

BUTTER & EGG DAYS

Founder of "Salute To American Graffiti" Honored as Good Egg

Sometimes the Good Egg is honored for preserving Petaluma's history that occurred long before any of us were alive. The recipient of this year's Good Egg award has been selected for helping us remember and honor a time in Petaluma's more recent history and, in the process, create an event that brings 30,000 visitors to Petaluma and invests tens of thousands of dollars back into the community.

John Furrer and his wife, Joetta, have been selected as the 2013 Good Eggs for creating, promoting and producing Petaluma's "Salute to American Graffiti" event, now in its eighth year.

Since 2005, the "Salute" has celebrated Petaluma's starring role in the iconic film with a car show of classic cars, live music, vendors and food. Because of the annual event, Petaluma is now identified as the place that many of the movie's most memorable scenes were filmed.

Furrer has become the "face of Salute to American Graffiti," acting as an ambassador for both the event and for Petaluma. The 2013 "Salute" takes place May 16 through 18, with the car show and festival in downtown Petaluma on Saturday, May 18. This year's event is a particularly significant one for both the movie and the Furrers. It is the 40th anniversary of the 1973 filming of "American Graffiti" and the 40th anniversary for John and Joetta.

It was a combination of a love of cars and a personal encounter with the film that planted the seed that grew into the popular event.

"I've been into cars since

high school," says John. "Joetta and I heard about 'American Graffiti' being filmed in Petaluma. We went to town and watched them tow the car around while they filmed. When the movie was released in 1973, it changed me from a modern car guy to a classic car guy."

"After he saw the movie, he was hooked and started looking for a car to work on," Joetta adds.

Furrer found a 1931 Model A, although it wasn't much of a car because only the body was on the frame; the rest of the car was "in boxes." Furrer spent the next 11 years restoring it from the ground up while working as



a fleet mechanic for PacBell and raising their three children, eventually getting the car on the road in 1985. "We used to drive it all over to car shows."

"That kind of started it. We were at Hot August Nights car show in Reno and started talking with Candy Clark, the actress who played Debbie in the movie. When we told her how we had watched the filming in Petaluma in 1973, she suggested doing a car show. As it turns out, we had some experience in this because for five years, we had been helping friends in Oregon put on a car show," Furrer says. Furrer met Rich Poremba who was in charge of the project for the Boys & Girls Club. "We bonded instantly. He became part of our family and although he wasn't a car guy, we made

him a car guy." Poremba became a driving force behind the event until his sudden passing in 2010.

The first "Salute" was held that year at the Petaluma Village Premium Outlets with 150 cars, raising \$10,000 for the Boys & Girls Clubs. Although the Boys & Girls Clubs chose not to continue with the fundraiser, Petaluma's Salute to American Graffiti took on a life of its own, forming the Cruisin' the Boulevard, Inc. non-profit in 2005.

"I was adamant in the bylaws that it be an all-volunteer organization and all money that is raised be invested back into Petaluma," Furrer says.

Cruisin' the Boulevard, Inc. has reinvested over \$120,000 back into the community. One of its primary projects is raising funds to place Automatic External Defibrillators in the community. Because of the "Salute" events, AEDs are now in all police cars, city hall and with high school coaches, so there is always an AED available on the field or on the court. "You put them out there and hope they never get used. The very thing that Rich helped create wasn't there to save him; if an AED was closer he would still be alive."

Additionally, the event has raised funds for Christmas Cheer, the police department's free bicycle helmet program and established the Henry Travers Memorial Scholarship Fund and will be creating a scholarship fund in Rich Poremba's name. Furrer encourages high school seniors to contact their counselor or call 707.762.3394 for more information.

Help Support the Parade with a Button

Don't wait until the day of the parade to show your support for the Butter & Egg Days Parade. Instead, purchase a collectable "Friends of the Parade" button now and show your support for Petaluma's beloved tradition throughout the month of April.

"Funding for the parade has become increasingly challenging over the past few years. We used to be able to depend on operational support from the city in the form of police and public works services. Now, we are charged for all operational costs of putting on the parade," explained Marie McCusker, Executive Director of the Petaluma Downtown Association which produces the parade. "We are so grateful to our sponsors for supporting this amazing event that unites our entire community and gives us all an opportunity to celebrate and applaud each other. Purchasing a commemorative button is a great way for everyone in the community to become a parade sponsor and help keep the Parade alive," she said.

The button promotion also encourages people to

shop locally. Downtown merchants are offering special discounts and incentives for those wearing a "Friends of the Parade" button between April 22 and April 28. Visit



petalumadowntown.com for a full list of participating businesses.



Buttons are available for \$5 at the Petaluma Visitors Center, 210 Lakeville Street, and four additional Button Sponsor locations in Petaluma: Raley's, 157 North McDowell Boulevard; Aqus Café at Foundry Wharf, 189 H Street; Lombardi's BBQ, 3413 Petaluma Boulevard North; and Petaluma Market, 210 Western Avenue.



HOLLINGSWORTH

Jewelers Gallery

I Love Parade Days!



5 Petaluma Blvd. North * Downtown Petaluma
707-763-6053
www.hollingsworthjewelers.com