



Laurie Strang Sousa Class of 2020

Laurie graduated from Las Plumas high School (LPHS) in 1978 and was on the Honor Roll her last three years. She competed in softball one year and track and field and powder puff football two years, and earned Most Valuable Football Player honors her senior year. Activities other than sports were membership in the band and choir as sophomore and in the Older Girls Conference Club as a junior and senior. The Soroptimist Club of Oroville bestowed on her the Citation for Good Citizenship, Courtesy and Kindness.

Following her graduation from LPHS, Laurie was assistant manager for Straw Hat Pizza for two years, and worked at Table Mountain Tavern until 1993, working her way through the ranks up to banquet manager. She then opened and owned Lauri-Dee's Cookie Bouquets which ran until 2005. From 2005 until 2010, she worked at the Hof Brau Restaurant in Oroville.

From early in her adult life and to this day, Laurie has given extensively to her community and received numerous honors from different groups. At age 25 she earned the Oroville Area Chamber of Commerce Award for Outstanding Employee for her work at Table Mountain Tavern. Eight years later in 1993, she was named Oroville Business and Professional Women's Club, "Woman of Achievement." In 2005 she was Executive Board President for the Butte County Special Districts and received its Certificate of Appreciation Award. The local YMCA named her its Oroville Service Club Individual of the Year in 2016 and in 2017, she received the Kiwanis Cal-Neva-Ha Distinguished Service Award.

Laurie joined the Oroville Sigma Phi Gamma sorority in 2000 and two years after becoming a member, became one of the founding members of the Oroville Breast Cancer Walk, an event that continues to draw large crowds and has garnered over \$60,000 in donations since its inception. She is a key player in that event to this day.

The Oroville Kiwanis International, has benefited from Laurie's active membership since 2004. In addition to her selling fireworks, working with kids at the Hooked-on Fishing not on Drugs event, painting fire hydrants, and annually cleaning the Old Bath House on the Feather River, she has been the Kiwanis Key Club Advisor at Oroville High School since 2004 and continues in that position today.

In 2007, Tom Aldridge, longtime OHS teacher and coach, and a group formed a committee to float and support Measure G to raise 12 million dollars to upgrade and improve Harrison Stadium. Laurie immediately stepped up as a volunteer and became a tireless leader of the group Oroville Area Sports Initiative Supporters (OASIS), which was instrumental in getting measure G passed. OASIS was organized as a non-profit organization that would continue to raise funds for the upkeep of the stadium. As of 2020, the group has raised over \$60,000 to help keep the facility pristine. Laurie serves as vice-president of OASIS and chairs the group's only fundraiser, the Victory Bell Game Dinner, held at the National Guard Armory before the OHS/LPHS annual football game. Laurie and OHS Kiwanis Key Club students, staff the event.

Another of Laurie's community projects sees her as the organizer for the annual C.A.S.T. event, where she works in cooperation with the Department of Water Resources to assist Oroville area children with disabilities. She is also a strong supporter of the Special Olympics. Annually, Laurie donates countless numbers of hours to her pet projects.

In a letter written in 1992 by Joe Evich, longtime owner of Table Mountain Tavern, he states, *"In our 12 years of working together, it has been like raising another daughter, watching her conquer each new job, getting married and becoming a mother. Even today, when I meet people who cannot remember her name, they still refer to her as Smiley."*

Upon Laurie being named Woman of Achievement for 1992-93, then Oroville Mayor Dennis Diver wrote in his letter of commendation, "This is a high honor and one you obviously deserve. The very qualities which have won you this recognition – enthusiasm, diligence and self-discipline, to name a few – are the very characteristics that will continue to spell success for you."

Laurie and her husband Ray make their home in her native Oroville. They have two daughters and one grandson.