Originally known as the Hamilton Children's Play Park Association, the Hamilton Field Community Development Foundation (HFCDF) was formed in 1999 to build the South Hamilton Park, which is located next to the South Gate community.

From the beginning, many neighbors have served on the HFCDF board, volunteering their time and talents to make Hamilton the very best it can be. Our name has changed to reflect our expanded goals and the HFCDF continues to work behind the scenes in many ways that benefit the Hamilton community.

Since October of 2001 the HFCDF has given over $12,000 in cash donations to our community. This includes donations to local schools, day care facilities, South Novato Little League, and the Hamilton Library. “For the most part, it’s been just seeing where the need is in the community and contributing to where our hearts see fit,” said Kate Ruehle, President of the HFCDF Board of Directors. “In one case we were reading in the paper that the Hamilton Child Development Center had a leaky roof and they were using buckets to try to catch the water. We sent them a donation immediately,” said Ruehle.

Thanks to the efforts of the HFCDF, the Hometown Festival will continue as an annual community event that is now co-sponsored by the Novato YMCA at Hamilton and will be held this year on Sunday, September 18th from 11 a.m. - 3 p.m. The festival has provided a way for the community to come together each year. Our schools, the U.S. Coast Guard community, local elected officials, and others participate annually. Most importantly, non-profits have had an opportunity to raise funds and get the word out about their organizations.

Additionally, our Board has decided to revive the Hamilton Post newsletter. The newsletter has gone through many variations over the past five years. “We hope that by re-establishing this newsletter that we start to raise awareness of all the activities and community groups that are right here at Hamilton,” said Ruehle.

The HFCDF is a non-profit organization that continues to be committed to improving the community at Hamilton Field. The foundation provides development assistance for the creation, improvement and promotion of parks, schools, museums and other public facilities and programs.

For more information on how you can donate or become involved, contact Kate Ruehle at (415) 382-0616 or Marty Wickenheiser at (415) 264-6564.
The Hamilton Forum and HFCDF form Coalition

The Hamilton Forum has been integral in ensuring that people who live or work in Hamilton, or otherwise have a stake in the community, are well-informed in a timely way about any issues affecting the community’s development. The “HamiltonForum” Yahoo group, started in 2002, has over 357 members.

Bayside resident, David Brewer, moderates regular community meetings between members of the community and government officials, developers, commercial interests, non-profit agencies, and others on matters that affect Hamilton’s ongoing development as a mixed-use community. “The Hamilton Forum is a strictly non-partisan group,” Brewer says, “whose mission is to provide a springboard for effective advocacy elsewhere, by bringing all respectful viewpoints to one table for balanced analysis and insight into any matters that might have an important impact on the community. It’s because of our shared mission with the HFCDF around community development that we have decided that our organizations should closely coordinate our work.”

David has joined the HFCDF board and will continue to look for ways that the two groups can assist each other to increase community involvement and service.

To join the e-mail distribution list and find out about meetings, subscribe to “HamiltonForum” at www.yahoogroups.com or email: jdavid_sf@yahoo.com.

Peter & Christy Palmisano Pledge $10,000 to Keep Hamilton Community Spirit Alive

At a tribute honoring Hamilton developer, Peter Palmisano for his help and support in building the South Hamilton Park, which residents call Palmisano Park, the guest of honor and his wife Christy Palmisano, surprised all of those in attendance by pledging a $10,000 donation to the Hamilton Field Community Development Foundation.

In a heartfelt letter sent to the HFCDF, Peter writes:

"The intent of our donation is to support and encourage the creation of community traditions at Hamilton."

Peter & Christy Palmisano

While others most certainly look fondly at the build environment at Hamilton, I’m most proud of the “software” or community spirit that grew with our Founding Families. They pioneered community traditions like neighborhood softball competitions, “block parties”, the Hamilton Forum, the Hometown Festival, HFCDF, and together as a community designed, funded and built their own Children’s Play Park. You and the other “Founders” of our community embodied the true spirit of “Live, Work, Play, BELONG”.

Peter Palmisano wants to ensure that the newer residents of Hamilton feel that same sense of connection and community spirit at Hamilton. Peter and Christy have asked that the donation be used “to help eliminate financial barriers to creating community traditions.” The HFCDF plans to bring back many of the community traditions that have fallen by the wayside, including reviving the Hamilton Post newsletter, Halloween Hullabaloo & Spring Fling. Other ideas for community activities should be submitted to the HFCDF by calling Kate Ruehle at (415) 382-0616 or e-mail at Kate_Ruehle@yahoo.com.

7th Annual
Novato Hometown Festival at Hamilton
Sunday, September 18, 2005
11 a.m. - 3 p.m.

Bounce houses, rock wall, face painting, carnival games, food and drinks.
Music by: Tim Cain, James K, and the Bungee Jumpin’ Cows

For more info, contact Jayne Belote at the Novato YMCA at (415) 883-9622

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**RESIDENT PROFILE**

**Therans Discover Novato’s “Best Kept Secret”**

by Steven Shoen

Chrissy and Peter Theran greet you at the door with their trademark welcoming smiles. They are new to Hamilton but have quickly become active members of our community. The Therans made the cross-country move to Hamilton from the suburbs of Boston. Their daughter Shelly had already discovered Hamilton and Chrissy found Novato to be a “best kept secret” because of its perfect location between San Francisco and the Napa Valley.

Semi-retired, Peter is active as a national consultant on animal welfare issues. Chrissy is very recently retired from Boston University where she taught psychological enrichment programs. They both have a love of nature and animals and truly appreciate the beauty of the Hamilton wetlands right in their backyard. Peter takes advantage and bike rides the back trails to McInnis Park and Chrissy is active with her dog walking group. “What happens to the area is why we’re so interested in the issues at Hamilton,” said Chrissy.

They started the Novato/Hamilton Residents for Responsible Growth (HRRG) primarily in response to the proposal for a senior housing development next to Newport. “The Mercy housing project got us interested in getting involved”, said Peter. “They were presenting a proposal of some 70 units, 3 stories high, and I thought that doesn’t sound right.” From real estate disclosures, many of the residents had believed that the development would be set at a maximum 25 units. Eventually, the Therans spearheaded the HRRG and got residents involved in the planning process for the facility. They even went so far as to propose an alternate site at Hamilton, the Commissary Triangle, where the facility could be expanded to the levels requested by the developer. They also did research to show it would be possible to develop the funding necessary so a low income, assisted-living component could be added to the facility. The project is now on hold awaiting a new location on city owned property.

However, the Therans philosophy is far from a “not in my backyard” attitude. As supporters of the “Next Key” addition to the New Beginnings Homeless Shelter, the Therans want to see that decisions about Hamilton are done in a thoughtful way that includes the community. “If we look at the issues carefully, give the neighbors the facts, they’ll make good decisions,” said Peter. Chrissy adds, “The major thing we want to accomplish is to get people involved in the process from the beginning. We simply want decisions to be made, not for us, but with the input of the people.”

That’s why they’ll continue working through the HRRG and be involved in issues including a proposed tot park to serve North Hamilton, the Hamilton Pool, the trails and wetlands project, more retail for Novato, and the Novato City Budget. “We’d like to see more retail in Novato for more revenue. We’re good at spending,” said Chrissy, “but now we have to develop more income.”

The Therans and the HRRG have found that the grassroots approach works at Hamilton. “We understand that not everyone can participate at all times, given the busy lives we all lead,” said Chrissy. “We have a lot of talent and smart people in this community and we’ve found excellent involvement with our neighbors. We all need to find out what is going on and get organized. It’s a matter of networking...grassroots democracy at its best.”

For more info about HRRG, call Chrissy at (415) 382-0963 or e-mail at christinetheran@yahoo.com.

**RESIDENT PROFILE**

**Therans Discover Novato’s “Best Kept Secret”**
Creating a Backyard Retreat

Hamilton is a great place to live with lots of open space, beautiful homes and good neighbors. As much as we all appreciate the benefits of community life, most of us also want some quiet space to ourselves. It’s been said that “good fences make good neighbors.” Sometimes a tall hedge can improve on that!

Hedges aren’t just for privacy, though. A good hedge can enhance the aesthetic appeal of your yard. Its height could range from 6 to 30 feet depending on your choice of plant material. It can provide flowers, berries and nesting sites for wildlife. On a windy site, a hedge can provide shelter for the cultivation of tender plants. Hedges can also be helpful in creating sound barriers. According to Dave & Carolyn Anderson of Monarch Gardens in San Rafael, before you select your hedge plants, there are a few things to consider.

Do you want hedge plants that are deciduous or evergreen?

Deciduous plants lose their leaves in winter, but they often provide seasonal interest with flowers, fruit and fall color. In winter, the bare branches allow light to come in and will still provide some screening. Some commonly used plants are: Betula, Plum, and Fergus.

An evergreen hedge doesn’t lose its leaves and so gives year-round screening. Pittosporum tenuifolium, Dodonaea, Arbutus marina, Photinia, and Podocarpus are good choices.

Once it's installed, a tall, healthy hedge will go a long way toward making your backyard retreat your sanctuary. Also, be sure to check with the Hamilton Field homeowners’ association at (415) 899-1122 before planting anything that will eventually exceed the fence height.

For more info about Monarch Gardens, call (415) 453-5544 or visit www.Monarchgardens.com.