

PEOPLE IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD

Vicki Reed pursues her passion for giving through The Parker Foundation

BY ELISABETH FRAUSTO

As the nonprofit Parker Foundation celebrates 50 years of contributing to other nonprofits, La Jolla resident Vicki Reed, one of its board members, says the foundation and the organizations it helps are “constantly evolving.”

Reed, a La Jolla resident since 1986, joined the board of The Parker Foundation in 2016.

The Carlsbad-based foundation, started in 1971, is named for Gerald Parker and Inez Grant Parker, who supported area organizations such as the San Diego Museum of Art, Boy Scouts and Northwest Family YMCA. The foundation was established with gifts from Inez after Gerald’s death.

Since its inception, the foundation has awarded more than \$56 million in grants to more than 750 organizations, including the Athenaeum Music & Arts Library in La Jolla, the La Jolla Historical Society, La Jolla Symphony & Chorus and La Jolla Playhouse.

Reed said organizations in San Diego County can apply for grants from The Parker Foundation, which has six meetings per year to review applications.

When the board agrees to fund an organization, “it’s fairly quickly. ... They receive their funds within two weeks,” she said.

Though the organizations funded by Parker have been largely arts-related, Reed said the foundation supports “anyone and everyone ... from education to health.”

Reed was a member of the San Diego Commission for Arts and Culture from 2008 to 2013 and was its chairwoman the last three years of her term.

She said the breadth of the organizations supported by The Parker Foundation drew her to its board.

“I was intrigued by the idea of being able to help various organizations throughout the county,” she said.

Her advocacy while on the arts commission led her to learn about many different organizations, she said.

Since joining the foundation’s board, Reed said, she has become passionate about efforts to support homeless people in the San Diego area.

She’s come to “understand the need for homeless people to be their own advocates,” she said. “They need to be understood.”

Reed is now Parker’s representative for Funders Together to End Homelessness, a network of organizations that work together toward solutions to homelessness.

“That has been a big change in my life,” she said. “[Homelessness] is a complicated issue. We have all this money going toward it ... and yet it always seems to be a growing problem.”

But she said “I’m really optimistic” about the network’s efforts.

Reed said she’s been pleasantly surprised by how many organizations became “creative during COVID and wrapped their heads around these major changes that were happening.”



COURTESY OF VICKI REED

La Jolla resident Vicki Reed is a board member with The Parker Foundation, which has awarded more than \$56 million in grants to more than 750 organizations in San Diego County.

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“They’ve had to do an about-face,” she said. “They’ve had to come up with ways to feed the numerous people that have had food issues. They’ve had to find housing for the homeless.”

Reed said “it really is kind of a goal of the [Parker] board to encourage other people to start private foundations and to work toward the same goal of giving back to the community.”

“We only have so many funds [and] we’re able to do a lot with these funds. But it’d be just wonderful if other people were able to

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also participate in the same way," she added.

In addition to financial help, local nonprofits need "interested board and staff to really work with the community and understand what the community's needs are and to just be willing to help," Reed said.

"I'm always pleased, after we fund an organization, to read their final report and see what they've been able to do with the money."

Reed said she will continue her work with the foundation, as well as the role of chairwoman of the NTC Foundation's Art in Public Places Committee at Liberty Station in Point Loma.

"I love my work at The Parker Foundation," she said. "I love it because I have gotten to know San Diego County in ways that I think everybody really needs to know and understand.

"I love this community."

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