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## Family Camp Out event brings a little bit of the wilderness to Moraga

By Vera Kochan



From left, second-time event campers the Colhoun family; first-time event camper Andrew Sargent brought five boys; and first-time event camper Nathan Thoms Photo Vera Kochan

Rancho Laguna Park played host to another one of the summertime town events organized by the Parks and Recreation Department. Family Camp Out was held Aug. 14-15 for the sixth time. The annual event, like so many others, was skipped last year due to COVID-19 mandates.

Beginning at 2 p.m. on Saturday, families pitched a colorful array of tents, both large and small, set up folding chairs, and broke out the ice chests, while the kids played games on the large lawn nearby. This was Brady Cooper's first camp out, and the excitement was clearly registered on the 10-year-old's face, having just played Hula Hoops and Cornhole with friends.

A per person fee of \$27 included dinner, breakfast the next morning, and entertainment in between. At last count, 59 families had registered at a total of 170 persons.

Parks and Rec Director Breyana Brandt was on hand to greet the attendees at the check-in table and see to all of the details for the event. Recreation Coordinator Donald Scully also served as jack-of-all-trades, in addition to spending the night in a tent in case of emergencies. "I just bought this tent at Costco," he explained.

There were craft tables for the kids with opportunities to make headbands out of leaves or decorate a rocket and watch it launched by a staff member.

The majority of folks were experiencing Family Camp Out for the first time. One dad, Athan Bezaitis, brought his two daughters, Koralia, age 4, and Nikoletta, age 2, but he will switch places with his wife and she will camp overnight with the girls. "Someone has to stay home and watch my other two kids," was his tongue-in-cheek excuse.

Massimo Scapini also admits to being a first-timer with 5-year-old daughter Portia: "My wife talked me into coming to this - she's over at the playground."

Dinner was served at 6:30 p.m., with a menu consisting of barbecue chicken, hot dogs, hamburgers, salad, rolls, juice, soda and water. After dinner, everyone made their way to the amphitheater for "Dante: Magician & Family Entertainer." No camp out can be complete without S'mores for dessert, and that's how the evening wound down before a strictly enforced lights out at 10 p.m.

Breakfast service began on Sunday at 7:30 a.m. for the early risers and consisted of breakfast sandwiches, bagels, fruit, juice and coffee until 9 a.m. By 10 a.m., all tents were expected to be broken down and the camp site cleaned up. Most parents would agree that the entire experience was like getting back to nature without having to drive for hours to get there.



Kids load their personally decorated rockets for lift-off while Donald Scully (right) supervises. Photos Vera Kochan



Camp being set up by Massimo Scapini (left) and Athan Bezaitis. Photos Vera Kochan

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