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Heidi McFarland, Santa Clara County Parks interpretive program coordinator, is seen leading a hike through Stevens Creek County Park. Bay Area Older Adults, Santa Clara County Parks, and Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District have partnered to offer hikes for adults age 50+ as part of BAO's preventative health program.



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF ANNE FERGUSON

Hikers enjoy a picnic lunch with a panoramic view of Silicon Valley during a break in a walk through Sierra Vista Open Space Preserve. Lunch gives hikers an opportunity to socialize during the Healthy Hikes program.

Social Climbers

Camaraderie a big part of Bay Area Older Adults' Healthy Hikes program

By Anne Gelhaus

Parks and Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District are encouraging South Bay seniors to take a hike.

Parks and Midpeninsula off its Healthy Hikes program for adults age 50 and up on Jan. 21 with a trek that promised the best views of Silicon Valley. The mod-

ay Area Older Adults, | nership with County Parks and | Jose's Sierra Vista Open Space | the program] this year—to ac- | take place on Wednesdays and are commodate new people." | two to four miles long.

Sunnyvale-based BAO, in part- erate 3-mile hike through San doubled the number of hikes [in and open space preserves. All hikes

Hikes, page 11

Continued from page 10

25. A guide will lead hikers to the rotary furnace that produced eral, an easy 3-mile hike in Los more than a million flasks of mer- Altos down Rancho San Ancury in the mid-1800s, and to the tonio's lower meadow trail on ruins of English Camp, where May 20 will end at Deer Hollow miners were housed, for a picnic Farm, where newborn piglets, lunch courtesy of Togo's.

While hikers will explore several of San Jose's public lands, the program takes older adults on trails from Alviso to Gilroy. Hikes include a 3-mile guided on March 18.

Picchetti Ranch Open Space and 26.
Preserve in Cupertino. The journey ends with a picnic at the eponymous winery.

Two birdwatching expeditions are planned for Vasona Lake County Park in Los Gatos, on April 15 and May 13. Since spring is a good time to catch glimpses of animal life in gengoats and sheep should be on

In addition to open spaces, Saratoga is home to a couple of county parks with vastly different environments. Hikers tour of Coyote Ridge in Fremont | can explore Villa Montalvo and Older Open Space Preserve learn its history on two midabove Cooper Garrod Vineyards | summer hikes on July 8 and 22. in Saratoga, where the trek will | The following month, intrepid end with lunch and wine-tasting trekkers can follow the trail in Sanborn County Park along the Wine is also part of the pro- side of cliffs produced by the gram on June 10, when hikers San Andreas Fault. This hike can take a stroll through the is also offered twice, on Aug. 12

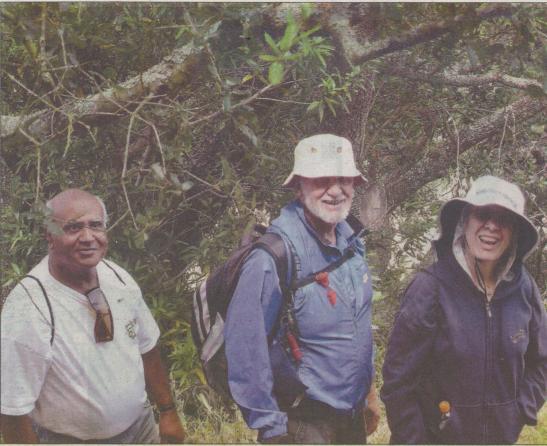
Healthy Habits

Inspired by her grandpar-



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF ANNE FERGUSON

Bay Area Older Adults, Santa Clara County Parks and Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District have partnered to offer hikes for adults age 50-plus as part of BAO's preventative health program.



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF ANNE FERGUSON

Hikers are seen here just beyond the Cathedral Staircase on the Mummy Mountain Loop of Coyote Lake-Harvey Bear Ranch County Park in Gilroy.

ents' love of the outdoors and I tional health. learning, Ferguson—a former older adults to improve their are challenging ourselves to do physical and mental health and more and push on." social well-being.

"As we age and especially after retirement, it is critical to be whelmingly the most important gives them the confidence to rephysically active, develop new aspect of the hikes to the seniors friendships and keep our minds stimulated," says Ferguson, "Because peop stimulated," says Ferguson, who goes on every hike in the their own pace, they have time program.

tute more than 30 percent of the time for people to socialize." county's population and increasingly suffer from chronic health conditions such as heart disease, diabetes and depression.

According to WebMD magazine, the myriad health benefits | tive program coordinator for of hiking include building leg and | county parks. | toiling away in Silicon Valley. "There's a park in every city," of hiking include building leg and core strength and bone density, controlling weight, lowering the risk of heart disease, improving blood pressure and blood sugar as how the ongoing drought is of Santa Clara County Parks." levels and combating stress and affecting waterfalls at Sanborn For more information on the

Hiking with a peer group can | Park in Morgan Hill.

tive—founded BAO to empower | hiker. "We may be older; but we | parks.

social relationships "is over-

to chat as they walk," she adds.

tional component, and Ferguson says BAQ hikers greatly appreciate input from hike leader Heidi McFarland, the interprecounty parks.

"She knows all the [parks] history and can learn things really and at Uvas Canyon County Healthy Hikes program, visit

also be good for seniors' emo- | McFarland's says she sees | bao-hikes.

the Healthy Hikes program as "Being with other people a way to encourage the area's Silicon Valley biotech execu- my age is inspiring," says one senior population to visit county

"Partnering with Bay Area Older Adults has enabled us to Ferguson says building new increase the number of older adults on county park trails and turn to the parks on their own," McFarland adds. "Since 2013, we've had more than 800 adults ages 50 to 85 on our hikes."

Besides the health and social Ferguson points out that adults ages 50 and older constigral part of our hikes as it is a spect of hiking is getting to explore the great outdoors. While Every hike also has an educa-ional component, and Fergu-spaces offer a wide range of environments and terrains, Ferguson says it can be easy to forget to get out and enjoy them when

she says. "This [program] gives seniors a chance to experience quickly," Ferguson adds, such the diverse nature and history

bayareaolderadults.org/2015-