



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Midpen Founder and Director Nonette Hanko retiring after 46 years She'll be recognized at her final board meeting December 12 at 6:30 pm**

**Los Altos, CA**— Retiring Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District Director Nonette Hanko will be honored at her last public meeting December 12. She helped found Midpen and has served 46 consecutive years on its publicly elected seven-member board of directors.

“We are celebrating the trails Nonette blazed that shape our region,” said General Manager Ana María Ruiz. “The undeveloped open space surrounding our communities, from the baylands to the foothills and forested mountains, exist in large part because of the work of Nonette and her fellow conservationists.”

Hanko was born and raised on the Peninsula where a love of music and time spent in nature shaped her childhood. An aspiring concert pianist, she studied music at San Francisco State University before marrying and moving to Palo Alto in 1950 where her family grew to include four children.

In the late 1960s, a recall of Palo Alto City Council members and Stanford University’s proposed development of Coyote Hill began drawing Hanko out to public meetings. Palo Alto Times reporter Jay Thorwaldson published an editorial in 1970 stating that conservationists wanting to preserve land on the rapidly developing Peninsula should create a public agency capable of acquiring it as had been done in the East Bay. It inspired Hanko to plan a meeting in her Palo Alto living room.

“I’d lost the wild places I had as a little girl. In Palo Alto there were NO TRESPASSING signs all the way to Skyline,” said Hanko. “When Jay’s editorial came out, I took it seriously. I said to myself, here’s an idea that could be used, why not?”

Hanko remained the consistent force behind getting Measure R on Santa Clara County’s ballot in 1972, allowing voters to create Midpen. The organization has since grown to include much of San Mateo County, preserving 63,000 acres in 26 public open space preserves from south of San Jose to Half Moon Bay.

“It’s a dream come true, being able to do something about saving our open spaces for people and animals. There is still land that needs to be acquired and trails we need to connect. When you’re building something important, and we’re still building it, you never lose that joy,” said Hanko.

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*The Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District is a public agency created by voters in 1972. Its mission is to acquire and preserve a regional greenbelt of open space land in perpetuity, protect and restore the natural environment and provide opportunities for ecologically sensitive public enjoyment and education. [www.openspace.org](http://www.openspace.org)*