



# SESSIONS

Forever Balboa Park's Biannual Newsletter

SPRING 2023





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**FOREVER  
BALBOA  
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1549 El Prado, Suite 1  
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info@balboapark.org  
(619) 331-1920



I recently had the pleasure of taking a tour of a number of native plant gardens in the San Diego region, sponsored by the California Native Plant Society. I was struck anew by the uniqueness of Southern California biodiversity and the passion and deep knowledge demonstrated by the gardeners. The blooms are gorgeous this year, and Balboa Park is no exception; all of the park's gardens and landscapes are bursting with color and the promise of spring.

The theme for this edition of our newsletter—Sprouting Success—draws its inspiration from the many people who volunteer their time, expertise, and resources to enrich the park. In this edition, you will learn more about Forever Balboa Park's collaborative endeavors to improve gardens and trails throughout the park. You'll be inspired by the stories of our volunteers' efforts to expand the park's urban forest. You'll be introduced to the ways

in which Forever Balboa Park is advancing its sustainability impacts through environmentally focused capital improvements in the House of Hospitality, and local, artisanal products offered at the Balboa Park Visitors Center.

The theme for this edition of our Sessions Newsletter—Sprouting Success—draws its inspiration from the many people who volunteer their time, expertise, and resources to enrich the park.

This edition also highlights Forever Balboa Park's commitment to inclusivity through its bilingual signage and wayfinding initiative, and the newly launched sPARK Awards that recognize some of the exceptional innovators transforming the park.

The successes featured here are possible because of your participation. Thank you in advance for continuing to support and celebrate our efforts to Sprout Success throughout the park. I hope you enjoy this edition of Sessions, and I look forward to seeing you in Balboa Park soon!

*Elizabeth C. Babcock*

**Elizabeth C. Babcock, PhD**  
President & CEO  
Forever Balboa Park



# IMPROVING THE PARK'S GARDENS



## SPRING BLOOMS CHANGE FOR THE INEZ GRANT PARKER MEMORIAL ROSE GARDEN

Just like every rose has its thorns, every historic rose garden has its maintenance needs. In partnership with the city's Parks and Recreation department, Forever Balboa Park removed the garden's round central pergola out of an abundance of caution for public safety.

Since the wood structure was erected in the mid-1990s, the climbing roses growing on its roof became dense and overgrown. While beautiful, these roses were increasingly difficult to trim and maintain, trapping moisture and offering an excellent habitat for pests. The weight, water, and insects combined to deteriorate the pergola's wood structure to the point it posed a safety hazard, so it needed to be replaced.

Fortunately, thanks to San Diego Foundation's ongoing generous support of the Rose Garden, the funds are already in place to build a new, more sustainable pergola. The new design will take full advantage of the garden's unique character and stunning 360-degree views of the garden, surrounding park landscapes, and adjacent canyon. We'll keep you updated on its progress.

## KATE O. SESSIONS CACTUS GARDEN RESTORED AFTER VANDALISM

Forever Balboa Park Garden Stewards skillfully repaired damages to the Kate O. Sessions Cactus Garden earlier this year. Sophia Galvez, Volunteer Project Coordinator; Walter Kast, Balboa Park Horticulturist; and Garden Steward volunteers gathered the cactus branches knocked off in an act of vandalism and transplanted them throughout the garden. More than 75 cactuses were salvaged and replanted. The cactus pups help round out and diversify the garden's beds. We are so thankful to the Garden Stewards for transforming an unfortunate situation into an opportunity to enrich Balboa Park's natural landscapes.



# BEHIND THE SCENES

As part of our role stewarding Balboa Park into the future, Forever Balboa Park operates and maintains the historic House of Hospitality. Home to the Forever Balboa Park offices, Balboa Park Visitors Center, Prado Restaurant, and other park nonprofit organizations, the House of Hospitality welcomes over 1 million visitors each year.

The House of Hospitality was first built for the Panama–California Exposition in 1915 and was completely rebuilt in 1997, based on Richard Requa’s 1935 remodel of the building. This year, we’re undertaking important capital improvements: replacing the building’s boiler, skylight covers in the grand ballroom, and two 100-ton chillers. While not the most glamorous of projects, updating this equipment will advance the building into the future by almost 30 years.



The state-of-the-art replacement boiler and chillers will use significantly less energy, heating and cooling the building at a fraction of the previous energy usage. Seemingly small changes like this add up, making the building’s upkeep more environmentally sustainable and cost-effective. These behind-the-scenes efforts are just a few examples of what it takes to keep a historic landmark open and operating for the public, while also advancing our commitment to a greener Balboa Park.

# IN THE FIELD

Volunteers Make  
a Difference  
Every Day



## NEW EQUIPMENT ELEVATES VOLUNTEER EFFICIENCY

Forever Balboa Park is happy to report a new storage shed and pickup truck are part of our volunteer repertoire. The new vehicle vastly expands our volunteers' capacity and efficiency in their work, a huge improvement over the two-seater golf cart they previously used to haul tools and equipment across the 1,200-acre park.

Thank you so much to Las Patronas, the Gayle and Enrico Grosso Fund at San Diego Foundation, and generous individual donors, as well as all of our wonderful volunteers!

## REGULAR PARK CLEANUPS ENGAGE COMMUNITY EAGER TO GIVE BACK

Spearheaded by Volunteer Project Manager Andrea Smith, Forever Balboa Park now offers monthly park cleanups for passionate parklovers wanting to give back to the park. Perfect for anyone unable to make a full-year commitment to our other volunteer programs, park cleanups allow community members the chance to impact Balboa Park one piece of litter at a time. Forever Balboa Park values the power of collaboration in these efforts, partnering with the Yosemite Climbing Association, for example, to host a cleanup as part of a San Diego-wide Community Facelift—just one of several cleanups taking place in natural spaces throughout the region. To learn more, follow @ForeverBalboaPark on Instagram.



# TREES FOR HEALTH GARDEN VOLUNTEERS JOIN GROWING CORPS

The Trees for Health Garden on Balboa Park's west mesa offers an inviting sanctuary to learn about the healing properties of trees and plants from all over the world. The garden began in 1993 as a project of the San Diego Herb Club and the Balboa Park Arborist. Together, they mapped medicinal trees in the park and then expanded the selections, creating one of the most diverse horticultural experiences in the park.

From the original 35 trees that were planted in 1995 near the corner of Quince and Balboa Drive, the garden has grown to 4.5 acres and 70+ trees thanks to a dedicated group of volunteers. The garden's primary mission is to educate the public on how various world cultures have used plants and trees to support health and wellbeing.

We are pleased to announce that the Trees for Health Garden has joined Forever Balboa Park, adding more than 10 longtime volunteers to our growing volunteer program. As a result, we will be more involved in helping to steward this unique horticultural resource. Our Tree Stewards and Garden Stewards have already stepped in to support the work of the Trees for Health Garden volunteers, helping with weeding and planting, and serving as subject matter experts for high school tour groups. Forever Balboa Park also secured a \$40,000 grant from San Diego Foundation to regrade and resurface the trails within the garden and improve pathways where needed. Carried out by the California Conservation Corps, the garden rehabilitation work should be completed by late summer.



*Forever Balboa Park volunteer programs are made possible through the generous support of Joseph Fisch and Joyce Axelrod, Las Patronas, Gayle and Enrico Grosso Fund at San Diego Foundation, The Elwyn Heller Foundation of San Diego, and other individual donors.*

*To volunteer in Balboa Park, contact Andrea Smith at [asmith@balboapark.org](mailto:asmith@balboapark.org) or (619) 331-2120.*

# Celebrating Innovation in Balboa Park



## RECOGNIZING CHANGEMAKERS

Forever Balboa Park hosted the inaugural sPARK Awards on March 29, 2023. The newly created sPARK Awards recognize people and organizations that amplify Balboa Park's distinct and positive impact on the region by celebrating those undertaking creative, collaborative, and imaginative work.

On that festive occasion, 170+ guests gathered to honor three awardees in three different award categories: Igniting Innovation, Crossing Boundaries, and Enhancing Ecosystems. Award winners were selected after careful review of nominations by a volunteer Selection Committee. A \$5,000 cash prize was provided to each awardee's nonprofit of affiliation or choice from Park Catalyst sponsor San Diego Foundation to fuel continued innovation and curiosity.

Please join us in celebrating the awardees who exemplify positive change and action in Balboa Park. All money raised at this event supports Forever Balboa Park's work to sustain and enrich Balboa Park.



*sPARK Awards 2023 was made possible by San Diego Foundation and other generous sponsors, including A.O. Reed & Co., Burnham Center for Community Advancement, Schwartz Semerdjian Cauley & Evans LLP, Enjet Media, Industry of Hues, and Cohn Restaurant Group.*



# SPARK AWARDS



## Igniting Innovation

GIRL SCOUTS SAN DIEGO, THE INCREDIBLE RACE

Girl Scouts San Diego, in partnership with Booz Allen Hamilton, hosted an Incredible Race scavenger hunt in Balboa Park that incorporated the park's landmark locations and cultural organizations. The program engaged 300 Girl Scouts in a range of STEM-related challenges to grow their STEM interest and confidence, and foster teamwork, leadership, and critical-thinking skills.

## Crossing Boundaries

MINGEI INTERNATIONAL MUSEUM, SAN DIEGO DESIGN WEEK

Mingei International Museum's San Diego Design Week (SDDW) celebrates the San Diego/Tijuana region by creating a forum for exchange and connection across disciplines and industries. SDDW attracts thousands of participants annually throughout the cross-border region. All program information is bilingual, with some programming taking place in Tijuana.



## Enhancing Ecosystems

SAN DIEGO URBAN TIMBER

San Diego Urban Timber works with the City of San Diego to repurpose heritage trees in Balboa Park that need to be removed for safety by milling the wood and turning it into artful creations. The items produced continue to sequester the wood's carbon by limiting decomposition. San Diego Urban Timber also works with the city to plant and maintain replacement trees.

# The Dorothea Laub Balboa Park Carousel

## RESTORATION UPDATE



The Dorothea Laub Balboa Park Carousel is in the homestretch of much-needed structural and historical renovation work. We are happy to report all indications point to a June reopening—just in time for the summer school break and peak tourism season.

To ensure the structural and

historical integrity of the beloved Carousel, Forever Balboa Park contracted with Mark Sauer Construction to carry out structural repairs of the Carousel building, with engineering guidance from MJ Structural Engineers and care for its historical legacy provided by Heritage Architecture & Planning.

The renovations included reinforcing the tension ring around the perimeter of the roof and replacing damaged clerestory framing. In addition, the triangular eaves on the building's exterior were removed to restore the historical profile of the original building.

Caring for a 100-year-old historic attraction with a lot of moving parts is an ongoing process. We are grateful to our dedicated supporters who enable us to protect and preserve such a San Diego landmark for the enjoyment of future generations. Thank you to the many foundations, corporations, and generous donors who have made this work possible.

Please visit [BalboaParkCarousel.org](http://BalboaParkCarousel.org) for updates on the reopening date and the Carousel's summer schedule.



*National Carousel Day is just around the corner. Celebrate the day at the Dorothea Laub Balboa Park Carousel on July 25, 11AM-5:30PM. Free rides and activities for all. Follow @BalboaParkCarousel for updates.*



## LOCAL & SUSTAINABLE GIFTS

The Balboa Park Visitors Center and Gift Shop is a hub for anything you might need while visiting Balboa Park. Expert volunteers staff the information desk, answering questions and serving thousands of visitors annually. Tour guides lead groups around the park weekly, providing personalized experiences to curious park goers.

Within all of that excitement, the Gift Shop houses one-of-a-kind treasures perfect to commemorate a trip to San Diego or for locals to flaunt their fondness for their favorite park. With a variety of options, there's a form of Balboa Park merchandise for everyone—hats, totes, tees, mugs, and more.

Plus, the Gift Shop houses sustainably made goods from local artisans and vendors. Handmade soaps, trendy items from Baggu, creative toys, and Parks Project merchandise make great gifts and purchases.

*Stop by the Visitors Center and Gift Shop by May 31, 2023, for 15% off with special code "Spring Sessions." Open daily, 9:30AM-4:30PM. Excludes sale items, books, and tickets.*

# POINTING THE WAY TO MORE INCLUSIVE SPACES

## Signage and Wayfinding Project Progresses

A key takeaway from the recent study, The Experience Plan Project for the Balboa Park Cultural District, conducted by the Balboa Park Cultural Partnership, was the need to create more welcoming spaces throughout the park that include all visitors, especially those from marginalized communities of color.

Spanish-speaking households in our binational region, in particular, continue to feel excluded due to a lack of Spanish-language accommodations. Interpretive signage is one impactful way to help ensure visitors feel welcome and included.

Installing bilingual interpretive signage parkwide has become a core objective of the signage and



wayfinding system overhaul project currently underway—a joint initiative between Forever Balboa Park and the city's Parks and Recreation department, and informed by public outreach ensuring many voices were heard. As fulfillment of phase 1 of the collaborative multi-year initiative draws near, the fruits of this endeavor are now visible in the Kate O. Sessions Cactus Garden, where the first bilingual sign has been installed. The goal is to have the remaining 30+ signs that are part of phase 1 fabricated and installed throughout the park by year's end.

Connecting people to places through interpretive signage, offering

more bilingual wayfinding, and presenting inclusive programming are just starting points for ensuring that Balboa Park is truly a wondrous place for all communities.

*The Signage and Wayfinding initiative is made possible by the Legler Benbough Foundation and San Diego Foundation.*



VOLUNTEERS PLANT

TREES IN 6 MONTHS



## It Takes a Community

# BUILDING THE URBAN FOREST

If you've been following Forever Balboa Park's efforts to rehabilitate and maintain the park's vital urban forest in partnership with the City of San Diego, you are already quite familiar with the remarkable work of our Tree Stewards. These highly trained volunteers have not only planted and tended to more than 600 new trees since the group began in 2017, but they train and lead other groups to reforest Balboa Park.

Since October 2022, Tree Stewards have engaged dozens of community volunteers, from high school students to military

veterans, in special tree planting events throughout the park, resulting in the successful planting of 77 trees in strategic locations.

The first major planting this year took place during our annual Plant It Forward event in November, when volunteers from the Golden Hill neighborhood enhanced their beloved park with nine new trees. The following month, 50+ employees from Brandes Investment Partners amplified the value of their corporate support by assisting Tree Stewards in the planting of three new trees and completing tree maintenance tasks in the park area near 28th Street.

We were honored to have 36 volunteers from Veterans Village of San Diego help put the finishing touches on the 26th Street Trail Project by planting 25 native coast live oaks in January in the Bennington Memorial Oak Grove. High Tech High returned in March for another tree planting and STEM lesson—this time, 62 students planted 21 Ficus and native trees in Morley Field, filling some of the gaps in our urban tree canopy left by fallen eucalyptus trees. And lastly, 15 new trees near the War Memorial Building are now soaking up some of the recent rains thanks to another community tree planting event.

The last tree planting event of the season will celebrate Arbor Day. On April 28, Forever Balboa Park and community volunteers will plant 15 new ficus trees in the Morley Field Fig Tree Garden. Trees are vital to a healthy community. Be sure to visit the Plant It Forward web page at [4-bp.org/PIF22](https://4-bp.org/PIF22) for educational resources on the benefits of trees and instructions on how you can contribute to San Diego's urban canopy at home.



*Forever Balboa Park's urban forestry initiatives are generously supported by San Diego Gas & Electric and the City of San Diego Parks and Recreation department.*

# Historic Changes at Balboa Park's **BOTANICAL BUILDING & GARDENS**



A few hundred feet from Forever Balboa Park's offices in the House of Hospitality, progress is palpable at the Botanical Building and Gardens restoration site. Stripped down to its skeletal structure for historic repairs, the building's profile is hauntingly beautiful, while also inspiring curiosity and excitement. Built for the 1915 Panama-California Exposition, the Botanical Building and Gardens in Balboa Park's National Historic Landmark District is known for its iconic lath structure, free to millions of visitors, and home to more than 2,100 plant varieties. This special building and the surrounding landscape are in the midst of a much-needed and significant restoration, led by a

partnership between the City of San Diego and Forever Balboa Park.

The City of San Diego is tackling phase I, which restores the building to its original 1915 design, recreating the series of arched openings with Palladian windows and large doors, and opening the inside space to the surrounding gardens. Accessibility and a spectacular planting plan, as well as updated amenities, are central to the restored design.

Forever Balboa Park is leading phase II of the project, restoring all of the exterior perimeter gardens, the fountains, the walkways, and the pergola that used to stand on the west lawn. Our campaign will also raise funds to ensure our

volunteer Garden Stewards can help care for the gardens and for public engagement programming that connects people to the wonders of nature.

If you are interested in learning more about this signature project, please visit [BalboaParkBotanical.org](https://BalboaParkBotanical.org).





# SPROUTING SUCCESS

## Your Support Helps Balboa Park Bloom with Possibility

Success is tangible here in Balboa Park—in the accomplishments of Balboa Park’s volunteer corps, in the progress of park improvements, and in the services provided daily to park visitors. Spring is a season of possibilities, of new growth and wonder. As we look forward to the coming months and the start of our next fiscal year this summer, new opportunities and plans for continued success and impacts are sprouting all over Balboa Park.

Forever Balboa Park’s programs and initiatives have strong roots in our predecessor organizations, but in our third year as Forever Balboa Park, we will continue to grow and evolve to capitalize on new opportunities and offer more to Balboa Park and its visitors.

This summer, the Dorothea Laub Balboa Park Carousel is reopening after months of restoration. Forever Balboa Park will celebrate National Carousel Day on July 25, welcoming back visitors to the historic attraction refreshed with updates.

Forever Balboa Park continues to grow and diversify our volunteer opportunities throughout the park, working in partnership with local schools and community groups to provide leadership and service opportunities to youth.

Progress is being made to expand inclusivity and accessibility in the park, including broadening our public tour offerings to provide bilingual options and park improvement projects focused on accessibility.

Collaborations with neighboring cultural institutions are in bloom to provide community programming.

The Botanical Building and Gardens restoration project is on track, and Forever Balboa Park is currently designing the plan for phase II, which includes the exterior gardens and educational programming.

Forever Balboa Park continues to advocate for Balboa Park, focused on realizing the potential of the park as a place for collaboration, ingenuity, and creativity.

Donations to Forever Balboa Park’s spring campaign make these plans possible. Help us continue the momentum behind transforming Balboa Park into a world-class destination, where success sprouts in every corner of the park. We hope you join us in Sprouting Success.

To make a donation, please use the envelope provided, call Ashley Carbonell at (619) 331-1991, or donate online via the QR code or URL below.



**[4-bp.org/spring2023](https://4-bp.org/spring2023)**



**FOREVER  
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1549 El Prado, Suite 1  
San Diego, CA 92101



**SPARK**  
AWARDS

### **Honoring Innovation**

Forever Balboa Park hosted the inaugural sPARK Awards, celebrating innovation in Balboa Park and recognizing outstanding changemakers.  
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## Generous Support

Forever Balboa Park's programs and initiatives to enhance Balboa Park and the visitor experience are generously supported by San Diego Foundation, City of San Diego Commission for Arts and Culture, J.W. Sefton Foundation, Walter J. & Betty C. Zable Foundation, Brandes Investment Partners, and The Favrot Fund.



For more updates on Forever Balboa Park, sign up for our monthly newsletter here: [4-bp.org/newsletter](https://4-bp.org/newsletter)

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