

The New Face of Parks and Recreation

By Sophie Braccini



Jay Ingram at work in the Hacienda de las Flores Photo Sophie Braccini

Many things have been happening concomitantly at the Parks and Recreation Department in Moraga. A new Master Plan has been approved that sets guidelines for the next 20 years, a new Director has been hired and the Recreation program has been repatriated under the administration of the Town after two years of co-management with the City of Lafayette.

New Director Jay Ingram had the difficult task of succeeding Penelope Leach, a popular figure who conducted most of the research work for the Parks and Rec Master Plan. Large community input sessions and surveys were conducted from which priorities were drawn. The main objectives reflect what the population wants and how it sees itself: a family oriented community, loving outdoor activities and wanting to create more recreation options for all generations. According to the Ingram, the Priority Level One, Capital and Non-Capital projects include: a gym/multi-generational community center, the implementation of Hacienda de las Flores building improvements, and the upgrading of sports fields through work with the Moraga School District. "Some aspects of the plan are quite obtainable," believes Ingram, "the Town is working with the school district to improve the playability and quality of the district's fields. I'm optimistic that we will find a way that will satisfy the community."

Other aspects are more challenging. "The plan recognizes the need for a gym/multi-generational recreation facility, the challenge here is going to be its financing," explains Ingram.

But he is not the type to be fazed by difficulty and he tackles one issue at a time. Would the Hacienda de las Flores be a possible infrastructure for this center? "The Hacienda does not have the 30,000 square-foot hall that is needed for that facility," explains Ingram, "However, if the Casita is renovated and enhanced it could offer a 5,000 sqf multi-purpose space." One of the main hindrances to extensive use of the Hacienda is parking. "The business plan for the Hacienda will be discussed at the February 27th Town Council meeting," says Ingram, "interesting options will be discussed then."

At the center of the renovation of the Hacienda are the needs expressed by the population for the revitalization of the recreation programming. "I'm excited to have Recreations back in Moraga," explains Ingram. "This gives us control through diversifying our offerings, allowing us to provide the kind of quality recreation Moragans are looking for." Ingram is enthusiastic about offering a diversified array of recreation for the very young, addressing the need of seniors, notably in partnership with the Moraga Movers, and offering recreation options for families such as the upcoming Father/Daughter Dance.

Ingram has been contacting teachers who are offering interesting classes in other communities. "I've been teaching ceramics for five years for children and teens in San Ramon," says Sabine Brunner, a ceramics artist displayed in the Bay Area, "Jay Ingram contacted me and convinced me to offer classes in Moraga." At this time, some classes are very successful and sold out, like Carpentry for boys and girls, and the High School Musical Class; other new offerings have not made it yet caught on, like African Dance and Movement for teens or the Northern Indian cooking class offered by Moraga resident Nisha Kabra.

Ingram is always on the look out for input from the community. For suggestions, send an email to jingram@moraga.ca.us. To review the present catalog of classes and register online, go to

http://moraga.ca.us/production/moraga_recreation_programs.php