



Working Together to Shape a Healthy Future
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PRESS RELEASE

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Eastern Oceanside Residents Create a Safe Space for Kids to Learn and Play

San Diego, CA (May 8, 2019) - We often hear from doctors, the media, and other sources that kids should spend less time on screens and more time outside, but what if there are no spaces for activity or worse yet, it isn't safe to be outside? Whether this is due to high crime, dangerous roads, or both, in some neighborhoods it simply isn't safe for kids to spend time outside, which takes away a critical opportunity for them to learn and play.

With the help of Botanical Community Development Initiatives (BCDI), residents in eastern Oceanside have worked hard to ensure children, families, and members of the community have access to a safe space to be active outside and learn about healthy foods. BCDI manages Community Roots Farm on the nearly two-acre property of Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran Church and lies adjacent to an affordable housing apartment complex. Unfortunately, the area suffers from high levels of gang activity. Just under a year ago, BCDI found a way to help by applying for a mini-grant through the San Diego County Childhood Obesity Initiative. With this funding and incredible support from the resident volunteers who dedicated hours of their time, BCDI was able to convert the parking lot of the church into a safe space for children and families to gather and play. The newly created space is fully fenced and not only gives kids in the community a place to play, but also provides a location for classes, community meetings, meals, farm activities, and more!

"I live in an apartment next door. Community Roots Farm is a place where I know I can always go, where I am always welcome. I can be outside in a beautiful place, do meaningful work outdoors, and I get to meet so many great people. Since being involved here, my health has improved and I am just overall happier. It is an important part of my life now," stated volunteer and community member Jesus Martinez.

The former parking lot is no longer just a space, but represents the collective efforts of neighbors working together to improve their surroundings. Now, parents in the area don't have to fear letting their kids play outside and community members have a space they can truly call their own.

“I like it because it’s a learning experience for my daughter. Plus, it keeps her off of the computer, keeps her away from bad things. It teaches her responsibility - caring for the animals, for the garden. I feel that she is safe there, especially now that we have the gate,” said Debbie Murrillo whose 12-year-old daughter enjoys learning about plants and animals on the farm.

Five-year old Maya perhaps said it best, “I love the farm because I feel free!”

BCDI officially kicked off the space with Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran Church as part of a Cinco de Mayo celebration on May 5th.

Interested in a mini-grant through the San Diego County Childhood Obesity Initiative? Sign up for the newsletter at www.sdcoi.org to stay up to date on future funding opportunities and more!

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[Botanical Community Development Initiatives \(BCDI\)](#) is a non-profit organization seeking to help people of all backgrounds nurture their relationship to plants in a variety of ways, thereby strengthening them as individuals, which in turns strengthens communities. Through years of experience they have seen the transformative power that these connections can make, as well as the fundamental role that plants play in all communities.

[The San Diego County Childhood Obesity Initiative](#) is a public-private partnership with the mission of reducing and preventing childhood obesity through policy, systems, and environmental change.