



Redlands Daily Facts



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Park ranger program ready for launch

By **JESSE B. GILL**
Staff Writer

REDLANDS — The Redlands Police Department is set to add another volunteer program to its repertoire, one that will help keep city parks safe.

Police Chief Jim Bueermann said that the plan to add a volunteer park ranger program is something the department has examined in the past.

"We brought this idea to the City Council before several years ago," he said. "They wanted to hold off on it, but now we're bringing it back.

"I spent a lot of time in parks as a kid," Bueermann said. "Our parks are special places and we need to be protecting them."

The new volunteer contingent would be based around the department's Citizen Volunteer

Patrol, a group of local men and women who help keep the city safe by patrolling areas and calling in when they encounter irregular activities. Bueermann said that the volunteer park rangers will operate in a similar way to the Citizen Volunteer Patrol.

"Just like the CVPs, we want them to be our eyes and ears," Bueermann said.

In a memo addressed to to the Redlands Parks Commission,

Bueermann said that the Police Department is seeking public donations to help in the creation of the new program. The initial funding needs have been met by a recent donation of \$5,000 by the Redlands Noon Kiwanis Club. The donation will cover the cost of uniforms, badges, radios, and other equipment and promotional items.

"The money will help us jump-start the program," Bueermann said.

When Bueermann brought his proposal for the new volunteer program before the Parks Commission on Nov. 8, the commission took a vote in support of the program.

"The Parks Commission is excited about the proposal," said Parks Commission Chairman Brian King. "We just don't see the downside to having trained people in our parks."

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RANGERS

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King said that the presence of park rangers in Redlands parks should ease the burden of the maintenance staff who are tasked with cleaning up the graffiti and vandalism that takes place on a regular basis.

"Sometimes people are lingering in places they shouldn't be lingering in and doing things they shouldn't be doing, and with the rangers there, it will help keep the parks free of vandalism," he said.

According to Parks Commission member Kristin Saukel,

having the rangers patrolling the parks in Redlands will help solve problems before they even start.

"The sheer presence of people in parks alone helps keep the juvenile delinquents at bay," Saukel said. "When these kids drive up and want to hang out at these parks, when they see you there, they turn around and leave. If there are park rangers walking the parks, all of a sudden, the kids aren't going to want to hang out at the parks."

Bueermann also mentioned that vandalism wasn't the only concern that fueled the formation of the park ranger program. Stolen cars, sexual assaults and murders have occurred in Red-

lands parks, mainly because by their nature, they can be difficult areas for police officers to patrol. With the addition of the volunteer park rangers, the police department will be able to keep an eye on Redlands' parks without expending the valuable resource of sworn officers.

"It will just help bring a better atmosphere to the parks," King said.

According to police spokesman Carl Baker, since the new program does not involve any expenditure of public funds, City Council approval is not necessary. The program will be an extension of the department's Citizen Volunteer Patrol and will begin as soon as equipment has been

purchased and volunteers have been trained.

"We are putting the word out that we are looking for volunteers," Baker said.

"I think it's a fabulous idea," Saukel said. "It's the perfect volunteer job. The rangers get to keep healthy, by walking around in our parks, and they get to help keep the community safe at the same time. It's a win, win, win for everybody."

Anyone interested in serving in the new volunteer park ranger program should call (909) 335-4744.

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