

## The Givers: Matt Ulery—The Community Organizer

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6 Selfless Climbers Working Hard to Keep Our Crags Safe, Healthy, and Open

*This is part two of our series, [The Givers](#), which profiles six climbers that share one common trait—they have all realized that community only works if each individual takes ownership. They have all asked, “If I don’t do it, who will?”*



Matt Ulery at the BACC’s Glen Canyon cleanup in 2016.

Saki Swang

Matt Ulery might look like your typical California climber. The 35-year-old from Oakland works at Touchstone Climbing’s Berkeley Ironworks, makes weekend trips to Bishop, sports a Bay Area hipster beard, and owns a dog named Barry. However, a few years ago, Ulery realized

more and more of his ilk were flocking to climbing—gyms were becoming crowded, the parking lots at the crags overrun, and trails receiving more impact than they could handle. So, instead of retreating into nostalgia for the good ol' days, Ulery hatched a plan. In 2013, he founded the Bay Area Climbers Coalition (BACC), a volunteer-run 501c3 nonprofit focused on climber stewardship and access in the Bay Area. Now, the organization boasts 1,500 members.

Throughout the last four years, the BACC has worked alongside the Access Fund to host stewardship events, identify needs in the community, and communicate with land managers to meet these needs. At Summit Rock in the South Bay, the BACC partnered with land managers to haul out 1,000 pounds of trash over the last four years, rebuild the climber access trails, and remove graffiti from the rock. Additionally, the BACC, along with the American Safe Climbing Association, has been replacing old and unsafe bolts at local cliffs. They recently received final approval from Castle Rock State Park to replace many of the 600 bolts on the sandstone crags.

Instead of seeing the downside of more climbers in the Bay Area, Ulery celebrates how our increased numbers now give us a “seat at the table” in policy decisions. Throughout his time on the BACC, Ulery has forged a friendly rapport with the local park employees. Land managers might seem intimidating, eager to rescind our cragging privileges; however, in Ulery’s experience, they love working with the climbing community, one of the stronger and more proactive user groups. The rebolting process at Castle Rock State Park, for example, was only made possible because the BACC worked for over four years with the park, straining to find common ground in meetings, showing commitment by attending and helping out with events, building relationships, and letting time and bad blood pass. Today, the BACC’s relationship with the state park resembles, more than anything, that of a team.



Ulery takes time out from his busy Bay Area life to sample Fontainebleau's sandstone.

Courtesy

As gym-bred climbers flock to our sport, Ulery welcomes them as members ready to learn and contribute rather than focusing on any behavior that tends to confound or anger old-schoolers. Ulery and the BACC work with Touchstone Climbing to host monthly "Gym to Crag" workshops, educating climbers on leave-no-trace ethics and best practices, and providing them with the opportunity to transfer knowledge into action at their many local Adopt-a-Crag events. Sure, the newbies need guidance; however, argues Ulery, get people hooked on climbing, and all of a sudden we have an eager audience in which to instill a love for wild places and the corresponding ethics. And that, Ulery believes, is community.

**Check out the rest of our [Givers](#) series:**