

Yolo Hospice and CWC: Shining lights in Yolo County

By **Craig Dresang**

Merriam-Webster defines the word luminary as “a body of light” or “a person of prominence or brilliant achievement.” And it is in that spirit that Yolo Hospice and its affiliate, Citizens Who Care, will again honor a small handful of Yolo County leaders who have helped make Yolo County communities brighter.

Now in its third year, Luminaries of Life annually honors longtime friends and ambassadors who have contributed to the missions of both nonprofit organizations and who have been instrumental in being champions of the frail elderly, those who are dealing with a life-limiting illness, and people who are facing profound loss. This year’s event will be held at the Woodland Community & Senior Center on Thursday, Oct. 11 at 5 p.m.



Sheila Allen. Courtesy photo

The evening will include a reception, dinner, live and silent auctions, and an awards ceremony honoring Shiela Allen and Jim Provenza of the Yolo Healthy Aging Alliance; Dr. Jack Berger, founding medical director of Yolo Hospice; Ken Wagstaff, former mayor of Davis and executive director of CWC; and Virginia Shubert, an early leader in the field of hospice care.

The **Yolo Healthy Aging Alliance** will receive the Community Partnership Award which honors an organization whose service and dedication has significantly benefited the lives of seniors. The organization serves as a unified voice for older adults and caregivers in Yolo County. The mission of YHAA is to promote the well-being of older adults through education, collaboration and advocacy.



Jim Provenza. Courtesy photo

YHAA is the outcome of a 2010 countywide community-based summit sponsored by the Yolo Commission on Aging and Adult Services and the In Home Supportive Services Advisory Committee. At the time, summit participants discussed gaps in services for older adults in Yolo County resulting from simultaneous draconian cuts in service and the silver tsunami of aging baby boomers.

Today, the organization is part of The SCAN Foundation's Community of Constituents Initiative to build a statewide movement to transform the system of care so that all Californians can age with dignity, choice and independence.



Jack Berger. Courtesy photo

Jack Berger, MD, will receive the 2018 Excellence in Care Award which honors a physician or clinician who promotes, in an outstanding way, quality end-of-life care for patients and whose partnership with the greater community has benefited the lives of others.

A graduate of Washington University School of Medicine, Berger is a retired Davis family medicine specialist with more than 47 years of experience. In partnership with Lefty Schultz, minister; Nancy Dubois, psychologist; and Lois Jacob, RN, Berger was a hospice visionary and a life-giving force during Yolo Hospice's birthing years.



Ken Wagstaff. Courtesy photo

Ken Wagstaff, a 50-year resident of Davis, will receive the CWC Grace Award — an honor named for the first recipient, Grace Hiddleson, who was recognized for the ways she exemplified the graces in western mythology that inspire excellence, service to others, charity, mercy, love, gentleness, and friendship.

Each year, the award is given to a volunteer who has excelled in their compassionate service to the elderly and their caregivers. Wagstaff is a retired health policymaker and program executive, having served the State of California for 34 years. Later in his career, he managed key aspects of the conversion of the State's Medi-Cal program into a managed care system and served as executive director and then board member for CWC.

He was also a member of the Davis City Council, serving as mayor pro tem and then mayor from 1998 to 2002. Under his leadership, the council adopted a sweeping new general plan to preserve the small-town character of the city.



Virginia Shubert. Courtesy photo

Virginia Shubert, RN, is this year's second recipient of the Excellence in Care Award, intended for individuals who have made a significant and lasting contribution to the broader field of hospice care. Shubert was Yolo Hospice's second executive director and under her leadership the organization became Medicare certified. She also positioned the agency to thrive in the midst of a rapidly changing healthcare environment.

Shubert also served as a content reviewer for the “Study Guide for the Hospice Palliative Nursing Assistant,” a book used by nursing assistants to prepare for their hospice certification exam. She was president of the board for the Hospice & Palliative Nurses Association in 1992, and a recipient of the organization’s “Leading the Way Award.” After leaving Davis several years ago, Shubert continued to work as a clinical supervisor for Hospice Partners of the Central Coast in San Luis Obispo.

In Eleanor Catton’s award winning book, “The Luminaries,” she says, “We spend our entire lives thinking about death. Without that project to divert us, I expect we would all be dreadfully bored. We would have nothing to evade, and nothing to forestall, and nothing to wonder about. Time would have no consequence.” Those words have indeed rung true for this year’s Luminary awardees who have invested energy, time and talent toward thoughtfully shaping care and support for thousands of individuals who are living in their final chapter of life.

Proceeds for this year’s Luminaries of Life will support the development and opening of a new adult day care program. If you would like to attend, or to sponsor an awardee, contact Louise Joyce at ljoyce@yolohospice.org or call 530-758-5566.

— *Craig Dresang is the CEO of Yolo Hospice and Citizens Who Care.*