The Year in Review
2022-2023

A report to our community showcasing our work to support San Mateo County Parks by funding projects, people, and programs.

“We deeply value our partnership with the San Mateo County Parks Foundation. Our collaboration is allowing families lacking transportation to embrace the wonders of nature. Families not only gain knowledge that nurtures curiosity and environmental awareness but they also enjoy the health-enhancing benefits of physical activity and reduced stress.”

- Kim Zuno, United through Education - Familias Unidas

Photo by San Mateo County Parks
To Our Extended Parks Family,

The Parks Foundation hired our first Program Coordinator, Adriana Fernandez Arriaga, in May 2022. Ever since, our program offerings and efforts to make parks more accessible to more people have grown exponentially. It has been awe-inspiring to say the least.

In our last Year in Review, we featured 5th graders at Wunderlich Park riding a horse for the first time. In one afternoon, a whole new world opened up for them – seeds planted that when nurtured can lead to all sorts of wonderful things.

Since then, the creative park outings that have instilled wonder and inspired action have included a weekend camping trip at Memorial Park, a salsa-making contest at Friendship Park, navigating a ropes course at San Bruno Mountain and a night hike at Edgewood Preserve. These outings develop new community leaders, improve classroom learning, open up pathways to new careers and offer better ways to take care of ourselves.

Access is key – whether that means enjoying a trail via your wheelchair or being able to read a park brochure in your language. Making sure people know about and can enjoy parks is such a wonderful gift that benefits us all.

What we are seeing now is that those who have gone on these park outings want to come back and volunteer. They want to return and pull weeds, lead hikes and pick up litter. We desperately need more volunteers to help in the parks, so this has been thrilling to note.

I recently attended the Friends of Edgewood’s General Meeting where I shared my vision for the Preserve’s next thirty years. The event had me reflecting on this remarkable group of volunteers. They have dedicated themselves to taking care of Edgewood Preserve’s sensitive grasslands for more than three decades – and it shows. Talk about the power of volunteers!

How can we clone all of this wonderful energy and multiply the number of volunteers looking after all 24 of our magnificent county parks? By introducing the parks to new people and by making them accessible and welcoming. This is what we are doing at the San Mateo County Parks Foundation. This is what we are doing, thanks to you.

Thank you for your generous support! You are responsible for creating many heartfelt and memorable moments in the parks. You are helping to nurture our next generation of conservation-minded park champions! The love that you share for the parks is multiplying, and we are seeing the results. Please read on to see all that we have accomplished together, because we cannot do this work without you.

With Gratitude,

Michele Beasley, Executive Director
and the Board of the San Mateo County Parks Foundation
Your gifts support projects throughout the County

This year’s project highlights:

An underwriter from the very first season, the Parks Foundation continues to produce a segment on OpenRoad with Doug McConnell, which this year focused on our first county park, Memorial, and our soon-to-be-newest park, Tunitas Creek Beach.

Ensuring park rangers have the tools they need to get the job done is important. This last year it included much-needed tools at the Coyote Point Marina, like a circular saw, leaf blower and hand drills.

Two annual park passes are available in every city, county and community college library in San Mateo County for people to check out. This improves park access at the seven county parks that charge a parking fee.

We love to support the Pacific Beach Coalition with a volunteer group grant. They draw hundreds, if not thousands, of volunteers to our coast to pick up litter, like tires and cigarette butts, which is no good for creeks, streams and coastal parks!

This was a fun project – connecting park ranger and videographer Rob Cala with the Friends of Edgewood to create an engaging video about Edgewood Preserve’s grasslands, wildflowers and the amazing volunteers who steward its 467 acres.

In its second year, our Enhancing Equitable Access grant program supported eight organizations that are helping diverse communities enjoy parks. One such group is Redwood City Together whose Executive Director, Rafael Avendaño, was honored at our 25th anniversary picnic. Their Promotores Community Outreach Team shares information about food, housing and parks with community members.

Bilingual Community Engagement intern, Cristina, is helping to revitalize Friendship Park with events and has been featuring regular contact with community gardeners. Reflecting on her work, she said, “It is extraordinary to see people working in their garden plots, harvesting their crops, and talking about family recipes and culture.”

Last year we began our Parks “World” Tour with San Mateo County Pride Center and Peninsula Family Service. Our goal is to make the parks welcoming and relevant to all, which is a great way to cultivate new volunteers. So far, these history walks + lunch have taken place at Coyote Point, San Bruno Mountain and Quarry Park. The next event is in the works now!

In its ninth year, OpenRoad co-produces segments on the show with Doug McConnell, which this year focused on our first county park, Memorial, and our soon-to-be-newest park, Tunitas Creek Beach.

Park interns lead summertime Naturalist programs at Memorial Park, including arts and crafts, nature and night hikes and campfire programs. “Crumb Clean” messaging is woven into all of it, reminding campers to clean up after themselves in order to protect the marbled murrelet, an endangered seabird.

Self-guided tour brochures for Fitzgerald Marine Reserve and Pillar Point Bluff were translated into Spanish and Chinese. We also added Spanish subtitles to the Fitzgerald Marine Reserve welcome video, allowing more people to learn about parks in their own language.

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

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“Our partnership with the San Mateo County Parks Foundation has helped us increase equitable access to local parks for hundreds of families. The popular free County Parks passes encourage people to explore what’s right in our own backyard. We are delighted to be able to connect residents with nature and the restorative experiences, opportunities for recreation and sense of calm that our parks bring.”

- Anne-Marie Despain, Director of Library Services, San Mateo County Libraries

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We were thrilled to work with San Mateo County Parks Foundation and Ranger/Videographer Rob Cala to develop a video that highlights some of Edgewood’s best-loved spring flowers and the story behind why Edgewood Natural Preserve is so special. This video lets us share the beauty of our California native wildflowers online and gives us a great tool to reach new people who don't yet know about Edgewood. We could not have created it without funding from the Parks Foundation. We’re so lucky to have such a supportive partner!”

- Barrie Moore, Vice President, Friends of Edgewood

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This year we were thrilled to launch our SMC Park Poster project. Stay tuned to see what our first three artists create for Edgewood Preserve, Fitzgerald Marine Reserve and Memorial Park. Early next year, Park Pics returns and we look forward to seeing your winter park photos.

Also next year is San Mateo County Parks' centennial! There will be a number of events throughout the year including a big picnic in July at Memorial Park – please join us! We are currently raising funds to upgrade the displays at the Memorial Park Nature Center and are seeking generous donors to help make this happen. Could this be you?