

San Ysidro, California, a predominantly Latino community (94%), is characterized by its youthful population, boasting around 3,850 households with children and 27% of residents under the age of 18 (data from the American Community Survey 2020 and point2homes.com). Despite its rich cultural roots, the community faces economic challenges, with a median household income 56% lower than that of the City of San Diego, and 20% of the population living below the poverty line.



The deteriorating state of a pedestrian bridge near Willow Elementary School has become a significant health concern, marked by graffiti, criminal activities, and litter. This bridge, abandoned by community members due to safety and sanitation issues, has prompted families to take longer routes to avoid using it. In response, RLA and Casa Familiar launched a community improvement project with the goal of ensuring the well-being of the community, particularly its youth, and setting a precedent for active neighborhood care by future generations.

In April 2023, Casa Familiar received a \$2,200 grant from Live Well San Diego and Community Health Improvement Partners. This grant played a crucial role in enabling us to organize two cleanup events for our community improvement project. The funding had a significant impact, allowing us to acquire essential items to ensure the safety and effectiveness of these cleanup activities. Thanks to the grant, we were able to purchase the necessary equipment, including trash pickers, durable trash bags, trash containers, brooms, gloves, face masks, containers for hazardous waste, and more.

The primary focus of our initiative was to rejuvenate the pedestrian bridge over the 5 Freeway between Willow Road and Calle Primera Street in San Ysidro. Residents from the Resident Leadership Academy (RLA) took the lead as part of their community improvement project, emphasizing aesthetics improvement and regular maintenance. Two community cleanup events in 2023 involved over thirty dedicated volunteers, including RLA graduates, promotoras, students, and community residents, engaging in activities such as community outreach, waste removal, recycling, and weed control. The involvement of community members highlights the importance of collaboration and engagement in achieving common goals, improving the quality of life for all residents.



The cleanup events occurred on June 22nd and November 18th, 2023, aligning with student availability to inspire future generations. Both events started at 125 Cypress Dr., San Diego, CA 92173, a 5-minute walk from the pedestrian bridge. We received support from various organizations, including The Office of Council Member Vivian Moreno, Institute for Public Strategies, San

Ysidro Summer Camp, San Diego Police Department, Casa Familiar Youth Services, and the Environmental Justice Department. Although small local businesses in the area were invited, unfortunately they couldn't participate.

The positive impacts of the project extended to Willow Elementary and San Ysidro Head Start schools, serving over 2,500 families, and nearby mobile homes and apartment complexes accommodating over 4,000 families. In total, more than 8,000 community members benefited from the project this year. Beyond enhancing the bridge's appearance, the project contributed to creating a safer and cleaner environment for the entire community.

During the cleanup events, we were delighted to see over 30 young members in the first session and around 10 in the second, with over 15 community members participating in both, totaling 75 members. With 30 participants in each cleanup, we provided a total of 60 hours of community service to students and community members.



At Casa Familiar, we take great pride in the valuable skills our community gained through collaboration with Live Well San Diego and Community Health Improvement Partners. This partnership now allows families to safely cross the bridge to access schools and workplaces. It's truly gratifying to witness the positive impact of our collective efforts. This collaborative endeavor underscores the importance of community engagement and cooperation, demonstrating the community's ability to enhance the quality of life for all residents. It serves as an inspiring model for the younger generation, showcasing how individuals can unite to make a positive impact on their community.