



THE ANNENBERG FOUNDATION TRUST AT
SUNNYLANDS

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Sunnylands fondly recalls Wallis Annenberg for her dedication to her family's legacy of philanthropy

RANCHO MIRAGE, Calif. — The Annenberg Foundation Trust at Sunnylands is deeply saddened by the passing of Wallis Annenberg, who will always be remembered for extending the legacy of philanthropy established by her father, Ambassador Walter Annenberg, and his wife, Leonore, Sunnylands' founders.

Wallis Huberta Annenberg, born in Philadelphia in 1939, was chairman of the board, president, and CEO of the [Annenberg Foundation](#) in Los Angeles and trustee of [The Annenberg Foundation Trust at Sunnylands](#) in Rancho Mirage, California. She died Monday, July 28, at the age of 86.

As head of the Annenberg Foundation since 2009, Ms. Annenberg is known for opening the Annenberg Community Beach House in Santa Monica to the public, the Annenberg Space for Photography in Century City, and preserving a landmark post office building in Beverly Hills as the Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts.

She also spearheaded fundraising for the Wallis Annenberg Wildlife Crossing, the largest wildlife corridor in the world, donating \$25 million in 2021. When completed, the crossing will act as a bridge allowing mountain lions and other animals to cross freely over the 101 Freeway in Agoura Hills, near the Santa Monica Mountains, without the threat of highway death or accidents.

In 2024, before he left office, then-U.S. President Joseph Biden awarded Ms. Annenberg the 2022 [National Humanities Medal](#) for her efforts to “transform and bolster the arts and humanities in public life, especially in her adopted home of Los Angeles.”

Walter and Leonore Annenberg were recognized as extraordinary philanthropists, designating more than \$3 billion in grants and gifts to major research universities, hospitals, medical

centers, public schools, and cultural and civic organizations. Ms. Annenberg saw a philanthropic model in her father and worked to maintain that ideal of generosity.

“My father didn’t have to pull me aside to talk about philanthropy because he lived a whole life of civic engagement, of philanthropy and giving,” she once said.

Her children, Lauren Bon, Gregory Weingarten and Charles Weingarten, co-directors of the Annenberg Foundation and trustees at The Annenberg Foundation Trust at Sunnylands, issued the following statement:

“To the public, she was a dynamic force in philanthropy. To us, she was a mother, grandmother, friend, mentor, and a force of nature whose life and family remain committed to honoring public service. Her generosity and commitment will be lifting people up for many generations to come.”

In a videotaped interview for Sunnylands, Ms. Annenberg remembered her father’s estate as a haven for family and friends, where her children swam, played tennis, golfed, and watched movies with their family. She attended New Year’s Eve festivities and other holidays at the estate every year.

“It was a family retreat, a place where you could watch the sunset with Ronald and Nancy Reagan, with Frank and Barbara Sinatra. It was a home, and also a constant, dynamic exchange of ideas,” she said.

Ms. Annenberg, along with others in the family, was instrumental in executing the mission of the Sunnylands Trust to preserve the estate as a venue for addressing global and national concerns, and to open the property to the public. She recommended the architect who had redesigned a home she owned in Malibu, Fred Fisher, to be the architect of Sunnylands Center.

As Sunnylands was about to reopen in 2012, she was asked in an interview with *Palm Springs Life* magazine what she foresaw for the estate’s future.

“It will be the gathering place that it once was, but a very open and inclusive one,” she replied. “Environmental workshops, conferences and events on all of the pressing causes to which the Annenbergs have dedicated themselves. We’ve gotten so much pleasure out of the place. Why not open it up to the world and pass it on ... ?”

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(Editor’s note: For photographs of Wallis Annenberg, [click here](#).)

The Annenberg Foundation Trust at Sunnylands

The Annenberg Foundation Trust at Sunnylands is a nonprofit operating entity that hosts high-level retreats and convenings on serious issues facing the nation and the world. Programs offered through Sunnylands Center & Gardens educate the public about the history of Sunnylands, its architecture, art collections, cultural significance, and sustainable practices.