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GOSSIP, IDEAS, AND GOINGS ON



A Walk on the Wild Side

Up close and personal

Giving a worldwide voice to wildlife by providing a permanent loving home for displaced, abused, abandoned, or permanently injured wild and exotic animals is the mission of Conservation Ambassadors and their engaging “Zoo to You” program.

“Is that a camel in the driveway?” squealed a 5-year-old with delight when approaching last year’s spectacular fundraiser for **Conservation Ambassadors** in the heart of Silicon Valley. Yes, indeed, a Peninsula estate owned by Linda Yates and Paul Holland became a wild life refuge for one glorious afternoon, complete with kangaroos in the front yard, lemurs in the garden, porcupines and turtles on the lawn, and otters in the wading pool—and that’s just a handful of the dozens of fascinating creatures that were on hand for the “Take a Walk on the Wild Side” event.



Conservation Ambassadors
Founder and CEO David
Jackson with Samantha Jackson

The animals and their caretakers hailed from Conservation Ambassadors, a nonprofit rescue zoo founded by animal expert David Jackson where un-releasable and unwanted wild and exotic animals find a permanent loving home. Conservation Ambassadors provides these animals a second chance at life by becoming ambassadors for their species through an outreach education program called “Zoo to You” that has educated ▶▶



Jack Hanna on stage with Samantha Jackson

millions of children since its inception.

Indeed, just about every time you see folks like Jack Hanna on TV with an animal, it's one from Conservation Ambassadors. Hanna is a major supporter of the group and made a guest appearance at the "Take a Walk on the Wild Side" benefit in Silicon Valley. The mission of Conservation Ambassadors strikes a chord with many. Yates and Holland have worked with Conservation Ambassadors for nearly 15 years. "David brought his 'Zoo to You' program to Ormondale School years ago," recalls Yates. "And we were so impressed, we wanted to help."

Jackson grew up in El Paso, Texas, and like many young Texans received a BB gun as a present. "I went out and shot at a bird and actually hit it," he recalls. "I freaked out and tried desperately to save it. I brought it into the laundry room of our house and went to get supplies and ➤



David Jackson





Gentry's Elsie Floriani and her granddaughter Chloe

came back and our cat had a mouth full of feathers. I became an animal conservationist on the spot." Jackson went on to earn degrees in veterinary medicine and found his calling working with exotic animals. He eventually turned family land in Paso Robles into an animal refuge.

He has a host of strange and heartwarming stories of animal rescues like the spider monkey that was found in a dumpster or the alligator drug dealers kept in a bathroom. Jackson and his team carefully nurse these animals back to health and spend months helping them gain trust in humans. They then train them to travel so that they can meet school children and appear on shows like *Good Morning America* or *The Tonight Show*.

When asked what's next for Conservation Ambassadors, Jackson relates, "We bring the animals to hundreds of schools each year. We are planning expansion and improvements of our facilities in Paso Robles, and we'll be back for another 'Take a Walk on the Wild Side' fundraiser in Silicon Valley on May 13." ♦

To reserve a table for "Take a Walk on the Wild Side 2017" or to book a "Zoo to You" appearance at your child's school, visit www.conservationambassadors.org.



Paul Holland

