

## **Palo Alto: A city where trees make news**

*Tree advocate group Canopy celebrates tree heroes at awards reception*

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For living things that grow slowly and mostly just stand around, trees in Palo Alto have been making big news locally -- along with a group of "tree heroes" recognized last week by the tree-advocacy organization Canopy.

The Palo Alto-based group held a reception to honor the memory of Betty Meltzer, a longtime Canopy leader who launched the "Dream of a Thousand Trees" to be planted along the Palo Alto stretch of El Camino Real -- complementing a similar project in Menlo Park.

Meltzer died last fall after a six-year struggle with cancer.

"If Betty were here, she would've acknowledged this honor with great humility," her husband, Bob Meltzer, said at the Jan. 21 awards reception at Scott's Seafood restaurant.

"I know she quickly would have pointed out that there are many other people besides herself that deserve special recognition," he said. He listed a range of individuals, including state Sen. Joe Simitian, who introduced Meltzer and who helped loosen up Caltrans' former restrictions on plantings in median strips of state highways.

He said Susan Rosenberg, Canopy co-founder and co-chair with Meltzer, "shared all the ups and downs, hard work and effort to accomplish the progress that was made." (Read Bob Meltzer's full remarks)

Meltzer said Simitian broke through several years of Caltrans' resistance to loosening its tight planting restrictions when he "managed to corner the Caltrans director, and in a remark that should be recorded in the historical archives in Palo Alto, pointed out that it was taking longer for Caltrans to make a tree decision than it took the United States to win World War II.

"The waiver was soon approved."

He said his wife "loved Palo Alto," where she grew up and "thrived in the unique environment that makes Palo Alto special." He said she would be especially proud to know that "as her grandchildren grew up and saw the trees along El Camino grow with them they could tell their friends, 'My Nana Betty helped make this street so special.'"

Awards presented included:

- The Arnold Soforenko Award to two finance people: former City Councilman Jack Morton, who provided financial advice and services to Canopy through his firm, Morton & Associates,

and Bob Golton, business manager of the Palo Alto Unified School District, for helping school officials "better understand the significant value school campus trees bring to the students, the staff and the community" in helping save large oaks at Gunn High School and working on greener landscaping plans overall.

- A special award to the Ad-Hoc California Tree Citizens' Group for "focusing attention on the sudden removal of California Avenue trees" and facilitating "a creative tree replacement plan for this vital street" in an effort spearheaded by Fred Balin, a College Terrace resident. The city in mid-September cut down 63 holly oaks in a move that surprised residents and many officials.

- "Out-on-a-Limb" awards were presented to three persons: Bob and Kay Schauer who as longtime volunteers completed the most surveys in a citywide tree survey, for being "fantastic planting leaders" who led "planting songs to make the digging go faster," and for teaching young volunteers that "plants need us"; and Annette Glanckopf Ashton "for her outstanding efforts as a "Neighborhood Tree Ambassador" on Bryant Street in the Midtown area, hosting "dozens of muddy volunteers in her driveway last January and preparing a slide show for the City Council.

- A "Student Forester Award" went to Javier Magana of the East Palo Alto Tree Initiative Project during his three years with the Canopy Youth Staff, for his "digging, planting, staking, tying, pruning, training, watering, weeding, mulching and surveying" work.