

# ENVIRONMENTAL AWARD PROGRAM HISTORY & PAST WINNERS



The Environmental Commission recognizes deserving individuals, businesses, and non-profits, for their commitment to environmental stewardship and outstanding environmental achievements in the City of Encinitas. Two Excellence in Environmental Stewardship awards have been historically granted to a for-profit business and a non-profit business each year since the program's founding in 2014 and inauguration in 2015 by Environmental Commissioners Jim Wang and Joy Lyndes. In 2019, under the leadership of Environmental Commissioners Inge Bisconer and Christian Adams, a new Environmental Hero category was added to recognize both an adult and a youth who are not necessarily affiliated with a business. Candidates are peer-nominated and must be Encinitas residents or located in Encinitas. Winners are selected by an independent jury of recognized environmental leaders.

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# PAST WINNERS OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL AWARD PROGRAM

## 2024

The City of Encinitas Environmental Commission announced the winners of the 2024 Environmental Award Program (EAP) at the April 23, 2025 City Council meeting, the 2024 winners were:

### **Excellence in Environmental Stewardship – For-profit Business: Nectarine Grove.**

Nectarine Grove not only serves really good food, but they are also a leader in proper organic waste disposal for customers. Food is served primarily in reusable service ware, which customers then buy themselves. Nectarine Grove leads by example and demonstrates that organic waste is something that can and should be easily separated. Nectarine Grove's mission is to work toward making a healthy community by serving food using all organic, local, and sustainable ingredients, and disposing waste in a way that reduces the amount of methane produced in landfills. Nectarine Grove also gives back to the community, support the Community Resource Center, Feeding San Diego, and food donations to Scripps Encinitas, in addition to other charities. By caring about organic waste, Nectarine Grove inspires customers to do the same. Rhiana Glor, owner of Nectarine Grove, explained that, "being sustainable for us means making choices today that ensure we can still serve our customers, support our community, and protect our planet tomorrow."

### **Excellence in Environmental Stewardship – Non-profit Organization: Plastic Beach.**

Plastic Beach, led by Matthew Clough, has a vision that includes creating a sustainable world with effective plastic wrap recycling. By educating retailers, collaborating with recyclers, and finding like-minded partners, Plastic Beach has worked tirelessly to remove soft plastics from our waste stream. Soft plastic that wraps surfboards, retail parts, clothing, dry cleaning bags, grocery bags, bubble wrap, and more cannot be handled by the EDCO sorting facility because the material will clog the system. Plastic Beach, however, collects soft plastics and ships it to businesses that recycle soft plastics into new products, saving nearly 100,000 pounds of the material since 2019 from being wasted. Plastic Beach is helping both individuals and businesses lessen their plastic footprint and is making a true difference in our environment. Matthew Clough said he is "proud that Plastic Beach is being recognized for our efforts to introduce real and accountable plastic bag and plastic wrap recycling to the Encinitas community and residents."

### **Environmental Hero – Adult: Jim Brown.**

Jim Brown is a 77-year Encinitas resident and has become a champion for cleaning our streets. Jim is a retired Marine and learned early the value of service. About 10 years ago, while walking for exercise, Jim started regularly picking up trash because he said he, "got tired of stepping over things while I was walking and looking at the view." He now goes out for trash walks about 150 times a year, resulting in an estimated 1,000 walks to remove litter so far. Jim likes to stop and say, "Hi," to like-minded people he sees picking up trash. Recently, Jim was the first person to join [StreetStewards.com](https://www.streetstewards.com), a program where you adopt the area of your neighborhood and highlight your route on a map. As individuals or families adopt streets, the online map marks those streets in green. Jim would like to see all of Encinitas "go green!" Jim is nearly 80 years young, and an environmental hero for cleaning our community.

### **Environmental Hero – Youth: Jay Burke.**

Jay, a 17-year-old senior at San Dieguito Academy High School, is a committed environmentalist. He is a founding member of the North American Butterfly Association Butterfly Northern San Diego Coastal Count Circle. Jay contributes valuable data on butterfly populations, aiding in conservation efforts. Jay promotes sustainability through native landscaping, habitat restoration, and volunteering at the San Elijo Lagoon and San Dieguito River Valley Conservancy through the Exploring Our Sense of Place Program. He is also pursuing certification as a California Naturalist. Jay's commitment to environmental education and stewardship makes him an outstanding young leader in local conservation and an environmental

hero. Jay expressed that, “Ever since I was a baby my parents got me into nature. I’m excited for being acknowledged for something I enjoy.”

## **2023**

The 2023 Environmental Award Program Winners were announced at the April 17th 2024 City Council Meeting. Awardees were invited to speak and show their recycled glass trophies at the beginning of the meeting. The awards were made by San Dieguito Trophy.

### **Environmental Hero Award, Adult category – Dr. Nancy North**

A member of the Encinitas Rotary, Dr. North took the initiative to create a sustainability committee within her club called "Econitas". To date, with Dr. North’s guidance, Rotary Club has organized two tours per year of the San Elijo Lagoon by the Nature Collective for kids and adults, and supported zero waste events like Encinitas Food and Wine Festival, Heritage Holiday Tree Lighting and EcoFest. Dr. North inspired her club with a reusable plastic bag drive which gathered over 200 bags and donated them to the Community Resource Center for their food distribution program. Dr. North also spearheaded an second drive for metal water bottles, collecting over 100 bottles for the local non-profit organization Los Angelitos which supports youth soccer. These efforts to promote environmental initiatives in Encinitas make Dr. North deserving of the Adult Hero Award.

### **Environmental Hero Award, Youth category - Sofia Gonzalez**

At Ocean Knoll Elementary School, Ms. Gonzalez participated in her school’s Green Team helping to support sustainability efforts like composting, recycling, water conservation and energy conservation. In fifth, sixth and seventh grades, she participated in the Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) Internship Program, where students study water quality and develop solutions to reduce polluted runoff. As an intern, Ms. Gonzalez presented to the State Water Resources Control Board in Sacramento about solutions to improve stormwater quality. In addition, she was an invited speaker at a major water quality conference in Las Vegas on the same topic. As a member of Swamis Surfing Association, Ms. Gonzalez regularly participates in beach cleanups. Ms. Gonzalez is finishing up her fourth year on the Encinitas Youth Commission. For the commission, she served on the Environmental Committee all four years and the Zero Waste Committee for one year. Sofia Gonzalez truly exemplifies what it means to be an environmental hero.

### **Excellence in Environmental Stewardship Award, Non-profit Organization - Encinitas Community Garden.**

The Encinitas Community Garden was established in 2008 as a non-profit that helps its members grow environmentally and sustainably produced food. Requirements for the 120 plots in the garden include the use of organic soil, the prohibition of synthetic pesticides or fertilizers, and conservation of water with irrigation timers and rainwater that is captured on-site. A greenhouse is provided to start plants from seed until they are hardy enough to grow in the ground. The Encinitas Community Garden collects any harvested surplus vegetables for the non-profit Healthy Day Partners which distributes the produce to food insecure populations. The

garden also creates a supportive community where neighbors can share tools, skills, and inspiration. As the participating gardeners connect with the land, this not only helps them economically, but they also become hopeful, confident, and healthy. These efforts are a great example of how to be environmentally friendly in Encinitas.

### **Excellence in Environmental Stewardship Award, For-profit Business category - Hansen Surfboards**

Hansen Surfboards has demonstrated excellence in environmental stewardship by their utilization of the Plastic Beach recycling program which facilitates the responsible recycling of plastic wrap waste. Participation in this program showcases Hansen's dedication to sustainable practices and commitment to reducing plastic waste in Southern California. In addition, Hansen Surfboards has taken actions to help the City of Encinitas achieve its climate action goals with the installation of solar panels in its parking lot. By incorporating these eco-friendly initiatives into their business, Hansen is an inspiring example for the community, making them a deserving candidate for this award.

## **2022**

The 2022 Environmental Award Program Winners were announced at the [June 14, 2023 City Council Meeting](#). Awardees were invited to speak and show their recycled glass trophies at the beginning of the meeting. The awards were made by [San Dieguito Trophy](#).

### **Environmental Hero Award, Adult category – Alessandro Fraschetti**

The 2022 winner of the Environmental Hero in the Adult category was Alessandro Fraschetti. Alessandro has been the dedicated "Captain" of Surfrider's Moonlight Beach cleanup since 2007. An avid surfer, Alessandro became tired of the amount of debris he saw in the ocean so he decided to do something about it. Under his supervision, an estimated 4,000 pounds of plastic and Styrofoam debris has been removed from our Encinitas beaches. The debris data he collected was used in successful single-use plastic ordinance campaigns in Encinitas and beyond. In the past 15 years, he has led nearly 150 cleanups, with approximately 16,000 volunteers in total. Alessandro makes everyone feel appreciated, epitomizing the expression, "It takes a village," to make change. Alessandro's passion for protecting our coastline inspires many of his volunteers and the residents of Encinitas to protect our local marine environment.

### **Environmental Hero Award, Youth (under 18) category – Bella Zumot**

The 2022 winner of the Environmental Hero in the Youth category was Bella Zumot. Bella, a student at San Dieguito High School Academy, created the Pack a Snack Club at her school. Bella saw a post on social media of a person making "eco-bricks", in which wrappers from snack packages are densely stuffed into plastic water bottles. She created a short slide show and, together with other students, teachers, and the San Dieguito Academy Foundation, organized a

collection for plastic wrappers in every classroom. Now Bella has an official club that makes eco-bricks which will be utilized to create eco-seating around the Academy's campus next year. Bella is a positive light for her school and all of Encinitas.

### **Excellence in Environmental Stewardship, For-profit Business – Surfdog & Java Hut**

The 2022 winner of the Excellence in Environmental Stewardship in the For-profit Business category were Surfdog & Java Hut. Surfdog & Java Hut are two businesses housed in one commercial space, both family-owned and operated by Dave Kaplan since 1999. Java Hut welcomes locals and visitors alike with its healthy menu, friendly service, and great cup of coffee. Surfdog & Java Hut were recognized by the award program for the many environmentally conscious actions they have taken over the past several years. In 2019, Java Hut became an accredited member of the Surfrider's Ocean Friendly Restaurant program. Java Hut meets and exceeds the City's single use plastic ordinance, Encinitas Municipal Code 11.27 and 11.26, by not using single use plastic bags for take-out even though the later code does not currently apply to restaurants. With the Covid shutdown, the owner took the opportunity to refurbish the Surfdog residence and did so in accordance with Build It Green's Green Point Rated Gold standard. As part of the renovation, Java Hut and Surfdog Records also became certified by the California Green Business Network. Some of the criteria for these accreditations include reducing water use, conserving energy, promoting sustainable commutes, preventing pollution, using non-toxic cleaners, avoiding waste, recycling, and hiring local vendors. Surfdog & Java Hut are a shining example of what it means to be environmentally friendly in Encinitas.

### **Excellence in Environmental Stewardship, Non-profit Business – Rob Machado Foundation**

The 2022 winner of the Excellence in Environmental Stewardship in the Non-profit Organization category was the Rob Machado Foundation. The Rob Machado Foundation was founded upon the belief that our planet needs environmental stewardship and it has taken action to do so. The foundation runs a water filling station program that serves a growing number of schools and public places and delivers clean, filtered water while encouraging the use of reusable water bottles rather than single-use plastic water bottles. They have installed water filling stations at 20 local schools including Paul Ecke Central Elementary, Ocean Knoll Elementary, Ada Harris Elementary, Park Dale Elementary, Cardiff Elementary, Capri Elementary, Flora Vista Elementary, Olivenhain Pioneer Elementary, Diegueno Middle School, Oak Crest Middle School, San Dieguito High School Academy, Sunset High School, La Costa Canyon High School, as well as the Magdalena Ecke Family YMCA. The water filling stations are estimated to have avoided the generation of up to 500,000 plastic water bottles. Additionally, the Rob Machado Foundation hosts a monthly beach cleanup at Seaside Beach in Cardiff. To support cleanup efforts, they installed trash cans with lids at local beaches and provided recycling bins at local sports fields. Recognizing the Rob Machado Foundation through the Environmental Award Program highlights the many actions the organization has taken to care of the environment over the years.

## 2021

The 2021 Environmental Award Program Winners were announced by Deputy Mayor Joe Mosca at the [June 22, 2022 City Council Meeting](#) via ZOOM. Awardees were invited to speak and show their recycled glass trophies at the beginning of the meeting. The awards were made by [San Dieguito Trophy](#).

### **Environmental Hero Award, Adult category – Jim Wang**

Jim is one of the most committed and successful former Environmental Commissioners in the history of Encinitas. For almost a decade as a volunteer, Jim championed public education and solutions to waste, climate change, and overall improvement to the environmental integrity of the City of Encinitas. Jim was particularly instrumental in declaring a climate emergency in the City, pushing forward ordinances to eliminate plastic waste and promoting bike transportation, building electrification, and Community Choice Energy. At least five current environmental ordinances in Encinitas would likely not have happened without Jim's leadership and engagement. Jim is an environmental hero of the highest order for the people of Encinitas.

**Environmental Hero Award, Youth (under 18) category** – There was no youth environmental hero in last year. We look forward to honoring a youth hero this year.

### **Excellence in Environmental Stewardship, For-profit Business – Nada Shop**

The mission of the Nada Shop is to make low waste living easier and more accessible to everyone by selling household and body care products available for refill in store, as well as other everyday plastic-free lifestyle goods. Most products are sold without any packaging or are packaged in plastic-free material like cardboard, aluminum, or glass which are all not only easily recyclable, but are also reusable. The Nada Shop helps change public behavior and educates our community on how important it is to reduce our plastic consumption and reduce plastic pollution.

### **Excellence in Environmental Stewardship, Non-profit Business – Community Resource Center (CRC)**

The CRC provides many different kinds of social services to many people in Encinitas and North County. The CRC is being recognized for environmental efforts to rescue edible food and reduce food waste with its Food and Nutrition Center (FNC). The FNC participated in a pilot program to pick-up nutritious, fresh food from partner grocery stores and distribute to food-insecure clients. It is now a model for other food pantries in the area. CRC's leadership in this important program helps fight hunger, provides crucial logistics for our community and grocery stores to fulfill their roles to rescue food, and reduces methane producing organic waste from going to our landfills.

## 2020

The 2020 Environmental Award Program Winners were announced by Mayor Catherine Blakespear at the April 28, 2021 City Council meeting via ZOOM. Awardees were invited to speak

and show their recycled glass trophies at the beginning of the meeting: [https://encinitas.granicus.com/player/clip/2391?view\\_id=7&redirect=true](https://encinitas.granicus.com/player/clip/2391?view_id=7&redirect=true). The awards were made by [Winner's Awards](#).

### **Environmental Hero Award, Adult category – Torrey Neel**

Torrey has been involved with the California Native Plants Society, where she demonstrates an increased awareness on the importance of native plants to our California ecosystem. Prior to starting a native plant nursery in Leucadia, Torrey would start seeds and place them out for members of the Encinitas community to plant for free. She has volunteered at the San Diego Botanic Garden, and her inspiration has meant much to both people and the all-important natural environment.

### **Environmental Hero Award, Youth (under 18) category – Danny Sheehan**

Danny is a volunteer with the Storm Water Pollution Prevention Program (SWPPP) at Paul Ecke Elementary school and an active monitor of our local Marine Protection Act. He is an accomplished surfer and is passionate about protecting the natural beauty of our ocean environment and reversing the damage already caused by humans. On many occasions he has confronted and successfully convinced older youth to stop destructive actions to sea life. Danny has demonstrated environmental consciousness well beyond his young years.

### **Excellence in Environmental Stewardship, For-profit Business – BCK Programs**

BCK instructors train public elementary school students as young as kindergarteners how to sort their lunchtime waste and compost food scraps, and run programs in recycling, energy conservation, air pollution and litter prevention. In the middle schools, BCK has worked diligently with students to create a 75% diversion rate, and students from 5th grade to 12th grade are given the opportunity to dig deep into water pollution issues through BCK's popular SWPPP (Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan) Internship Program. The program has instructed thousands of Encinitas students with the hope that they become informed Encinitas citizens passionate about protecting the environment.

### **Excellence in Environmental Stewardship, Non-profit Business – San Diego Botanic Garden**

Now in its 50th year, San Diego Botanic Garden is the preeminent plant conservation institute of the region, and one of the most important botanic gardens in the country. The Garden educates over 1,000 students per year through formal programs, with special focus on field trips and classroom support for Title 1 and other underserved schools in Encinitas and San Diego County. The Garden serves as a world class plant conservation and education institution right in the heart of Encinitas and works with the City to maintain the natural areas around Cottonwood Creek Park.

## 2019

The winners of the 2019 program were again presented beautiful awards made of recycled glass by [Winner's Awards](#). The Environmental Hero Awards were presented at the Surfing Madonna Beach Run on Oct 26, 2019 by deputy Mayor Jody Hubbard, and the Excellence in Environmental Stewardship awards were presented by Mayor Catherine Blakespear at the August 12, 2020 City Council Meeting.

### **Environmental Hero Award, Adult category – Nita Gilson**

Nita Gilson, founder of [CropSwap](#) and [ProduceGood](#), located at The Hive at the Leichtag Commons. The organization's volunteers gather unwanted fruit and vegetables from farms and backyards and connects this otherwise wasted food with the needy. Since its inception in 2014, [ProduceGood](#) has recovered over 165 tons of produce, providing over one million meals for the hungry.

### **Environmental Hero Award, Youth (under 18) category – Elizabeth Hazard**

Elizabeth Hazard is an Encinitas native and 11th-grade honors student at San Dieguito Academy who is making headlines in her work for a more natural world. Working with the Nature Collective and in school, she is a recognized leader in native plant conservation and gardening. She created her school's California Native Plant Club which has secured back-to-back First Place Awards in the San Diego County Fair Ecke Jr. Garden Shows.

### **Excellence in Environmental Stewardship, For-profit Business – [Inn at Moonlight Beach](#)**

Inn at Moonlight Beach is the first hotel in the world to receive the prestigious [WELL Certification](#) at the Platinum (highest) level. The Inn filters the air and water to its highest levels, the building materials are reused and sustainable, a biodynamic urban farm generates its own compost and provides guests local foods, and the site has been remediated and the soil amended to prevent stormwater runoff and soil erosion. Shangwen Kennedy, the owner of The Inn at Moonlight Beach, accepted the award.

### **Excellence in Environmental Stewardship, Non-profit Business – [Encinitas Ranch Community Association](#)**

Encinitas Ranch Community Association is known for its work to create one of the county's largest recycled water projects (13.7 million gallons of water per year), for upgrading their irrigation system to state of the art automation and sensor technology, and for working with their landscape contractor to convert to battery powered landscape maintenance equipment. Richard Stern, President, Encinitas Ranch Community Association, accepted the award.

## 2018

The 2018 Awards were delivered on Sunday, October 7, 2018, by the City of Encinitas Mayor, Catherine Blakespear, at the Surfing Madonna Beach Run at Moonlight Beach. In 2018, the awards were made of recycled glass and presented to Doug Gibson, Executive Director and Chief Scientist of the San Elijo Lagoon Conservancy (Non-profit category) and to Brian Callaway, outdoor enthusiast, and Patagonia Cardiff's Retail Floor Lead (Business category).

### **Environmental Excellence Award, For-profit Business – [Patagonia](#), (Cardiff, CA)**

The Patagonia Store in Cardiff by the Sea, California, splits its profits between charitable causes and shareholders. Patagonia engages the community, promotes sustainability and awareness, and combats marine debris through beach cleanups with [I Love A Clean San Diego](#).

### **Environmental Excellence Award, Non-profit Business – [San Elijo Lagoon Conservancy](#)**

The San Elijo Lagoon Conservancy, now called [The Nature Collective](#), has been enhancing, preserving, and restoring the San Elijo Lagoon for decades, allowing many migrating wildlife to have a safe landing place to rest and rejuvenate. The Conservancy provides education for all generations and a peaceful place to connect with nature and enjoy a leisurely walk.



## 2017

On November 5, 2017, Encinitas Mayor Catherine Blakespear presented awards for Excellence in Environmental Stewardship to two Encinitas individuals for their organizations' commitments and dedication to environmental awareness and for demonstrating outstanding eco-friendly practices and contributions to our community. This is the 3<sup>RD</sup> year for this Environmental Commission initiated Environmental Awards Program.

### **Environmental Excellence Award, For-profit Business – Richard Risner**

Rich Risner, owner of [Grounded Landscape Architecture](#), promotes environmentally-sensitive landscaping, while using drought-tolerant plants and landscape planning, and creating spaces in appropriate balance with nature.

### **Environmental Excellence Award, Non-profit Business – Mim Michelove**

Mim Michelove, co-founder of the non-profit [Healthy Day Partners](#), has worked with schools for over a decade to teach children and parents about the complete cycle of food, from farming to healthy eating to sustainability.

“These awards give our environmentally friendly residents and businesses the recognition they so greatly deserve for being forward-thinkers and community leaders in environmental stewardship,” explains Encinitas Environmental Commissioners Jim Wang and Joy Lyndes. The 2017 EAP Awards were sponsored by the City of Encinitas, the Encinitas Environmental Commission, the Surfing Madonna Oceans Project, and Coastal SAGE Landscape Architecture. This year the awards were made from colorful recycled glass instead of artwork presented by a local artist.

Mayor Blakespear presented these awards at the November 5, 2017 Surfing Madonna Beach Run, after running the in the race herself. This year the race made an official attempt to set a Guinness World Record as the world's largest run on beach sand. The Surfing Madonna's mission is to keep our oceans clean, our coastline protected, and to provide opportunities for disabled kids and adults to experience the healing power of the ocean. This is a nonprofit organization dedicated to protecting our ocean from the harmful effects of pollution and cultivating new ocean advocates.

“Congratulations to our deserving 2017 award winners, and thank you to all the EAP volunteers, sponsors, judges and our Encinitas community, for your outstanding efforts to set a high standard for environmental stewardship.” – Environmental Commissioners, Joy Lyndes and Jim Wang

## 2016

### **Environmental Excellence Award, For-profit Business – [Encinitas Foreign & Domestic Auto Repair](#)**

Encinitas Foreign and Domestic Auto Repair, family owned since 1988, is a company that is eco-friendly throughout. They are 100% solar powered and energy efficient, recycle whenever possible, are also a certified Green Station for used oil collection to protect our natural environment, and they segregate and isolate aerosols, cleaners, and other toxins.

### **Environmental Award Program for the Non-profit Business – Brad Roth, [Cottonwood Creek Conservancy](#)**

Brad Roth has dedicated over 25 years of his life to the Cottonwood Creek Watershed. Brad Roth, Mark Wisniewski, and countless volunteers over time have devoted endless hours to the preservation and restoration the creek. Brad Roth and the Cottonwood Creek Conservancy have been educating, inspiring and leading, teams of volunteers since 1993.

The two artists selected in the creation of the 2016 Environmental Awards were Christina Zeller of [Christina Zeller Art & Design](#), and [Nate Main](#), illustrator and designer.

## 2015

This first year of the Environmental Award Program, two artists were solicited to make the awards to be given to the recipients. The art had to be original and environmentally themed. The artists had to be local Encinitas residents. The artists were compensated for their work by the Commission. The two artists in 2015 were [Artie Mattson](#) and [Tom Scott](#)

### **Environmental Excellence Award, For-profit Business – [GoodOnYa Organic Deli](#)**

Established in 2001 by Olympic Athlete, Kris Buchannan, [GoodOnYa](#) received the award for their environmental and organic practices throughout their product lines, equipment, operations, and company culture.

### **Environmental Excellence Award, Non-profit Business – [Solana Center for Environmental Innovation](#)**

[The Solana Center](#) received this award for their long history of promoting sustainable practices, recycling, composting, local cleanups, and environmental education.