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Gala to Give Glimpse of Carr Ranch Property

By Sophie Braccini



Carr Ranch's stunning south view. Photo Adam Weidenbach

"and I wanted to be part of that."

With its 600 acres of open hills, canyons, creeks, trees, shrubs, wildflowers, wildlife and its spectacular views of the East Bay, Carr Ranch is one of the most beautiful open space properties around. While hiking or horseback riding the ranch, it truly seems as if the sky's the limit.

The John Muir Land Trust (JMLT) that is focused on buying the property to open it to the public has raised over two-thirds of the \$7 million purchase price. On April 30, it will host the Pure Muir Gala to help those fundraising efforts. It will be held at the picturesque Campana Farm set at the edge of Moraga.

Pat Rose, owner of Campana Farm, located at 2151 Camino Pablo next to Rancho Laguna Park, joined the JMLT as soon as she heard of its project to purchase Carr Ranch, "I was so thrilled," she said,

Campana Farm is a six-acre property spread on flat land next to 13,000 acres of EBMUD watershed open space and Carr Ranch. Rose says she had been worried about the Carr Ranch and how it could be developed since it is located outside of the Moraga town limits and development would not have had to abide by such town's rules as the protection of ridgelines.

Campana Farm is the perfect place for an event supporting the purchase of the Carr Ranch property, according to JMLT Executive Director Linus Eukel, because it is close to downtown Moraga, and at the same time secluded and surrounded by open space. Standing on the main lawn where the gala will be held, one has the feeling to be at the edge of the world, with infinite uncharted territory in sight, inviting exploration.

Rose has developed her property for elegant large events, such as weddings, with a front garden where appetizers and drinks will be served before dinner on the April 30. Native plants, flowing grass, flowers and a pond create an inviting atmosphere.

On the evening of the gala people who purchase VIP tickets will go on a short hike on the trails behind Campana Farm to learn more about Carr Ranch, and see the property from a few key vantage points. Eukel and Chuck Lewis, JMLT board chairman, will be speaking briefly about the trust and Carr Ranch. Well-known television personality Doug McConnell will be the Master of Ceremonies.

Rose says that JMLT expects 350 people and she anticipates the event to be a big success, with music by the Charles Wheel Band, catering by Classic Catering of Pleasant Hill, and a live auction. Items up for bid include a horse-drawn carriage tour with John Muir's great-grandson, Mike Muir; a Carr Ranch private hike followed by dinner at Campana Farm; a week at the New Jersey shore for eight; eight nights at the River View Cabin inside Yosemite; a wine tasting experience for six supplied by Urban Wineries with Chef/Sommelier Melissa Lavrinc Smith; and a sail on the San Francisco Bay on a racing Trimaran.

Eukel said that he has been very impressed by the level of support Lamorinda residents, and Moragans especially, have given to the project, many of whom were not affiliated with the JMLT before. The town of Moraga recently gave \$10,000 to add to the campaign.

Rose expects the crowd to be an eclectic group, which she says is part of the charm of the kind of people she has met at JMLT events: a wide cross-section of suburbanites and city-dwellers, often passionate hikers, and enthusiastic about preserving the hills.

"The dilemma will be the fashion," she says with a smile referring to the fact that some will hike before dinner. Participants may have to pack a change of hiking boots in their trunk. Tickets are \$250 and can be purchased at www.jmlt.org/gala2016.



Campana Farm, next to Rancho Laguna Park, will host the Gala. Photo Sophie Braccini

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