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San Diego Botanic Garden Expands Access to More Diverse Audiences through Federal Grant

Encinitas, Calif. (March 10, 2022) – Last month, [San Diego Botanic Garden](#) (SDBG) launched *Access Afternoons*, a community outreach project that welcomes new audiences to the Garden through funding the organization was awarded through the [Institute of Museum and Library Services \(IMLS\)](#). IMLS has given over \$15 million in American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act grants to support the role of museums, libraries, and collections-based institutions in helping their communities recover from the coronavirus pandemic. SDBG is facilitating San Diego’s relief and recovery effort by providing free, regularly-scheduled Garden visits to populations who have suffered during the pandemic from isolation, resource scarcity, or economic hardship. SDBG is implementing the project in partnership with five San Diego County social services agencies: [Alzheimer’s San Diego](#), [Boys & Girls Club of San Dieguito](#), [City of Encinitas](#), [Community Resource Center](#), and [United Service Organizations](#). Working with each partner to tailor programming to a specific group or audience, *Access Afternoons* celebrates the community-based approach that has been foundational to the Garden’s success.

"As pillars of our communities, libraries and museums bring people together by providing important programs, services, and collections. These institutions are trusted spaces where people can learn, explore and grow," said IMLS Director Crosby Kemper. "IMLS is proud to support their initiatives through our grants as they educate and enhance their communities."

Under *Access Afternoons*, SDBG offers free visits and interactive, experiential programming for racially and culturally diverse communities, students in free after-school care, homeless and economically disadvantaged families, and seniors who need companionship and/or may be suffering from Alzheimer’s and other age-related illnesses. Working with its partners, SDBG customizes each visit to meet the needs and interests of the audience through activities including interactive tours of the 37-acre garden and hands-on workshops about gardening and the arts.

"*Access Afternoons* enlightens, delights, and offers respite to those who visit," said SDBG Senior Director for Visitor Services, Education and Membership, Tomoko Kuta. "Our Garden is already recognized as a beautiful green space where visitors relax and enjoy nature. Under this project, we are honored to serve as a trusted community resource where people come together to overcome the negative effects of the pandemic through our programming. The project forges a new place-based relationship with the Garden for participants, while offering activities that help maintain a healthy, hopeful outlook for the future, such as gaining new knowledge about plants, honing new skills in gardening or botanical art, and expanding one’s social

network. *Access Afternoons* visits and programming will help to alleviate the emotional distress so many in our community experienced during the past two years and build relationships among the participants, playing an important role in the health of the region.”



Children can learn about the season’s fruits and vegetables; help plant, water, and maintain the raised plant beds; taste the produce; check out a worm-composting bin; and marvel at the aquaponics demonstration units in SDBG’s largest children’s garden.

SDBG is working closely with each of its five partner organizations to translate audience-specific expertise into training for the Garden staff and volunteers who function as program facilitators. By tailoring activities to each group that visits, the project aims to provide support for the diverse educational, economic, mobility, diversity, mental health, and age-related needs and interests of the community.

“Alzheimer’s San Diego clients and their care partners are enjoying safe outdoor activities at the Garden, which has been a relief from all of the restrictions that they’ve been living with due to COVID-19,” explained Adrianna McCollum, Director of Social Programs and Volunteers at Alzheimer’s San Diego. “We love seeing how participants are enjoying their time together at the Garden with new SDBG staff and volunteer friends. The planned activities are providing multi-sensory experiences that are recalling many fond memories.”

IMLS supports approximately 50% of San Diego Botanic Garden’s project costs through an award of \$39,650 (grant [ARPML-250719-OMLS-22](#)). The remaining 50% of the project is funded by non-governmental sources including admissions and membership revenue. The project runs through October 2022.

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San Diego Botanic Garden

Established in 1970, San Diego Botanic Garden is a 37-acre urban oasis located in Encinitas, California, just north of the city of San Diego. We garden to create, share and apply plant wisdom in our world. With four miles of trails and nearly 5,300 plant species and varieties, SDBG is San Diego County's leading public botanical outreach and education institution. SDBG has 15 gardens that represent different regions of the world, 12 demonstration gardens where visitors can learn in a hands-on setting, and the largest public bamboo collection in North America. SDBG also has three interactive children's gardens, including its flagship, one-acre Hamilton Children's Garden, the largest kids' garden on the West Coast. Collaborating with community, nonprofit, academic, government, and industry partners to maximize our combined impact, the Garden leads major educational programming for children and adults through individual and group classes, tours, and programming. To learn more, visit www.sdbg.org.

Institute of Museum and Library Services

The Institute of Museum and Library Services is the primary source of federal support for the nation's libraries and museums. IMLS advances, supports, and empowers America's museums, libraries, and related organizations through grantmaking, research, and policy development. The agency's vision is a nation where museums and libraries work together to transform the lives of individuals and communities. To learn more, visit www.imls.gov.