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Local teen sparks improvements to Moraga skate park

By Vera Kochan



Skate stunts by Owen Myall Photo Vera Kochan

Originally constructed in 2003, thanks to a tri-city partnership between Lafayette, Moraga and Orinda involving initial funding as well as ongoing maintenance, the skate park is a popular feature at Moraga Commons Park.

All good things, through time and observation, can always be improved. And who better to make those observations to a skate park than the kids who use it. Owen Myall, an Acalanes High School student and Lafayette resident, was just 14 years old when he first approached the Moraga Town Council 16 months ago. During the public comments and suggestions portion of the meeting, Myall came prepared with a written proposal of his vision for improvements to the skate park.

Parks and Recreation Director Breyana Brandt recalled, "It was my second day on the job and my first town council meeting. After Owen's presentation the council said it was a perfect project for me to begin with. Owen and I got together and using his notes, we tightened things up."

Myall based his ideas on feedback and comments that fellow skateboarders had made. Adding a water bottle filling station would help to eliminate the dozens of empty plastic bottles that litter the "bowl" - what skaters call the deep part of the park. More people are using metal water containers and would not leave them as trash. Another recommendation was to put recycle and trash cans in more visible locations, because the kids have had to clean garbage such as watermelon rinds out of the bowl.

A cement seat wall will be added to provide good viewing of the entire area for parents to watch their kids and for tired skateboarders to rest at a safe distance from the activities. Myall stated, "This will be especially good for the younger kids so they don't get hurt." One final improvement will be to replace safety signs for skate park users.

Estimates for new plumbing and cement pouring could cost the Parks and Recreation Department nearly \$20,000. After getting over the initial price tag shock, Myall said he would volunteer to raise the money himself. With the moral support of his parents, Gannon and Julia, along with sisters Madeleine, 23, and Emma, 21, Myall approached and received donations from Moraga Parks Foundation, Orinda Community Foundation, Lafayette Youth Commission, Sustainable Lafayette and Orinda Park Foundation.

Other than helping with some paperwork, Myall's parents left him to his own resources. Julia stated, "I did have to sit in on two meetings for him because he was in school, but he would much rather have gone to the meetings."

Myall's proposal pitch for donations was basically the same one he'd used to entice Moraga council members. "When I'm excited about something it's easy for me to do," he admitted. "I was very excited about this."

All five checks were written payable to the town of Moraga and have been earmarked for Specific Donation Projects that will be plugged into the FY 2019-20 Capital Improvement Program Budget.

Two separate contractors are scheduled to begin the improvements in late August. Completion of the project is expected to take a few weeks when, with any luck, it should be finished just in time for Myall's 16th birthday.



From left: Julia Myall, Owen Myall with Parks and Rec Director Breyana Brandt Photo Vera Kochan

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