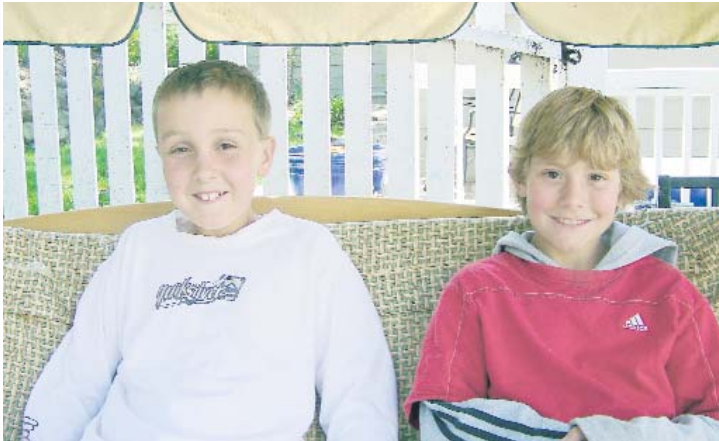


## Lafayette 5th Graders Live in the Redwoods

By Jean Follmer



Lafayette Elementary 5th Grade Students Jake Bequette and Chad Brown Photo Jean Follmer

Fifth graders from Burton Valley, Happy Valley, Lafayette and Springhill elementary schools just returned from Loma Mar, California. Each year, 5th graders from Lafayette spend an entire school week living amongst the redwoods at the YMCA Camp Loma Mar.

Springhill principal Bruce Wodhams said the district “has gone to the same camp for the last 30-40 years.” The camp is run by the non-profit outdoor school Exploring New Horizons. ENH seeks to provide “affordable, environmental

education for the greater San Francisco Bay Area.” They hope to “nurture intelligent, active citizens who will work together to create a healthy and sustainable environment and a responsible society.” Wodhams said “The whole theme is (to be) very environmentally aware, to not leave your carbon footprint. It’s very ecological...a very intense week of learning.”

This trip represents the first time away from home for most of the students. The students are housed in cabins with a blend of stu-

dents from all four elementary schools. Their daily outing groups also consist of students from all schools. Wodhams said it’s “great socially to be on their own and make new friends. It plays a big role in the transition to middle school.”

The students arrive at Camp Loma Mar on Monday. Tuesday through Thursday, they take group excursions with a naturalist. They return home to Lafayette on Friday. Lafayette Elementary 5th grader Chad Johnson said “On the first day, we went to the tide pools and got to see lots of cool animals. One of my friends caught a big crab.” Johnson also said “We got to go to the redwoods and skip rocks in a stream. My group found 197 banana slugs in the redwoods.” They also saw a huge dead redwood tree called “Dead Fred”. Another Lafayette 5th grader, Jake Bequette said “We learned a lot about nature.”

There were also excursions that focused on developing independence. Johnson said “We went on a night hike without flashlights.”

Bequette said “In the oak forest, we went on a solo hike. You’d follow the path and find cards, read them and do what they said.” Bequette thought the point of the solo hike was “to give you an idea you can succeed by yourself.” Both boys are anticipating moving on to Stanley Middle School next year. Bequette said “I’m a little excited and a little scared.” Johnson said “I’m a little nervous. We’re going to meet a lot of people we don’t know. We’ll get to go to a new school with lots of new stuff.” Both agreed that the camp helped ease their anxieties about middle school because they were able to make new friends.

Each night, there was a campfire where the students sang songs and put on skits like “Protect the Trees” and “Camp Idol.” Johnson said “On Wednesday night, we had a Barnyard Boogie. They taught us a dance kind of like square dancing.” Bequette said “Our teacher played the drums and another teacher played the piano.” The students will definitely remember their time at Camp Loma Mar. Wodhams said it’s “probably the high point (of the elementary school experience) for these kids.”