

Susan Drake, business leader and philanthropist, awarded with TreePeople's highest honor

Susan Drake, co-owner of Casa Automotive Group and Subaru Of Sherman Oaks, was honored on Oct. 8 with TreePeople's inaugural Jim Hardie Award in recognition for her tireless support of the organization's work and its home at Coldwater Canyon Park.



A board member since 2017, Drake has generously supported TreePeople toward upkeeping Coldwater Canyon Park as well as providing Subaru vehicles essential to the organization's community work. Although a City of Los Angeles public park, Coldwater Canyon Park receives few public funds and is maintained mainly by private donations. Drake is one of the park's greatest champions.

"People like Susan Drake are those angels that help us maintain our beautiful park," said TreePeople CEO Cindy Montanez. "Susan is our top contributor to this park. Los Angeles wouldn't have this beautiful park if it wasn't Susan and the commitment of Subaru of Sherman Oaks.

Drake was honored at Harvest Moon, TreePeople's first fundraising event since the COVID-19 pandemic. She received the organization's newest service award, which was named after longtime supporter and staff member Jim Hardie, who passed away in 2021.

"The day I was approached to be a TreePeople board member was one of my proudest moments," Drake said. "Speaking for trees is an important voice. I thank those of you on the ground, in the soil. It's been an honor to work with you, digging and planting, weeding and raking. You make such a positive impact for our Earth."

Hardie was a member of TreePeople's Board of Directors, oversaw the creation of the S. Mark Taper Foundation Amphitheater, led the tree planting efforts to plant and care for more than 300 trees on Martin Luther King Blvd in South Central Los Angeles, trained hundreds of community volunteers as Citizen Foresters, and dedicated his life to stewarding Coldwater Canyon Park.

"Jim would be honored that you would be honored with something that bears his name because he appreciated your love for this park and for this organization and your commitment to the work that he was doing," said Eileen Knight, Hardie's widow.

About TreePeople

TreePeople unites the power of trees, people, and nature-based solutions to grow a more climate-ready LA. The organization inspires, engages and supports Angelenos to take personal responsibility for the urban environment, facilitates collaboration among government

agencies, and promotes leadership in grassroots volunteers, students and communities. In this way, TreePeople seeks to build a powerful and diverse coalition to grow a greener, healthier and more water-secure Los Angeles for present and future generations. For more information, visit treepeople.org.