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Lamorinda teens saved the day at Orinda Olive Festival

Submitted by Katharine Barrett



Photos provided

picnic areas, and overall served as outstanding ambassadors of the Wagner Ranch Nature Area to the greater public. Capri Filippenko and Kate Bertenthal displayed their inspiring project to encourage people to plant olive trees, which help remove carbon from the atmosphere.

Shout out also to Orinda's own ALMA music, directed by James Fiatarone, who presented an entertaining recital by dozens of student musicians and singers. The Orinda Ukulele Band enticed visitors through the Olive Gate with Hawaiian tunes in the historic Olive Grove, much to the delight of picnickers. Orinda's own Carole Amstutz gave Welcome Gate greetings and unparalleled concierge service to first-time Olive Festival visitors. Mary Welte, recently retired Orinda school teacher, patiently and generously guided more than 50 young artists with their tile painting endeavors.

Professors' emeriti, John Helms and Reg Barrett, guided families along the trails to the homestead, ruins of the blacksmith shop, and olive grove to hear the Orinda Ukulele Band. The proceeds of John's gorgeous olive wood creations of bowls and sculptures were donated to the Nature Area. Children received Olive Passports to take to the activity stations for a nature stamp. Embracing the theme of olives and peace, Jan McGurk helped children and adults craft leafy olive crowns, which they crafted from fresh boughs.

There were 25 activity stations to choose from, such as Frontier Chemistry with Dan Phillips, and Claire McCullough's Face Painting station.

Well-loved nature columnist Joan Morris invited visitors to observe a variety of bird nests and shared her insights about animals and wildlife. Nearby, Friends of Orinda Creeks displayed maps and proposals for improving citizen access to San Pablo Creek, which runs through downtown Orinda. Alison Burns and Athena Davis of the Orinda Historical Society, attracted dozens of curious children and families to their array of 100-year-old household artifacts from the ruins of the historic Wagner Ranch; and nearby, Teresa and Kent Long shared visuals from the historic Moraga Adobe.

Special thanks to Teen Advisory Committee members Mallika Dandamudi, and Madi Lehman and Sara Lehman, all of Miramonte High School, who provide great ideas, guidance, and assistance to the Friends of Wagner Ranch Nature Area board of directors; and to our photographer, Wade Barrett.

Toris Jaeger handed out awards to the Eagle Scouts who completed projects in the Nature Area, including Brendan Ball, Alex Meckes, Logan Lee, Kendall Law, Daniel Lucas and Kobe Martin.

Opportunities abound for middle and high school students and adults! For more information on how to volunteer at the Nature Area, go to: www.fwrna.org.

If not for the stepping up of dozens of willing teens, and many of their parents, this fall's Olive Festival would not have been the great success it was. More than 1,500 visitors from 39 Bay Area Cities - Sacramento, Los Gatos, Modesto, San Ramon, even New York City - attended the 10th Annual Orinda Olive Festival at the Wagner Ranch Nature Area on Oct. 6.

Great big shout out to Boys Team Charity (middle and high school boys and their parents), National Charity League (middle and high school girls and their moms), Boy Scout Troop 237, OIS Others First middle school students, as well as Carondelet and Miramonte high school students. Very capable teenagers from these groups welcomed visitors, worked with visiting youngsters exploring the pond and its wildlife, prepared and conducted a garden scavenger hunt for toddlers, raked pathways, sold raffle tickets, set up booths and



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[back](#)

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