



News Release
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Berkeley, California

Contact: Alan Bern
Community Relations Librarian
510-981-6107

**Berkeley Public Library's *Local Places...Sacred Spaces* presents
*Reconnecting Community – The Living Legacies
of Berkeley Partners for Parks and Berkeley Path Wanderers***

Please join us for a double-treat as **Berkeley Public Library's series *Local Places...Sacred Spaces*** presents the **Berkeley Path Wanderers (BPWA)** and the **Berkeley Partners for Parks (BFPF)** in the Central Library's (2090 Kittredge at Shattuck, downtown Berkeley) 3rd floor Community Meeting Room, Saturday, May 7, 2011, 2-4pm. Presentations by representatives from the two organizations will be followed by Q & A and discussion. The Path Wanderers will be offering their newest edition of their splendid Berkeley paths map as well as paths cards for sale at the program.

Berkeley Partners for Parks (bfpf.org) President John Steere will begin the program by describing how citizen involvement has helped create and maintain a remarkable set of public open spaces across Berkeley. Berkeley has one of the most diverse and community-based collection of parks, paths, and community gardens of any city its size in the West. A little known but major catalyst in sustaining these "commons" is Berkeley Partners for Parks (BFPF). This nonprofit organization has for 16 years been providing the infrastructure that volunteer organizations need in order to enhance our public commons; BFPF has played a signature role in bringing fiscal support and hundreds of thousands of hours of volunteer "sweat equity" to enhance Berkeley's parks, community gardens, and creeks. BFPF sponsors "adopt-a-park" groups, which work in partnership with the City and local businesses and organizations to carry out innovative projects throughout Berkeley. John Steere, President and co-founder of BFPF, will tell its story and how it has helped to foster a participatory culture of the commons in Berkeley and contributed the city's ongoing greening and livability through collaborative, place-based initiatives.

John Steere is a 29-year Berkeley resident, environmental activator, and environmental and Sustainable planning consultant. He has for over two decades been creating and supporting partnership-oriented community/arts/environmental causes. John's advocacy efforts have focused on creatively organizing and building community via "placemaking" by way of collaborative initiatives in 1) parks creation, 2) creek restoration, and 3) supporting community sustainability projects. Toward these ends, he's the cofounder and current president of Berkeley Partners for Parks (1993) and has facilitated the creation of

two parks in Berkeley including Halcyon Commons, He also founded and led East Bay Citizens for Creek Restoration (1987 to 1994) and was a founding board member of Livable Berkeley. He's the chair and founder of his local neighborhood group, Halcyon Neighborhood Association – which does neighborhood tree plantings, clean-ups, park care, and potlucks. He speaks widely at conferences and lead tours and interpretive rides, among them the annual “Hidden Gems of Berkeley” tour. Steere has a joint Masters in City Planning and Landscape Architecture from University of California, Berkeley, and an AB in Environmental Studies/Psychology from Harvard University.

Following Steere's presentation will be the Berkeley Path Wanderers. The title of the program is ***Reconnecting Community***, and the BPWA is busy doing just that by constructing new walkways that change how people experience their neighborhoods. BPWA President Colleen Neff will introduce the Path Wanderers (berkeleypaths.org). Neff moved to Berkeley from New York in 2001 with her husband and two sons. As a regular fitness walker, the paths became an important part of her daily life in her Northbrae neighborhood and beyond. She joined the Berkeley Path Wanderers Board of Directors in 2006 and was vice-president for two years and has been president for 1-1/2 years. She loves leading walks for the group as well as working to build new paths (her favorite paths include: Northgate, Keeler, and Sunset Paths). Neff is also on the Board of The Maybeck School on College Avenue in Berkeley.

The best way to talk about the work of the BPWA is through photos of their path building efforts. BPWA will also present a short slide show, narrated by BPWA board member Steve Glaeser or Charlie Bowen that will highlight BPWA volunteers and show some before-and-after photos of work on the paths. Current building projects are Path 80 in the Park Hills neighborhood and Miller Path East which connects Creston Road to Grizzly Peak Boulevard. BPWA will also show some photos of their twice-monthly free walks program designed to get people out to enjoy their community and, of course, discover the paths.

This program is not to be missed! Come learn about two local treasures in your community, the **Berkeley Path Wanderers and the Berkeley Partners for Parks**, both of whom enhance the life of our community's local places, helping to make them the sacred spaces we both need and want.

For accessibility questions or further information, please call Alan Bern at 510-981-6107, or go to berkeleypubliclibrary.org.

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