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State Farm Home Office, Bloomington, IL

Monarch Butterfly Habitat construction begins



Photo Vera Kochan

Some of the many volunteers helping to build the monarch habitat, from left: Moraga Mayor Mike McCluer, Sandy Sohner, Moraga Park Foundation President Clay Serrahn, Moraga Public Works/Parks Maintenance Manager Kyle Salvin, Steve Sohner, MGC President Penny Walwark and project co-chair Bobbie Preston

By Vera Kochan

Scientific research notes that

the monarch butterflies are at critically low levels in western states because of destruction to

their milkweed habitat along their migratory route as human housing expands into their territory and use of pesticides and herbicides increases.

Moraga falls within the western monarch's critical "coastal range," and as such it can provide a nectar and larvae host habitat. It is important to plant milkweed species that are native to California, keeping in mind that it takes one year for the plants to establish themselves and two to three years for them to bloom.

The Moraga Garden Club is establishing a certified monarch waystation at the Rancho Laguna Park with construction having recently begun by clearing out the area that once contained a par course over 10 years ago. The planting area of 2,600 square feet, 58 feet in diameter and 170 feet in circumference is now surrounded by a 6-foot-tall fence made of 2-by-2 inch wire, much like the one already lo-

cated along the Camino Pablo side of the grounds, in order to have a cohesive appearance with the rest of the park.

Additional construction has seen a cardboard, biodegradable weed abatement layer installed; the placement of decorative boulders; and groundwork laid for a fountain. Soil has been delivered and took volunteers approximately two days to spread. Future work will include a new irrigation system; pathway placement; the construction of a pergola within the habitat; and five benches strategically placed around the outside of the fence. Planting is expected to begin April 24.

MGC has made considerable headway toward meeting its fundraising goal of \$35,000. The club is approaching 85% of its intended mark, but even if the goal is reached it would still fall short of including artwork in the garden. To that end, MGC plans on having sales of the

nearly 1,100 milkweed plants they have propagated. The first sale (which will include other monarch nectar plants) takes place April 17, from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. in conjunction with the Orinda Garden Club's sale located in the Orinda Library Plaza at 26 Orinda Way. Milkweed plants can also be purchased starting April 17 at the Moraga Garden Center, 1400 Moraga Rd., Wednesdays through Sundays from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

There are still some benches available for a donation purchase. Visit: www.moragagardenclub.com and click onto "Benches for Habitat" in the header. To make a cash donation, click onto the green box "Moraga for Monarchs" on the Home page. For more information on the project, email Moragaformonarchs@gmail.com.

Free carwash in Moraga helps chase away the COVID blues

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When asked whether they would accept a donation, the response was a polite "No." According to Sister Pitovao Wong, "We are doing this to make people happy. Everybody has been through so much because of COVID. It's our way of bringing some joy into people's

lives."

The idea began with a group of missionaries based in San Francisco. When the East Bay missionaries heard of the success, they began their car wash this past February concentrating in the areas of Berkeley and Moraga.

"Washing cars is fun, especially after being in quarantine

for so long," said Sister Nellie Kendell. "Everybody asks if they can donate. We only want to make everyone a little bit happier."

With approximately 20-25 young men and women working all aspects of the process, the entire experience is done in a matter of minutes with nary a grumpy face in sight. The duties

are distributed on a rotational basis. "When the sign holders are tired of dancing in the street," explained Kendell, "they can come over here to wash cars."

While water use restrictions due to California's dry winter and expanding drought conditions may change plans for organizers, the free car

wash is expected to last through the summer either in Berkeley or the Moraga location. The hours are 11:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. every Saturday (depending on weather). Call (510) 599-1470 to confirm days and times. Or, just look for the happy faces holding signs on Moraga Road at the Lafayette/Moraga border.

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