

## **Berkeley Partners For Parks**

### **20 Years of Working Together**

**June 2014**

*Berkeley Partners for Parks is a citywide nonprofit supporting parks and open spaces in Berkeley through encouraging citizen involvement.*

For 20 years, Berkeley Partners for Parks' volunteer citizen groups have worked to create a green and friendly city by increasing and enhancing recreation and open spaces. BPFP provides (a) nonprofit status so our partner groups can accept tax-deductible contributions, (b) back-office necessities including accounting and insurance, and (c) collegiality, inspiration, a wide range of experience, advice on grants and funding sources, and valuable partnerships.

### **Here is a sampler from the past year:**

#### **Berkeley Path Wanderers Association**

This past year saw the opening and renaming of Betty Olds Path, dedicated to longtime BPWA champion and former city council member Betty Olds. In a major achievement, upper Halkin Walk, complete with steep switchbacks and handrails, was built. The expert path-building team also turned its attention to upgrading some of the earliest BPWA-built paths, including Sterling Path, Latham Lane, and Atlas Path, with Stoddard in progress. BPWA volunteers also installed steps at the bottom of the Glendale-LaLoma Park trail and engineered a new shortcut at its top.

A longtime goal was achieved when the Santa Fe Right of Way was opened between University Avenue and Addison Street, linking Strawberry Creek Park to what is now continuous trail to Richmond! BPWA also provided input for the city of Berkeley's disaster mitigation plan.

BPWA continues to lead two free walks per month, attracting as many as 90 participants! Large crowds gather for such varied events as Quirky Berkeley and the six-part Whole Berkeley Walks, in which our two youngest volunteers, Jacob and Zeke, aged 12 and 13, covered every path in Berkeley!



#### **East Bay Green Parks Association**

East Bay Green Parks Association has had a busy year, again focused on removing the thick blanket of invasive ivy that makes too many of our parks unwelcoming to people, wildlife, and native plants. Volunteers ranged from grade-school kids from Berkwood Hedge School to retirees who were part of Los Amigos de Codornices, the neighborhood group that launched restoration in the 1970s.

While maintaining our previous success at Grizzly Peak Park, we continued to focus mainly on the beautiful middle fork of Codornices Creek in Codornices Park. Volunteers pulled out masses of ivy, kept invasives from re-colonizing the cleared areas, and installed over \$500 in low-maintenance, drought-tolerant native plants. The range of species continued to widen, with re-introductions of cow parsnip with its giant leaves and big white umbels, delicate wild strawberry, and fragrant, colorful hummingbird sage. These and others welcome native bees, butterflies, and hummingbirds – as well as people.

## El Cerrito Community Garden Network

The El Cerrito Community Garden Network, founded in 2010, continues to grow and expand our activities! In 2013, we added four new 4' x 20' garden beds at El Cerrito's Fairmont Park. The main users are Tibetan residents, thanks to a partnership with Community Health for Asian Americans, a nonprofit helping Tibetan and other Asian refugees and asylum seekers. The beds help these new residents acclimate to life in the US by giving them a connection to the land and the opportunity to grow familiar vegetables. Produce also is routinely given to neighbors passing through the garden.



ECCGN also gave away seed packets and more than 100 vegetable seedlings at our table at the El Cerrito Earth Day celebration. Other giveaways included free seedlings for local home gardeners, cancer-patient caregivers at the El Cerrito American Cancer Relay for Life, Growing West Contra Costa school-garden coalition, and 1300 seedlings to 18 Earth Childhood Center gardens in the Oakland School District! In spring 2014, we launched our newest effort – a four-drawer Seeds of Cerrito seed library at the El Cerrito Recycling Center, with donated seeds including heirlooms, organics, and natives!

## Friends of Five Creeks

As Friends of Five Creeks approaches its 20<sup>th</sup> year, it continues to launch new projects. One is Bay Currents, monthly fall-spring talks on Bay Area natural history and environmental issues. With top-quality speakers and overflow crowds, the free talks will move in fall 2014 to a larger venue, St. Albans Parish Hall, Washington at Curtis, on second Tuesdays.



As numbers of volunteers continue to grow, F5C launched a new stewardship project west of the mouth of Strawberry Creek, where a new Bay trail segment is bringing many visitors. More than 30 work parties also removed acres of fire-prone French broom in Tilden Regional Park and the El Cerrito Hillside Natural Area. Thanks to every-Tuesday Weed Warriors, F5C also continues to maintain maturing projects on Codornices and Cerrito Creek, at Berkeley's Mortar Rock and Shorebird Parks, and elsewhere. F5C also continued its monthly walks for ages 50+, coordinated King Tides walks around the Bay, helped organize the yearly Sudden Oak Death "bioblitz" survey, and revived testing Codornices and Cerrito creeks for sewage pollution (working with the US EPA region 9 lab). The good news: No major problems.

## Friends of Halcyon Commons/Halcyon Neighborhood Association

Whole Foods Market at Telegraph and Ashby has made Halcyon Commons a recipient of their Nickels for Nonprofits program! Bring your own bag(s) before July 6, 2014, and tell checkout that you want to donate your nickel refund(s) to Halcyon Commons. The funds will help volunteers refurbish the park pathway this fall. Meanwhile, we continue to host several work parties each year – we especially appreciate the support of Cal's Berkeley Project student volunteers in the spring and fall.



Friends of Halcyon Commons also is excited that Nina Lyons has agreed to serve as the artist creating a sculpture of a halcyon bird, to be installed in the oval near the Father Sun Bench. This will fulfill a longtime dream! The sculpture was on the wish list for our park from its beginning. The location and design were approved by the Civic Arts Commission and Berkeley City Council in 2007. Our aim is intallation in 2016, for our 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary. For more information, contact Nancy Carleton at 510-644-0172 or [halcyon92@gmail.com](mailto:halcyon92@gmail.com).

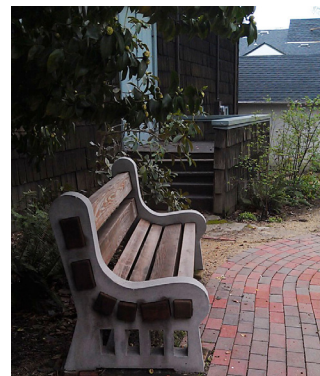
## Friends of Westbrae Commons

The Friends of Westbrae are focused on building community spirit through the creation of shared gardens and public open space. The Karl Linn, Peralta and Northside Gardens provide plots for growing food and flowers, and spaces for community gatherings. Ongoing events include weekly Tai Chi, art exhibitions and classes on plants for nutrition and medicine. Northside Garden hosted a Halloween event with pumpkin carving and costumes for the neighborhood kids. Volunteers working with the Chia group continued to maintain and expand the native planting along the Ohlone Greenway. The Salon de Plants presented a monthly workshop on a featured plant, teaching its history, culture and uses. The annual fall Harvest Party is a celebration of food, music and garden culture that is open to all.

## Hillside Club's Front Streetscape Project

The historic, landmarked Hillside Club successfully completed new landscaping with California native plants, as well as installation of a redwood bench with concrete supports (designed by Julia Morgan) and a brick pathway. The next goal in improving the front streetscape of our beautiful redwood-shake building is rebuilding the west landing and front steps. New materials will better withstand use and rain, and will lessen the risk of water damage to adjoining parts of the building. This work is scheduled for August, when the building will be closed while the interior floors are refinished. A few damaged redwood shakes may also need to be replaced.

Once the new landing and steps are done, the brick walkway to the steps will be completed. After that, the upgrade will turn to the walkway and handrails around the front door – a project that is envisioned but not yet planned.



## LeRoy Steps

The LeRoy Steps look beautiful, especially with the flowers planted by neighbors in bloom. The lighting installed with the help of our Chancellor's Community Partnership Grant is now taken for granted! Many people don't know that the steps used to be dark and somewhat dangerous at night – although people walking back from Greek Theater concerts still often express their appreciation. This project definitely is a success, achieving the grant program's goal of "enhancing the quality of life for people who live and work in Berkeley by providing grant funding to neighborhood improvement projects."

## Santa Fe ROW Bioremediation and Community Education Project

There is good progress on the exciting and practical research project of using brake ferns to remove arsenic from the contaminated soil of the old Santa Fe Right of Way, in Southwest Berkeley! The 1600 *Pteris vittata* ferns planted in winter 2013 on two blocks of the vacant, city-owned land grew steadily over spring and summer. Researchers harvested fern biomass in October, and in spring 2014, the ferns have emerged from winter dormancy for another season of bioaccumulation and bioremediation.

The long-term goal is making the old railroad grade part of a vibrant urban greenway. The immediate goals of this two-year project, funded by a Chancellor's Community Partnership Grant, include both academic research and public education for gardeners. With the work on the Santa Fe Right of Way as springboard, the Ecology Center in fall 2013 hosted an exciting series of community events on "Soil in the City," aiming to overcome barriers of toxic and/or depleted soils and promote safe and thoughtful urban gardening and greening. The series grew to include several sites, multiple experts, and partners including Urban Adamah, Spiral Gardens, and Phat Beets.





## Schoolhouse Creek Common

Schoolhouse Creek Common, the neighborhood-built park at Curtis and Virginia Streets, next to the Berkeley Adult School, entered its eighth full year with many of its native plants just reaching their mature size. The different areas -- the swing and sand pit, benches, and tables -- are nicely nestled among the plants, and getting plenty of use by neighborhood kids, Adult School students, and residents and passers-by in general. After a couple of burglaries at the Adult School, 2013 brought some judicious pruning that created better security through sight lines.



UC student volunteers continue to be crucial in keeping everything neat and inviting. The photo shows great student volunteers from Cal Rotaract and Circle K International in April 2014, helping neighbors remove weeds that grew quickly after late spring rains. Meanwhile, neighbor and designer Jamie Day has taken on a new project: advising young volunteers at the native-plant garden at Shorebird Park.

## Thousand Oaks Neighborhood Association's Urn Project

There is exciting progress in the Thousand Oaks Neighborhood Association's Urn Project, replicating and restoring the huge concrete urns that graced steet corners and paths when the subdivision opened in 1910. Enthusiastic complements and donations followed the restoration of the remaining original urn (on the Alameda at the base of Indian Trail) and the installation of two replacement replicas (in Stoneface Park and the triangle at Alameda and Yosemite.) The project also received a 2012 Berkeley Architectural Heritage Association Preservation Award.



As a result, the co-ordinators have ordered two new urns -- they are scheduled to be installed in fall 2014 at two of the original urn sites: on The Arlington and The Alameda at Tacoma.

## Where does BPFP fit in?

Our projects bring together:

- people with an idea or dream for outdoor spaces or recreation
- people who give money or volunteer
- organizations with know-how and experience.

BPFP helps provide that know-how, and manages the finances, providing an essential "back office" including insurance, accounting, and tax deductibility. We make it all hang together!

*Our mission: Berkeley Partners for Parks builds vibrant, healthy, ecologically sound communities by providing structure needed to engage volunteers in work for public open space and recreation, in and around Berkeley, California.*

*Berkeley Partners for Parks is organized exclusively for charitable and educational purposes within the meaning of Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.*