



Friends of the Wagner Ranch Nature Area

Fall 2016 Newsletter

The Wagner Ranch Nature Area is an 18 acre nature preserve and historic site located adjacent to Wagner Ranch Elementary School in Orinda.

7th Orinda Olive Festival Sunday October 2th 11:30 – 4:30

Tribute to Toris Jaeger

This year the Orinda Olive Festival opened with a tribute to Toris Jaeger and her 40 years of teaching children in the Nature Area. A founding member of the Friends of the Wagner Ranch Nature Area, Terry Slaman, described how Toris has a deep respect for biodiversity and Earth systems. With her quiet guidance, thousands of children have learned to love nature and explore local history. Orinda Mayor, Victoria Smith, spoke to how Toris has served the community for many years, and Ann Alton described how she encouraged Toris to apply for the job of District Naturalist in the mid-1970s. Miriam Storch, a former student in the Nature Area programs, referred to a Native American quote "The wind cannot defeat a tree with deep roots," saying that through all the wind over the years, Toris kept her feet planted firmly on the ground and kept the nature area alive. Esther Railton Rice, Ed. D. wrote in her letter about Toris, "At the Nature Area, Toris found her niche and has dedicated her life to this piece of land and the children who learn on it. Her warmth, gratitude to those who help her and selflessness make her one of the most joyous and warmest of my career memories." Toris often tells us that the looks of wonder on the faces of her "Nature Detectives" feed her soul. Directed by Dr. Jim, the students of the Academy of Language Arts and Music (A.L.M.A.) led the audience in a refrain of "Happy Anniversary to You."



Photo by Wade Barrett



Amphora Lafayette's Extra Virgin Olive Oil Photo by Wade Barrett

7th Orinda Olive Festival Gets Underway

Hundreds of children and adults gathered to celebrate the Nature Area and its 133 year-old historic olive grove. Amphora Nueva from Lafayette returned for a second year providing visitors with a wonderful variety of extra virgin olive oil and balsamic vinegars. Berkeley Olive Grove showcased its award winning organic olive oil, and a variety of California olives and olive oils were tasted by visitors at the *All About Olives* station in the olive grove. Cricket Nissen treated visitors to the aromas and textures of olive soaps and lotions at the Raw Soap booth.

Children received *Olive Passports* to take to 30 activity stations for a nature stamp. They were rewarded with honey sticks for having their Passports stamped at 10 stations. Embracing the theme of olives and peace, children and adults wore leafy olive crowns, which they crafted from fresh boughs. The Orinda Juniorettes were very busy decorating faces, and other popular activities included: Nature Tattoos by Coyote Brush, Decorating Tiles, and a variety of olive games, for which Bell Carter – Lindsay Olives provided their delicious olives as prizes.

Back by popular demand the Orinda Ukulele Players enticed visitors in through the Grove Gate and entertained them with lively tunes and sing-a-longs. Visitors could also enjoy Zamboni's Pizza and visit a variety of activities including the very popular Nature Art with artist Jennifer White and BOGOS Art with the Strickler family. Local Plein Air artist, Sylvia Fones painted the grove scene, as families watched her at work.

The Friends of the Wagner Ranch Nature Area support stewardship of the Nature Area, with an emphasis on high quality educational programs that benefit Orinda students, teachers, and community partners.

The Nature Area is owned by the Orinda Union School District.

We Thank our In-kind Supporters & Sponsors

The Pit Spit Challenge was a popular source of delicious olives whose pits were then used to hit targets. The enthusiastic volunteers from Others First recruited visitors and organized the challenges. Diablo Foods generously sponsored the Pit Spit and provided their deli olives and prizes.



Photo by Wade Barrett

Ask a Master Gardener, with Martha Lee, Linda Mizes, and Anne Diggins provided fascinating information about the art of gardening. The Cooking Demonstration Tent featured Amphora Nueva's recipes with Nate Bradley, and Jeff Wampler of Eclectic Catering. Nearby, weary adults could relax with a Derry Calay, Healthy Ways Massage.



Photo by Wade Barrett

Contra Costa County's only Olive Festival came to a close with the student musicians of ALMA providing counterpoint to the native birds. This vibrant fundraiser, conducted by the Friends of the Wagner Ranch Nature Area raised funds for Nature Area Programs.



Photo by Wade Barrett

More than 100 volunteers joined forces: teens and youth from Scout programs, Others First at OIS, Miramonte High School, ALMA Music Program, Diablo Valley delegation of Youth and Government, Orinda Juniors and The National Charity League. We heartily thank our generous sponsors: Bell Carter – Lindsay Olives, Mechanics Bank of Orinda, Alan Metheny, Wells Fargo Advisors, Orinda Chamber of Commerce, Diablo Foods, Orinda Orinda Optometry Group, and Orinda True Value Hardware.



Photo by Wade Barrett

Educational Programs

Since 2009, the FWRNA has been funding staff for the Nature Area programs: Animal Studies—grade 3, Native American Studies and Rancho Days—grade 4, and Pioneer Days and First Thanksgiving— grade 5. The Nature Area is owned by the Orinda Union School District



Alan Metheny
Managing Director – Investments



Olive Festival In-Kind Gifts

Academy of Language & Music Arts
Amphora Nueva
Bell-Carter Lindsay Olives
Berkeley Olive Grove
Captain Vineyards & Winery
Casa Orinda Restaurant & Bar
Chow's Lafayette Restaurant
Clark-Lausch Family
Clean Cleaners of Orinda
Coyote Brush Studios
Kim Curiel Nature Meals
Diablo Foods
Energy Matters, Oakland
Flemings Steak House, Walnut Creek
Fourth Bore, Orinda
Haas Winery, Lafayette
La Piazza Restaurant
Oakland Museum
Orinda Ballet Academy
Orinda Chamber of Commerce
Orinda True Value Hardware Store
Peet's Coffee & Tea, Lafayette
Piccolo Napoli
RARE BARREL, Brewery, Berkeley
Raw Soap, Berkeley
Rebecca Dahlberg
SAFEWAY
Screaching Owl Vineyard, Orinda
Shelby's Restaurant
Siam Orchid
Victoria Smith, Mayor of Orinda
Starbucks, Theatre Square
Steve's Bees
Storch Family
Toris Jaeger
Trader Joe's, Lafayette
Village Inn Café
Village Pizza
Jane Voll
We Olive, Lafayette
Jennifer & Marshall White
Zamboni's Pizza

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