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Blazing a New Trail on the Burton Ridge Trail Connector

By Cathy Tyson



Christy, Georgia and Tyler Winkle on the Burton Ridge Trail Connector. Photo provided

Christy, Georgia and Tyler Winkle enjoy the recently completed all-weather trail that meanders through the north-end of the Lafayette Community Park and connects to the Community Center. Although the Winkle family clearly likes the walkway, there were a few heated public hearings that precluded the completion of the two-part Burton Ridge Trail Connector.

Many nearby homeowners were not thrilled with the path, calling it a "trail to nowhere" and "unnecessary and wasteful" along the already quiet residential street. One fellow who testified about the trail in the summer noted that now that it's complete some of the neighbors are coming around.

On a recent sunny day, Christy Winkle and her kids were using the path, "I will always treasure the memories of taking the trail from our house to the Community Center starting with the baby bjorn and then strollers and then push bikes and then bikes with training wheels and then off they go in the distance on their own bikes...We are so thankful for all the good times our family has had at the Community Center over the years."

The project connects the neighborhood to the Lafayette Community Center and Community Park along with the Lafayette-Moraga Regional Trail and provides safe, designated, less muddy routes for walkers and cyclists.

The Burton Ridge Trail Connector project has two parts – first the Murray Lane Trail component along an undeveloped city-owned parcel on the south side of Murray Lane between Michael Lane and Burton Drive. The skinny strip of land a quarter of a mile long has been dedicated for park and trail use since 1987, when the Murray Lane subdivision was built.

The second portion is the Community Park North End Weatherization project – a formerly muddy in the rainy season trail in the north end of the Community Park serves as a maintenance and emergency access road. Originally composed of dirt and wood chips it becomes understandably challenging to traverse when wet. Funds were used to weatherize the trail adding edging, a rock sub-base and decomposed granite surface.

City engineers estimated the total cost of the projects to be \$502,000 for both components, but the actual cost came in at \$418,377. Construction costs at \$307,777 made up the lion's share, but the project also required design and survey work, reports by an arborist and landscape architect and other services. These projects were funded entirely with voter-approved East Bay Regional Park District Measure WW monies that can only be used for acquisition of and improvements to parks and trails.

Big Thank You to Volunteer Spirit Van Drivers

By Cathy Tyson



Commissioners and friends toast volunteer Spirit Van drivers – from far right to left, Eddie Carvalho, Steve Rogness, Malcolm Hendry and Mauna Wagner. Photo Cathy Tyson

Senior Services, commissioners and friends toasted volunteer Spirit Van drivers and dispatchers for their dedication in providing a crucial link to independence for area senior citizens. Without this valuable service many seniors would be homebound.

Monday through Friday, the van takes riders to the C.C. Café at the Walnut Creek Senior Center for a healthy lunch and socialization. Errand rides on Wednesday afternoons along with medical appointments on specific days round out the Spirit Van services.

When asked why he helps out, driver Malcolm Hendry replied, "It's just a way of helping a fellow traveler who needs it." Adds colleague Mauna Wagner, "The Spirit Van offers seniors the

best of both worlds - independence to take care of themselves, along with a connection to people who care about them. It's a great program!"

The Lamorinda community is fortunate to have a transportation program for seniors so older citizens can live independently in their own homes after they no longer drive. "We generally don't realize how important transportation is until we no longer have a car at our disposal. Lafayette, Moraga, and Orinda have a wonderful group of volunteers who step up to the plate to drive our seniors to medical appointments, grocery shopping, and errands," said Mary Bruns, Senior Transportation Coordinator.

"I feel so blessed to have this

opportunity to drive these people who really are so full of life," said Eddie Carvalho. "All it takes is a ride to lunch and back. Two hours a day makes such a difference in their lives. I overhear them talking and what comes up most of the time is how without this lunch run, we wouldn't have met each other or all the people at the lunch. It really gives them something to look forward to every day!"

For readers looking to give back to the community, there is a need for volunteer Spirit Van drivers and folks to assist seniors in giving the service a try by chaperoning. No special license is required, but there is a training class, for more information call (925) 284-5546. To schedule a ride on the Lamorinda Spirit Van, call (925) 283-3534.

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