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## Local Spots Celebrate National Parks' Centennial

By Sophie Braccini



Since the late 1800s and the establishment of Yellowstone National Park, this country has been preserving land and historical sites. It was on Aug. 25, 1916, that President Woodrow Wilson created a unique federal administration to manage all the federally owned properties for the enjoyment of the people, the National Park Service. This year parks all over the country are celebrating the centennial. It is also an opportunity to rediscover the 11 national parks of the Bay Area.

Tom Leatherman is National Park Service (NPS) Superintendent at four National Park Service historic sites in the East Bay. He spoke at the Lafayette Library and Learning Center on May 4 to kick off the local celebration.

Leatherman highlighted that the NPS not only manages large parks and wilderness areas, but also preserves and promotes sites that can bring history of this country alive. Right here in the Bay Area, the city of Richmond was chosen to be part of the Urban Park program - there are only 10 urban areas nationwide, aimed at connecting people to their parks every day, not only while they're on vacation.

The closest site to Lamorinda that is part of the Richmond urban park is Eugene O'Neill's home in Danville, Tao House, his last "home and harbor" as the Noble prize-winning playwright called it. The house that O'Neill and his wife left in 1944 has been completely restored and can be accessed through a shuttle departing from downtown Danville. Information is available at <https://www.nps.gov/euon/index.htm>.

Many have already visited the Rosie the Riveter Homefront National Historic Park. On Saturday, Aug. 13, the Richmond site will hold a "Rosie Rally" hoping for a turnout of 5,000 people dressed up as Rosie. Details are available at the <http://www.rosietheriveter.org/news-events/events>.

The other sites that are part of the urban area are the Port Chicago Naval Magazine National Memorial- the most recent addition to the NPS in 2009 - and the John Muir National Historic Site that includes the home John Muir shared with his wife and daughters in Martinez, as well as Mt. Wanda, where Muir liked to take his daughters on nature walks. Mt. Wanda was purchased for preservation by the John Muir Land Trust in the 1990s. The trust is one of the many partners NPS works with to preserve and manage the sites.

All these parks are part of the Centennial campaign "Every Kid In a Park" that gives every fourth-grader nationwide a card to access national parks with their family for a year. As Leatherman explained it, this year's celebration focuses on involving the next generation of park-goers. The superintendent added that the program started for this school year would continue with next year's fourth-graders.

California has more national sites than any other state. It includes national trails, preserves, memorials and historic landmarks. For the centennial, the NPS has produced "Find Your Park" brochures to engage the public. Leatherman said that many minorities do not always feel a connection with national parks; he hopes that the current campaign will show them how their ancestors were part of the development and the history of the Bay Area.

The three Lamorinda libraries are proposing youth and adult events as part of the centennial celebration: For adults on June 23, backpacking experts will share their experience in Yosemite in Lafayette; for youth, from April to August, the Lafayette library will display postcards sent by young patrons from any national park; on May 18, the Moraga library's Wild Child Book Club for upper elementary and middle school students will discuss books about children surviving in the wilderness; on June 20 the Lindsay Wildlife Museum will bring animals from Yosemite to the Lafayette library; and on July 12 children can bring their favorite stuffed animal to spend the night in the Lafayette library. (The stuffed animal gets to sleep over, not the child.) Details at [ccclib.org](http://ccclib.org).



Reach the reporter at: [sophie@lamorindaweekly.com](mailto:sophie@lamorindaweekly.com)

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