



Photo: Rowland Rebele Collection

## Giving Hope

Local patrons and philanthropists,  
Pat and Rowland Rebele are making a difference

By Terri Morgan

Pat and Rowland Rebele are well past the traditional retirement age, but they show no signs of slowing down. They're too busy for that. The Rio del Mar couple quit the newspaper business and moved to Santa Cruz County in 1979 to be closer to their extended families and eventually to pursue a new life goal: They want to give away all of their hard-earned money. They've been working full-time toward that goal, donating well over a half-million dollars every year to back education, art, music, and homeless

programs. And they don't just sign checks; they donate their time as well as their money.

A staunch supporter of First Amendment rights, Rowland graduated from Stanford in 1951 with a degree in journalism and then earned an MBA at Harvard. Then he put his education to work, realizing his goal of owning and operating a community newspaper. Pat quickly became an enthusiastic partner in his enterprises.

"We started in newspapers in Coalinga and operated the paper there from 1957 to 1961," Rowland recalls. When the Rebeles sold the

*Coalinga Record*, they joined forces with Lowell and Alice Blankfort, who owned the *Pacifica Tribune* at the time. The two couples owned and operated a number of community newspapers over the years, including their flagship publication, the *Paradise Post*. They also served as largely

(Top) Rowland and Pat Rebele are major supporters of the Homeless Service Center. Their generosity helped establish the family shelter that bears their name.



Photo: Rowland Rebele Collection

(Above) Publisher, Roland Rebele (far left) with his fellow journalists observe California Governor Edmund G. "Pat" Brown working on a Linotype typesetting machine at Rebele's newspaper.

hands-off owners of other newspapers in California, Colorado, Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Illinois.

The Rebele-Blankfort partnership sold the *Paradise Post* and retired from the newspaper business in 2003. Their timing couldn't have been better. Unlike the current era, in which newspapers are an endangered species, the Rebeles were in the business during a golden age of print journalism. Newspapers thrived in the pre-Internet days, when advertisers relied on print ads to attract and retain customers.

"We made money in the business and this is the time to give it away," Rowland said. "Newspapers were very good to us, and California has been very good to us. The idea of giving it all back is crazy, but we get to see the fruits of our labors."

Pat agrees wholeheartedly.

"The joy is in the giving," she said. "If you've got it and your health is good, it makes sense to give it away to people (and non-profits) that will use it responsibly and get the job done."

Sitting in their comfortable living room surrounded by paintings, sculptures, family photos, and books, the Rebeles don't sound the least bit crazy while explaining why they donate an average of \$500,000 to \$600,000 annually to help enrich the lives of others.

Both are clearly on the same page, and, even after 61 years of marriage, still are clearly passionate about each other. The two make eye contact often, smiling when they catch each others' eyes and, at times, finishing each others' sentences. Both talk enthusiastically about their passion for journalism and the programs they have established at Cabrillo College and at Stanford to give aspiring journalists opportunities for on-the-job training. By establishing grant programs at both schools, the couple's largesse provides interns with stipends for three to nine months so they can receive hands-on experience at media outlets both locally and around the globe.

The program has been invaluable locally, according to Brad Kava, who heads Cabrillo College's journalism department. Kava, who has placed interns at local daily, semi-weekly, and weekly newspapers, as well as radio and television stations, notes many of the interns have gotten hired after proving themselves in the workplace.

"They're a godsend," Kava said, referring to the Rebele-funded internships that provide students with practical experience to complement classroom studies. "They've saved journalism in Santa Cruz County. They've given us a journalism program that's on the level of Stanford's. We're creating great journalists and they're getting hired."



Photo: Bill Longjoy

(Above) After 61 years of marriage and numerous business ventures, Pat and Rowland Rebele show no signs of slowing down.

Free speech and the public's right to know how government funds are spent is also a huge passion for the couple. Rowland is a board member of the First Amendment Coalition, and established a program at Stanford so graduate students can study matters pertaining to freedom of the press.

The Rebeles also are also major supporters of the Homeless Service Center. Their generosity helped establish the family shelter that bears their name. The Rebele Family Shelter provides up to six months of shelter for needy families. Serving up to 28 families at a time, the family shelter gives people a hand up, rather than a handout. Along with a roof over their heads and meals, the center provides counseling, health care, and job support services to help people get back on their feet.

"We feel very strongly about helping people who are less fortunate," Pat said. "But we feel that the people we help need to do their part."

The Rebeles generosity isn't just about money. They also give their time. They host an annual fundraiser for the homeless center and support the Smart Solutions to Homelessness organization. Rowland serves on the board of directors for the homeless shelter and rolls up

his sleeves to serve soup and bus tables at the annual Soup Line Supper fundraiser.

"Reb is so passionate about this work," said Santa Cruz Mayor Don Lane, referring to Rowland by his nickname. The longtime homeless advocate also noted Rowland is very much a hands-on supporter of homeless issues. "He has his hands all over the (various) activities around the issue of homelessness," Lane said.

Music, art, and literature are also dear to the Rebeles' hearts. Pat attended UC Santa Cruz after the couple's three children were grown, and earned her BA in Art History in 1988. The couple funded an endowed chair in History of Art and Visual Culture at UCSC to encourage students to get involved in museums and provide enrichment to their studies. The list of other arts programs they support would fill an entire magazine.

With all of the work they do to help others, the couple doesn't have time for hobbies. Both chuckled when asked what they do in their spare time. Spare time. It's a foreign concept to Pat and Rowland Rebele.

"It seems like we're busy all the time," Pat said. ♣