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Time to hit the trails - it's a springtime challenge!

By Pippa Fisher



From left: Donica Katayanagi, Jeff Gillett, Jonathon Katayanagi, Todd Trimble, Breyana Brandt, Cz Czerner (and front) Penny Katayanagi, Rocky Katayanagi pose in their Lamorinda Trails Challenge T-shirts on the trail by the Lafayette Community Center. Photo Pippa Fisher

It's spring in Lamorinda and the three Parks and Recreation Departments of Moraga, Orinda and Lafayette want nothing more than to see residents out enjoying the area's beautiful trails. For this reason they are offering a challenge - the first-ever Lamorinda Trails Challenge, to be precise. Kickoff events are planned in all three communities May 4.

The May 4 kickoff events, with representatives at the trailheads handing out free T-shirts, maps, and guides to promote the challenge, will take place in Lafayette at the Reservoir, in Orinda at the open space on Donald Drive and in Moraga at the Moraga Commons Park from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Starting May 1, there are two ways to complete the Lamorinda Trails Challenge. Residents can opt for either the "Go the Distance" or the "Complete the Objectives" challenges.

Participants choosing to go the distance must hike 26.2 miles - marathon distance - which can be done in one hike or many hikes. Participants will track their distance and turn in the log sheet from the Trails Challenge Guide

that can be downloaded or picked up at recreation offices. The guide recommends using the free AllTrails smartphone app to make tracking distance fun and easy.

Completing the objectives challenge requires completing five out of eight objectives outlined in the guide, such as hiking a neighborhood trail, hiking a regional trail, picking up litter, identifying wildflowers and becoming familiar with possible evacuation routes.

Completion must be logged and submitted to one of the recreation departments by Nov. 1. Success will earn participants a 2019 commemorative pin.

There is no cost to participate and, even better, while supplies last, participants can pick up a free Trails Challenge T-shirt, made possible by a donation from Coldwell Banker, which is sponsoring the challenge.

It has taken the hard work of a number of people to bring this about. Orinda Parks and Recreation Director Todd Trimble, Moraga Parks and Recreation Director Breyana Brandt and Lafayette Parks, Trails and Recreation Director Jonathan Katayanagi worked with Orinda Parks and Recreation Commissioner CZ Czerner and Coldwell Banker Managing Broker Jeff Gillett.

The three department heads, working together, identified the three cities' trails. Katayanagi explains that, inspired by Lafayette's AllTrails maps, Orinda and Moraga developed AllTrails maps that capture all the city trails, East Bay Regional Park District trails and East Bay Municipal Utility District trails.

"With all three cities' AllTrails Maps completed, the departments worked together to develop a self-guided trails challenge modeled after the EBRPD's Trails Challenge and the National Park Service's Junior Ranger Program," says Katayanagi.

Czerner, who has worked tirelessly to help bring this to fruition, is a lifelong walker/runner. Explaining how important it is to get out and walk as a healthy way to cope with stress, she recalls starting walking at a very young age.

"When I was 5 my father died of a heart attack," says Czerner. "My mother had to go to work and I was left with no father and effectively no mother." She explains that she dealt with her grief by walking and running. "This was in the 1940s," she says. "No one did that then. But it helped with my stress."

Since then, even during Czerner's high-pressure career as a lawyer, wherever she has been in the world she has always set aside an hour a day to walk or run. "It has kept me healthy," she says.

It's personal for Katayanagi too, whose daughter, then 6 years old, completed the EBRPD Trails Challenge in one day.

"I took her out on a hike and told her about the pin and she didn't want to stop until she had completed the

challenge and earned her pin. Five parks and over 15 miles later she completed the challenge in one day," said Katayanagi.

"It was the pin that got her on the trails but after she had her pin she wanted to take her 4-year-old brother out to do the challenge one hike at a time," says Katayanagi, adding, "She will probably be a lifelong hiker and all because the Park District offered this wonderful program."

Starting May 1 those interested in participating in the Lamorinda Trails Challenge will be able to download the guide and digitized trail maps at www.lovelafayette.org/trails.

For more information or to pick up printed copies, residents should contact the Parks and Recreation offices in Moraga, Orinda or Lafayette.

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