

2024 Laguna Hills Chamber of Commerce Non-Profit Organization of the Year Nellie Gail Ranch Owners Association (nominee)

Nominator's name: Susie Caskey

Non-Profit Organization Nominee: Nellie Gail Ranch Owners Association

Reason for Nomination

I proudly submit this application for the Laguna Hills Chamber of Commerce 2024 Non-Profit of the Year Award. Since 1976 Nellie Gail Ranch Owners Association (NGR) has stood as the heart and soul of Laguna Hills. It has brought neighbors together, built an inclusive and thriving community and delivered programs that inspire, protect and uplift. NGR has a rich history of fostering community spirit, enhancing the quality of life and serving as a cornerstone of the Laguna Hills community. Through innovation, leadership and steadfast dedication to its mission, NGR has had a profound impact on residents and the broader Laguna Hills community.

The forward-thinking leadership of NGR is reflected in the development of robust community programs. For example, the NGR Emergency Preparedness Program features a state-of-the-art Command Center with extensive radio equipment capable of supporting government agencies during disasters. This 'pillar of safety' ensures that NGR is not only a safe place for its residents but also a critical resource for the City of Laguna Hills during emergencies. Local leaders commend this program, and many residents and officials have been trained to handle emergencies with confidence. The City of Laguna Hills has included the NGR Emergency Preparedness Program in their mandatory Hazard Mitigation Report required by the State of California Housing and Community Development Department.

Nellie Gail Ranch's commitment to excellence extends beyond its own borders. There is a long history of supporting service men and women from Camp Pendleton Marine Base. NGR organizes and serves as a collection point for ball gowns, diapers and toy drives for Team Darkhorse families. This year NGR provided a free dinner at The Watering Hole restaurant for Marines and their families who were participating in the Laguna Hills Memorial Day 5K Run. These efforts strengthen the bond with those who serve and protect our country. In addition to supporting the 3/5 Marines, NGR also engages local youth organizations such as Lions Heart and students from Laguna Hills High School, offering valuable volunteer opportunities while fostering a culture of service and leadership for the next generation of leaders. NGR also has a strong partnership with Family Assistant Ministries (FAM) through the Christmas Adopt-a-Family program wherein 10-15 families, since 2020, receive much needed support during the holidays. Adjunct to this is the hundreds of toys given to Toys-for-Tots over the past few years. Lastly, this past September NGR showed compassion during the Airport Fire by heroically sheltering over 50 displaced large animals, including horses, pigs, a llama and a cow. This selfless act provided much-needed relief to their owners and showcased an unwavering dedication to helping others.

Relationship to the Nominee

As a 27-year resident of Nellie Gail Ranch and the Chair of the NGR Historical Committee, I have watched the community age gracefully with mindfulness of inclusion toward all residents of Laguna Hills and other cities. As a resident member of the Laguna Hills Chamber of Commerce I respect that NGR is an active member of the Chamber, encouraging residents to participate in Chamber events.

Additional Comments

Nellie Gail Ranch operates as a vibrant, master-planned community comprising 1,405 homes across 1,450 acres, making up 11.5% of Laguna Hills. The commitment to preserving the heritage and pioneer spirit of Lewis and Nellie Gail Moulton is evident in the maintenance of 25 miles of equestrian trails and four community arenas, which support hundreds of equestrian enthusiasts annually.

In addition to serving the residents, NGR provides access to five parks complete with walking paths, playgrounds and sports courts, allowing these spaces to be enjoyed by the public. The popular Summer Concert Series, hosted at no cost to attendees, brings together hundreds of families for evenings filled with music, food and camaraderie. These efforts foster a sense of belonging and enrich the cultural fabric of Laguna Hills.

Nellie Gail Ranch is home to eight formal and active committees with 31 volunteer members ranging from Architectural Review, Historical, Equestrian, Events, Landscape, Security, Trails and as previously mentioned, Emergency Preparedness. This leadership model empowers residents to have a direct role in shaping their environment and promotes civic engagement while fostering a collaborative spirit.

On behalf of its homeowner membership NGR operates an Equestrian Center, Tennis & Swim Club and The Watering Hole. There are eight pickleball courts, ten tennis courts, two sand volleyball courts, a Jr. Olympic-size pool and 96 equestrian stalls, attracting riders from across the region and bolstering local economic activity. The community-at-large may purchase a membership to use these facilities for a nominal fee. There are 15 full-time and seven part-time employees. The NGR board of directors believes in leadership through open communication. This year they hosted a town hall meeting featuring CR&R and the City of Laguna Hills representatives to explain the new 10-year solid waste program. This event helped to ensure residents could be fully informed and fostered trust and collaboration between the City of Laguna Hills, NGR and the community. Additionally, a Fall Festival was introduced this year. It provided an opportunity for Laguna Hills residents to meet our Sheriffs and Crime Prevention Specialist in addition to Marines from the 3/5 battalion. Local beekeepers provided information and businesses sold their goods. A bounce house, face painter, food drive and another free concert was enjoyed by all!

The impact of NGR's efforts is best captured through the words of those they serve:

"The Emergency Preparedness Program gives me peace of mind knowing our community is ready to handle any situation." – Lydia Hervatin Hidden Trail Road LH

"On behalf of Laguna Hills High School and the LHHS Girls Beach Volleyball program, I wanted to extend our thanks and appreciation for allowing the Laguna Hills Girls Beach Volleyball Team to use your two sand courts during our upcoming inaugural 2025 season as a CIF sanctioned sport. As a result, you have provided us with an opportunity to host matches and improve our program while affording our young high school student athletes an opportunity to grow in the sport they love. Your partnership is a value to our school and athletic community." – Jay Chadwick, LHHS Assistant Principal / Athletics

"The Summer Concert Series is a highlight of our year. It's wonderful to see families and friends come together to enjoy amazing music under the stars." – Lynn and Glenn Showell Talega Ave. LH

Nellie Gail Ranch is more than a neighborhood - from the 5,000 hidden eggs for the beloved annual Easter Egg Hunt, to the Christmas Celebrations - it's a movement. A movement rooted in service, safety and connection. As a non-profit 501 (c) (4) NGR's nearly 50-year legacy speaks to the passion and significant role for making Laguna Hills a better place for all.