

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Monday, October 1, 2018

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Adopt-a-Drain Program Surpasses Expectations in First Year

Initiative encourages locals to name their own storm drain, be clean street advocates

San Mateo, CA — The City of San Mateo is celebrating the first anniversary of a program that encourages volunteers to support the environment and have a sense of neighborhood ownership by keeping storm drains near their homes clean.

Last October, the City launched San Mateo's "Adopt-a-Drain" program, which engages residents in helping clear debris, such as leaves or trash, that can clog drains during storms and cause flooding. The Public Works and Information Technology departments collaborated with the City's volunteer coordinator to initiate the program.

"We're fortunate to have an engaged community here in San Mateo and the number of residents who've already signed up exceeded our initial expectations," said Mayor Rick Bonilla, who has adopted two drains in his own neighborhood. "It's fantastic to see people throughout the City participate in the program. Adopters make it part of their routine to check on their drain and prevent litter from entering into our sensitive waterways including creeks and the Bay."

Those who sign up can name their own drain and will receive a free kit that includes a volunteer safety vest, cleaning supplies, a program-branded bucket, as well as instructions. As the rainy season nears, the City welcomes new volunteers to participate by helping reduce the chance of flooding and preventing litter from polluting the Bay. This fall, all adopters can also enter a "best drain name" and "me and my drain" photo contest to win prizes.

Volunteers' adopted drain names paint a picture of the fun residents are already having with the program. Names like "The Grater Good," "Dr. Ain," "DrainWalker," "Storm Trooper" and "Sir Drains a lot," are a few examples of the personal touch and sense of ownership volunteers have with their drains.

In the first year of the program, 212 drains have been adopted by 121 resident volunteers who are dedicated to keeping their drains debris free. Examples of participants include families, businesses, neighborhood groups and people of various backgrounds. Volunteers care for their storm drains by sweeping up leaves and twigs, removing trash, and generally making sure storm water can safely flow to the Bay.

"When I moved to San Mateo last year, my roommate told me about the program," said Jackie Nuñez, who adopted two drains near Cypress Avenue during last year's rainy season. "It felt great to do my little part to keep litter out of the Bay, to help local wildlife live in a clean environment and just to help my neighborhood. It doesn't take a lot of work and the results are so rewarding."

Signing up for "Adopt-a-Drain" is easy and fast. Go to www.cityofsanmateo.org/adoptadrain or call 650-522-7296, or email adoptadrain@cityofsanmateo.org to get started. Volunteers with photos on their profiles are eligible for prizes.

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Photo courtesy of the City of San Mateo

San Mateo resident Jackie Nuñez cleans one of the storm drains she claimed in the City's "Adopt-a-Drain" program near her home in the North Shoreview Neighborhood. The popular program celebrated its first year anniversary on Oct. 1, 2018 with 212 drains already adopted by residents. Registering is easy, go to: www.cityofsanmateo.org/Adopt-a-Drain or call 650-522-7296.