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Slim pickings as volunteer pear pickers work together while staying apart

By Vera Kochan



Volunteers Gisele Purdy, left, and daughter Kaia
Photo Vera Kochan

Moraga's annual pear harvest to benefit The Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano saw plenty of volunteers, but not enough pears to pick.

The Moraga Park Foundation-sponsored two-day event was narrowed down to one short morning on Aug. 8 when it became evident that within a matter of hours all of the fruit had been removed from the century old trees located on Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School, St. Monica's Catholic Church and Bruzzone properties.

Moraga Valley Kiwanis Club event lead Karen Reed estimates that this year's haul came to approximately 3,000 to 4,000 pounds; considerably less than last year's record-breaking 14,731 pounds. The lack of a substantial rainfall this past winter can be blamed. However, Reed quoted her grandmother's philosophy in that "whenever there's a bumper crop one year, the trees need a year to regroup."

A battalion of 265 volunteers from around the community, including organizations such as Boys Team Charity and 178 members of National Charity League, came dressed in obligatory face masks and kept their social distance with each familial group working on a tree together. For liability reasons ladders were not permitted, but workers were supplied with fruit picking poles and cardboard boxes to fill.

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[back](#)

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