



## FOUNDERS' AWARD NOMINATION FORM

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### Founders' Award for Lifetime Contributions to the Town of Portola Valley

Portola Valley's Founder's Award for Lifetime Contributions recognizes the cumulative civic engagement and leadership of longstanding volunteers in the Town of Portola Valley.

**Nominee:** Gary Nielsen

**Nominator:** Nancy Lund

**Recommenders:** Nona Chiarello, Wil Patterson and Kevin Welch

**Date:** April 4<sup>th</sup>, 2023

**Qualifications:** Gary Nielsen represents the character of the quintessential Portola Valley volunteer in terms of dedication and commitment to town values, vision, and civility and has done so throughout many years of volunteerism in Portola Valley. He has made continued and significant contributions across a broad range that have benefitted the Town of Portola Valley and its community in both formal and informal ways. We enthusiastically endorse his nomination.

#### Service to Town

- 1969-1972: Los Trancos Water Co. Board of Directors
- 1984-1989: ASCC
- 1989-1992: Planning Commission
- 1992-2000: Town Council (Mayor 1994 and 1998)
- 2000-2015: Finance Committee
- 2000-present: Open Space Committee
- 2001-2002: Ad Hoc New Town Center Location Research Committee
- 2004-2006: Ad Hoc New Town Center Fund Raising Committee
- 2004-present: Jasper Ridge Biological docent (leading the Continuing Education Program)
- 2005: San Mateo County Grand Jury
- 2008: Blues and Barbeque honoree
- 2012-present: Police Commissioner

#### Service to Community Organizations

**Attachments:** Nomination Letter from Nancy Lund  
Letter of Recommendation from Nona Chiarello  
Letter of Recommendation from Wil Patterson  
Letter of Recommendation from Kevin Welch

## **APPENDIX**

### **Award Criteria:**

- Twenty years or more of distinguished service to the Town including on a committee, a commission and/or on the Town Council, as well as within other Town working groups, or within other Portola Valley local organizations (i.e. Portola Valley School District, Midpeninsula Regional Open Space, Friends of the Library, The Sequoias, etc.).
- Represent the character of the quintessential Portola Valley volunteer in terms of dedication and commitment to town values, vision, and civility.
- Continued and significant contributions across a broad range that have benefitted the Town of Portola Valley and its community in both formal and informal ways.
- Has not served on the Town Council for at least 5 years.
- May be awarded posthumously.

### **Nominating and Award Selection Process:**

- Nomination can occur at any time on an ad hoc basis (vs. annually)
- Nomination must include a nomination letter, the resume of the nominee (or list of contributions), and a minimum of 3 supporting letters of recommendation, sent to the Town Manager.
- Nominees to be evaluated and recommended by a standing subcommittee of the Council.
- Nomination process will be confidential; however, nominees will be notified once nominated. The nominee would confirm their willingness to be nominated for consideration by the entire Town Council.
- Recipients will be acknowledged at a Council meeting with a plaque, as well as having their name listed on a plaque at Town Center (location TBD).
- Limit of up to 4 award recipients per year.

It is with great pleasure I nominate Gary Nielsen for one of the first Founders' Awards for Community Service. Gary has played a leading role in town life for nearly double the time required to receive the honor. In 2008, because his unwavering support for the protection and preservation of open space, he was named a Blues and Barbeque Festival\* honoree for his significant role. Below is a list of his remarkable legacy...so far.

1969-1972: Los Trancos Water Co. Board of Directors

1984-89: ASCC

1989-1992: Planning Commission

1992-2000: Town Council, Mayor 1994 and 1998

2000-2015: Finance Committee

2000-present: Open Space Committee

2001-2002 *ad hoc* New Town Center Location Research Committee

2004-2006 *ad hoc* New Town Center Fund Raising Committee

2004-Present: Jasper Ridge Biological docent; created and leads the Continuing Education Program

2005: San Mateo County Grand Jury

2012-present: Police Commissioner

I believe that even the founders themselves would be astonished by how well Gary has carried forward their dreams for Portola Valley. He is well deserving of this recognition.

\*For thirteen years, the Blues and Barbecue Festival was a fund raiser for open space and a community builder.

Nancy Lund, Town Historian

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

5 Feb 2023

I enthusiastically support Nancy Lund's nomination of Gary Nielsen for a Founders' Award for Community Service. To illustrate Gary's service, I'd like to highlight some examples of his long-lasting contributions in two areas where I have worked most closely with him—the Portola Valley Open Space Committee, which I joined ten years ago with Gary's encouragement, and Jasper Ridge.

Gary's long tenure on the Open Space Committee has included very significant contributions, including three that have anchored my involvement in the committee.

Gary has been singularly important in Spring Down Open Space, the most visible of the town's open spaces. He drafted the 2009 Spring Down proposal that the Open Space Committee submitted to the Council, including detailed aspects such as a suggested trail layout. He monitored every step of Spring Down's progress, and, in 2018, he documented the story of its restoration. Gary's description of Spring Down's value as open space formed the core of a vision statement that has guided all restoration efforts since. It also highlighted the need and value of vision statements for other town-owned open spaces. Gary continues to serve as liaison to the Conservation Committee for restoration at Spring Down; this includes participating in field meetings to assess progress. His efforts have helped align the two committees.

Also in 2009, Gary created a brochure of town open spaces that included both a map of open spaces and a synopsis of how the town and residents brought about our incredible array of protected areas. Gary's 2009 map and brochure have been updated in the map and brochure that the open space committee finalized last year, but the core is still as Gary envisioned it. His layout, text, and even a photo are incorporated in the new documents.

In addition to very tangible contributions, Gary brings his knowledge of the town's history and residents to the discussions and decisions of the open space committee. In the days when our number one agenda item was acquisition, Gary, together with Chip McIntosh, provided the knowledge of properties, people, and possibilities. That knowledge is still vital as our focus has shifted to safeguarding what is already protected.

Gary's community service at Jasper Ridge also benefits Portola Valley. In 2011, after being a Jasper Ridge docent for a half dozen years, Gary proposed a program of Continuing Education geared especially to community docents who lead public tours, and he organized a steering committee to work out the logistics. At the conclusion of the program's first year, he reported that every slot was filled in every session. And he has continued the program every year since, except during the COVID closure. The program benefits Portola Valley directly, because a number of docents live in Portola Valley, and indirectly, by enhancing public appreciation of the local environment.

Knowing how much Gary has contributed to open space protection, I was stunned to see Nancy Lund's long list of Gary's other contributions to the town. He is clearly a community service hero!

Respectfully,  
Nona Chiariello



Dear Tor and Nancy:

Here is my recommendation for Gary Nielson for the Founder's Award for Community Service:

I have known Gary Nielson through his dedication to the Town of Portola Valley, and also as a friend for over 30 years. His quiet and diplomatic manner, together with his many years of dedicated volunteer service to the Town of Portola Valley, is reflected in the respect that he holds throughout the community.

His focus and hard work was evident at our local gym where Gary's workouts were an inspiration to us all.

Both as a community leader and a kind and generous individual, I highly recommend Gary Nielson for the Founders Award for Community Service.

Wil Patterson

FROM THE DESK OF

**Kevin F. Welch**

February 5, 2023

Founders Award for Community Service Committee  
Portola Valley, CA

Dear Committee Members for the Founders Award for Community Service,

It has been my pleasure to work with Gary Nielsen for the past twelve years as we served together on the Bicycle, Pedestrian, Traffic Safety Committee.

Gary selfishly devotes a great deal of his time to meet the needs of the committee. Gary takes on the task of moving the SMART radar speed trailer to different locations on Portola and Alpine Roads.

Gary's willingness to spend his time is a huge part of his persona - to give back to our town. He has always had a warm, cheerful attitude while working with me when we move the trailer and with all the Bicycle, Pedestrian, Traffic committee volunteers, as well as with the community members at large.

I wish to recommend Gary Nielsen to receive the Founders Award for Community Service as I can think of no one more deserving.

Sincerely yours,

Kevin F. Welch, Ph.D., MPA, MAT