



Friends of Huddart & Wunderlich Parks

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ANNUAL IMPACT REPORT 2022

INTRODUCTION

When the yellow school buses returned to Huddart and Wunderlich County Parks last September, we were thrilled to begin teaching science in the outdoors once again! Friends of Huddart & Wunderlich Parks (Friends) is so grateful to our donors whose generosity helps sustain nature-based programming to benefit our community and the environment. With a mission to promote the positive health and community benefits provided by parks and to support equitable and inclusive access for all park users, Friends leads hikes, teaches youth environmental science, showcases local history, and celebrates the unique horse heritage of San Mateo County. Together, our staff, board, volunteers, and a network of partners delivered impactful programming that served 6,000 people while improving parklands for the enjoyment of tens of thousands of park visitors. We are pleased to share these highlights of the past year.

CELEBRATING HORSE HERITAGE

Thanks to Lightning, the mini-horse, and many specially trained docents and equestrian volunteers, park visitors had unique opportunities to learn about the unique horse heritage of San Mateo County. Our long-running Folger Stable Living History Program returned to in-person programming last spring, serving 414 third and fourth graders, and demand has been on the uptick this fall. We expanded history programs for youth over school breaks in partnership with Chaparral Ranch's horse camp program and other summer camp providers, hosting history scavenger hunts for 670 children.

Key to our popular Meet-a-Mini is Lightning, who was adopted by the Friends in 2020. This program introduces small children, ages 3–12, to horses and horse safety in a very approachable way. Participants interact with Lightning, practice grooming, and go out together on the trail, leading Lightning.

We re-opened the Carriage House Museum, open on weekends and staffed by Friends’ docents. The museum highlights the history of the area and contains many artifacts from the historic Folger Estate. This year we’ve welcomed 2,500 museum visitors to about the estate and its history.

SUPPORTING NATURE-BASED EDUCATION

Our Huddart Park Nature Hikes programs serves students in grades K-6, helping them discover a love of learning and science while spending time outdoors. During the 2021-22 school year, we served 1,077 students; two-thirds were students of color and nearly half low-income. Thanks to generous financial supporters, Friends could offer transportation subsidies to reach the park. One teacher described the impact of the field trip—and the availability of subsidies:

About half of our students hadn’t been hiking in a forest before this trip! This opportunity was so amazing. Our students were so happy to be out and learning in nature! They haven’t stopped talking about all they saw and learned. We would not have been able to go if not for the funding provided by the Friends. Thank you!

We extended this educational opportunity to schools serving special education students with mobility challenges, adapting our curriculum. Accessible field trips introduced 52 students to the forest this year. One teacher shared:

We are so grateful to get our Special Needs students out and about in the community! It really adds to our academic and social skills curriculum! The docents were so flexible and terrific.

We also hosted special summer outings for 288 low income and homeless youth over the summer working with community organizations like Sienna Youth Center and *Familias Unidas*.

We are currently scheduling trips for this school year and anticipate a busy hiking season. We anticipate the demand for subsidies will be even higher this year due to high gas prices.

IMPROVING HEALTH & WELLNESS

Friends’ “Parks Rx” Initiative helps people’s health and wellbeing by spending time in the parks. We partner with the San Mateo Medical Center’s



Docent Lorna Basso on a Meet- a- Mini program; photo appeared in a recent *Punch* magazine article about the Folger Stables, including Friends’ educational programs.



Kindergartners learning about trees and leaves with a specially trained docent.

Pediatric Lifestyles Clinic, San Mateo County’s Behavioral Health and Recovery Services and Avenidas Clinic to lead outings for patients and family members. As we look to expand this work, Friends’ docents have attended special training sessions to help their communication techniques to support people out on hikes who may be anxious, stressed, or living with mental health challenges or trauma.

ENSURING THE HEALTH OF OUR FORESTS

Friends’ programs would not be possible without a healthy forest. With San Mateo County Parks Department, we helped spread the word about park and trail closures during a forest health project that removed heavy brush from under the tree canopy. The treated area is not only more resilient to wildfire, but it has also become an outdoor classroom where we can talk with visitors about forest ecology. Friends’ volunteers are support forest managers by collecting data quarterly, observing changes in the flora and fauna along trails treated for fire resiliency.

A special opportunity that required intrepid volunteers was to spend two--very long--days helping a UC Davis researcher complete a “Redwood Clonal study.” To estimate the biomass of a “fairy ring” of redwood trees in Wunderlich Park, our 14 community scientists had to measure the diameter of 276 living tree limbs, all thought to come from a single individual seedling—therefore all genetic clones. Preliminary results were that this redwood clone covers one acre of the park, weighs 1,000 metric tons, with an estimated volume of 100,000 cubic feet. If confirmed, it would be the largest ever identified and could become the second-largest organism in the world in terms of its above-ground weight!



Community Science volunteer.

LOOKING AHEAD: THE DAIRY HOUSE

It has been more than 10 years since the Friends rehabilitated and restored the 1905 Folger Estate Stable from a nearly demolished state. Friends has since successfully brought history alive with the re-use of the Folger Stable for equestrian use and living history, and the Carriage House as a museum for the entire community.

A priority for Friends now is the rehabilitation of the oldest remaining historic structure on the Folger Estate: the Dairy House. We envision a future when a restored Dairy House would invite park visitors—from history buffs to young students—to peek into the past. They might see milk jugs, bushels of vegetables, hanging ham hocks, and other perishable foods and come to better understand the estate’s operations. More details are included in the attached brochure.

CONCLUSION

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, history, and horses—all the while improving community health and wellness.