

B.C. recreation district voted best in state

By EMILY NORD

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BOULDER CREEK — People heading the recreation district in Boulder Creek are making a name for themselves as the best in the biz.

For the first time, Boulder Creek Recreation and Parks District won the award for outstanding small district by the California Association of Recreation and Park districts in a statewide contest in April.

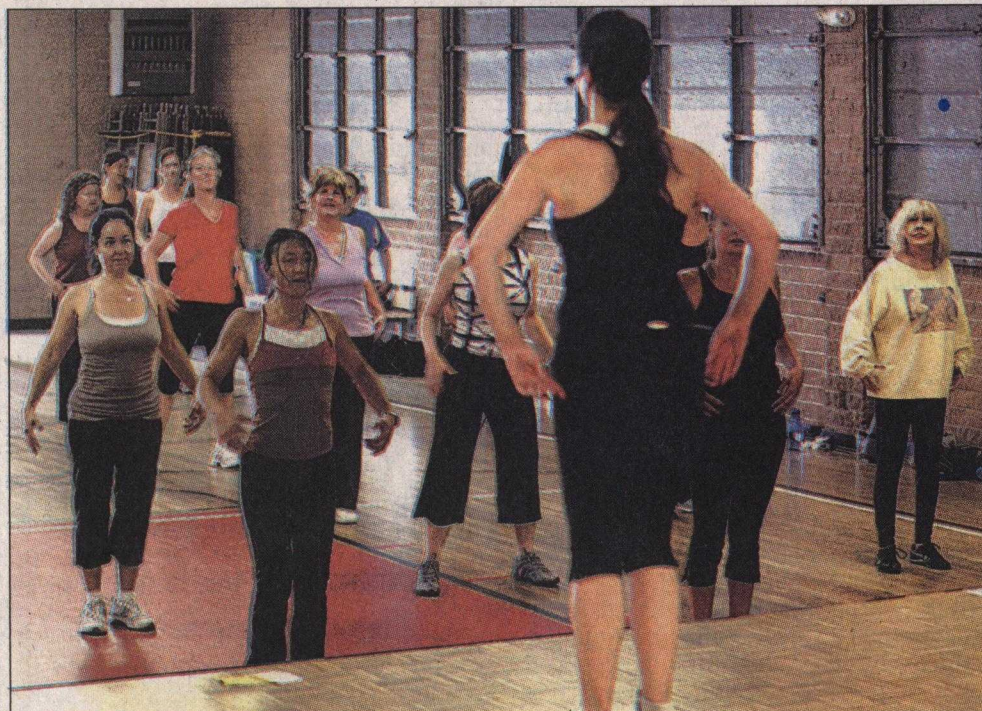
Out of 25 applicants, the Boulder Creek district won for remodeling the recreation hall, upgrading the Junction River park, introducing new programs and events, and increasing the facilities usage to more than 2,800 people last year.

"It's really exciting," said district manager Christina Horvat. "We've been working to improve for such a long time. We're heading in a new direction and hopefully this creates a more positive image."

The chair of the district's board of directors, George Galt, shared Horvat's excitement about the honor.

"I'm pleased not only as a representative of the district but as an individual. I think it shows a tremendous amount of progress we've made the last couple years," said Galt. "It really is kind of like a Cinderella story."

In the 1990s, the board was criticized by the Santa Cruz County Grand Jury for rancor among the directors, and the district was plagued over the years with problems including staff turnover, accusations



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While moms work out in the Boulder Creek Recreation Hall, the kids are being cared for by the morning nanny in the next room. The Boulder Creek Recreation and Parks district recently won an award for being the best small district in California.

of administrative bungling and negative interactions with some residents, Horvat said in a 2007 story.

Horvat, who began working in Boulder Creek in 2006, applied for the award on behalf of the district after seeing growth in clientele and positive feedback from the community.

Horvat's first project as district manager was to upgrade the picnic and beach area of the Junction River park with a \$50,000 grant. Part of the upgrade includes a new security protocol that aims to reduce park crime.

"We want to make all families feel more comfortable and welcome to the park,"

Horvat said.

The Boulder Creek Recreation and Parks District has a budget of \$159,000 from property taxes and receives money for special projects from grants and bonds funded by the state.

Representatives of the district offer a variety of classes and programs for adults, teens and children in the hall behind the Boulder Creek Fire Station. They also help plan events throughout the year, like the Fourth of July Parade, the Christmas tree lighting celebration and the upcoming family day at Garrahan Park.

"There is such a variety of programs that people don't need to drive all the way to

Santa Cruz anymore," said Horvat.

The district just received a grant for \$220,000 for its next project to upgrade Garrahan Park from a sporting field to a multi-use park with a play structure, picnic area and walking path. The project is currently in its early stages of planning and development with building to begin later this year.

Because the district is its own separate entity, it is not effected by the possibility of state park closures, however, Horvat is expecting lower funds when the state budget is passed in August.

Despite the possibility of setbacks, Horvat is hopeful about the future of the rec-



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Kids are being cared for by the morning nanny in the Boulder Creek Recreation Hall.

reation district and hopes it will better serve the community. "I've grown very fond of Boulder Creek, peo-

ple here have great community spirit," said Horvat. "I hope I can help create memories."