

The Mercury News

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Amid the flag waving, parading and barbecuing that have come to symbolize the Fourth of July, a nice cool swim is many kids' favorite way to enjoy the holiday — which reminds us that, in San Jose, there's something extra to celebrate on this Independence Day. Despite a punishing budget deficit of \$118.5 million that once threatened to devastate summer swim programs, the city staff and some elected officials managed to pull together public-private partnerships to keep more swimming spots open.

In the case of Almaden Lake, the city was short \$70,000 in operating costs — and District 10 Councilwoman Nancy Pyle made the money appear like magic. Pyle said she'd cover half of the shortfall from her office budget if the community came up with the rest, and individuals and businesses generously stepped up despite a dismal economy. What a terrific show of all-American, can-do community spirit.

Three city pools in neighborhoods where hardly anybody has a pool in the backyard were also in danger of closing. The city parks staff saved them by establishing partnerships with the collaborative California Sports Center and Sparkle Swim School to run aquatic programs. At Rotary Ryland Pool downtown, Biebrach Pool in Gardner and Fair Swim Center in central San Jose, the groups will conduct lessons but will also offer open swimming at a cost no higher than the city charges.

For Biebrach, a \$5,000 gap in financing will be

filled by

District 3 Councilman Sam Liccardo, using money contributed toward his re-election campaign.

The creative financing deals benefited from another institution worth celebrating: the new San Jose Parks Foundation, which can accept private money and pass it on to the city. The foundation's ultimate goal is to raise an endowment to preserve and improve city parks and trails despite diminishing public resources.

Two other San Jose pools, Camden and Mayfair, will stay open with regular city staffing. And the city is seeking a partner to operate the Silver Creek High School pool for the summer, having continued to lease it from East Side Union High School District, which will provide maintenance. Keep fingers crossed for that one.

For details on all the pools and swim programs, go to www.sanjoseca.gov/prns.

Today will be a quieter Fourth in San Jose. There will be no fireworks show downtown, largely because the city can't come up with the money for security and the like. Nor should it for a single weekend's entertainment in a year when budget cuts will affect many important city services, including libraries, community centers and public safety.

But the swim partnerships are important. They'll help keep kids cool, occupied and out of trouble for the summer. If they succeed, more partnerships may follow at community centers and other facilities that otherwise are likely to have to close next year, as budget deficits continue and the city runs out of options.

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