

PRESS RELEASE

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Media contact: Gigi Allanic, Alissa Wolken
206.548.2550 | woodlandparkzoo@zoo.org

Zoo honors local and international heroes with conservation awards *Seattle high school student receives award and scholarship*

SEATTLE—At its **Thrive Leadership Awards** dinner and fundraiser last night, Woodland Park Zoo honored individuals and a family business who have demonstrated their commitment to protecting wildlife and the environment around them, and advancing Woodland Park Zoo's mission of conservation.



"Conservation depends on people and each of these awardees is a force for nature," said Woodland Park Zoo President and CEO Alejandro Grajal. "Zoos can't protect the biodiversity of species alone. We need partners and the unsung heroes to help us protect our planet, whether that's educating millions of visitors on zoo grounds, working with farmers in Mexico, or being a champion of wildlife through time and leadership. They are showing us how to change humanity's relationship with nature. They are truly forces for nature."

The zoo's inaugural Thrive Leadership Awards were presented to:

Conservation Leadership Award: *Rodrigo Medellín, PhD*, for his dedication to the study and conservation of bats and other mammals. Known as the "Bat Man of Mexico," Medellín's tireless research and work with farmers is restoring the population of Mexico's lesser long-nosed bat, which pollinates the blue agave—the single plant species tequila is produced from. Bat-friendly tequilas and mezcals are saving bat species while revolutionizing Mexico's tequila industry.

Youth Conservation Award and \$5,000 scholarship: *Katherine Fry*, a senior at Chief Sealth International High School in West Seattle, for contributing nearly 800 hours of volunteer service and providing leadership in the zoo's youth programs including ZooCorps, Seattle Youth Climate Action Network and Citizen Science Amphibian Monitoring. In the fall, Fry will begin undergraduate study at Western Washington University to study environmental science and biology.

The zoo surprised Fry with the \$5,000 scholarship in recognition of her outstanding leadership at the zoo. "We are very grateful to Woodland Park Zoo board member Rob Short and his wife Emer Dooley for providing a considerable boost to Katherine's promising studies and career," said Grajal.

Guy. C. Phinney Corporate Leadership Award: *Brown Bear Car Wash and owners Odermat Family*, who for more than two decades have supported Woodland Park Zoo through their generosity and leadership action. As a family business, Vic and Mary Odermat have made it a priority to have their whole family involved in connecting people to nature and being a voice and advocate for conservation.

Outstanding Philanthropic Leadership Award: *Rick and Nancy Alvord*, a couple who has been a part of Woodland Park Zoo's community for 32 years—giving so big-heartedly of their resources, time and leadership to help the zoo expand its role as a conservation and education institution. True believers in giving back to their community, they have passed this value on to their own children and grandchildren, creating a legacy of compassion for wildlife and the environment.

"These exemplary leaders are accomplishing extraordinary things to change the lives of animals, change the lives of people and change the world. This is what Woodland Park Zoo's exciting and engaging future is all about," said Woodland Park Zoo Board Chair Jeff Leppo.

Funds raised at the Thrive Leadership Awards dinner will support Woodland Park Zoo's exemplary animal care program, wildlife conservation projects in the Pacific Northwest and around the world, hands-on environmental learning for all ages, and action-centered programs that engage communities in protecting wildlife and living landscapes. For information or to become a zoo member, visit www.zoo.org or call 206.548.2500.

Accredited by the Association of Zoos & Aquariums, award-winning Woodland Park Zoo is famed for pioneering naturalistic exhibits and setting international standards for zoos in animal care, conservation and education programs. Woodland Park Zoo is helping to save animals and their habitats in the Pacific Northwest and around the world. By inspiring people to care and act, Woodland Park Zoo is making a difference in our planet's future. For more information, visit www.zoo.org.

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