



Trailblazer

A Newsletter Published by the Friends of Stevens Creek Trail

Summer 2005

11th Trailblazer Race Set for September 25th

Runners and walkers—tie your sneakers! The 11th Annual Trailblazer Race is rapidly approaching, and you're all invited!

Whether you're a serious athlete, a recreational runner or just someone looking to have some outdoor fun in a glorious early-autumn atmosphere, you'll definitely want to put this event on your calendar—Sunday morning, September 25. The program once again will feature both 10K and 5K runs, a 5K walk and a host of fun races for children, plus free food, water and entertainment. And this year, ultra-marathoner "Flyin' Brian" Robinson—who earned major headlines in 2001 by completing the Appalachian Trail, the Continental Divide Trail and the Pacific Crest Trail all *in the same year*—will be running! As always, proceeds from the much-anticipated event support the Friends of Stevens Creek Trail and the ongoing effort to promote further extensions and upkeep of the trail.

"This event is by far our biggest fundraiser each year," says Aaron Grossman, race organizer and executive director of the Friends organization. "But unlike most pass-the-hat fundraisers, the Trailblazer Race gives people a full range of fun, healthful, family-oriented activities to enjoy—activities that showcase the trail and its scenic natural surroundings. We encourage everyone to bring their family, friends, co-workers and neighbors to take advantage of this special event—and we thank them wholeheartedly for their support!"



The 10K and 5K races (6.2 and 3.1 miles, respectively) are certified by the USA Track and Field Association and officially timed. Both races start and finish at the Mountain View campus of Microsoft Corporation, the host and presenting sponsor, on La Avenida Avenue near Highway 101 and Shoreline Boulevard. The courses are flat and scenic, with major portions running alongside Stevens Creek and tidal wetlands that support many species of migratory birds and native flora. The 10K course includes a loop through most of Shoreline Park while the 5K just enters the park before turning back.

The 5K Trail Walk also begins on the Microsoft campus, heading south along a particularly scenic stretch of the trail featuring colorful vegetation, heavily wooded areas and up-close looks at the creek. The children's events take place afterward on grass and sidewalk paths on the Microsoft campus.

On-line and mail-in registration is available at www.stevenscreektrail.org. For lower

rates, advance registration must be postmarked or sent electronically by September 10.

The new race logo—an updated sandpiper design by local artist Bill Murray—will adorn natural-color T-shirts provided free to all pre-registered race and walk participants. Day-of-event registrants will receive free shirts as long as supplies last. In addition, all pre-registered participants will be eligible for the traditional post-race drawing of valuable prizes donated by race sponsors.

"Volunteers are always needed to help set up the event, direct runners and take down the event afterwards," says Grossman. "Those who sign up in advance will receive a race T-shirt as well as complementary food and water during the event. Businesses and other organizations or individuals who want to support a popular, community-oriented event may also contact us about sponsorships or prize donations. Just give us a call or drop us an email—(408) 255-5780 or exec-dir@stevenscreektrail.org."

Registration	Advance	At Event
Adult 5K or 10K Race	\$24	\$28
Adult 5K Trail Walk	\$18	\$22
Youth* Race or Walk	\$12	\$15

*Youth rates are for ages 19 and under.



Davis Fields Named 2004 Volunteer of the Year

It isn't often that a volunteer steps forward and has an immediate and sustained impact on an organization. But that's exactly what happened when Mountain View resident Davis Fields offered to lend his many talents to the Friends of Stevens Creek Trail.

Thousands of local citizens and community leaders now have a much better picture—literally!—of what the Stevens Creek Trail is all about, thanks to the creative and prolific camera work of Mr. Fields. And for that contribution, the Friends named Davis Fields our 2004 Volunteer of the Year at the city's annual Celebration of Leaders gala, hosted by the Mountain View Chamber of Commerce.

Like many other volunteers, Davis became involved with the Friends when he learned the Stevens Creek Trail would be passing through his neighborhood—and might even have an access point within sight of his house. What started out

as advocacy with his neighbors for extending the trail soon grew to much more. Today, visitors to www.stevenscreektrail.org can enjoy a wonderful pictorial stroll up and down the existing trail, thanks to the web-based virtual tour Davis created and installed for us.

Davis volunteers his creativity and energy to take the photographs, build the web pages, and host and maintain the tour web site, which is also a great resource for related maps and articles. Each September, he also serves as the official photographer for the annual Trailblazer Race and Trail Walk, our major annual fundraiser. This work involves taking hundreds of digital photos, carefully indexing them, and posting them soon after the event so participants can easily find, download and order any images they want.

In addition to his work with the Friends, Davis is also a volunteer math and science tutor at Mountain View High School, communications



officer for the Silicon Valley Business Exchange, and communications officer and secretary for Bethel Lutheran Church in Cupertino. He and his wife Mary have two teenage boys, Davy and Jim.

We can't thank Davis enough for his tireless work on our behalf. If it's true that a good picture is worth 1,000 words, we could not say enough to repay him for the countless quality images he's furnished to us!



Was it great weather, a worthy cause, the allure of free pizza—or maybe all three?

Whatever the reason, the Friends organization was thrilled to welcome more than 90 volunteers to help out on Stevens Creek Clean-up Day, held Saturday morning, April 16. Large contingents from two local businesses—Target and Synopsys—and several family groups helped swell our ranks to a record number this year. Their combined efforts resulted in the collection and disposal of many more bags of debris and refuse than would otherwise have been possible. Special recognition goes to several unusually hearty souls

Record Number of Volunteers Help with Creek/Trail Clean-up

who ventured hip-deep into the creek—without waders!—to pull large chunks of flotsam out of the chilly waters. Great work!!!

And did we mention painting? Many of our volunteers applied fresh coats of gray paint to sign posts and fencing along the trail, giving everything a nice, clean look. And when the work was finished, volunteers feasted on cold drinks and hot pizza donated by

Milan Pizza and Tony & Alba's, two of Mountain View's more popular, civic-minded restaurants. Man, was it good!

Throughout the morning, many trail users stopped to thank the volunteers for their efforts and to ask about getting personally involved next time. If you're interested, please check our web site—www.stevenscreektrail.org—for information on our next clean-up event. And thanks again to all of you who helped out this time. Please come back again!





Trail Update

Mountain View, Cupertino, Los Altos, Sunnyvale

Building a multi-use trail from the Bay to the foothills, and providing numerous access points along the way, will require the political support of all four cities noted above. Here's a progress report on construction and planning activities in each of these cities.

Mountain View

With nearly four miles of trail already built, the next step will extend the trail under El Camino Real and to the southernmost reaches of the city. In 2004, an Environmental Impact Report was approved to take the trail all the way to Mountain View High School, near the Los Altos border. Because this segment is so long, it will be built in phases, with each phase requiring detailed design and construction documents. The first and possibly most difficult phase will pass beneath El Camino Real, connecting the existing Yuba Drive terminus with the south side of El Camino Real. City officials have been developing design and construction documents for this portion, coordinating closely with Caltrans, PG&E and the Santa Clara County Water District. Construction is tentatively scheduled to begin in summer 2006 and is expected to take about 12-15 months. This will be a significant addition to the trail, allowing users to avoid surface crossing of the busiest thoroughfare in Mountain View.

Cupertino

This March a major milestone was reached when the Cupertino City Council unanimously approved the construction of a multi-use trail from Stevens Creek Boulevard to McClellan Road. The trail will start at the Stockmeir property, cross the creek at the southern end of the orange grove, extend through Blackberry Farm and the Water District property, then pass through the eastern edge of McClellan Ranch Park, where it will connect to McClellan Road. The approval of this trail segment is the culmination of years of study and discussion and is a major stepping stone in our long-term objectives for the trail.

Los Altos

The city of Los Altos recently decided not to include a trail-feasibility study in its 2005-2006 budget, citing a "huge backlog of projects" that it wants to address first. Unfortunately, the City now has just one more year to act if it wants to take advantage of an \$80,000 award from the Valley Transportation Authority to help fund the study. The grant offer, which would pay 80 percent of the study's cost, will expire in 2007. Some Los Altos officials may feel that extending the trail through the city only requires putting up some signs along an arbitrary street alignment. This is in contrast to a careful and rigorous study of the safety and traffic flow needs and requirements

of the pedestrians, bicyclists, and motor vehicles interacting together on such a route. To encourage officials to fund the study next year, the Friends has offered to contribute \$5,000 toward the cost. Los Altos residents who believe a feasibility study makes sense should contact council members now to make your views known.

Sunnyvale

While it isn't certain what part (if any) of the Stevens Creek Trail will need to pass through the city of Sunnyvale, many residents have begun pressing for access. The Sunnyvale City Council has so far declined to discuss the issue, citing a 1994 decision to reject direct access based on advice from a consultant who cited perceived difficulties related to trail construction and the fragile nature of some of the creek area. In recent years, however, Mountain View engineers have devised solutions to these problems and the trail will be extended alongside much of Sunnyvale. This has prompted a number of Sunnyvale residents to begin a grass-roots campaign to persuade the council to revisit its 11-year-old decision and reconsider a connection to the trail. Petitions to promote access at the western end of Remington Avenue have been circulating in Sunnyvale, and momentum seems to be building. For more information, Sunnyvale residents may contact Sunnyvale Citizens for Stevens Creek at sunnyvale_trails@yahoo.com.



Highway 101-85 Project Nears Completion; Stevens Creek Trail Remains Unaffected



After more than two years of work, the highway-improvement project at Highways 85 and 101 in Mountain View is nearing completion. Fortunately for trail-goers, all work along Stevens Creek is finished. Use of Stevens Creek Trail in the vicinity of the project should be unaffected during the remaining work.

The \$123 million construction project began in January 2003 and is scheduled for completion in early 2006. Valley Transportation Authority (VTA), the lead agency for this project, has worked effectively to maintain trail access,

particularly the trail under Highway 101. This undercrossing provides critical access to jobs and recreation in the Shoreline Park area. Without it, bicyclists and pedestrians would have a significant and dangerous detour crossing the freeway on the heavily traveled Moffett Boulevard or Shoreline Boulevard overpasses.

Upcoming project milestones include completion of the northbound 85 and northbound 101 connection (fall 2005); the Old Middlefield Way connection (fall 2005); and the high-occupancy-vehicle direct-connect lanes. For more information, go to www.vta.org/highways/rte85101n.htm.



**Before you recycle,
perhaps you have a friend who
would like to read about the
Friends of Stevens Creek Trail.
Please pass it on!**



Susie Brain Resigns as Friends' Executive Director—and Leaves Us a Much Stronger Organization



Susie Brain, executive director of the Friends of Stevens Creek Trail since December 1999, officially resigned her post in May after an extended medical leave. While we are deeply saddened by her departure, we are very pleased to report that Susie is recovering wonderfully from her illness and will remain close to our organization in an unofficial capacity. Aaron Grossman, former Friends board member who resigned to serve as interim executive director during Susie's absence, has been elected to replace Susie as our permanent executive director.

It is impossible in so little space to capture what Susie meant to the Friends organization during her five-plus years at the helm. She joined the Friends as only the second executive director since the organization's founding in 1993. During her tenure, she brought a degree of professionalism

and enthusiasm to the organization that served us extremely well, especially during the severe economic downturn that gripped the Valley during her first few years of leadership.

Steve Olson, board president in 2001, recalls "having the pleasure of recruiting Susie" in 1999, then watching her adroitly manage the Friends biggest crisis when our largest financial backer (SGI) canceled its sponsorship of the Trailblazer Race during the technology meltdown of 2001. The race had to be called off that year and our ability to fund operations was threatened. But Susie's "outstanding organization skills (and, boy, did we need that!), perseverance, calm disposition and sense of humor" got us through, Olson recalls. Susie put the clamps on spending, renewed efforts to find new sponsors and donors, and helped the organization grow and become much more professional. By 2002, a major new presenting sponsor had been secured, the race was back on and a major crisis averted.

"Susie was the heart and soul of the Friends," says Grossman, who served as board president in 2002 and 2003. "She kept us focused and on track, reminded us of what was important and timely." Adds Olson, "Susie's contributions have set a foundation that will help sustain the organization for many years to come."

Tom Frankum, board president in 1999 and 2000, says Susie "was always thinking of others and had incredible attention to detail." Among other things, she never forgot birthdays of board members or to send a "thank you" to donors. Says

Tom Bornheimer, current board president, "Susie is one of the main reasons I joined the board. She was very energetic and happy to explain how the board works and what I could contribute to the Friends." John Brazil, president in 2004, adds: "Susie always remembered that Stevens Creek is more than a trail for humans. It's a vital wildlife corridor home to diverse flora, fauna and riparian life."

Ironically, one of Susie's greatest accomplishments occurred while she was away from the Friends on medical leave. It was a fitting culmination of four years of continuous effort to win support for the trail in the city of Cupertino—two years on a trail task force and two more years supporting the trail at city meetings. Though she never felt she was making much headway at any given meeting, her efforts were rewarded earlier this year when the city council voted unanimously to approve a section of multi-use trail from Stevens Creek Boulevard through Blackberry Golf Course and Farm and McClellan Ranch to McClellan Road.

Perseverance, indeed.

The Friends will miss Susie in more ways than we can enumerate. We are deeply thankful for all she has done for us over the years. She will continue to work on the Santa Clara County Parks and Recreation Board, and we look forward to staying in close touch and, perhaps, building some more trails together!



Have You Seen...the Black Phoebe?

Have you ever noticed, while taking a leisurely walk long Stevens Creek Trail, a "large" swallow-sized black and white bird? If the bird has a black head, black breast, white belly and appears about seven inches long, you're probably observing the only black-breasted flycatcher in America—the Black Phoebe (FEE-bee). The only other bird with similar coloring is the Dark-eyed Junco, slightly smaller and with a shorter beak for eating seeds.

Black Phoebes are often found near creeks and lowland marshes. They are most easily seen when perched erectly on the lower branches of trees, especially sycamores, or on fence posts, or in shady places. If you spot one while it is perching, note the bird's habit of "tail-bobbing"—raising and lowering its tail. The Black Phoebe has the ideal thin, flat beak for catching insects. It swoops down from its perch to catch bees, wasps, flies and moths, among other insects. Black Phoebes have also been recorded taking small

fish from the surface of the water. Stevens Creek is an ideal habitat for these birds, providing both feeding and nesting support. They build a cup-shaped nest of mud mixed with various plant materials on a ledge of a bridge or a building near water. Black Phoebes seem fairly unwary around humans, so the next time you walk the trail, sharpen your eyes or take your binoculars and see if you can spot one of these dainty birds.



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Online Registration:
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Trailblazer Race 2005
Sunday, September 25th



**Mark your calendar for a day of fun
for the entire family!**

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