



# ELINGS PARK FOUNDATION 2014 ANNUAL REPORT



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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**



*Summit for Danny*

### ***Thirty Years: An Enduring Achievement***

Elings Park is a powerful example of what civic pride and engagement can achieve. Fifty years ago, before the term “public private partnerships” had become cliché, or the Environmental Protection Agency and its Brownfields Program existed, a handful of public officials, community and local business leaders committed themselves to the idea of transforming a closed landfill into a major recreational facility.

Endorsed and promoted enthusiastically by the Santa Barbara's elected officials, a convergence, of private, public and charitable investments built Elings Park; a public asset that has become the largest sports and recreation center in Santa Barbara and one of its finest natural areas.

Since the foundation was established in 1980, it has been devoted to the conviction that outdoor recreation is vital to an individual's and a family's physical and emotional well-being. Our operations have always been privately funded without public subsidy, entirely from user fees, donations and grants. The foundation's commitment to an urban park that strengthens the community by offering every generation a chance to play together has been unwavering.

Though we proudly celebrate our thirtieth anniversary and take pride in achieving the goals of the park's earliest visionaries, the foundation recognizes that it must adapt its programs to meet the demands of the next generation, the community's changing demographics and the neighborhoods that surround it.

Public participation in the park's tournaments, events and activities continues to grow; but, we must keep in mind that the playing fields, which are home to more than 200 teams and thousands of competitors each year; the pavilions, picnic areas and groves, which have hosted so many weddings and family gatherings; and, the roads and pathways, which have led countless guests to spectacular vistas, have all turned thirty.

Notwithstanding the fact that Elings Park continues to make memories that last a lifetime, there is an inescapable and pressing need to launch an improvement program, which restores the facilities and infrastructure that visitors have enjoyed for decades. This program will be a top priority for the foundation's fundraising efforts, as well as, its capital and operating budgets in coming years.

## **2014 Highlights**

Though this Annual Report focuses on the Elings Park Foundation's efforts to renovate and restore its five athletic fields and six tennis courts. It is very important to remember that in 2014 the park also promoted events and programs that could change lives and community organizations that could save them:

- Granted 100 disadvantaged children summer camp scholarships. As Santa Barbara Police Athletic League's largest non-profit summer camp partner, Elings Park continued a tradition of offering outdoor and athletic experiences that are challenging, educational and character building.
- Served as a venue for important community celebrations and fundraisers like Glow in the Park featuring hot air balloons to raise funds for Doctors without Walls and Santa Barbara Street Medicine which provides medical treatment to vulnerable populations; and, Summit for Danny, a hike, including Virgil Elings, that generated donations that have a powerful impact on alcoholism and drug abuse in Santa Barbara County.
- Doubled the number of tennis lessons, clinics, and tournaments offered to young tennis players at the Las Positas Tennis Courts.
- Welcomed the Santa Barbara Girls Softball Association to the Castagnola Softball Baseball Complex, joining the hundreds of teams that call Elings Park their home field.
- Celebrated the union of more than forty couples who exchanged vows at Godric Grove and Singleton Pavilion.

- Collaborated with rugby, lacrosse and soccer enthusiasts to develop new approaches to managing, financing and restoring the park's two overused multiple purpose sports fields.

## **2014 Financial Summary**

Financially, 2014 was a good year for the Elings Park Foundation. **Total Expenses** were **\$972,081**; **Total Income** was **\$1,048,324**. Total Income reflects **\$211,983** in **Contributions** (grants, donations and gifts) and **\$836,341** in **Operating Revenues**.

The foundation takes great pride in its relationship with the City of Santa Barbara and is grateful for the patience and tolerance of our neighbors. We are confident this partnership can make certain the Park's future will be as impressive as its legacy. The park's geographic prominence will continue to elevate its stature within the region. Located at the center of Las Positas Valley within the Arroyo Burro Creek Watershed, this 230 acre urban park is the hub of a remarkable public landscape, comprising Douglas Family Preserve and Arroyo Burro Beach Park.

It is easy to imagine a renewal of the park's infrastructure and the development of new projects that enhance the private and public investment made to protect this stunning landscape and its abundant recreational and conservation values; however, this optimistic vision will require the same bold and energetic civic engagement that created Elings Park thirty years ago.



## **FIVE FIELDS**



### ***Outdoor Recreation: Innovation and Strategy***

The backbone of the Elings Park's recreation program is its five athletic fields. The demand for playing fields in Santa Barbara continues to climb and exceeds the capacity of our five fields. A great example of their popularity is the fact that presently 76 adult softball teams and approximately 900 players use the fields every week night. Moreover, all five fields (three softball /baseball fields and the two soccer fields) are now used for multiple

purposes: soccer, lacrosse, rugby, softball, baseball, summer camps, dog agility, dog walking, as well as community and corporate events.

This year the Board of Directors decided to confront the serious turf management issues that threaten these multipurpose fields and the reasons for their declining condition. A major focus of 2014 was the deterioration of the two fields that are used extensively for lacrosse, rugby and soccer.

Our work plan was to renovate, restore and reprogram the fields to address soil composition, the impact of irrigating with reclaimed water and over usage. Staff also explored a business model that encouraged greater reliance on user groups and organizations to finance the management and maintenance of the athletic fields.

Park staff was able to reduce usage and schedule a two month field closure for repair and recovery. Turf management and soil issues were researched and a new maintenance regimen pursued. Soil conditioners were applied to buffer toxins and promote leaching in the root zone, fertilizers with low salt content were used; and, a hybrid Bermuda grass tolerant to salty soil and high traffic was no till planted.

The City of Santa Barbara's redevelopment of its reclaimed water system, which will provide Elings Park with a reliable allocation of reclaimed water of good quality, will be a key component of this turf management initiative.

In addition, as a consequence of negotiations between the Santa Barbara Rugby Association (SBRA) and Santa Barbara Lacrosse Association (SBLA), these organization agreed to raise funds to help cover the costs of field renovation. SBRA raised \$50,000 in 2014, and this year Curvature Inc. working with SBLA made a tremendous donation of \$75,000. These contributions will make restoration and improvement of both fields possible. The foundation successfully completed the renovation of the lower field in late August 2014 and anticipates the completion of the upper field early this summer.



## LAS POSITAS TENNIS COURTS



### ***A Public Asset: New Directions***

Four years ago, Elings Park Foundation agreed to accept responsibility for the Las Positas Tennis Courts. Recognizing that the tennis courts were the first phase of development of Elings Park, formerly Las Positas Park, the foundation executed a lease agreement, implemented a business plan, and assumed financial responsibility for the courts operation and maintenance. The foundation's overarching objective was and continues to be, the creation of a community resource, which provides an affordable public facility for players, families and young people to enjoy or learn the game of tennis.

Recognizing the poor condition of the tennis center, the Board of Directors committed itself to building a contemporary facility, which hosts a comprehensive program of tennis activity.

Accordingly, a \$2.5 million dollar fundraising campaign was launched to raise private donations to rebuild the center and establish an endowment for maintenance. The

foundation is encouraged by its success in 2013 / 2014. In fact, \$100,000 in contributions was donated expressly for completion a number of long deferred critical maintenance projects, including replacement of fencing and windscreens, repair and painting of court lighting and court resurfacing, as seen below.



A conceptual design for the redevelopment of the Las Positas Tennis Center was prepared, submitted and currently the subject of deliberations by the Architectural Board of Review (ABR). Comments and recommendations to improve the Tennis Center's design have been made at meetings in December of 2013 and November of 2014, where ABR expressed comfort with the size, bulk and scale of the revised design concept.

The foundation is equally pleased to report that the Las Positas Tennis Courts are being transformed from six, infrequently monitored, drop-in tennis courts to a rejuvenated public resource that offers an array of new tennis programs and events, emphasizing youth development.

Though we are constantly striving to add new members and increase visitation, we did experience significant growth during the last two years. Visitation grew by 29% in 2014. During 2013 visitation reached 8,761 players and for 11 months in 2014 reached 9,645; 30% of those visits in 2013/2014 participated in clinics or tennis lessons.

## **WEDDING AND SPECIAL EVENTS**



### ***A Sense of Place***

Elings Park is an exceptional urban park, a public space that holds special meaning to many people in Santa Barbara and throughout the region. It has strong identity and character that is recognized by visitors and valued deeply by residents. The park makes memories that people cherish for a lifetime.

Hosting family and community celebrations, as well as corporate events has been a priority for the park, since its grand opening in 1985.

Weddings, baptisms, graduations and celebrations of life at our signature venues are always in great demand and consistently booked a year in advance. In 2014 these venues exceeded financial projections and outperformed other recreation areas in the park.

Elings Park also provides field space to a number of corporate, community events, and local charities that bring stature and prestige to the Park. Two new events in 2014 deserve mentioning because of the importance of the issues they address.

### **Summit for Danny Community Climb**

Over 250 hikers joined the Summit for Danny Community Climb in late October. Every year, hikers unite to raise scholarship funds for substance abuse treatment at the Daniel Bryant Youth and Family Center. This year's event raised over \$125,000 for treatment programs, which serve over 300 teens.

### **Glow in the Park**

400 guests were offered a singular experience at Doctors Without Walls-Santa Barbara Street Medicine's inaugural "Glow in the Park" fundraiser.

"Taking Health Care to New Heights," a crowd-pleasing event presented by experts from the Citrus Classic Balloon Festival, featured tethered rides and a Sunset Glow for guests gathered to enjoy food and drinks as eight balloons were inflated.

DWW-SBSM has provided free volunteer medical care from Santa Barbara to Isla Vista for five years, treating the area's most vulnerable year-round and during times of disaster,

### **Community and Corporate Events**

Providing venues and open space for local organizations and businesses also raises the Elings Park's profile, weaving it directly into the fabric of the community. We were thrilled in 2014 to host and sponsor dozens of institutions whose purpose is crucial to the economic and social health of Santa Barbara. A list that includes:

#### **Schools**

Santa Barbara Middle School Graduation  
Santa Barbara Charter School  
Starr King Alumni  
Learning Den Graduation  
Sunrise Montessori Graduation  
Monroe School Fundraiser  
Gaucho Alumni

#### **Local Businesses**

Towbes Group  
Montecito Banking and Trust  
Union Bank

Sonos  
Brophy Brothers  
Medtronic  
Qad  
Ontraport  
Fresco Café  
Hunter Industries  
Santa Barbara County Bar Association  
Trader Joes  
Rodgers, Sheffield & Campbell, LLC  
MNS Engineering  
McDonalds Corporation

### **Community Organizations and Events**

Fun in the Sun Olympics  
The Jodi House  
Terrain Festival  
Upstage Left Productions  
Tequila Harvest Festival  
Aloha Spirit Bash

### **Santa Barbara Rugby Association: Beer Fest**

Splitting the proceeds of Beer Fest with Elings Park as a donation to operations for more than a decade, Santa Barbara Rugby Association's (SBRA) Beer Fest is in a league of its own. Since 2007 SBRA has contributed \$220,000 dollars. Last year the park received a \$50,000 donation to offset costs associated with maintenance and renovation of the two multipurpose soccer fields.





## KEY PUBLIC PROGRAMS



### ***Community Investments: Connections that Count***

Elings Park Foundation has always considered providing recreation and open space experiences to every generation of Santa Barbara's culturally diverse community one of its core objectives. Our softball and baseball programs, running series, dog walking, and summer camp demonstrate those investments and connections.



## **Softball**

Softball is one of the Elings Park's premier adult programs. For 15 years the park has organized and managed spring, summer and fall softball leagues. More than 200 teams and 3000 players compete 5 nights a week in the park's softball leagues.



## **Mesa Trails**

Elings Park sponsors and conducts the Mesa Trails Running Series, which affords 50 or more runners a dozen 5K and 3K runs.

Held every spring and summer, the series offers residents and visitors a great chance to explore one of Santa Barbara's most stunning landscapes, observe epic views of the Santa Barbara Channel at sunset, while enjoying a singular running experience.



## Tournaments

During 2014 the park's athletic program successfully promoted and managed 10, two day softball and baseball tournaments, primarily for children and teenagers between the ages of 9 and 18. Typically, the tournaments comprise 10 to 20 teams with 150 and 200 players, plus spectators, family and friends.

In addition, staff worked with several independent tournament directors to schedule and coordinate eight adult tournaments.

## Summer Camps

Our summer camp program has always been a key component of the park's youth program. Summer camps provide great opportunities for children to connect, develop, and have a great time.



Camp Elings stresses athletics and healthy outdoor recreation. Recreating outdoors improves physical ability, cognitive capabilities, and self-esteem. For several years we partnered with the Police Activities League to provide 100 scholarships to underserved children who may not have access to a summer camp. We were also particularly proud that 2014 marked the third year of Camp Inclusion, which presents children and teens with special needs an opportunity to attend a stimulating, therapeutic, and fully-inclusive summer camp. Campers are paired with same-aged Peer Buddies, whose role is to work on a camper's social skills while having fun at camp.

Our 2014 camps included BMX, Camp Inclusion, Lacrosse, Nature and Games, Soccer, Softball, Sports Activities and Tennis and served more than 900 children and teens.



### **Off Leash Dog Park (EP Dog Program)**

Across the country, demand and interest in off-leash dog parks continues to grow, yet for 15 years Elings Park has managed a highly successful off-leash program. Today, 700 dogs run and walk on the park's 230 acres for a small fee.



## **PARTNERSHIPS**



### ***Empowering Others to Accomplish Our Mission***

Serving a very broad constituency: children, families, community groups, corporations, athletes, dog owners, and outdoor enthusiasts from all generations, socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds; the park sponsors a unique range of recreational pursuits, some which exist nowhere else in Santa Barbara County. As a consequence of this diversity, it has been imperative for the foundation and staff to foster partnerships with community groups, athletic organizations and businesses that provide services to the public. In addition to the tennis organizations mentioned earlier, the park depends on these nine entities to provide management and programming:



## Lacrosse

November through May, the Santa Barbara Lacrosse Association (SBLA) promotes development of lacrosse at all levels, providing opportunities to play, coach, officiate, while experiencing North America's first sport. Among its directors, coaches, staff, volunteers, players, fans, and the community at large, SBLA teaches and promotes respect for the game, safety, and sportsmanship. Their programs typically serve about 200 players between the ages of 6 and 14.



## Rugby

Young and old alike participated in the exciting sport of Rugby at Elings Park, thanks to the volunteerism and commitment of the Santa Barbary Rugby Association (SBRA). SBRA's programs now include, Grunion Men, college teams, Stingray Youth League, Fossil Old Boys, as well as, men and women's club teams. SBRA is active at the park November through April, hosting tournaments, weekly practices and games each month.



### **Southern Union Soccer League (SUSL)**

An organization dedicated to providing recreational soccer for adults aged 18 and over. This adult soccer league is open to all adults regardless of ability and plays at the park every Sunday, October through May.

### **American Youth Soccer Organization (AYSO)**

The mission of AYSO mission is to develop and deliver quality youth soccer programs that promote a fun, and a family environment based on six philosophies: everyone plays, balanced teams, open registration, positive coaching, good sportsmanship, and player development. AYSO practices at the park 5 days a week from August to February.

### **Santa Barbara Pony Baseball**

Santa Barbara Pony Baseball practices and plays at the park five days a week for two hours August through February. It is a local organization dedicated to providing recreational baseball for boys and girls aged 5-15 years throughout the Santa Barbara, Goleta and Carpinteria areas.





## **Paragliding -Hangliding**

Those who wish to fly or soar on thermal updrafts flock to Elings Park South, where you find three schools and one of the finest training facilities in the nation with spectacular views of the Pacific Ocean and Arroyo Burro Beach. The foundation has agreements with three organizations: Eagle Paragliding; Fly Above All, and Fly Away Hang Gliding, all of which schedule instruction all year.

## **BMX**

Open three days a week for about three hours, the BMX track is the park's most underutilized facility. Though the number of participants fluctuates dramatically, Elings Park BMX Raceway is a challenging track that offers skills clinics, races, a summer camp and practice sessions.

## **Elings Park Electric Flying Club**

Members of the Santa Barbara Radio Control Modelers Club (SBRCM) brokered an agreement with the foundation, the paragliding and hang gliding schools to offer a reason to fly electric models at Elings Park South through creation of the Elings Park Electric Flying Club.

## Radio Controlled Cars

Channel Islands Raceway is experiencing an upward trend in participation, as well as, a significant increases in annual memberships and the purchase of day passes. Racing occurs at the Raceway on the 2nd and 4th Saturdays every month. The foundation is fortunate the track operator and builder assumes complete responsibility for maintenance and redesign at no cost to the park.





## **CONCLUSION**



### ***Looking Forward: A Legacy Continues***

Hopefully the images, facts, anecdotes and descriptions assembled in this Annual Report demonstrate that the conversation, our founding Chairman, Jerry Harwin initiated 50 years ago, launched a most successful enterprise between the City of Santa Barbara and the Elings Park Foundation, one which has given recreation and open space experiences to millions. We also hope to have conveyed our approach to outdoor recreation and our reliance on the dedication of partners and donors that contribute energy and resources to the park's success year after year.

There is little doubt that the alliance of public and private interest that built Elings Park will be essential to revitalize and improve it. The Elings Park Foundation is challenged by the prospect of building upon this thirty year legacy to make certain the park remains one of Santa Barbara's most precious community treasures; a public resource that offers every visitor a good time; and, continues a tradition of encouraging active living and making Santa Barbara an exceptional place to live.