

Open the schoolyards

By Ingrid Dries-Daffner, Berkeley

(San Francisco Chronicle, April 30, 2009, page A-10)

Pat Lamken makes an excellent point in her letter “Shut out of parks” (April 22): Kids need more public transportation to our beautiful open spaces outside the city. Otherwise, only people with cars will be able to enjoy the Bay Area’s beautiful parks.

We all know that children are healthier when they have safe places to play. But another issue is the lack of access to open spaces right inside the city limits. Fortunately, we already have those places: schoolyards. But kids often can’t get past the locked gates to the playground after school hours. When schoolyards are closed after hours, some children can’t play outdoors, which means they don’t get the exercise they need to be healthy.

The smart solution is to keep schoolyards open after hours so all children can be more active.

Original letter

“Shut out of parks”

By Pat Lamken, San Francisco

(San Francisco Chronicle, April 22, 2009, page A-14)

Minority kids don’t go to parks for an excellent and obvious reason — no public transit. Parks are for people with cars. Look at the East Bay, which has the highest minority population. There is a chain of parks from Richmond clear down to San Jose. And how many have transit access? One bus runs to one park, Tilden, on one day, Sunday. Want to go to Mount Diablo? You can see it from San Francisco, but without a car, it’s easier to get to Hawaii. Want to go to Point Reyes or the Sausalito Discovery Museum? Start jingling those car keys. To repeat, parks are for people with cars, and until you change that, don’t bother teasing kids about what they can’t have.