



“The greatest threat to our planet is the belief that someone else will save it.”

- Robert Swan, Author



South Bay Sustainable Communities

The mission of South Bay Sustainable Communities Network is to build healthy and sustainable communities by encouraging them to create lasting change in their daily lives through education and community engagement in environmental conservation, neighborhood composting, and sustainable urban farming.

Tina Matthias • Founder and Executive Director

2023

- Began our journey 3.5 years ago
- 16 Community Compost Hubs
- 40K pounds of food waste (Since May 2019 130,500 lbs)
- Produced 2,000 pounds of compost (Since 2020, 8,500 lbs)
- Redistributed 7,500 pounds of edible foods from food drives & gleaning (Since 2021, 25,600 lbs)
- Prevented 32,110 pounds of CO2e GHG emissions (Since May 2019 105,524 lbs)

Home + GARDEN



Tha Mathias, founder of South Bay Sustainable Communities, admires her backyard garden, which benefits from the compost she and her neighbors make.

A community from kitchen scraps

Neighborhood composting program piloted in Chula Vista cut de-sac takes root across city as residents embrace effort

BY GABRIEL GOLDEN

It's a common sight most days to see people walking to the town house at the end of a Chula Vista cul-de-sac carrying a container filled with food scraps. They then empty those scraps into one of the white buckets beside a high-tech "Food Drop" compost bin for South Bay Sustainable Communities, a local nonprofit that's big on community outreach.

The house belongs to 55-year-old executive director Tha Mathias and her husband, Dan Brown, the organization's founder and chief executive officer. Since 2019, she has led this composting program with several others in SBSC, including Youth & A Sustainable Future, community education, nature trails and gardening and more outdoor work.

Mathias, who worked at the Large Coast Economy Center in Chula Vista for more than 10 years as a volunteer and program manager until her retirement, is also a member of the City of Chula Vista Sustainability Commission. She was instrumental in helping establish the new program in light of the January 2022 California Assembly Bill 188, which required every jurisdiction in the state to provide organizational services to all residents and businesses in the area.

Mathias had several water waste outreach events that resulted in a grant for her Chula Vista community engaged. When COVID-19 and the lockdown prevented her from going to her job, she decided it was the perfect opportunity to start her neighborhood composting system.

After doing water research with organizations in Northern California to learn best practices, she got to work on the street. Now it's share recipes, we share food, we help people grow stuff, and if they're growing one thing, we'll be growing another, and then there's a swap."

Tha Mathias · executive director, South Bay Sustainable Communities



Mathias lets her compost bins reach 130 degrees before turning it. She uses process the food scraps but avoid fish headings, which can be used for painting or as agreed landscape plants.

Start a composting program

The Mathias offers the following suggestions for San Diego County residents who live outside of Chula Vista who want to start their own neighborhood composting program:

- Get information from your city about best practices and learn whether there are any programs for meals or banking.
- Work with your waste hauler.
- Mathias learned in getting up and later expanding the program that people like to eat, such as candles or metal shoes. When reaching your neighbors, the advice, bring them a candle and compost to get them started.
- Create and bring a basket that explains what your plan is, how they can participate, what the goals are and restrictions.



The Mathias demonstrates the use of a sifter that separates larger pieces from more processed compost. The neighborhood operation processes a new batch of compost every 65 to 80 days.

SCRAPS

FROM E3

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Food scraps are collected in buckets. Neighboring tools help neighbors shovel the compost to take home.



Mathias shows her compost bin in the garden of her Chula Vista home.

There are several reasons for leaving the bin to compost, and if you're not ready to compost, you can still help. Here are some ways to help:

- Check out the Salena Center for Environmental Innovation in Encinitas, a nonprofit that focuses on soil water and waste diversion. Their resources page (salenacenter.org/soil) includes a "Compost It Yourself Guide" that explains how to build a hot compost, when to test samples, when to test compost for pH and nutrients, and the basics of how to compost. They're also very helpful, knowledgeable people, so don't be shy about reaching out for advice.
- Call the San Diego County Geographic Information System (GIS) for another helpful resource. It explains how to start a community-scale composting program and, like the Salena Center, has guides to building a composting bin and how to compost.
- Finally as Mathias advised, contact both your city and waste hauler for best practices information — and if they have any handouts that might get neighbors excited while you're recycling.



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Redistributed 7,500 pounds of edible foods



Local food drives, Chula Vista Collaborative, Salvation Army, Norman Park Senior Center, Southwestern College



Sorting Student Lunch Waste into:

- Organics & Non-Organics
- Rescue Foods
- Soiled Paper Waste
- Liquids
- Recycling
- Trash





OUTH BAY

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

Network



Composted
10,143 lbs.
Food Scraps



Rescuing, Composting
and Sorting Food



2023

Youth
4 a sustainable
future



54,855 lbs.

Foods Rescued

Feeding neighborhood families through daily and weekly food drives and pantries, nonprofit refugee organizations, senior centers, and unsheltered families



15 High, Middle and
Elementary Schools
Participating in Y4SF



Students take action to Affect Climate Change!



Diverted **68,050 lbs** of Food Waste, Rescued Foods, and Liquids from the landfill which prevented:



2,722
Gallons

of gas used in
waste transportation



46,000
Pounds

of CO₂e Carbon Dioxide
greenhouse gas emissions
from landfill

YOUTHS MAKING a DIFFERENCE for TOMORROW!



Training and Presentations



In Class
and
Outdoors



Hilltop High Y4SF Training Day



Learning to Sort



**Creates little
true trash**

Assemblymember David Alvarez



City Sponsored Earth Day & Street Fairs



Youth
Leaders
taking
ACTION
through
education



CLIMATE CHANGE IS REAL

Community Outreach

- Collaborate with local service clubs with Students give workshops / presentations
- Give presentations at local elementary and high schools
- Train & start up new schools with the Y4SF Program, *creating a youth workforce*
- Street Fairs and Earth Day Events



City Sponsored Clean-ups





Takeout Plastics Campaign

Single-use
Plastic
Reduction
Ordinance

Y4SF Students go to City Council



Community Events



18 Guided Hikes
& Tours in 2023



Community Workshops

2023

14 Community Workshops



Regenerative Community Orchard

Planted 48 Fruit Trees and 12 Shade Trees

Created 300 ft of Garden Beds



Taking Action and Affecting Climate Change



Rescued Food Mosaic



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Tina Matthias
Founder and Executive Director

