

## Restoring Pescadero Creek County Park's Forests: A Journey of Patience, Science, and Hope for Our Precious Redwood Heritage.

In the Santa Cruz Mountains, tucked away from the hustle and bustle of urban life lies a treasure – Pescadero Creek County Park. The largest park in the San Mateo County Parks system at nearly 6,000 acres, Pescadero Creek neighbors both Memorial and Sam McDonald County Parks, and is popular with hikers and equestrians.

Prior to the County attaining control of the property in 1971, Pescadero Creek County Park had been extensively logged by the Santa Cruz Lumber Company. Today, a few old-growth redwood stands remain but the forest is mostly dense, second-growth coast redwood and Douglas-fir. Logging and stressors, like drought and wildfire, have led to the Parks' declining ecosystem health and resiliency.

Visitors may see Pescadero Creek's serene beauty of towering redwood trees and long, peaceful trails; San Mateo County Parks and its partners, however, see both potential and vulnerability. To give the forest a better chance of survival when the next fire comes, an ambitious restoration project will get underway later this year.

This remote woodland is getting readied for its next act so it may thrive for years to come.

### The \$5.5 Million Forest Health Initiative

In 2024, the San Mateo Resource Conservation District

(RCD) was awarded a \$5.5 million CAL FIRE grant for forest management at Pescadero Creek and adjacent Camp Jones Gulch. Of this funding, \$3.9 million is dedicated specifically for critical forest restoration work at Pescadero Creek, covering 541 acres. This funding begins to implement the **Pescadero Creek County Park Climate and Habitat Resiliency Plan (CHRP)** which focuses on nurturing the Park's native species and habitats to create ecosystems that are more resilient to climate change and disturbances like disease and fire. The CHRP was developed following the 2020 CZU Lightning Complex Fire that burned over 2,800 acres in Pescadero Creek.

"This project is a tremendous opportunity to improve forest resilience while educating the public about what active forest management looks like," shared Hannah Ormshaw, Assistant San Mateo County Parks Director, and a lead on this project. "Pescadero Creek is not capable of getting to old-growth status on its own and remains vulnerable to a devastating wildfire."

After clear-cutting, plant life gradually returns in a forest – called secondary succession – and without interference, grows into dense stands of smaller trees which are less capable of resisting fire. Small trees sprout up close together and prevent more mature trees from growing to their full potential.



*Hannah Ormshaw, Assistant Director, County of San Mateo Parks Dept., standing in Pescadero Creek County Park after the 2020 CZU Lightning Complex Fire. Photo by Rob Cala.*

Selectively removing small trees gives breathing space for the rest of the forest.

This is important for people to understand. When potential treatment areas were ranked in the CHRP, sites that can be viewed by the public came out higher. Allowing people to observe this work contributes to their knowledge of a healthy forest.

### What does the work entail?

Two primary approaches will be utilized:

- **Mechanical mastication** across most of the project area, which will remove trees 8 inches in diameter and less through

grinding, chipping, and mowing.

- **Restoration thinning** on 110 acres, where trees between 18-30 inches in diameter will be hand-selected for removal by professional foresters. Up to 50% of these trees will be removed to create proper spacing that allows the largest, healthiest trees to thrive, promoting old-growth characteristics that benefit the entire ecosystem.

After mechanical and manual treatments reduce the density of vegetation, land managers can utilize other tools to maintain this work. Herbivory is strategic grazing by animals, like goats,

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## San Mateo County Parks

Cowell – Purisima Trail  
Coyote Point Recreation Area  
Crystal Springs Regional Trail  
San Andreas Segment  
Sawyer Camp Segment  
Edgewood Park & Preserve  
Devil's Slide Trail  
Fitzgerald Marine Reserve  
Pillar Point Bluff  
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Pescadero Creek Park  
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San Pedro Valley Park  
Tunitas Creek Beach  
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*Two panoramic photos comparing conditions in an old growth forest (top) and a neighboring second growth forest (bottom) in Prairie Creek Redwoods State Park. Redwoods in the second growth forest suffer from high competition and lack the fully developed canopies seen in the old growth forest. Photo by Andrew Slack, Save the Redwoods League.*

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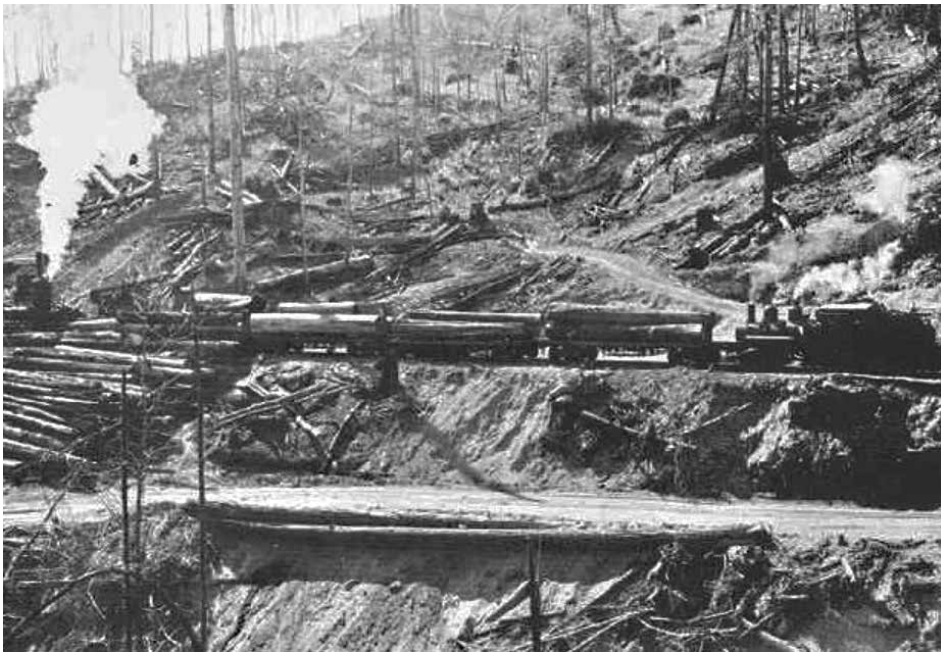
to manage vegetation. The best tool available, though, is a prescribed burn. "Prescribed burns are a maintenance tool for the future, done 5-10 years after the initial treatment," said Ormshaw. "Right now, the sheer amount of vegetation, including dead vegetation, needs to be brought to a manageable level before a prescribed burn may even be considered."

Forest restoration work is a big undertaking and expensive to do. Opportunities to save money can be a very good thing. Costs can be reduced when a licensed timber operator takes payment in the form of fallen timber, which is resold in the marketplace, potentially leading to a cost-neutral contract. Some logs will be left on the ground for habitat, but not all logs can stay on site. Checks and balances are put in place to make sure that what is being removed is ultimately in the forest's best interest. Any additional revenue would be placed in a trust fund established by the County Board of Supervisors and earmarked for restoration purposes in Pescadero Creek County Park.

## Regional resilience

Pescadero Creek's restoration efforts do not exist in isolation. It is one piece of a much larger puzzle that is the Santa Cruz Mountains. Many different land managers are working across this vast landscape to ensure healthier forests in the face of looming environmental challenges. California State Parks released their Forest Management Strategy for Big Basin, Año Nuevo, and Butano State Parks in August 2024. The San Mateo RCD is partnering with private and public landowners to complete a fuel break around the community of La Honda. And a network of land managers keeps everyone up to speed on all the good work happening which can lead to landscape-level improvements.

That would be the Santa Cruz Mountains Stewardship Network, a collaboration of twenty-five organizations engaged in land stewardship that includes local, state, and federal agencies, land trusts, universities, timber companies, water utilities, and indigenous tribes. Its members feel "that the act of stewardship toward land is based on the concept that



*Santa Cruz Lumber Company, Pescadero Creek, 1943*

landowners and land managers take good care of the land for its own sake and for the future, and not only for short-term personal gain." They recognize they share a rare opportunity and responsibility to protect this unique ecological and cultural heritage. It takes many hands working together!

### And it requires patience.

At the time the original redwood forest at Pescadero Creek was logged, the largest redwood trees were probably close to 1,000 years old, with diameters between 10 and 20 feet. In this forest's case, it is the

*removal* of certain trees that will benefit future generations. Long-term monitoring programs will be set up to track trends and contribute to the scientific understanding of redwood forest management.

Old growth redwoods are the global champion for carbon sequestration, outperforming even rainforests. Carbon sequestration is the process of capturing and storing carbon dioxide before it enters the Earth's atmosphere and contributes to a warming planet. The removal of dense stands of small trees allows the remaining trees to grow larger and sequester more carbon long-term.

When one looks back in time, we see that humans have disturbed the land in some way for hundreds of years. Indigenous land stewardship included using fire as a tool to clear out encroaching brush and allow other plants to regenerate – a relationship based on reciprocity. This was replaced with aggressive clear-cutting and the suppression of beneficial fire which has made the forest understory a tangled mess more susceptible to a destructive wildfire. To make up for the damage that has been done in the last century, active forest management that learns from indigenous stewardship practices is crucial going forward.

## Round Two: Beautiful San Mateo County Park Posters



*Hollis Callas, Damon Belanger and Calene Luczo stand with their original artwork in our second park poster round. Photo by Rob Cala.*

At the end of March, we had an artists' reception for our second round of park posters. It was a great turnout that included an appearance from Supervisor Ray Mueller who made the insightful comment that each poster depicted a bench, inviting the viewer to come, relax and enjoy this tranquil park setting. The fact that each artist decided on

their own to include a bench speaks to the welcoming nature of your San Mateo County Parks.

Round three will kick off in January 2026. Encourage the artists in your life to apply next year!

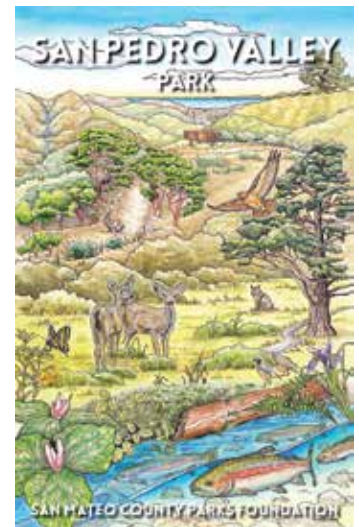
**Our Artists in Their Own Words** (read more from our artists on our website, [www.SupportParks.org](http://www.SupportParks.org))

### Calene Luczo, "The Majesty of San Pedro Valley Park"

"For the last 13 years I have been working as a professional marine science illustrator based in Santa Cruz. I create colorful, vibrant wildlife paintings and illustrations that focus on coastal flora and fauna. The goal of my artwork is to create a window for the public to better see and understand the natural history of coastal species and ecosystems with the hope of inspiring conservation efforts.

I was initially drawn to San Pedro Valley Park because San Pedro Creek is an important steelhead spawning ground. However, after visiting the park, I became captivated by not only the creek, but its diversity of habitats and flora and fauna.

It became apparent that this park has so much beauty and natural diversity that it's impossible, and frankly unjust, to only choose one view or trail or ecological zone to feature on

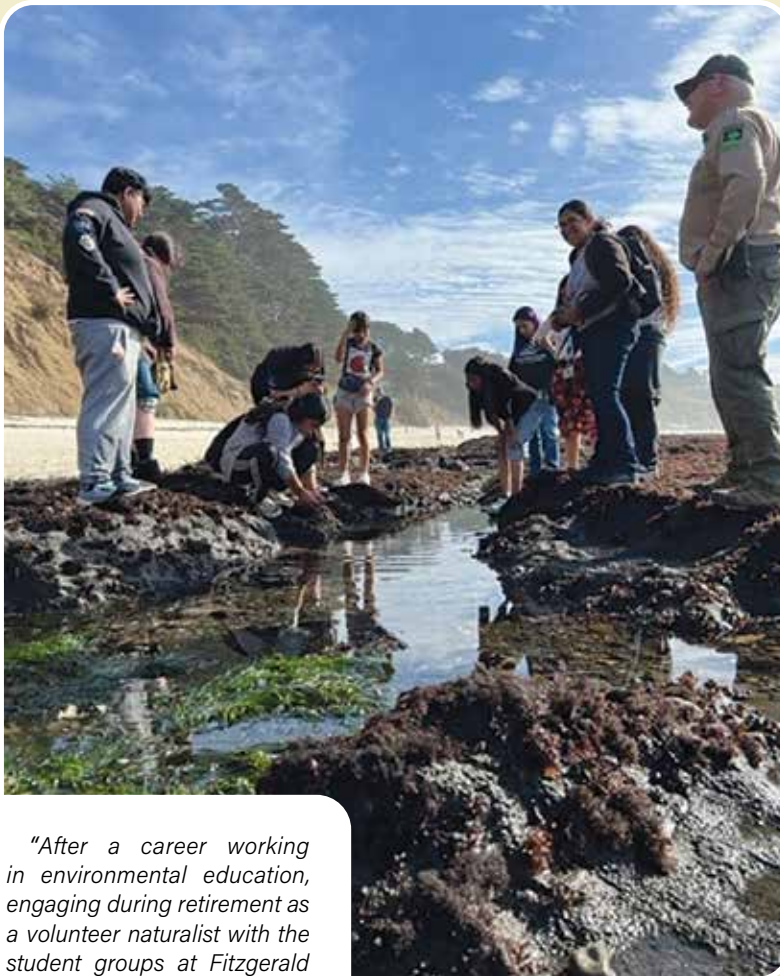


its poster. So, after collecting all my data, I decided that the best representation of SPVP is a sort of montage of its most favorite landmarks – those that would never be seen from the same vantage point, interspersed with some of its iconic flora and fauna. In my piece, you will find

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# It's Springtime! And Summer is Around the Corner. How Do You Enjoy Spending Time in the Parks?

We asked a few people. Here is what they had to say...



*"After a career working in environmental education, engaging during retirement as a volunteer naturalist with the student groups at Fitzgerald Marine Reserve has been a very satisfying highlight. Life in the tide pools provides a unique opportunity to discover these living organisms for the very first time. When I observe the students' fascination grow during the two-hour tour, I know the experience has been a success and will be long remembered."*

— Roger Hoppes,  
Friends of Fitzgerald  
Marine Reserve Volunteer  
Naturalist

Photo courtesy Adriana Fernandez Arriaga

*"The reason I love to connect youth to public parks is because public spaces are a space for everyone from all walks of life to get in touch with the natural world and a world that has endless learnings and opportunities. Nature provides a door to a beautiful world and to me this world is more fun when youth of all walks of life have an opportunity to be a part of it!"*

— Rafael Avendaño, Executive Director,  
Redwood City Together

Rafael with two young men he mentored  
at the Flood Park pump track

*"One of my favorite teachers in high school was my English teacher, Mr. Lance. He had a way of helping us immerse ourselves in what we read for class, so when we read *The Kite Runner* by Khaled Hosseini, our class hosted a kite festival for the school. It was an incredibly fun day to spend with friends while learning about an important pastime and piece of Afghanistan culture. When SMC Parks decided to host a large community event, I suggested we host a kite festival, and we did for 2017 – 2019. After the pandemic, the kite festival morphed into the much larger celebration of Summerfest. This year we are excited to incorporate kites, taiko drummers, baile folklorico, and Bharatanatyam dance. We are so lucky to live in a society of blended cultures and are happy to feature the beauty of these cultures through music and art as part of our community event."*

— Katherine Wright, Park Ranger III,  
Interpretive Division, San Mateo County Parks



Photo courtesy SMC Parks





A migrating cedar waxwing page that Sharron completed. They are lovely birds that make their appearance as they migrate from north and central America to Canada.

"As a long-time photographer, my camera has been my tool to record my observations. However, during the past several years, I have learned to record my observations in a different way. By slowing down and taking time to be in the moment. Nature Journaling is a means to bring together my love of nature by recording my observations through words and sketches. It is not about fine art—it is about being curious, observant, and aware of the natural world. Wanting to share with others all the benefits of nature journaling, I was invited to give Nature Journaling workshops at the Sanchez Art Center in Pacifica. Also, I began a Nature Journaling Group at San Pedro Valley Park in Pacifica. In our challenging world nature journaling is a positive force and movement."

— Sharron Walker, Friends of San Pedro Valley Park & The SPVP Nature Journalers



Photo courtesy Rob Cala

"It's Springtime! The air is filled with birdsong. Birds that choose to nest here, arrive to set up their breeding territories and find a mate. Here are a few reasons I fell in love with birding after a co-worker introduced me to bird-watching. It gets me hiking in many places of natural beauty. Trying to figure out what I'm seeing or hearing exercises my brain. Birding is like a treasure hunt. I enjoy tallying up all the bird species I've seen or heard. Birding can be a solo activity or a social one being part of a vibrant birding community.

Since we are in the Pacific Flyway, any time of the year is a great time to go birding as each season provides a unique "birdscape." Per [www.ebird.org](http://www.ebird.org), a world-wide avian database run by Cornell University, close to 500 species of birds have been recorded in San Mateo County. Any time is a great time to go birding!"

— Malia DeFelice and Chris Hayward, Birders



"I have always liked to be outdoors, hike, and to capture the natural world. Our county parks allow me easy access to multiple different beautiful areas to do this! I'm most interested in seeing plants, animals, and insects in different environments and in photographing them interacting and living their lives from their point of view. It both educates people about what's out there beyond their usual world and puts my own problems into perspective."

— Suzanne Coberly, SMC Parks Foundation supporter

Crab spider on California Asters, photo taken at San Pedro Valley by Suzanne Coberly

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Wayne & Silvia Montoya

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Gregory Mulinare  
David & Kimberly Mullarkey  
Gayle Murphy  
Marilyn Murphy  
Margaret Nalbach  
Allison Needels  
Sally & Julie Newman  
Judy Nishimoto  
Robert & Bea Nissenson  
Michael & Gail O'Connor  
David & Virginia Ogilvie  
Se Baek Oh & Sun Ok Hwang  
David Olsher  
Rodney & Jeanne Panos  
Richard & Joanna Parness  
Hilary Paulson & Ralph Spickermann  
Edward Pease  
Laura Peterhans  
Christine Pezzi  
Alan Phinney  
Martha Pindar  
Mitchell Pon  
Daniel Ponti & Pamela Harris  
Elaine Porter  
Patricia Porter  
Martha Poyatos  
Ted Pratt  
Rhonda Press & Lawrence Ragent  
Kirstan Price  
Don Revelo & Marci Morell-Revelo  
Jeannette Ringold  
Angela Robbiano  
Renette Robillard  
Andrew Rodondi  
Erik & Deborah Rogind  
Ron & Judy Romines  
Howard B. Rosen & Susan M. Doherty  
Barbara & Andrew Rosenberg  
Annemarie Rosengreen  
Paul & Raquel Rusca  
Susan Ryals  
Mark Schack  
Sandra Scheidler-Coulter  
Mary Scholz Guedon & N. Graham Guedon  
Marianne & Bob Schonfisch  
Carl Schwab  
Rick & Lauren Schwartz  
Kenneth Schwartz & Jane Tan  
Rita Seamans  
Jeffrey Segall & Jun He  
Kathryn Shumway  
Patricia Skillman  
Janice Smith  
Dan Smolkin  
David & Barbara Smoot  
Bruce & Gayle Snyder  
Carol Spillman  
Duane Steffey  
Linda Stegora  
Laurel Stine  
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Lina Swisher & Dan Rubin  
Roy Takai & Elaine Yam

Mariko Tanaka  
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Andrea Tichy  
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Charlene Trueb & Suzanne Tierney  
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Marilynn Vandor  
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Marianne Witscher  
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Randolph & Melinda Wong  
Dean Woo  
Rose Mary Wright  
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Michael & Martha Yamamoto  
Paul Yang  
Winslow Yee  
Boris Zhikharevich

### **Monthly Giving**

Laurie Alexander  
Anonymous  
Rebecca Archer  
Belinda Arroyo  
Scott Barkley  
Michele Beasley  
Nathaniel & Natasha Bergson-Michelson  
Gary & Nancy Bertolini  
Pamela Bilz  
Julia Bott & Paul Acklin  
Avis Boutell & Alice Miller  
Loretta Brooks & Chuck Heimstadt  
Barbara & Joel Bruxvoort  
Caiti Busch  
Susy Castoria  
Eirene Chen & Stephen Cottrell  
Robert Choy  
Suzanne Coberly & Jeff Haas  
Ryan & Brenna Connolly  
Katy Coonan Rhoades  
Dorothy Cordell  
Josephine Cosino  
David & Nancy Crabbe  
Mary DeLong & Jamie Riotto  
Diane Elcan  
Raquel Espana & Nadia Thind  
Adrienne Etherton  
Timothy Fox  
Deking Francisco  
Linda Joyce Franklyn  
Meg Gilmore  
Gary Glass  
Mark Golembiewski  
(Continued on page 8)

(Continued from page 3)

five iconic areas in the park: the view to Pacifica from the Montara Mtn Trail, Brooks Falls, a trail winding through the native Montara manzanita grove, the large Monterey Cypress, and the expansive meadow along the Weiler Ranch Trail.”



**Damon Belanger, “Sawyer Camp Trail”**

“As a longtime resident of San Mateo County, I enjoy

exploring our many parks, and now, as a parent, I appreciate even more the vital role these spaces play for our families and communities. Designing the Sawyer Camp Trail poster for the Parks Foundation has been a meaningful way for me to give back and honor these incredible places.

Sawyer Camp Trail is a unique and scenic trail that deserves special recognition. With its winding path hugging the Crystal Springs Reservoir, it offers serene and breathtaking views of both the landscape and diverse wildlife. My goal was to capture that tranquility by focusing on the reservoir’s reflective waters, contrasted against the lush tree line beyond. I wanted to evoke the beauty of nature that envelops you the moment you step onto the trail.

To add a human element, I incorporated a bench and bicycle—symbols of the trail’s inviting atmosphere. Strategically placed benches allow visitors to pause and take in the beautiful views, each offering a different yet equally stunning perspective. Bicycles are a common sight, sharing the path with folks taking

leisurely strolls. Spaces like these provide a much-needed sense of balance and connection, providing respite from our busy, everyday lives.”



**Hollis Callas, “Wonderful Wunderlich”**

“From a young age, I spent most of my free time outdoors—playing in the Georgia red clay, climbing magnolia trees, and catching fireflies on warm Southern nights. Nature was where I felt most at peace, and even as a child, I understood the importance of cherishing our natural spaces. That love never

faded; if anything, it has become a defining part of my life and a constant source of inspiration for my artwork. My work is a celebration of the natural world, capturing its textures, colors, and rhythms through vibrant illustrations.

It’s been a dream project to explore Wunderlich and express what makes it so special through my artwork. This park holds so many true gems in one area: the historic structures like the stable, carriage room, dairy house and stone wall, the winding network of trails, the diverse ecosystems, and the rich equestrian community. It has so many stories to tell. As I wandered through Wunderlich, I was captivated by the lush fern families, the trickling creek in the gully, and the towering redwood fairy circles that made me feel small in the best way. In the meadowlands, I could see the distant city skyline, all the while feeling completely immersed in the serenity of nature.”



(Continued from page 7)

- Jennifer Gonzales
- James & Laura Gran
- Rita Guiliano
- Eloise Gularte
- Heather Hardy & Matt Nelson
- Robert Haxo
- Sam & Leslie Herzberg
- Steven Hibshman
- Dan & Margaret Hilberman
- Raymond Hodges
- Christine Hollender
- Leslie & Jeff Holzman
- Peter Ingram & Ann Yvette Pirie
- Amy Jensen
- Mark Kaminsky
- Judy Kay
- Jane Kikuchi
- Ashley Larsen
- Alice Leung
- Kirk Lindstrom
- Kimberly Marlow
- Susan & Jack Marquis
- Perry McCarty Jr.
- Timothy McHenry
- Dennis & Donna Meixner
- William Meyer
- Julianne Nagal
- Anna Nastari
- Jane Nettesheim
- Pamela Noyer

- Russell H. Miller & Kirk Alan Pessner
- Stephen & Patricia Pickford
- Tim Powers
- Danae Ramirez
- Suzanne Rivoire
- Ronald Rogers
- Diane Ross
- Robert Ruth
- John Salcido
- Cleo Salisbury
- Anne Scanlan-Rohrer & Scot Rohrer
- Robert Scruggs
- Ida Sim
- Gladys Smith
- Georgia Stigall
- Matthew Suarez
- Laura Torresan
- Donna Vaillancourt
- Sharron L. Walker
- Katherine Wilson
- Nanette Wylde & Kent Manske
- Veneranda Zamora Redmond

**Gifts in Honor**

- Laurie Alexander in honor of Adriana Fernandez Arriaga
- Anonymous in honor of Archangel Michael
- Belinda Arroyo in honor of SEBA
- Julia Bott in honor of Michele Beasley

- Barbara Erny & John Huang in honor of Friends of Edgewood
- Rebecca Haseleu & Paul Hackleman in honor of Laurel Finnegan
- Ariadne Horstman in honor of Gireesh Shrimali
- Benjamin Lutch in honor of Luiz Barroso
- Allison Rock in honor of Christopher Wuthmann
- San Mateo Medical Center Laboratory in honor of Meg Gilmore
- Laurel Stine in honor of Jason Stine

**Gifts in Memory**

- Arlene Andrews in memory of Anthony Gularte
- Dimity Berkner in memory of Lutz
- Michael & Susan Casey in memory of Carol Kemnitz
- Katherine Bradshaw Chappellear in memory of Daniel N. Chappellear
- Mary Duffy & Laura Camodeca in memory of Dianne Mahan
- Diane Elcan in memory of Marie Williams Elcan
- Celeste Evans in memory of Alden & Dorothea Evans
- James Feichtl in memory of Lucille Kristofits-Feichtl

- Eloise Gularte in memory of Anthony J. Gularte
- David Hou in memory of Makenna Hou
- Alisa & Neil MacAvoy in memory of Pat Greene
- Maggie Mayer-Chupka in memory of Carolyn Shain
- Timothy McHenry in memory of Caroline McHenry
- Mikhail Mineyev in memory of Leonid Osetinsky
- Joey & JoAnna Nguyen-Delgado in memory of Mocha & Luna
- Anne Scanlan-Rohrer & Scot Rohrer in memory of Dorothy Scanlan
- Beverley Talbott in memory of Joan Rummelsburg & Jackie Neider
- Kelly & Jed Thompson in memory of Christopher Loren Albers
- Ellen Whitesell in memory of Leonid Osetinsky
- Helene & Gary Workman in memory of Mark David Petersen
- Alla & Victor Zeyliger in memory of Leonid Osetinsky
- Boris Zhikharevich in memory of Leonid Osetinsky

**Matching Gift Programs**

Adobe

- Agilent Technologies Foundation
- Apple Matching Gifts Program
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- TIAA
- Visa Employee Giving Program

Every effort was made to ensure that this list is complete and accurate. The Foundation regrets any errors or omissions. Please contact us so we may make the proper correction.

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