

Sheika and Pepi Gramshammer to be Recognized as Vail Trailblazer Award Recipients

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Sheika and Pepi Gramshammer, known around the world for investing their heart and soul into Vail's rise as an international resort, have been selected as recipients of the 2018 Vail Trailblazer Award. 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 resort community.

The Gramshammers will be formally recognized at the March 6 evening 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 13 at Donovan Pavilion.

Known simply as Sheika and Pepi, the Austrian-born Gramshammers are being celebrated for their courage and ongoing commitment in sharing their love for Vail which has blossomed through the decades. Their legacy began in the early 1960s when, as a world-renowned professional ski racer, Pepi was lured away from his affiliation with Sun Valley, Idaho, with the prospects of helping Vail's dreamers build a ski resort. Shortly after his arrival in 1962, Pepi met Sheika Moser at a race in Aspen and the two were engaged within weeks and were married in 1964. Later that same year, they were among a handful of Vail's early investors, opening their signature hotel at the corner of Bridge Street and Gore Creek Drive. For more than 50 years, their colorful personalities have delighted guests of their Hotel Gasthof Gramshammer with many becoming loyal friends who return year after year.

Daughters Kira and Sheika were born and raised in Vail and are also involved in helping to run the family business which includes the inn, restaurant, bar and Pepi's Sports retail store. The property completed a significant remodel in 2016 that included expansion of the bar and renovation of the guest rooms. Their signature dining deck is one of the Vail's most iconic settings where the ambiance of the village comes alive year-round, especially in the summer when Sheika's flower boxes are in full bloom, a tradition she began years ago that inspired the town and other businesses to take part.

In addition to putting down roots as Vail's early innkeepers, the charismatic Gramshammers enthusiastically called upon their international friendships to help build Vail's reputation for ski racing with introduction of World Cup racing in 1967. Their work as Vail's ambassadors continued through the decades as they traveled around the world to meet with officials from the International Ski Federation to help secure Vail's bid to host the Alpine World Ski Championships in 1989, 1999 and 2015.

Their hospitality also extended to the White House as the Gramshammers became close friends with President Gerald R. Ford and his family. Pepi eagerly joined the president for ski outings in Vail, while Sheika became an early supporter of the Betty Ford Alpine Gardens after the First Family made Vail their part-time home in later years.

Known for their ongoing philanthropic support, the Gramshammers hosted Vail's annual Crystal Ball black-tie fundraiser event from 1982-1998. The predecessor of today's Black Diamond Ball sponsored by the Vail Valley Foundation, their Crystal Ball event generated over \$2 million for ski-related organizations and programs, including the 1989 and 1999 World

Championships bid, the U.S. Ski Team, Ski and Snowboard Club Vail and Vail Resorts' adaptive ski program.

Their generosity extended throughout the community, including the hospital, now Vail Health. In the 1970s, Sheika organized a tennis tournament and other fundraisers which enabled the hospital to purchase an infant incubator and a defibrillator for Vail's growing population.

Pepi's devotion to inspire others to become passionate about skiing has included his Wedel Weeks ski training program introduced in 1985 which is now in its 33rd year. The program pairs some of Vail's finest ski instructors with energetic skiers for a week of instruction in the Austrian tradition. He was also instrumental in launching the Vail Valley Foundation's American Ski Classic in the 1980s; it was his idea to add ski legends to the event.

In addition, the couple's commitment to advancing Vail's education, recreation and cultural pursuits have included their contributions as members of the Vail Valley Foundation's board of directors. Sheika has also served on the Vail Dance Festival Committee and is currently a member of the Betty Ford Alpine Gardens board of directors.

In announcing the 2018 Trailblazer Award recipients, Vail Mayor Dave Chapin says the Gramshammers' presence in the community has been felt in so many ways. "Sheika and Pepi have been an amazing example of what it means to be 'trailblazers,' a couple who has dedicated their lives to enhancing Vail's social, recreational and cultural values through their active involvement in skiing, as business owners, raising their own family, and daily involvement as community members. It is most apparent that everyone who lives and visits Vail is well aware of Sheika and Pepi Gramshammer!"

The Vail Trailblazer Award was established during the town's 50th birthday celebration in 2016. The Gramshammers are the third recipients to be honored and were selected by a Town Council committee from among other deserving nominations. Sheika says she and Pepi are honored to be recipients. "Vail has not only been our home, but has become the foundation in our lives for 54 years," she said. "To be recognized by the Town of Vail is a wonderful tribute to our family's legacy."

The Trailblazer award is the second recognition for the Gramshammers given by the town. In 2012, Pepi, now 85, was recognized by the Vail Town Council with a proclamation upon his 80th birthday. Other distinguished honors have included Pepi's recognition as Citizen of the Year in 1989 by the Vail Foundation as well as his induction into the Colorado Snowsports Hall of Fame in 1990, while Sheika was presented with the Vail Centre's Torch Award for Lifetime Achievement in 2017.

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