

Published August 18th, 2021

## 45th Anniversary of the Lafayette-Moraga Regional Trail celebrated

By Sora O'Doherty



Founders celebrate the 45th anniversary of the Lafayette-Moraga Regional Trail with EBRPD directors. Photo Sora O'Doherty

Barbara Grigg had thought of the trail idea about a decade before she became involved. Grigg was looking for a safe route to school for her child at the time. As the idea percolated, the town of Moraga and the East Bay Regional Park District became involved, and there was a grant to build bridges over the creeks crossed by the trail route.

The other trail founder, Avon Wilson, attributed the success of the project to "two PTA ladies who were able to persist." Wilson had moved to Reliez Valley Road with two small children, and was horrified by the traffic along the route to the school bus stop. "With Lynn," she said, they found a way. "Lynn would have called God," she added, "if it were important to do so." Hiden did all the work on the layout of the trail, Wilson said, while she did all the cost figures. They went to the Lafayette City Council "in our short skirts and bouffant hair." One of the council members asked, "Did you write this yourself girls?" The project was the result of a lot of citizen caring and support, she said. "Moving to Lafayette 50 years ago was the best thing that ever happened to me," she concluded, "and you are part of it."

George Fisher, the chair of the advisory committee, worked for five years on the planning and environmental documents that needed to be prepared. Ed Chu worked on the landscaping, and Moraga Mayor Mike McCluer talked about how the trail came to be extended to Moraga. The whole idea, he noted, is a regional spine connecting to the 27.7 mile Iron Horse Trail, formerly used by trains, that runs from Pleasanton to Concord.

McCluer said that his family has used the trail for over 30 years, and that it has been one of the mainstays of the community during the pandemic, providing a sense of normalcy and access to the health benefits of interacting with nature. Lafayette Mayor Susan Candell called the trail a lifeline through Lafayette dedicated to extending access to the city.

Assemblymember Rebecca Bauer-Kahan said that the trail showed that "when women step up and lead, great things happen." She added that the value of the trail is that it shows how to get people out of their cars, to reduce our carbon footprint, and provide safe routes to schools as well. She praised EBRPD as great stewards of the land.

The Lafayette-Moraga trail parallels St. Mary's Road through Lafayette and Moraga. It is intended for hiking, bicycling, and equestrian use. According to the EBRPD website, the trail was once used by mule trains to carry redwood from Oakland to Sacramento. Later, when the mule trains had passed into history, the lumber was carried by steam trains, including the Oakland-Antioch and Eastern Railroad, the San Francisco-Sacramento, and the Sacramento Northern, for which the easement was historically named.

The website also describes the trail: "The north end of the trail begins at a staging area at Olympic Boulevard and Pleasant Hill Road in Lafayette, south of Highway 24, and ends at East Bay Municipal Utility District's (EBMUD) Valle Vista staging area at the outskirts of Moraga, bordering San Leandro Reservoir and Reinhardt Redwood Regional Park. (A permit is required to hike in EBMUD lands; call (510) 287-0469.) The trail makes connections to a variety of schools (including Saint Mary's College), regional trails (Briones-to-Las Trampas), local parks (Moraga Commons), and commercial areas in downtown Moraga."

The East Bay Regional Park District on Aug. 5 celebrated the 45th anniversary of the Lafayette-Moraga Regional Trail, one of the first rails-to-trails projects in California, and to unveil a permanent information panel at the site of the original Trail's dedication that occurred on July 4, 1976. The celebration also honored the founders of the trail, who spoke at the event.

Many speakers honored the trail, including representatives of Congressman Mark DeSaulnier and Supervisor Candace Andersen, EBRPD President Dee Rosario, Don Goode from the original trails committee, and Jerry Kent, retired EBRPD Director. Following the unveiling, EBRPD sponsored an ice cream social for all in attendance, as well as trail users who happened to pass by.

The 7.7-mile linear park, now an integral part of daily life in Lamorinda, was conceived by two young women many years ago. Founder Lynn Hiden told the audience that



Domino making friends Photo Sora O'Doherty

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