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## One local man's mission: Clean up the town of Moraga

By Diane Claytor



Debris collected during Bollinger Canyon cleanup. Photos provided

Scott Parker is a man on a mission and he's hoping many of us will do what we can to help accomplish the ultimate goal: ridding Moraga of litter and making sure it stays that way.

For the past four months, the Moraga resident has single-handedly cleaned up many of the town's public spaces, including watersheds, creeks, empty lots and roadsides. He has spent hours filling hundreds of garbage bags with tons of trash. "I'm guessing I've picked up about 5,000-6,000 pounds of garbage, probably 30 years worth of litter," Parker proclaims. He's found thousands of bottles and cans, painting supplies, dumped garbage, furniture, discarded barrels, motorbikes, shopping carts, TV's and even a rusted-out old car he estimates is from the '50s. And while he's done the work on his own, he has received considerable help from the town's staff in hauling much of the garbage away.

A lover of nature and the outdoors, Parker has always hated seeing litter, whether along the side of a road or on a beach. Whenever he'd go hiking or take his dogs for a walk, he'd pick up trash. He'd be at the park or a soccer field and pick up trash. "We should all be doing this," he insists. "If we all made this small effort, garbage wouldn't be such a huge issue."

Parker, a finance strategist, found himself between jobs and with time on his hands. After dropping his son off for soccer practice at the Lafayette Community Center one day, Parker looked around and noticed how much trash there was, especially in the areas that were more difficult to access. So he picked it up. He began carrying trash bags in the car and every time he dropped one of his boys off for practice, he'd take an hour or so to drive somewhere, park, walk around and take in the landscape. There was no dearth of trash. Parker reports that he collected about 16 bags of garbage over approximately five hours just on St. Mary's Road.

He stopped at the Bollinger Canyon pullout and was shocked at the amount of trash all the way down to the creek. He found an old HVAC unit, started rocking it back and forth to break it apart. It took him an hour and that's when he made a decision. "OK, it's on," he remembers thinking. "I'm going to get everything I can out of this watershed. I don't care how heavy it is, I'm going to get it out and then I'm going to figure out where the problems are and go to the town, describing all I'm seeing." Parker says he spent more than 20 hours, pulling out at least 3,000 pounds of dumped items and trash from this one area.

"I was on a mission," he declares. Parker hit the vacant lot next to the Rheem Theatre where he spent hours cleaning up trash. He picked up nine bags of garbage at the hill by the storage facility, more bags at the empty lot by 7-11 and hundreds of bottles and cans in the creek by the Commons. He climbed up to Painted Rock where he cleaned up hundreds of paint cans and painting paraphernalia. He picked up two carloads of trash on Canyon driving out to Pinehurst.

All the while, Parker recalls, he's thinking about what can be done to stop all this dumping. "I'm mentally strategizing," he says, "thinking about going to the town and telling them this is what I'm seeing, this is what I'm doing and asking them what can all of us do to prevent garbage from accumulating?" He has some ideas: more garbage cans, fencing around some pullouts, annual inspections of empty lots, creeks and watershed areas. "Maybe even some 'Keep Moraga Beautiful' signs," he suggests.

Parker believes the next steps are strategies and organization. "Let's prevent this from happening again," he states. "We all say we care about the environment. Let's prove it. This is our backyard. It doesn't take much.

"All we need is to be vigilant and curious," Parker continues. "Pull off to the side of the road. Look around. Pick up trash that you see. That's all I did."

The town of Moraga has a page on their website where residents can report issues of concern (<https://webrai.mycivcapps.com/moragaca>). Parker strongly urges residents to use this resource. "The Town needs to be aware of the problems. When you go for a walk, if you see something, say something," he says. "Advise town officials about concerns through their website. They've been pretty responsive."

Parker is no longer searching for garbage. But when he's out and about, he's still looking around, picking up

litter. "It makes us feel better to live in a clean house, wear clean clothes. It's the same with the environment," he states. "A clean environment makes us feel better about ourselves, our neighbors and our community."



Debris found at Painted Rock Photos provided

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