

17th Annual Wildlife Festival

More than 1,500 people of all ages enjoyed the Wagner Ranch Nature Area on Sunday April 22nd celebrating the 48th Earth Day. Families came from 34 Bay Area Cities. There were dozens of activity stations to choose from, such as Nature Tattoos with Coyote Brush Studio and Garden Wonders with Cynthia Brian. Soon children were catching water boatman bugs in the pond with dip nets, while others were painting ceramic tiles to take home. Chemistry Magic with Dan Phillips fascinated children, as did Steve Gentry's Bee Hive. One seasoned volunteer commented that she hadn't seen so many strollers and toddlers at past Wildlife Festivals.

For 17 years the Friends of the WR Nature Area have invited the community to enjoy the wisdom of local environmental groups like Friends of Orinda Creeks, Parents for a Safer Environment, Sustainable Contra Costa, and EBMUD while celebrating Earth Day. Young artists made nature rubbings, created science art with James Strickler, and showed off their faces painted by the Orinda Juniores. Solar-cooked muffins were available from Wendy Helms' *Solarvare* oven. Columnist Joan Morris invited visitors to ask questions about wildlife and identify camouflaged animals in nature photos. One of the owl boxes nearby now houses a family with chicks!



Chester Miner, Elder of the Cherokee Nation, led the Blessing of the Nature Area, then he and his friends from Manteca gathered under the giant oak to honor this special area with singing and drumming. Orinda Mayor, Amy Worth, and Vice Mayor, Inga Miller, presented the Friends of the Nature Area with a Certificate of Recognition for the Wildlife Earth Day Festival. Toris Jaeger honored the 2018 Nature Area Champions: Chester Miner and Esther Rice, Professor Emeritus of Environmental Education at CSEB.

Students have been installing conservation projects in the 18-acre Nature Area, owned by the Orinda Union School District, for 30 years. Toris thanked seven students for their Eagle Scout Projects: Jack Anthenien, Wood Duck Boxes; Evan Draeger, Bridge over Wagner Creek; Logan Krumholtz, California Quail Project; Kevin Pease, Adobe Brick Frame Boxes; Andrew Patten, Rebuild of Pond Fence; Chinmai Srinivas, South Bridge Ramp; and Max Tom, North Bridge Ramp. In the garden, the O.I.S. Green Team was leading eco-projects, and children were hunting for toy critters hidden in the lush grape vines and herbs. The youngsters were delighted to take home their catch of plastic grasshoppers and lady bugs..

If you were weary, you could be revived by massage artist, Derry Calay, or with lovely music played by students of ALMA, the Academy of Language Arts and Music. Other energetic souls joined John Helms for tours of the Nature Area, visiting the old ruins of the Wagner homestead. Terry Murphy, President, and Kay Norman, of the Orinda Historical Society displayed artifacts from the historical site and photographs of the elegant three-story home before it burned down in the 1920s. Teresa Long of Friends of the Moraga Adobe and Architect, James Wright, restorer of the Old Yellow House, shared their insights into local history.

We couldn't have had such a successful event without the assistance of more than 100 volunteers (most of them students: youth from Scout programs, Others First at Orinda Intermediate School, Miramonte High School, Orinda Juniores, the National Charity League, Boys Team Charities, and community volunteers. Visit our website www.fwrna.org.

Mission

The Friends of the Wagner Ranch Nature Area support the conservation of the Nature Area as a natural environment and its preservation as an historical site, with the goal of enhancing environmental education programs for schools

and the community.

Nature Area Programs

Students have a direct connection to their natural world and cultural heritage through hands on observation and activities:

3rd Grade

Animal Camp—Hikes and pond studies introduce local animals and plants.

4th Grade

Native American Studies—Native American uses of the environment.

Rancho Days— Exploring representative shelters, foods and crafts.

5th Grade

First Thanksgiving – Pilgrims and Native Peoples hold a Thanksgiving feast.

Pioneer Days—Customs of the pioneers and 49ers coming to California.

Other FWRNA Activities

OIS, Others First – Sunday Volunteers

Scout Projects

Earth Day - Wildlife Festival

July 4th Activities

Olive Festival October 14th Fundraiser

Maintenance of trails, meadows, ponds

FWRNA Board is recruiting people who are committed to improving the educational, historical, and natural resources of the Nature Area, which is the property of the Orinda Union School District. Contact kdbarrett08@gmail.com

Donors to Raffle: Claire McCullough, Rebecca Dahlberg, Marshall and Jenny White, Kathy Barrett, Connie King, Manager of Sweet Dreams



Loard's in Orinda



Casa Orinda Restaurant & Bar



Orinda Historical Society

