



Students admire their new healthy food options garden at Bubbling Wells Elementary School in Desert Hot Springs.

## Elementary Students to Till the Soil of Their Own School Garden

*Desert Healthcare District/Foundation helps create Bubbling Wells School's healthy food options*

COACHELLA VALLEY – March 5, 2018 – Over the last several months, Desert Healthcare District/Foundation has teamed up with teachers, students and the school principal at Bubbling Wells Elementary School in Desert Hot Springs to design, create, build and fund a school garden. Today, a ribbon-cutting ceremony officially recognizes the hard work and welcomes the students into their new garden.

“One of the District/Foundation’s areas of community health focus is healthy eating and active living,” said Herb K. Schultz, CEO at the District/Foundation, adding that “teaching students about the benefits of growing their own vegetables and fruits is not only important, it can be fun!”

The funding for the garden was granted from Riverside University Health System (RUHS) to be used toward place-based health initiatives in Desert Hot Springs. As the District/Foundation secured the funding, staff worked with

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## SCHOOL GARDEN

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RUHS-Public Health through its NEOP (Nutrition Education and Obesity Prevention) program to plant the seedling of the garden idea with Palm Springs Unified School District. Andrea Morey, Program Coordinator for RUHS, explained why their commitment to healthy programs for students includes gardens. “School gardens are opportunities to stimulate classroom curiosity in an active outdoor setting. Students can participate in planting, growing, and harvesting vegetables – even preparing a healthy snack!”

Palm Springs Unified School District was a garden collaborator, instrumental in both the approval process and in-kind donations of extending the necessary water lines, garden irrigation system and timer, and work by the grounds crew.

District/Foundation staff members Alejandro Espinoza, Program Officer and Outreach Director, and Vanessa Smith, Health Educator, were instrumental in the garden process including hands-on tilling of the soil. Curriculum that helps the children learn about healthy eating of things like fruits and vegetables is also provided to teachers via Smith and Espinoza or presented directly to the students by their teachers. Teachers Kris Woody and Aiden Albano-Bachtell established a Gardening Club for interested students who will maintain the garden year-round.

“It’s very exciting to be one of the first schools in Desert Hot Springs to have our own student-operated garden,” indicated Principal Omar Tinoco. The Bubbling Wells PTA is also a major contributor to the garden’s creation and future success. The PTA is working on fundraisers and a garden-work day set for the spring with the help of parents. “Our healthy school garden is seeded and off to a vivid start,” added Tinoco.

Go to the District/Foundation Facebook page for photo updates of the ribbon-cutting, plantings and on-going student work: @DesertHealthcareDistrict.

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#### **About Desert Healthcare District/Foundation**

The Desert Healthcare District is local government agency formed in 1948 whose mission is to achieve optimal health at all stages of life for all District residents. The District includes more than 200,000 residents and encompasses the cities of Desert Hot Springs, Palm Springs, Cathedral City, Rancho Mirage, Palm Desert (west of Cook Street), and unincorporated areas of Riverside County. The District and its affiliated nonprofit Desert Healthcare Foundation, together, are one of the largest funders in the Coachella Valley, granting more than \$4 million annually to nonprofit, community-based and provider organizations. These funds are used to assist residents — especially the underserved — in accessing vitally needed resources, such as primary and behavioral healthcare, housing, food, and transportation resources.