

Connecting with Nature on Fiscalini Ranch Preserve: Bench Dedications on the Ranch



By KITTY CONNOLLY, Executive Director, Friends of the Fiscalini Ranch Preserve (fiscaliniranchpreserve.org)

The distinctive benches are so characteristic of the Fiscalini Ranch Preserve, it is hard to image the place without them. Designed by local artists and by Friends of the Fiscalini Ranch Preserve's (FFRP) own talented volunteers, they are great places to admire the view or take a keepsake photo, but the benches do so much more for the Ranch.

When the East West Ranch, now Fiscalini Ranch Preserve, was purchased as public open space, no funds were allotted for managing it, upholding the conservation easement, or ensuring natural resource protection on the property. In 2004, FFRP created the Bench Donor Recognition program to raise the funds needed for these important aspects of caring for the Ranch. Donor recognition benches were placed on the Ranch under an agreement between FFRP and Cambria Community Services District (CCSD) that allows for the placement of 17 benches on the West Ranch.

Six of the benches honor donors who helped to purchase the Ranch, including a bench dedicated to Friends of the RanchLand. Two were set aside for those who help found and care for it: the Angel and Ranch Hands benches. One was dedicated to Barbara Harootunian, a Cambrian who left a significant bequest to FFRP. The rest of the benches bear dedications made by family and friends to honor or remember loved ones.

This month, the 17th year of the bench dedication program ended when the final dedication was made on the 17th bench. Altogether, 39 bench dedications – 12 this year alone – have added nearly \$415,000 to the endowment. It is fitting that these funds provide perpetual care not only for the benches and plaques but support perpetual care for the Preserve.

While we wait for the final few plaques to be made, take some time to read the dedications around the Ranch. They are touching and inspiring tributes to the place the Ranch holds in our hearts and memories.

