

A Storied History

The Chronicle of Don Diego Scholarship Foundation 1986-2021 . . . and Beyond

Setting the Stage

It all began on October 9, 1915 in the Canary Islands village of Puerto de la Cruz, Spain with the birth of Domingo Tomás Hernández Bethencourt.

By 1920, when he and his family immigrated to America, the San Diego County Fair, which began as an agricultural exposition in 1880, was a popular annual event.

The two became intertwined in 1947 when the dashing Hollywood actor, now known as Tom Hernandez, embraced his lifetime role as the Fair’s goodwill ambassador, Don Diego.

After this charismatic face of the Fair died in 1984, the 22nd District Agricultural Association

Board determined that the best way to honor Tom, in addition to commissioning a “¡Bienvenidos, Amigos!” sculpture that continues to welcome Del Mar Fairgrounds visitors today, would be to create a college scholarship program in his name. Thus, the Don Diego Fund was born.

Although Tom did not have children, his legacy of “progeny” is impressive. From this nonprofit’s inception through 2021, nearly 300 scholarship recipients and hundreds of thousands of Plant*Grow*Eat elementary students, who learn about agriculture from the ground up, have been beneficiaries of donors’ largesse.

This is our story.



Left: San Diego County Fair, back in the day.

Middle: Actor Tom Hernandez embraces his role as Don Diego.

Right: Before becoming world-famous actress Raquel Welch, Jo Raquel Tejada was 1958’s Fairest of the Fair.

Planting the Seeds

Like a small seed that would grow into a sturdy tree, Don Diego Fund began modestly after Tom's death as the nonprofit partner of the San Diego County Fair and Del Mar Fairgrounds. The 22nd DAA Board comprised the founding Fund Board, with each member honoring Tom's legacy by contributing \$5,000 in seed money to fund college scholarships, and later, agriculture education.

Some stakeholders, such as Charity Fair Horse Show, have continued their commitment to this day. Other constants have been families such as the Eckes,

organizations such as SDG&E and Del Mar Thoroughbred Club, and Chana Mannen, who as the Fair's Deputy Manager oversaw operations until she retired and was appointed Don Diego Fund's Executive Director.

Don Diego Fund's enthusiastic community support was evident in Dave Barham, the creative genius behind Hot Dog on a Stick; a Fair favorite. Deciding to become a founding member, Dave delivered his initial contribution in a unique way: a grocery bag of cash totaling \$5,000. As time went on, additional business and

community leaders joined the Board, making the guiding organization a synergistic blend of leaders from different walks of life.

The organization's 1986 debut was lively and fun, presaging summers to come. Artist Maher Morcos' 16-foot sculpture of Tom Hernandez was unveiled at the Fairgrounds' entrance



during the first Don Diego Fund Gala, which took place the night before the Fair's



Over the years, the Don Diego sculpture has been whimsically decorated to celebrate the Fair's annual theme.

Opening Day. The annual Dinner and Concert Gala has become legendary. As the annual primary fundraiser, it showcases each year's class of scholars, and enables recipients to meet and thank their donors.

In accordance with the intent of awarding scholarships to deserving students associated with activities and events at the Del Mar Fairgrounds, particularly agricultural pursuits, three \$1,000 scholarships were initially offered. One each was given to an outstanding FFA and 4-H student; the third to the winner of the Fairest of the

Fair, a competition that was discontinued in 2005.

College was cheaper then, and \$1,000 – nearly \$2,500 in today's money – went a long way. So have many of our idealistic, ambitious Scholars.

In their quest to build a better San Diego, and a better world, scholarship recipients are excelling in careers as agriculture teachers, animal geneticists, vintners, veterinarians, healthcare professionals, community leaders, research scientists, entrepreneurs and more. We are very proud of them all!

Selected Success Stories

1995's Vince Mukulanis learned the importance of leadership and community service in 4-H and now instills those values in his sons while honoring his agricultural roots and passion for forest conservation as a Davey Resource Group executive.



From blue ribbons to the Blue Angels, 1999's Amber Lynn Scott has always soared beyond. Having served as White House Social Aide, this public affairs professional is currently earning her PhD in Organizational Communications at USC.



2000's Scott Stebner is an award-winning photographer/videographer who captures blue-collar grit. Sales of his iconic "Kansas Farmer" book help fund a perpetual scholarship for Kansas State Agriculture Communication students.



2011's Brett Huff received a B.S. in Agriculture/Animal Science and worked in animal genetics-based biomedical research; searching for cures to human diseases. Today, he is establishing a cow-calf operation in Ramona.

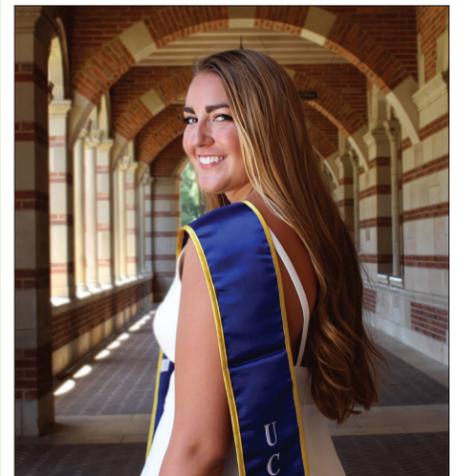


Selected Success Stories

After graduating in three years, 2016's first-gen college student Yessica Valentin earned a bilingual elementary teaching credential and became a teacher in the Vista District that has nurtured her and her eight siblings.



2016's Carney Flynn's interest in genetics began in 4-H and never waned. She graduated from UCLA and is pursuing an M.D. while conducting COVID-19 patient care studies.



Honoring an Icon



Affectionately known as the "Father of Don Diego," Robert Spanjian was foremost among many Board members who over the years frequently reached into their own pockets to augment scholarships.

Founding Members

Dave Barham
 Edmund and Inez Burke
 Charity Fair Horse Show
 Del Mar Thoroughbred Club
 Paul Ecke
 Ray Harmon Family Foundation
 Mr. and Mrs. Eugene Klein
 Mr. and Mrs. Warner Lusardi
 Ben Osher
 Sheila and Patrick Rose
 San Diego Gas and Electric
 Mr. and Mrs. Morris Sims
 Southern California Edison
 Mr. and Mrs. Robert Spanjian
 Mr. and Mrs. Richard Spanjian
 Mr. and Mrs. Donald Stone
 Watt Industries



Charity Fair Horse Show President and DDSF Board member Susan Fariior presents a 2010 donation to then DDSF Chair Allan Royster.

Growing Opportunities

Now firmly planted in the Fairgrounds, and nurtured by robust Board commitment and donor generosity, Don Diego Fund's impact on students and the community grew. Fast. Far. And wide.

Scholarship awards increased to \$1,500 in 1988 and \$2,000 in 1990. The following year, two FFA and two 4-H Scholars received \$3,000 each. By 1995, the scholarship amounts rose to \$5,000. Categories also expanded: to Exhibitor/Participant in 1996; Employee in 2002; and Vocational Education in 2015.

Beginning in the early 2000s, the number and monetary amount of awards began to increase dramatically as the Board added scholarships at \$2,500, \$1,500 and \$1,000 levels. In 2013, it established the \$5,000 Spanjian Family Scholarship.

As the program evolved and the name changed from Don Diego Fund to Don Diego Scholarship Foundation (DDSF) in 2013, guidelines solidified. Today, eligibility is based upon a San Diego area applicant's participation in activities and events at the Fairgrounds, including the San Diego County Fair.

In 2019, DDSF reached a milestone of awarding more than one million dollars in college scholarships and agricultural grants.



Tom Hernandez would have tipped his sombrero to his namesake organization!

2020 Scholar Sasha Jouldjian matriculates at Boston College on her way to practicing Family Law and advocating for women and children.

New Programs Take Root



A man ordered a "Will You Marry Me?" Legacy Brick. He escorted the love of his life to the Fountain, unveiled the brick, got down on one knee, opened a jewelry box to reveal a gorgeous engagement ring, and popped the question. Astonished to tears, she cried, "YES!"

To raise funds and connect the wider community to DDSF, the organization initiated new programs in the twenty-teens. The Legacy Brick Program enables people to commemorate a special person or memorable moment with a customized brick installed at the DDSF Legacy Fountain at the Fairgrounds' Plaza de México.

One of the most engaging Fair opportunities is Plant*Grow*Eat, a program that teaches elementary school

children about agriculture and nutrition in a fun, hands-on way. Kids become organic farmers, growing edible plants from seed, then proudly bringing their crop to the Fair where they earn ribbons and explore agriculture areas. Beginning in the early 1990s, DDSF has solicited donors, including businesses, community organizations and individuals, to sponsor buses that annually transport thousands of students from Title 1 schools for this transformational experience.



One P*G*E farmer joyfully declared, "I don't like radishes from the store. But when I eat the one I grew, it tastes good!"



Grounded in the Past — Building Toward the Future

In March 2020, life changed for DDSF, and the world. The COVID-19 pandemic brought everything to a devastating halt, forcing suspension of the San Diego County Fair for only the second time in its 140-year history. The first time was during World War II, after which it roared back in 1947 with the theme, Outdoor Life, and the introduction of Tom Hernandez as goodwill ambassador, Don Diego.

The pandemic put a harsh pause on DDSF's Plant*Grow*Eat program and Gala. Disappointed but undeterred, the Board forged ahead with ambitious efforts to begin raising its second million. Pursuing an aggressive marketing strategy, the DDSF expanded its databases while creating and cross-pollinating targeted communications on social media and print platforms with impressive results.

Individual and corporate support has been the backbone

of DDSF since its inception. In addition to the Spanjian award, the Zable Foundation has been a longtime sponsor of 4-H and now Junior Livestock Auction scholarships.

After an Endowed Named Scholarship program was innovated in 2020, Board and community members enthusiastically rose to the challenge. The first scholarship honored San Diego's iconic Tulloch ranching family. Others swiftly followed. By 2021, 11 Endowed Named Scholarships had been established by people passionate about making an enduring investment in the future.

Expanding farther, two Board families established one-time, four-year scholarships totaling \$20,000 each; one in 2020 and one in 2021. The awards have enabled students of great promise and great need to attend prestigious universities as they strive to become leaders of our community.

In celebration of our 35th anniversary, we determined to carry forward the DDSF tradition of giving back by establishing an Alumni Scholarship. Past recipients will be invited to join together and pool financial resources to provide an annual scholarship.

As we emerge from these arduous pandemic times, we are buoyed by the continuing high caliber of our Scholars and the certainty that Don Diego Scholarship Foundation will persevere to build a better San Diego, one scholarship at a time.

With a total \$1,191,000 awarded to 298 students 1986-2021, we dedicate this Chronicle to everyone who has donated time, wisdom and money over the past 35 years.

Thank you!



1947 San Diego County Fair program.



The first Endowed Named Scholarship honors the Tulloch family.



The \$20,000 CGW Family Foundation Scholarship facilitated by Board member John Hoeflich propelled 2020 Scholar Nikki Arias to UC Davis.

DDSF Scholar-Leaders: 1986-2021!

1986

Lisa Cannon
Greg Dosier
Tina Napier

1987

Lynette Berry
Kim Pauley
Christina Ramer

1988

Daniel Boyer
Charlotte Jenkins
Maura Leonard

1989

Dennis Barrett
Catherine Muldar
Matthew Sherman

1990

Vicki Hedeem
Jervan Marino
Annette Osuna
Suzanne Peterson

1991

Danielle Bennett
Sarah Carroll
Kristie Katin
Maya S. Lee
Jennifer Mix

1992

Ted Dexheimer
Lorraine Gailband
Kimberly Rafter

1993

Amy Hall
Stacey Moore
Karin Sorem

1994

Melissa Alvarado
Kari Stout
Shannon Zumwalt

1995

Rebecca Jessup
Kyah Latimer
Vincent Mikulanis

1996

Leslie Cunningham
Rachel Dawson
D'Ann Dobbins
Amanda Yarnell

1997

Nora Elsalawy
Jami Kaptein
Gianna Suter
Timarie Szabo

1998

Paul Brydon
Kelly McPheters
Anthony Tanbakuchi
Shay Williams

1999

Shannon Dixon
Anika Dominguez
Mary Masch
Amber Scott

2000

Travis Chesney
Jared Poppert
Scott Stebner
Miranda Toledo

2001

Tara Ascroft
Shalini Patnaik
Laura Stevens
Joseph Wellhouse

2002

Veronica Cesena
Anna Good
Johanna Northcote
Tarah Peters

2003

Levi Gassaway
Stephanie Platis
Raquel Rusing
Alysha Stehly

2004

Breanna Bell
Claire Boeck
Kelly Dobel
Troy Lemperle
Jesse Lyon
Joshua Raser

2005

Ashley Colburn
Ashley Downing
Panna Felsen
Bobbi Freeman
Ashley Holmes
Chris McCormick
Chad Morse
Christina Platis
Jessica Reading
Lindsey Tulloch

2006

Sara Bayles
Brandon Chesney
Philip Cobb
Jessica Groleau
Holly Hart
Jamie Hill
Shannen Kerst
Olivia Loiacono
Jane Lyon
Morgan Mitchell
Jenny Ngo
Hannah Payne

2007

Carla Boeck
Jessica Eby
Hannah Evana
Katherine Kasten
Steven McLennan
Marissa Quinn
Marissa Tescier
Jasmine Wallace
Spencer Williams
Lisa Zhu

2008

Julianne Duffin
Melissa Dunckel
Rebecca Eichten
Laura Gregorich
Lisa Hillebrecht
Jenna Jauregui
Carolyn Lechner
Jessica Robbins
Samantha Schofield
Alexa Stanton
Alexis Tarbet
Emily Whitecotton
Brandon Young

2009

Mark Brashear
Adelaide Dyer
Caylee Falvo
Kelsey Gilmore
Arianna Lasche

2010

Kevin Brice
Emily Cary
Juliana Collins
Nichole Miller
Holly Rogers

2011

Brett Huff
Daniel Menno
Katelyn O'Brien
Prithvi Undavalli

2012

Kirby Challman
Meredith Lehmann
Kendall Lynch
RaeAnne VanTol

2013

Tessa Adler
Brooke Buckley
Scott Jacobson
Mathew Kelly

2014

Gregory Brice
Rachel Brown
Emily Dorsey
Noa Glaser
Carolyn Kravitz
Victoria Laird
Jamie McKinley
Madeline Muhr
Eliza Naimi
Bryeson Rowell
Aaron Steger
Ashley Therien
Nikolina Zenovic

2015

Matthew Antunez
Madison Carmichael
Sarah Dean
Austin Koch
Hannah Labrie-Smith
John O'Leary
Hannah Presley
Bryna Rackerby
Sarah Roberson
Sophia Schmidt
Brett Signore
Devin Stanley
Kaylin vanTol
Amy Wehner

2016

Ryan Berardelli
Sofia Davis
Carney Flinn
Amy Gload
Helen Jin
Sophia Mock
Courtney Ouellette
Ray Rapue
Taryn Sehnert
Samuel Sugarman
Sarah Uribe
Yessica Vargas

2017

Samantha Brandenburg
Sierra Branson
Mariel Cota
Kathleen Cummings
Sage Drohan
Sarah Drown
Kathryn Flinn
Hannah Gill
Katherine Golden
Audrey Greenwood
Chandler Hall
Andrew Holemio
Blake Jackson
Sophia Kazmierowicz
Alisa Marks
Grace Martineau
Monsera Martinez
Katlyn McClellan
Mary Moreno-Christian
Kyle Murray
Mia Rice
Ann Signore
Valorie Wolf
Marissa Wu
Jessica Xu
Jessica Zou

2018

Hailey Baldwin
Katlyn Barath
Megan Clodfelter
Sabrina Drobeck
Sydney George
Catalina Gonzalez
Alyssa Hadix
Olivia Jarvis
Briana Kier
Autumn Kleinrath
Collin Kooyman
Hannah Lambert
Marilyn Long
Anna Lonsway
Angelina Manasan
Tierra Mathews
Elizabeth Melott
Victoria Navarro
Hiram Olivarria Jr.
Cambria Osborn
Reanna Paala
Grace Parker
Tori Pedersen
Katie Philips
Courtney Reiter
Ella Sumagaysay
Alicia Trujillo
Alyssa Marie van Tol
Conner Watson
Travis Woliung

2019

Hailey Bjerknæs
Helen Buchanan
Robert Carmichael
Katelyn Challman
Leah Gill
Kassidy Gray
Johanna Jimenez
Megan Kelly
Sol Kier
Jacqueline Kinch
Nick LaRocco
Kasin Martin
Elijah Martineau
Miranda Medford
Emilie Melnychuk
Elizabeth Navarro
Charlize Rice
Marisol Salas
Russell Sorbo
Isai Soto
Sissy Sugarman
Rachel Utter
Evan Wright

2020

Nicole Arias
Delaney Barnes
Rylie Boyd
Alexa Brown
Madison Causey
Amanda Engert
Christian Estill
Rachael Gilmore
Elizabeth Habib
Maranda Hawkins
Way Hlaing
Lauryn Jarvis
Sasha Jouldjian
Evan Maher
Kevin Ramales-Alcaide
Lariece Reyna
Delana Sehnert
Allison Shao
Jerry Snow
Emma Thorpe
Jessica van Tol
Olivia van Tol

2021

Rebecca Berquist
Sydney Breese
Juan Carlos Cigarrero
Samantha Coleman
Areli De Casas
Claire Fernandez
Elizabeth Hazard
Kylie Konyn
Aiko Lozar
Kellsey McCaffree
Matthew Morse
Alyssa Partner
Leila Perko
Alexander Poroy
Adelle Priest
Morgan Robinson
Adelaide Sorbo
Jamie Uribe
Edwin Vargas Navarro



Top 2021 recipient Edwin Vargas Navarro, who is using his \$20,000 Liss Family Scholarship and \$1,000 Junior Livestock Auction Scholarship to major in Math at UC Berkeley, epitomizes the high-achieving Scholars Don Diego is delighted to support.

Don Diego Scholarship Foundation Leadership

Board Members 1986-2022

Chairs:

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Barbara Dunphy
Jim Morris
Allan Royster
Paul Ecke III
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Roxana Foxx
Juanita Hayes

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Ann Davies
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Glenn Drown
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Susan Farrior
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Vivian Hardage
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G Joyce Rowland
Ray Saatjian
Frederick Schenk
Steve Shewmaker
Pierre Sleiman
Alysha Stehly
Megan Tevrizian
Karen Tanz
William Tulloch
Bob Vice
Louis Wolfsheimer
Gene Yee
George Young
David Watson
Robert Valdez

Members:

Michael Alpert
Jan Anton
Chuck Badger
Lisa Barkett
Doug Barnhart
Leslie Barone
Ruben Barrales
Richard Bloch

Current Leadership Team

Executive Committee:

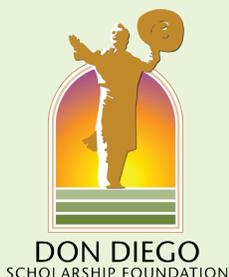
Juanita Hayes, Chairman; John Hoeflich, Vice Chairman;
D Prestininzi, Secretary; George Karetas, Treasurer

Board: Lisa Barkett, Alyson Connelly, Sandra DiCicco,
Glenn Drown, Susan Farrior, Joe Harper, Kirby Morrison,
Frederick Schenk, Stephen Shewmaker, Alysha Stehly

Chairs Emeritus: Paul Ecke III, Roxana Foxx, Jon Liss

Executive Director: Chana Mannen

Mission: Don Diego Scholarship Foundation promotes education in a fair and fiscally sound manner by providing scholarships to deserving San Diego area graduating high school seniors and graduates who have been associated with activities at the Del Mar Fairgrounds, including the San Diego County Fair. The Don Diego Scholarship Foundation also provides grants for agricultural education.



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