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FEATURE ARTICLE

San Jose's Central Park

Many locals have no idea just how much Guadalupe River Park and Gardens has to offer.

By Kellen Dickinson

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Unbeknownst to many locals, a world of undiscovered outdoor fun (254 acres of it, to be exact) is sitting right in their own backyard, a wonderland known as Guadalupe Park and River Gardens. Nestled between Highway 880 to the north and Highway 280 to the south, the three-mile regional park runs along the banks of the Guadalupe River.



In addition to 150 acres of public parkland, the Children's Discovery Museum, the world's largest Monopoly board and a renowned rose garden, the park boasts 2.6 miles of trails, plus a wide variety of ongoing activities and events for adults and children alike. Visitors can volunteer for rose deheading and contribute to the bloom of more than 4,400 rose plants, take a ride on a carousel, or get their hands dirty and take a class on worm composting.

Recently, the park hosted a free event for families called Adventures on the Green. Local children's recording artist Andy Z arrived to play a couple of sets of songs, and booths from nonprofit organizations such as Our City Forest were there to provide families with information on the importance of Guadalupe River. "It was just another way to bring people into Downtown so they could experience the park and know it's there," explains Leslee Hamilton, the park's executive director. "It really ties to our mission of promoting the development and active use of the park."



The park's mission is evident in everything it has to offer. Apart from special events like Adventures on the Green, the park features regular activities such as day camps, fitness classes and educational programs. Flower Arranging 101, Yoga in the Park and Family Fitness are just some of the many classes offered. Tennis courts lie between Santa Clara Street and St. John Street, while the recently completed 2.6 miles of trails will soon extend south to Almaden Valley, connecting even more of the surrounding area.

The park's involvement in educating the community about the green movement is also apparent. Hamilton has seen a huge increase in interest in home gardening recently, and as a result the park not only offers composting workshops, but also sells worm and compost bins for backyard use. The water district will also give a demonstration on water efficiency later this year. "We are really hoping that by doing these projects here, there are things that can be replicated in other parks across the city and in neighborhood backyards," says Hamilton.

Guadalupe River Park and Gardens has come a long way in recent years. Not only is it providing a model for others to replicate, it has become a gathering place for locals – which is one of the goals Hamilton set out for the park to achieve. Another goal she plans to achieve is to increase awareness of all the park has to offer. "I'd like more people in San Jose to know about the park and know about the amenities – whether it's the trails, or the arena green area with the carousel and play lawns, or the beautiful gardens we have out here."

That goal is not far from her reach. With wait-lists for some classes, it seems the word about the park's many offerings is spreading. With Downtown San Jose's growing residential

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population, Hamilton not only has hopes for a farmers market, but sees the area as a fully functional park that in 10 or 15 years will be the hub of the city. "Great cities have great parks," says Hamilton. "You think of Golden Gate Park or Central Park. This will be San Jose's Central Park."

UPCOMING EVENTS

River Day Camp

Aug. 4-8, Aug. 11-15

9am-1pm (depending on age)

Ages 5 to 10

This day camp, held at the Visitor and Education Center, still has a few spots available. For three or four days per week, children learn about different topics such as fossils, fitness, the weather, animal tracking and more. Flexible days allow parents to plan the camp around their schedule.

Through Science of Sports Class

Aug. 4-8, Aug. 11-15

9am- Noon, 1-4pm

Grades 4 – 8

A class for sports fanatics and science whizzes of all kinds. Children will learn the physics behind all their favorite sports. At the end of the four-day experience, the little Newtons will create their own sport using all they have learned.

Rose Deheading

Aug. 12, Sept. 9

5-7:30pm

All ages welcome

For those in the mood to help out the community this summer, this is just the job. Head on over to the Heritage Rose Garden and help snip off all of the dead roses in order to promote the growth of more blooms. Free ice cream will be provided for a job well done.

Tapestry Arts Festival

Aug. 30 – Sept. 1

The festival is a three-day celebration of visual and performing arts in San Jose. It not only includes artists and craftspeople, but music, food booths, a home and garden show and much more. Proceeds go to arts education programs in schools and arts outreach in the community. Other Activities: Adopt-a-Rose Program, Composting Workshop, Flower Arranging 101, Summer Walking Series, Yoga in the Park, Family Fitness, My Own Marathon, Pumpkins in the Park, and more.

For times and dates, go to www.grpg.org.

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