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## **Hammers' Dedication to the Arts Recognized**

*Building Named "Susan and Phil Hammer Theatre Center"*

**SAN JOSE, CALIF.** – European Cirque stilt walkers from the Bay Area Earth Circus Productions joined City and theatre officials today to unveil the San Jose Repertory Theatre's new "Susan and Phil Hammer Theatre Center" sign.

The new sign pays tribute to two longtime supporters of the arts, Susan and Phil Hammer, who were instrumental in the San Jose Repertory Theatre building's creation.

"Susan and Phil Hammer's dedication to the arts helped transform our downtown," said Mayor Chuck Reed. "Thanks to their leadership, downtown has made great strides in its conversion into a creative urban center. Their commitment to the San Jose Rep has provided thousands of local residents and visitors with the opportunity to see and experience first-class live theater and performing arts."

In 1995, the San Jose Redevelopment Agency and the San Jose Repertory Theatre collaborated to give San Jose's premiere theatre company a permanent home. The Agency contributed \$28.5 million toward building the new theatre, and the theatre company raised \$3.2 million. More recently, the Agency invested \$60,000 for the new sign. The name of San Jose Repertory Theatre, the non-profit theatre company, remains the same and will continue to make its home in the Susan and Phil Hammer Theatre Center. The building is getting a name for the first time.

In honor of Susan and Phil Hammer, the Rep also announced the establishment of "The Mark Hammer Memorial Artists' Fund," with \$25,000 in pledged donations from the Hammer family and generous donors, which will be used to support actors, directors,

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designers and production artists' work at the Rep. The fund honors the legacy of Phil Hammer's late brother, Mark Hammer, a professional actor and teacher. Prior to relocating to New York City for the last 15-years of his life, Mark Hammer's career spanned a myriad of stages across the nation (Broadway and throughout the world, including 20-years at Arena Stage in Washington D.C.).

A longtime arts advocate, former Mayor Susan Hammer led the project's effort while in office from 1991 to 1998. As a founding board member and the board's second president, Phil Hammer helped guide the theatre during its early years and raised funds for its completion.

"I am continually impressed by Phil and Susan Hammer's unwavering commitment to the arts in downtown," said San Jose City Councilmember Sam Liccardo. "The Hammers' instrumental efforts in developing a permanent facility and fundraising for the Rep, one of our city's grandest icons, is an enormous reason why the downtown continues to be an exciting place to live, work and play."

The San Jose Repertory Theatre, founded in 1980, opened the dramatically designed state-of-the-art building in November 1997. The 54,000-square-foot venue has allowed the company to grow, bringing 100,000 residents and visitors into downtown San Jose, and serving more than 12,000 youth and adults annually through outreach and education programs.

"Susan and Phil Hammer joined hands with the arts leaders of San Jose and created a vision of San Jose as a mecca for arts and culture," said the theatre company's Artistic Director Timothy Near. "Then they took action and focused the city's movers and shakers on the job of building support, stability and homes for their artists and arts organizations. I am thrilled that the Rep can provide a place where the Hammers' legacy can be celebrated."

The dedication, which coincides with the building's 10-year anniversary, gives it an official name, which was approved by the San Jose City Council. The auditorium, which seats 572, is named in honor of the Sobrato family.

**About the San Jose Redevelopment Agency**

The Agency is dedicated to improving the quality of life for all who live and work in San Jose. Governed by the City Council, the Agency facilitates and oversees comprehensive programs for development to revitalize and strengthen quality of life and competitiveness for San Jose's downtown, neighborhoods and industrial areas. [www.sjredevelopment.org](http://www.sjredevelopment.org)

**About the San Jose Repertory Theatre**

The Mission of the San Jose Repertory Theatre is to engage, entertain and inspire people. The Rep produces innovative theatrical performances that offer fresh perspectives into the human condition, educational programs that promote life-long learning and outreach initiatives that benefit our diverse community. [www.sjrep.com](http://www.sjrep.com)

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