

# New vision for Valley Springs park outlined

By Nick Baptista / The Valley Springs News / August 16, 2024

An effort to rejuvenate the parkland surrounding the Jenny Lind Veterans Memorial Hall in Valley Springs is picking up steam.

Valley Springs resident Michael Faatz made a presentation at Wednesday's meeting of the Jenny Lind Veterans Memorial District Board of Directors to clean, repair and upgrade many of the amenities at the parkland that has deteriorated over the years.

A group of more than two dozen volunteers recently cut back the weeds and accumulated brush at some of the park's long-forgotten amenities that include an outdoor chapel, horseshoe pits, bocce ball court, physical fitness stations, picnic area and peace sign grove.

"We have a park in Valley Springs right now," Faatz said in his presentation. "Why build the new one. We have everything we need."

The district is on a tight budget and Faatz envisions much of the work will be done on a volunteer basis in coordination with the veterans district board, which encouraged him to continue pursuing the initial phase of clean up and bringing back more detailed plans and cost estimates.

"We're taking some baby steps, but this is really a multi-phased project that could take several years," said Faatz, who is a 24-year Valley Springs resident.

He retired in August of 2022 as a colonel in the National Guard. Up until then, Valley Springs was simply a bedroom community to him given his work out of town and overseas deployments.

He's now fully immersed in the community and on a new mission.

In addition to bringing many of the existing facilities back to usefulness, Faatz envisions an open-air theater close to the baseball fields, an observation deck at the hilltop cross, paved pathways, along with memorial walls honoring our veterans, community servants, history and culture.

To sustain these amenities he foresees a coalition of volunteers, businesses and civic organizations sharing responsibility to maintain and improve the various areas of the park.

He and the Rotary Club of West Calaveras are working on plans for a "Fitness Run" in the near future to raise awareness of the park and provide seed money for park improvements.