

Woman with a Heart for Bakersfield

Janis Varner



Janis Varner has an indomitable heart to improve the lives of others. Her generosity as a hands-on volunteer touches our community's most vulnerable persons as well as our heroes. With passion and determination, Janis dedicates endless hours as a champion for the abandoned, hungry, homeless, ill, and

the men and women who have served our country.

For over twenty years, Janis opened her home for a Ladies Christmas Tea that supported local charities. Janis provided an array of treats, vendor shopping, and raffle prizes and motivated each guest to bring toys, clothing, and supplies for the less fortunate. Charities that benefitted from these abundant donations included the Bakersfield Homeless Center, Alliance Against Family Violence and Sexual Assault, Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA), Garden Pathways, Gleaners, Henrietta Weill Memorial Child Guidance Clinic, Honor Flight Kern County, and The Mission at Kern.

A tenacious fundraiser, Janis has garnered support for numerous community causes. Janis and her husband, Vernon, are founding members of the Committee to Save the Sports that raised funds to reinstate the CSUB wrestling, golf and women's tennis programs in 2010 after substantial budget reductions eliminated the programs. Janis chaired the Evening with Stephen Neal fundraiser that helped to revive the wrestling program. Since that time, she and Vernon have been integral members of the CSUB community and have continually raised monies to support the wrestling budget.

For ten years as her birthday celebration, Janis has raised funds for charities by hosting Birthday Babe Bunco. During the last six years, monies raised have been donated to Honor Flight Kern County to send veterans to visit their memorial in Washington D.C., at no cost to them. With the help of her many friends, Birthday Babe Bunco has

raised over \$55,000 for Honor Flight.

With patriotic fervor and devotion to veterans, Janis assists Lili Marsh with the promotion of Honor Flight Kern County. Janis traveled as a guardian on her first flight Memorial Day weekend 2012. This past week, Janis completed her 14th flight escorting veterans to Washington D.C. where they received their much-deserved hero's welcome.

Janis commemorates many firsts in our community as a member of the first board of directors of Links for Life (originally known as Business and Charity Golf Link) which is celebrating its 25th Anniversary this year. She served as chair of the first golf tournament held at Wasco Valley Rose; chair of the first fashion show held at Stockdale Country Club; chair of the first auction held at Red Lion Inn, and sponsored the Survivors Christmas Dinner. Additionally, Janis established the Mary Anne Walz Scholarship Fund for students in the medical field at Bakersfield College and California State University Bakersfield.

Born and raised in Taft, a proud Wildcat, Janis graduated from high school in 1966. Janis will celebrate 29 years of marriage to her supportive husband, Vernon, this June.

Though she modestly says, "The little things I do on a daily basis are done from the heart and I don't consider them noteworthy," Janis' bountiful expressions of caring enhance the lives of many.