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A Meal for Every Mile

By Jean Follmer, with Angela LaScala-Gruenewald



From right to left: Diana LaScala-Gruenewald, Daniel Mather and Angela LaScala Gruenewald at the end of trail in Tahoe City

A 2007 visit to Lake Tahoe prompted Lafayette sisters Angela and Diana LaScala-Gruenewald to consider the Tahoe Rim Trail (TRT). As avid backpackers, they decided to take it on during the summer of 2008. With Diana at MIT and Angela at Acalanes, they would be able to really catch up. They had volunteered extensively through Contra Costa's Youth Action Council, so it felt natural to build public service into

their hike. After considering many options, "Backpacking for Food" was born.

The goal was to raise funds for The Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano. The idea was simple: Backpack around the TRT, ask for pledges for miles and donate proceeds to The Food Bank. One dollar can purchase three cans of food, so they set their fundraising goal at \$3000 for 10,000 cans of food.

Angela said "During the summer, the generous spirit of the holidays fades away and the organization struggles. That's one of the primary reasons this project will really help." Diana said her community service passion was initially inspired by Joan Tomasini of the Food Bank during her freshman year at Acalanes. The sisters have worked with Joan ever since.

They were thrilled to discover incredible support through

out the community. Diablo Foods generously offered their store front for fundraising and REI in Berkeley also opened their doors to them. The sisters found a fellow devoted backpacker who wanted to pitch in and help. They worked together with Daniel Mather throughout the month of June fundraising and planning. Although they fell short of their goal, they raised over \$2,200 in pledges.

On June 28th, they set off for the TRT. In total, they hiked 169 miles averaging 12 miles a day for 15 days. They carried 3-4 days of food at a time, picking it up at three planned drop-off points. Angela said the hike had a tremendous impact on her: "The experience was amazing. The backpacking was incredible and I learned a lot about the struggle (in fundraising) for non-profits. We thought of every mile as a meal and went for it." Diana said the bonus was "We got to do something we really love."

The Lafayette sisters will complete "Backpacking for Food" on August 1st when they turn in the donations to the Food Bank. They hope to reach their \$3,000 goal and are still accepting donations. To help them reach their goal, contact them at backpacking4food@gmail.com.

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Getting ready to go back to school! photo Jean Follmer
Springhill Elementary moms put together packets for August 25 Scorpion Day at Springbrook pool

Young Performers Present "Alice in Wonderland, Jr."

Submitted by Rachel Pergamit



Grace Roberts (White Rabbit), Marissa Monopoli (Alice) Photo provided

The zany world of Lewis Carroll will march into Moraga

when young performers take the outdoor stage in the all-time fa-

vorite Disney musical "Alice in Wonderland, Jr." The After School Drama Club has filled the hot summer afternoons with music and dance for local children, which will culminate in an evening performance under the stars. Audience members are encouraged to bring picnic dinners and blankets to the evening performance at the beautiful Hacienda de las Flores in Moraga on July 25, 2008 at 7 PM.

Cast members include Katie Coates as the madcap Mad Hatter and Marissa Monopoli in the title role of Alice. Performing as the ever-late White Rabbit is Grace Roberts with Catrina Kolm as the laid-back, cool Caterpillar. Margaret Hunger will be cutting off

everyone's head as the Queen of Hearts. Ashlee Lyall, Amanda Giles and Julie Meng will share the role of the pesky Cheshire Cat. The troublesome twins, Tweedle Dum and Tweedle Dee, will be portrayed by real-life best friends, Katherine Christensen and Samantha Myatt. Anya Petrovich, Jessica Nelson, Isabella Jacobi, Rachel Jackson and Natalie Kolm are the nasty flowers. Rounding out the cast is Cameron Cort (Doorknob), Sara Lee (Dodo Bird), Kellen Kvech (King of Hearts), Cameron Kvech (Mathilda), Claire Nelson (Small Alice), Tara Gottfried (Tall Alice) and Haley Seyranian as the March Hare.

Alice in Wonderland, Jr.

July 25, 2007 @ 7 PM
Hacienda de las Flores
2100 Donald Dr., Moraga
Tickets are \$7 in advance, \$9 at the gate
Contact (925) 300-8337 or
www.AfterSchoolDramaClub.com

Correction:

In our July 9 story Student Organizes Fundraiser for 5 Year Old, we indicated that the Lettko's would be holding an event in their Lafayette home on July 25. The Lettko residence is actually in Orinda, 19 Fallen Leaf Terrace.

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The Eagle Who Built the Bridge

By Jean Follmer



3rd from right John Wilcox

Photo provided

During his sophomore year at Acalanes High School, Life Scout John Wilcox became ready to fly with the Eagles. Although he was ready to join the elite rank, he had a big decision to make. John had to decide what he wanted to do for his Eagle Project; the act that would enable him to finally become an Eagle Scout.

After being a Boy Scout for over 10 years, John wanted to do something big. He said, "I joined Cub Scouts in the 1st grade at Springhill. I stayed in (Boy Scouts) because of the public service, hiking and camping." It was during an act of public service that John discovered the path to his Eagle Project. John said that he and some fellow Boy Scouts "were rebuilding a trail in Briones when I learned of several opportunities." It turned out that several Bay Area sites were in need of pedestrian bridges and the prospect of building one appealed to John. He chose to build a 25 foot pedestrian bridge near a picnic site on the old Mangini Ranch property near Mt. Diablo. The land is currently owned by Save Mt. Di-

ablo and it is scheduled to be given to the California State Park system.

Building a bridge isn't your typical Eagle Project. In fact, the magnitude of the project raised some initial questions. John said "You have to get approval from your Troop Leader and an Eagle Advisor." He said both men wanted to make sure he was going to be able to complete the project before they approved it. He assured them he would finish and they granted their approval. John moved on to securing all of the funding, materials and labor. He was lucky enough to have the structural engineering donated by his parents, Craig and Karen Wilcox, both engineers. John said, "I sent out donation packets to local construction (and related) companies." He had a great response from local companies such as Hardy Investments, MWH Engineers, Overaa Construction, Peacock Construction and Piedmont Lumber.

John was joined at the site by eight friends and fellow Boy Scouts. Although John had done a lot of the prep-work with two

friends (which included cutting, drilling and pouring the foundation), the bridge still needed to be completely constructed. Getting started was a challenge since they had to slide the beams down the steep embankment which leads to Galindo Creek. John said his Eagle Project enabled most of the boys to earn some of their community service hours required by both Boy Scouts and Acalanes High School. Approximately 240 hours of work went into the bridge project.

Although the Mangini Ranch property is not yet open to the public, you will have an opportunity to cross John's bridge on August 10 from 9am-12pm, when Save Mt. Diablo volunteer David Ogden will lead a 2-3 mile hike on Save Mt. Diablo's Mangini Ranch property. In addition to crossing John's bridge, organizers say the hike will include newly constructed trails through some of the property's most beautiful areas. Great views and rare plants are emphasized. For more information, contact David Ogden at davidogden@sbcglobal.net.

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