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# Soul Support – The Orinda Park and Recreation Foundation

By Laurie Snyder



Looking out of their windows, Orinda Union School District administrators will see kids at play in Pine Grove Park. Adjacent to the new OUSD administration building on Altarinda Road, Orinda's newest park features restrooms, a tot lot and improved turf. The public is invited to a special ribbon cutting ceremony Sept. 30 at 5 p.m. Photo Ohlen Alexander

**I**f you look up 'recreation,' it's defined as anything boosting the human spirit – sports, music, reading, hiking, biking – landscaping," says Bill Wadsworth, a Miramonte High School graduate who has lived in Orinda with his wife for 35 years. A children's book author, Ginger Wadsworth volunteers for the Orinda Library Paws to Read program while Bill serves as the president of the Orinda Park and Recreation Foundation – one of the city's most impactful, unsung nonprofits.

Founded in 1975 as the Orinda Foundation, the name changed during the 1980s, but the mission remained: "To aid and contribute to the City of Orinda's recreational and community service activities related to parks, open space, beautification efforts, and community recreational improvements." An astounding 100 percent of funds raised support this mission. The foundation can do this because it is entirely volunteer run. To date, it has raised \$1.5 million.

"We divvy up responsibilities, have 10 meetings a year, and keep those to an hour-and-a-half. It's rewarding to work with others for a common purpose. You can sit there and have ideas by yourself all day long and not think of the obvious. You develop new friendships, and are energized by others' ideas," says Wadsworth.

The Orinda Park and Recreation Foundation was started by average folks who noticed a need and decided to fix it. When the Orinda Union School District opted to sell its school on Orinda Way in the mid-1970s, Orindans launched a tax exempt organization and purchased the historic structure plus three adjoining acres, creating the Orinda Community Center and Park. The group then improved those facilities, and set more milestones.

Raising over \$600,000 to buy 111 acres for the Orinda Oaks Open Space Preserve, picnic areas and trails, volunteers partnered with the Muir Heritage Land Trust to save six additional acres. The foundation helped restore and provide San Pablo Creek access to schools, helped build Lamorinda's Skateboard Park, launched Moonlight Movies, and continues bettering the community in collaboration with the Orinda Association, Art in Public Places Committee, Community Foundation, and Rotary.

Next up – buying and installing defibrillators at sports fields and creating maps for Orinda's trail system. "Providing our community with the ability to participate in something restorative and recreational is important," says Wadsworth. For more information, go to [www.oprfoundation.org](http://www.oprfoundation.org).

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