

SIERRA CLUB
LOS PADRES CHAPTER
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WBC leader changed lives

By John Hankins

It all started with a public notice in the 2009 issue of *Condor Call*:

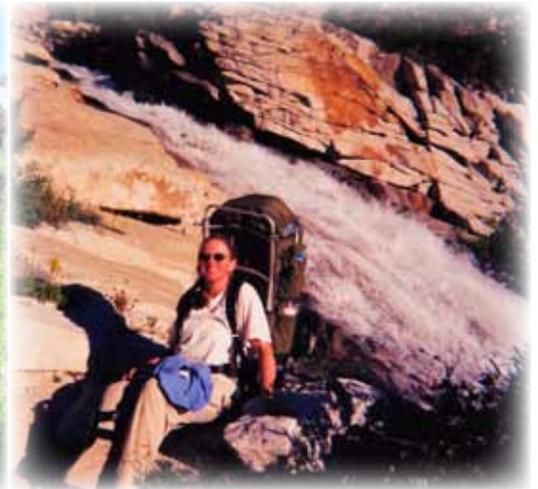
“For the first time ever, the Los Padres Chapter is sponsoring a Wilderness Basics Course beginning January 20 (2010), thanks to the efforts of organizer Teresa Norris and a cadre of volunteers who will share their expertise.”

Teresa initially got permission from the chapter’s Executive Committee, then put a couple of articles in the *Condor Call*. Suzanne Tanaka and Alisse Fisher were first on board, then Kim Homan, Marc ‘Roadkill’ Hertz, John Hankins, Irene Rauschenberger, and Kurt Pressler came on board to bolster the team.

It sure worked, starting with about 25 students and a continuous rise to 60 or so. Many who took the course became trained leaders and then circled back as WBC staffers.

Unfortunately, the Covid pandemic shut the class down for the last three years, and Teresa is retiring as the ongoing Chair of WBC. Fortunately, the current WBC board is determined to revive it in 2023 (see separate story).

At the chapter’s December holiday party, Teresa was given the Wilderness Hero Award and the club is searching to place an overlook bench in her honor, hopefully on her favorite trail in the Fillmore area where she lives. Los Padres ForestWatch is also on



Teresa Norris didn’t start out as a backpacking expert, as you can see by the heavy large backpack in 2004 (photo right, by sister Nanci Wise). But she learned via training and experience and by 2009 helped create our Wilderness Basics Course, sharing her knowledge (note the slim daypack years later on Sulphur Mountain (left). Through it all she and her husband Tom got it down perfectly (bottom) happily backpacking a 2018 trip along the Pacific Crest Trail.

the search.

“Whatever we do, it won’t be enough,” said David Gold, an at-large member.

“Thanks, it’s been a joy of mine over the 14 years, I didn’t consider it work. It’s been a wonderful community. In the beginning there wasn’t a community, then they got to know each other and now it’s a community . . . always my hope from the beginning,” she said.

From the start, WBC’s topics included backpacking clothing and equipment, first aid and safety, water filtration, map and compass, fitness and much more, notably tips from experienced hikers that you won’t find in books.

It grew in reputation and other outdoor experts from wilderness groups and

authors became speakers: Los Padres Forest Watch, the Forest Service, Los Padres Forest Assn., backcountry writer Craig Carey. Search and Rescue members became a favorite.

“The one night a week evening lectures will set the stage and prepare you for the real-life adventure that awaits you and your group on the trail. Each of the outings will be different and exciting because nature is unpredictable, but you will be ready to succeed,” wrote Lawana Godwin, a graduate from the first class who become staff. “The camaraderie alone will keep you actively learning every minute of the adventure.”

WBC often had a ‘warning’ that it could change your life. And it did, with all ages,

families and couples taking it together and even experienced hikers learning something new. Some were timid at first, others anxious to learn more to feel safe and comfortable in extreme wilderness.

This is Teresa Norris’ legacy.

