



Pacific Palisades Community Council

2021 Awards Honorees

Six dedicated Palisadians will be honored at the PPCC Holiday Meeting & Awards Celebration on December 9, 2021 – to be held via Zoom and returning after a hiatus in 2020 due to pandemic conditions.

CITIZEN OF THE YEAR

Christina Spitz is the textbook definition of a community activist and leader. Over the past 10 years, she has been Chair of the Pacific Palisades Community Council, Secretary of the PPCC for several terms, and chair and member of numerous committees. She is currently Vice Chair of the Westside Regional Alliance of Councils, and for years has operated as de facto "Chief of Staff" for her successor PPCC Chairs, essentially enabling the PPCC to continue its agenda seamlessly.

Chris is being awarded Citizen of the Year for leading the charge to put a stop to the plan to install a homeless village at Will Rogers State Beach in Pacific Palisades. Essentially single handedly, she researched the law and the facts, and drafted, vetted and edited over 30 complex position letters to city, county and state officials. She drafted and distributed countless messages, reports and summaries to public officials, websites and public notices. Chris relentlessly submitted numerous public record requests to various local, county and state agencies and officials, which revealed critical documents regarding the inner, behind-the-scene machinations of these same public officials, as they attempted to push the beach homeless housing plan into fruition without prior notice to this community. She analyzed and synthesized literally hundreds of records which would have otherwise gone unseen and unknown. She shared this information with other community groups in their efforts to oppose the plan, coordinating and cooperating with others.

During this past year in the midst of the pandemic, she has been in full trial prep mode seven days a week. Without her efforts it is extremely unlikely that the opposition to this plan would have been successful. All of us owe her an immense debt of gratitude for ensuring that all the people of Los Angeles have access to the recreation and beauty of our community's Will Rogers State Beach.

GOLDEN SPARKPLUGS

Scott Cullen will receive a Golden Sparkplug Award for his passion for rescuing plants from local construction sites and finding new homes for them in Pacific Palisades. In 2019, he single-handedly took a Bowdoin St. eyesore (the median between Radcliffe and Temescal) and turned it into a lush, lovely spot. He cleared the weeds, dug out and amended the soil, hand-watered until the drought-tolerant plants took hold, and then started planting rescued plants. He continues to plant, water, weed and mulch. The median is now a lovely bed filled with succulents, lavender, fortnight lilies and more. Scott's quiet volunteerism continues to add beauty to our community gardens.

Rick McGeagh will receive a Golden Sparkplug Award for his tireless work in cleaning up the Will Rogers State Park area of leaves and trash and his relentless prodding of the city and state to help clear out the brush along Sunset Blvd. and into the park that constituted a fire hazard. Rick spends several hours every weekend, for months, raking and hauling away trashcans full of dead leaves and debris, fuel for fires. Rick has been an active PPBA board member for many years, throwing the ceremonial first pitch in 2014 to officially begin the Pacific Palisades Baseball Association season. Rick has been on several local boards, including the Palisades Community Council, the Palisades Park Advisory Board, Corpus Christi's Pastor's Advisory Council, and continues to run the St. Monica's Thanksgiving Dinner for the Homeless starting in 1991 - present, and donating 1000 pairs of socks to the homeless.

Matthew Rodman will receive a Golden Sparkplug Award for his outstanding service as President of the Pacific Palisades Parade Association (PAPA). Matt accepted the position in 2018 and has guided PAPA through challenging times. The 2020 event was virtual due to the strict Covid restrictions in place at the time. Under Matt's leadership the 4th of July festivities were kicked off by an actual flyover of the patriotic condor squadron. Families were encouraged to watch the flyover from their homes and then to tune in to the virtual event that featured musical groups, celebrities and a salute to the many neighborhoods of Pacific Palisades. In keeping with the 2021 Parade Theme "The Sparkle Returns," Matt secured the permits needed to allow the parade to return to the streets of the Palisades. Matt – a 2017 Golden Sparkplug awardee for his work to improve student safety and traffic conditions at Paul Revere Charter Middle School – is the embodiment of the "can do" spirit that is a hallmark of the spirit of volunteerism.

Ingrid Steinberg has been chosen for Golden Sparkplug honors for her innovation and drive to establish and co-found the community's first environmentally focused non-profit organization, *Resilient Palisades*. The organization's goal is to help unite residents, local businesses, institutions, schools, and other Palisades organizations in an effort to create a healthier, safer, and more resilient community. Ingrid's environmental organization is focused on educating, empowering, and supporting the reduction of local emissions and the establishment of new community alliances and infrastructure in order to face environmental challenges. Resilient Palisades has established four community teams: Clean Air and Water; Zero Waste; Clean Energy Resilience; and Plant-Based Solutions. Under Ingrid's leadership, board members and volunteers have begun to make real change in our community. For example, Ingrid helped spearhead Resilient Palisades' Green Gardens campaign (to reduce the use of gas-powered garden equipment), the Cut-Out-The-Cutlery campaign (to reduce the use of plastic cutlery in take-out from Palisades restaurants), the Pali Microgrid (to help hundreds of Palisadians add solar + storage to their homes), and other new initiatives such as Vegan Fests.

Krishna Thangavelu, widely known as "KT," will receive a Golden Sparkplug Award as a passionate and formidable grass roots organizer in the community's opposition to the proposal to turn Will Rogers State Beach into a site for homeless housing. KT brought together multiple organizations and leaders to ensure public access and safety for all who wish to enjoy the beauty and recreation of Will Rogers State Beach. She formed coalitions and worked tirelessly to create consensus and form teams to address different aspects of the fight. KT started the Facebook group "Protecting Parks and Beaches" and galvanized the formation of the nonprofit "Beaches and Parks 4 All" to speak with a bi-partisan voice and fight the proposal from a compassionate, reflective point of view.