

Garden Grove

Lon and Linda Cahill

While they met working for the city of Garden Grove, it may have been the U.S. Marine Corps and the U.S. Navy that actually brought Lon and Linda Cahill together.

The daughter of a sailor, Linda was born in San Diego but lived in Long Beach in her youth. The family eventually settled in Orange County and Linda graduated from Westminster High School. She attended classes at Golden West College and later worked as a surgical assistant in the dental clinic at the UCLA Dental School while taking classes there and at Santa Monica City College. She attended California State University, Stanislaus, and in 1975 earned a bachelor's degree in social ecology from UCI. Following graduation she became an intern for the city of Garden Grove, working in five departments during her 32-year career. She retired as the employee development director.

Lon was born and raised in Quincy, Massachusetts. After graduating from Quincy High School, he enlisted in the USMC and following boot camp was stationed at El Toro, where he was an aircraft electrician. His four-year commitment completed, he joined the Douglas Aircraft Corporation and then Hughes Aircraft in Fullerton. In 1964, he became a fireman with the Orange Fire Department, later becoming captain. Moving to the

Garden Grove Fire Department, he was division chief from 1981 to 1985 and then promoted to fire chief, a post he held from 1985 to 1993. After retirement, he joined the Brea Fire Department and four years later became the fire chief at Disneyland, retiring again in 2005.

While Lon and Linda worked and met in Garden Grove, it was there they also began serving the community. One of Linda's early tasks was coordinating services for senior citizens. One of the programs that was begun under her leadership is what has developed into Acacia Adult Day Services, Inc. From its beginnings in a local church, the program for frail seniors is now in its own 13,000 sq. ft. facility. "On opening day, there were two staff and eight seniors who came. Today, 30 years later, there are more than 30 staff who can serve 120 per day," she says. A founding board member, Linda continues on the board and in October was chairman of "Coming Home," a 30th anniversary celebration of Acacia. During her 30 years of involvement, she has continued in leadership roles, including several terms as president of the board.

In 1989, Linda joined Soroptimist International of Garden Grove and has served as both vice president and president. She was a longtime member of the Senior Meals and Services Board of Directors, and for more than 20 years she has been involved with Garden Grove Boys and Girls Club in an advisory position as an associate board member.

Linda is also a member of the United Way Leadership Circle and focuses on initiatives to help women. For the past 16 years, she has been active with the annual CHOC walk,

serving 10 of those years on the steering committee. As a member of the prizes committee, she helps distribute gifts the day of the race as well as before and after. “Many years I took vacation time to work on walk registration and prize distribution,” she said. In addition, she is currently parliamentarian of the Desert Coast Region of Soroptimist International and chairman of the organization’s region conference.

Soon after becoming division chief, Lon began supporting the Boys Club, “before it became the Boys and Girls Club,” he says. He served a term as president and resigned when appointed a trustee of the Hoag Foundation. As a trustee, Lon oversees property that was left “solely for the support of the Boys and Girls’ Club,” he says. “The property was donated in the 1950’s and in addition to the Boys and Girls Club, part of the Kiwanis land Park sits on the property.” Currently, he oversees construction of an eight-story project also on the property at Garden Grove Blvd. at Brookhurst.

An associate member of the Garden Grove Strawberry Festival Assn., Lon serves as the “back up person who lays out the festival grounds.” He’s the liaison with the carnival company and the festival association, contracting with the facilities program manager.

Most recently, Lon has become active with CHOC Walk, the Marine Corp League, a national organization of retired and former Marines, and Toys for Tots. From 1986 to 1993, he was a member of Garden Grove Rotary West, serving as president. And during his time as the fire marshal in Brea he was involved in that community’s Rotary, as well.

While mostly active in Garden Grove, they reside in Anaheim where Lon has served on the Public Utilities Board for the past six years and has been chairman for the past three years. Appointed by the mayor and city council, the board oversees the electric and water utilities in the city. Lon and the other six board members meet monthly and can serve two, four-year terms.

As members of the Garden Grove Sister City organization, both Lon and Linda recently chaperoned 10 Garden Grove exchange students on their visit to Anyang, Korea. Over the years, they have also hosted Korean exchange students in their home.