



American Planning Association

Making Great Communities Happen

Cathedral City Receives National Planning Award for a Grassroots Effort for Youth Environmental Education Program

Washington, D.C. – Cathedral City, California’s, Environmental Conservation Division (ECD) Kids and Community Program, an inspirational environmental education and awareness project, will receive the American Planning Association’s 2013 National Planning Excellence Award for a Grassroots Initiative. Working together, government staff, community activists, educators, artists, environmentalists, local businesses, volunteers and young people conceptualize, design, plan and create hands-on environmental projects that help reduce landfill waste and beautify the landscape of Cathedral City.

The National Planning Excellence Award for a Grassroots Initiative honors how a community utilized the planning process to address a need extending beyond the traditional scope of planning.

“The ECD has always recognized the importance of engaging young people as passionate and active stewards of the environment,” said Deanna Pressgrove, Environmental Conservation Manager. “Early on we realized that projects integrating art with the environment allowed youth to explore their creativity and take pride in their work particularly when they had a voice in the decision-making process. From these revelations, the Kids and Community Program was born.”

The goals of the program include making recycling and conservation fun for kids, preserving the beauty of the local environment and encouraging youth to play an active role in community efforts. The program regularly utilizes scrap materials and discarded trash to create works of art keeping costs to a minimum.

Since the Kids and Community Program’s founding, city youth have replaced unsightly graffiti on the Dinah Shore Bridge with a stunning mural, created sculptures from trash, planted school and community gardens, launched anti-litter campaigns and even started their own recycling program. From the in-school recycling program to hands-on arts projects, an estimated 750,000 tons of trash have been removed from the waste stream and Cathedral City exceeded its requirement to divert 50 percent of waste instead diverting 60 percent on an annual basis.

“Cathedral City’s Kids and Community Program brought an untapped resource – area young people – and turned them into active and contributing stewards in environmental and community affairs,” said Ann C. Bagley, FAICP, 2013 APA Awards Jury Chair. “Local leaders, parents and individuals in other communities can learn from this project and engage their own local youth as a fresh and hopeful generation of future advocates for change in environmental and community affairs.”

Cathedral City representatives will receive the National Planning Excellence Award for a Grassroots Initiative at a special awards luncheon held during APA’s National Planning Conference in Chicago on Tuesday, April 16, 2013.



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For a list of all of the APA 2013 National Planning Excellence, Achievement, and Leadership Award recipients, visit www.planning.org/awards/2013. APA's national awards program, the profession's highest honor, is a proud tradition established more than 50 years ago to recognize outstanding community plans, planning programs and initiatives, public education efforts, and individuals for their leadership on planning issues.

The American Planning Association and its professional institute, the American Institute of Certified Planners, are dedicated to advancing the art, science and profession of good planning -- physical, economic and social -- so as to create communities that offer better choices for where and how people work and live. Members of APA help create communities of lasting value and encourage civic leaders, business interests and citizens to play a meaningful role in creating communities that enrich people's lives. APA has offices in Washington, D.C., and Chicago, Ill. For more information, visit www.planning.org.

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