

Descanso Gardens



2018 *Annual Report*



From Our Director



If you don't know where you are going, you'll end up someplace else.

– Yogi Berra



If I were to characterize 2018 at Descanso Gardens in one word, it would be “planning.” Planning is, of course, something every institution engages in. But in 2018, we were more deeply immersed in mapping out the way forward for the institution than at any time in recent memory. As I look through the pages of this annual report, I am reminded of how much we accomplished in 2018, and how we are moving through 2019 guided by all those plans we made.

We achieved a major milestone in July 2018 when Descanso Gardens was reaccredited by the American Alliance of Museums. First accredited in 2003, we are proud to be designated as a museum. While the public might view Descanso Gardens as a park, the institution is guided by a broad educational mission that extends beyond recreation. To maintain this important designation, museums must go through an intense review process. The self-study review began in 2017 and took several months, and was followed by a site visit by our peers from AAM. Through the reaccreditation process, we compared our operations to best practices in the museum industry, and we have subsequently made some tweaks to the way we do business.

For example, in 2018 we revised our emergency preparedness plan. Besides completely overhauling our emergency handbook, Descanso Gardens' staff and volunteers participated in our first large-scale safety drill in February 2018, which simulated a devastating earthquake. Since then, we have conducted first aid and CPR training for staff and volunteers. Thanks to a grant from The Capital Group Companies Charitable Foundation, we purchased three automated external defibrillators to be used in a cardiac emergency. I hope we never have to use the AEDs, but it's good to know they are ready to help save a life.

Our 2018 planning switched into high gear when we hired Rios Clementi Hale Studios to lead the Board of Trustees and managers to create a master plan for Descanso. The master plan will become the roadmap for Descanso's evolution over the next 15 years. It will guide future projects and decision-making regarding the garden's facilities, operations and initiatives. Master planning began in earnest in September 2018, and it continues as I write this today. We expected to have a completed master plan by the first quarter of 2020.

With visitation surpassing the half million mark, we worked on initiatives in 2018 to help make every visit more meaningful. We created a better visitor map to guide our guests as they explored the gardens. We created new “wayfinding” and storytelling signage, and visitors have shared positive feedback to these projects.

We welcomed our first artist-in-residence in 2018, thanks to lengthy planning on the part of the Sturt Haaga Gallery's curatorial committee. Carole Kim is an interdisciplinary artist who spent the better part of a year talking to visitors and members about their Descanso experiences. In the dark of night, when Descanso was closed, she was busy photographing the gardens in amazing plays of light on dark. Her exhibition, *Shine a Light*, is currently on view in the Sturt Haaga Gallery through Oct. 27.

And of course, planning played a major role in the new camellia display located near Feather Falls. With grant funds from the Stanley Smith Horticultural Trust, staff created an ornamental garden that allows visitors to experience the diversity and beauty of the camellia collection in a concentrated area. We are eager to see how this garden shapes up in the future.

When 2018 was over, we looked back on all those plans – and we kept planning right through 2019! A garden is constantly changing, and planning helps direct that evolution. As our founder, E. Manchester Boddy, wrote decades ago: “Descanso Gardens, of course, will never know completion ... I hope you will not only learn to know and enjoy the gardens, but that you will share the spirit that sustains them.”

Juliann Rooke, Executive Director



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Our Mission

Descanso Gardens is a unique Southern California landscape distinguished by its specialized botanic collections, historical significance, and rare natural beauty. Our mission is to practice exemplary stewardship of Descanso's distinctive character and assets; offer people an experience close to nature; and cultivate understanding of the natural world and people's place in it through inspiration, education and example.



Looking back at the year, we count these among our achievements for the year.

- ▶ **Descanso was reaccredited by the American Alliance of Museums** in July following an intensive self-study process and onsite visit by AAM representatives. First accredited in 2003, we are proud to be designated as a museum, guided by a broad educational mission.
- ▶ **We began working on a master plan with the design firm of Rios Clemente Hale Studios.** This plan will guide development at Descanso through the next decade.
- ▶ **Staff and volunteers participated in Descanso's first safety drill** in February, which simulated a devastating earthquake. Local first responders gave feedback on our readiness to deal with a major emergency. The Capital Group Companies Charitable Foundation funded the purchase of additional first aid equipment.
- ▶ **Interdisciplinary artist Carole Kim began her yearlong tenure as Descanso's first artist-in-residence.** Photographing gardens after hours at night, she created works for her 2019 exhibition *Shine a Light*, a reference to both her use of light as a medium and a means of focusing one's attention.
- ▶ **Record-setting attendance passed the half-million mark.** To make each visit more meaningful for this influx of visitors, a permanent information table was installed as part of the Center Circle renovation. Knowledgeable volunteers provide a warm welcome, give directions and answer questions for visitors.
- ▶ **An expanded volunteer program** that included Community Service and Student Community Service Days gave would-be helpers more options to provide much needed "people power" for Descanso. In all, 383 people participated in these special single-day events or in our regular volunteer program.
- ▶ **A new camellia garden was installed in the Camellia Forest in spring, with funding from the Stanley Smith Horticultural Trust.** The first phase of the garden focused on camellias with links to China, including Yunnan *reticulata* camellias, as well as Japanese *Higo* camellias. The area below the Boddy House was also replanted with several camellias in fall. In all, 188 of our signature flowers were planted in the gardens.
- ▶ **An exhibition at the Sturt Haaga Gallery underscored Descanso's commitment to the wildlife that call this garden home.** *Growing Habitat: LA's Wildlife and Descanso* was curated by the Education Department with support from several outside organizations, including the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County and the Arroyos and Foothills Conservancy.



2018 By the Numbers



From a brutal heatwave to a plethora of projects, here are some of the facts and figures that made 2018 memorable at Descanso Gardens.

123

pieces of art on view in the Sturt Haaga Gallery



Visitors came from **12 countries** and **48 U.S. states**

(North Dakota and Mississippi, please come see us!)



1

new entry for the Rose Garden



Admissions reached an all-time high of **581,545**



383 volunteers doing **16,540** hours of service



20,253 came to **23** spring & summer evening events

248,320 member visits



Temperatures soared to **113°** on **July 6, 2018**, scorching camellias and oaks (most recovered)



14,524 school field trip visitors



23,000 tulip bulbs planted for spring



3.81 = the score teachers gave field trips (on a scale of 1 to 4)



96 spring bloom walks

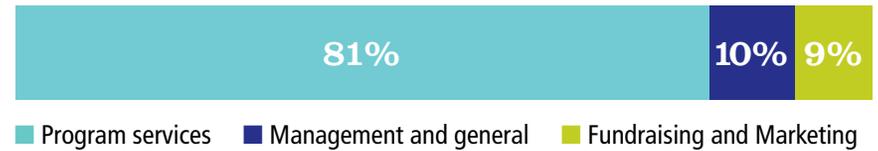


Below is a snapshot of our operating budget for 2018. Audited financial statements are available at descansogardens.org.

2018 Income	
Revenue	
Admissions	\$1,320,232
<i>Enchanted</i> ticket sales	\$3,708,794
Sales, rentals and programs	\$1,930,796
Other revenue	\$3,862
Total revenues	\$6,963,684
Contributions	
Memberships	\$1,309,104
Donations	\$815,638
In-kind donations	\$5,192
Total contributions	\$2,129,934
Other	
LA County management fee	\$270,000
Investment income	\$58,981
Total other	\$328,981
Total income	\$9,422,599



2018 Expenses	
Program services	\$7,514,465
Management and general	\$935,706
Fundraising and marketing	\$860,275
Total expenses	\$9,310,446





Enchanted Forest of Light Sponsors

We are grateful to these individuals and organizations who helped ensure the success of *Enchanted Forest of Light* by providing sponsorship support in 2018.

Anonymous	HomeStreet Bank
Erin and Rich Atwater	Katie King and Torrey Sun
Jennifer Kuo Baxter and Thomas Baxter	George Kunkel
California School of the Arts – San Gabriel Valley	Amy and David Lamb
Cardinal Rule Winery	Wendy Lees and Tom Boyle
City of Hope	James Levin and Sarah MacDowall
Gordon and Dona Crawford	Margaret Leong and Michael Checca
John D’Angona	Ben and Lucia Logan
Georgianna B. Erskine	Sandra Mays and John Marshall
The Flashdance	Greg and Stephanie McLemore
Laura and Mark Furey	Peggy Miller
Gelsons	Peter and Ann Murphy
Elizabeth and Stephen Gleason	Andy and Juliann Rooke
Golden Road Brewing	Carie and Andy Salter
Goldstar	Brad and Vicki Schwartz
Heather Sturt Haaga and Paul Haaga, Jr.	Signature Party Rentals
Lovell Holder	Smilebooth



2018 Grants

Funder	Gift	Project
Rose Hills Foundation	\$75,000	General operating support
The Capital Group Companies Charitable Foundation	\$20,000	World Rhythms concert series, visitor shuttle and safety equipment
Stanley Smith Horticultural Trust	\$6,500	Native plant purchases
City of La Cañada Flintridge	\$5,000	Drinking fountain
Metropolitan Water District of Southern California	\$2,000	Water programming and native plant purchases
Total	\$108,500	

2018 In-Kind Donations

Anne Caffey	Ralh Malmquist
Cardinal Rule Winery	Nuccio’s Nurseries Inc.
Irene Chen	Monica O’Horan-Ford
Jack F. Conley	Signature Party Rentals
The Flashdance	Smilebooth
Golden Road Brewing	Lisa Sola



Center Circle Associates

Center Circle Associates is Descanso Gardens' highest level of membership. CCA members provide philanthropic support to Descanso while enjoying exclusive benefits and special access to the Gardens.

Descanso Circle | \$10,000+

Margaret Leong and Michael Checca
Rick Neumann
Heather Sturt Haaga and Paul Haaga, Jr.

Patrick and Kathy Feely
Stephen and Liz Gleason
Nel Graham
Lovell Holder
Ruth and Jeremy Jones
David and Amy Lamb
Richard and Mary Mader
Sandra Mays and John Marshall
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Donna and Randall Melby
Tim and Kate Morphy
Andy and Juliann Rooke
Carin and Andrew Salter
Eugene and Marilyn Stein
Brian and Shari Thomas
Timur Tillyaev and Lola Tillyaeva
Len Torres and Anita Brenner
Hope Tschopik Schneider
Lynn and Donald Voss

Director's Circle | \$5,000

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John D'Angona
Georgianna Erskine
Doug and Claudia Forbes
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Peter and Ann Murphy
Blythe Haaga Parker and Tyler Parker
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Curator's Circle | \$2,000+

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Jennifer Kuo Baxter and Thomas Baxter
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Circle Associates | \$1000+

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James and Mitzi Walters
Eric and Jill Weinlein
Robert and Karen Wicke
Phyllis Winnaman
Richard and Amy Wohl
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Supporters



The following donors kept Descanso Gardens green and growing with their nonmembership donations of \$500 or more in 2018.

\$50,000 and up

Margaret Leong and Michael Checca
The Rose Hills Foundation

\$25,000 – \$49,999

Insuk Copprell
Vieve Metcalfe and Jay Holladay
Peggy Miller
Heather Sturt Haaga and Paul Haaga, Jr.

\$10,000 – \$24,999

The Capital Group Companies
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Gordon and Dona Crawford
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Estate of Michael Parga
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Rick Neumann
Andy and Juliann Rooke
Brad and Vicki Schwartz
William and Noel Wade

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Kim and Ginger Caldwell
City of Hope
City of La Cañada Flintridge
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Doug and Claudia Forbes
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Stephen and Liz Gleason
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La Cañada Kiwanis Foundation
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James Levin and Sarah MacDowall
Ben and Lucia Logan
Sandra Mays and John Marshall
Wendy Munger and Leonard Gumport
Alex and Ameri Ramirez
Susan Redpath
Ned and Shirley Russell
Carin and Andrew Salter

\$1,000 – \$4,999

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HomeStreet Bank
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Supporters

Edward and Susan Johnson
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Descanso Gardens

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