Azusa Beautiful, founded in 2005, a 501(c)3 not-for-profit volunteer organization whose mission is to keep Azusa beautiful through tree plantings, plant sales, general beautification projects such as Utility Art Boxes, murals and more. Azusa Beautiful is comprised of volunteers dedicated to enhancing the beauty of the City of Azusa by encouraging and facilitating community participation in beautification projects throughout the city.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of our project was to revitalize the Azusa Community Garden by providing workshops that promote mindfulness and healthy living through gardening. We intend to help revitalize the garden space, convening volunteers through our new collaborators. We expect to employ health strategies including, motivating adults and youth to be more physically active, to eat more produce through education and gardening, to support residents to make lifestyle changes that will reduce their risk of developing diabetes, and to enhance the mental wellbeing of residents through mindfulness and wellness programming at the garden. We had planned to host several workshops in the garden but due to COVID-19 we shifted to virtual workshops.

Azusa Beautiful Workshops
• We held two Open houses to reintroduce the Azusa Community Garden
• Due to COVID-19 we did virtual workshops

Informational & Open House Meeting
• The meetings were held at the Azusa Community Garden
• Most attendees were not aware of the Azusa Community Garden
• Once familiar they expressed interest in participating

Meditation
• We held a virtual Meditation workshop in partnership with the DIMC
• We had more than 25 participants
• After the workshop several people said it helped clear their minds
• They were thankful for the class
• We are scheduling two virtual Tai Chi classes in late May

Zumba
• We held a virtual Zumba workshop
• We had more than 50 participants
• We received positive feedback from those who attended

Community Partnerships – Ensuring future success
• We reached out to local organizations and offered a free garden box. We received commitments from 8 organizations that agreed to maintain a garden box.
• We also have interest from the San Gabriel Valley Economic Partnership in creating a STEM workforce development project with Azusa kids along with the City of Azusa and the Community Garden. The Partnership is submitting a proposal this month to fund the project. This project would create opportunities for hands on learning to design and build garden beds, a gardener hut, or work on things like lighting and irrigation.
• We will also continue our partnership with the City of Azusa to promote programs and the Garden itself through their expanded social media and virtual programming due to the Coronavirus Emergency.

Raised Garden Beds
• Several participants of the community garden are seniors. Many expressed interest in having a raised bed. We purchased materials to build 10 raised beds in the garden.

OUTCOMES

• Raised awareness in the Azusa Community Garden to increase the occupancy of garden boxes from 40% to 95% reserved.
• Over 75 participants in classes
• Development of “Friends of the Community Garden” to continue to develop and create excitement about the project
• 8 City of Azusa nonprofits reserved garden boxes and committed to a shared vision of creating a revitalized community garden and a healthier Azusa

VIRTUAL CLASSES

Final Thoughts

• The project helped to revitalize the Azusa Community Garden and raise awareness of its offerings to the community. People are also practicing safe distancing while gardening.
• The community partnerships and workshops we provided helped promote mindfulness and healthy living.
• It also motivated adults and youth to be more physically active, to eat more produce through education and gardening, to support residents to make lifestyle changes that will reduce their risk of developing diabetes, and to enhance the mental wellbeing through the workshops we provided.
• We will continue to provide virtual workshops and inform them of free workshops available so they can continue a healthy lifestyle.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: We would like to thank our partners at City of Hope, who provided all of the health assessment testing and evaluations, under the leadership of Dr. Jessica Clague DeHart.