

Leaders in Action Kids Nights February 2025

Organization and Neighborhood Overview

Bayside Community Center’s mission is to empower its diverse community to improve its quality of life through services, education, and advocacy. Its vision is a city where every neighborhood has access to abundant resources that promote community connection and economic self-sufficiency, expand educational and cultural opportunities, and facilitate healthy living and general well-being. Although Bayside serves the whole community, the overwhelming majority of its clients reside in Linda Vista.

To give some context on the community, Linda Vista is an under-served urban neighborhood where almost two-thirds of its 35,511 residents are below the “low income” threshold, with 40% of households below the “very low income” threshold and almost a quarter below the “extremely low income” threshold, while 7.6% earn less than \$15,000 per household. The Linda Vista population is composed of Hispanic (36%), White (34%), API (22%), and Black (4%) residents, with almost an equal number of males (17,652) and females (17,859). Based on the 2020 census, 11% of the population are 65 or older. Linda Vista is also a USDA-identified “food desert” with only one grocery store, but ample liquor and convenience stores.

The Leaders in Action and the Linda Vista Farmers Market

Bayside has the pleasure and privilege to support the Linda Vista Leaders in Action (aka “Leaders”). The Leaders are graduates of the Resident Leadership Academy who gather monthly to give their time and energy to implement community-identified projects. Formed in 2014, this group has prioritized food security, access to education, community safety, neighborhood beautification, small business support, and beyond. One of their advocacy efforts with arguably the most long-term impact was rallying behind the reopening of the Linda Vista Farmers Market (aka “Market”).

The Market was originally opened from 2011-2020, but shut down during the pandemic. As a vital source of local commerce, access to fresh produce, and a community gathering space, the absence of the market in Linda Vista was palpable. Frustrated as they watched other neighborhoods throughout



the county reopen their markets, the Leaders mobilized the community to advocate for the Market's reopening. They planted the seed for what would become the Love, Linda Vista Farmers Market, which opened in May 2021 under the leadership of the newly-formed Love, Linda Vista nonprofit.

Overall, the Market has been a great success in Linda Vista. But like any event, attendance ebbs and flows; vendors commit and then relocate to more lucrative markets where the surrounding community has more purchasing power (e.g., Little Italy, North Park); and the community has questioned whether the Market would survive. The Leaders, some of whom are vendors at the Market and others who

frequent weekly to purchase local produce and hot food items, focused their attention on supporting the market's success.

And so began the Kids Night events!



Kids Night Success

In 2023 and the first half of 2024, the Leaders hosted special gatherings at the Market every few months geared towards providing entertainment for the neighborhood kids. By providing easy-to-implement arts and crafts, activities, and music, the Market would attract more families, increase the amount of purchasing at the Market, support the local economy,

and create a positive, public-facing, family-friendly environment. Then stepped in the County of San Diego and Community Health Improvement Partners with generous funding through the Resident Leadership Academy Project Stipend Program Award, providing \$2,600 to support four Kids Night events in FY25.

To date, the Leaders have hosted three Kids Night events:

- September 19, 2024:
 - The first event focused on arts and crafts, contextualized in the celebration of Mexico's Independence Day. Red, white, and green was on full display! The Leaders purchased face paint kits, craft kits, and pipe cleaners, plus also supplied markers, crayons, and drawing / coloring materials. Prior to the event, the Leaders gathered to make Mexican Independence Day decorations and regalia to spruce up the booth, as well as a photo prop for pictures. The Leaders also hired a local band from Francis Parker High School to provide live music for two hours. A flier was created and disseminated (see below).

- October 31, 2024:
 - The second event was a Halloween Spooktacular, chock full of Halloween inflatables, a hay bale set up, and a costume parade! The Leaders infused arts and crafts again, this time with Halloween stickers and a pumpkin decorating station. The kids got to trick or treat at the Market, too, as each vendor was given small candies to pass out. This was estimated to have the largest turnout of the three events thus far. A flier was created and disseminated (see below).
- January 9, 2025:
 - The third event was a Dia de los Reyes / Kings Day Event. The children had costumes available to dress up in as the kings. The Leaders also purchased culturally relevant food and beverage to give away to market-goers, include two rosca cakes and ingredients to make champurrado, a traditional Mexican beverage. Lastly, in the spirit of the day's event, the Leaders purchased and distributed over \$400 worth of toys to the kids who attended! The families got to celebrate a cultural holiday; the kids were thrilled with the toys and the rosca; and the market saw a greater turnout. The vendors even commented to the Leaders about the positive boost they saw that evening. No flier was created, but the event was promoted via word of mouth, community meetings, and Whats App messages.

While each event varies in attendance, Bayside estimates that an *additional* 50+ people attend the Market during each Kids Event. This directly translates to increased revenue for vendors and overall increased positivity at the Market with greater attendance.

Next Steps

On May 1, 2025, the Leaders will hold their final Kids Night Event in celebration of Children's Day / Dia de los Ninos. They are already discussing which table games, toys, arts and crafts, and big ticket item(s) such as live music or a bounce house will be employed. They are excited to celebrate this holiday and finish up the RLA Project Stipend with a bang. Please join us on Thursday, May 1, 2025 starting at 4:00 pm for the final event!



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