



# Altadena Foothills

www.altadenafoothills.org

# CONSERVATOR

Newsletter of the Altadena Foothills Conservancy

Number 8 June 2005

## AFC Celebrates First Five Years

By Shari Asplund

On May 7, about 100 friends and supporters of the Altadena Foothills Conservancy gathered at the wonderful Folly Bowl to observe the Conservancy's fifth anniversary with a festive party that featured good conversation and music, a lively auction, displays to highlight why the Conservancy exists, and a chance to experience this amazing backyard amphitheater.

The AFC's first fund raising event was a ton of fun and a great success. Thanks to many generous supporters, we raised over \$6,500. We are deeply grateful to Susanne Dadd and James Griffith, our gracious hosts; the Philobosians and Jerryatrics, the musical entertainment; auctioneer Joe Futerman; Michelle Markman and Laura Bennett who designed the invitation; lots of friends who volunteered their time; and numerous individuals and businesses who contributed more than 40 auction items.

We even had some special visitors from Altadena's past. Benjamin Eaton (Tim Brick) and Alice Taylor Eaton (Michele Zack) visited us through "time travel" technology. These two historic residents of Altadena happen to be the subject of a film being produced by AFC in a

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*Above: All ages came out to celebrate, including Mrs. Altadena, Rosa Johnson, who sold bumper stickers from Altadena's 1969 Rose Parade float to benefit AFC.*

### Sincere thanks

*To those who donated auction items:*

Adolfo and Maria Miralles	Jamie Sullo
Altadena Hardware Company	Lori Paul and Rob Staehle
Altadena Historical Society	Nami Olgin
Bonnie Callahan	Nancy Steele
California University of Health Sciences	Paul Ayers
Coffee Gallery	Ralph F. Miles, Jr.
Dave Doody	Ross Riggs
Erlander's Natural Products	Steve's Pets
Fox's Dining Room	Steve's Bike Shop
Heinz Ellersieck	Susanna Dadd
	Sweetpea of California
	Tina Riggs

*And to the volunteers who helped make the party a success:*

Carla Slepak	Jennifer Kutner
Gary Day	Lynn Helsabeck
George Widman	Nils Asplund



PHOTOS: GARY MCCARTHY



*Above: La Canada Flintridge Mayor Anthony Portantino, AFC President Nancy Steele, and Altadena Heritage board member Kim Kenne. Left: Partygoers enjoy the entertainment.*

THE AFC ACHIEVED A SIGNIFICANT MILESTONE

this year as we observed our five year anniversary. Anniversaries are times of reflection and celebration, and we did both. To reflect, in March we gathered in Borrego Springs for a Board retreat. We felt strongly enough that an out-of-area retreat was necessary that we all paid our own way, staying in a funky motel and eating in local restaurants. In addition to retreating to discuss the Conservancy's future, we also wanted to see the desert wildflowers and visit with the Anza Borrego Desert Natural History Association.

The ABDNHA hosted us on Saturday and Sunday morning as we focused on the Land Trust Alliance's Standards and Practices and discussed our strategic plan. The Board adopted the Land Trust Standards and Practices (rev. 2004) as appropriate guidelines for the Conservancy's operations and we committed to making continual progress toward implementation of those standards and practices. I believe that this commitment is one of the most important steps the Conservancy has taken to ensure that the land we own stays preserved in perpetuity. The Standards and Practices cover such areas as Board accountability, compliance with laws, conflicts of interest, fundraising, financial and asset management, selecting conservation projects, ensuring sound transactions, and stewardship. Our resolution further strengthens our alliance with other land trusts around the county and will provide landowners with additional assurance of the Conservancy's organizational strength.

As for the celebration part of observing our five year anniversary, we partied on May 7th. I had fun helping Joe Futerman, our auctioneer (who stepped in at the last minute when Ray Considine took sick), pitch the many items that were donated to us to benefit the foothills. I also enjoyed meeting many new friends and putting more faces with the names I've grown familiar with over the last five years. The music of the Philobosians and the Jerryatics, who donated their performances, was great, and the weather even cooperated by staying dry for two days after a soaking rain. We are so grateful to Susanna Dadd and James Griffith for donating their incomparable Folly Bowl (and Susanna's incredible humus) for the party. We appreciate each and every one of the individuals and local businesses who helped us to celebrate and raise money for the Altadena foothills.

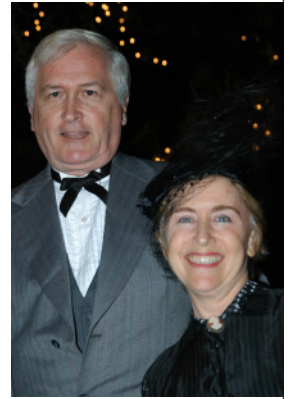
On a personal note, I am happy to announce that in July I will be starting a new job with the Los Angeles and San Gabriel Rivers Watershed Council as its Executive Director. The Watershed Council works with the County, cities, and nonprofits to facilitate a comprehensive, multipurpose, stakeholder-driven consensus process to preserve, restore, and enhance the many beneficial uses—economic, social, environmental and biological—of the Los Angeles River and San Gabriel River watersheds ecosystem through education, research, planning, and mediation. If you want to learn more, the website is [www.lasgrwc.org](http://www.lasgrwc.org).

Enjoy your summer and, wherever you go, take care of this tender land!

Nancy L. C. Steele, D.Env., President

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partnership with Art Center College of Design as part of our watershed education effort. They regaled us with stories of life circa 1860's-1870's in the foothills.



Tim Brick and Michele Zack as Ben and Allice Eaton

The benefit gave us an opportunity to thank three major contributors who have been extremely important to AFC's ongoing work:

**Mr. Bob Knox** was our first benefactor. Between December 2001 and January 2005, he sent monthly checks that provided the Conservancy with steady and dependable income. His generosity enabled us to become financially secure and tackle bigger projects. We honor him for his commitment to local land conservation and his invaluable support of the Conservancy.

**Mrs. Doris Pankow** contributed \$7,000 to the watershed education film, "Eaton's Water." She is a new contributor to the Conservancy, and we greatly appreciate her willingness to work with us on this project. We honor her for her commitment to youth environmental education.

**The Board of Altadena Heritage** stepped up to the plate in a big way, donating \$5,000 for "Eaton's Water," to support a fellow non-profit in a mutually beneficial project. They are our partners in preserving our natural heritage.

We also greatly appreciate, Jeffrey George who maintains our website, and Adriane Jach who produces our newsletter.

We look forward to the next five years and beyond, to realizing our shared vision of preserving 400 acres of Altadena's precious open space for future generations to value and enjoy.

# Project Report



## Watershed Educational Film Moves Forward

By Michele Zack

When you're hot you're hot.

"Everyone's talking about the intersection of history and the environment; it's the most exciting new direction exhibits and educational programs are taking these days," a museum curator who is a judge for the American Association of State and Local History told me recently.

And so the timing seems to be excellent for Altadena Foothills Conservancy's film project that tells the story of how local pioneer Ben Eaton transformed the land by developing the area's first large scale water delivery systems, thus making the communities of Pasadena and Altadena possible. Students will be engaged *where they live* in learning about water issues and our specific climate, instead of trying to learn from generic or east coast examples about these important subjects.

The film began as a treatment I wrote for AFC from the point of view of Alice Taylor Eaton, who moved to the Fair Oaks Ranch in 1865. It was conceived as part of the organization's mission to create and deliver water-

*Below: Film maker Sally Levi, left, and her sister Alice, a professional cinematographer, direct the action. Right: Stephen Levi, a professional actor and playwright (and Sally's father) came from Virginia to play Don Benito Wilson; behind him is Dr. John Griffin portrayed by actor Gus Lynch.*



shed education. The project has grown into a partnership with Art Center College of Design's student film maker Sally Levi, who adapted the story into a period narrative drama, complete with actors, sets, horses, period costumes, and action. The 15 to 20 minute film has already been shot on location at Universal Studios back lot, the Arboretum, Eaton Canyon, and Santa Clarita,



PHOTOS: MICHELE ZACK

and is now in post production. The educational aspect has also grown to include Sally's entire class of 50 Art Center students, plus many adult professionals, who have learned about history and our environment as they work to make the film a reality.

Pasadena Unified School District plans to introduce the film into 6th grade and high school science, and 8th grade history classrooms and curricula beginning in the fall. We are grateful to Doris Pankow, Altadena Heritage, Supervisor Mike Antonovich, Altadena Historical Society, Sierra Club, Dorn Platz, and our Friends for their generous gifts that made this project possible.

## Join the Conservancy Board

Your conservancy is poised for growth, and needs extraordinary people to help us reach our short-term goals and plan for the future. We seek people who are interested in volunteering to support our numerous projects and new board members to participate in policy development and project implementation.

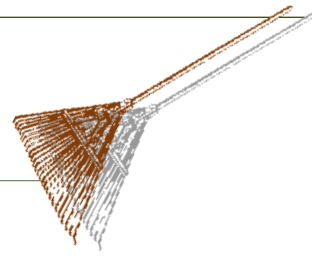
Ideal candidates will embrace AFC's vision and mission while bringing experience and skills to accomplish our goals for the conservation of Altadena's foothills. Your efforts will be amply rewarded with

the boundless gratification of those who love our foothills as we move our vision forward.

If you can see the Altadena foothills from your residence or nearby, you fulfill the residency requirement for board membership.

To express interest or learn more, please contact one of the nominating committee members: Rick Carron at 626-296-0330, Robert Staehle at 626-798-3235, or Nancy Steele at 626-350-6598, [nsteele@aaltadenafoothills.org](mailto:nsteele@aaltadenafoothills.org).

# Land & Trails Update



## AFC Participates In Community Effort to Restore the Altadena Crest Trail

AFC vice president Lori L. Paul and board member Robert L. Staehle are regular participants in the Altadena Crest Trail Restoration Working Group (ACTRWG) steering committee, an ad hoc collection of local trail users that includes hikers, runners, equestrians, mountain bikers, birders, dog walkers, and others dedicated to the restoration of the historic Altadena Crest Trail (ACT) from Eaton Canyon in the East to Hahamongna Watershed Park in the West (where 4 major trail systems converge, connecting La Canada Flintridge, Pasadena, Forest Service, and Altadena trails). The ACTRWG was established at the request of Los Angeles County and Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich to provide on-the-ground trail information, trail history, and community input.

Though the ACT was contiguous up until the 1970s, there are now three major gaps located in the vicinity of Rubio Canyon, Skylane, and Lower Millard Canyon at the La Vina development and Lincoln Avenue Sediment Placement Site (SPS). Much progress has been made to reconnect the trail. Working with a major landowner, Sameer Etman, a potential route to close Rubio Gap has been identified, physically walked, and mapped with GPS data. Landowner and equestrian Dabney Zorthian attends the ACTRWG and is working to reestablish the trail easement across her property to help close the Skylane Gap. Work continues on the new SPS equestrian staging area and trail head across the street from Loma Alta Park. Rain washouts and recontouring will be needed for that connection to the ACT.

The Conservancy encourages the restoration of the ACT because trails provide public access to the natural beauty of the foothills, educational opportunities for nature study, access to Native American and pioneer sites, and free, healthy exercise and recreational activities.

ACTRWG meetings are open to everyone. Anyone who attends is automatically a member. Roll up your sleeves, put on your hiking boots, and help restore the Altadena Crest Trail.

For information about the ACTRWG, visit [www.fourpalms.org/act](http://www.fourpalms.org/act).

For general information about Altadena trails, including local trail conditions and suggested hikes, visit [www.altadenatrails.org](http://www.altadenatrails.org).

## Will We Clear Brush Forever?

Robert L. Staehle, Chair, Natural Resources Committee

Thanks go to many volunteers for helping Altadena's conservancy maintain the property it protects. In order to reduce fire hazard, Los Angeles County ordinances require all landowners to clear brush near residential structures. Volunteers from across Altadena, and many from farther locales, have helped with Spring brush clearance since 2001. This year's job was a lot easier than in the past because we have been clearing regularly and much of the large growth has already been removed.



LORI L. PAUL

Tim Callahan clearing brush on the Wilson Triangle

At the May 28th work party, one of those helping clear the portion of the Conservancy's Andrea Wilson Triangle asked the very good question, "What is your long-term plan?" to which another added, "We can't do this every year."

We do have a long-term plan, or at least a mental sketch, to reduce the amount of labor required on this now-protected parcel. While it is possible to modify land so that essentially no maintenance is required for many years, this is inconsistent with conservation goals. One can simply pave over

the land, and until cracks appear and things start growing up through the pavement, virtually nothing needs to be done.

A far preferable alternative, which we intend to employ, is to encourage and plant species that make the maintenance much easier. Astute species selection can produce growth resulting in a reduced fire hazard, thereby helping us be good neighbors to those who live in nearby structures. During brush clearance on May 28th, at least four seedling oaks were spotted and preserved. These will be encouraged, along with others transplanted in from nearby yards, in hopes of creating a small grove. As they grow larger, California live oaks (*Quercus agrifolia*) and Engleman oaks (*Quercus engelmannii*) create growing plots of dense shade that limits growth of the shrubs that fuel large fires. By virtue of the tannic acid that oaks produce and incorporate into their leaves, these trees, while not fireproof, are naturally fire resistant. Smaller fires often burn right up to oaks without igniting them, and even large fires seldom kill them outright. That is one of the reasons why many large oaks in Altadena continue to grow where they have been since before Europeans arrived.

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Some poppies were also spotted as we cleared brush, and more of these may be planted, along with lupine, in a mix of vegetation that was once far more common in the area. Left alone, California poppies (*Eschscholzia californica*) generally form small, low plants that die back in early summer, leaving very little above-ground fuel for any fire. Their dense, quick growth after the first rains often shades out other seedlings, but a little selective weeding of non-natives is typically required for them to gain a foothold. Brush clearance over the last two years is probably why we saw some poppies this year. The ones we saw were non-natives, but their habits are similar to natives we may seed the area with this fall around the time of the first rains.

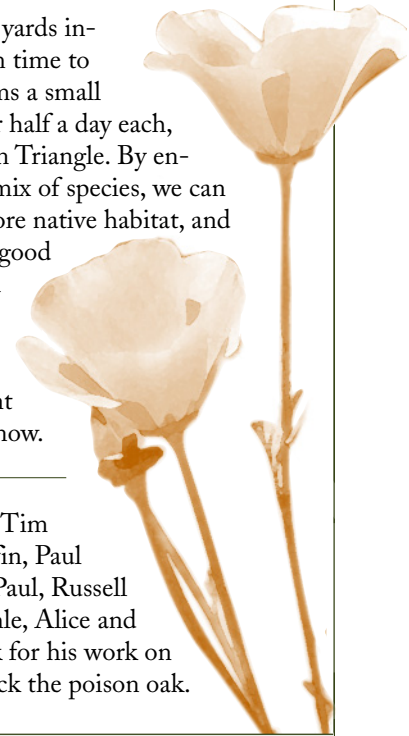
Local artist David Green once told me about seeing the Altadena foothills aglow in orange with native poppies all the way from Long Beach Harbor during the 1920s. Poppyfields Road was named for the fields of poppies through which it passed, before it was lined with houses. Without much effort, we can restore this feature to a few places in our community, much as the Nuccios have along Chaney Trail by their nursery. Once seeded, the native poppies re-seed themselves each season, and provide their

intense splash of color from approximately February through June, depending on water and humidity.

Custody of any property, our own yards included, requires maintenance from time to time. Annual brush clearance seems a small price to pay, perhaps 25 people for half a day each, once a year, for the Andrea Wilson Triangle. By encouraging and planting the right mix of species, we can diminish maintenance needs, restore native habitat, and reduce fire danger all while being good neighbors. Altadena belongs to all of us; where else can we do this?

If we do our work properly, a few of the oaks we encourage and plant today will be here centuries from now.

**MANY THANKS TO:** Bonnie and Tim Callaghan, Andrea and Aria Griffin, Paul Dimotakis, Sameer Etman, Lori Paul, Russell Ruff, Marie Slonski, Robert Staehle, Alice and Ian Wessen, plus Heinz Ellersieck for his work on many days since January to cut back the poison oak.



**Donating to AFC**

Most of you send us a check when you want to make a donation. We love checks! Here are some other ways you can advance the goal of preserving open space lands in Altadena:

**Charge It** — If you have an American Express card, you can charge your donation to AFC. Go to: <http://home3.americanexpress.com/cards/charities/donateonline.asp>, click on the link to “contribute to your favorite charities,” enter Altadena Foothills Conservancy in the nonprofit name line to search, then follow the directions for donating. AFC will receive slightly less than the amount you’ve donated, as the nonprofit that processes the donation, JustGive, takes about 2.5% to cover processing, so please keep that in mind when you make your donation.

**Donate Appreciated Assets** — Appreciated assets, such as real estate, stocks, bonds, or securities, can be donated to AFC and you will receive a tax benefit.

**Donate Your Car** — AFC has now received two donations from Cars 4 Causes because Friends donated their cars in our name. You can call 1-800-766-CARE (1-800-766-2273) or visit their Web site at <http://www.cars4causes.net> for more info.

**Leave a Legacy** — You can make a future gift to AFC by naming AFC in your will or living trust or listing AFC as a beneficiary of a retirement account or life insurance policy. You should consult your attorney for the exact language, or contact AFC for assistance. If you make one of these arrangements, let us know so that we can thank you today.

**Contributions to Altadena Foothills Conservancy**

*Please renew your membership as a Friend of the Altadena Foothills Conservancy or become a new Friend.*

- I am renewing       I am a new Friend
- \$10    \$30    \$50    \$100    Other \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- Please contact me about a larger gift to AFC.

**Watershed Education and the Eaton Documentary**  
DONOR CATEGORIES

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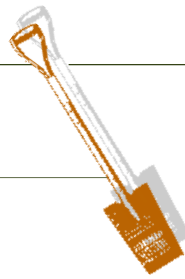
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626-798-3235

*Thank you for your support.*

# Restoration Update



## Woodbury and Marengo Pocket Park

The Conservancy is working in cooperation with several partners to build a pocket park on 8,000 sq. ft. of neglected land at the intersection of Woodbury and Marengo. Our partners include Altadena Heritage, Mark Goldschmidt Design, Los Angeles County Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich, Los Angeles County Department of Public Works, City of Pasadena Water and Power Department, Foothill Municipal Water District, Arroyo Seco Foundation, and Theodore Payne Foundation.

We are making progress in the planning phase of the project. On May 24th, the AFC delivered to Public Works officials a Preliminary Plan for consideration and comments. Supervisor Antonovich's office followed up to discuss the administration of the project.

AFC expects to complete the preliminary phase of the project and move toward approval of a final plan by mid-July 2005, barring unforeseen problems. Construction will begin once AFC has received the required permits and the County has approved AFC's technical plans.

For more information on the pocket park, please visit the AFC website or call Rick Carron, Project Leader, at 626-296-0330.

## Chaney Trail Pocket Oak Restoration

We are pleased to announce that the coast live oak (*Quercus agrifolia*) and Engelmann oak (*Quercus engelmannii*) saplings restored to a small parcel in the Chaney Trail neighborhood are thriving. The recent heavy rains helped establish the transplanted oaks, which have already grown several inches. Only one coast live oak has died out of the 15 planted, an excellent success rate thus far. The little trees will receive supplemental water over the hot summer months, as needed, to enhance their chances of survival.

Restoring native oaks to this site will beautify the neighborhood and provide habitat for birds and other wildlife. Landowners Luke and Efi Latief, along with their neighbor Robert Chave (who donated funds for AFC to purchase the oaks from the Theodore Payne Foundation for Wild Flowers and Native Plants), are to be commended for their support of this hobbit-size oak restoration project.

## AFC Board of Directors

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To receive updates  
and occasional  
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from the AFC,  
send an e-mail to:

[nsteele@altadenafoothills.org](mailto:nsteele@altadenafoothills.org)

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