

Vi and Byron Brown to be Recognized as Vail Trailblazer Award Recipients

24 February 2017



Long-time community members Vi and Byron Brown have been selected as recipients of the 2017 Vail Trailblazer Award in recognition of their 50-plus years of civic involvement. Presented by the Vail Town Council, the Vail Trailblazer Award has been established as an annual civic recognition to honor those who contribute their time and talent to make Vail a great community.

The Browns will be formally recognized at the March 7 Vail Town Council meeting in which a mayor's proclamation honoring the couple will be read into the public record. Recognition will also take place during the Town of Vail Annual Community Meeting on March 14 at Donovan Pavilion.

The Browns' legacy in Vail began with their arrival in 1964 after Byron convinced Vi to relocate from their home in Denver. The family included young sons Mike and Todd, while daughter Cindy was born a short time later in their new hometown. At the time, Vail had a population of just over 100 residents with everyone pulling together to help Pete Seibert and the other founders build a ski resort and a new community.

For this young couple, Vail represented the land of opportunity. Byron formed a real estate development company and built the first house in West Vail which became the family home. Byron was also instrumental in expanding utilities and other infrastructure that made it possible to develop neighborhoods in West Vail and East Vail. He served more than 30 years on the boards of the local water and sanitation districts and also doubled as a ski patroller.

Vi spent much of her time introducing the children to skiing and other wonders of the great outdoors while also working as a small business owner and in various retail shops. In addition, she became a familiar fixture at the Vail Information Booth, where she befriended many newcomers and life-long guests. Vi also taught Sunday School at the Vail Chapel, served on the Eagle County School Board and has had a familiar presence at Town Hall while serving as an election judge during decades of municipal elections.



Civic-minded from the start, the Browns were active supporters of Ski Club Vail which became the epicenter for so many of Vail's early families. The Browns organized fundraisers for the club, served on the club's board of directors, provided technical support in organizing sanctioned ski races and led a capital campaign to build the current Vail Ski & Snowboard Club headquarters at Golden Peak. They were also instrumental in helping to bring the first World Cup ski races to Vail and the 1989 Alpine World Ski Championships. In addition, Byron helped form the local Buddy Werner Ski League, an organization

that transitioned many children to become ski racers at Ski Club Vail. Their son Mike excelled at the sport, becoming the first Vail athlete to join the U.S. Ski Team in 1981, a particularly proud moment for Vi and Byron and the rest of the community.

The Browns are also remembered for their decades-long role in organizing and supporting the Eagle Valley Community Fund, in which millions of dollars have been returned to local non-profits from the annual rummage sale event.

Today, Vi and Byron's presence can be found at numerous community events, including the ribbon cutting for the recent Vail Golf & Nordic Center Clubhouse, Vail's 50th birthday celebration, the town's annual Community Meetings and more. Married for 55 years, they served as the grand marshals for the Vail America Days Parade in 2016 and are previous recipients of the Hornblower Award presented by the Vail Valley Foundation as well as various Rotary Club awards.

The Browns say they are humbled by the recognition. "Byron and I didn't know you could get an award for living in and loving Vail," says Vi.



The Vail Trailblazer Award was established during the town's 50th birthday celebration in 2016. The Browns are the second recipients to be honored and were selected by a Town Council committee from among other deserving nominations. The recipient for the award's inaugural year in 2016 was Dr. Thomas Steinberg, Vail's first full-time physician and the longest serving member of the Vail Town Council.

For more information about the Vail Trailblazer Award and the nomination process, visit the town's website at www.vailgov.com/trailblazeraward.

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