

The Open Space Needs You!

Q: Why volunteer with us?

A: It's a win-win. You get sunshine, exercise, stress reduction, a sense of accomplishment, a chance to meet others who value our Open Space, the gratification of giving back to the community, and productive calorie-burning. The community gets an improved and robust wildlife habitat.

How to Volunteer. You have several ways to volunteer with us. You can join us as a team member on an existing project, participate in a group volunteer event, or volunteer as a family. This last category is new. Two years ago, we experimented with an Adopt-a-Tree Program. A family of two adults and a teen agreed to plant and care for four trees. The plus of this program is that the family gets to work together on their schedule, and their daughter gets community service credit for time spent watering and weeding. The four trees are now flourishing and will soon be able to survive on their own. When fully grown, they will provide shade for the nearby trail, stabilize the soil in the area, and provide additional habitat for wildlife.

Our volunteer opportunities are open to all age groups. While young people often volunteer with their families, teenagers and adults can also participate in our project groups. In fact, in this issue of the Newsletter, we feature a talk presented to the Walnut Creek City Council by a young woman who was a sixth-grader at the time, followed by an interview contributed by a teen volunteer. Everyone is welcome and valued in our community.

Volunteer Activities. When people think of volunteering in the Open



Members of the Oak Habitat Restoration team remove protective wire cages no longer needed.

Space, habitat restoration is often the first thing that comes to mind. But we value a variety of contributions. We are especially interested in recruiting people with specific skills and interests, such as photography, teaching, video, writing and editing, and graphic design. You could work on trails, submit photographs for our social media or website, write for our Newsletter, or help renovate the Open Space kiosks. Your unique talents can make a difference!

You may have seen on our website that we have a set of established projects which meet every week. If you are not ready to commit to that level of participation, please consider joining us for one or more special events during the year. We often have public events such as acorn gathering and planting, which will give you an idea of what a restoration project might be

(continued on page 2)

Foundation Receives Proclamation from Mayor

On behalf of the Foundation, on June 18th 2024, President Kime Smith received a letter of Proclamation from the City of Walnut Creek presented by Mayor Haskew. The letter was in recognition of the contributions our organization has made in support of the Walnut Creek Open Space during its first fifty years. The Walnut Creek Historical Society was also recognized at the City Council Meeting.

Happy 50th Anniversary WCOS!

This story began in 1970 when developer Louis Scott proposed to build 600 cluster homes on 200 acres of slopes along Shell Ridge. Well-prepared residents went to the City Council meeting with three petitions and testimony from four organized groups to argue against it. The Council approved the development on a split vote. Far from being the end of the story, that was the beginning. You can read all the fascinating ins and outs on our website here.

On June 6, 1974, the citizens went to the polls and passed two bond measures that established Walnut Creek’s Open Space, the first city-owned open space in the nation. In 1979 the Walnut Creek Open Space Foundation was incorporated to advise the City on further land purchases and make sure that the original land use policies were followed and the land remained in its natural state.

We joined with the City of Walnut Creek and the WC Historical Society to celebrate the anniversary itself, but we have a number of other events planned through the next 6-8 months – nature walks and hikes, bird-related activities, a Family Oak Planting Project and other activities at our restoration sites,



Legacy planting at 30th Anniversary –
Ralph Kraetsch and Dick Daniel plant an acorn.
Photo: Bob Brittain

a different history talk, and a passport to record your participation in the various events. We’ll also post interesting tidbits on our website and alert you to them on our Facebook and Instagram accounts. You can conveniently access our social media through links on our landing page: <https://bio.site/wcosf> (also reachable through the QR code found elsewhere in this issue of the Newsletter.

— Lesley Hunt

The Open Space Needs You!

(continued from page 1)

like. These sessions require no previous experience or skills. We also recently hosted a group blue bird nestbox-building activity organized and led by an Eagle Scout Candidate.



Birdbox
Video Link

Consider participating with your organization if they volunteer for a group work session with us. It’s a great way to give back to the community in the company of friends and family. Volunteering together can strengthen your bonds and create lasting memories!

Other opportunities. The City’s Open Space Division also sponsors volunteer activities. For example, if you are interested in gardening, the Native Plant Garden in the Sugarloaf Area may suit you — please see the short article highlighting this group below. The Open Space Division is also responsible for the educational programs at Borges Ranch. They are looking for docents, especially in the Spring and Fall when school is in session (see below). Other volunteering opportunities are also available. Please visit the Walnut Creek City website’s Open Space section, Volunteering area for further information.

Contact Us. Here are some email addresses to use to contact us for more information:

- To volunteer for an existing project as an individual: volunteer@wcosf.org
- To volunteer your group to help us out for a day: group.volunteering@wcosf.org
- If you are an Eagle Scout Candidate or member of a youth service club: youth.volunteering@wcosf.org

2024 Trail Survey

You may have already received an email asking you to participate in the new 2024 Trails Survey. The survey is a follow-up to the 2018 Trails Survey and will take less than 10 minutes to fill out. This is your chance to weigh in on where you see value and where you see areas which need improvement. Please consider taking the time to respond. Responses are anonymous.

We would like to use this survey mechanism to get feedback from our membership on other matters as well; for example, to find out what content and media you would like to see for future issues of the Newsletter. We will send out no more than two requests per year.

The original email request will also provide a link to “Opt Out” of this and future surveys, if you prefer not to participate in the Foundation’s surveys.

Kristen Ho's Speech

In September 2020, the Walnut Creek Open Space Foundation (WCOSF) started the Family Oak Project. Our purpose was to plant new trees and protect existing trees. We also wanted to reach new volunteers by designing a project where parents and their children could work together to benefit our Open Space and gain experience with the natural world.

We arranged to have an experienced volunteer accompany each family to teach them the skills and provide help as needed. It was also a chance to talk about our Open Space and nature. We enjoyed working with the families, and several families have now become regulars at our Family Oak Events.

WCOS started planting oaks in our Open Space before the effects of climate change were widely recognized. Reacting to climate change concerns has become another purpose for our restoration work. One of our attendees (then 11-year-old Kristen Ho) interviewed me and my wife Lesley about climate change and our involvement with WCOSF. Since Kristen wanted to be involved in fighting climate change, we encouraged her to speak before the Walnut Creek City Council. I listened to her presentation and felt that her thoughts were well organized and that she delivered them with poise and confidence. The text of her speech appears at right.

I am very impressed at how well Kristen and other young people who attended our events have acquired new skills and have worked to benefit our Open Space. It has been a special pleasure for me to work with the families and other adults at the Family Oak Project events.

— Bill Hunt

Volunteer Spotlight: Kristen Ho

Speech presented to the Walnut Creek City Council

Hello, my name is Kristen Ho, I am a 6th grader at the Seven Hills School.

I think we all know quite a bit about climate change by now and the terrifying impact it will eventually have on our environment and society, like the day the sky was orange and filled with ash from the fires.

I'm thankful for foundations like Walnut Creek Open Space Foundation, that get others interested in preserving nature and I'm also appreciative of the open space itself, without it, I would have never really gone outside during the pandemic.

I am here today, outside of my comfort zone because I want adults to know about the younger generation's point of view on climate change.

When I saw the orange sky on the day of the wildfires which I sometimes refer to as the "apocalypse" I thought we needed to do something about it and take action.

That's why I started helping with reforestation at Shell Ridge. Once a month, typically on a Saturday with some friends, Ava Bakkum, Priyanka Advani and Emma Singh, we go to the open space and meet other families to continue our mission to repopulate oak trees around the area.

Once we picked acorns from the trees, learning about the different ways to tell if they were ripe or gone bad. After gathering the nuts in plastic bags, we germinated them in the fridge for a month or so. In that time, they sprouted and were ready to grow in soil.

The next time we went out with 2 foot high metal wire fences and shovels to plant the seeds in hopes they would become another oak. These trees will help dispose of carbon dioxide that causes global warming.

But we also need people to pay more attention to spare the air days, consider using renewable energy sources in their homes, and try driving less or switching to electric cars.

And in cities like Walnut Creek, construction has made it much busier, and more packed. With more houses and condo complexes, there's a need for fresh air and space.

So if buildings continue to rise, places like Shell and Lime Ridge need to be preserved. We need to remember to protect the wildlife, native plants, and animals because this is their home.

If everyone contributes and does their part, I believe that change can happen. I love my community, and I want generations after me to enjoy it as much as I do.

Thank you for allowing me to speak here today.



Our Landing Page

We have a convenient page on the web which has links to our social media, volunteering links, and photos. It's an easy way to find us on the web.



Point your phone's camera at the symbol to the left and click the link.

<https://bio.site/wcosf>

Interview with Kristen Ho

[Four years after her presentation to the City Council, Kristen is still an active volunteer in the Walnut Creek Open Space. Here is a current interview with her as captured by a new teen volunteer, Mihir Konkar. -ed.]

Hello readers, my name is Mihir Konkar, and I'm a Junior at Campolindo High School. The interview below took place over a phone call, and it serves to give an insight into Kristen's experiences and how she made an impact in her community. I hope this piece inspires readers, especially the youth, to go out there and make a difference!

Q: How did you first get involved with WCOSF, and how long have you been volunteering there?

"I first started volunteering with WCOSF in 6th grade, so about 3-4 years. I started around Covid and I did a volunteer event with a couple of my friends from elementary school. We were collecting acorns to germinate oak trees at Shell Ridge, and after that, we continued on with these projects and I've been doing it since!"

Q: What made you come back to volunteer after the first time?

"Part of it was just being around with friends and having these meetups where we knew we were volunteering to do something good for the environment, as well as being a social event where you could be around your friends and enjoy their company. That made it special, especially since I was in 7th grade, and I also think the way WCOSF set up the events where each one was adding onto the previous one which made it feel like you were making progress on the project, and made it quite rewarding."

Q: What was your "spark" to write your City Council letter (which was by the way very impressive) and your ultimate goal for it?

"I joined the WCOSF around the pandemic, and I think that the time when we were trapped in our houses for such long periods of time took a toll on my mental health, so being able to go out into the Open Space was this

moment where I felt safe and different than being trapped inside beforehand. Being out in nature, especially for me, helped me really rejuvenate myself and take away any stress that I had. I started redeveloping my love for nature and wanting to preserve this space for others to enjoy, and that led me to speak to the Walnut Creek City Council and share the importance of the Open Space with others, especially with those who are part of the youth community. It was a huge step for me, but I felt like I needed to say something and get my point across because I felt and still do feel really passionate about the WCOSF and everything it stands for."

Q: Tell me a little more about your climate podcast experience and how that came to be?

"I did it not too long after I had spoken to the Walnut Creek City Council. I am a part of this youth group of around 15-20 teenagers, and I joined around the pandemic as well. The adult chaperone who was helping do the legal logistics of organizing our environmental volunteer events; she told me she had heard of this opportunity to speak on a climate podcast called Earth Feels. She told me that they were looking for what young people have to say about the environment and climate change, and she asked me if I would like the opportunity to speak on it. I was a little nervous, but at the same time motivated to get my point across and seeing someone younger could be encouraging kids to say 'if she can do it maybe I can too'. I wanted to inspire others to get involved and make a difference. Aside from that, this experience was a game changer for myself, as I felt more confident in my own voice and that was really empowering."

Q: What are some of your hobbies outside of school and WCOSF?



Bill Hunt assists Kristen and family with installation of an enclosure to protect a volunteer oak in Shell Ridge.

"I actually play the harp, which is definitely something unique, and there's this harp store tucked into downtown Walnut Creek which is where I first found my love for the instrument. I started playing around 7 years old, and I love playing for other people; I actually play at local senior centers as community service to entertain and connect with elders. I also play tennis and cross country/track, as well as swimming for a year."

Q: What fields of study are you interested in, as well as do you have any plans for the future?

"I tend to see myself as someone who focuses on the present more than the future, but for future career paths, I primarily want to do something that helps people and benefits the community. Potentially, I have taken into account engineering, biomedical engineering, something related to the medical field, but I have also thought about business, and being around and communicating with people."

—Mihir Konkar

Docents needed at Borges Ranch

The Walnut Creek Open Space Division seeks volunteers to lead school tours at the Old Borges Ranch in Shell Ridge.

Docents provide walking tours of Borges Ranch to groups of age range Pre-K through 5th grade weekdays 10:00 am – 12:00 pm. The tours include:

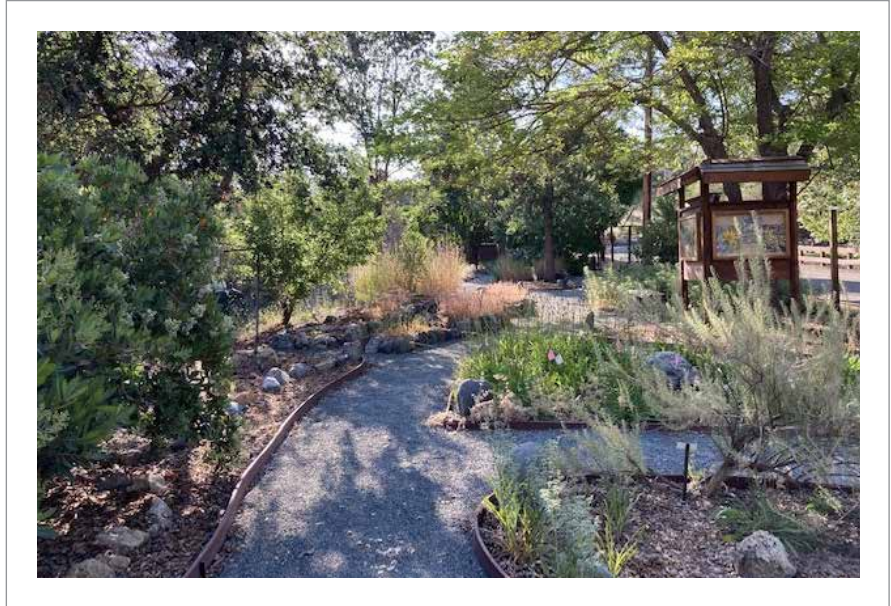
- Historical information about the site and the Borges family
- Interpretation of what life was like living on the Ranch in the early 1900s
- Outdoor activities, including pumping water, sawing wood, lariat toss, and farm animal interactions
- Tour the inside of the Historic 1901 Borges Ranch House and 1903 Carriage Barn
- Teaching children about farm animals that live on the ranch, including sheep, goats, pigs, and chickens
- Visit to the blacksmith shop

There is a flexible commitment of 2 hours a week during the Spring and Fall when school is in session.

For more information, please contact: Ranger Corri Frazier, 925-943-5899 x2665 or Frazier@walnut-creek.org



Open Space Rangers Joel and Corri work out a new route for the Indian Valley Trail in a difficult section.



Sugarloaf Native Plant Garden.

Sugarloaf Open Space Native Plant Garden

In October of 2021, Judy Franceschi, Mary Ann Jervis, and I started working in the weed-covered Sugarloaf Native Plant Garden. This garden was established by Ranger Bruce many years ago. The weeds covered most planting surfaces, and we weren't sure any native annuals would appear once it rained. However, we were pleasantly surprised to find several natives that had survived the weedy years.

Since then, we have welcomed Buttercups, Blue Eye Grass, California Aster, Poppies, Narrow Leaf Mules Ear, Ithuriel's Spear, Fremont Star Lily, Elegant Clarkia, Globe Gilia, and Chinese Houses. The Mugwort and Soap Plant have thrived, and the existing Toyon and Black Sage have added new healthy branches. Many other of Ranger Bruce's original natives did not reappear even after we pulled every weed and lovingly mulched the garden.

Ranger Corri and his staff replaced the broken bender boards and helped with pruning dead wood. They also supplied us with ample mulch and hardware cloth cages to keep the squirrels from digging up our plants. Eagle Scout, Jared Schroter, built a well designed information kiosk for his Venture Scout project. This Winter, we look forward to planting several more chaparral plants and to continuing to mulch, weed, and nurture this gem of a native garden.

—Jill Dresser

Sugarloaf Native Plant Garden Crew

The Crew meets most Monday afternoons from 3:30 - 5pm.

During the spring and summer we often each add a day to weed and/or water the garden. There are bathrooms, water fountains, and parking at the site. We each provide our own tools and always bring gloves. Please wear appropriate footwear, clothes & hat for the weather and time of year.

To volunteer (confirm Monday timing), please contact the group leader, Jill Dresser at jilld@wcosf.org.



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Inside:

- **The Open Space Needs You!**
- **Mayor’s Proclamation**
- **Happy 50th Anniversary WCOS!**
- **Volunteer Spotlight: Kristen Ho**

 **Yes, I want to help protect and preserve Walnut Creek’s Open Spaces.**

We invite you to join the Walnut Creek Open Space Foundation. Memberships and contributions are tax deductible to the extent allowable by law. There are numerous areas where you can help. Interested? Drop us an email at volunteer@wcosf.org, visit our website at www.wcosf.org, or fill out the form below and mail it to WCOSF, Box 309, Walnut Creek, CA 94597-0309.

I would like to join the Walnut Creek Open Space Foundation

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____ CITY _____ ZIP _____

PHONE _____ EMAIL (WE NEVER SHARE) _____

- PATRON-\$500
- BENEFACTOR-\$250
- SUSTAINING-\$100
- SPONSOR-\$50
- FAMILY-\$40
- INDIVIDUAL-\$25

I WOULD LIKE TO VOLUNTEER TO: MAINTAIN OAKS PLANT NATIVES CREATE WILDLIFE CORRIDORS HELP WITH OUTREACH

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