



July 9, 2021

PRESS RELEASE

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### **Valley-Wide Director Dr. Steve Simpson earns state award**

*Recreation District recognized four times by California Association of Recreation and Park Districts*

Valley-Wide Recreation and Park District Board of Director's Member Dr. Steve Simpson was recognized by the California Association of Recreation and Park Districts as the Outstanding Board Member for 2021.

Dr. Simpson was presented his award at the 2021 CARPD Awards Banquet on June 24 in Monterey.

Also recognized were Dean Wetter, Outstanding General Manager; Pete Gregory, Outstanding Volunteer; and Healthy Valley Foundation, Outstanding Community Organization.

More than 25 new Parks and Facilities have been added to the Valley-Wide District since Dr. Simpson joined the Board of Directors in 2010.

One of Valley-Wide's most celebrated openings was that of Jim Venable Exchange Club Park. It is a unique facility that offers tennis, pickleball, basketball, volleyball, fitness equipment, walking trail, bicycle maintenance station, playground, picnic gazebos and barbecue grills. It was a facility that took more than 15 years to build and for our community, it was a historic event to be able to cut the ribbon.

Although there were many advocates for this facility, no one was more vigilant than Dr. Simpson, who year after year pushed to make sure it became a reality. He attended every community meeting, answered questions, and took notes to make sure the amenities in this facility matched the needs of the community.

Dr. Simpson, an optometrist who practices in Hemet and the current Board Secretary, not only has he been a vocal advocate for the District, but an extremely active one. As a member of the National Exchange Club, Dr. Simpson has been actively fundraising for the community for many years; he has also hosted events, served as master of ceremonies and participated in every fundraiser the District has organized.

Before he was elected to the Board, he was involved with Valley-Wide as a baseball coach for many years.

"Dr. Simpson is very deserving of this prestigious honor," Valley-Wide General Manager Dean Wetter said. "He is a calming influence who gives deep thought to every decision he makes, ensuring the public gets the best possible services while being a good steward of public funds."

Pete Gregory started with Valley-Wide about 15 years ago, volunteering through a French Valley soccer program. He began organizing donations for the French Valley Community Center's Halloween Spooktacular event, providing several hundred dollars in candy each year. Then he started organizing donations for the Friends of valley-Wide Foundation's Weekend auction and later started organizing donations for the annual Breakfast With

Santa event, first by donating toys and games and then taking on bike donations.

Under Gregory's leadership, the organizations he works for donate thousands of dollars to Valley-Wide programs each year.

Healthy Valley Foundation has improved the lives of residents in the San Jacinto Valley through its generous donations to programs that promote fitness. The Foundation has paid for fitness trails at three Valley-Wide Recreation and Park District facilities.

The Foundation was created after the Hemet Valley Medical Center transitioned from a public entity to private in 2010. The organization came out of the Hemet Hospital Foundation, the charitable wing of the former Valley Health System.

The foundation has a goal of creating a healthier community and aims to support organizations that share that vision. Innovations brought forth by the Healthy Valley Foundation have enhanced fitness opportunities in the San Jacinto Valley, a community with several seniors and low-income residents who otherwise would not have access to such activities.

"The CARPD Awards of Distinction are among the highest recognition our agency can receive and our awards are a credit to our staff and partners who made this happen," Dean Wetter said. "We are honored to receive this award on behalf of our residents."

The California Association of Recreation and Park Districts, represents special recreation and park districts throughout California. CARPD has been dedicated to improving the quality and efficiency of recreation and park districts. The California Association of Recreation and Park Districts advocates for and provides park districts the support needed to fulfill their role as providers of quality programs and facilities to their local communities.



*Outstanding Board Member*  
Dr. Bruce Simpson  
Valley Wide Recreation and Park Districts  
*Award of Distinction 2023*





## PHOTO CAPTIONS

TOP: Valley-Wide Recreation and Park District Board of Director's Member Dr. Steve Simpson was recognized by the California Association of Recreation and Park Districts as the Outstanding Board Member for 2021.

BOTTOM: Valley-Wide Recreation and Park District leaders show off the awards the district received from the California Association of Recreation and Park Districts last month. From left are, Board Members Mike Juarez and Angela D. Little, Board President Nick Schouten, General Manager Dean Wetter, Board Secretary Dr. Steve Simpson and Board Vice President Jan Bissell.

Photos courtesy Valley-Wide Recreation and Park District

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