

**PRESS RELEASE**  
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## **SB Museum of Natural History Presents 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Legacy Awards**

*Honoring Elisabeth and Greg Fowler,  
Renee Grubb and Village Properties, and John O'Brien*

**SANTA BARBARA, CA**— The Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History hosted its Leadership Circles of Giving Dinner on Thursday, January 19 in Fleischmann Auditorium. The annual event recognized the generosity of Leadership Circles Members and key donors who helped sustain the Museum and Sea Center's work during the past year.

The Museum's Legacy Awards recognize extraordinary contributions to the Museum and the natural world by community supporters, donors, and volunteers. This year, Elisabeth and Greg Fowler, Renee Grubb and Village Properties, and John O'Brien were honored for their generosity and dedication to the Museum.



*Left to right: Board Chair Brad Willis, John O'Brien, Renee Grubb, Luke Swetland, and Elisabeth Fowler*

Elisabeth and Greg Fowler joined the Museum as Members 17 years ago and have never looked back. After moving to Santa Barbara from Seattle with their four children, Greg, who grew up in the area, was delighted to revisit the Museum where he had fond childhood memories. Elisabeth joined the board two years later and served on a variety of committees where she excelled at fundraising. She chaired four galas, which raised \$1.3 million for school programs, and the Centennial Campaign Cabinet that raised \$18.4 million for the Centennial Project. She moved on to chair the board from 2014 to 2016, helping bring the Museum into its second century of service. In addition to generously giving her time to the Museum, Elisabeth and Greg have been incredibly generous philanthropists, both through their support of the Museum and the Santa Barbara community. The Santa Barbara community is fortunate to have the Fowlers' support and the Museum is fortunate to have them as part of the family.

Renee Grubb founded Village Properties in 1996 with her partner Ed Edick after more than a decade of real estate experience in Santa Barbara. She immediately began giving back to the community through her award-winning Teachers Fund, which helps local schools acquire needed supplies and books. Her commitment to education and strong interest in the natural world made for an easy "yes"



when she was invited to join the Museum's Board of Trustees in 2010. Renee was an integral part of the Master Planning Committee where her expertise helped guide several decisions for the board as the organization crafted the Centennial Project. She also chaired the Governance Committee helping ensure the board leadership was strong, committed, and represented the very best civic leadership in Santa Barbara.

John O'Brien and his wife Marsha have been Museum Members since 1988, and in the early 2000s, John became a Museum docent. For more than two decades, John led school groups and volunteered in Gladwin Planetarium where he shared the universe with thousands of school children as well as summer visitors. John and Marsha were the first to volunteer at the newly reopened Sea Center in 2006, following its complete renovation and expansion under the leadership of former director Karl Hutterer. John could often be found on the Wet Deck sharing specimens from the waters below. Both John and Marsha have been closely involved in the Santa Barbara Audubon Society for many years. John served on their board, and through that became an early volunteer with Audubon's Eyes in the Sky raptor education program. He has been instrumental in stewarding the partnership between Audubon and the Museum, especially in the building and operation of the mews. Recently John and Marsha joined the Mission Creek Legacy Society, truly cementing their commitment to the Museum and ensuring a lasting legacy for generations to come.

President & CEO Luke J. Swetland remarked, "This year's honorees deserve to be recognized and celebrated for the enormous contributions they've made to the work of the Museum. By donating their time, sharing their talents, and offering their expertise, they build on the outstanding work of our staff to connect people to nature for the betterment of both. Volunteers, donors, and Members are the heart of our institution and we couldn't be successful without their support."

Leadership Circles Members play a critical role in supporting all facets of the Museum and Sea Center's work, including education, research, exhibits, collections, and accessibility initiatives. Visit [sbnature.org/leadership-circles](http://sbnature.org/leadership-circles) for more information.

The dinner was catered by Catering Connection and the awards were supplied by Bryant & Sons.

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## About the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History

*Powered by Science. Inspired by Nature.* Founded in 1916, the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History inspires a thirst for discovery and a passion for the natural world. The Museum seeks to connect people to nature for the betterment of both, and prides itself on being *naturally different*. For more information, visit [sbnature.org](http://sbnature.org).