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**Health Matters**

Thursday, June 10, 2004

**Grateful Dads Hit the Trail**

By Randy Ayento

In 1998, Jonathan Marks decided that he did not have to give up his adventurous lifestyle – which included rock climbing in Yosemite and hiking in the Alps – just because a new bundle of joy entered his life. This was how Grateful Dads was born.

Now with a membership of more than 200 fathers across two chapters in the North and East Bays, grateful dads can now enjoy the outdoors with dozens of other fathers and their kids as they ramble through trails within the Bay Area.

“We pretty much meet up for a two-and-a-half-hour hike,” said East Bay Chapter President Allen Mueller. “It’s a way for dads to get involved with their kids through outdoor activities and to connect with other fathers in the area.”

Mueller, who started the East Bay Chapter in March, is already up to 40 members and still growing as fathers are discovering the positive benefits that come from being a Grateful Dad.

“Our first hike was at the end of March, and we’ve grown about 10 members a month since then,” said Mueller. “It’s a great way to bond with your kids and

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get in shape while having fun outdoors.”

Mueller, who’s been with the club since its early beginnings in 2000, has lost 30 pounds and has developed a stronger relationship with his 4-year-old daughter. After stumbling across Grateful Dads through the Internet a couple years ago, Mueller has found that mothers’ groups and curious wives have been the best outlet to get the word out. Alameda resident Chris Wornum can thank his wife for introducing him after she found the group on the Internet. Since then, Wornum has been trekking with his 7-year-old daughter Madeline and toddler Brendan.

“There is great companionship and good hiking,” said Wornum. “It’s one of the few ways to get a good workout and it seems every kid totally enjoys it. They’re singing, playing and talking to each other, and just having a great time overall.”

But its biggest selling point may be that the club is not selling anything at all. All it takes to join is an e-mail to the mailing list, and, best of all, its free.

“The organization is very simple and informal; we just set up a time and place to show up,” said Mueller. With just a handful of father-oriented groups in the Bay Area, Grateful Dads offers a combination of healthy exercise and good times between fathers and their children.

For more information on the group, visit the Web site at [www.gratefuldads.com](http://www.gratefuldads.com).

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[of Pepper Gomez' Life, Horseshoe Tournament this Saturday](#)

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Get the 10 day forecast



**59°F**

Mostly Cloudy

**Feels Like: 59°F**

**Humidity: 72%**

**Wind: SW at 8 mph**

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