Greetings YMSL Rancho!

The holiday season has arrived and I wish you peace and joy with your friends and loved ones. I hope you have a chance to work with our partners and help spread the holiday spirit to those less fortunate. I also encourage you to take the time to reflect on your experience with YMSL so far. When life gets busy, we may forget why we made this commitment. For me, I value the time with my teenage son and my heart feels full when I see him working to help others. I also feel our boys grow so much by feeling valued, feeling part of a community, demonstrating responsibility,
practicing their communication skills, and feeling a sense of purpose. I was so impressed to see the boys running their meetings and working together at our chapter wide event at Grassroots Ecology. Well done! Please stay safe and enjoy this holiday season.

Warmest wishes,
Nicole Goodwin
President YMSL Rancho

“\You make a living by what you get. You make a life by what you give\”~Winston Churchill

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**Important Dates**

**Moms Meetings**
- Tuesday January 24 (#4)
- Tuesday March 21 (Last)

**Young Men Meetings**
- Sunday January 29 (#5)
- Sunday February 26 (#6)
- Sunday March 26 (Last)

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**YMSL Rancho website**

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**Questions and Answers**
**Question:** If I participated in the chapter event at Foothills Park, how do I log the time?

**Answer:** Moms earn 1 meeting credit and 2 philanthropy hours with Grassroots Ecology; Young Men earn 1 meeting credit and 2 philanthropy hours with Grassroots Ecology.

**Question:** What is the Presidential Volunteer Service Award?

**Answer:** This year the YMSL Rancho Chapter has been approved as a certifying organization for the President's Volunteer Service Award (PSVA), which is a national recognition program that encourages all citizens to live a life of service. YMSL members are eligible for both the Group award and Individual awards. Please log into the chapter website for more information.

**Question:** I have an 8th grade son who would like to join YMSL next year. Is he guaranteed a spot?

**Answer:** Yes. All current members, who are in good standing, will have the opportunity to enroll their 8th grade sons before we take new members into the chapter.

**Question:** I know a mom/son who might be interested in joining YMSL next year. What are the next steps?

**Answer:** You will be receiving an overview slide deck and email within the next few weeks that you can forward on to all Prospective Members. There will be more details in that email.

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**Animal Assisted Happiness**  
*by Max Lopez, Class of 2019*

Animal Assisted Happiness is an organization that provides animals for children and their family members to interact with to bring happiness and smiles. This is especially designed for special needs kids. They have been open since 2009 and their goal of “1 million smiles” is on its way to becoming a reality. Their selection of animals ranges from goats to pigs to birds. Their most popular section is arguably their bunnies and guinea pigs, which constantly have visitors coming to socialize with them. They are also the most popular job, as the only requirement is to socialize with them by holding them in small pillow-like holders.

When you volunteer there, there are plenty of different jobs to do. There is goat walking, the aforementioned bunny/guinea pig socializing, stable cleaning, amongst others which I have yet to try myself. The goat walking can either be fun or it can be one of the most difficult jobs there. If you get a goat that is ready to walk, it will happily run alongside you at an alarmingly fast pace. But on the other hand, if you get a stubborn goat, the walk is going to be short, tedious, and lots of nagging at the goat. Of the two times I have done it, one goat was mostly willing to walk, and the other was extremely stubborn and hardly walked anywhere before we decided to return him to the rest of the goats. Cleaning the stables is a quick job, but it has a few downsides. You have to bend over during most of the process and it expectedly smells pretty bad.

Overall, working at Animal Assisted Happiness is a fun time. It has multiple, not too difficult jobs that have a lot of variety. I would recommend giving it at least one try, even if it doesn’t seem like your thing. I went in unsure my first time and I ended up really enjoying it. They are usually open on weekends, and are always open to new volunteers.

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**Sunday Friends**  
*by Shane Mujica, Class of 2019*

Sunday Friends is a philanthropy that helps underprivileged families. They meet on Sundays at various schools. The parents take classes on finances and raising their kids. When you volunteer, you do crafts
and indoor games with the kids. With the games they learn things like math and writing. You also help them cook food that everyone shares while they are there. There is also time to go outside and run around and play soccer and basketball. When the kids spend time with the volunteers playing or cooking or learning, they earn tickets. At the end of the time, they spend the tickets on items they need for their house or for school. I like going to Sunday Friends because I get to work directly with kids!

Lessons from Grassroots Ecology: Stevens Creek Water Monitoring

by Kelly Chen, VP Communications

The sound and sight of running water were great ways to start a Sunday, while helping support Grassroots Ecology in monitoring the water quality in Stevens Creek. Along with fellow board member Terri Ettinger, our sons and another YMSL young man, we enjoyed a fun and education morning. Monitoring the creek water is important to the ecosystem, since many native animals depend on the water for drinking. Local fish that are “threatened” (one step away from “endangered”) because of decreased water supply include the Delta smelt, salmon, and steelhead and rainbow trouts.

We learned about the many sources of pollution in our natural creeks:
1. Fertilizers: Excess runs into the water and promote algae to grow. When this plant dies, it consumes oxygen needed by local fish
2. Pesticides: Excess run into the waters and kill macroinvertebrates such as the damselfly and dragonflies
3. Soap from car wash water runs off into the creeks and ocean
4. Droppings from pets containing bacteria from the gut can cause illness in native animals. Sea otters specifically are becoming sick from bacteria in cat droppings, as many breeds of cats (and dogs) are not native

After this introduction, we were more than motivated to help out. We visited many spots along Stevens Creek, starting with Moss Rock, a relative cozy little area past Stevens Creek Reservoir, to McClellan Ranch. Along the way, we collected data about the water pH, turbidity, odor and other qualities.

Grassroot Ecology and its predecessor have been collecting this important information since 2004. They have presented this data to the local water district to minimize further damage to the creeks or to consider
preventative actions. Just as valuable as helping out today, we left feeling empowered to educate ourselves and our community about the importance of creating a healthy ecosystem.
"Our Mission: Assist, serve, and support those who are in need in our community, develop leadership skills, and promote mother-son relationships"