**Mark Thompson**

*By: Rachael Komulainen, Park Animal Keeper (William S. Hart Park)*

Mark Thompson, General Maintenance Worker for Hart Park, passed away suddenly on Sept. 10, 2021.  His memorial service was behind Hart Hall on Oct. 21, 2021.  That same day, a memorial bench – handcrafted by his coworkers – was installed and dedicated, by the waterfowl enclosure.  The last major project Mark worked on was the massive remodeling of the waterfowl exhibit.

The staff, the volunteers, and the animals were there, to help celebrate the life of our friend and coworker, Mark Thompson. Remember the joke about the guy that you give a ruler, hammer and a roll of duct tape to – and he goes out and builds a shopping mall?!? Well, Mark WAS that guy! There was nothing he couldn’t build nor fix, if it landed on his plate of tasks. Such an amazing talent – and so smart and funny. And, work ethic! He completed each project with such quality and thoroughness, and in such short amounts of time! And, what a mentor! As my coworker Miguel said: Mark shared his knowledge. He really was happy to teach people what he knew, and not just hoard the knowledge to himself. I know that we are all better for having known him.

Looking around, we could all see his legacy of work everywhere, especially the beautiful aviary cover on the recently finished waterfowl exhibit renovation. In fact, before I went on vacation to Minnesota for the last two weeks in July, I told Mark: “If I die suddenly, please promise me that you will make sure this project gets completed for the birds.” At the time, Mark laughed and said that “yes, I promise to make sure it gets completed.” Well, Mark was a man of his word. Just a couple weeks after making sure that this exhibit was completed, he passed away.

Mark loved his family more than anything. His wife Angie was the center of his universe. I think we all felt that we got to know Angie really well because Mark talked about her so often. And, he was so proud of his sons, Jeremy & Aaron, and their families. Mark loved to play golf, he had an amazing singing voice—in fact, singing for our coworker Cheryl Hazama’s memorial service in April of 2018—and he was a man of deep faith. He had even been a pastor. His complete faith in the big picture in life was very transparent because he exuded such a peacefulness and a connectedness, that only strong convictions can bring.