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Watershed Wildlife & Restoration Walk for Older Adults



Group of BAO Watershed Wildlife & Restoration Walkers

Santa Clara County, CA – April 26, 2017— Bay Area Older Adults (BAO) teamed up with Santa Clara County Supervisor Ken Yeager, Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society (SCVAS) and Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge (DESFBNWR) to get older adults outdoors and learning about the importance Bay Area wetlands. BAO is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization whose mission is to empower older adults to engage in healthy behaviors, improve their physical and mental health and social well-being. BAO's Healthy Living™ Program offers an affordable, preventative health program that engages 3000 older adults each year in physical, educational, cultural and social activities throughout Santa Clara County.



In Santa Clara County, adults age 50+ constitute more than 30 percent of the population and increasingly suffer from chronic health conditions such as heart disease, diabetes and depression. BAO Founder and former Silicon Valley biotech executive, Dr. Anne Ferguson emphasizes “These costly health problems are preventable with lifestyle changes such as regular physical and social activities and lifelong learning. BAO's Healthy Hikes Program research study found that more than 90% of program participants described BAO as a catalyst for increasing their physical activity and social connections.” One hiker, Rosa, who was diagnosed with Type 2 Diabetes in early 2016 explains “By regularly participating in the walking programs offered by Bay Area Older Adults, I have successfully lost 20 pounds. I have also brought down my sugar numbers significantly and am now considered to be pre-diabetic.”

Another participant, Marie, tells her story “Several years ago I was diagnosed with a heart condition. I could not go walking or hiking by myself. My husband works a lot, all of our friends are gone, and we have no one else. I couldn't get out much or afford to go anywhere and eventually became very isolated. The more isolated I became, the more depressed I got, a problem a lot of seniors face I learned. Almost a year ago I went online looking for anything I could do with people around my age and physical activity level. Then I found BAO. They have cultural events, educational lectures, and walks/hikes of different levels. It helps get me out of my isolation, stay active, and have other people to socialize with. After my open heart surgery last summer, it was important for me to exercise to get back in shape. With BAO programs,



someone walks with me so I can safely recover and build my strength. Even though I cannot go at the same pace as everyone else, someone will always stay with me. One day I could not go very far. Someone walked back with me to make sure I was okay and stayed until the rest of the group got back. The next day someone actually checked on me! There is genuine concern for how I am doing and shows me there really are people out there who still care.”



All 133 older adults surveyed agreed that the hikes increased their knowledge of our local parks. Supervisor Yeager, a passionate proponent of Santa Clara County parks and improving the health of our residents, adds “I was so happy that the Board of Supervisors followed my recommendation to provide Bay Area Older Adults with funding for their Healthy Hikes program. Hiking is not only one of the best forms of exercise for seniors, but also a great way to enjoy the 28 parks and more than 52,000 acres that make up the Santa Clara County Parks system.” As a 70-year old hiker, Sue, expressed “BAO programs are important to me because they keep me hiking outdoors and socially engaged. As I have gotten older and retired, motivating myself to get out socially is more difficult but BAO makes this easy. I would not be hiking if I hadn’t joined BAO.”

BAO partners with the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society and Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge to lead hikes four times each year. On April 26, BAO organized a walk for a group of older adults at Alviso Marina County Park with these two organizations. The goal was to get some outdoor exercise with their peers, enjoy scenic views of the sloughs and wildlife and learn about the importance of wetland habitats. The walk on April 26 was led by Ralph Schardt, Executive Director of the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society who helped the group find and identify a diversity of shorebirds, ducks and even a rare sighting of a migrating Baltimore oriole! Birdwatching is one of the most popular and fastest growing hobbies in North America especially with older adults. “Birding gives people of all



ages the ability to connect with nature in a special way,” as Ralph Schardt, Executive Director of SCVAS conveyed. Jared Underwood, manager of DESFBNWR for U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service updated the group about recent wetland restoration on the federally protected refuge lands surrounding Alviso Marina County Park. As he explains “Restored wetlands not only provide tremendous outdoor recreation opportunities like walking and birding, they offer critical habitat for endangered species, they reduce the risk of flooding and improve water quality.”

For more information, please visit www.bayareaolderadults.org or contact: Dr. Anne Ferguson, Executive Director, 408-774-0593 or share@bayareaolderadults.org

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Bay Area Older Adults™ (BAO) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization whose mission is to empower older adults to engage in healthy behaviors, improve their physical and mental health and social well-being, and build sustainable, supportive communities that facilitate independent living. The BAO Healthy Living™ Program offers an affordable, preventative health program engaging older adults in physical, educational, cultural and social activities throughout Santa Clara County.

Supervisor Ken Yeager represents the 4th District on the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors and has served since 2006. For information about his public service, please visit <https://www.sccgov.org/sites/d4/Pages/d4.aspx>

The Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society promotes the enjoyment, understanding, and protection of birds and other wildlife by engaging people of all ages in birding, education, and conservation.



The Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge is managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to conserve and protect wildlife and wild habitat on more than 30,000 acres along the southern reaches of the San Francisco Bay. Learn more at https://www.fws.gov/refuge/don_edwards_san_francisco_bay/