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Local Organization Develops Innovative Gardening Program for Low-Income Cochise County Residents

Bisbee, AZ, February 7, 2014: Baja Arizona Sustainable Agriculture (BASA) recently launched a new program designed to teach children, families, and seniors how to grow successful vegetable gardens in their own backyards. The Cochise County Backyard Garden Project will use a combination of educational classes and workshops, garden and farm tours, and a garden cooperative (in which participants help other participants install backyard gardens with technical assistance from BASA) to:

- Introduce participants to gardening for food production to foster stronger connections to where their food comes from.
- Increase access to (and consumption of) fresh food while reducing reliance on unhealthy and expensive fast food.
- Increase community control over food production in our region.
- Empower community members with the knowledge and self-reliance they need to regain control of their own diets.

Funding for this program is made possible by the Community Food Bank of Southern Arizona's Punch Woods Endowment. Other project partners include the Community Food Bank's Home Garden Program, Cochise County Master Gardeners, and Ecoasis Sustainable Living Center.

Meghan Mix, Director of BASA, explains "much of Cochise County is considered a food insecure region: an area with limited or no access to fresh, healthful, affordable food. Food insecurity commonly occurs in low-income areas with high poverty rates, and translates to high rates of diabetes, obesity, and heart disease from lack of proper nutrition. With less than 25% of residents eating 5 servings of fruits and vegetables a day, innovative programs that bring people closer to their food can change lives."

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Baja Arizona Sustainable Agriculture is a grassroots nonprofit whose mission is to facilitate local, sustainable food production, marketing, and education in southern Arizona. See www.bajaaz.org for more info.