Happy Holidays, everyone! This year has sure been a whirlwind, and now that it is getting close to the year’s end, let’s take a moment to reflect.

There were a lot of positive moments during this year, including the addition of a couple more rabbits and Mute swans to those already existing exhibits. We had a couple of new staff members and several new volunteers join us, throughout the year, as well. We also lost a couple of staff, through promotions &/or transferring to parks closer to their homes. “Pixie,” our 20-year old, potbelly pig, passed away in April and our 19-year old golden pheasant, “Ricky,” passed away in October. Both were extremely old for their species and had very long and happy lives.

This past spring, the Barnyard won the L.A. County-Parks & Rec award for Agency/Facility/Program of the Year – which honored last year’s Waterfowl Habitat Renovation Project. We continued our partnership with Santa Clarita Grocery, which provides us produce for our Critters. Then, in November, we recently partnered with Costco of Santa Clarita, to also give us produce for our Critters.

Also, we were able to do a massive clean up of the park – i.e. brush clearance, tree trimming, raking/weeding – at the end of the summer. So many people helped to make this possible, including: LA County Crew Instructors & their crews, California Conservation Corps, LDS Church group (several different wards participated), and outside contractors. The park looks so very good, as a result of all their efforts! Thanks to all!

Every year has its challenges, though, and this year was no exception. We had a couple of staff injuries this year, including to the Park Superintendent and I. Thankfully, they were injuries that heal with time. Staffing shortages continued to be another obstacle that we had to overcome. So, we REALLY APPRECIATE our dedicated volunteers for really stepping up to the plate and filling in the gaps, whenever needed. Our volunteers are the BEST!!

Also, we want to THANK all of the community members and Green Thumb of Newhall, for their pumpkin donations! Our critters LOVE pumpkins! If you have uncarved pumpkins that you want to donate to a good cause, please drop them off at Hart Park – place on the porch of the Animal Keeper’s Office, near the barn.

Finally, I want to invite everyone to come and participate in our 2nd (annual) Barnyard Holiday Lights event on Dec. 3rd, from 4pm-8pm. Santa and his ‘reindeer’ will be present for photo ops! Last year was a very successful and fun event, and this year’s will be bigger and better!

To close, the Critters, volunteers, staff & I want to wish you all a very happy, safe and peaceful holiday season! *(Click here or on the image below to see photos of our staff and volunteers, including larger versions of the images used in this article.)*