

Ano Nuevo dedicates path for handicapped

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ANO NUEVO — A trail allowing the handicapped to see the elephant seal breeding grounds was dedicated Wednesday morning and will be open Dec. 16.

The work of volunteers and state park rangers, and spark plugged by ranger Nina Gordon, the trail partly fulfills a dream that rangers have been trying to realize the past six years.

In 1980, park personnel opened a dirt trail for wheelchairs on a trial basis but passage was too difficult.

Gordon and others never gave up the dream and with the help a \$5,000 donation from Post Cereals, 200 yards of rubber conveyor belts that are used in quarries were laid over the dirt trail and access was made possible.

Called the Whole Access Trail, the 200-yard path runs to the beachside breeding grounds of elephant seals. Only about 60 seals are around this time of year but the numbers swell to more than 1,000, rangers said.

The rubber trail begins at the end of a private drive over which state parks now has a right-of-way. Handicapped persons can drive in most of the way to the breeding grounds.

At the dedication ceremony, seven handicapped pupils from Juana Briones School in Palo Alto lined up their chairs and waited patiently for the speeches to end to be the first down the rubber-padded path.

State Sen. Becky Morgan, R-San Mateo, told the children and about 40 others gathered at the ceremony, "This is a part of the world no one should miss."

Rangers said they want the trail paved and there is a possibility the park will get state funds to do it.