

Laguna Learning Center Begins Phase I Construction

by Mark Green, Resource Development Director

Road improvements, septic work and site preparation have begun at the Laguna Learning Center on Occidental Road, rehabilitating historic Stone Farm to create a world-class educational facility celebrating the Laguna de Santa Rosa.

Construction has been delayed for much of this year due to the difficulty of achieving a successful percolation test for the septic system after the winter's unusually heavy rains. The project was given the go-ahead when the City of Santa Rosa issued a building permit in October. The Foundation was ready to go, and work has begun! We have contracted with the General Contracting firm of Jim Murphy and Associates (JMA), and have begun to recruit in-kind contributions of construction services from generous local builders, contractors and service providers.

Phase I of the Laguna Learning Center will rehabilitate the Civil War-era farmhouse on Stone Farm to serve as offices for the Laguna Foundation, stabilize the barns, repair the roadway, establish parking, and begin landscape work to return the farm to past splendor. The Foundation hopes to occupy the farmhouse within a year.

The Laguna Learning Center is the linchpin of the Foundation's strategy to focus public attention on the Laguna and restore large areas as thriving wildlife habitat with sensitively managed public access. When all three phases of construction are complete, the Learning Center will be the jewel in the Laguna's crown, providing young and old with an innovative interpretive center, interactive exhibits, exciting education programs, research facilities, and a re-created 19th-century farm garden and orchard. It will be the



Septic system was installed in less than week, with a clear forecast and willing workers. Thanks goes to Foundation Director Guy Smith for his hard work in coordinating materials donors.

headquarters for the Foundation's work to restore the rich wildlands of the Laguna, and its programs will highlight the Laguna's diverse and fascinating wildlife, Native American culture and agricultural legacy. The Laguna Learning Center will be a perfect place for locals and visitors alike to immerse themselves in the lore of the Laguna before jumping out on the system of Laguna trails which will begin construction next year—truly, this

project offers something for everyone.

We're excited to get started, and need your help! Please consider making a contribution to the capital campaign to create the Laguna Learning Center—a facility which will make the Laguna a celebrated Sonoma County treasure for generations to come. Contact Mark Green, Resource Development Director at ext.3, or email: mark@lagunafoundation.org.

Laguna de Santa Rosa Foundation

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*Education Program Assistant***Executive Director's Report — Dan Schurman**

However, we can't allow this excitement to overshadow the tremendous progress we're making in all the rest of our programs. Our education program, "Learning Laguna", continues to grow in size, reputation, and quality. Our dedicated docents will this year bring their love and wonder of the Laguna to more than 1,000 elementary school children. And with a waiting list of classroom teachers who want to be part of the program, we know there are hundreds more students eager to learn about the Laguna as our program grows.

Two years into the Ludwigia Control Program, we have removed enough of this invasive water weed to cover four football fields at a height of three feet. With our project channels largely clear, we now have the breathing room to begin planning and implementing the type of Laguna-wide restoration projects that will address the root causes of this complicated issue.

Our Middle Reach Restoration Project, the largest restoration project yet undertaken in the Laguna, is underway and will be continuing for the next few years. Thousands of trees and shrubs will be planted as we bring back a healthy riparian corridor covering nearly 1.5 miles of the Laguna in its central and most sensitive reach between Highway 12 and Occidental Road. We'll also be restoring oak woodlands in the uplands on adjacent Kelly Farm. This will be a tremendous opportunity for the public to get involved in and observe a restoration project in a highly visible stretch of the Laguna.

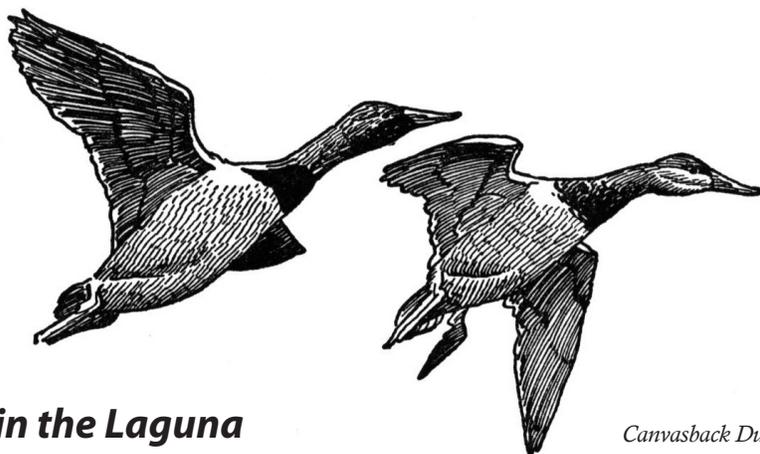
Our science program is getting off the ground under the inspiring leadership of our new Research Director, Dr. Christina Sloop. Currently, Christina is working on a conceptual modeling project to identify sources of water quality impairments in the Laguna. This preliminary project will set the stage for a much more comprehensive analysis of the water quality problems of the Laguna (also known as a "TMDL"),

which is a top long-term goal of the Foundation. While this could take years to complete, getting it started now will prevent it from languishing as a low-priority project for the responsible regulatory agencies.

As we near the publication of our Laguna Ecosystem Restoration and Management Plan (RMP), the science program is also beginning the design and construction of a comprehensive Laguna Ecosystem database. This essential piece of any sophisticated inquiry on the Laguna will collect and collate multiple layers and sources of data – past, present and future – so our investigations fit into and contribute to a larger understanding of the Laguna watershed as a whole. Not only will this continue to inform and guide our future restoration work, refining and building on the RMP, it will also enhance our ability to attract the necessary institutional collaborations and funding to enable these efforts to move forward.

As you can see, the Laguna Learning Center, while being the most visible and "sexy" of our many projects, is only another plank in a solid strategic platform of addressing the complex of issues that affect the health of the Laguna: short and long term, scientific research and on-the-ground restoration, education and awareness-raising, generating community support and involvement – all are necessary ingredients that we're bringing together in what we believe will be a comprehensive, effective approach to dealing with what is perhaps the most pressing environmental challenge in central Sonoma County: the health of this vital wetland ecosystem and all the benefits and services it provides for our communities.

As with any such effort, it takes many, many people to make it happen. We applaud and thank all of you who help make this work possible through your gifts of time and money. As I always say, we couldn't do it without you.



Canvasback Ducks

Winter in the Laguna

BY MARY ABBOTT, *Education Program Director*

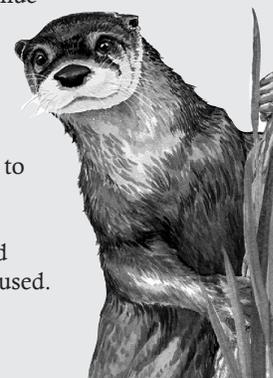
What birds might you find on the Laguna trail these days? Birds are the most abundant wildlife present in the Laguna – and the most easily observable too! Keep your eyes out for the return of the Black-Crowned Night Herons, roosting in numbers, along the Laguna channel in the Sebastopol Preserve. Also look for masses of Cedar Waxwings, gobbling up berries from mistletoe, poison oak, and other plants. Listen for the busy, buzzy Ruby Crowned Kinglet, Yellow Rumped Warbler, and the ubiquitous White and Golden Crowned Sparrows. Say hello to returning Says Phoebe, Western Kingbird and American Pipit. Ducks are showing up now too: Buffleheads, Pintail, Merganser, Cinnamon Teal, among others. Can you add to this list?

River otter will be feeding on steelhead as the water rises, bobcats have molted into a darker gray color for camouflage and coyote has begun courting and pairing off for mating. Blacktail deer are forming clans of females and young, while the bucks remain solitary. If you venture onto a Laguna trail, you may be lucky enough to spot any of these animals. Be sure to let us know your sightings!

Learning Laguna Serves Record Number of Students

The Education Program has had several milestones over the past quarter: this Fall, we served nearly 400 students through Learning Laguna – a record number for this season! The program now boasts a waiting list too. As word gets out about our wetlands education program for kids, teachers are clamoring to sign up!

We continue to add new classroom and field activities to keep our docents interested and enthused.



A Fond Farewell to Carolyn "CJ" Johnson

Prior to the launching of the LF Education program in 1999, one of our founding mothers, Carolyn "CJ" Johnson, began sowing the seeds for our future. CJ became a Laguna Foundation board member in the early years before the organization had any staff. She was a guiding light for the community's awareness of and appreciation for the Laguna. Backed by a degree in Biology from Sonoma State University and spurred on by her experience with Mrs. Terwilliger in third grade, she worked closely with her lifelong friend, Raini Vallarino, to develop curriculum for both the docent training and Learning Laguna. She was a key presenter during the docent training and infused our docents and kids with her unbridled enthusiasm for birds, bugs and discovery.

CJ also served as Chairperson of the Education Committee, bringing into focus an ongoing strategic plan process for the future. Even though CJ often took a big picture view of the program, she was right there to

provide coffee (regular and decaf) at events, and get out into the field with the kids as a docent and a day leader. She often opened her home for docent parties and continuing education events, and was a keeper of our history. After all these years, some changes for CJ's involvement in the program are on the horizon: CJ will be moving out of volunteering for the Laguna Foundation and will focus more on her work in other areas, as well as slowing down to enjoy life a bit more. She has played a pivotal role in the development and nurturing of this program and she will be dearly missed!

*Our fondest appreciation,
CJ, for all you have given us
over the years!*



*Welcome
our new
staffer,
Linda
Wilson!*

We are delighted to be able to add Linda to our growing Ed program staff. Linda received training as a docent, in Marin where she grew up, with Mrs. Terwilliger at the Terwilliger Nature Education Center (now Wildcare). From her experience there, she was instrumental in launching the Spring Lake program for Terwilliger and was the docent site coordinator for over 4 years. Linda also worked as a Sonoma County librarian and has a background in graphic and home interior design.

Laguna Art & Garden Gala A Sold-Out Smash!

The Foundation's third annual Art and Garden Gala was packed to the treetops this year. Held on a perfect September Sunday afternoon in the gardens of the lovely Vine Hill House, the Foundation's annual fundraiser auctioned an extraordinary collection of art by prominent Sonoma County artists. Magical and circus performers strolled the garden grounds, trapeze artists soared overhead, and our full house of guests enjoyed delicious food by Highfeather Catering (Michael Hirschberg and Greg Markey), desserts by LaDolce V and Zix Cookies, with paired wines from premium wineries of the Laguna watershed. The event raised much-needed funds for the Foundation's programs, and the word at the gate as our guests went home was that this was the "best party ever".

If you missed it this year, we hope you'll join us next time: the 2007 Art and Garden Gala will be held Sunday, September 9, 2007. Thanks to all the wonderful volunteers, artists, sponsors, guests and entertainers who made this year's event so magical!

Special thanks also goes to Dan and Jan O'Connell of the Vine Hill House.

Thank you to our sponsors:

Golden Eagles

Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria

River Otters

Beyers Costin, Sonoma National Bank, Sonoma West Times and News, Vine Hill House

Bobcats

Bill and Gail Bettinelli, Clean Lakes, Inc, Gallo Family, La Dolce V, Luther Burbank Savings, Anne and Clay Stephens, Veale Investments, Zix Artisan Sweets and Savories

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Egrets

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Performances included feats of aerial amazement by Marek Kaszuba School of Flying Trapeze, mysterious spectacles by the Mystic Family Circus and momentary lapses of the possible by Ken Garr



Contributing Artists

Barnee Alexander, Mathilde Amiot, Holly Anderson, Warren Arnold, Jocelyn Audette, Sally Baker, Abby Bard, Joel Bennett, D. A. Bishop, Tony Black, Paula Bailey Brent, Cheryl Costantini, Tamsen Donner, Mary Fuller, Louisa King Fraser, Yvonne Giambrione-Martin, Joany Goodwin, Green Greenwald, Michael Hayden, Joe Honton, Brooke Holve, Don Jackson, Linda Kammer, Tari Kerss, Nemea Laessig, Laurence, Joyce Libeu, Kristina Lucas, Fred Lund/Becoming Independent Artworks, Mikio Matsumoto, Robert McChesney, James Millikan, Pat O'Connell, Hanya Popova Parker, Annie Roberts, Robin Rogers, Deborah Salomon, Micah Schwaberow, Jack Stuppin, Bill Wheeler, Kathleen Woolfe, and Kathleen Youngquist.



Thanks to our wonderful Gala Committee of Nina Arrabit, Mary Black, Susan Churchill, Pauline Fisher, Barbara Harris, Brooks Leete, Sandy Mays, Pat O'Connell, and Nancy Peter, the Laguna-themed artwork was gorgeously displayed and was the highlight of the event.

Opportunities to Get Involved with the Laguna de Santa Rosa Watershed

SECOND ANNUAL STATE OF THE LAGUNA CONFERENCE!

Thursday March 29 through Sunday, April 1, 2007

Nearly 18 years after the first State of the Laguna Conference led to the formation of the Laguna de Santa Rosa Foundation, the Foundation will convene a second State of the Laguna Conference to discuss the future of Sonoma County's most important wildlife area.

Addressing issues of water quality, wildlife habitat and biodiversity, flood protection, invasive species, outdoor recreation and other public concerns, the Conference will present the recommendations of Enhancing and Caring for the Laguna, a restoration and management plan for the Laguna watershed published by the Foundation in winter of 2006.

The four-day conference will include a two-day Science Symposium, where scientists and students will present and discuss current studies and future research directions in the Laguna watershed and the Santa Rosa Plain, followed by a full day of presentations and panel discussions with experts and public agency representatives on Saturday. Sunday will be dedicated to field tours of the Laguna, with docent and local expert led discussion. Attendees may choose to attend any or all days of the Conference.

Details and registration will be available on our website in mid January.

BECOME PART OF THE LAGUNA RESTORATION TEAM : JOIN THE LAGUNAKEEPERS!

January 20

Middle Reach – Willow Sprigging
The first of two big workdays on the new middle reach restoration project. Experienced Keepers may also want to join us January 17th or 18th while we gather willow cuttings for use at the site (likely to be strenuous).

February 24

Laguna Uplands
General maintenance (weeding, blackberry removal) at this well-established site. We'll take stock of existing plantings and may install replacement plants where necessary. A great place to take in the views of the Laguna near peak flow!

March 24

Native Plant/Insectary Garden
An exciting new project at the Water Treatment Plant's "Joint Wetlands" area. We'll be planting trees and shrubs to attract beneficial insects. This project will provide an important community education opportunity, demonstrating the habitat value and water-conserving benefits of native & select drought-tolerant plant species.

MORE VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES COMING IN 2007!

With the completion of the Restoration & Management Plan, the Foundation is set to begin the first phase of major restoration work on the Laguna. Restoration staff have already begun laying an irrigation system for the hundreds of plants we're planning to install this Spring – but we'll need help planting the trees and shrubs that will expand valuable wildlife habitat in the Laguna. *Volunteers will play a key role!*

Keep your eyes open for upcoming announcements on how you can participate in this exciting restoration effort. Volunteers can help in numerous ways -- we'll have opportunities for skilled or unskilled, indoor or outdoor, frequent or intermittent helpers!

For further information, or if you would like to be on the LagunaKeeper mailing list, please contact Catherine ext.109 or catherine@lagunafoundation.org.



SPRING 2007 DOCENT TRAINING COMING UP!

Have you been considering becoming a Laguna Docent? Please come to the docent training orientation evening on Monday, February 12, 7-9 pm at the Santa Rosa Library Downtown Branch, at the corner of 3rd and E Street. We are offering a lively evening of activities from the program, open to the public. This is a great chance to learn all the details of the training, becoming a docent, and volunteer commitment. Training begins March 12. Applications -- available by mail or on our website -- are due by March 1.

For further information, or to request a brochure, please contact Mary ext. 102 or email: mary@lagunafoundation.org.



COTATI CREEK CRITTER EVENTS

Community Planting Days:

2nd Saturdays of each month, 9 a.m. – 12 noon: Jan 13, Feb 10, Mar 10, Apr 14
Last Sundays, 10 a.m. – 1 p.m.: January 28, February 25, March 25, April 29

Join Cotati Creek Critters in planting 2,000 native trees and shrubs along the Laguna de Santa Rosa in Cotati! Meet at Ladybug Lot (City well lot #2), Lakewood Avenue, Cotati. Please see the page on "Planting Day Information" at www.CotatiCreekCritters, which lets people know what to wear, what to bring, and what to expect, and has links to directions and a map.

"Inside/Outside Nature Education series": Indoor, evening presentations in the fall and winter, with outdoor field trips in spring and summer, featuring local experts. Evening presentations are on first Monday evenings at 7 p.m., at the Cotati Community Center, E. School Street, Cotati (behind Cotati City Hall, 201 W. Sierra Avenue).

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 5: *Is There Any Such Thing as Wastewater?* – Denise Cadman

MONDAY, MARCH 5: *Local Native American Relationships with the Land* – Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria

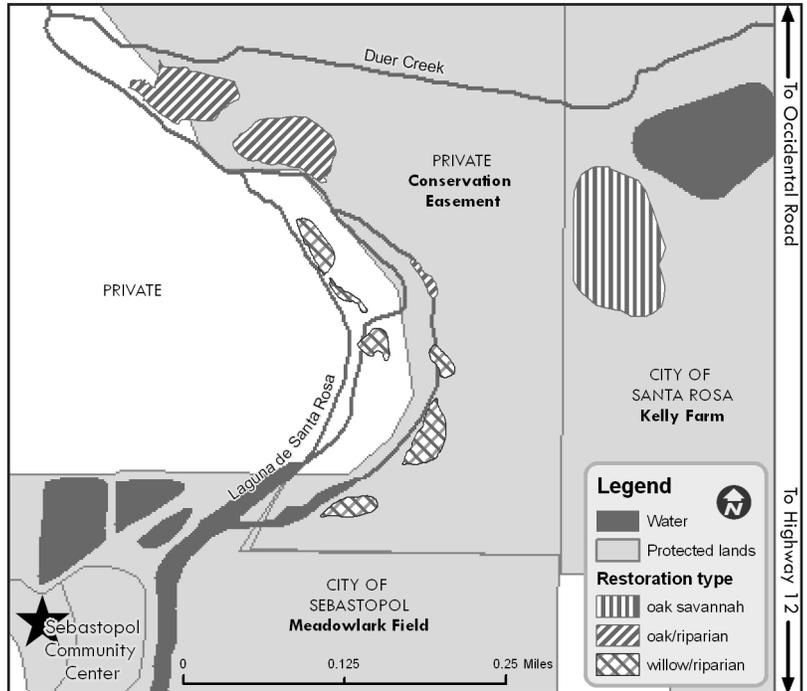
Middle Reach Restoration Project Update

Joe Honton, Watershed Data Manager

Ecological restoration of the middle reach of the Laguna—from Sebastopol to Occidental Road—got off to a strong start this summer. The overall goal for the project is to enhance the biological diversity of the area’s plant life, and as a consequence, to increase the abundance and variety of the area’s animal life. This will be achieved through the reintroduction of native plant species that have diminished over the years: plants like oak, ash, and walnut for the upper story; box elder and willows in the sub-canopy; coyote bush, wild rose, hawthorn, elderberry, and snowberry in the shrubby understory; plus honeysuckle and sedge as creepers and groundcover.

The preparatory steps taken this summer included basic planning, field surveys and owner outreach. We’ve been very fortunate to receive the enthusiastic support of Balletto Vineyards, Dei Dairy, the City of Sebastopol and the City of Santa Rosa—these landowners have all seen the value of enhancing the area’s biota. Together with our fiscal sponsors—California State Coastal Conservancy, US Fish & Wildlife Service, and the Community Foundation Sonoma County—these community partners share our vision for a healthy restored Laguna.

When studying the area, the challenges we face became readily apparent: this is a flood-plain with thick layers of clay deposited during winter months, when long periods of inundation are the norm; this also is a place where the dry summer season bakes the soil, which has very little humus, leaving a deeply fissured hardpan. Clearly, this is an area where careful attention to the landscape will be needed if freshly planted species are to thrive.



Almost 3500 plants have been ordered for the project and have been growing in commercial nurseries since this past Spring. Another 300 willow cuttings will be taken later this year by our LagunaKeepers. There will be plenty of work to do, both this winter and next spring, with irrigation systems, wildlife monitoring, plant surveys, and more. This is another great way to get involved. Interested?—call us!

Exciting New Bird Monitoring Project Begins in the Middle Reach!



Black Crowned Night Heron

Christina Sloop, PhD., Research Director

A group of experienced bird watchers are now getting ready to volunteer their skills in an exciting new Laguna Foundation program aimed at establishing a baseline of the riparian and grassland bird communities in the Laguna middle reach, between Hwy 12 and Occidental road. With the help of PRBO Conservation Science bird biologist Tom Gardali we are training volunteers to follow the ‘area search method’ protocol, a worldwide standard scientific method, at various locations several times per month. Our volunteers will record all birds they encounter in a given area during a given time, and will also report bird behavior, weather conditions and assess vegetation in the study plots.

The program is long-term and will ultimately inform the success of the Laguna Foundation Middle Reach Habitat Restoration Program in the years to come. It will allow us to see how we are doing in our quest to improve and restore this beautiful Laguna ecosystem, and will also give us the ability to detect crises by distinguishing the natural seasonal population fluctuations from those that may indicate more serious declines due to other, external forces. If you would like more information on this project or have questions please don’t hesitate to contact Christina Sloop at ext.101 or email: christina@lagunafoundation.org.

Thank you to our generous supporters since the last Meanderings...

Laguna Learning Center Campaign Contributors:
Bradley and Tina Baker, Allen Barbieri, Bill and Gail Bettinelli, Marylee J. Carli, Susan and Ken Churchill, Clay and Kim Clement, Connie and Hugh Coddling, Sam and Mary Dakin, Charles Evans, Miles and Linda Ferris, William and Cynthia Gallaher, Matt and Gina Gallo, Joany Goodwin, Joseph and Susan Gorin, Caryl Ohrbach and Mickey Hart, Carolyn Johnson and Rick Theis, Eric Koenigshofer, Mary Frances Laier, Tom and Sally Lambert, Tom and Ann McGinley, Glenn and Franny Minervini-Zick, Larry Moskowitz and Ouisue Packard, Les and Lori Perry, Nancy Peter and Jeffery Orth, Joan Przekop, Brian and Jymmy Purtill, Greg Sarris, Gladys and Bruce Sawyer, Jean Schulz, Dan Smith and Joan Marler, Anne and W. Clayton Stephens, Virginia Strom-Martin and Don Martin, Raini and Steve Vallarino, and Kirk and Pat Veale.

In-Kind Contributors:

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Institutional:

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Individuals:

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...and, of course, all our donors, volunteers, and you.

Become a Friend of the Laguna!



P.O. Box 7886
Santa Rosa, CA 95407

Founded in 1989, the Laguna de Santa Rosa Foundation works to preserve, restore, and provide opportunities for the public to enjoy and learn about the Laguna, Sonoma County's richest region of wildlife habitat.

The Foundation is a nonprofit organization supported by contributions and grants. IRS ID #94-3155180. All contributions are tax-deductible.

**Clip this coupon and mail with your check.
THANK YOU for supporting the Laguna de Santa Rosa Foundation!**

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Mailing Address _____

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Tax deductible donation enclosed of \$ _____

I am interested in volunteering. Please call me for opportunities in docent training, restoration projects and/or outdoor recreation (circle preferences).

Preservation Circle. I'd like to support the Laguna with a contribution of \$ _____ every quarter!



Laguna de Santa Rosa Foundation
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Santa Rosa, CA 95407-0886
(707) 527-9277
info@lagunafoundation.org

The **Laguna de Santa Rosa Foundation**, founded in 1989, works to preserve, restore, and inspire greater public understanding and appreciation of the Laguna de Santa Rosa, a rich and extensive complex of freshwater wetlands on the North Coast of California. The Foundation conducts educational programs, implements preservation and restoration projects, works with landowners and public agencies to protect and improve Laguna resources, and works to develop appropriately managed opportunities for the public to enjoy the Laguna.

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**HAPPY
NEW
YEAR!**



Let us know!

If you received this mailing in error, received duplicates, or any part of your contact information is misspelled, please call Maggie at x107 or email maggie@lagunafoundation.org. Thanks!

Another Wonderful Year with Susan Churchill



Susan Churchill is a dedicated supporter of the Laguna Foundation and is currently our Board President. She began as a Docent for the Laguna Foundation in 2002 and became a Board member in 2003, serving first as Secretary and later Board Vice President. Susan was also Chair of the Laguna Learning Center Committee last year, and she continues to focus on the details of fundraising for the Center and its construction.

Susan received an undergraduate degree in Wildlife Biology from the University of Montana and worked towards a Masters in Environmental Science from 1977 to 1978. She has an extensive career in environmental consulting and, surprisingly, building construction! Her first job after college was working for Gerald Hines Interests, a national real estate developer, similar to Donald Trump and in seven years, Susan built out over a million square feet of tenant improvements in Seattle, Oakland and San Francisco. She learned to read and interpret blue prints, account for site budgets, reconcile change orders and coordinate all communications between client, architect and contractor, on behalf of the building owner. Her previous work with space planners, architects, and general and specialty contractors will be invaluable to us as we construct our Learning Center.

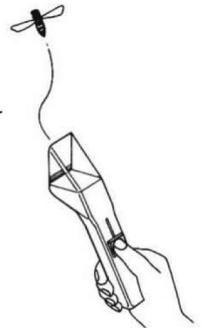
In 1986 Susan and her husband, Ken, began ACC Environmental Consulting which is now one of the largest locally-owned environmental consulting firms in California. Susan retired in 1999, moving to Santa Rosa, and Ken continues to be involved with ACC. The firm recently donated an in-kind environmental site investigation for the Laguna Learning Center.

Susan says she feels "privileged to be President during such an exciting time in the evolution of the Laguna Foundation." We could not have gotten to the building initiation of the Laguna Learning Center without Susan's courageous leadership and incredible insight.

Thank you Susan!

Catch and Identify Insects with SNAPY!

The SNAPY is a well-made, unique German tool for catching and releasing insects and very small critters like frogs. SNAPY gives you a chance to study the critter, and release it without harming it. It is easy and fun to use -- kids love it (so do adults)!



Purchase of a SNAPY helps to fund Learning Laguna, our children's wetland education program. SNAPYs cost \$15 and can be purchased on our website, or you can pay in person by dropping by our office. Please call ext. 107 so we know when to expect you.