

The newspaper of Silicon Valley

# The Mercury News

Volume 168, Issue 168

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 4, 2018

24/7 COVERAGE: MERCURYNEWS.COM » \$1.50

**A CALL TO THE WILD**

## One last chance for free parks admission this Saturday



PHOTOS BY SHMUEL THALER — SANTA CRUZ SENTINEL ARCHIVES

Around 10,000 free passes have been issued since the beginning of the year.

Discount program marks 100th anniversary of Save the Redwoods League and offers entry to many parks across the Bay Area and state

**By Paul Rogers**  
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There's no such thing as a free lunch, the saying goes.

But once a month, 11 times so far this year, there really has been free admission to California's venerable redwood state parks. And now the program, aimed at helping a new generation of California residents discover some of the state's most storied landscapes, is offering one last free admission day: next Saturday Dec. 8.

Here's how it works. The public is offered free vehicle admission to 45 parks — majestic preserves that are home to the world's tall-

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The free admissions program is part of the 100th anniversary celebration of the Save the Redwoods League.

# Parks

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est trees. It's part of the 100th anniversary celebration this year of one of California's oldest environmental groups, Save the Redwoods League, based in San Francisco, which organized the campaign with the state Department of Parks and Recreation.

But eager outdoors-folk can't just show up at the park's gates and expect to be let in without paying. First they must obtain a free day-use pass by going to FreeRedwoodsDays.org.

The passes can be used at popular parks like Henry Cowell Redwoods in Santa Cruz

County; Mount Tamalpais in Marin County; Butano on the San Mateo Coast; Pfeiffer Big Sur in Big Sur, Armstrong Redwoods in Sonoma County, Calaveras Big Trees in Calaveras County and Humboldt Redwoods — home of the Avenue of the Giants — in Humboldt County.

The number of available passes varies by park. For the more popular parks, they do run out. Big Basin Redwoods State Park, in Santa Cruz County, already has issued all of its free passes, for example, for next Saturday. And national parks, like Yosemite, Sequoia-Kings Canyon or Muir Woods, are not included.

Since January, roughly 10,000 free passes have

been issued, allowing an estimated 30,000 people free admission. Of those, 70 percent were first-time visitors.

"Our objective of introducing people to the redwood parks was really taken in stride," said Sam Hodder, president of Save the Redwoods League.

"We wanted to inspire the redwood parks to become a central component of the California experience again, at a time when there's an awful lot of bad news and people feeling out of control about what's going on in the world," he said. "Our redwood parks offer solace, and stability and beauty and a sense of hope. This program was all about connecting people again

to that."

The organization paid the state parks department for each free pass that was downloaded. Admission prices per vehicle vary, but are roughly \$10 per car. The league raised that money from Oracle and other donors.

The 2018 campaign, called the "Second Saturday" program, follows similar efforts in 2015, 2016 and 2017 in which the league paid for free admission to redwood parks on the Friday after Thanksgiving to encourage people to get outside and experience nature rather than rushing to shopping malls.

Redwoods are the tallest trees in the world. They grow only in a nar-

row band from Oregon to Big Sur, stretching more than 300 feet tall and living up to 2,000 years. Their close cousins, giant sequoias, grow in the Sierra Nevada and are the largest trees by volume in the world.

The first redwoods in California were protected in 1864 when President Abraham Lincoln set aside 20,000 acres of Yosemite Valley and the Mariposa Grove of giant sequoias as a preserve. For decades after along the coast, loggers with broad saws and teams of oxen cut massive coast redwood trees, some of which dated back to the Roman Empire, for fence posts, railroad ties and lumber for homes.

In 1900, San Jose pho-

tographer Andrew P. Hill formed the Sempervirens Club, to preserve redwoods in the Santa Cruz Mountains. He and other conservationists convinced state lawmakers to establish Big Basin, which became California's first state park.

By 1918, the Save the Redwoods League was founded by Stephen Mather, E.C. Bradley, William Kent, Henry Fairfield Osborn and Madison Grant. Since then, the organization has preserved roughly 214,000 acres in 66 parks, including iconic areas such as Avenue of the Giants in Humboldt County.

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## Local News

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MISSING FOR WEEKS

# Radio host found dead in Kentucky

Bay Area personality Ray Talaferro's body was found in a wooded area near where he was last seen

By Annie Sicencia  
and Joseph Geha  
Staff writers

Longtime Bay Area radio host Ray Talaferro, who had been missing for several weeks in Kentucky, has been found dead, according to his family and authorities.

Talaferro's son, Raphael Talaferro Jr., said his body was found Sunday near the southern border of Illinois. "It is with great sadness that the Talaferro family has to announce the passing of Ray Talaferro," Talaferro Jr. said in a statement. "His body was found in Paducah, Kentucky in a wooded

area approximately a mile from where he was last seen. The family appreciates the support and help we received in our search for Ray. This is a devastating ending to our search for him over these past weeks." The Paducah City Police Department issued a brief press release Monday confirming that a body found Sunday afternoon was that of Talaferro. Police said the discovery was made by two teenagers near the



Talaferro

area of South 25th Street and Brooks Stadium Drive. An autopsy is pending and the investigation is continuing, police said, noting more information would be released as it becomes available. Local authorities requested assistance in the missing person case from the Federal Bureau of

Investigation, according to an FBI spokesman. Brad Warr, a media representative for the FBI, said Monday that agents from an Illinois field office were sent to the Macon County area of Illinois and Paducah on Nov. 29 to assist in the case, though further details about the FBI involvement weren't immediately available. Macon County Sheriff Ted Holder said last week that Ray

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PIZARRO

## 'Dancing Pig' sign in San Jose on the road to rehabilitation

The historic Stephens Meat Products "Dancing Pig" sign — a San Jose icon that outlived the factory it once advertised — may soon dance again thanks to a successful fundraising campaign to restore it.

The Preservation Action Council of San Jose spearheaded the effort to raise \$55,000 to restore the vintage electric neon sign on Montgomery Street, near both Division Station and M&P Center. The sign, made in the 1950s by the Electric Sign Co. of California, is in the area expected to be impacted by Google's proposed San Jose development and had fallen into serious disrepair over the past decade.

The \$55,000 campaign was launched a year ago and surpassed its goal. Talaferro were made and add to support the effort, and volunteers got the word out at events like Viva CalE! PAC-52 garage sales and a trail of seven fundraising events. Key donors included Russian Farms — which currently owns the Stephens Meat brand — the Jo Drecher Memorial Fund at PAC-52 and Poor House Blues, the New Orleans-themed entry and music venue just a block away from the sign.

Several sign companies prepared bids to restore the sign. Young Electric Sign Co. (YESCO) was chosen and the restoration is expected to begin soon. In a statement, YESCO Chief Marketing Officer Jeffrey S. Young said, "Marking our 100th year anniversary, we are thrilled to be involved with this renovation and committed to keep the sign in San Jose glowing."

While the goal has been met, fundraising will continue to create a maintenance fund and to landmark other historic signs that are at risk of being demolished or deteriorating beyond repair. And if you're wondering, the historic Orchard Supply Hardware sign that disappeared last month from a shuttered store site has yet to be found. It would certainly be a candidate for preservation if it is ever found.

NEW PLACE TO ROLL IN THE NEW YEAR • While the South Bay has plenty to do nearly all the time, a wild New Year's Eve celebration is one of the highlights.

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