

# County of Santa Clara

## Parks and Recreation Department

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[www.parkhere.org](http://www.parkhere.org)



April 30, 2020

Megan Dreger, Grants Administrator  
Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority  
33 Las Colinas Ln  
San Jose, CA 95119

Dear Open Space Authority Citizen Advisory Committee

I enthusiastically support Bay Area Older Adults' (BAO) VIP Trailblazers Program that promotes learning about the cultural and natural history of our parklands while at the same time improving their physical health and social well-being. I have been at Santa Clara County Parks Department for the past 27 years and am currently Volunteer Program Manager. In this capacity, I cultivate volunteers that are vital for our docent program, trail maintenance and other critical aspects of keeping our parks accessible to everyone.

I started working with BAO in early 2013 when I was Interpretive Program Supervisor and BAO launched their hiking program for older adults. Our two-year partnership paired my team of park interpreters and volunteer docents with BAO's administrative and event planning experience to offer a healthy, educational and immersive experience to Bay Area seniors which was age- and ability-appropriate. As Volunteer Program Manager for Santa Clara County Parks, I have continued to facilitate volunteer docents for some BAO hikes. I am happy to organize volunteers to teach the VIPs about the cultural and natural history of our parklands as needed.

Since then, BAO has demonstrated the capacity for outreach and engagement of vulnerable older adults who have special physical and psycho-social needs and who benefit from a more facilitated and supported outdoor experience. BAO has independently served increasing numbers of seniors, not only in Santa Clara County Parks, but in Midpeninsula Regional Open Spaces, Open Space Authority preserves, and city parks within Santa Clara County. I applaud Dr. Ferguson's effort to partner with Vista Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired to provide the same type of health and wellness benefits to visually impaired older adults. This underserved population of older adults will benefit deeply from the high quality and customized programming that BAO offers.

Sincerely

Julie Lee

Volunteer Program Manager

Santa Clara County Parks and Recreation Department

Board of Supervisors: Mike Wasserman, Cindy Chavez, Dave Cortese, Susan Ellenberg, S. Joseph Simitian

County Executive: Jeffrey V. Smith

