

Tribute to Laurel Gray

Laurel has been the longest serving board member in the history of Senior Gleaners and the primary person responsible for the survival of the food rescue non-profit since its founding in 1992.

Among his contributions:

- He was one of 3 people in the early 90s who saw the need to recover wasted food to feed hungry people. He researched a Sacramento-based senior gleaning group as a model for the San Diego organization.
- Laurel filed articles of incorporation and submitted the IRS paperwork to obtain authorization as a non-profit organization—503(c)3 status granted in June of 1992.
- Although retired from a lifetime of work with the Lutheran Church, he devoted huge chunks of time to the newly created organization helping with day-to-day operations initially and serving as board president most of the years between 1992 and 2016, with continued board membership through 2020.
- To fund the early work, Laurel applied for grants, sought support from churches and raised funds from volunteers—sources that continue today.
 - His most notable accomplishment has provided major funding to the organization today since the late 1990's—a \$200,000 donation from the estate of North County dairyman E.J. Allen.
- Through the years, Laurel and members of his family consistently have been among the most generous financial donors to Senior Gleaners. Laurel has included SG in his will.

Results of his work:

- Senior Gleaners has gathered nearly 8 million pounds since establishment—an average of 300,000 pounds of fresh fruit and unsold groceries annually. Food that would have been wasted has fed thousands of low-income county residents of all ages each year.
- Hundreds of individual volunteers have found meaningful work, enduring friendships and health benefits of weekly activity.
- Hundreds of residents (many of them seniors themselves) have benefited from help to harvest their surplus bounty.

Other passions demonstrate Laurel's commitment to helping others in need:

- In the early 1960's, with the support of his church but opposition from some community members, Laurel traveled to the South to register Black voters.
- In recent years, he has been an advocate for the homeless and for immigration rights. He has participated in outreach events and has marched in protests at the border.