



Friends of Huddart & Wunderlich Parks

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Students from the Big Lift Literacy Booster Program on a Huddart Park Nature Hike

Impact Report July 2020

Introduction

Friends of Huddart and Wunderlich Parks (Friends) is pleased to present this final report on our programming that allowed us to expand access to the outdoors, promote community health and wellness in nature, and enhance STEM education for students through hands-on, experiential environmental education. Community support also helped us respond to the challenges presented by threats of wildfire and extreme heat and then the outbreak of COVID-19. In 2019, Friends' expanded nature programming served 8,268 community members, including 1,418 kids on hikes (up 33% from 2018), 1,339 kids on California Living History programs at the Folger Stable (up 10% from 2018), and 3,570 visitors to the Carriage House Museum (up 18%). We also invited 256 people to participate in our new Healthy Hikes program, and our dedicated volunteers contributed an estimated 1,674 hours to support nature programming.

Although 2019 was a banner year for Friends, 2020 has been a challenge. We had a full season of kids' nature hikes planned with expanded partnerships serving low-income youth. These cancellations impacted an estimated 1,300 students, plus another 540 we planned to join us for a Family Nature Day. Unfortunately, we have had to put plans to commemorate the 10th Anniversary of the restoration of the Folger Stable on hold, cancelling our August Barn Dance until it is safe to gather again in-person. Despite these challenges, we used this time to refine and strengthen our nature programming with stronger science curriculum and new educational materials for teachers and

Spanish-speaking park visitors. We are also exploring new ideas and potential partnerships that advance goals of engaging the community in nature while protecting the health and safety of our staff, volunteers and visitors.

Organizational Update

Before continuing with the details of our programs this year, we want to share two organizational changes. First, sheltering-in-place gave Friends' board members the opportunity to reflect upon our work and its importance to the community. At its meeting in April, the Board adopted an updated mission statement that speaks to the broader role we are now playing in our community. Our new mission statement now reads:

The Friends of Huddart and Wunderlich Parks are park enthusiasts and stewards who provide a wide range of programs and events in two historic redwood parks in the heart of the Bay Area. Our mission is to promote the positive health and community benefits provided by these parks and to support equitable and inclusive access for all park users. We lead hikes, provide environmental education, showcase local history and celebrate the unique horse heritage of San Mateo County.

At the same meeting, the Board recognized the incredible leadership shown by Kym Teppo as our Programs Director and promoted her to become the Friends' Executive Director. Kym's work as been invaluable in creating expansive nature programming, and she had increasingly evolved into taking a broader role leading our work. This new title better captures all she brings and the importance of her work to the Friends of Huddart and Wunderlich Parks.

Highlights: Huddart Park Nature Hikes

Support from the Sorenson Foundation for Friends' *Huddart Park Nature Hikes* helped youth in grades K-5 access experiential, nature-based education that supports academic achievement in science. Highlights of activities this year included:

- *Scheduling field trips.* We completed a busy fall season that brought 677 students out to Huddart Park for science education field trips. We had scheduled 845 students to come out for what was going to be our busiest spring field trip season yet before we had to cancel programs for COVID-19.
- *Serving students at under-resourced schools.* We were especially proud to extend benefits of this nature education program to so many low-income students at under-resourced, Title I schools. These schools often lack financial resources to provide environmental education opportunities. With your support, over half of those we served came from Title I schools.
- *Piloting a new initiative to serve students with disabilities.* We were really excited to test out a new nature program to serve special education students' experience in nature. Working with Hoover Community School Special Education teacher Mary Khan, we planned a special program that could engage her class of 10 non-verbal, autistic children, including seven in wheelchairs. We

Under-resourced School Partners

Daly City
Bayshore Elementary

East Palo Alto
Aspire Charter
Brentwood Academy
Los Robles Elementary

North/South Fair Oaks
Connect Community Charter
Hoover Elementary

Redwood City
Henry Ford Elementary
John Gill Elementary
Orion Elementary
Selby Lane Elementary
St. Francis Siena Youth Center

San Mateo/Foster City
PIP Fiesta Gardens Preschool

met in advance with the teacher to understand better the students' needs, provided a specialized training program to the docents who would support the program, identified an accessible route, and customized the curriculum to meet specialized needs. While we had to cancel the trip due to COVID-19 related school closures, the time and effort to develop an appropriate and unique experience will help us expand the types of programs we provide in the coming year.

- *Providing continuing education for specially-trained docents.* Critical to the success of our programs are our 32 docents, who receive special training and continuing education. We had six workshops for our docents planned, but had to cancel three due to limitations on group gatherings. In place of in-person workshops, we created a [new online resource page](#)¹ to keep docents' interpretive skills fresh. We also piloted a new training platform where docents could connect to other online learning opportunities on topics ranging from backyard birding, local indigenous history, and exploration of a local pond from the point of view of an entomologist.
- *Refreshing our curriculum.* During the fall, we created the new *CA Life Science and NGSS Standards in Huddart Park Nature Hikes* handout to use with teachers. This [online publication](#)² is demonstrated to school administrators and teachers how Friends' curriculum supports California's rigorous content standards for science as well as the national Next Generation Science Standards.
- *Coordinating Countywide Curriculum.* Friends collaborated with San Mateo County Office of Education and other content providers to identify online environmental literacy resources available to teachers and parents to support distance learning. We also developed a [document](#)³ that identifies classroom science content areas addressed by Huddart Park Nature Hikes and other environmental education providers.
- *Conducting program impact evaluation.* We compile feedback from teachers and docents at the end of the school year, which allows us to evaluate the impact of this program, including measuring satisfaction. One objective is to see that 90% of teachers surveyed agree that the Huddart Park Nature Hike field trip linked to their classroom science curriculum. All teachers on our fall field trips reported that they saw clear links between the field trip and their classroom curriculum and 89% rated the trips as "excellent" or "very good."



"My students had a great time learning in the great outdoors. The docents did a wonderful job on focusing on plant and tree adaptations. I appreciated how docents taught students about how the Ohlone used the plants and acorns. The trip also gave my students background knowledge for an upcoming unit on Adaptions and Structures in Science. They took time to answer students' questions and listen to their thoughts and comments."

~ Participating Teacher

¹ Our beta online docent training program is here: <https://padlet.com/fhwp2961/wkl8so3s0rk5>.

² Link to *CA Life Science and NGSS Standards* brochure: <https://huddartwunderlichfriends.org/images/forms/CA-Standards.pdf>.

³ The working version is available here: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/17R4DfX881rdLhuaJTqWrlrRHAYG3oF5vG-Aoxj2DAs/edit>.

Highlights: Healthy Hikes

Your support also helped pilot, refine, and scale up efforts to provide healthy hiking opportunities for the community. The program has been variously called the “Expanded Hikes with Friends” and “Parks Rx” programming, but was rebranded this spring as Friends’ “Healthy Hikes.” This new name better reflects our goal for this work: to increase physical activity and wellbeing among families facing health challenges by providing customized, supportive outings and other nature-based activities. Activities this year included:

- *Offering outings and events for the community.* Friends continued providing themed outings that are very popular and serve the general public. Through a partnership with the Peninsula Open Space Trust, we have been hosting two Family Nature Days at Huddart Park. We held one event in October and welcomed 288 parents and children. Regularly scheduled outings called “Hikes with Friends” engaged 196 people in several ways: getting started with hiking, exploring different parts of the parks, leading sunset hikes and learning about the history of the area, including logging.
- *Providing summertime outings for disadvantaged youth.* Last summer, we partnered with two youth service organizations to bring 110 at-risk children to the parks for special summer outings to experience nature and learn about science. Our partners included LifeMoves, which operates several family shelters, and San Mateo County’s Big Lift literacy booster program, that provides youth with academic support.
- *Partnering with health providers to help improve patient health.* One continuing partner was with the San Mateo County Medical Center’s pediatric clinic. We were proud to again offer patients in Dr. Rachel Borovina’s Healthy Life Style Clinic the opportunity to spend time outdoors. Her clinic works closely with low-income families to support healthy life style choices. In September, we organized an event for 55 pediatric patients and their families during which our docents led hikes, played outdoor games, and offered refreshments, with translation help to better serve Spanish speaking families. We had two additional family events planned with the help of pediatricians for this spring before public gatherings were cancelled.
- *Establishing new partnerships.* We expanded our work with San Mateo County’s Behavioral Health and Recovery Services program. Clinicians here serve patients experiencing Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. During our special outing, we led a short hike, and then gathered under the redwood trees for deep breathing and mindfulness exercises.



“Everyone enjoyed a magical experience that has inspired many families (and staff) to explore the restorative powers of the outdoors. The patients, families and staff are all grateful for your time and efforts creating such a unique opportunity. It truly was a wonderful afternoon.”

~ Dr. Borovina, San Mateo County Health System

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- *Expanding outreach to Spanish-speaking families.* We created new communications materials to help Spanish-speaking participants learn about the parks and the benefits of exercising outdoors. With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, we wanted to maintain our connection and outreach with these families, so we created a [website in Spanish](#)⁴ with links to virtual park tours and health and wellness information. We also created a [self-guided park brochure in Spanish](#)⁵ with suggested hiking routes and nature education activities for families.

Highlights: Folger Stable Living History School Program

Provided in collaboration with the San Mateo County Historical Association, the Folger Stable School Program provides California history-themed field trips for third and fourth graders at Wunderlich Park's historic Folger Estate Stable. This is our longest running school program, kicked off in 2010-2011. In the 2019-20 school year, we served 753 students and had another 509 students scheduled to come out to the park when the pandemic hit. Each field trip includes experiential activities that reinforce the historical information presented and helps students learn how people lived on the land. Activities include apple-pressing, leather stamping, building a rock wall, and saddling a horse. Our dedicated docents were a vital part of the program by teaching kids about the historical objects in the museum and showing kids how to tack a horse by bringing a horse or mule out to meet the students.

Another change this spring was for Friends to adopt Lightning, the mini horse which has long been a beloved presence and "horse ambassador" at the Folger Stable, greeting all the school children during their history field trips. Lightning has also entertained our pediatric patients participating in Healthy Hikes programs and events. With the onset of COVID-19, Chaparral Ranch was experiencing financial hardship and was faced with the possibility of having to sell Lightning. Friends quickly jumped in to adopt Lightning and take over the costs of his care. Our cadre of docents are now responsible for his grooming and exercise.



Looking Ahead

Friends continues to take an expansive view at how we can provide a wide range of engaging nature programming for a diverse community, with only three part-time staff members and some 50 volunteers. We provide programs very cost-effectively; last fiscal year, 84% of total expenses directly supported services for the community.

We are gratified that so many people are showing their love of nature by spending time outdoors in nature and we hope to build on those experiences over the coming year. Our plans are to build in more flexibility to how we deliver nature programming so we are able to respond to inevitable interruptions as the pandemic continues. This summer we provided nature education for small groups of children attending day camps. We are exploring possibilities of extending that model of

⁴ See: <https://padlet.com/fhwp2961/Espanol>.

⁵ Available at: <https://huddartwunderlichfriends.org/images/forms/Brochure-Habitat-Hop-Spanish.pdf>.

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small group nature-based science education this fall to homeschooling groups, for example. We created new virtual lessons about nature that can be used by teachers with students over distance learning platforms or in the classroom before and after field trips to Huddart Park to supplement what the students learn while at the park. We are looking at ways to commemorate the important work that saved the Folger Stable, even though our Barn Dance and other 10th anniversary plans were postponed. We established safety guidelines and protocols and providing training for our volunteer docents so we can re-open the Carriage House Museum as soon as it is safe to do so.