

Girl Scouts' Monarch Butterfly Project

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Some wise person said, "Not all heroes wear capes." In fact, some wear Girl Scout uniforms! Four local 12 year-olds in Scout Troop 4288 embarked on a project that will have a positive and lasting effect on our community's environment. Noting that the Monarch butterfly is an endangered population, they set about with the zeal and motivation of researchers to do something about it.



Scouts Lilly, Sloane, Alexandra and Emery designed what would become the basis of their nationally recognized Silver Girl Scouting Award. Their first step was to become educated about the factors involved in the dwindling population and the strategies to increase the numbers of this endangered species. They looked to Ron Vanderhoff, General Manager and V.P. at Roger's Gardens, an expert on the Monarch Butterfly. Ron explained that the loss of safe milkweed plants in the Monarchs' spring and summer breeding areas is the most significant factor contributing to this issue. The development of rural lands, the use of herbicides etc. have contributed to this

loss. Ron emphasized the importance of planting the correct plants for the caterpillars to feed on. Regionally appropriate milkweeds (not tropical) are the required host plants for caterpillars of the Monarch Butterfly. In our case, the California native, Narrow leafed Milkweed which grows on our local hillsides is the milkweed of choice. Ron also discussed the migration patterns, the life cycle as well as the local plants critical for the health and growth of Monarchs. Ron said, "From two million Monarchs to two thousand in less than thirty years! How we respond to the Monarch crisis will say a lot about how we respond and care for the planet as a whole. I am very proud of these girls."



The Scouts then began what would be a 50-hour project of promoting the conservation of the Monarchs. They furthered their research by exploring local gardens including Roger’s Gardens, Sherman Gardens, The Environmental Nature Center (ENC) and areas around the community. They developed literature/ brochures and set up booths at Roger’s Gardens and the Saturday morning CDM farmers’ market to inform the community on ways the residents could help in the effort.

These girls felt that an important part of the project, was “to inform the next generation of butterfly advocates. The girls created custom coloring books that were distributed to a local preschool and presented educational awareness sessions to the children in summer camp at the ENC.” Additionally, they created mini pollinating kits which were distributed through the Oasis Senior Center.



One of the most lasting action items was the opportunity to work with Newport Beach Public Works Superintendent, Kevin Pekar, to create a nationally recognized Monarch Waystation in the Civic Center Gardens using Native Milkweed plants donated by Roger’s Gardens. Superintendent Pekar was very impressed with these young Girl Scouts. “Listening to their concerns about the environment and working with them on the native milkweed waystation was inspiring for me. They are the

advocates we need.” Mayor Muldoon added importance to the project by meeting with the girls at the Civic Center Garden and admiring their knowledge and enthusiasm.

An added attraction was that after the planting was completed and thoroughly watered, two Monarchs actually made an appearance to show their appreciation!

In the Girl Scouting world, Troop 4288 spent 4th and 5th grade learning about causes they wanted to address. Following that, the girls earned their Bronze Award focusing on single use plastics in the ocean. In 6th – 8th grade, the Monarch Butterfly project earned these four girls their Silver Award. In high school, some of the scouts will aspire to earn their Gold Award, requiring over 80 hours to create and implement another project which will have a positive and lasting effect on the community.

Building the Monarch Butterfly population one cocoon at a time may seem like a daunting goal, but these young heroes are determined to make it happen!