

Olive Festival Presses on at Wagner Ranch

By Cathy Dausman



Shopping for an olive tree at last year's event Photo Ohlen Alexander

Orinda's second annual Olive Festival will take place the afternoon of October 2 despite a last minute paperwork snafu that nearly caused it to be cancelled. A misunderstanding between the State and Friends of the Wagner Ranch Nature Area (FWRNA) involving lapsed paperwork for the organization's non-profit status had board members making several trips to Sacramento last week. "We've been jumping through hoops the last five days," said FWRNA Board Secretary Kathy Barrett last Thursday.

The Nature Area is 18 acres of wild lands bordering San Pablo Creek that has served as an environmental classroom for Orinda school children for over 30 years. The site was named after Theodore Wagner, California's first Surveyor General and founder of Orinda's first school. FWRNA is restoring a heritage grove of Mission olive trees on site.

Last year's festival attracted 300 people and raised \$10,000; Barret says they hope to do even better this year. The three hour event (festival hours are 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.) features olive tasting, arts, crafts and games, cooking demonstrations, live music, a silent auction supported by

over 60 local businesses and a live raptor show by Jenny Papka of Native Birds. *Lamorinda Weekly* food writer Susie Iventosch and E.J. Keller, Carrot et Caviar, will demonstrate olive recipes.

Event food will be catered by Dana Jaffe. Retired Del Rey Elementary teacher Marjie Masonte will oversee olive games, an olive regatta, an olive "pit spit" and something she calls "olivacious exploration." Music is provided by Orinda's Academy of Language and Music Arts (ALMA) and the Orinda Ukulele Band. Orinda Rotary, Friends of Orinda Creeks and The Recycle Bank are also represented at the Olive Festival, which Barrett says is the only one in Contra Costa County.

Proceeds from the Olive Festival support nature programs, including the two day Rancho Days program, for third, fourth and fifth grade students in Orinda Union School District. Last year FWRNA donated \$16,000 to the school district. Wagner Ranch Nature Area is next to Wagner Ranch Elementary, at 350 Camino Pablo and Bear Creek Road, Orinda. Festival hours are from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. Sunday, October 2. Details are available online at www.fwrna.org.

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