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"Futures" Has Moraga Commons Looking Bright

Cathy Dausman



Moraga Commons stays neat and clean, thanks to Futures Explored, Inc. grounds crew from left, Bill Davenport, Chad Cordon, job coach Daniel Rednic, Pam Rohrer and Jennifer Campbell. Photo Cathy Dausman

what Bernie calls "one of the nicest parks in the county."

Each worker is responsible for transporting him or herself to the Futures site in Lafayette before they're driven to the park by job coach Daniel Rednic. Rednic and program coordinator Barbara Townsend offer support only as needed, noting their job is "to be invisible." Workers are simply people who happen to have developmental disabilities, she said.

The crew is proud of the work they do and the paycheck that comes with it. They work from 9:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. with an hour off for lunch, pulling weeds, raking and sweeping.

"In the warm weather we clean tables," said Campbell, "but not in cold weather because the water gets our hands too cold."

Davenport swept steadily, and spoke enthusiastically about "finding money"-nickels, dimes, quarters - while doing his job. He proudly showed off his recent purchase of camouflage gloves.

Rohrer loves to work outside because it's so beautiful, and she loves to play 'peek-a-boo' with children who wander by. And while Cordon stopped work to politely answer questions (cleaning tables and sweeping are his favorite jobs), it was clear he was eager to return to pushing his broom.

Local resident Pete Williams has long admired the group's work. "They are out there week after week helping us all out. They deserve some recognition," he said. "I always say hello to them and thank them for the good job they are doing but I suspect many just pass them by and take them for granted."

For more information about Futures Explored, visit www.futures-explored.org or call Barbara Townsend at (925) 284-3240, ext. 223. Futures Explored, Inc. also staffs a Lafayette's Round Table Pizza crew and a Lafayette street cleaning crew.

While adults and children played on a recent sunny morning at Moraga Commons, two men and two women swept the parking lot of leaves, moss, and litter. Chad Cordon, Bill Davenport, Pam Rohrer, Jennifer Campbell and Eliot Quintana are part of Futures Explored, Inc. - a private tax exempt non-profit serving individuals with developmental disabilities and their families.

Futures Explored began work in Moraga parks in 1996 with a crew of seven and a job coach. The current crew works weekdays at Moraga Commons and Rancho Laguna Park.

Moraga Public Works and Parks Superintendent Dan Bernie certainly doesn't take them for granted. Bernie admits he didn't initially know how the Futures crew would work out when he assigned the group a small section of the Commons to clean on a trial basis, but said in two weeks "it was spotless."

"I can't say enough good things about the group," he said.

With three Moraga parks and over 360 acres to maintain on a two-man town crew, Bernie is grateful for the extra help. Their attention to detail has even diminished the need for pesticides, he noted.

Budget cuts prevented the group from working for a time in 2010, but they're back, making Moraga Commons

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