Institute for Environmental Solutions

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2017 GREEN Prospectus

2017 Greenbelt Restoration and Environmental Education Network (GREEN) Project Prospectus

Introduction

The Wheat Ridge Greenbelt faces severe environmental threats. The Institute for Environmental Solutions (IES), along with project partners, The Wheat Ridge Parks and Recreation Department (WRPRD) and Kullerstrand Elementary School, are working together to confront those problems while educating a new generation of environmental stewards. The purpose of the IES 2017 Greenbelt Restoration and Environmental Education Network (GREEN) project is to introduce at-risk, seriously emotionally disabled and general education students in Wheat Ridge to the natural environment through hands-on science education while providing environmental improvement to the Wheat Ridge Greenbelt. IES GREEN will use the Wheat Ridge Greenbelt as a "living-laboratory" to enrich the science curriculum and socialization for students through workshops, planting days, and a nature walk. Students will positively change the environment by planting native trees, shrubs, and grasses, remove invasive species, and improve the Greenbelt's ecosystem, native species habitat, and Clear Creek watershed.

IES has worked with WRPRD on successful restoration programs before. This includes Revive the Greenbelt (2013), Preserve the Greenbelt (2014), Growing the Greenbelt (2015), and the 2016 GREEN Project.

The Wheat Ridge Greenbelt

The Greenbelt is a cherished open space, which borders Clear Creek through Wheat Ridge from Eldridge Street west of I-70 to Harlan Street east of Wadsworth. Devastating hailstorms and extreme flooding, along with farming and mining activities, have caused the number of plants native to the area to shrink. In 2015 Wheat Ridge Parks and Recreation Department built a new trail, connecting Kipling Street and the Wheat Ridge Recreation Center to the Moore Street Trailhead. Thirty mature trees were removed. The Greenbelt walking and bicycle trail provide extensive opportunities for outdoor activities for community members and is heavily used by Wheat Ridge and surrounding area residents. Without mitigation along the new trail section, Clear Creek will continue to erode its banks and create flooding problems. The IES GREEN Project will increase the number of trees and shrubs, improving the bare trail section and reducing further damage to the Greenbelt ecosystem. Without this project, the Greenbelt could experience flooding on walking paths, and damage to Wheat Ridge homes and businesses.

IES, the Wheat Ridge Parks and Recreation Department, and Kullerstrand Elementary School will work together on the GREEN project to ensure the new trail section is improved with new native trees and plants. A three-year plan will be implemented by IES and carried our by the Tree Stewards. This includes watering the trees, mulching around the trees, and removing weeds. During the summer, children from the Wheat Ridge Sun Camp will participate in the Tree Steward program by watering, weeding, and mulching in the planting area.

2017 GREEN Objectives

- Special and general education students at Kullerstrand Elementary School will learn about Colorado's ecology and practice their social skills in classroom workshops and field trips with IES and Wheat Ridge community volunteers.
- Students will plant native trees, shrubs, and grasses along the new Greenbelt trail.
- The Greenbelt ecosystem will experience cleaner air and water through the planting of native trees and shrubs, and the removal of harmful weeds.
- IES will implement a three-year maintenance plan where IES Tree Stewards will water and care for trees and plants, mulch and weed, and safeguard the health of the trees and plants.
- IES will evaluate the success of the program with a final report and present the project to the community with a project video.

KULLERSTRAND GREEN www.i4es.org

Wheat Ridge Children and Nature: A Healthy Combination

The 2017 GREEN program builds on five years of successful IES community and student tree planting programs in the Wheat Ridge Greenbelt with the support of the Wheat Ridge Parks and Recreation Department. IES projects have taught hundreds of students to become the next generation of environmental stewards through in-class and outdoor learning workshops. In collaboration with educators, students, parents, local volunteers, Scouts, and our project partners, the program will be a positive experience for the students with lifelong benefits. One of the Kullerstrand Elementary School teachers said, “This is a good way to give back to the community and let the community know that our school cares”. A Kullerstrand student said, “If there were no trees, we would have a hard time breathing”. The students learn about the importance of trees and how they help clean the air and improve water quality with the valuable lesson that environmental stewardship is something they can take with them throughout their lives.

Kullerstrand Teaching Responsibility and Independence with Learning Supports (TRAILS) works with at-risk students to provide behavioral, emotional, social, and academic support. They work with students with the goal of getting them into general education classes. During the planting days, the TRAILS students can pair up with general education students to work towards that goal.

During the summer, Wheat Ridge Sun Campers going outside to the Greenbelt to water the trees and pull weeds that are sometimes taller then they are! Sun Campers excitedly talk about taking their parents out to the Greenbelt to show them where they care for the trees and shrubs. They are excited to help care for the open space and learn about the plants and animals that thrive in the area.

Tree Stewards

Tree planting and maintenance in the Wheat Ridge Greenbelt is a community-wide effort. IES Tree Stewards come together to help Kullerstrand students on planting day and during the summer they implement the three-year maintenance program. Tree Stewards are trained community members and are an important part of the GREEN program and vital to the success of the program. They have been an active and effective force of dedicated community volunteers throughout IES programs the past five years.

About IES and the Tree Project

The Institute for Environmental Solutions delivers scientific solutions to improve our health and environment. Our project mission is to improve the environmental quality of Colorado's cities using tree science. IES initiatives focus on improving community health and local economies through strategic tree planting and maintenance.

Be a GREEN Supporter!

Help your community TODAY! Donate your time and become a Tree Steward, or donate your tax-deductible monetary contribution. Contact IES by email or phone: solutions@i4es.org or 720-295-4437. Please visit our website at www.i4es.org.

Project Partners and Funding

GREEN would not be possible without the support from our community partners and funders:

- Kullerstrand Elementary School
- Wheat Ridge Parks and Recreation Department
- Wheat Ridge Recreation Center Sun Camp

GREEN receives generous funding from:

- National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
- Patagonia Denver
- The City of Wheat Ridge Outside Agency Contribution Program
- Donations from People like YOU!