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Balboa Park Conservancy Achieves National Recognition as a Points of Light Service Enterprise, Local Award for Innovative Urban Forestry Education

San Diego—The Balboa Park Conservancy’s programs and stewardship are receiving national as well as local recognition. At the end of 2018 the nonprofit public-private partnership that cares for Balboa Park learned it has succeeded in being certified as a Points of Light national Service Enterprise. At the same time, the Conservancy was awarded the San Diego Regional Urban Forest Council (SDRUFC) award for Best Urban Forestry Educational Project.

The Balboa Park Conservancy is now among the top 11 percent of nonprofits nationwide to be certified and one of only 19 Points of Light national Service Enterprises in San Diego. Points of Light is the world’s largest organization dedicated to volunteer service. The Service Enterprise Initiative is a national change-management and capacity-building program that transforms the way organizations engage volunteers to better meet their missions. The training and certification program is delivered through a national network of Hubs, which are organizational leaders in volunteer engagement and nonprofit capacity building in their communities.

For every \$1 invested in effective volunteer engagement, organizations can expect \$3 to \$6 in return through more effective program delivery. According to calculations required for the certification, the Conservancy averages \$6 for every dollar, representing a 600 percent return on investment. That said, Volunteer Committee Chair and Trustee Glenn Rossman stresses that the ROI isn’t about cost savings: “We do not see the use of volunteers as a way to reduce our expenses. Rather, volunteers empower the Conservancy to extend its mission without extending its budget.”

The Balboa Park Conservancy completed an extensive assessment, more than 20 hours of training and coaching, and an extensive internal planning and change process to better integrate volunteers into its human capital strategy. By achieving this level of excellence and certification, the Conservancy is now better equipped to leverage the time and talent of volunteers and better meet its mission.

The **San Diego Regional Urban Forest Council** is a member-driven coalition of agencies, businesses, and educators working to improve San Diego’s urban forest assets. The group promotes the benefits of trees for a cleaner, healthier, and more prosperous San Diego region. Its annual awards recognize local professionals and community members for their contributions to urban forestry. The Conservancy was recognized for launching a massive urban reforestation project over the past two years, with many state and local collaborators. They have brought urban forest education to schoolchildren, park visitors, Urban Corps youth, and others.



"I am pleased to welcome Balboa Park Conservancy as one of San Diego's 19 certified Service Enterprises," says Sue Carter Kahl, President of Sue Carter Kahl Consulting, the Conservancy's appointed coach/facilitator during the certification process. "This certification demonstrates their commitment to strong volunteer engagement practices that make the Conservancy a great place to serve while ultimately enhancing the Balboa Park visitor experience. Their staff, board, and volunteer team models what is possible when there is shared ownership of a vision."

"The Balboa Park Conservancy being officially recognized by the Points of Light Foundation as a Certified Service Enterprise reflects our commitment to best practices in volunteer stewardship," says CEO Tomas Herrera-Mishler. "We are building on the strong base established by our volunteer corps in the Balboa Park Visitor Center. We continue to move from strength to strength thanks to our amazing cadre of volunteers."

The Balboa Park Conservancy provides expertise, advocacy, and resources to envision, enhance, and sustain Balboa Park for all visitors in partnership with the City of San Diego and in collaboration with other organizations in the Park and the community.

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