. Kloss, a Franklin resident, was Elk Grove's Citizen of the Year in 1977 and a person who made many contributions to south Sacramento County and Elk Grove.

* Mary Dakuzaku Tsukamoto (Class of 1933) – Along with her husband Al (Class of 1932), Mary, a Florin resident, made history in her long time role as a teacher and in helping people understand the experiences of Japanese Americans during World War II. Mary Tsukamoto School is named for her, and *We the People, A Story of Internment in America* is the book I helped her write in 1987.

* Gordon Van Vleck (Class of 1937) – A Michigan Bar-Sloughhouse resident, Van Vleck was instrumental in California agriculture and was president of the California Chamber of Commerce. He also served as Governor Deukmejian's Secretary of Resources and, in that position, he had the honor of escorting Queen Elizabeth when she visited Sutter's Fort in 1983.

* Dave Morse (Class of 1938) – Dave was a long time counselor at Elk Grove HS and the originator of the TRIAD concept for improving relationships with students. His wife Jane is also an active community member. They are also recipients of my History Gold Stars for their efforts in preserving our local history.

* George W. Morse (Class of 1940) – Like his brother Dave, George was a native of Bruceville or East Franklin as it is known today. He was very involved with both business and agriculture. The mother of Dave and George was Barbara Comstock Morse, the namesake of today's elementary school.

* Paul Hrepich (Class of 1943) – Paul was a school bus driver who pioneered school bus driving and even taught it at the California Highway Patrol. He was also a dairy man and greatly involved with community activities along with his wife Dorothy (also a 1943 Super Grad) who was Elk Grove's Citizen of the Year in 1987.

* John L. Zehnder, Sr. (Class of 1945) – Everyone in Elk Grove knows John Zehnder who was Citizen of the Year in 1969. He has probably attended more sporting events than anyone in town as well as many activities of the Lions Club, volunteer fireman, and the Elk Grove Community Foundation. All the Zehnder sons are active in the community, especially Mike Zehnder, Elk Grove Citizen of the Year in 1992, who is known all over town as Fireman Mike.

* Don Larson (Class of 1948) – Dr. Larson was a pioneer in the management and administration of services for children with special needs in Elk Grove. He went to school at Sierra Enterprise, taught at Elk Grove HS and served later as a district administrator.

That takes us only to the 1950s with Elk Grove's Hall of Fame, and my list goes on with more Citizens of the Year, Chamber presidents, and leaders in business and the school district. You will also read about Super Grads who are making a difference in California, the nation and the world. I will continue next week, and do send me your suggestions for more Elk Grove Super Grads.

To be continued ...

1. History Happened Here, Book 1-River, Oaks, Gold – \$20
2. History Happened Here, Book 2-Fields, Farms, Schools – \$20
3. Images of America-Elk Grove – \$20
4. We the People, A Story of Internment in America – \$30

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