

JACK LONDON
STATE HISTORIC PARK

JACK LONDON PARK PARTNERS

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*(Left to right) Sonoma County Supervisor Susan Gorin, Sonoma Mayor Jack Ding and Board of Supervisors Aide Hannah Whitman with the Grandmother Tree and Ferns at Jack London State Historic Park on Sept. 24, 2022.
(Photo by SonomasLife.com)*

Jack London State Historic Park fundraising gala - A magical evening in an enchanted forest

Benziger Family Environmental Education Program announced

(Link to photo gallery below)

[Jack London State Historic Park](#) transformed into an enchanted forest on Sept. 24 as 320 guests attended the gala fundraising event, “Once Upon a Time in a Not-So-Distant Forest.” The event raised more than \$550,000 for the non-profit Jack London Park Partners which has funded and operated the park on behalf of the people of California since 2012.

Biodynamic winemaker and farmer Mike Benziger, chairman of the Jack London Park Partners Board of Directors, was honored for his commitment to the park's outreach to youth. It was announced that the program will be named the Benziger Family Environmental Education Program.

"Mike has been very generous with his time, leadership, and resources. He is especially committed to our environmental education programs," said Executive Director Matt Leffert.

"The reason Jack London Park is so critical to me and my family is not only its dramatic beauty and illustrious history, but because it's a place to reach and educate the next generation of young people," Benziger said.

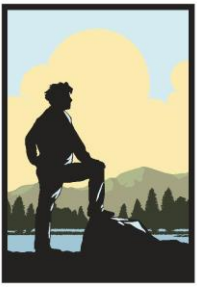
"Kids spend too much time in front of screens and too little time outdoors in nature. Jack London State Historic Park is counteracting this by bringing students to the park for fun, hands-on environmental education programs. We are capturing students' imaginations and creating opportunities for them to follow their curiosity and reconnect with nature and themselves. We are offering pathways to nature to develop the environmental stewards of tomorrow," he added.

Gala attendees were introduced to the park's new wine partner, [Eco Terreno Wines & Vineyards](#), which provided Sauvignon Blanc and Cabernet Sauvignon produced with biodynamic, organic, and regenerative farming methods.

The highly imaginative and interactive event was developed by Gregangelo's Velocity Entertainment. Beginning with a reception in the Eucalyptus Grove, attendees met original costume characters like "Skunk," "Wolf," "Owl," and "Bee."

Attendees included California State Senator Bill Dodd and Chief of Staff Ezra Chabaan, Sonoma Mayor Jack Ding, Sonoma County Supervisor Susan Gorin and Aide Hannah Whitman.

After a delicious family-style meal by Elaine Bell, served in the Winery Ruins, "The Dance of the Four Seasons" and other pieces were performed by magical forest creatures and aerial faeries. The park's 2,000-year-old redwood, affectionately known as the Grandmother Tree, was brought to life to sing a lullaby and tell an ancient story.



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Former Sonoma Alcalde Marcelo Defreitas, creative director of Gregangelo's Velocity Entertainment, led the "fund a need" drive, resulting in donations from nearly all in attendance.

"The evening was magical in many ways. Most exciting was the atmosphere of love and support for the park and all it offers to the community. The generosity of our guests – slightly more than last year - was impressive, especially in this unsettled economy," said Gala Chair Liz Fisher.

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About Jack London State Historic Park:

Jack London State Historic Park, in the heart of the Sonoma Valley, is operated and funded by Jack London Park Partners. Funding to keep the park going strong is generated from visitors, annual passholders and generous donors. Learn more about the park at jacklondonpark.com/ and on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [YouTube](#).

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Photo Gallery:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1piZ_Q080Q9NRdbgigLOfdywkDsDOnyFH/view?usp=sharing

Captions (left to right unless noted):

People:

1. Jack London Park Partners Board Chair Peter Ferris, Renee Acosta and Senator Bill Dodd (by SonomasLife.com)
2. Sonoma County Supervisor Susan Gorin, Sonoma Mayor Jack Ding, Aide Hannah Whitman with the Grandmother Tree and Ferns (by SonomasLife.com)
3. Creative Director Marcelo Defrietas, Autumn Satyr and Gala Chair Liz Fisher (by Hiromi Yoshida)
4. Jack London Park Partners Chair Mike Benziger with granddaughter Noah Weiswasser (by Zoart Photography)
5. Jack London State Historic Park Executive Director Matt Leffert with George and Ann Arabian (by SonomasLife.com)
6. Mary Chakota and Dean Jackson with Skunk (by Zoart Photography)
7. Jack London Park Partners Board Vice President Malcolm Walter, Diana Bugg and Bee (by SonomasLife.com)

8. JLPP Chair Peter and Donna Ferris with Rick Stanfield and Board Member Laura Stanfield (by SonomasLife.com)
9. JLPP Board Member Sandy Leonard, Farm to Pantry Founder Duskie Estes and John Stewart (by SonomasLife.com)
10. Senator Bill Dodd, Fairmont Hotels & Resorts' Michelle Heston, Transcendence Theatre Company's Brad Surosky and Maggie Simenthal (by SonomasLife.com)
11. JLPP Treasurer David Lambert, Ann Paolini, Gala Chair Liz Fisher and JLPP Vice President Malcolm Walter (by SonomasLife.com)
12. JLPP Board Member Karen Collins, Sonoma State University Professor/Chair David McCuan, San Francisco Yacht Club Commodore Gary Sheppard and Lisa Klairmont (by SonomasLife.com)
13. JLPP Board Member Hank Martinson and John Gurney (by SonomasLife.com)
14. Sonoma Index Tribune Journalist Chase Hunter, Sonoma Mayor Jack Ding, KSVY's Bob Taylor and Kenwood Press' Paul Goguen (by SonomasLife.com)
15. Melissa Dowling and Paul Goguen of Kenwood Press (by SonomasLife.com)
16. Sonoma Valley Sun Publisher Val Robichaud and Sonoma Community Center's Alyssa Conder (by SonomasLife.com)
17. Maud Hallin and Gaynor Brown (by SonomasLife.com)

Setting & Entertainment

- A. Aerialist at reception in the Eucalyptus Grove (by SonomasLife.com)
- B. JLPP Board Member Ford Goodman, Diana Bugg and Lynn Goodman in the Eucalyptus Grove (by Zoart Photography)
- C. Grandmother Tree and Ferns (by SonomasLife.com)
- D. Woodland characters created by Velocity Entertainment (by Zoart Photography)
- E. Eco Terreno Wines (by Zoart Photography)
- F. Dinner set in the Winery Ruins (by Zoart Photography)
- G. Dessert on an enchanted forest theme by Elaine Bell (by SonomasLife.com)
- H. Enthusiastic support for Jack London State Historic Park (by Zoart Photography)
- I. Owl (by Zoart Photography)
- J. The Moon rises (by Zoart Photography)
- K. Dastardly Developers Dee Molish and Barry Cudda (by Zoart Photography)

Other Special Guests

- JLSHP Executive Director Matt Leffert (by SonomasLife.com)
- JLSHP Executive Director Matt Leffert (by Zoart Photography)
- Jack London Park Partners Chair Mike Benziger with granddaughter Noah Weiswasser (by Hiromi Yoshida)
- Angel Santamaria of Eco Terreno and wife Maria (by SonomasLife.com)
- Eco Terreno General Manager Rob Izzo (by Zoart Photography)
- Betty Gai and Martha Aguiar (by SonomasLife.com)
- Buffy Miller and Diana Bugg (by SonomasLife.com)
- The Herrera Family (by Zoart Photography)
- Tom Duffy and Diana Tang channel their inner elves (by Zoart Photography)