Avenidas Lifetimes of Achievement 2020 Honorees to be Announced at Reception in January

Three couples and three individuals spotlighted for their community involvement

(Palo Alto, CA) Jan. 24, 2020--For the past 32 years, the non-profit organization Avenidas, which offers longevity and wellness services to the residents of Palo Alto and nine adjacent Peninsula cities, has been honoring a group of older adults for the contributions they make to the community with the Avenidas Lifetimes of Achievement Awards.

The roster of the 2020 honorees will be announced at a private reception at Avenidas@450 Bryant Street in Palo Alto on Thursday, January 23 from 5-7pm and includes: Fran Codispoti, Betsy Gifford, Gay & Bill Krause, Eliane & Armand Neukermans, Alma & Jim Phillips and Steve Player.

“The treasure trove of outstanding seniors who have made so many contributions to our community makes our honoree selection process very challenging, and this year was no exception,” states Avenidas President and CEO Amy Andonian. “Each individual’s story is so interesting and rich and their accomplishments give us all quite a high standard to shoot for in our own lives!”

After this unveiling of the honorees in January, the annual fundraising event for Avenidas is held on May 17 at an outdoor garden party from 3-5pm. This event is open to the public, and ticket sales go toward supporting all of Avenidas programs that help re-invent aging. Tickets are $85 a person, and available online at www.avenidas.org or by calling (650) 289-5445.

Here are summaries of each honoree’s accomplishments:

Fran Codispoti

Fran Codispoti was originally from Brooklyn, New York, and travelled throughout her childhood as her father was in the Marine Corp. After she graduated from Syracuse University, she worked for Time Life Inc, then moved to Japan and Hawaii, teaching in a private school. Next, she moved to California where she met her husband while working at Hewlett Packard in Cupertino.

When Fran took time off from work to have her first child, she enrolled in Santa Clara’s MBA program at night and also started a recruiting company. Midway through the MBA
program, and right after the birth of her second child, Fran was diagnosed with Hodgkin’s Disease, and her complete recovery took several years. That’s when her career took one more turn. Fran started fundraising for her children’s school, and experienced great success.

Twenty-one years ago, Fran joined the Board of Directors of Avenidas, wanting to help the aging population improve their lives, since Fran’s own mother was in her late 80’s at the time. Again, fundraising was part of her involvement, as she co-chaired two capital campaigns.

Other groups Fran currently works with are Stanford Cancer Council, Foundation for a College Education--as an advisory board member, Bay Area Cancer Connections, Emeritus Advisory committee, Human Rights Watch, HRW, Silicon Valley Executive Committee, Stanford Women’s Cancer Center, Gunn High School and Palo Altos Unified School District.

**Betsy Gifford**

The Fall of 1966 brought Betsy Gifford as a newlywed to Palo Alto from Aurora, Illinois, knowing only her husband Jon and a high school classmate at Stanford.

What to do now? Once Betsy and her husband got settled into their “old girl” on Waverley Street, it was time to become engaged in their amazing community. They chose to settle in Old Palo Alto as it was very similar to where they both were raised: a multi-generational population, a strong commercial base, and a fine university.

As the bus stopped at their corner, it seemed logical that Betsy volunteer as a Pink Lady at Stanford Hospital doing patient services. Then came along an invitation to join the Palo Alto Auxiliary at Allied Arts, benefiting the Children’s Hospital at Stanford. Junior League and PTA commitments followed after their two sons were born.

After her husband passed, Betsy and her sons have continued the Gifford legacy through their cornerstone support of all things YMCA. Betsy was part of a dedicated group of individuals who raised money for a new Y in East Palo Alto, which Betsy still visits several times a year to learn about all the Y’s new programs.

Betsy has also served for the past 30 years as part of Gamble Garden’s “Dirty Knees Brigade,” a group of weekly volunteers who work in the gardens. In addition, she has served on numerous boards, from the Music Guild at Stanford to the Palo Alto Community Fund. Betsy resides in Palo Alto.
Gay Krause

Gay Krause was born in Newport News, Virginia, and spent the majority of her childhood in Falls Church, Virginia. She graduated from Penn State University with a B.S. in education and special education. She next obtained a Master’s degree in counseling philosophy from the University of Virginia. After graduating, she moved to California and worked for year at U.C. Berkeley at the Counseling Center as a psychometrist.

After she married her husband Bill, she began her teaching career in Mountain View, where she worked for the Mountain View/Whisman School District as a teacher, counselor, assistant principal and principal of both Graham Middle School and Landels Elementary School.

In 1999, Gay was recruited by the president of Foothill College to do a start-up project, working on professional development with K-12 educators. Gay has been executive director of the Krause Center for Innovation for 20 years and worked with over 21,000 educators during this period.

Currently, Gay serves on six non-profit boards, including the YMCA of Silicon Valley, the FHDA Foundation, Children Now, The Mountain View/Los Altos/Los Altos Hills Challenge Team as chair/founder, the Palo Alto Medical Foundation Community Board chair, and the executive board of the Los Altos Chamber of Commerce. Gay and Bill live in Los Altos Hills.

Bill Krause

Bill Krause was born in Philadelphia, PA, as a dependent of military parents, and went to Kindergarten in Japan, high school in Germany and graduated from the Citadel, living in eight other places in between.

Bill had quite a year in 1967, when he met and married his wife, Gay, and he also joined Hewlett Packard as their first digital sales engineer. By coincidence, he ended up having lunch with Bill Hewlett on his very first day at HP! Fast-forward to 14 years later when Bill joined Bob Metcalfe, the inventor of Ethernet, in 1981 to start 3Com Corporation. In 1995, Bill retired as Chairman. Since then, he has served on multiple public and private boards, and today he serves on the boards of CommScope, Forward Networks, and Smart USA, along with being a Senior Advisor to The Carlyle Group and a Board Partner at Andreessen Horowitz.

Bill has numerous honors and awards, including serving as the Chairman of the American Electronics Association, the Junior Achievement Silicon Valley Business Hall of Fame, and the Citadel’s “Alumnus of the Year.”
Bill sums up his life's work as being organized around three phrases of 15 years each of learning, earning, and serving, as well as giving back both by mentoring and philanthropically. Bill and Gay live in Los Altos Hills.

Eliane Neukermans

Eliane Neukermans, born in Belgium, obtained degrees in Economics and Philosophy from Louvain University, Belgium. She taught in Belgium, at the Thunderbird Business School in Phoenix, at Sacred Heart and eventually Castilleja, where she taught for 25 years.

In her youth, Eliane was an avid student leader, and while living in upstate NY, very involved with the local Migrant Worker Center and Vista.

Since her retirement, she has been engaged in participating or supporting various community organizations such as the Palo Alto Community Fund, Foothill College, Environmental Volunteers, Avenidas, the Big Sur Environmental Institute, Human Rights Watch, Thomas Merton Center, St Elisabeth Seton School, Portola Valley Ranch, Global Women Leadership Network, JaipurFoot and Amici Lovanienses.

Elaine is the mother of four and grandmother of nine with her husband Armand.

Armand Neukermans

Armand Neukermans, born in Belgium, was trained as an engineer and physicist and holds degrees from Louvain Univ, ASU and Stanford. He was active in the tech industry for over 50 years and worked in diverse fields for several large and small companies, eventually forming his own company, Xros.

Armand was nominated “Silicon Valley Inventor of the Year” in 2001. Since his retirement, he has been active in supporting and advising social entrepreneurial and environmental efforts. With his wife Eliane, he initiated the JaipurFoot project at Stanford, which resulted in a student-designed $20 knee prothesis, of which over 18,000 are now in operation.

For the last 12 years, Armand has led a group of retired volunteer engineers and scientists in technology research in support of innovative climate mitigation efforts to cool the earth at U. Washington and Harvard.

Armand and his wife Eliane live in Portola Valley, have four children and nine grandchildren.
Alma Phillips

Alma (Howard) Phillips grew up on a farm outside a small town called White Deer, Texas. She graduated from the University of Texas, where she met Jim Phillips, and prepared to teach elementary school, which she did for a couple of years.

Her passion is working with children and she is good with them...just ask her adult children, her 22-year-old grandchild, or any of the many children or their teachers whom she has tutored!

Although she did not teach for many years, she has volunteered for many. Some of the organizations that she has volunteered for are Environmental Volunteers, Deer Hollow Farm, League of Women Voters and Mid-Peninsula Citizens for Fair Housing.

Alma and Jim have been married for 62 years. It has been their habit to support each other’s goals and activities, making for a good and loving team.

Jim Phillips

Jim Phillips earned a B.S. and M.S. in Electrical Engineering from the University of Texas-Austin. He retired as a line executive with Lockheed in the company’s Space Systems Division, having spent 37 years in systems development with General Electric, LTV, and Lockheed.

Jim is now an active community volunteer. He has served as chair of the Palo Alto Family YMCA and of Peninsula Habitat for Humanity, and on the boards of the YMCA of the Mid-Peninsula, Palo Alto Community Child Care, Foundation for a College Education, YWCA of the Mid-Peninsula Donor Advised Fund, One Dollar for Life, and the Kiwanis Club of Palo Alto where he’s a past president. Jim and his wife Alma live in Palo Alto.

Steve Player

Stephen Player’s parents believed in the importance of community service, and he has led his life pursuing that goal. He earned his AB from Stanford and LLB from Hastings College of the Law. After spending a year in England working for Stanford at its overseas campus, he returned to Palo Alto and began the practice of law. He was fortunate to work with a firm that represented such clients as Hewlett-Packard, Watkins-Johnson, and other Silicon Valley companies which enabled him to meet many of the future leaders in the burgeoning electronics industry.

As a young lawyer, he volunteered to assist many start-up non-profits, including the Stanford Mid-Peninsula Urban Coalition, Foundation for a College Education, Center for a New Generation and others. In fact, Steve was one of the folks sitting in Bea
Hubbard’s dining room discussing and planning for the Senior Coordinating Council, which later became Avenidas.

After practicing law, he joined Stanford University as a planned giving officer. He has continued a close association with Stanford as a volunteer where he has served on various boards over the years, including the Buck/Cardinal Club and the Stanford Historical Society. Steve has been the recipient of several community awards including the Tall Tree Award from the Palo Alto Chamber of Commerce, Red Triangle Award from the YMCA, and Stanford Associates Award. He lives in Palo Alto and is married to the former Nancy Miller, whose father, Bill Miller, was a prior Avenidas Lifetimes of Achievement honoree. He has two adult children, Sam and Elizabeth, and four grandchildren.

About Avenidas

Avenidas is a non-profit organization that provides tools for positive aging to people and their families on the mid-Peninsula. Avenidas runs an Enrichment Center in Palo Alto, a dual-licensed facility in Mountain View that provides adult day health care called Avenidas Rose Kleiner Center, and an aging-in-place membership program, Avenidas Village.

Through the Avenidas Lifelong Learning & Leisure program, people can participate in brain and fitness activities, foreign language classes, creative arts workshops and more. The Health & Wellness program offers health screenings, lectures and personal services such as podiatry. Avenidas Care Partners helps families work through conflict by providing counseling, support groups and geriatric care management. The Avenidas Door to Door program provides transportation, while Handyman Services offer home repair services. For more information, visit www.avenidas.org or call (650) 289-5400.

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