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Hayward Area Recreation and Park District **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Hayward Area Recreation and Park District Announces Award Winners for the Board of Director Awards

2017 Board of Directors Awards

Hayward, CA (January 2018) – In 1962 the Hayward Area Recreation and Park District Board of Directors initiated these annual awards to honor and thank individuals and organizations who assist our District in its mission to provide quality parks, recreation programs and facilities. This marks the 54th year for the awards program. The Hayward Area Recreation and Park District (H.A.R.D.) is pleased to announce and congratulate the 2017 Board of Directors' Awards recipients:

- Organization Award- Castro Valley/Eden Area Chamber of Commerce
- Individuals Winners- Rene Gandolfi, D.V.M.
- Special Recognition- Mr. Billy Bradford
- Special Recognition- Hayward Junior Giants Program
- Volunteer of the Year-Ms. Christina Sonas
- HARD Foundation Organization of the Year Award- CAHR
- HARD Foundation Special Recognition-Home Depot

The award detailed information is listed below:

2017 Organization Winner - Castro Valley/Eden Area Chamber of Commerce

The Castro Valley/Eden Area Chamber of Commerce serves the communities of Ashland, Castro Valley, Cherryland and San Lorenzo. Comprising the Eden Area, these communities offer rich and diverse opportunities to learn, shop, work, play and live. Each community has a unique history and flair offering residents and visitors experiences to remember. Castro Valley's offers Lake Chabot and the world-class Eden Medical Center are just a few minutes apart.

The vibrancy of the REACH Ashland Youth Center and grandeur of Cherryland's historic Meek Estate flow out into the communities as well. San Lorenzo offers access to the Bay, its own Village, and recreation for most lifestyles. There are restaurants for every taste and budget, more than 25 parks, award-winning school districts and shopping for every occasion...come and enjoy Alameda County's Eden Area.

The Chamber has been a vibrant factor in providing support to business with monthly mixers and trainings. The Chamber co-sponsors a variety of positive programs to area residents that benefits the entire community. The Annual "Fall Festival" is a two-day event in Castro Valley, that provides arts, entertainment and showcases local business. This event attracts **over 41,000 per year**. For three years the Chamber has partnered with the District to co-sponsor the "Summer Outdoor Movies" in the park series that is offered five times per summer and attracts **1500** residents. New in 2017 was a joint event between the Chamber and District called "CV EATS", a Tuesday food truck night, at the Adobe Park held for *32 weeks* attracting an estimated **9000** residents. In October, the Chamber also held in partnership BARKS & BOOS a family centered event at Adobe Park that attracted

over **800!** The Chamber has also been a partner with our District in the new AG Day event held at Rowell Ranch and the Eden Night LIVE program at the Mission/Hampton & 166th East 14th site.

The Chamber is a positive community building organization that deserves annual recognition for their role in building a more positive and healthy community!

2017 Individual Winners – Rene Gandolfi, D.V.M.

Dr. Gandolfi has been an amazing volunteer for HARD since 1987, with over 3,100 logged hours. He has been instrumental in helping with the care that goes into the over 100 resident animals that live at Sulphur Creek as well as the 700 injured, sick, and orphaned native wildlife that are brought in for rehabilitation each year.

Dr. Gandolfi has shared his veterinary skills free of charge, having saved the District over tens of thousands of dollars. He is always on call for veterinary support for the hundreds of wild animals, including coyotes, hawks, foxes, bobcats, squirrels, opossums, skunks, bats and even the gophers that are brought in for rehabilitation. He has dedicated his veterinary services to caring for all our animals. Over the years, his services have included a variety of surgeries, X-rays, pathology tests, and general exams, along with providing medications at a minimal charge.

Some of his latest services though have gone above and beyond the call of duty in doing micro surgeries on some of our resident bats, and hazardous not to mention tedious surgeries to remove the scent glands from 3 skunks used for educational programs. These last surgeries involved lining his office in plastic sheeting, minimizing general patients for the day, and having a support staff that could endure a perilous few hours as he worked to remove some extremely large scent glands without them rupturing.

The skills and services provided by Dr. Gandolfi to the animals at Sulphur Creek has been an amazing gift. For 30 years he has worked to keep our resident animals healthy and has helped us to offer a second chance to the native wild animals we support.

2017 Special Recognition – Mr. Billy Bradford

If you were to tell Billy Bradford that he is a community hero, he will most definitely say 'no, but in fact he is a community hero. Billy is the founder of "Castro Valley Pride", he has organized "Bad Business Model" a free bike giveaway program, he is a general community activist and has volunteered for HARD's Senior Adult Programs for the last 3years.

In 2010, Billy along with some Castro Valley High School students formed "Castro Valley Pride" a community event to raise awareness and promote equality for all lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. The event started with a couple of hundred people and has grown to thousands of attendees. This is so important because there is often hate and bigotry towards the LGBTQ community, that has even led to suicide of some youth. This event shows young people that there is support and love for them. It also gives the general community at large the opportunity to come together, be supportive and unify together for a positive event.

Another worthwhile program Billy does is "Bad Business Model Bikes". Billy acquires and purchases used bikes and refurbishes them and then gives them to those in need. There's people who now have transportation options due to Billy's generosity. He has not tracked

how many bikes he has given away or how much money he has spent, but he says he loves what he does.

Billy is also a general community activist. He has put together Prop 8 rallies in his community, worked with faith based organizations to show support. He calls himself a Logistics Coordinator by building and hauling things, getting permits and working with law enforcement for rallies.

In 2014 HARD's Senior Adult Program staff saw a need for a special event for the Senior LGBTQ participants. Through discussion and examination, we discovered many seniors had never enjoyed their High School Prom as who they really were in High School. Staff decided to hold a special Senior LGBTQ Prom in 2015. The Senior Program budget was low and we contacted Billy to see if he would help, and he quickly agreed, by being DJ for free. Billy was instrumental in this event; he attended committee meetings, came on a Saturday morning for sound check, helped promote the event and DJ all night long. He volunteered his time and talents and has been the DJ every year since. He has made a positive impact on the community and for the Hayward Area Recreation and Park District.

2017 Special Recognition – Hayward Junior Giant Program

The Hayward Junior Giants program has been running for sixteen (16) summers and is provided by Hayward Police Department Youth and Family Service Bureau by Police Officers, School Resource Officers and Counselors, who volunteer their time in partnership with the San Francisco Giants Community Fund and the Hayward Area Recreation and Park District (HARD). In addition, to learning basic baseball skills, the Junior Giants program encourages all participants to focus on education, healthy eating, violence prevention and positive character development. Last summer 582 Junior Giant participants played baseball at Weekes Park and received free breakfast and lunch through the “Let’s Do Lunch Hayward ... and breakfast too ..” program. The San Francisco Giants Community Fund provides player uniforms, baseball equipment, and training for league players and volunteers, as well as prizes and tickets to select Giants games so youth can experience Major League Baseball. The Hayward league of the Junior Giants has been identified as one of the most successful Junior Giants programs.

The program is overseen by the City of Hayward’s Youth and Family Services Bureau, which is headed by Administrator Emily Young. “It’s about much more than just baseball,” Young said. “We have practices and games, but we also try and teach the kids about healthy eating choices, mental health, physical health and reading.” In addition to weekly one-hour skills drills, where players learn baseball techniques from coaches who are police officers and Hayward high school students, they also play in at least one game per week, according to Young.

Volunteer of the Year 2017 – Ms. Christina Sonas

Each month during the year, we recognized the hard work and dedication of a volunteer in one of our programs. Our volunteers hold a vital role in the success of our organization and we are grateful for their service to our District. At this time, will all 2017 volunteers in attendance please stand. If you could join me in a round of applause for all of these wonderful volunteers and their many hours of service.

Ms. Sonas willingly offered to assemble a committee that successfully organized the One Enchanted Evening” fundraiser that raised more than \$ 17,500 after expenses to benefit the programs of the Douglas Morrison Theater.

Ms. Sonas generously offered and provided boundless energy as the event “Chair” and leader of the fundraising committee. Ms. Sonas offered the idea for this fundraising event during a very difficult budget time for our District in 2016. During this time, the District was facing difficult budget decisions that involved possible cuts or reductions of services to the Douglas Morrison Theater Program. Ms. Sonas stepped up and offered her assistance in support of the Douglas Morrison Theater Program.

Over a period of a year Ms. Sonas assembled a very skilled and energetic committee of Chorus members to plan and execute a comprehensive Theater Fundraiser. Ms. Sonas and her committee planned ALL aspects of the “One Enchanted Evening” event. This event was held on April 29, 2017 with 181 attendees who enjoyed an evening of music, dancing, silent auction and food at the Hayward Japanese Gardens and Senior Center. Additionally, the committee planned a silent auction that raised over \$5,500 of the event proceeds from community based donations.

HARD Foundation Organization of the Year CARH

Care, Advancement, Respect, and Hope (CARH) was formed in 1972 with a mission to enrich the lives of adults and children with intellectual disabilities in the greater Bay Area. Since day one, CARH has raised vital funds for its community programs by collecting generous donations of clothing and housewares from local households, then marketing the goods for sustainable resale and recycling uses.

For 42 years, CARH reached thousands of disabled children and adults serving Alameda, Contra Costa and Solano Counties through a partnership with Thrift Town. Sorensdale Recreation Center and Sulphur Creek have had longstanding relationships with CARH and with CARH’s support they have been the beneficiary of a multitude of funding and collaborative events.

In 2015, the CARH Board was faced with an insurmountable challenge. With a change in management of Thrift Town, an unstable marketplace and increase in recycling competitors, it no longer became feasible to continue their partnership. The CARH Board looked at all possible ways to continue the non-profit, but in the end, the most fiscally viable option was to dissolve CARH as a non-profit entity.

It is the way in which the CARH Board responded to this arduous decision that they are most deserving of the 2017 HARD Foundation Organization of the Year Award. As a group of volunteers, touched in one way or another by the disabled community, the CARH Board chose to forge ahead and create a long-lasting legacy of their stellar work by embracing their mission.

The CARH Board decided that the proceeds of the sale of their three-acre property in Castro Valley would go to worthy organizations that supported the special needs population. The Board chose Sorensdale Recreation Center and Sulphur Creek Nature Center for funding and the HARD Foundation received over \$200,000 to continue their programs and expand services at Sorensdale and Sulphur Creek.

In 2017, with the generosity of CARH, two classrooms at the Sorensdale Recreation Center were transformed into the Life Skills Lab and Wellness Center. These newly completed rooms have provided enrichment and additional curriculum to the students who utilize the center every day. Sulphur Creek Nature Center has also expanded their services as a result of the generosity of CARH. Naturalists, docents and volunteers are providing interactive presentations for the disabled, elderly and individuals with intellectual and physical

disabilities.

We have witnessed firsthand the amazing work of CARH, and we have been privileged to be entrusted to carry on your legacy. It is the HARD Foundation's honor to recognize CARH as our 2017 Organization of the Year. We thank you for your longstanding efforts and the opportunity to keep your exemplary work ongoing in the community!

HARD Foundation Special Recognition) **Team Depot, Home Depot Hayward**

Since the first Home Depot store opened in 1979, giving back has been a core value for the Company and a passion for its associates. Today, The Home Depot, in partnership with The Home Depot Foundation, focuses its philanthropic efforts on improving the homes and lives of the community, with an emphasis on U.S. military veterans. Through Team Depot, the Company's associate-led volunteer force, thousands of associates dedicate their time and talents to these efforts in the communities where they live and work.

When the HARD Foundation and Sorensdale Recreation Center approached, Tiffani Hale, a Hayward Home Depot employee and Team Depot Captain in 2016, she immediately embraced the opportunity to assist with the Life Skills Lab at Sorensdale. Tiffani introduced us to the Hayward Home Depot Store Manager and they encouraged the HARD Foundation to submit a \$5000 funding request to the Home Depot Foundation.

The HARD Foundation was very fortunate to receive the \$5000 grant in Home Depot gift cards. With that donation, we were able to purchase all the appliances for the Life Skills Lab, including the oven, stovetop, dishwasher and sink. And that was just the beginning!

Over the next several months, 16 employees from Hayward Home Depot participated in a Team Depot remodel project at the Sorensdale Life Skills Lab. The Team Depot group came out on four occasions and provided skilled manpower to complete the insulation, sheet rock, taping and mudding of the Life Skills Lab. They then painted the large classroom and laid a specialized laminate flooring.

It was a tremendous transformation of an old classroom that is now a state-of-the-art learning and life skills lab. We are so grateful to Tiffani Hale, the leadership team of Home Depot Hayward and the wonderful Team Depot volunteers. Together, you have improved the lives of our students at Sorensdale and made a positive impact on our community! Kudos and Thanks to Tiffani and the Hayward Home Depot Team.

These award winners received their awards on Friday, January 26, 2018 at a luncheon at Sorensdale Recreation Center in Hayward, in their honor.

We are so thankful for the many partners and volunteers that the District has the honor of working with! Again, congratulations to our 2017 Board of Director Award Winners.

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Creating Community through People, Parks and Programs since 1944