

## Linda and Jim Morton: Aging into Volunteering

Years ago, before she qualified as a senior, Linda remembers spontaneously having lunch at Sebastopol Area Senior Center's Harvest Café. Enjoying her meal and the company, she thought, "I could do this." Linda had worked at the local grammar school as the "lunch lady" and spent 10 years in Kaiser's Nutritional program (and raised three kids); she willingly signed up.



Linda's volunteer commitment continues today, six-plus years later.

Linda worked through COVID in the SASC kitchen. "It was not easy, but we did it." Today, Linda volunteers as a Harvest Café waitress on Thursdays and says she loves it.

A few years ago, Linda bought her husband Jim a ukulele to encourage his retirement. Realizing his rock band guitar days didn't translate to the ukulele, Jim enrolled at Finley Center in Santa Rosa. After attending the 100-plus student classes, Linda encouraged Jim to sign up for the SASC's new (and smaller) ukulele classes.

Now 74 and recently retired, Jim volunteers every Monday as the SASC ukulele club co-facilitator with Cindia Brody. Jim fell into the role after some shifts in teacher reorganization, sharing, "It's a social and fun thing to do, and I enjoy it."

One day, Linda casually told Jim that the Harvest Café sought a dishwasher. After some contemplation, Jim volunteered to wash dishes in the Cafe on Fridays. "I became a professional dishwasher from a full-time contractor and project manager, it's a natural segway," Jim laughs. "I've been in charge all my life. I just kind of float along now and play and wash dishes," Jim jokingly shares with a genuine smile.

Admitting that the ukulele club won't be playing at Carnegie Hall, Jim shares that each of the 15-plus club members brings music and is improving. Asked by the Council of Aging presenter, who runs the weekly Alzheimer's classes next door, the ukulele club plays three songs for the class. "It's not a big deal, but I think we might be getting better at playing these little concerts each week," Jim giggles.

Both Bay Area natives, Jim grew up in Sebastopol, and Linda grew up in Novato. After graduating from high school, Linda was employed by the Fairfax Police Department, while Jim ironically was building the Sergeant's home.



Agreeable to a blind date, the sergeant picked Linda up at her parents' house. He drove her to a baseball game Jim was playing and planned to introduce them. The meeting was on July 7th, 1977, and Jim and Linda were married on October 15th, 1977.

Happily married for 47 years, with three kids and nine grandchildren, Linda and Jim live outside of town in a home Jim built. They have two donkeys, three llamas, two horses, three dogs, and two cats.

Jim and Linda's three children and now their nine grandchildren all attend schools in Sonoma County, including Twin Hills Elementary School, where Jim was the first second-grade class to graduate. "I love it. Oh, it's beautiful. Wow. We're like third generation," Jim shares.

Jim worked as a contractor managing projects all over the Bay Area, sharing, "But Linda had the biggest job in the world; she made and raised our children!" Their team effort is admirable.

Over the years, Jim and Linda traveled around the world. For 30 years, Linda bred and raised Bernese Mountain Dogs, traveling to Japan, Germany, British Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Texas, and Colorado for shows. Linda (and her dogs) also starred in numerous commercials and were involved in the Pet Therapy program with the Sonoma County Human Society, visiting Apple Valley Convalescent Hospital patients. She also had a "Reading Dog" whom she took to schools for the children to read to.

Years ago, Linda's horse threw her, and she broke her pelvis in three places. On crutches and using a wheelchair for four months, she decided never to ride again. But when Linda started taking her granddaughter to riding lessons, she began to feel the desire again. Now they take lessons together every Wednesday. "Oh, I love it. It's fun," Linda happily shares. Linda joyfully explains that you never forget something you truly love. "The first step, I was a little like, ugh. But after we went 10 steps, I was like, Oh, I got this!" she proudly shares.

Jim admits he never really knew about SASC growing up in Sebastopol. "I think the senior center has done so well. I see the people come in, gather, and talk, and it's great. There is a real sense of community for the elderly, and I am one of them!"

Jim and Linda volunteer at Analy during the Kawanis club fireworks show. Linda humbly shares that she has taught advanced swimming to children through the Rotary for over 10 years.

"I have to admit, I wasn't too thrilled about being old and the word senior doesn't do well with me," Jim shares. "It's hard to believe that you aspire to this position in life, and yet I have to admit, when you get here, it's not all bad," Jim humbly shares.

Linda and Jim both exemplify a willingness to participate in whatever comes along. Their positive attitudes and joy in lending a hand, rooted in their commitment to each other and the community, are comforting and inspiring.

**Thank you, Linda and Jim, you always make everything so fun!**



To learn about ways to volunteer at the SASC, Please visit our website [sebastopolseniorcenter.org](http://sebastopolseniorcenter.org)

