

WINTER 2023

THE PARK POST

Hikes • History • Horses



Friends of Huddart
& Wunderlich Parks

THOUGHTS FROM

The Park Bench

Dear Friends,

Fall is upon us, and we don't know what this winter will bring. Recovery efforts continue from the storms of last winter in both Huddart and Wunderlich Parks, along with preparation for the winter ahead. We are amazed by the amount and speed of repair work accomplished on roads, bridges and trails, with much work still to be done. We appreciate the effort by San Mateo County Parks to keep our parks 'visitor ready' and beautiful.

We had a busy summer with many community programs, historical tours, and opportunities to meet Lightning the mini-horse. In August we hosted a 'Family Fun Day' at Wunderlich Park. This was a first for us and a most enjoyable one! Many families spent the afternoon enjoying pony rides, a petting zoo, various crafts, hot dogs, popcorn and ice cream. Thank you to our many volunteers for all your time and good work. We appreciate you so much.

We continue to look for new ways to serve our diverse communities, and are happy to report on the first docent-guided wheelchair hike, making Huddart Park more accessible for a special needs group who otherwise might not have the opportunity to enjoy it. Check out the article in this newsletter for more information.

Our generous donors help us provide programs like this and much more. We are so grateful for your commitment to both ongoing programming, and new capital needs, like the Dairy House restoration. We're delighted to let you know that we expect to break ground in early 2024 on the first phase. This historic structure is one of the county's earliest 'cold houses' for storing dairy items. Its restoration helps keep alive links to local history. Many thanks for your help as we launch this effort.

On behalf of the Friends board, and our talented and dedicated staff and volunteers, we wish you the best.

Jackie and Ann
Co-presidents Jackie Nicholson and Ann Cripps



A SPECIAL DAY IN THE WOODS



A program four years in the making, but worth the wait! Special education teacher Mary Kahn contacted the Friends in November 2019 to talk about her dream of taking her class out into nature. Covid-19, wildfires, and rain all intervened at different times to necessitate four cancelled trips because these students are medically fragile. But in October of 2023 we were able to share the joys of nature and hiking with 8 special education students, all of whom use wheelchairs. The students and their dedicated personal aides hiked the Chickadee ADA accessible trail, enjoyed woodland creature puppets, felt rough redwood bark and soft moss, smelled bay laurel leaves, and watched a lizard sunning while butterflies flitted by.

Teacher Mary Kahn reflected on the day with joy, “I teach students who are extra special, most of whom use wheelchairs. What a beautiful and memorable guided hike we had today in the majestic redwood trees. I loved everything -the joy on my student's faces, the tactile things, the beautiful day, the amazing guides. My students were engaged and had the best of times. It was a trip that was so special to my students and their families. I'm flying high from being able to bring my students to Huddart Park so they could have this experience. I have a tear in my eye just thinking about our great time we had today.

Volunteer naturalists were also inspired by the outing. Rick Johnson reflected on his hiking experience, “we shared the beauty of the Chickadee trail’s woods, habitats, and views. We offered close up experiences to each of them: touching wood and lichen, smelling leaves, spraying water on dry moss, and looking up towards the treetops. Each child lit up. I seemed to get as much out of the day as they did. It was a privilege for me to experience their humanity and varied personalities, and help them to be free in the woods.”



Friends was able to offer this free field trip and pay for the buses to get students to the park thanks to partners and generous donors. San Mateo County Parks Rangers cleared the trail to ensure safety. The San Mateo County Parks Foundation provided parking passes for return visits for aides and families and training for our naturalists working with students with learning differences and challenges. We are excited to announce that the Merck Foundation, a generous partner for years, recently awarded us funding that will include making improvements to the ADA accessible trail and allow even more visitors to experience these naturalist guided hikes.



A CHALLENGING ROAD



Do you remember the excitement of boarding the bright yellow school bus as a child? Giggling in line in the cool morning air, wondering who to sit next to, hoping the driver would be the singing type. Excited for a day of adventure and play. This is a long-treasured part of the American educational experience that is sadly becoming a thing of the past. Did you know that some schools are limiting field trips to one per year or cancelling them altogether? We hear frequently from teachers that one of the largest obstacles to going on field trip adventures is the cost of transportation. Did you know that the average school bus can cost almost \$1,000?

This year our field trip programs face an additional roadblock with a new town ordinance that prohibits traditional sized school buses on the road up to Huddart Park. To keep our field trips running, we have contracted for smaller buses and are offering more transportation subsidies to schools. Our transportation costs have tripled because the compliant buses fit 1/3 the number of kids. We anticipate spending \$15,000-20,000 on school buses this year alone! We are grateful to you, our long-time donors, for your support for programs like this. Please consider us in your end-of-year giving so we can continue to share our parks with children who are the future stewards of these precious places.

This photo shows buses that meet the size restrictions at Huddart Park this fall for a field trip paid for by the Friends of Huddart & Wunderlich Parks.



LOOKING AHEAD

2024 marks the 50th anniversary of Wunderlich Park and 150 years since the Dairy House was constructed onsite by farmer Simon Jones. Help us celebrate these milestones by donating to the Dairy House project. We are 2/3 of our way to our goal that will allow us to stabilize the structure and save it for future generations. You can donate in the remit envelope or on our website and designate your funds to "THE DAIRY HOUSE" www.HuddartWunderlichFriends.org/donate



FUN IN THE SUN!

We had so much fun hosting families at Wunderlich Park for our first Family Fun Day! Visitors enjoyed pony rides, a petting zoo, leather stamping and horse shoe decorating all while enjoying live music, refreshment and Mr. Softee ice cream. Thanks to our volunteers, donors, and partners at San Mateo County Parks and Chaparral Ranch for helping us host this free family fun day!



We ♥ our volunteers!



Ranger Residence Rehab

New Project - we are contributing to rehabilitate this trailer so that a Ranger can live on site at Wunderlich. This will increase safety in the park for visitors and resident horses and provide affordable housing for our hard working rangers.

Donate at:

www.HuddartWunderlichFriends.org

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