**Alex Morales**

*By Margi Bertram, with contributions from Addison Tweedy, April Del Cid, Brad Brahe, Debbie Morrison, Rachael Komulainen, Maggie Romero, John Bertram, and Phyllis Dozier.*

Alex Morales was the security guard assigned to William S. Hart Park and Museum since February 1, 2015, and he recently lost his short battle with cancer and passed away. His job fulfilled the following requirement laid out in Hart’s will, that “At all times when the Museum is open to the public a guard shall be maintained within the museum for the purpose of protecting the Museum Pieces and Property.” As such, his job at the Hart Museum was to follow every tour, in order to ensure the safety not only of the collections, but of the staff and guests as well.

However, Alex went above and beyond his assigned role. He knew every fact from every tour, and if one of us faltered, he’d be there to discreetly give us the information we’d forgotten. With his bilingual skills, Alex would provide tours for our Spanish-speaking visitors, for which we (and they) were always grateful. He admired “Mr. Hart” as a human being, flaws and all – someone he could relate to, and felt a deep, genuine connection to him. When tours were over for the day, he would patrol the park, which he loved, often proclaiming, “The park is just the best!”

Alex would get so excited when he saw a snake in the park, and he took the initiative to ask Rachael Komulainen to train him on safely catching and relocating rattlesnakes in high traffic areas of the park. His willingness to learn this skill literally saved snakes’ lives.  Additionally, he always checked on all of our Barnyard critters and would notify staff if he saw any issues.  He would send pictures and videos to assist off-site staff to evaluate each situation.  During really hot, over 100 degree days, Alex would go into the Barnyard after park staff had left to hose down the pigs again and add water to their mud holes.

He was always alert to any nearby fires, and would make sure all of us were aware of any possible danger to the park. Every day, Alex answered patron questions, and was an extra pair of eyes when we could not be everywhere. This willingness to do more than what was expected of him resulted in Alex being personally invested in Hart Park and Museum – he genuinely cared for the place itself, as well as the staff and visitors. We know he was important to us, but we also know this place was important to him. He kept us all safe and his support, kindness, and generosity were beyond measure.

We will all miss Alex – especially the animals of Hart Park.  Thank you for your service, Alex.  Our deepest sympathies go out to his family.