



JACK LONDON PARK PARTNERS

Making Jack London State Historic Park thrive as a relevant community resource



Our start:

Valley of the Moon Natural History Association (VMNHA) was established in 1977 to support the interpretive needs of Anadel State Park, Jack London State Historic Park, and Sugarloaf Ridge State Historic Park. It has played a key role in training volunteers and developing programs and exhibits.

However, an enormous challenge came in 2011 when the State announced that all three parks were scheduled to be closed within the year. Concluding that the closure of Jack London State Park was unacceptable, the VMNHA submitted a proposal to State Parks to operate the park. The proposal was accepted, resulting in the creation of the Jack London Park Partners (JLPP) to oversee management of the park.

JLPP receives no financial support from State Parks and depends entirely on private donations to execute programming, maintain the grounds, and administer operations.



Impact100 Sonoma
has awarded two
Community Grants to

Jack London Park Partners: \$15,000 in partnership with Hanna Boys Center for trail restoration (2014) and \$15,000 for park restoration (2015).

What we do:

We deliver distinctive outdoor recreation to encourage physical activity for fitness and good health, experiential learning, and environmental education to create a diverse group of environmental stewards. In addition, we celebrate our cultural and historical heritage through interpretive docent tours designed to inspire visitors with stories of Jack London's achievements and facilitate events such as Transcendence Theatre Company's *Broadway Under the Stars* that strengthen the bonds of community.

A single story:

One of the goals of Jack London Park Partners (JLPP) is to become a more relevant community resource to organizations serving at-risk youth and underserved communities. Research suggests that outdoor physical activity improves academic performance, develops conservation ethics, increases the ability to think creatively, and develops intellectual skills. It improves attitudes and self-perceptions. At-risk youth and underserved communities have limited access to nature and thus are deprived of these health and psychological benefits.

JLPP partnered with Hanna Boys Center, a neighbor to the park, to collaborate in an eight-week "Teens to Trails" summer program of trail-restoration work days. Teens received training in tool use associated with landscaping, carpentry, forest management, habitat restoration, erosion control, and trail maintenance. They focused on leadership skills, teamwork, problem solving, decision making, conflict resolution, personal responsibility, and time management. A daily environmental education component underscored the relationship between the health of the environment and personal health. Teens who successfully completed the program received work-readiness certificates to support future employment opportunities.

The program was a big success. These "city kids" indicated they were no longer afraid of the outdoors and were much more comfortable in a natural environment. They were all proud of their certificates, and two of them expressed interest in pursuing forest management as a future career opportunity! An additional benefit of the program was the weight loss and "firming up" experienced by the teens after eight weeks of physical exercise.

Our future:

We strive to be a model for private/public management of state parks and to provide long term stability and viability to Jack London State Historic Park, while engaging the local community.