

Having seniors in our parks is a great gift

Editorial

The Marin County Parks Department is doing more than maintaining county-run parklands. It has placed a priority in making their natural settings and environment assets part of the lives of more local residents.

Making our local parks more available and accessible to every resident should be a priority; one that's been exemplified by the county's recent decision to rollback its fees, which for many years were among the highest across the Bay Area.

But the parks department is doing much more.

In fact, the county has established a \$190,000 community grant program, part of which has been used to make it possible for 14 organizations to bring people to county parks — people, who would otherwise face financial, physical or transportation hurdles to be able to enjoy what was created to be available and enjoyed by all.

A July 15 story in the Independent Journal told of the collaboration between the parks and Love Is The Answer, a San Rafael nonprofit, in helping cover transportation costs so that local seniors can take part in activities at McNear's Beach Park in San Rafael.

As part of the \$4,000 grant, residents from a local seniorliving complex have been meeting up with third-graders from Brandeis Marin School to enjoy the outdoors and participate in nature-oriented educational projects.

“It has been really wonderful and transformative, a way to get everybody out together, experience nature, stress free and

increase their well-being,” said Jessica Williams, LITA's executive director.

That's what our local parks should be all about.

The grant is funded by the Measure A sales tax, which Marin voters approved in 2012 to maintain and improve Marin's parks, maintain and buy open space and preserve Marin ranchlands.

Measure A has been able to double what the county had been doing in providing community programs.

Helping make a program such as LITA's Bridging Generations excursion possible fulfills an important objective of Measure A. Opening the gates of our parks to those who would have trouble getting there on their own is an important recognition that these seniors have been paying taxes for these parks. In many cases, their tax dollars and contributions helped build them. Making it possible for them to continue to enjoy them deserves to be a community priority.

They should be able to enjoy their investment in what is best portrayed as a common good.

To be able to share time with young people, such as LITA's program with Brandeis Marin pupils, further enhances the community value of local parks.