

Volunteer Corner

BY: CHERYL WEGNER, VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR

Learning Choice Academy of La Mesa -Teens On Trails

On Wednesday, April 20, 2011 nine students, their teacher, and one parent from Learning Choice Academy in La Mesa assisted staff with trail maintenance on the Lakeside Linkage, below the Whitaker Estate in Lakeside. This volunteer project was part of the Teens On Trails program established by our department a couple years ago. Teens On Trails works with schools and other youth organizations to provide volunteer opportunities doing trail work. A department representative provides a brief orientation in the classroom prior to the day of service. The orientation includes the DVD called Volunteering for Trail Maintenance, created by the Southern California Trails Coalition, of which our department is a founding member organization. The Learning Choice Academy students were given a safety talk by Senior Park Ranger Patty Heyden, and then headed up the trail, tools in hand. Park Attendants, Jake Miller and Matt Hunsaker worked with some of the students, constructing water bars and filling in erosion. Maryanne Vancio, the Trails Coordinator and Cheryl Wegner, the Volunteer Coordinator were also on hand to work with the students and even showed a few students how to use a clinometer to determine the percent of grade on the trail. Everyone had a good time while providing a valuable service.



Parks Society News

By: George Hanson, President of the San Diego County Parks Society

During the current economic depression, it has become fashionable—at least in some quarters—to bash public employees. A public employee myself—admitting my potential bias—I consider myself well served by public employees. But of all the public employees I have encountered, from employees of the DMV to university professors, clearly the most outstanding group of workers I know is that employed by the San Diego County Department of Parks and Recreation.

I have found Parks Department employees, whatever their job classification, to be outstandingly qualified, professional, and gracious. They are surely the most patient and kind-hearted people I have ever met, most of them dealing with the public on a daily basis, and often in challenging circumstances.

What is perhaps most interesting to me is that this culture of excellence has existed in the Parks Department for a long time, at least as far back as the time of Bob Copper, when I first had significant contact with the Parks Department. I don't know if Bob Copper instituted the culture of excellence, or only inherited it, but I know the culture has persisted throughout the terms of Michael Kemp, Susan Hector, Renee Bahl, and now Brian Albright. I don't think these directors deserve credit for maintaining the culture of excellence as much as the Parks Department employees deserve it themselves. What I observe on a daily basis is that Parks Department employees possess a pride and élan that is seldom seen, and which they self-instill and reinforce every day.

I won't mention specific names of Parks Department workers I especially treasure, because that would only serve to slight the ones I haven't space to mention, and the ones I don't know. Please know then, each of you, that I fully appreciate the work that you do each day, and that I know you are each worth far more than the compensation you receive for your labors.

