



CITY OF SANTA BARBARA

PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION REPORT

AGENDA DATE: October 23, 2013

TO: Parks and Recreation Commission

FROM: Recreation Division, Parks and Recreation Department

SUBJECT: United Way Day of Caring – Westside Neighborhood Center Garden and Tree Planting

RECOMMENDATION: That the Commission receive a presentation on the United Way Day of Caring Westside Neighborhood Center Garden and Tree Planting project.

DISCUSSION:

Neighborhood and Outreach Services (NOS) participated in the annual United Way Day of Caring event on September 28th. This citywide initiative promotes volunteerism through specific beautification projects identified by community agencies. The United Way facilitates the distribution of volunteers and assigns them to the Day of Caring projects. The Westside Neighborhood Center Garden and Tree Planting project benefited by being a Day of Caring volunteer site.

Project Background

The Westside Neighborhood Center sits along Highway 101 between pedestrian and vehicle bridges that lead into dense residential streets within Santa Barbara's Westside. The property and facility has been undergoing improvements and renovations. A major highlight is the development of the Center's community kitchen. Part of the kitchen's program objectives is to implement a robust "Garden to Kitchen" initiative that promotes food security and healthy cooking practices. The Center maintained three garden boxes prior to the project, and through donations and volunteers, five new boxes were built on the Day of Caring. Nine citrus trees were also planted adjacent to the garden area on that same day.

The Day of Caring

The Day of Caring project began at 8:00 a.m. with 25 volunteers. The volunteers were residents, employees of Bank of America, members of the Santa Barbara Rotary, youth from the City's Youth Apprentice program, and City staff. The volunteers filled the new garden boxes with compost and soil and planted a variety of herbs, vegetables, and flowers. Varieties of lemon, lime, and orange trees were also planted.

The volunteer construction of the boxes were designed by architect Jim Bell and built by Larry Weidel Construction. The project also benefited from donations and discounted support from Bob's Backhoe, Engel and Gray Compost, All-Around Landscape, Channel City Lumber, Jack and The Tool Box, Island Seed and Feed, Fairview Gardens, and Healing Grounds Nursery.

Including costs paid for the irrigation installation, and the in-kind donations, the total value of the project was \$10,000.

City Park's staff Steve Takaya, Pete Whittington, Ramiro Arroyo, Ignacio Valdez, Juan Garcia, and Luis Quesada provided valuable insight and professional support to ensure the installation of the garden was completed properly and up to code.

Park's Maintenance worker Antoine Kyle who cares for the grounds at the Westside Neighborhood Center deserves a special recognition for his dedication and service to the project. He and workers from the NOS Work Experience program, that he supervises, gave extra care and attention to the project.

The project ended with a free lunch and a volunteer discussion about the significance of the garden and how it will be sustained to assist families and children. Volunteers came away from the project knowing that it will be a source for promoting healthy living and to improve the quality of life for neighborhood residents.

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APPROVED BY: Nancy L. Rapp, Parks and Recreation Director