

Seaside/Sand City

Special Advertising Section

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Grit & Grace

A life, a love story, a legacy By Lisa Crawford Watson

Community

2020

Focus

Ralph Rubio moved with his parents to Seaside in 1952, when he was not quite a year old, and grew up on a dirt road in a city that was growing up along with him. The first kindergarten class opened at Ord Terrace School in 1956, and he was in it. Five generations of his family have since played out in this city, from his parents to his great-grandchild.

The lifelong resident and six-term Mayor of Seaside developed a devotion to his hometown as if it were an extension of himself—his heart and his soul, his heritage and the future of his family.

"We're the little city that could," Rubio once said. "We have constantly struggled against the odds, but we're making progress. The city was initially thought of as a resort community yet ended up being a workingman's town, a blue-collar town. But we're changing that in small increments, enabling residents to have a sense of pride when we say, 'I am from Seaside'."

Rubio, a member of the Carpenters Apprenticeship Program, devoted 23

years to a career as a union carpenter with Local 605, followed by 16 years as a Northern California Carpenters Regional Council (NCCRC) Union Organizer and Senior Business Agent for Monterey and Santa Cruz counties. His contributions to the structure of his community were surpassed by the impact of his leadership. After serving eight years as Mayor of Seaside, in 2014, Rubio was diagnosed with liver cancer. Determined not to let it get the best of him, he went on two win two more mayoral elections. Like every other battle he fought for what mattered to him, he was determined to prevail against cancer. And he did, for six years.

In the wake of his quiet departure on Sunday, July 19, a few of the many people profoundly moved by their experience of Ralph Rubio have come forward to share their memories, their appreciation, their love for this pillar of the community.

Carmel Mayor Dave Potter

Ralph Rubio, a carpenter by trade, was a great builder. He was a builder of consensus, collaboration, and

communities. During our time together as policymakers, we dealt with difficult projects that needed the same skills Ralph employed as a builder, to bring a project from concept to reality. Whether it was the Seaside City Council, the Water Board, Transportation Agency, or Fort Ord Reuse Authority, Ralph worked tirelessly to make The City of Seaside and Monterey County better places for all of us. It was my pleasure to have built houses with him many years ago and, for well over a decade, to have worked, side by side, to build this community into a better place to live. I will miss you, my friend.

Sand City Mayor Maryann Carbone

I've known Ralph Rubio all my life. We grew up in the same church, Saint Frances Xavier, and in the same community, which gave us a true sense of belonging. Once grown, we worked together in the construction trades, alongside my nine brothers, making our mark through various jobs on the Peninsula. We worked together, played together,



Gracie and Ralph Rubio CPY May 2017-provided photo

stayed in our Seaside community together.

Ralph was such a kind, wonderful guy. When my 37-year-old brother passed suddenly from a heart attack, I went to Cannery Row, where Ralph was working on a project, for his support. He talked to me like a brother. And he knew he could always come to me, as well.

I was surprised when Ralph got into politics; I was surprised when I did, too. But we both felt strongly about community service. We served on many boards, and both became mayors. He gave so much to his community.

Seaside Mayor Ian Oglesby

I met Ralph Rubio 18 years ago through our Monterey

County Supervisor and Mayor of Seaside, the late Jerry Smith, who wanted me to work with one of his campaigns. We quickly developed an understanding of each other. Ralph appointed me to the Seaside Planning Commission and, when I ran for City Council, he supported me. I saw the integrity in what he had done and what he stood for throughout his political career.

Many times, as we faced issues before us, I always remember Ralph saying, "Is it the right thing to do, and the best thing to do for the citizens for Seaside?" For him, it always came down to what was right and what was best. He was a man of integrity, character and patience. He was patient with people who wanted to have their say or disagree with him; he never personalized it or told us what to do. I respected him for that, for allowing me to do my own thinking while remaining open to his thoughts.

I always admired the hard work I saw from Ralph. He sat on so many boards and commissions, doing it all without heartache and without fail, day in and day out. He had a strong work ethic and was very professional. It was an honor to have known Ralph for all the years I did.

Byrl Anderson Smith

I have known Ralph Rubio since I was 12 years old. The things I remember and smile about come from the

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Three local grads receive scholarship awards from IMPOWER

All of them are members of the Boys & Girls Club



Provided photo of Stephanie Nava

Three outstanding young women from Seaside and Salinas were recognized with a \$1,000 scholarship to help kick start their college adventure. IMPOWER, a local nonprofit, announced these scholarships in June. The mission of IMPOWER is to Inspire, Motivate, Prepare and Organize Women to Engage and Reinvest. The group strives to impact the



Provided photo of Litzi Pacheco

community in positive ways that support and nurture women and these scholarships are just one example of many awards and scholarships the group has given out in the past decade. The three very deserving recipients of the scholarships are Stephanie Nava, Litzi Pacheco, and Jazzmin Woods.

Nava graduated in June from Seaside High and



Provided photo of Jazzmin Woods

has been a member of the Boys & Girls Clubs for 10 years. She has been an active leader in the Keystone leadership group and is involved with Tech Challenge and Girls' Health in Girls' Hands. She worked as an intern for the B&G Club, helping teach 4th and 5th-grade club members. She is also an incredible artist and likes to sketch during her free time. She will be attending CSUMB or University of the Pacific to study graphic design.

Pacheco graduated in June from Seaside High School and has been a member of the Boys & Girls Clubs since she was 6 years old. She participated in many Club programs including Tech Challenge, Girls' Health in Girls' Hands, and Keystone leadership group. She worked as an intern at the Club helping Kindergartners and 1st graders. She is passionate about helping younger children and being a mentor to them. She plans to attend Monterey Peninsula College to study Early Childhood Development.

Woods graduated in June from Notre Dame High School and has been a member of the Boys & Girls Clubs for 11 years. At the Club, she participated in SMART Girls, Positive Sprouts, Basketball, Career Launch, College & Career Readiness, and Money Matters. She will be attending the University of the Pacific to major in graphic design. Her dream is to design video games that focus on making positive social changes while providing entertainment to kids and teens.

IMPOWER congratulates each of them on their achievements thus far and wishes them continued success in their future endeavors. The heart of IMPOWER is to support women in being true to their talents, confident in their abilities, valuing their resplendent uniqueness, and making nourishing their mind, body, and soul a lifelong pursuit. To learn more about IMPOWER, please visit impowerwomen.org. vide the popular items," said Georis, "making sure everything's seasonal and fresh, and everything on the menu is a hit. That includes gazpacho, shrimp cocktail, Mexican corn pizza, Meyer lemon pizza, and, of course, our pear salad. There's no way we could take that off the menu; we'd have to close the front door if we did."

Maybe it's the weather, the spacious garden setting, the consistent menu. Perhaps it's the new coffee bar and little general store adjacent the café that has Georis finding his business a little busier than usual.

"I think people appreciate how we've modeled our business to cater to safety measures," he said. "It requires a new, slower lifestyle, which we also celebrate. We want people to enjoy themselves, not be stressed, and let us take care of them. It reminds me of dining in Mediterranean France or Barcelona. People are eating much earlier and taking their time. It's all absolutely fabulous."

Sand City unveils new mural

The Sand City Arts Foundation announced the unveiling of their debut mural project, a collaboration between Central Coast artist Eleen Auvil and Seaside resident Margaret Ghodsi. The mural is located at the intersection of Hickory and Ortiz in Sand City across from the Independent Building in the West End District.

Sculpture has been Auvil's primary focus for the past thirty years. Her materials include bronze, copper, stone, wood, handmade paper, and mixed media. Her techniques and subjects are equally diverse. Auvil is also a talented textile designer and a printmaker, best known for her distinctive monotypes. She holds a rare dual Artist Member status, having juried into the Carmel Art Association separately for both two- and three-dimensional works. She has trained and taught widely, received numerous awards, and exhibited across the United States. After sixty fruitful years of producing multimedia artwork, Auvil decided to stop commuting to her studio in Sand City due to age. She is 95 years young. Last year Sand City Art Foundation asked her if she would give Sand City a departing gift and she obliged. The Wood Family, owners of the building, gave their blessing to use the building for an Eleen Auvil Mural. John Fisk from Fisk Paints in Sand City generously donated the scaffolding and advised on paint, brushes, and color matching.

Margaret Ghodsi, a graduate of the San Francisco Art

Institute, took on the task of painting the giant mural. "Because of the pandemic, we cannot have a party to celebrate the birth of this beautiful work, yet we would like to tell people about it. You don't even have to get out of your car, just drive by and enjoy. It brings a smile to your soul."







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closeness of going to Saint Frances Xavier Church together, and we always did family picnics on Sundays, at El Estero Park. His mom would cook. Ralph was like a brother; he called me Byrlie, and I called him Ralphie. We didn't always agree, but that was good, it kept our relationship lively; we really got along well.

So much of our growing-up experiences informed our life in the Seaside community.

I got to see Ralph often while he was ill. He fought the good fight; he truly did not want to leave this place or Gracie, at all. He was such a hero. In scripture, Matthew 5:9, we find, "Blessed are the peacemakers." Ralph always was a quiet giant, such a peacemaker. That's how I'll take him to my grave with me. I'm happy my path and his path were able to cross in life.

Michael A. Houlemard, Jr.

Over the past few weeks, the Monterey Bay community has heard that Ralph Rubio was a great mayor, fabulous family man, wonderful friend, focused warrior, and a visionary leader. We learned of Ralph's tireless commitment to every mayoral duty, to youth sports and education, to regional workers and apprentices, to social justice and equality.

His accomplishments as Seaside Mayor and Fort Ord Reuse Authority Chair have resulted in Seaside now rising to parallel status with other regional cities. The establishment of the Central Coast Veteran's Cemetery in Seaside, dedication of the Fort Ord National Monument (with main entry points through Seaside), and construction of General Jim Moore Boulevard are just a few of Mayor Rubio's accomplishments where he played a crucial role. Without question, Ralph's contributions are far-reaching and form a lasting legacy. This fact was recognized when he received the 2016 Ruth Vreeland Public Official of the Year Award.

However, few knew the depth of his lifelong devotion to social, cultural, and



Mary Ann Carbone and Ralph Rubio Presidio 2007-provided photo

diversity and equality in all aspects—with a laser focus on inter-racial communication. We should not forget that Ralph insisted on the rights of workers-of all colors—and strengthening our individual and institutional commitments to eradicating bias and prejudice. Ralph was a truly great friend, and I will miss him dearly, deeply, greatly. His love of family, honor to colleagues, patience with difficulties, practical intelligence, engaging smile, and a wink of an eye are how I will remember him.

Diana Ingersoll

When Ralph Rubio started as a council member, I was the Public Works Director/City Engineer for the City of Seaside. During that time, we worked very closely together, as he was the City's representative, and I was the City's staff liaison for many public agencies. Eventually, Ralph became Mayor of Seaside, and I was the Deputy City Manager. I retired in 2016, and Mayor Rubio stepped down in 2018. Through all those years, Ralph and his wife Gracie established a friendship with my husband and me.

Many residents respected and loved Mayor Rubio because he always had "Seaside First." He kept his campaign promise. It was an honor and a pleasure to have worked for and with him to make Seaside what it is today. Mayor Rubio and his First Lady, Gracie Rubio, touched so many lives. Together, they made Seaside proud. Mayor Rubio's 18 years of dedicated service as an elected official will be remembered and appreciated. A person's leadership is determined not when things are easy, but when they get tough. He never faltered.

William Terry Bare, Colonel, US Air Force (ret)

Ralph Rubio was one of my favorite people. I will remember him fondly and with tremendous respect. He was not only a friend but also a man I looked up to, an unselfish man of principle and honesty; a straight talker who would take time to look you right in the eye and listen to what you had to say-rare qualities in our leaders. When Joselyn and I came with our family to the Monterey Peninsula to serve on the Presidio in 2008, Ralph and Gracie Rubio were among the first people we had the pleasure to meet outside of our circle of military acquaintances. They were great supporters of our military, of Veterans, and made sure we were welcomed into the communitv.

Our families spent time together over the years, going to local restaurants, attending La Merienda, playing golf, and working to support charities and churches. I truly will miss Ralph's friendship and our camaraderie, whether discussing local issues, celebrating holidays, or just shooting the breeze. He was a helluva special man and will always be an inspiration to me. Ralph and Gracie have made a great

lives of the Bares, but for so many he brought together in this wonderful and diverse community he helped build. God bless you, Ralph.

Karen Rodriguez

It is my honor to tell you a little about the Ralph I know. We met, 40 years ago, when my cousin JoAnn and I moved across the street from Ralph and his first wife, Karen. I was a naïve 21-year-old, living away from my parents' home for the first time. Ralph and Karen embraced me, and we became fast friends. I looked up to Ralph as a protector and family man. Anytime we needed help fixing something or if we were scared at night, Ralph was always there, dependable, friendly, and helpful. Karen and I became very close friends and Ralph, whose best friend was my future husband, Alex, was our best man.

When Karen became ill with ovarian cancer, I witnessed such dedication and love for her from Ralph. He was devoted to his faith, his family, and the City of Seaside, and he worked tirelessly on behalf of each. He was one of the most giving, intelligent people I know. Ralph met Gracie at the pharmacy where he got medications for Karen, and they formed a friendship. After Karen's death, they reconnected and starting dating. As their love grew, we could see that sparkle in his eye again. When he decided to marry Gracie, he

asked Alex to be his best man. When I think of Ralph and Gracie I think of fun, laughing, and love, and we shared so many cherished memories. During Ralph's final days, I witnessed Gracie taking such great care of Ralph with so much love and tenderness—the same care I witnessed so many years ago, from Ralph.

Ron Chesshire

When I met Ralph in 1977, through the Carpenters' Local 605/Building Trades, his days seeking identity as a young Chicano from Seaside, coming out of the late '60s, were mostly behind him. He was married, with one child, and a second soon on the way. He was working and facing the responsibilities of adult life while trying to move on from a challenging past. Intelligent, sharp, and fun-loving, Ralph was proud of his heritage, his family, and his community. He had an inner strength, was contemplative and reflective but also could be stubborn. We never knew when that "little devil" in him would pop up. We shared good times and bad times, but this final time he addressed privately, as he was not willing to burden those around him. In the Union Trades, we say, "Give back." Ralph did this to the best of his ability with the time he was given. He cared.

Gracie Rubio

I often told Ralph he was a cat with nine distinctively different lives. I met him in his Carpenter life. He was already a Father and Grandfather. He was a Husband whose wife was in the fight for her life against cancer. I witnessed his unwavering belief that she'd beat it. Tragically, she didn't. From there, our friendship grew into 26 years of an extraordinary life and love partnership, and the roads we traveled were exciting, challenging, and very rewarding. Life got pretty hectic, especially when he entered his Political life, but we always carved out our time to just be Ralph and Gracie, to enjoy the simple pleasures of our life together with an appreciation of the blessings we'd been given. That appreciation deepened as we navigated six years of living with cancer. Ralph's strength and determination to remain here with me, with all of us, was inspirational. He beat the odds consistently. His doctor called him John Wayne. We were Grit & Grace.

Ralph often called out to me, "Hey Gracie, we have a good life, huh? I love my wife, I love my house, I love my dog, I love my life...We have a good life." Yes, indeed, we did.



Gracie and Ralph Rubio Merienda 2006-provided photo

economic equality. Ralph was fully dedicated to

difference not just in the



Mayor Rubio and Diana Ingersoll's last Seaside City Council meeting-provided photo





Terry and Joselyn Bare with Ralph and Gracie Rubio AF Ball 2009-provided photo



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Ralph and Byrl Smith June2012-provided photo

Village Project opens doors and enriches lives for an underserved segment



The Village Project, Inc. was founded in 2008, partly in response to the passage of California voter-approved Mental Health Services Act of 2004. It was initially founded to meet the mental health needs of the African American community, a community designated by the Mental Health Services Act as one of five historically underserved communities. The others being Native Peoples, Latinx, Asian/Pacific Islander, and LGBTQ+ communities. Shortly after opening its doors, The Village Project, Inc. began providing culturally defined clinical services to all of these communities. In early 2010, The Village Project, Inc. was declared a "Model Agency" for grassroots organizations attempting to reduce and eliminate disparities in the communities they serve.

Provided photo

In short order and in response to other needs these communities had, an acclaimed Afterschool and Cultural Enrichment Academy was created. Now named after late Founding Board Member and nationally recognized local Educator and Administrator Mae C. Johnson, this 10-year old Academy has been touted as a model by agencies throughout the state for its successful work with students often referred to as "at-risk." We call them "Students of Promise." In due time, other programs and services were added, most of which were named in the fullpage ad in today's Herald. One, Emanyatta ("Warriors Camp" in Maasai) is a five-year research project funded by the State Department of Public Health's Office of Health Equity. This project, now going into its fourth year,

is proving that children of African Ancestry once they learn their true identity and history, will not have mental health issues that will be severe and disabling. Maasai Warriors from Kenya visited the children in the first year of the program in December 2017. A Mental Health Education series was started two years ago that was greatly attended by members of the community. Named after the late Lucille Hralima, a former therapist intern, the series serves to educate the community about mental health and reduce the stigma that has often been associated with seeking mental health treatment. Two of The Village Project, Inc.'s newest programs are the Eagala model of Equine-assisted therapy and the Nyumbani ("Returning Home" in Kiswahili) Program for

formerly incarcerated people who are being released to come back to the community. Many are victims of the "war on drugs." The program is designed to provide these

home returners with program support, including therapy - both equine and talk therapy- and connection to other vital community services and programs that will assist them in living productively and not returning to prison. The program also attempts to be proactive and preventive by providing interventions designed to steer people away from criminal justice involvement. The program is facilitated by a case manager who has lived the experience. The Eagala model of equine-assisted therapy does not involve riding the horse. It is an on the ground therapeutic. unhindered experience with the horse being front and center and allowing the client to interact with and reflect, project, and make a deep connection. There are two Eagala-trained

and certified therapists to assist in this process. Children and families have experienced much success with this model, as have Nyumbani clients. Some long-time supporters of The Village Project donated three horses to The Village Project so the Eagala/Equine-Assisted Program could be a reality.

The Village Project, Inc's mission is "To help our communities reach a greater state of well-being by strengthening families through the provision of community-based culturally appropriate services." Their Motto is "Boa Me Na Me Mwoa Wo" (Help me and let me help you." The group's logo is the West African symbol for Collective Responsibility and Interdependence, two principles of functioning that has historically kept communities vibrant and healthy.



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Cultivating a More Perfect Union

Cannabis dispensary seeks to create a culture of service in Seaside community

by Lisa Crawford Watson



Growing up in the San Francisco Bay Area during the AIDS crisis of the 1990s, David Spradlin got a sincere sense of the value of marijuana in helping patients manage the effects of their illness. In fact, without early AIDS patients and social advocates like the equally controversial and determined David Peron of the San Francisco Cannabis Buyers Club, Spradlin realizes the medical marijuana movement may never have gotten traction.

"The realization that marijuana could help with nausea, pain, wasting syndrome, and one's mental state of being put the focus on compassionate care for AIDS patients, and opened the door for where we are today," said Spradlin, CEO of cannabis dispensary Perfect Union.

Today, Spradlin and his team are well aware that cannabis reportedly helps relieve chronic pain, improve lung capacity, manage weight, regulate and prevent diabetes, fight certain cancers and mitigate their effects, regulate seizures, alleviate anxiety, help manage PTSD, among other issues, as corroborated by the Medical Cannabis

Provided photo of

Network. Headquartered with two locations in Sacramento, the company is responding to need by expanding throughout California this year, including, with a grand opening September 1, Seaside.

Cannabis Constitution

"We the People of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union. . ." As Spradlin and his team established their cannabis company, the words of the Preamble to the United States Constitution rang true for the evolution of a company dedicated to bringing people together with the right product. A Perfect Union.

Spradlin, who shifted from marijuana farming to cannabis cultivation, understood impressions created by early retail cannabis interactions behind dingy storefronts and back-alley dealings. Perhaps, in those days, because they had to. This motivated him to bring his product to market in a well-lit, community- and education-focused environment in partnership with people who know cannabis and understand business. The most prominent message on the Perfect Union

website is, "We appreciate the efforts of your cousin's brother-in-law who grows weird stuff in his basement, but yeah, no. . ." Times have changed. And so has the commerce of cannabis.

"Our mission stems from the early days of cannabis commerce when we had to work hard to turn around hearts and minds," said Spradlin, "which we still take seriously. We want to educate people who are cautious about cannabis coming into their community, and bond with people who come into our stores, in a spirit of service." **Cultivating Cannabis Customers**

Communities need organizations like Perfect Union, says Spradlin, which focus on getting to know customers at a level where the company can actually make a difference. It means knowing their name, their dog's name, what they like and don't like, what makes them feel better. and what they actually need.

"As we expand throughout California, we have a good model of growth, set up for the long term," said Jim Taschetta, chief marketing officer and head of retail operations. "Our strategy is based on our commitment to make communities better. This takes more than just selling weed. It is a mentality that permeates the company, in every interaction, every transaction, every relationship we establish."

The Perfect Union model, Taschetta says, is a threelegged stool on which the company stands. It starts with taking care of employees, giving them a solid footing on which they can thrive. By so doing, they are positioned well to treat guests well, in a spirit of service. The third piece, he says, is the direct impact on the community. By giving back to the community, thy foster reciprocal support, making the community stronger.

"It is, quite simply, a very fulfilling way to do business," Taschetta said. Long-time local, John Lucero, who served 15

years as head bartender at Carmel Valley Ranch, has joined Perfect Union as general manager of the Seaside dispensary.

"After working in the cannabis business for about four years, what I like about this company," he said, "is the focus on a culture of empathy and compassion for employees, guests, and the community, which aligns with my personal philosophy. This is the 'Perfect Union,' and this is what drew me to pursue this job."

Lucero, who has long been passionate about the healing capacity of cannabis, hopes every dispensary succeeds, in support of building cannabis commerce throughout California.

"Nothing warms my heart more than to recommend a product to promote people's health, and to hear that it made a positive difference in their lives. These are the stories we're trying to foster."

Visit www.perfect-union. com to learn more about Perfect Union and their products and new Seaside dispensary.



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