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## **STAGE SHINES BRIGHTLY FOR PUPPET THEATER VOLUNTEERS**

Michelle and Bob Bandel receive Robert Brownlee Award

DECEMBER 15, 2016 — Last night, Happy Hollow Park & Zoo puppet theater volunteers, Michelle and Bob Bandel, received a Robert Brownlee Award from Happy Hollow Foundation.

The Robert Brownlee Awards Program honors volunteers for their service to Happy Hollow Park & Zoo with a \$1,000 gift. Awards go to outstanding volunteers to acknowledge their individual commitment of time, effort and enthusiasm in supporting Happy Hollow Park & Zoo's mission.

This year, two special volunteers were celebrated with Danny the Dragon Sleigher exhibit and Christmas in the Park as a backdrop. The Happy Hollow Foundation board of directors was joined by volunteers, community leaders and Jim and Michelle Murphy of the Brownlee Foundation to recognize and honor these amazing volunteers.

The duo was nominated by Judy Roberto, who oversees the puppet theater, for their amazing dedication to Happy Hollow. They have volunteered more than a thousand hours a year for the last four years and bring theater experience and passion to their work.

“They are a team in every way and they share their impressive design, construction and problem solving with the entire staff,” said Ms. Roberto. “Their dedication and contributions make our productions so much better than they would be without their work.”

Nearly five years ago, the Bandels were volunteering at a children’s theater in Milpitas but were looking for a new opportunity to give back. They explored a variety of organizations but chose Happy Hollow’s puppet theater.

“We have lived in San Jose for more than 40 years and when our children were small, Happy Hollow was a frequent destination,” said Bob Bandel. “The work we do is fun and keeps us, arguably, sane. It is great to be able to interact with such intelligent, artistic people.

These are exactly the type of people that the Robert Brownlee Foundation, a private family foundation, wanted to recognize. The foundation recognized the importance of volunteers and set up this fund to make a difference.

The Brownlee Foundation focused a lot on science education for children. The foundation was actually closed five years ago but it took the remaining funds and set up trusts for various organizations.

"My brother and I grew up at Happy Hollow," said Jim Murphy, who managed the foundation for years. "Even though my brother is gone and the fund is closed, it feels great to give back — especially to Happy Hollow."

The Murphys appreciate and understand the work of Happy Hollow Park & Zoo better than most. Discovering nature through play, being part of the species survival program and offering a place for families to be together are just a few reasons they support Happy Hollow Foundation.

### **Robert Brownlee Award Winners**

**2016:** Bob and Michelle Bandel

**2015:** Lynne Grob

**2014:** Vanessa Onsurez

**2013:** No award given

**2012:** Karen Bauman, Amy Cepe and Lisa Clifton-Bumpass

**2011:** Chris Del Pilar and Ken Hanlon

**2010:** Steve Demkowski and Bob Pariani

**2009:** Hiatus due to park construction

**2008:** Hiatus due to park construction

**2007:** Heather Lerner and others

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**Happy Hollow Foundation** (HHF) is a non-profit organization, established in 1958 and dedicated to advocating, supporting and enhancing the Happy Hollow Park and Zoo. The focus of Happy Hollow Foundation is to engage individual donors, foundations, corporations, and government agencies in helping to advance the park & zoo.

**Happy Hollow Park & Zoo** has received many awards and high-fives, including:

- A five-year accreditation from the Association of Zoos & Aquariums
- A winner of the Sustainable Built Environment, Acterra Business Environmental Awards
- First gold LEED-certified amusement park and zoo in the United States
- Collected more donations for Jeans for Giraffes than all the larger institutions in our area

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