

For Immediate Release

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Annual Volunteer Awards

On November 3, 2018, the Puente Hills Habitat Preservation Authority (Habitat Authority) presented awards to three special volunteers. The Habitat Authority is a local government agency which manages the Puente Hills Preserve, 3,870 acres of hillsides in Whittier, Hacienda Heights and La Habra Heights.

The Habitat Authority volunteer program is made up of a group of very gifted and conscientious individuals that are helping to promote stewardship of the Puente Hills Preserve. The Habitat Authority volunteers' time is extremely valuable in helping us to maintain trails and provide quality outdoor educational programming to the surrounding communities. Trail Watch volunteers help with acting as our rangers' eyes and ears on the trails, alerting us to important information on the trails and helping trail users in need. Also, our Docent volunteers are a critical element in our free community outdoor educational programming including that provided to local elementary schools. Since the beginning of the docent program, the Habitat Authority has tripled the amount of people it annually reaches.

This year the three award recipients are Lee Willard, Trail Watch Volunteer, Pam Hill, Docent Volunteer; and Licha Gonzales, Overall Volunteer.

Trail Watch Volunteer of the Year 2018



Lee Willard lives in Whittier and first began volunteering for the Habitat Authority in 2011 as a docent. The following year he completed Trail Watch training and has since spent countless hours hiking the trails and reporting back to Rangers. Lee loves our hills and has long been active with Hills for Everyone, Friends of the Whittier Hills and Sierra Club. In 2012, Lee was awarded our Trail Watch

Volunteer of the Year. This past year he donated 78 precious hours in helping the rangers keep the Preserve trails safe and clean. He is an asset to our Trail Watch program and we greatly appreciate his service!

(Photo above) Lee Willard, Trail Watch Volunteer of the Year with Bob Henderson, Habitat Authority Chairman.



Docent Volunteer of the Year 2018

Pam Hill is a Whittier resident and geology teacher. She has been a Docent volunteer since 2015 and in 2017 she completed Trail Watch training. Pam holds multiple degrees and teaches at Cal State Long Beach, but still finds the time to hike, help us with Hills Alive, Trail Watch, Jr. Rangers and various special activities. She previously was recognized as our Overall Volunteer of the Year in 2016, and this past year she donated 83 hours as a volunteer Docent, and additional hours out hiking the trails. We don't know how she does it, but we very much appreciate it!



Overall Volunteer of the Year 2018



Eloise, 'Licha', Gonzales, of Rowland Heights, became a Docent in 2011 before joining the Trail Watch team in 2012. Since that time, Licha has been active in virtually every aspect of volunteering here at the Preserve, and in 2015 she was awarded our Trail Watch Volunteer of the Year. Volunteering 250 hours this past year alone, she helps with Little Explorers, Hills Alive,

public awareness efforts, Trail Watch, and tirelessly works to repair vandalized ropes in our restoration areas. She also helped launch our latest education campaign affectionately known as "Doggy Duty", providing a water station for hot pooches and some valuable education for their guardian owners.

(Photo above) Licha Gonzales, Overall Volunteer of the Year with Bob Henderson, Habitat Authority Chairman, and Terri Hernandez, Habitat Authority Interpretive Programs Coordinator

The next volunteer training opportunity is in January, and it is offered once a year. We are currently accepting applications, and welcome all to apply! Visit www.HabitatAuthority.org for more information or call Habitat Authority staff member Terri Hernandez at (562) 945-9003.

The Habitat Authority is a joint powers authority with a Board of Directors consisting of the City of Whittier, County of Los Angeles, Sanitation Districts of Los Angeles County, and Hacienda Heights Improvement Association. The Habitat Authority came into existence in 1994 as a condition of approval for the Puente Hills Landfill. It is dedicated to the acquisition, restoration, and management of open space in the Puente Hills for preservation of the land in perpetuity, with the primary purpose to protect the biological diversity. Additionally, the agency will endeavor to provide opportunities for outdoor education and low-impact recreation.

For more information about the Habitat Authority visit www.HabitatAuthority.org. ###