



Hike for Hope - A Huge Success

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(PLEASANTON, CA) Under perfect blue skies 672 hikers and 62 volunteers (including two on horseback and two on ham radio) gathered at Sunol Regional Wilderness to enjoy the wildflowers and to be part of Hike for Hope, the annual benefit for Hope Hospice. Not the typical hike, the day was filled with music, laughter, and reflection as hikers took to the hills in memory of a loved one. The event's chair, Dolores Bengtson and thirteen committee members, was joined by retired Pleasanton police chief, Tim Neal, and retired Amador High School principal, Cyril Bonanno.

Families with children, some three generations strong, learned about animals, plants and flowers in the area from exhibits outside the East Bay Regional Parks naturalist education trailer. Adults and children both were drawn to the collection of pelts from animals and snakes living in the park surrounds. Kids were delighted to make friends 'up close and personal' with the horses of mounted trail patrol volunteers, coordinated by Rich Guarienti of Dublin, who were there to bring a presence of safety and to answer questions. Mike and Ann Koch of Alamo came for their second year. Mike said, "Last year's hike through Sunol Regional Wilderness proved to be a great time for all no matter their age or experience. There is nothing like walking in "Little Yosemite" with family and friends at this time of year. Having benefited from hospice's help and support during the passing of my mother in 2010, we find special meaning in life's renewal as we enjoyed the wonders of spring on this year's hike."

Stan Goldberg, local musician, author, and hospice volunteer played music on several wood flutes as hikers ascended the hills. Many returned to Hike for Hope to repeat their experience from last year. Pushpa Dalal of Pleasanton was attending the event for her first time and was thrilled to have completed the longer trek. Community members from all over the East Bay made new friends and future hike dates while others renewed old friendships along the trails. To keep everyone refreshed, ice cream was donated by Dreyers and water was donated by Eternal Waters of Walnut Creek.

Added to the festivities, a free raffle took place with prizes donated by REI. Hikers whose tickets were drawn won hiker pole sets, a backpack and a signed copy of Jacky Poulsen's book, "Tri-Valley Trails." As hikers neared the end of the trails and headed for home, they received seed packets to be scattered in their own yards in memory of a loved one. The hike yielded over \$70,000 to be used by Hope Hospice for current and future services.

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