

January 26, 2010

Dream of Environmental Center to Become Reality at Edgewood *Volunteerism, Inspiration the Focus of the Bill and Jean Lane Education Center*

REDWOOD CITY, Calif. – The San Mateo County Board of Supervisors today put the final piece into place to start construction of what will become a showcase for environmental education and volunteerism: The Bill and Jean Lane Education Center at Edgewood County Park and Natural Preserve.

The \$1.3 million center provides the opportunity to increase the visibility of volunteer programs, recruit volunteers and expand environmental education efforts. A groundbreaking ceremony will be held February 11 at 2 p.m. at Edgewood, a popular spot for hikers and nature lovers on the western edge of Redwood City.

“Last year the Board of Supervisors chose to recognize the many contributions to our community by naming the center in honor of Jean and Ambassador L. W. “Bill” Lane, Jr.,” said Board President Richard S. Gordon. “The Lanes were instrumental in bringing about many of the treasures in our community that we enjoy today. They provided a significant gift toward building the center and this gift among their many others will inspire our future generations to take care of our natural treasures.”

Mr. and Mrs. Lane have long supported the local parks system and parks programs. “We are lucky to have high caliber parks nearby and we believe strongly that these parks are important for the families of San Mateo County. They are the places we can easily go, without traveling long distances (saving time and gas), to enjoy our families and refresh our spirits.” they wrote in a letter to donors for the center.

The design of the center incorporates many of the latest “green” features, including reused materials, solar power and insulation made from recycled blue jeans. Even the site was chosen carefully to minimize environmental harm: it will be built on the site of an old house and use existing oak trees for shade. The design fits with the environmental ethics of the Lanes.

Since she was a small child, Mrs. Lane has had a consuming curiosity about biological diversity and the interrelationship of all living things. From an early age, she walked with her parents in the Illinois woods every spring to discover the earliest blooming wildflowers, mushrooms, salamanders, birds’ nests and all manner of living creatures. “We must continue to educate and inspire ourselves and our future generations,” she said.

In all of his philanthropic, business, and government activities, Mr. Lane has taken pride in his volunteer work and encouraged volunteerism for all ages. Mrs. Lane is well known for her hands-on volunteer activities in the community. “We were inspired by the dedication of the many people who already volunteer at this biological wonder in our backyard and are pleased to support the infrastructure that will allow them to expand their habitat restoration and environmental education efforts.” Mr. and Mrs. Lane wrote.

Since 1970, the community has worked to establish Edgewood as a park, save the land from development and elevate its status to a preserve. Today, the same people – and many, many more – visit and volunteer at the Preserve. This history of community activism and continued involvement attests to Edgewood’s special nature.

Volunteers contribute more 10,000 hours annually at Edgewood. Some work on trail maintenance or as members of the trail patrol. For more than 30 years, the dedicated volunteers known as the Weed Warriors have restored natural habitat and removed invasive weeds so that the wildflowers and animals that depend on the native plants can flourish. Friends of Edgewood Docents lead spring wildflower walks for adults and educational field trips for local schools and youth groups.

“The generous contributions from the community, including Bill and Jean Lane and many dedicated volunteers at Edgewood who restore habitat, maintain the trails or lead walks for children and adults, speak volumes about the importance of this project,” said Julia Bott, executive director of the San Mateo County Parks Foundation. The Foundation was responsible for the campaign to secure funds for the project. “We couldn’t have done it without the help of many, especially the Friends of Edgewood,” she added. More than 1,000 families contributed towards the center.

In anticipation of the building, the Friends of Edgewood have been recruiting additional volunteers to staff the building and expand the programs found in the Preserve. “It’s these programs that will give the building life and make it a vibrant learning center,” Bott said.

San Mateo County operates 18 separate parks, three regional trails and numerous other county and local trails encompassing nearly 16,000 acres. They are located throughout the County and represent a wide variety of natural settings. These include a marine reserve, a bayside recreational area, coastal mountain woodland areas, and urban sites. There are almost 1.5 million visitors to the County Parks annually.

Edgewood, although only about one square mile in size, is home to over 500 different plant species, a remarkable richness. The plant communities provide habitat for frogs, lizards, foxes, coyotes, bobcats, raccoons, deer, and more than 70 resident and migratory bird species. More than 100,000 visitors annually enjoy Edgewood’s well-maintain trail system.

The Educational Center will serve as a portal to the natural wonder to be found in Edgewood. The building is modest, with a small ranger and docent office, storage and accessible bathrooms. There will be two outdoor amphitheaters and exhibits that involve touch and listening.

The ceremonial groundbreaking will take place February 11 at 2 p.m. at Edgewood. The entrance is about a half-mile east of Interstate 280 on Edgewood Road. A grand opening of the building will be held later this year.

To learn more about the Bill and Jean Lane Education Center and volunteer opportunities, please visit www.friendsofedgeswood.org or contact the San Mateo County Parks Department at www.co.sanmateo.ca.us/portal/site/parks/ or call (650) 363-4020.

About the San Mateo County Parks Foundation

The San Mateo County Parks Foundation funds projects that restore habitat, provide environmental education, improve trails, support volunteer efforts, and encourage recreational use of parks. Since its founding in 1998, the Foundation and its members have provided over \$10 million dollars for San Mateo County Parks.

Additional information can be found at www.SupportParks.org

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