

## **Park orientation signs garner national award**

LAGUNA NEWS-POST

On Nov. 14, the orientation signs at Laguna Coast Wilderness Park gained national recognition and received second place in the Wayside Exhibit category at the Interpretive Media Awards presented by the National Association for Interpretation.

The Acorn Group and SoLa Creative, a collaborative design team selected by Laguna Canyon Foundation to help create the sign panels, submitted the project titled, "Laguna Coast Wilderness Park: A Mosaic of Landscapes."

Laguna Canyon Foundation's goal was to create panels for the park entrances that would welcome and instill a sense of understanding in park visitors. The orientation signs are easel-supported images of original Laguna plein air paintings of current park access trails with text about the site and an appropriate verse. Visitors can view these signs within the Laguna Coast Wilderness Park at Laurel Canyon, Dilley Preserve, Barbara's Lake, Little Sycamore Canyon and Big Bend, as well as an access point at Bommer Ridge between Laguna Coast Wilderness Park and Crystal Cove State Park.

In late 1999, foundation staff and board members worked with representatives from The Nature Conservancy, the County of Orange and Coastal Greenbelt Authority to discuss signs and public awareness of the park. The foundation received a grant from the Donald Bren Foundation to help underwrite the program.

With funding available, the team selected Jennifer Rigby of The Acorn Group and Laura Stahlberg of SoLa Creative to lead the sign development. After receiving the award Rigby commented, "One of the most gratifying experiences in interpretive planning and design is working with community members and foundations who are passionate about the land. ... Intuitively we felt we had created panels that are meaningful and inspiring to visitors, but to have such efforts recognized in a national media competition is extraordinary."

The Laguna Plein Air Painters Association was asked to help with the paintings of the six sites. Artists Saim Caglayan, Ken Auster, John Cosby, Jacob Baas, Jeff Horn and Cynthia Britian each selected a site and created a new artwork.

While dedicating the signs at the 2001 Celebrate Laguna Coast Wilderness Park Ceremony, Michael Pinto, founder and president of Laguna Canyon Foundation said, "The collaboration of the artists and the foundation illustrates the symbiotic relationship between art and the preservation of nature."

With a grant from the Joan Irvine Smith & Athalie R. Clarke Foundation, the foundation was able to purchase the original paintings for the future James and Rosemary Nix Nature Center at Laguna Coast Wilderness Park.

The award celebrates more than just the signs, said Mary Fegraus, of the Laguna Canyon Foundation.

"The recognition reminds everyone of the ecological fragility and natural beauty of the wilderness park system, and that is an oasis amidst development.

As expressed by the orientation signs, the Laguna Coast Wilderness Park is a 'mosaic of landscapes' preserved for present and future generations," she said.

For more information call: 949-855-7275.