

Eleanor G. "Toni" Locke, who passed away February 10th 2015 at age 97, lived her life to the fullest.

Whether involved with community organizations, the MacArthur Metro newspaper, volunteering, collecting sea shanties, playing the recorder, swimming or lending an experienced ear when needed, Locke never seemed to stop working toward making her world a better place. Family and those whose lives she affected will be gather to celebrate her life on March 28.

Locke moved to Oakland in 1974, already in her late 50s, and for the next 40 years left her mark as she worked to build strong neighborhoods in Oakland's Dimond and Laurel districts. In 2003, she received a \$10,000 MAGIC grant from Avanti and was named Oakland Mother of the Year in 2011.

Locke worked with the MacArthur Coalition, the Dimond Improvement Association, cofounded and edited the MacArthur Metro newspaper and was cofounder of Friends of Dimond Branch Library. She volunteered with the Oakland League of Women Voters and at several Oakland schools.

The list is a long one, but with her passing, friends and colleagues are thinking back to not just what Toni Locke did but how she worked and the values she shared with others. In part, music brought Locke to Oakland.

"In 1969, my mother went to Hungary for two years. She

learned Hungarian, lived in a village and learned the Kodaly method of music," said daughter Nancy Meyer. "When she came back she got a job at Holy Names University, helped build their Kodaly music education program and created the Music Resource Center."

Locke published a book of music for Kodaly method teachers, "Sail Away: 155 American Folk Songs to Sing, Read and Play" in 1981 and a few years later organized the collection of sea shanties at the Maritime Museum in San Francisco.

Once in Oakland, Locke helped organize the MacArthur Coalition, working to help reinvigorate the Laurel District, attempting to clean up some car repair shops and the Hill View Motel and bringing in local policing. The MacArthur Metro grew out of the coalition. As editor, Locke worked with volunteers to coalesce various neighborhood newsletters into an eight-page monthly with current news, advertising and columns.

"Mother said the newspaper had to be a vehicle for the social action we're doing," Meyer said. "She created the Metro in a way that made it a local political force, not just a calendar of local social events."

Working with volunteers and local groups meant Locke needed to keep everyone at their task and agreeable.

"She just had a touch, being firm when she needed to be, cajoling, playful, clear; it was an act of really skillful community organizing and volunteer management," Meyer

said. "The Metro work was very satisfying to her; she loved trying to work with the community and loved all the human interaction of guiding this newspaper."

Karen Long met Locke through Friends of Dimond Branch Library, noting that Locke had a way of helping people solve problems.

She was a really good listener; she'd listen and then she'd say something really wise and really helpful from her background and experience that would make a difference in the discussion about what we should do or how we should do it," Long said. "So people always paid really close attention to what she said because it was always helpful."

Locke was also a member of the Dimond Improvement Association, where Karen Marie Schroeder described her as a skilled liaison between the city and Laurel and Dimond offices, noting that Locke could bring different groups of people together to talk.

"The one thing she seemed to be able to do that a lot of people cannot do is she could see the whole picture so if you were discussing something and there were several sides and people were getting a little upset she could make you see each other's points," Schroeder said. "She could see the consequences as well as tell you the history behind something. Not in a lot of words but in such a way to help you get a bigger idea of what you were dealing with."

Meyer believes that her mother influenced so many lives through her energy and that the many lasting friendships Locke formed lived on long past the activities.

"She changed how others lived their life, how they saw their role in their community and what they believed they themselves could do," Meyer said. "She never gave up working toward making the world better or thinking that if people would keep their eyes open and organize that they could make change for the better. It's easy for us to get cynical and she didn't."

On March 28, friends and family will gather to share personal reminiscences and celebrate Toni Locke with speakers, the Holy Names choir, some sea shanties and a slide show. They'll be there to pay tribute to a woman whose daily life was an example for everyone.

"She didn't see age as a reason to stop being an active community member," Schroeder said.