



San Mateo County Parks Foundation

inspiring people to care for,
learn about and enjoy our parks

Summer/Fall 2018

Foundation Past, Present and Future: Celebrating 20 Years of Supporting Parks Projects and Programs

By Korrine Skinner, Board Chair

Twenty years ago marked a turning point for San Mateo County's park system, which was then showing the strain of a decade of declining funds and increasing use. In the 1990s, revenue allocated to local governments was shrinking and mandated expenses growing, leaving little left for the county's 19 parks.

By 1998, park use boomed to more than 3 million visitors a year, yet inadequate funding led to reduced staffing and a backlog of nearly \$25 million in deferred maintenance, improvements and programs.

To meet this increasing demand, a volunteer committee made up of various park constituencies and led by Linda Dyson-Weaver, a member of the county parks commission, was created to investigate both tax-based and non-tax-based

ways to augment park funding. Early efforts to raise tax-based money failed, so the committee focused on raising private money by setting up what is now the San Mateo County Parks Foundation.

"With no dedicated tax for parks, the available dollars in the county's general fund just weren't enough to meet the growing demand," Dyson-Weaver said. "As population and use increase, so does impact and demand for improvements and access. Compared to public health services and public safety, parks may be discretionary, yet they are so important to our collective well-being."

Linda Liebes, executive director of the Coyote Point Museum for Environmental Education (now CuriOdyssey), was a member of the alternative funding committee who played a key role in launching the Parks Foundation. "I could see that we would be directly impacted by the



direction things were going," she said. "If a lack of funding meant the parks were closed for a few days a week, we, too, would have struggled. I cared very deeply about the condition of the parks and so did a lot of others who gave their time and talents to finding a solution."

Julia Bott, who had been involved in the effort as director of a local Sierra Club chapter, stepped off the committee to throw her hat in the ring to become the Foundation's first executive director. She was hired in October of 1998 and remained at the helm until her retirement in 2015, successfully overseeing the distribution of more than \$10 million to the county parks department.

"People love our parks," Bott said in early interviews. "The parks in San Mateo County are jewels and they need a little polishing."

The Early Years

The Foundation's first office was at Flood Park in Menlo Park, and new playground equipment for Flood and other parks to meet newly mandated ADA requirements was among the Foundation's first fundraising priorities, as were shade shelters at Huddart Park,



The Parks Foundation's largest project has been the Bill and Jean Lane Education Center at Edgewood Park and Preserve.

(Continued on page 3)

San Mateo County Parks

Coyote Point Recreation Area
Crystal Springs Trails
San Andreas Trail
Sawyer Camp Trail
Edgewood Park & Preserve
Devil's Slide Trail
Fitzgerald Marine Reserve
Pillar Point Bluff
Flood Park
Friendship Park
Junipero Serra Park
Huddart Park
Memorial Park
Pescadero Creek Park
Sam McDonald Park
Heritage Grove
Mirada Surf
Moss Beach Park
Quarry Park
San Bruno Mountain Park
Sanchez Adobe
San Pedro Valley Park
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Woodside Store
Wunderlich Park

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The Parks Foundation played a key role in acquiring Mirada Surf.

CELEBRATING 20 YEARS

Sunday, September 9, 2018 1-4 pm

Huddart County Park

1100 Kings Mountain Road, Woodside

**Wine, beer & hors d'oeuvres,
Silent auction and wine pull
Gourmet picnic lunch
Guest speaker Doug McConnell
Emcees Kathy and Bill Korbholz**

Available at supportparks.org/celebrating20

Join The Celebration

As the San Mateo County Parks Foundation celebrates 20 years of supporting our extraordinary parks, we're honoring three of our extraordinary founders, Linda Dyson-Weaver, Linda Liebes and Julia Bott, with a gourmet picnic lunch, silent auction and presentation.

Honorees Linda Dyson-Weaver and Linda Liebes were the dynamic duo when it came time to figure out a private funding source for San Mateo County parks. It was through their vision, talent, persistence and enthusiastic but relentless involvement of others that the Foundation came to fruition. Linda Dyson-Weaver served on the Parks Commission and Linda Liebes was executive director of what we now know as CuriOdyssey and both shared a deep love of nature in general and of San Mateo County parks, specifically.

Julia Bott was the Foundation's first executive director, and the largest single driver of our first 17 years of successfully contributing more than \$10 million in support of county parks.

Please join other park supporters on Sunday, September 9 at Huddart County Park as we honor these amazing individuals, celebrate our past and usher in the future!

(Continued from page 1)

seismic updates and a new roof at Sanchez Adobe and equipment for volunteer crews.

In its first year, the Foundation raised nearly a quarter million dollars in donations and pledges, presenting its first gift to San Mateo County Parks in August of 1999.

Just three years after its founding, gifts to the Foundation topped \$3 million. In 2002, fundraising for the Foundation's largest project to date began, culminating 9 years later in April 2011 with the opening of the Bill and Jean Lane Education Center at Edgewood Park and Natural Preserve.

Also in that first decade, the Foundation contributed funding for the acquisition and planning of Mirada Surf, one of the few undeveloped coastal bluffs in the region and an important connection point for the California Coastal Trail. Tour de Peninsula, thanks to bicyclists and sponsors, raised nearly \$20,000 to support Bicycle Sunday and other park programs and the Foundation provided a matching grant for the planning needed to extend the heavily used Crystal Springs Trail south of Highway 92.

"While park acquisitions and improvements get all the glory, the Foundation provides much-needed support for preservation projects, volunteer crews, student environmental education and lots more that's less visible but no less important," Bott said. "There's a period of years where we funded a slew of feasibility and planning studies, so much that I used to joke about how much paper we funded. You'd be amazed at what kind of studies and permits are required to move things far enough along that you can begin to apply for grants and the major funding needed to get big things done."

Habitat restoration to support the successful reintroduction of the endangered Bay checkerspot butterfly to Edgewood Park was one of those quieter projects, as were other vegetation management and invasive plant removal efforts, new radios for trail patrols and other tools and materials to support the thousands of volunteers who serve our parks.

By 2005, budget cuts stemming from the dot-com bust and ensuing downturn again reduced park staffing and progress on maintenance and improvement projects. That year, the Foundation, which had raised \$5 million since its inception, stepped in to fill the gap with a gift of nearly \$1 million to San Mateo County parks.

Act Two: The Second Decade

By its 10th birthday, the Foundation had raised \$9 million and completed 30 projects, including improving trails, funding clean park maintenance tractors to reduce greenhouse gas and air pollution emissions, providing temporary access at erosion-damaged Coyote Point and installing salmon and steel-head migration culverts at San Francisquito Creek.

Goals for the Foundation's second act included a continued focus on habitat restoration, youth environmental education, funding conservation job training, building on already successful volunteer programs and breaking ground on the aforementioned Bill and Jean Lane Education Center.

"We celebrated our successes just in time for another dive of the Bay Area's boom and bust economy," Bott recalled. "While state parks were closing, San Mateo was able to carry on because local folks were really beginning to recognize how vital parklands and recreation opportunities were to vibrant



Many volunteer work days were promoted and supplied by the Parks Foundation.
communities."

In 2012, more than 65 percent of county voters approved Measure A, a half-cent sales tax increase that promised some funding for parks. The Foundation played a central role in advocating for the passage of Measure A, recognizing the need for steady park maintenance and improvement funding.

"As high-density growth increases, our parks continue to serve as family and community gathering spaces and provide intrinsic value for all citizens to 're-create' as well as recreate," Dyson-Weaver said. "I think people recognize that parks play a special role in providing convenient and safe access to nature, along with the opportunity for interpretation and education that add to the outdoor experience."

In addition to helping to clear a maintenance backlog, Measure A funds provided for missing trail connections, coastal habitat restoration and the addition of a natural resource manager to lead efforts to protect and scientifically manage sensitive park resources.

In 2015, with the financial outlook for county parks much improved, Bott decided it was time to retire. Along with the Foundation board, she found a worthy successor in Michele Beasley, who is equally dedicated to inspiring people to care for, learn about and enjoy our parks.

With the 2016 passage of Measure K, where 70 percent of county voters extended the half-cent sales tax increase for 20 years, parks funding is no longer on life support. The Foundation is now able to focus on expanding park access to get more people out into nature, building new partnerships with like-minded organizations like REI, sponsor of our Coyote Nights summer mixers and new trail signage, and supporting special projects that enhance the enjoyment of our parks.

"As we celebrate 20 years, we look back to thank all of our founders, donors, partners and volunteers who have carried us thus far," Beasley said. "And we look forward to a future of new faces, new challenges and new opportunities."

Thank you to our generous supporters!

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(Continued on next page)

The Parks Foundation welcomes Traci Loftis as our Membership and Development Assistant

Traci Loftis joined San Mateo County Parks Foundation as the Membership and Development Assistant in April. She has always had a love for technology and the outdoors, bringing both of her passions to play at the Parks Foundation. She grew up in Kansas, and at the age of twelve, her parents took their family of eight on a six-week camping trip. They covered the entire Pacific Northwest and camped at as many National Parks as possible. She was standing on the bluffs looking down at the ocean, and she decided at that moment that Northern California was the most beautiful place she had ever seen and made it her dream to live here.

Traci went on to attend Wichita State University and Kansas State

University, studying computer and architectural engineering and selling real estate to help pay her way through school. She has always loved any kind of technology and figuring out how things work. She spent many days in high school tearing some of the original personal computers apart — just to see if she could put them back together.

Traci finally realized her dream and moved to San Mateo in 2011. When she isn't working for the Parks Foundation, she is selling real estate. She also uses her auction skills to help nonprofits raise funds as an auctioneer. She loves to kitesurf, run barefoot, and hang out with her dog Joey when she is not working. She also has a lifelong passion for learning, and is



Traci Loftis, Membership and Development Assistant

constantly curious by nature.

We are thrilled to have Traci join San Mateo County Parks Foundation to help us connect even more people to our amazing park system here in San Mateo County.

(Continued from previous page)

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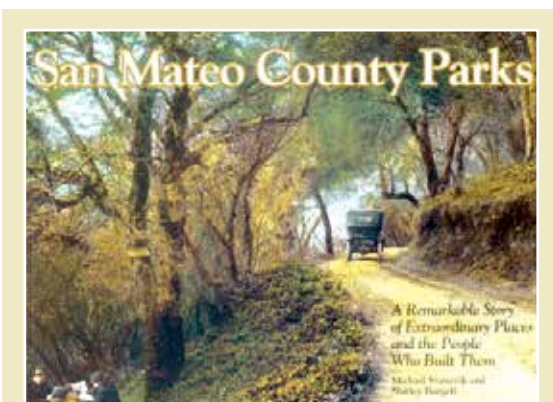
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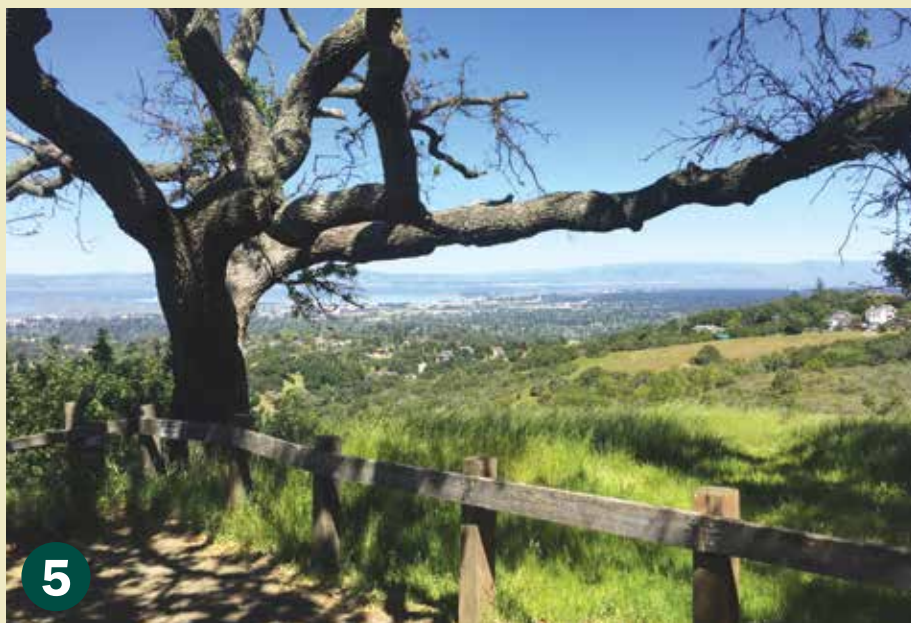
Top Hikes for Gorgeous Views



1. San Bruno Mountain in Brisbane – Summit Loop Trail

2. Fitzgerald Marine Reserve in Moss Beach – above Seal Cove

3. San Pedro Valley in Pacifica – Montara Mountain Trail at Brooks Creek Trail



4. Pillar Point Bluff in Moss Beach – Jean Lauer Trail

5. Edgewood Park and Natural Preserve in Redwood City – Ridgeview Trail

6. Coyote Point in San Mateo- Merchant Marine Memorial Overlook

7. Memorial Park in Loma Mar – Mt. Ellen Summit Trail



8. Devil's Slide near Pacifica – off Highway 1

Share with us your favorite San Mateo County Parks hike with views – follow us on Instagram at [smcfoundation](https://www.instagram.com/smcfoundation)



San Mateo County Parks and Recreation Foundation

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Questions? Contact Michele 650.321.5812 or michele@supportparks.org

Our commitment

The San Mateo County Parks Foundation is committed to providing funding to improve the quality of County Parks for our community.

To get this newsletter by email,
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