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## Successful Campout At Rancho Laguna Park

By Sophie Braccini



Moraga friends gather at the recent family campout at Rancho Laguna Park, coordinated by the Town of Moraga. From left, Craig Pinedo, Dylan Davis, Shin Young, Lisa Wyckhouse, and Matt and Michelle Brobak, with two of the group's children. Photo Andy Scheck

also discovering the peaceful Rancho Laguna Park for the first time.

Shin Young said, "This gives such a feeling of a vacation close to home, and I don't even have to cook!" While Dylan Davis was grateful that a volunteer from Lamorinda Dogs "went through every inch of this place on Saturday morning and removed any waste."

As these families were relaxing, at the other side of the park, there was big excitement with the rocket launch. It was a simple system built by Clinton Calkins, the new Moraga Parks and Recreation associate who organized the campout. After building their rockets out of cardboard and foam, the kids used an air-propelled system to launch them to impressive heights.

"This was a very well organized camp with enough activities, food and free time for the kids," said Frank Qian, who set a tent for himself, his wife Yun Shang, and almost 5-year-old son Tong Qian. They were part of a group of five families who pitched their tents together. "Our son was so excited about the camp that he wasn't able to take a nap this afternoon," said Shang, who added that the contained setting and organization of the event allowed parents to relax.

After the catered dinner Saturday night, kids were treated to story telling by professional storyteller John Weaver who took the children on a fun journey. "There were no scary stories," said Calkins. Then parents and older kids had the opportunity to gaze at the stars through the powerful lens brought to the park by the Mount Diablo Astronomical Society. "There is no city light pollution here," commented Calkins. "We saw Saturn with its rings and even some of its moons."

On Sunday morning, noise could be heard in tents starting at around 6:45 a.m. Calkins, who had stayed the night and wanted to be available at any time, did not sleep much. Cheerful nonetheless, he quickly started to set up breakfast with colleague Kimberley Nelson who came to help.

"I loved the stories and I loved breakfast," said young Riley Shafer as he got ready to leave the park with his family. His mother Jessica confirmed that they all had a great time and that she

Tents and families filled the remote and bucolic Rancho Laguna Park July 26-27 as part of a family campout organized by the Town of Moraga. The inaugural sold-out event gave more than 100 kids and parents a wonderful adventure right in Moraga's back yard.

"We had never taken the kids camping," said Lafayette resident Ryan Merlo as he helped his daughter Silvani build a rocket during the craft portion of the event. "This seemed like a relatively low risk setting." The Merlos already had a tent and just had to add sleeping bags for their 2- and 6-year-old children. Merlo heard about the campout through his wife's friend. He said he had never ventured to the outer confines of Moraga before, and he found the setting very pretty.

The Davis, Pinedo, Wyckhouse, Young and Brobak families from Moraga looked like they were having a good time sitting by their tents, under the redwood trees. "I read about the camp on the (Moraga Citizens Network e-newsletter) link," said Lisa Wyckhouse, whose family set up their tents close to their friends. Some of these families had camped before, others had not, and some were

hoped the town would do it again. "It was a very nice thing, with lots of nice people," she said, adding only one caveat: "There are pluses and minuses having families with little kids camping close together and when you are all trying to go to bed, it's not easy."

Yun Shang said she and her family had a very good night and that her son also loved the story telling.

"Everything came out very well," concluded Calkins. He is already starting to plan for next year.



Storyteller John Weaver has the rapt attention of families gathered at the park's outdoor amphitheater. Photos Andy Scheck



Kids watch in wonder as a cardboard and foam rocket shoots toward the sky.

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