



Renewing Pleasure in Your Life: Here's One Healthy Way

By Michael Mantell, San Diego Life Coach Examiner

March 26th, 2011 11:59 am PT

When my good friend, Bob Holloway, told me he was in a ten-week program of study to become a volunteer guide at San Diego's famed Mission Trails Regional Park, he served up yet another example of genuine inspiration. This morning at his graduation at the Mission Trails Visitor Center, with Bob beaming while leading the crowd in a magnificently inspiring "America, The Beautiful" (he's also a famed barbershop quartet singer for professional sporting and other venues in and around San Diego), I thought about just how special this gentleman in his 70s, really is.

He constantly renews his life and derives so many benefits from doing so. When you consider volunteerism as offering positive psychological, emotional, physical, professional, social and spiritual benefits, how can Bob not be a terrific example of renewal for all of us? Bob's passion and positivity are contagious, and to be a great volunteer, what else do you really need?

Bob and his fellow guide graduates diligently studied, and were meticulously tested on, more material than most people ever consider when they pass the cars lined up on Golfcrest Drive or elsewhere nearby the Regional Park's 6,100 acres of natural beauty. This outstanding national resource includes lakes, the San Diego River and Old Mission Dam, a 46-site campground, towering Cowles Mountain and more than 40 miles of trails for equestrians, hikers, bikers and families who just want to appreciate a wondrous treasure of San Diego prior to Cabrillo's landing, that exists minutes from our famed beaches. Although Bob was worried about learning the mountainous amount of material, no pun intended, he got an "A" on his test, as we all knew he would.

Now Bob is prepared to take visitors to this third "Jewel in the San Diego Park System" on guided interpretive hikes, offer superior education along the way, teach us about Lake Murray, the Kumeyaay Lake Campground, the plants, animals, and the fascinating cultural and historical aspects of Mission Trail's unique natural environment. He promises to take us on a hike through Oak Grove Trail where we'll see a small oak woodland with rare "Engelmann" oaks. The Visitor Center Loop Trail, through coastal sage brush, chaparral, and riparian woodland habitats and through the Riverside Grinding Site Trails, are other hikes down the road for us. I can't leave out the Kumeyaay Lake walk, the Old Mission Dam walk and the Oak Canyon Trail, through a narrow streambed to see up close waterfalls and wildflowers.

Bob shows us what a "helper's high" is all about as he learns more and more, and helps others learn about this national treasure. The glow on Bob's face supports what Dr. Hans Selye, the pioneer researcher in the field of stress management believed, "sustained good deeds have a cumulative positive effect on our own well-being." The research on volunteerism demonstrates that "Over-involvement with self at the expense of the community leads to 'psychological dislocation' and anxiety."

Research at UCLA and other medical institutions further points to other benefits that having a "concern for others" can have for the volunteer: an improved immune system, a decreased metabolic rate, improved cardiovascular functioning, healthier sleep, and most impressive is greater longevity! Volunteering helps you make new friends, increases your social and relationship skills, increases your self-confidence, and brings fulfillment to your life.

Bob's zest, verve, and tenacity are truly inspirational. Those hikes, walks, climbs and hours in the sun are terrific opportunities for "green exercise" as well. Boy will he stay in the great shape he's already in.

Congratulations Bob Holloway on this impressive accomplishment, one among many in your life. And of course, congratulations to Mission Trails Regional Park for having such a wonderful guy as one of your many new guides!

For more information on Mission Trails Regional Park, how to get involved in their remarkable upcoming events, go to www.mtrp.org