

# Community spirit alive in Midcounty

By CANDACE ATKINS

At a time when Live Oak residents are "volunteered and donated out," the best restorative is a Community Spirit Day, says Jim Offel, student teacher at Del Mar Middle School.

"On Saturday, May 8, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., we'll have the Spirit Day, where people can get together for a day of games and activities. There will be food, booths, music and an opportunity for everyone to get together for an old fashioned picnic," he explained. "It will be free, of course. It will be our way to thank the community for all they've done the past year. So much volunteer time has been given, money has been pledged for our schools, the flood victims and other projects. This event can and should be viewed as something that doesn't require anything from people; they are just supposed to have a good time on a nice spring day."

The Spirit Day will be held at Del Mar Middle School, 1959 Merrill St., off 17th Avenue, and is open to Live Oak residents and their friends. There will be competitive games, such as softball and relays, plus cooperative "new games." Activities will be geared for the very young through the elderly.

"There is real value in people playing together," he said. "If people can play together, they can work together. There is a real need for an event like this in Live Oak."

There will be live music and a picnic lunch sold at a minimum cost. Proceeds from lunch sales will benefit the after-

school sports program at Del Mar. Fresh pressed apple juice and popcorn will also be sold.

In addition to games, food and entertainment, about 20 local organizations will sponsor information booths.

According to Offel, "Residents will have some contact with support organizations in the neighborhood and in the county. It will give people the opportunity to know one another."

Representatives from County Parks, Dominican Hospital, Energy Future, Special Olympics, Sunrise Senior Services, Neighborhood Watch, Live Oak Preschools, 4-H, Resource Center for Non-Violence, Community Hospital and Friends of the Harvest will attend the Spirit Day, and will offer literature and other information on their services. A number of other groups will also have booths, including sports and service clubs.

"With the government withdrawing funds for social services, it is extremely important that people be aware of these groups," said Offel.

"I feel it was natural for the school district to sponsor the Spirit Day," he continued. "Schools should and need to do more than house students. Schools should take more of a role to promote broad, positive interaction between residents."

"With the lack of park space in Live Oak, it is more important than ever that our schools be open for residents," he added.

The Spirit Day is the brainchild of Offel, who is a Live Oak resident. He thought of the event last fall, before the flood. At that time, he wanted a small scale new games

tournament, an event that appeals to young people, but not all adults.

"It was hard to justify just that. We needed more," he remembers. "We expanded it to include games for all ages, both competitive and non-competitive. We wanted to reach everyone."

After the January storms, Offel saw a need to expand the event to include service agencies. "There is a double importance," he explained. "Live Oak residents need to know one another — what we can do for each other."

"Live Oak is kind of tucked in here between Capitola and Santa Cruz, and there is a feeling of being forgotten. (But) there is a special feeling in Live Oak, you can't deny it," he said.

Offel sees the Community Spirit Day as the beginning of other similar events in Live Oak. "It should inspire, spark other events," he explained. "This is our place, it's something to be proud of. We can make it even better."

Participants will be the guests of Del Mar students, who will referee games, set up and dismantle equipment used for games. Liz Smart from Live Oak Community Schools is also organizing the event. There will be students from Cabrillo College to help, and aides from Del Mar will also work at the Spirit Day.

For those who are not "volunteered out," Offel said he can "use a little help" with preparation and clean up. Call Offel, 475-6565 to help.

"The biggest help, though," he said, "will be for people to participate."