

## David Garden honored for philanthropy

By Jesse Duarte on September 19, 2012



It wouldn't be a bad idea to thank David Garden if you've ever done any of the following things:

- A) Walked your dog at Wappo Park;
- B) Attended a class or a meeting at the Napa Valley College Upvalley campus; or
- C) Lived at Stonebridge Apartments or admired it as a model affordable housing development.

All three facilities exist because Garden had a vision for how his 20-acre parcel near the Pope Street Bridge could serve the community — and the willpower and skill to turn that vision into reality.

Local dignitaries, EAH Housing and Napa Valley Community Housing gave Garden his due Sept. 12, when a room at Stonebridge was christened the “David Garden Community Room.”

Garden said he was guided by the good old

Golden Rule.

“The philosophy of caring for your neighbor is number one,” he said.

Garden was the “benevolent instigator” who saw a need for affordable housing in St. Helena and offered his land for what became an 80-unit affordable housing complex, said Mary Murtagh, CEO and president of EAH, the nonprofit that manages Stonebridge.

In 1988, Garden started working with people like contractor Ed Forde, Monsignor John Brenkle of the St. Helena Catholic Church and Bill McCune of Napa Valley Ecumenical Housing.

A year later, a nonprofit led by Leo Ainsworth formed to guide the project's early phases. Eventually EAH was brought on board to develop Stonebridge, which was finished in 1993, aided by \$500,000 in city funds.

Today, "Stonebridge is an incredible, shining example of everything affordable housing can be when it's done right," said Murtagh.

The property also became home to a 6.9-acre extension of Napa Valley College and a park that the city is still developing.

Mayor Del Britton said St. Helena is a special place to live because of generous people like Garden and his wife Nancy, who runs The White Barn on Sulphur Springs Avenue.

Supervisor Diane Dillon also thanked the Gardens for their service, and gave Garden a proclamation from the Board of Supervisors commemorating his "selfless" accomplishments.

Rep. Mike Thompson, D-St. Helena, Assemblymember Michael Allen and State Senator Noreen Evans sent along certificates honoring Garden.

Lorraine Stuart, who served on the original Stonebridge board, said the Gardens represent "the essence of St. Helena," and thanked David for his "creativity, compassion, courage and stubbornness."

Luz Maria Chavez, a Stonebridge resident, also thanked Garden, especially on behalf of the single and divorced moms who wouldn't be able to live in St. Helena if it weren't for Stonebridge.

"We need people like you," said Chavez.

Garden, who worked as an engineer for 30 years before starting a ranch and vineyards in St. Helena in 1972, said the experience taught him a few things about affordable housing: first, good projects depend on "some landowner who cares" and is willing to accept a reasonable offer on their land.

In addition, rental housing is preferable to for-sale units, and property management is key, he added.