

## MENDOPENDENCE DAY!

Throughout California, ongoing budget cuts have been destroying countless programs and deeply gutting others through the elimination of funding. What we are witnessing across the board is a dramatic reduction in financial support for public health, state parks, education and many youth activities. Mendocino County is no less affected by these deficits, yet we have a unique opportunity with such a strong network of community to band together and preserve these integral programs.

Locally, the Mendocino Coast Recreation and Park District (MCRPD) have also suffered from the nationwide recession, resulting in the reduction of hours for its employees and the depletion of programs. Friendship Park, previously managed by the Friends of Friendship Park has now become part of the Mendocino Recreation & Community Center encompassing the historic school building, the playground and community garden.

Friendship Park was constructed through an incredible outpouring of volunteerism and local participation, helping to raise over \$40,000 during five years of planning. On April 18<sup>th</sup>, 1993 Friendship Park celebrated Opening Day for Mendocino Little League with the first pitch thrown by Paul Sutterly, a huge contributor in the park's construction. Over the years, the role of Friendship Park has grown beyond a first class park into a public space that includes Girls' Softball, little league, soccer, youth football, Sunday baseball, and of course, the 4<sup>th</sup> of July community celebration.

Every year for the last 17 years, people convene after the 4<sup>th</sup> of July Main Street Parade at the ballpark to relax, celebrate, gather with family, friends, and to renew old acquaintances. This year the 4<sup>th</sup> of July celebration will undergo some changes including a new name, Mendopendence.

Mendopendence will offer great food and drinks from local vendors, large-scale live music/staged entertainment including SambaDa, The Lavender Grace Band, and The Bucky Walters and many activities for adults and kids alike. This year, there will be a beer garden for people over 21 (age will be verified and no underage drinking will be permitted). The admission is a \$5.00 suggested donation (kids under 12 are free) to raise funds for continued maintenance and improvements of the community park.

Peg Brown Levy, Director of Mendocino Recreation and Community Center said, "Friendship Park serves as a visual reminder that by working together, we can define community values and provide a sense of place." "Mendopendence" is a perfect opportunity for our community to come together and ensure continued viability of Friendship Park for all ages. If you're interested in vendor space or volunteering at Mendopendence please contact Nicole Kench at [mendopendence@gmail.com](mailto:mendopendence@gmail.com) or phone at 707-489-1619. We hope to see all of you there.