

# Transforming Lives and Community Luncheon

Honoring Rita Semel and Mark Buell

Wednesday, May 2, 2018

11:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.

Julia Morgan Ballroom, The Merchants Exchange Building



**Rita Semel**, a native New Yorker, first came to San Francisco in 1939. During World War II, Rita worked first as a copy boy, then as a reporter for the *San Francisco Chronicle*. In 1945, Rita became the first Associate Editor of the newly formed *Jewish Community Bulletin*. She retired from the Bulletin in 1950 when her first daughter, Elisabeth, was born and began doing freelance public relations for the March of Dimes, the America-Israel Cultural Foundation, and the Israeli Consulate (then located in Los Angeles).

In 1964, Rita served on the committee that organized the San Francisco Conference on Religion and Race, and she became its coordinator for the next 25 years. It was during this period that she became a consultant to the Jewish Community Relations Council, and eventually joined the staff as Associate Director, and then Executive Director, where she built important coalitions and organized campaigns to advance a just society and a secure Jewish future. For more than five decades, Rita has mobilized broad coalitions to advance common causes of social concern, worked to advocate for those most in need, and built long lasting relationships among the Bay Area's many communities.

In 1990, Rita co-founded the San Francisco Interfaith Council, and her tenure has been marked by orchestrating significant programs which have a direct impact on the lives of San Franciscans – from the emergency winter shelter program for the homeless, for which she has galvanized multi-faith and City cooperation, to the chaplaincy program at the Youth Guidance Center. In 2011 the San Francisco Interfaith Council created the Rita R. Semel Endowment Fund for Interfaith Work.

Rita serves on the boards of Clinic by the Bay, Congregation Emanu-El and Grace Cathedral. Rita was appointed by Mayor Edwin Lee to the Human Services Agency Human Services Commission.



**Mark Buell** is a native San Franciscan, a graduate of the University of San Francisco and a decorated Vietnam veteran. He has spent 35 years in both public and private real estate development. Mark served as San Francisco's first Director of Economic Development under Joseph Alioto and later served as the first Director of the Emeryville Redevelopment Agency from 1977 to 1985. Buell served on the Boards of various non-profit organizations including the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy, Bolinas Museum and the Chez Panisse Foundation. He is President of the SF Recreation and Park Commission, President of the Marin Community Foundation and a member of the Board of the California Academy of Sciences and past Chairman of the America's Cup Organizing Committee. Buell is married to the former Susie Russell Tompkins and has two children from a previous marriage: Sabrina and

Justin.