



Friends of Huddart & Wunderlich Parks

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Friends' adapted nature education programs to serve small groups with customized education programs and tours such as this "pandemic pod."

Annual Impact Report to Donors

INTRODUCTION

Friends of Huddart & Wunderlich Parks (Friends) is grateful for an ongoing partnership with our grant funders and donors to support community programming at two outstanding redwood parks. Friends has a mission to promote the positive health and community benefits provided by parks and to support equitable and inclusive access for all park users. We advance this mission by leading hikes, providing environmental education, showcasing local history, and celebrating the unique horse heritage of San Mateo County. We are pleased to highlight our community, nature-based activities of the past year, made possible by your generous support.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

While we were somewhat constrained by the continuing pandemic and safety, Friends pivoted in 2021 to provide an impressive array of virtual and in-person programming. We connected 3,747 community members to nature so far this year, with more engagement plans to come this fall. We have and are continuing to invest in new programming approaches that engage people in nature in new and different ways. Our specially-trained docents are also on board—172 volunteers have attended nine continuing education events to keep their interpretive skills sharp. This means we're in a good position to host more nature-based programs in 2022.

Nature-Based Education

Our long-standing *Nature Hikes with the Friends* program serves elementary school students in grades K-5 with experiential outdoor education that supports academic achievement in science. Although we had to cancel spring 2020 programming and were not able to offer school programs during the 2020-21 school year, we did use this “Pandemic Pause” to make strategic investments in educational programming to better serve teachers and students. We also adapted program delivery so we could serve smaller groups, including 369 people with homeschooling and “pandemic pods.”



As California began re-opening this summer, and with new guidance, we were able to expand in-person programming. We ran nine outings in partnership with community-based organizations that helped 164 low-income youth experience nature this summer. Our partners include the Siena Youth Center, Bicycle Nature Camp, and LifeMoves Family Shelters.

As fall approached, we began reaching out to long-time school partners and found — to our delight! — that many teachers were eager to schedule fall field trips. Six schools are planning to come out this fall, however, none have funds for the school bus transportation costs, so we have used donor dollars to help subsidize these costs. We were especially excited this month that the first trip in 18 months allowed us to serve special education students attending the Arbor Day School. The trip was well received, and teachers raved about the opportunity to be out in nature with their students.

Another enhancement in the works is to serve middle school students. Some schools we serve are K-8 programs and teachers are requesting field trip opportunities for older students. This expansion will also give us the opportunity to add topics such as the role of forests play in the world’s ecosystem and how forests can help mitigate climate change.

Wunderlich Park/Folger Stable Programs

Our longest-running youth education program, the *Folger Stable History Program*, engages people in the history and horse heritage of our area, however, it was also on a hiatus due the pandemic. We were able to create a virtual format that served 252 students this year. Working with our partner, the San Mateo County Historical Association, we will re-start the in-person field trips come spring.

Over the summer, we offered *Summer Scavenger Hunts* with our partner at Chaparral Ranch and their summer horse camp. This gave campers the chance to learn about history while they completed scavenger hunts at Wunderlich. We also continued to offer small group tours of the Folger Estate Historic District and Stable, serving 537 people. The *Carriage Room Museum* opened to visitors again, and has welcomed 1,670 visitors since January.

One of the most exciting new developments of the past 12 months came about when Friends agreed to take on the care of Lightning, the mini-horse. When Chaparral Ranch, Lightning's owner and Folger Stable's operator, was experiencing financial hardship, Friends agreed to take on his care. Lightning is a beloved presence at Folger Stable, and we were eager to keep him here. Under this new arrangement, Lightning continues to be a **Park Ambassador**, going out with docents to greet park visitors. His presence makes it easy to start



conversations, such as talking about safety when meeting horses out on the trails and handing out bilingual park brochures. This activity has engaged some 500 people so far this year.

The **Meet-a-Mini Program** gives families with young children and grandchildren the chance to spend time working with Lightning. Activities introduce concepts related to animals, wildlife, and plants, and hiking. The new program is quite popular, engaging 380 children and their caregivers since January.

We also used this time to look at the historic resources of Wunderlich Park, including evaluating the condition of the "Ice House," a historic cold storage structure located next to the entrance bridge. We retained an architectural historian and structural engineer to advise us on stabilization and repairs. Our board is now evaluating next steps for this preservation project.



Healthy Hikes

Friends has built upon our long history of offering outings to the community through our participation in the San Mateo County Parks Rx initiative aimed at supporting community health and wellness through increased physical activity and time in nature. We co-hosted two small outings with the Parks Rx program since January and are planning a fall **Family Nature Day** with health care providers from the San Mateo County's Pediatric Healthy Lifestyles Clinic. Another new opportunity coming up is to support a new health and wellness program **Nurture in Nature** to engage Spanish-speaking families in the outdoors, focusing on new mothers and children under two.

Healthy Forests

Not only have we had to respond to the challenges of the pandemic, the threat of catastrophic wildfires is another pressing challenge. New discoveries of Sudden Oak Death, a disease that kills oak and tanoak trees, have challenged us to respond more proactively to protect the forests of

Huddart and Wunderlich forests from this ecological threat. San Mateo County Parks has the ultimate responsibility for forest management in these two parks, and our role is focused on supporting these efforts through community outreach and education, and mobilizing stewardship volunteers.

This work includes distributing information about how we can reduce the spread of the pathogen that causes Sudden Oak Death by cleaning our boots and horses' hooves after visiting potentially infected areas.

Friends' **Weed Warriors** program engages volunteers with month work parties to steward our forests. The top priority is to remove invasive and flammable weeds such as tackling areas infested with broom. Volunteers have contributed 295 hours toward making forests healthier. We are looking to expand volunteer crews and engage service clubs and youth organizations.



Volunteers supported **Community Science** projects related to healthy forests, helping to gather samples that can help identify presence and spread of Sudden Oak Death, in coordination with researchers from UC Berkeley. We are testing a possible crowd-sourced monitoring program that could engage the public in tracking ecological changes.

Looking Ahead

Friends is uniquely situated to showcase the health and wellness benefits of time spent in the outdoors. The generous support of our funders made it possible for us to pivot, adapt, and find new audiences. We demonstrated how to run nature-based activities for small groups safely. In a COVID-recovering world, our work makes a positive impact by reducing isolation, electronic overload, learning loss, and nature deficit that are exacerbated during the pandemic. These lessons are informing plan for 2022. With new approaches, strong partners, and greater community interest in parks, we are well positioned to recapture participation numbers as well as serve broader and more diverse community members as we emerge from the pandemic.

Friends continues to take an expansive view at how we can provide a wide range of programming for a diverse community, with only two part-time staff members and some 50 volunteers. We provide programs very cost-effectively; last fiscal year, 84% of total expenses went directly to support services for the community. Because we had to cancel our biggest fundraiser, the Barn Dance in August 2020 due to restrictions on gatherings, other sources of financial support like gifts from donors like you were all the more important this year.

Thank you again for your support for the efforts of the Friends of Huddart & Wunderlich Parks to create welcoming, inclusive, and engaging nature-based programs to support appreciation for the outdoors, science, and horses while improving the health and well-being of our community.