



Friends of Huddart & Wunderlich Parks

HIKES • HISTORY • HORSES

Annual Impact Report 2023

This has been a wonderfully busy year and a much welcome return to outdoor programming that connects community to nature. Friends of Huddart and Wunderlich Parks is so grateful to our staff, board, volunteers, partners -- and generous donors -- for helping preserve, promote, and steward these two historic redwood parks. With so much going on in the parks, Friends is on track to directly serve 6,000 people in 2023, plus improve the experience and enjoyment of the parks for thousands more! We are proud to share this report which highlights what we accomplished together.

THROUGH THE SEASONS



What a winter! When much-needed winter rain finally came to San Mateo County, it came in torrents that caused unprecedented storm damage. Widespread park closures were needed to protect visitors while rangers, assisted by expert volunteers, completed disaster recovery efforts. At Huddart and Wunderlich that work included scouting miles of trails to assess conditions, cutting and moving 100+ downed trees as well as hazard tree limbs. Stormwater poured into the Carriage House Museum. Friends, along with San Mateo County Parks and Chaparral Ranch, responded quickly to dry out and protect the historic collection.



All that meant that spring was especially welcome -- when it finally arrived. In between storms, we continued recovering from the damage to roadways, bridges, and trails, re-opening the parks to the public. Luckily, we were able to stay on track with our spring outdoor education programs, thanks to our hardy group of docents, program partners, and schoolteachers who had to adapt as conditions and plans changed.



By summer, we were ready to embark on what became our busiest season in years! Over the summer, we delivered a wide variety of programs -- for youth camps, scouting groups, and residents of senior centers. We led historical walking tours at the Folger Stables, introduced young children to horses, celebrated the past during the Victorian Walking Days, and capped off the summer with our first ever Family Fun Day August 27th.

FRIENDS' PROGRAMS

Spending time in nature is vital to us all. With partners, Friends shares Huddart and Wunderlich parks with a wide community.

History & Horse Programming

The Folger Stable Historic District in Wunderlich Park provides a wonderful place where Friends celebrate our area's horse heritage. Over 40% of the people we served this year took part in one of our history & horse-related activities. A big draw is our horse ambassador, Lightning, the mini horse, adopted by Friends in 2020.

- Lightning is the centerpiece of so much programming, and Friends is responsible for his care. He enjoys a dedicated team of handlers and Friends pays for his board, feed, farrier and veterinary costs.
- Our *Meet-a-Mini* program is a great way for young children to learn about horses. During the program, children meet Lightning, help groom him, and lead him on a short walk. Lightning is a star attraction at community events such as Woodside's Day of the Horse, Family Fun Day, and many others.
- The *Historic Folger Stable Field Trip*, delivered in partnership with the San Mateo County Historical Association, provides interactive history and social science lessons for about 650 third and fourth graders each year. Assisted by Friends' docents, students meet Lightning, build replicas of stone walls, press apples, stamp leather, and learn how to "tack up" a horse.
- The *Victorian Walking Days* event provided special opportunities to learn about earlier periods.
- The *Carriage House Museum* at Folger Stable is open weekends thanks to Friends docents and is visited by about 3,000 people each year. School programs and history tours also stop by the museum for opportunities to see the life-size replica of a blacksmith shop and original 19th-century carriages. They learn about the history of the Folger and Wunderlich families and the Folger Coffee Company. Another exhibit shares the area's logging history.

School Nature Hikes

Friends supports STEM education (i.e., science, technology, engineering, and math) for students in kindergarten through eighth grade attending San Mateo County schools. Friends' specially trained docents help teachers with classroom science lessons. While out on the trail, students learn to observe nature and connect what they see to what they've learned at school.



DAIRY HOUSE UPDATE

Our other big initiative underway is the Dairy House restoration. Built around 1874, this is one of our favorite buildings in the Folger Estate Historic District. This charming little building, near the park entrance, was once used as a cold house for perishable foods—making it the oldest refrigerator in the County!

Friends has completed rehabilitation planning, is securing needed approvals from the County, and has raised \$100,000 toward the ultimate \$250,000 cost. We are looking to break the project into phases, while continuing to fundraise.

We envision the restored Dairy House welcoming history buffs, park users, and students to see hanging ham hocks, milk jugs, and bushels of perishables kept the old-fashioned way.

Friends is moving ahead with the first phase of work that stabilizes the structure and makes it watertight leaving landscaping and interpretive improvements to a future phase.

- Since January we have served 404 students and have another 360 students scheduled for fall field trips. About 63% of participants are students of color and a majority from low-income households.
- Thanks to generous donors, we were able to waive participant fees for all schools and subsidized the cost of bus transportation for one-third of schools.
- We piloted a program with Arbor Bay School to serve high-needs special education students with physical disabilities this year, an initiative that is in high demand. We also offered specialized training for our docents on working with people with disabilities. We have three all disability field trips planned for the fall, including one all wheelchair participant hike.
- All our school programs are popular: nearly the entire schedule is already filled for the 2023-24 school year.

Hikes for All

This program connects people to nature who otherwise experience barriers to spending time outdoors working with community partners.

- We organized summer outings for 82 low-income children who participate in the Siena Youth Center's programs. This long-standing partnership provides youth with a special visit to the redwoods.
- We co-hosted with SMCPF 50 graduates of San Mateo County Sheriff's CARON Community Program's Young Parents Program with a day outdoors at Wunderlich.
- We welcomed seniors from the Sunny View Retirement Community for an outing to learn about history and meet our mini-horse and park ambassador, Lightning.

Healthy Forests and Stewardship

Friends has stepped up efforts to inform and educate park visitors about the importance of healthy forests and our volunteers have been helping with stewardship and community science projects.

- We contributed community-collected science data to research efforts including helping monitor for presence of sudden oak death and cataloguing local nature during a *BioBlitz* community event. We are continuing to train community members on how to participate in BioBlitz events and build community science efforts through various corporate events.
- We teamed up with County Parks for a stewardship day that focused on pulling French and Scottish Broom, weeds that are invasive and highly flammable.



SCHOOL NATURE HIKES

We were proud to have received such high overall ratings from teachers. In post-trip surveys, 92% rated "excellent."

"This hike goes right alongside our science unit, *My Big Nature Adventure*. We love the docents, hands-on explorations, and the beauty of Huddart Park." ~ Kindergarten teacher

"It was such an amazing opportunity for students to just walk through nature, notice, wonder, and grow in their curiosity about the natural world. I am always struck by how even though hiking is typically a free activity, it is an activity associated with communities of far greater privilege. The leisure associated with hiking outdoors is not something most of our families from East Palo Alto can afford." ~ First grade teacher

- We welcomed teams from scouting groups and local businesses to help with park maintenance.

Docents and Volunteers

We just can't say enough: a continuing and all-important success factor is the dedication of our volunteers. Our 50 volunteers collectively contributed 1,600 hours from fall 2022-summer 2023 supporting our parks and programs! We are always looking to grow this pool of volunteers and successfully recruited eight new volunteers this year. Nurturing our docents with outings and continuing education opportunities is an ongoing commitment. 2023 activities:

- A course on nature journaling for docents to help incorporate arts into hikes. We are looking to add
- new content to summer naturalist programs for groups like the Siena Youth Center such as journaling, nature art mandalas, and creative writing. We were joined by nine participants, including Adriana Fernandez Arriaga from the Parks Foundation.
- An outing to the San Mateo County Museum included a tour for 14 of our Carriage Room docents and talks by the Museum director about how they design and research new exhibits and pointed out historic connection we could make for our museum visitors.
- A visit to the Jasper Ridge Farm for 13 Meet-a-Mini docents and Board members where they learned about animal therapy and ways to work with different populations which could help enhance our equine program.
- A session led by the director and a teacher from the Arbor Bay school, a partner who brings students receiving special education services for outdoor programs in our parks, taught 20 docents about different learning styles, disabilities, and ways to support all types of learners.

We initiated a review of FHWP's naturalist docent onboarding and training efforts and piloted a program for new volunteers with three full day sessions that focused on oak woodland ecology, redwood ecology, and the art of interpretation and thematic storytelling. We were able to roll out the pilot for seven new docents and six long-time docents who serve as mentors. The program committee of our Board is now taking the course materials and evaluations and building them into training outline and program that we can sustain going forward.



OUTDOORS FOR ALL

Friends provided a special nature outing for medically fragile students this fall. We are so grateful to our wonderful and dedicated volunteers who helped make the outing possible.

Teacher Mary shared:

I teach students who are extra special, most of whom use wheelchairs. What a beautiful and memorable guided hike we had today in the beautiful redwood trees. I loved everything--the joy on my student's faces, the tactile experiences, the amazing guides. My students were engaged and had the best time. I'm flying high from being able to bring my students to Huddart Park for this experience.

LOOKING AHEAD TO 2024!

Did you know that 2024 is the 100th anniversary of San Mateo County Parks?!? It is also the 50th anniversary of Wunderlich County Park, and in 2025, we will celebrate the 120th anniversary of the Folger Stable. We are making plans to celebrate all these milestones, stay tuned for details!

For a small, community-based organization with just one part-time staff person, Friends can take an expansive view of what’s possible with programming thanks to our dedicated board of directors, volunteers, and a network of partners.

For this new school year, we face a big jump not only in demand but also in the cost of bus transportation to the parks. Complying with a new Woodside town ordinance about vehicle length on Kings Mountain Road up to Huddart Park is part of the additional costs. With 85% of our schools arriving via school bus we expect transportation costs to double. We are responsible for Lightning’s costs of care, which seem to increase every year.

Opportunities continue to emerge to get people out in nature. After we piloted a program for the Arbor Day School to support special education students with mobility challenges, we found we were one of the few providers of outdoor education that can serve such students. This seems to be a growing opportunity for us and the community.

Please make sure to check out our newly designed website online at www.huddartwunderlichfriends.org/
 Kym Teppo has a new email address, too: fhwp2961@gmail.com.



BOARD AND STAFF UPDATES

Our volunteer board of 12 directors provides the incredible leadership and strategic direction for the Friends. Our board has grown in number, with three new members. Ann Cripps and Jackie Nicholson have taken on the challenge as co-Presidents of the Board. They are more than up to the challenge, and former Board President Jill Daly (pictured above) is never far away as she continues to lead the Dairy House campaign. We wished our longtime financial manager, Joe Geist, a happy retirement in late 2022 and are fortunate to have Kym Teppo has been with Friends for nine years and is doing a fabulous job as our executive director.

