

From the Pleasant Hill-Martinez Record

Dual 'day' celebrates John Muir's birth and Earth Day

Staff report

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The John Muir National Historic Site will play host to its namesake's 172nd birthday this weekend, with a celebration of Muir and his influence, and the 40th anniversary of Earth Day.

The free family event — which attracted some 2,400 visitors from across the Bay Area last year — will have exhibits and activities, including the cutting of a birthday cake by John Muir (as portrayed by National Park Service Ranger Frank Helling), who will also tell some stories.

Michael Muir, great-grandson of John Muir, will greet guests with a horse from Access Adventure, the organization he founded to provide outdoor recreation for people with disabilities.

During the day, there will be live entertainment, self-guided tours of the 1882 Victorian Muir home and grounds, nature walks with Doc Hale, Junior Ranger activities presented by the park service, self-guided tours of the California Native Plant Garden, and more.

Music will be performed by the Piedmont Highlanders Pipe Band — acknowledging Muir's birthplace in Scotland; Extended Roots, a 13-member female acoustic group from the East Bay playing Celtic, old-time and bluegrass music; and Spinning Wheel, a local bluegrass band.

Speaking on "Thinking Like a Watershed" will be Brock Dolman, director of the Water Institute, Occidental Arts and Ecology Center.

Before the celebration starts, the Bay Area Ridge Trail Council will lead an early-morning, two-hour walk on the Ridge Trail through Carquinez Strait Regional Shoreline to the Muir site and celebration. A shuttle is provided to the start of the hike, and participants are to meet at 8:30 a.m. For more information, visit www.ridgetrail.org.

Festival visitors will not be able to park at the Muir home — except for those with handicap placards — and organizers have free parking and shuttle service to and from Alhambra High School and Martinez Adult Education.

Dozens of exhibitors from environmental and educational organizations will be on hand, and there will be two silent auctions, with the proceeds

benefiting the John Muir Association, which presents the festival in partnership with the National Park Service.

Also sponsoring the event are Allied Waste; the Bay Area Air Quality Management District; city of Martinez; International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local Union #302; Martinez Community Foundation; and Shell Oil Products, US Martinez Refinery.

if you go

- WHAT: John Muir Birthday/Earth Day celebration
- WHEN: 10 a.m.-4 p.m.

Saturday, April 17

- WHERE: John Muir National Historic Site, 4202 Alhambra Ave., Martinez
 - COST: Free admission; food and beverages available for purchase
 - TRANSPORTATION: Only vehicles with state-issued handicap parking placard can park at site. Free parking at Alhambra High School, 150 E St. or Martinez Adult Education at D and F streets; shuttles run throughout day.
 - INFORMATION: Visit www.johnmuirassociation.org or call 925-229-3857.
- Heavy rain cancels. In event of uncertain weather, call 925-288-8860.