



COUNTY OF VENTURA COUNTY EXECUTIVE OFFICE

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NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

2020 VENTURA COUNTY EARTH DAY AWARDS

Board of Supervisors honors five environmental champions in Ventura County

April 22, 2020 - The Ventura County Board of Supervisors honors five recipients for Earth Day Awards in recognition of the 50th anniversary of Earth Day. The five environmental champions by Supervisorial District are:

District 1: Supervisor Steve Bennett

Ventura Land Trust

Ventura Land Trust (VLT) is an accredited land trust and 501(c)(3) nonprofit that has been protecting and preserving open space in Ventura since 2003. VLT is currently working on the purchase of 2,100 acres of prime hillside property with the goal of opening the first large-scale, publicly accessible hillside nature preserve in Ventura. VLT together with their extensive volunteer base has diligently removed trash and invasive plants in the watershed, planted native trees, plants and flowers and built trails creating much-needed public access to green space. In partnership with Once Upon A Watershed, each year they host hundreds of local students on free outdoor environmental field trips. VLT also presents a community Environmental Speaker Series of lectures and host an array of volunteer and community activities. To date VLT has permanently protected 30 acres of open space in the Ventura River watershed and manages an additional 60 acres.

District 2: Supervisor Linda Parks

Dan Hirsch, Committee to Bridge the Gap

Daniel Hirsch, President of Committee to Bridge the Gap, has fought for the cleanup of the Santa Susana Field Lab (SSFL) for four decades, ever since his students at UCLA first discovered that there had been a partial core meltdown at the Lab. Supervisor Parks said: "We are thankful for Mr. Hirsch's efforts to educate and advocate for cleaning up nuclear and chemical pollution at SSFL and for his commitment to protecting the health and safety of the public."

Recently retired as the Director of Environmental and Nuclear Policy at UC Santa Cruz, Dan has worked to: stop the relicensing of SSFL's "Hot Lab" get independent epidemiological studies on the health impacts of SSFL contaminants on SSFL workers and the offsite population; led the successful effort to prevent SSFL's radiologically contaminated debris from being sent to sites not licensed for low-level radioactive waste; advocated for the historic 2010 agreements with the state and federal governments clean the contaminated site to background levels, so the area would be returned to pre-pollution levels supported by Ventura and Los Angeles Counties; and, worked tirelessly with public health, environmental and neighborhood groups, and elected officials to fight for the promised cleanup.

District 3: Supervisor Kelly Long

Port of Hueneme Councilmembers Steven Gama and Laura Hernandez for Weekly Port Hueneme Beach Cleanup

For many years, Steven Gama regularly watched Ted Waddell walk the beach area of the City of Port Hueneme picking up trash. Steven always said to himself "I can do that, and I should do that". Ted Waddell was an enormous advocate for volunteerism in the City and left a huge vacuum with his passing in 2016. Inspired by Ted Waddell, Steven Gama and Laura Hernandez became the site captains at Hueneme Beach for the California



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Coastal Clean Up in September of 2016. However, it became apparent that beach cleanup was needed every week. In addition to walking the beach area with his white bucket whenever he had the time, Steve together with Laura organized a grassroots Hueneme Beach Clean Up effort every Saturday beginning at 8:30 am, meeting at the Alaska 261 Memorial.

Since 2016, it is estimated several thousands of buckets of trash have been collected. Their California Coastal Cleanup site sees close to 400 participants annually. Between the California Coastal Cleanups and the Saturday efforts, thousands of people have participated. Volunteers come from all over the county and even Los Angeles. Local Unions like the Carpenters and Longshoreman help. Many different religious organizations, high school groups, elementary school groups, private schools and local surfers participate. For Steven, it is a top priority to participate each Saturday and has cleaned the beach almost every Saturday for the last four years! "It makes me feel good to be on our beautiful beach being productive. I would rather be surfing but this is just as good, as I enjoy watching the young surfers which I used to be"

District 4: Supervisor Robert O. Huber George Kerr

George Kerr has had a lifelong commitment to habitat restoration and to re-wild our wild places. His biggest passion is his work to conserve the Desert Bighorn Sheep. He has volunteered and worked with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife for over 40 years to help restore habitat and enhance the population of our desert bighorns in Ventura County and other areas. He has been extremely active with a conservation program called "Water for Wildlife" of which his father was one of the founding members over sixty years ago. The program is dedicated to developing and enhancing water sources in our desert regions to supplement what is lost through droughts, encroachment, and loss of habitat. George also owns a landscape design and construction company specializing in energy efficient landscape designs through water conservation. As a volunteer, his motto is quite simply "Making a difference by being the difference," dedicating his time and energy to a complete and healthy ecosystem through habitat restoration and wise use.

District 5: Supervisor John Zaragoza Florencia Ramirez, Author *Eat Less Water*

Florencia is an advocate, educator, mother and trained researcher in Public Policy. Her entry into water conservation began shortly after giving birth to her youngest child when she came across an article in the *Los Angeles Times* with tips on how to save water during the drought. "Take shorter showers," the ad read, and it inspired Florencia to sell 80,000 shower timers because you can save 2500 gallons of water in one year if you shorten your long shower by 4 minutes. After learning we eat anywhere between 500-1300 gallons of water every day, she realized the most far-reaching, effective place to save water is to eat less of it.

Her book *Eat Less Water* investigates planet-friendly alternatives to reduce water consumption in agricultural production and cooking, which she finds is the ultimate call to action. Florencia is also working to transition schools and parks from landscapes dependent on chemicals to organic landscaping in and around Oxnard, California, with funding awarded by Patagonia. Supervisor Zaragoza said: "Florencia Ramirez has been very influential in our community with her award-winning techniques to save our water through the food we consume every day. I am proud to award Mrs. Florencia Ramirez County of Ventura Board of Supervisors Earth Day 2020 award."



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