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Camp Fair in Moraga Touts Variety of Summer Activities Parents Urged to Sign Up Early

By Sophie Braccini



Photo Sophie Braccini

perfect advertisement for the peaceful Moraga summer to come.

Estelle Dupart and Martha Rutzen both came to the Hacienda with husbands and children 5 and 8 years old. "We're going to register my son for baseball again and we are getting ideas of what's available for my daughter as well," said Rutzen, who received a flyer about the event in her child's backpack.

About a dozen vendors' booths filled the Hacienda courtyard, each a part of the Parks and Recreation summer (and some spring) camp offerings. "We offer a mix of sports, games and academic camps," said Ingram. "Usually the sports camps are the ones that fill up at the beginning of the summer, while parents tend to register their children for more academic subjects as the start of the school year gets closer."

In addition to traditional sports offerings, like lacrosse, baseball, cheerleading and basketball, two new exciting offers in the sports category include fishing and scuba diving, said Ingram.

Some vendors set up a hoop and brought a few balls, and that was enough for kids to start running around and having fun on the large grassy field of the Hacienda. "That's what kids do best," said Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School teacher Jerry Gruen who presented information about the Moraga Sports Camp, "just having fun!"

But not all of the kids were interested in sports. "My daughter wants to do magic," said Dupart. "That's why we came here so the kids could see who the people are and we as parents can get an idea of what the interaction will be."

Roy's Magic Camp had come to the fair prepared to give potential young clients a taste of what the camp would be like, showing them tricks, getting them to play and guess. Roy Porfido (Roy the Magician) got them involved and wanting more. "We teach them how to present themselves, puppetry, story telling, juggling and also magic," Porfido explained.

Next to the magician, the Jewelry Making vendor was showing off the natural beads and the tools the children will use during the camp to create bracelets, necklaces, earrings and other decorative objects. "We get mostly girls for this camp," she said, "but every year we get one or two boys as well."

One of the camps that has done well over the past years, and is expanding, is Camp Kinder Cool for incoming kindergarteners, said Ingram. "And this year two teachers are adding a Oneder Cool camp for kids entering first grade." These camps are in the academics category and speak to local parents' determination to give their kids the best chance possible to succeed.

"Oneder Cool is for the transition from kindergarten to first grade. We focus on reading skills and phonics and making sure that they'll have that solid base to start first grade," said Rheem Elementary teacher Cathy Kathan. "But there will also be a lot of bubbles and Play-Doh, as well as outside, in the garden, and water play, while making sure that they learn to read." The camp will be held at Rheem but is open to any incoming first grader from any school district.

By the end of the fair, Recreation and Facilities Coordinator Kimberly Nelson was quite happy with the number of people who had signed up for classes. "We offered a 10 percent discount for people who signed up today," she

Yukyeong Kim cautiously wandered the grounds of the Hacienda de las Flores on Saturday, March 3, interacting with summer camp vendors who gathered there for the Moraga Parks and Recreation Summer Camp Expo. The young South Korean mother moved to Moraga just a few weeks ago, following her husband on an expatriate contract, with their two boys, ages 6 and 8. The camp fair was a perfect opportunity for them to see what's customary and possible for children locally. For the children who do not yet speak English, the fair was a concrete way to get a feel for what they'd like to experiment with this summer.

This direct interaction was the motivation behind Moraga Parks and Recreation Director Jay Ingram's idea to hold such an event. "We want to show Lamorinda families all the possibilities that are offered here in town," he said. "Having the opportunity to meet the camp operators and talk to them gives a much better idea [of the camp] than looking at a catalogue."

Ingram, his team, and the vendors were lucky that there was such a spring feel in the air on Saturday. With warm sun and flowers in bloom, the Hacienda was itself a

said.

"This is a big help for the camp organizers," said Ingram. "One of the reasons for this offering (the 10 percent discount) was to get people to commit early so the instructors have some level of comfort." Ingram remembers instances when camps had only three kids signed up a week and half before the start date and had to be canceled.

"Parents who wanted to sign up three days before camp started were disappointed that it was no longer offered," he said.

At this time, there is still space in all the camps. You can register online at www.moraga.ca.us.



Roy's Magic Camp

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