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**SBCC Foundation and Explore Ecology Receive \$100,000 EPA Grant:
Collaborative project supports a network of food-producing permaculture gardens
engaging students and the broader community.**

Santa Barbara, CA - Santa Barbara City College, Explore Ecology, and five community partners have teamed up under a grant from the Environmental Protection Agency's Environmental Education Program to create the Santa Barbara Ecological and Edible (SBEE) Garden Project, a network of community gardens that will promote biodiversity, increase access to locally grown food, and foster a connection between the community and natural ecosystems.

"This is the largest EPA Environmental Education grant ever awarded to an organization in Santa Barbara County, and one of the largest in California in recent decades. It speaks to the collaborative work and far-reaching impact of Santa Barbara City College, Explore Ecology, and our many incredible community partners," says Rachel Johnson, SBCC Foundation Director of Grants.

Partner sites range from school gardens and youth centers to community gardens and homes. The sites include the SBCC Permaculture Garden, Explore Ecology School Garden sites, Mesa Harmony Garden, the westside location of United Boys and Girls Club of Santa Barbara County, El Centro (aka Santa Barbara Lower Westside Community Center), Youth Drought Project, and the Santa Barbara Botanic Garden.

The broad array of sites and partners will connect K-14 students, teachers, the public, and local researchers around the critical issues of ecological health, water conservation, restoration of native habitat and biological communities, and the production of local, healthy food.

“This grant will allow us to create spaces that restore biodiversity, grow healthy food, connect with the community, and educate students. These efforts show how a community college can reach out beyond its borders and partner with residents, community groups, and local schools to make Santa Barbara a healthy and enjoyable place to live and raise your family,” says Adam Green, Ph.D., Professor of Biology and Environmental Studies at SBCC.

In 2015, students at SBCC started a biodiverse, food-producing garden on campus to increase habitat for native plants and pollinators, provide food to the SBCC Food Pantry, and educate the diverse students and community members that visit our campus. This grant will help continue the development of that garden and link it through education and research to other gardens in the community surrounding SBCC.

Explore Ecology manages 30 school gardens serving grades K-8 throughout the county and will focus on the six closest to SBCC for this project. Lindsay Johnson, Explore Ecology’s Executive Director says, “Explore Ecology is thrilled to be part of this EPA grant which will lead to greater environmental education opportunities for our community. We look forward to the collaborations and partnerships that this grant will foster. This is a big moment for environmental education in Santa Barbara!”

In addition, students and faculty from SBCC’s Permaculture Program will work with community sites on a resilient community design process to further develop their gardens. Partners in this work include Hugh Kelly at Mesa Harmony Garden, and Chuy Valle, Chelsea Lancaster, and the Somos Semillas Collective at El Centro. Central to this work is collaborating with the surrounding communities to identify their unique food sovereignty and justice solutions, engaging community members in the design of the gardens and the implementation of programming.

Daniel Parra Hensel, Adjunct Faculty in SBCC’s Environmental Horticulture Department says, “The power of this grant lies in its emphasis on both ecological and social processes. We are utilizing a Resilient Community Design model with our community partners, which allows us to engage the larger Santa Barbara community, students and faculty at SBCC, and local organizations towards place-based ecological literacy training, social justice analysis, and community organizing. The impacts will be felt far and wide!”

The project also includes the garden at the westside location of the United Boys and Girls Clubs, where Club Director Jesse Gonzalez creates programming to engage and educate children and their parents. Finally, a residential garden on the mesa near the SBCC campus, which is a collaboration with Brad Smith and the Youth Drought Project, will show community members how they can develop their own biodiverse, food-producing landscapes at home.

Dr. Denise Knapp and Kylie Etter of the Santa Barbara Botanic Garden will conduct research on biodiversity of native pollinators at multiple sites involved in the project to expand our knowledge base and provide regionally appropriate guides for attracting and supporting pollinator communities for homeowners, farms, and businesses. Data on the ability of these gardens to decrease run-off pollution will also inform the City of Santa Barbara as they develop guidelines for sustainable landscape design.

Through the Santa Barbara Ecological and Edible Garden Project's series of workshops, lectures, and webinars, community members will have the opportunity to learn more about the project and how to create healthy resilient ecosystems in their own yards and gardens. Please visit the project's website for more information and to register for the first event in our speaker series on Wednesday, April 21 - <https://exploreecology.org/sbee-garden-project/>.

About the SBCC Foundation

The SBCC Foundation has provided Santa Barbara City College with private philanthropic support since 1976, serving as the vehicle through which individuals and organizations may invest in the college and its students.

As an independent 501c3 nonprofit organization and partner to SBCC, the SBCC Foundation awards more than \$5 million annually for student success programs, scholarships, book grants, emergency funds, and other critical needs of the college. For more than four decades, the resources raised and managed by the SBCC Foundation have supported SBCC students as they prepare for careers, transfer to four-year universities, and pursue lifelong learning goals.

In 2016, the Foundation launched the SBCC Promise, offering all recent, local high school graduates the opportunity to attend SBCC full-time at no cost. The SBCC Promise relies entirely on private support and covers all required fees, books, and supplies for up to two years. To date, nearly 5,000 local students have participated in the SBCC Promise. By removing financial barriers, the SBCC Promise ensures that SBCC's life-changing educational programs are fully accessible to all local students.

For more information, visit <http://www.sbccfoundation.org>

About Explore Ecology: Explore Ecology is an environmental education and arts nonprofit that educates over 38,000 children a year, inspiring them to engage with the natural world, think critically, and experience the value of environmental stewardship. Explore Ecology programs include the Art From Scrap Creative Reuse Store and Gallery, Watershed Resource Center, and School Gardens Program. For more information, visit ExploreEcology.org.



Santa Barbara Ecological and Edible Garden Project

