

Volunteer of the Year - 2007

Helen Klembeck

Helen Klembeck, and her husband Frank, had been active volunteers at the Dolphin Gallery and Shop long before the summer of 2005, when Ursula Jones resigned as manager to move to Vancouver Island. In the sudden void, and the dropping sales, there were many long faces wondering if the Dolphin, as the downtown presence of Gualala Arts, would survive. When Helen was picked Volunteer of the Month in May, 2006, she was asked what prompted her to assume the management position of such a large and, at that time, problematic facility. Her answer was as matter-a-fact as she is. "I just jumped into the void."

That she did, and she hit the ground running. Instead of immediately becoming a new manager, she formed committees from the existing roster of excellent volunteers to tackle each of the several jobs. Still, it soon became clear however that it was Helen who was the driving force behind the many changes. Not only was she willing to do the really dirty work, like tackling that storeroom, but her warm and generous personality inspired others to not only help her, but to take on responsibility for other changes. Today, each part of the ever-changing operation is under the guidance and care of one or more volunteers.

Artists vie with each other for the opportunity of having a show at the Dolphin. Each month an artist with work for the walls is teamed with an artist who does standing pieces. This means twelve shows to hang and take down, previews to set up, openings to arrange with food and drink, sales to make, records to keep, accounts to be balanced, and walls to keep painted, and carpets cleaned. And this is just the gallery!

The largest space in the Dolphin is filled with consignments by artists far and wide as well as local. Here you will find, not only excellent paintings on the walls, but a wide assortment of large (read expensive) and small one-of-a-kind ceramic pots, sculptures of wood, glass bowls and vases, photographs, books, decorative and artful items.



Even the quickest peek into the store attests to Helen's good taste and appreciation of art.

It is Helen that decides what will be shown in the gift shop and she, like the expert retailer she is, constantly moves the items around, giving everyone a prime chance for better sales. Part of her natural talents aids her involvement with artists. She enjoys learning innovative ideas and giving the artists encouragement. Many artists say it was her help that set them on their road to more art activities, shows, and sales. Helen is dedicated to helping the artist and to finding new and affordable art for the Dolphin customer.

She has also continued the tradition of making the Dolphin the tourist information post of the town so many visitors' first impressions of Gualala are formed as they enter this attractive and innovative atmosphere. The volunteers they meet here can set the tone for their visit to the coast.

What the new visitor or casual shopper may not see, unless they come in on the day

Helen is herself manning the desk, are the hours of work, the nights trying to devise a new way of displaying the excellent jewelry that sells so well, or resolving a conflict of scheduling as she manages over thirty volunteers.

To this job also Helen brings special skills. She has very high standards while at the same time being supportive and flexible. If a volunteer cannot show up, Helen takes their place without a murmur. She may be manager, but she is still one of the team. With her example, she encourages the volunteers to help make the store look and function at its very best.

Thus, the gift shop and gallery look better than it ever has before. It is agreed that the shows are even better, and last month sales reached an all-time new high, and the volunteers are dedicated and efficient. For this, and much, much more, Gualala Arts is proud to have Helen Klembeck be the Volunteer of the Year. Congratulations and thank you, Helen.