



JOHN W. CHRISTIAN



John W. Christian's life was a celebration of family, friendship and community. He will be remembered for his life's work, for his vision and his dedication that inspired the improvement of the quality of life in every community he served. John's steady and effective leadership helped to create and expand open space and to enhance the quality and range of recreation programs. By always engaging citizens in the planning of projects and by fostering innovations and relationships among institutions, businesses and neighborhoods, he succeeded in stretching limited resources as far as possible to reach the best results for the benefit of all citizens. John's strength and gift was knowing that all relationships begin with individuals. He created relationships for their own sake and nurtured them with his kindness, generosity and enthusiasm. His monument cannot be contained in any structure or program but can be found in the hearts of his family and friends, in the web of relationships spanning his profession and in the healthy lives of children and adults who are able to enjoy the products of his public service.

LIFE

John was born on June 20, 1946 in Elmhurst, Illinois. He got his start in parks and recreation while overseeing youth programs in Beloit, Wisconsin as a teenager. He went on to earn a bachelor's degree in recreation and park administration from the University of Wisconsin, LaCrosse, his master's in the same field from Indiana University and a doctorate in education from the University of Minnesota. He worked for the Hennepin County Regional Park District in Minnesota for almost 19 years, starting out as an administrative assistant and eventually rising to chief of operations. In 1988, the City of Sunnyvale hired John to be the Director of Parks and Recreation and he worked in that capacity until his death in 1996.

PROFESSIONAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS

John was passionate about parks and recreation. During his eight-year tenure in Sunnyvale, John was considered a visionary who developed progressive parks and recreation programs, services and partnerships that left a legacy to be enjoyed by future generations. He was instrumental in securing adequate open space for the community by developing joint-use agreements with the Sunnyvale School District, Santa Clara Unified School District and Cupertino Union School District for the public use of open space at 19 sites comprising 115 acres. John was particularly proud of his work on a joint-use agreement with Santa Clara County that led to the opening of Sunnyvale Baylands Park in 1994, a regional park consisting of 100-acres of mitigated wetlands habitat and 77-acres of improved parkland

with a multitude of recreational facilities. In recreation he oversaw a key shift in service delivery to an enterprise model that emphasized customer service, efficiency and fiscal management. A major achievement was the development of the Columbia Neighborhood Center, a partnership between the City, Advanced Micro Devices and the Sunnyvale School District. The center opened in 1996 and used a unique neighborhood service delivery model to provide the local community with educational, health and social services for youth and families. As a tribute to his character, community involvement and professional accomplishments, John was named the City's Distinguished Citizen of the Year Award in 1996.



JOHN W. CHRISTIAN GREENBELT

RENAMING THE GREENBELT

Many people associated the Hetch-Hetchy greenbelt with John W. Christian because of his passion for, and enthusiastic promotion of, the greenbelt concept and the landscaping project during his tenure as Director of Parks and Recreation. He clearly saw the potential for the greenbelt to become a valued asset to northern Sunnyvale, and was proud of his role in continuing the development of the greenbelt and in raising its visibility within the community. One of the last events he oversaw as Director of Parks and Recreation was the dedication of the renovated Fairwood Park with its adjacent and newly landscaped portion of the greenbelt. John used the completion of the project as a reason to host a neighborhood celebration and barbecue to highlight the importance of the greenbelt in linking the neighborhoods, parks and schools in northern Sunnyvale. In 2001, Councilmember Fred Fowler suggested the City consider renaming the Hetch-Hetchy greenbelt after John W. Christian to honor his memory and his contributions to the Sunnyvale community and in recognition of the special commitment he had to the Lakewood, Fairwood and Orchard Gardens neighborhoods. On August 28, 2001 Sunnyvale City Council unanimously approved renaming the Hetch-Hetchy greenbelt as the "John W. Christian Greenbelt".

GREENBELT DESCRIPTION & DEVELOPMENT

The greenbelt is located on the Hetch-Hetchy water system right-of-way and is a fairly linear, eighty-foot wide strip of land extending east to west across the entire City of Sunnyvale. A good portion of it - from the City's eastern boundary at Calabazas Creek to just east of Mathilda Avenue, a distance of over two miles - serves as a natural greenbelt linking open space amenities for pedestrians and bicyclists.

At one end of this two-mile stretch lies Orchard Gardens Park. At the other end is Fairwood Park/School, and between these two destinations lie Lakewood Park/

School and Seven Seas Park. Recognizing the important role this right-of-way could play as a non-vehicular transportation linkage between schools and recreational facilities, the City procured permits from the San Francisco Water Department for the use and improvement of the area in the 1970's. At that time an asphalt bicycle and pedestrian path was constructed by the City along the two-mile stretch from Orchard Gardens Park to Fairwood Park to Borregas Avenue was improved with landscaping and recreational facilities. In 1995, during John W. Christian's

tenure as Parks and Recreation Director, a section of the Hetch-Hetchy right-of-way from Blazingwood Drive to Manzano Way was improved by the City and included lighting, landscaping, benches and other amenities. Other projects provided similar improvements from Borregas to Morse Avenues in 1999, and from the East Channel to the Lakewood Shopping Center in 2001, effectively completing the landscaping and beautification of the greenbelt.

GREENBELT MAP

