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A Young Parks and Recreation Director Reaches Out To The Community

By *Sophie Braccini*



Jay Ingram, Moraga Parks and Recreation Director Photo Sophie Braccini

Jay Ingram joined Moraga Parks and Recreation Department (Parks and Rec) a little over a year ago. He arrived from Marin County, full of energy and with high hopes for the Moraga community: the town had just gotten back its own recreation department and was going to be able to offer new classes. "I do believe in the motto 'creating community through people, parks and programs,'" says Ingram, "Moraga has yet to recognize the positive impact a Parks and Rec can have on a community." He is working hard at improving their experience.

After a year in office, Ingram has a lot to show for it: the department is managing a full offering of classes for all ages (go to [//moraga.ca.us/production/moraga_recreation_programs.php](http://moraga.ca.us/production/moraga_recreation_programs.php)), in 2008 the Hacienda de las Flores hosted 49 paying events from retreats to music recitals, and from theater performances to weddings; Ingram organized the first community garage sale, summer movies at the Pavilion, the 2nd Annual Treeline Triathlon and many other events. Monthly trips were organized to take seniors to fun and exciting places in the Bay Area. The department worked with other groups and individuals for the success of Moraga Beautiful Week, 4th of July, the Summer Concert series, Pear Festival and the Hacienda Open House. Coming up are "Breakfast with Santa" and 15-minute

private visits with the bearded man in red who comes bearing gifts.

Ingram's vision of his department is a group that works in synergy with stakeholders: the K-12 schools, Saint Mary's College, the Moraga Movers (age 55 +)), the Park and Recreation Foundation and others. "I have met people and groups in town, and this has been very productive," says Ingram. "For example, as a result of a renewed relationship with Saint Mary's College, the two institutions will offer sports camps for the winter and spring breaks. The Town Crier, that includes the Activities Guide, will also present all of the campus games and a Saint Mary's student is starting an internship to work on the Triathlon marketing plan and volunteer recruitment."

The Moraga School District is an important partner for Ingram as well. Joint meetings have been taking place to start talking about a multi-generational community center. At study as well is a synthetic turf field. Ingram has met with Rheem Elementary and is looking into enrichment classes such as karate, hip-hop, dancing and yoga. "I have been included in C.O.R.E. meeting with all the PTAs, MEF and the District staff," adds Ingram.

Big on the future agenda of the Director is the Hacienda de las Flores. At this time, the rental rates are appropriate for large functions such as weddings, but are out of reach for family events or Girl Scout troops. Ingram wants to have a different rental format for family events so residents can use the beautiful historic building to celebrate birthdays or host a family type function. "The Council will make the decision," says Ingram, "but that's what I will recommend so the Hacienda serves our community better."

Ingram's enthusiasm and optimism stays high, he want the residents to consider the Parks and Rec when making their leisure choices. "The relationships we are creating are starting to flourish; it is to the benefit of all the Moraga residents," he concludes.

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