


2023 ANNUAL REPORT



BLUE SKY



**TOGETHER,
CUYAMA IS
BLOOMING**



Contents

3	Our Mission	48	Eventful Skies, Cozy Huts: Cuyama's Charm
4	Our Team	52	L88 Continues to Take Flight
16	From the Director	58	Effervescence of Cuyama
24	Route to Beauty	62	2023 Financials
30	Foraging Friendships with Victory Gardens	69	Our Vision
34	Sowing Seeds for Rural Resilience	70	In the Press
38	Art in Action	72	Donors & Contributors
44	Water from Thin Air	74	Contact Us
		76	Credits

Our Mission

We're working to strengthen our rural communities by supporting entrepreneurs and building our regional creative and economic resources.

Nuestra Misión

Estamos trabajando para fortalecer nuestras comunidades rurales apoyando a los empresarios y construyendo nuestros recursos creativos y económicos regionales.

Our Team

Kelly Schmandt Ferguson

2023 President of the Board;
Chief of Staff at [Automotus](#)

Jesse Sugarmann

2023 Memorykeeper of the Board;
Artist & Educator at [California State University, Bakersfield](#)

Katerina Barilov

2023 Treasurer of the Board; Co-Founder
& COO at [Jump Aero Incorporated](#)

Ciara Ristig

Member of the Board; Senior Program
Manager at [National Association of Development Organizations](#)

Eric Meyer

Member of the Board; Program
Coordinator at [Santa Barbara Alliance for Community Transformation](#)

Carmen Sandoval-Aqimowon

Member of the Board; Artist,
Consultant, Painter, Printmaker and
S'amala Chumash Language Teacher

A Note from Our Board of Directors

As we reflect on the past year, it's impossible not to be struck by our incredible journey. The year started with tremendous rain and flooding that cut off the Cuyama Valley community from vital resources, providing another reminder of the challenges that rural communities face when climate disasters strike and why building resiliency is core to the mission at the Blue Sky Center. While flooding was a major marker at the start of the year, the lack of water resources in the Cuyama Valley made national headlines as the ongoing battle over groundwater rights continues to pit big agricultural players against the local ranchers, farmers, schools, small businesses, and residents.

As always, the Blue Sky Center team has been steadfastly committed to the Cuyama Valley community and dedicated to creating resilient, thriving, and inclusive rural economies. To this end, a major focus of this year was building the pipeline to fund needed and ongoing climate, food, arts, and economic programs. We are thrilled to report 2023 has marked our most successful year yet for grant funding with \$235,000 being awarded for Blue Sky Center-led programming that fosters climate, economic, and cultural resilience. These awards come from funders

all over the country, including the U.S. Departments of Energy and Agriculture; California's Sustainable Growth Council, Community Economic Resilience Fund, and Arts Council; Santa Barbara County's Sustainability Division; the Creative Change Coalition; private foundations, and more. This funding will provide Cuyamans with greatly needed climate resiliency, celebrations, and exaltations of community spirit and other programs for years and decades to come.

In the following pages, we invite you to delve into the inspiring stories that have unfolded throughout the year. Each narrative reflects the unique character of the Cuyama Valley, capturing the spirit of a community that thrives on unity, creativity, and shared experiences. We are excited about the year to come and welcome your support in sharing the word about Blue Sky Center and the Cuyama Valley. As always, we invite you to immerse yourself in what our team has woven together, inviting you to be not just a reader but a participant in the Blue Sky story.

With gratitude,

Blue Sky Center's Board of Directors

Our Team

Kelly Schmandt Ferguson

2023 Presidenta de la Junta; Jefa de Gabinete en [Automotus](#)

Jesse Sugarmann

2023 Secretario de la Junta; Artista y Educador en la [California State University, Bakersfield](#)

Katerina Barilov

2023 Tesorera de la Junta; Cofundadora y Directora de Operaciones en [Jump Aero Incorporated](#)

Ciara Ristig

Miembra de la Junta; Gerenta Senior de Programas en la [National Association of Development Organizations](#)

Eric Meyer

Miembro de la Junta; Coordinador de Programas en la [Santa Barbara Alliance for Community Transformation](#)

Carmen Sandoval-Aqimowon

Miembra de la Junta; Artista, Consultora, Pintora, Grabadora e Instructora de Lengua S^hamala Chumash

Nota De Nuestro Consejo De Administración

Al reflexionar sobre el año pasado, es imposible no sorprenderse por nuestra increíble trayectoria. El año comenzó con lluvias torrenciales e inundaciones que dejaron a la comunidad del valle de Cuyama sin recursos vitales, lo que nos recordó una vez más los retos a los que se enfrentan las comunidades rurales cuando se producen desastres climáticos y por qué el desarrollo de la resiliencia es fundamental para la misión del Blue Sky Center. Si bien las inundaciones fueron un importante marcador a principios de año, la falta de recursos hídricos en el valle de Cuyama saltó a los titulares nacionales, ya que la actual batalla por los derechos sobre las aguas subterráneas sigue enfrentando a los grandes actores agrícolas con los ganaderos, agricultores, escuelas, negocios pequeños y residentes locales.

Como siempre, el equipo del Blue Sky Center ha estado firmemente comprometido con la comunidad del Valle de Cuyama y dedicado a crear economías rurales resilientes, prósperas e inclusivas. Con este fin, un enfoque importante de este año fue construir el canal para financiar programas

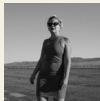
climáticos, alimentarios, artísticos y económicos necesarios y en curso. Estamos encantados de informar que 2023 ha marcado nuestro año más exitoso hasta la fecha en materia de subvenciones, con la concesión de \$235,000 para programación dirigida por el Blue Sky Center que fomenta la resiliencia climática, económica y cultural. Estos premios provienen de financiadores de todo el país, incluidos los Departamentos de Energía y Agricultura de EE. UU.; el Consejo de Crecimiento Sostenible de California, el Fondo de Resiliencia Económica Comunitaria y el Consejo de las Artes; la División de Sostenibilidad del Condado de Santa Bárbara; la Coalición para el Cambio Creativo; fundaciones privadas y más. Este financiamiento brindará a los habitantes de Cuyamán la tan necesaria resiliencia climática, celebraciones y exaltaciones del espíritu comunitario y otros programas en los años y décadas venideros.

En las páginas siguientes, le invitamos a adentrarse en las inspiradoras historias del año. Cada relato refleja el carácter único del Valle de Cuyama, capturando el espíritu de una comunidad que se nutre de la unidad, la creatividad y las experiencias compartidas. Estamos muy entusiasmados con el año que viene y agradecemos su apoyo en compartir la palabra sobre Blue Sky Center y el Valle de Cuyama. Como siempre, le invitamos a sumergirse en lo que nuestro equipo ha tejido juntos, invitándole a ser no sólo un lector, sino un participante en la historia de Blue Sky.

Con gratitud,

Junta Directiva del Blue Sky Center

Staff



Em Johnson, Director of Strategy

futurist, advocate, memorykeeper



Jack Forniash, Executive Director

spreadsheet artist, stargazer, tracker



Sandra Uribe, Land Steward

emprendedora, compromiso, reunión



Mayela Rodriguez, Arts Program Manager

artist, educator, astrologer



Melanie Shaw, Hospitality Manager

planner, nurturer, adventurer



Jason Bero, Facilities Assistant

motivator, optimist, artist



Joal Stein, Development & Communications Manager

poet, peach, provocateur



Contractors, Consultants, & Co-Creators

The hands and minds that help Blue Sky get things done in 2023, as well as the creative cultural workers that partnered with us to present work that is inclusive, impactful, and beautiful.

Abby Uribe-Deloya, Panelist for
Community Action Fellowships

Alan Plascencia, Student Artist for “Clean
Cuyama” logo design competition

Alaydis Rojas, Student Artist for “Clean
Cuyama” logo design competition

Alex Guerrero, Warrior Wagons, Jardines Victoria Fabricator,
& Interviewee for Partners for Rural Transformation profile

Alexander Hernandez, Assistant for the Victory
Gardens Grape Grafting Workshop

Alfonso Alvarez, Student Artist for “Clean
Cuyama” logo design competition

Alfonso Gamino, Panelist for Community Action Fellows

Alfonso Rodriguez, Student Artist for “Clean
Cuyama” logo design competition

Alisha Taff, Interviewee for Partners for
Rural Transformation profile

Andi Garcia, Art in Action Coordinator

Anna Dulaney, Artist for the Creative Youth
Development flag-making project

Anthony Fonseca, Co-Creator for
Community Action Fellowships

Arturo Cruz Solorio, 1st Place Prize Artist for
“Clean Cuyama” logo design competition

Ashten Christensen, Student Artist for “Clean
Cuyama” logo design competition

Balance Financial, Accountant

Brenton Kelly, Cuyama Home Energy Survey Tester

Brownstein Hyatt Farber Schreck, LLP,
Water Adjudication Lawyer

Carmen Sandoval-Aqimowon, Co-Creator and
Co-Host for Community Action Fellowships

Carolina Solorio, Housekeeper

Cereal Box Studio, Graphic Designer for the Cuyama Home Energy Survey

Cesar Uribe, Facilities Repair and Maintenance

Dabrya Plascencia Fonseca, Panelist and Co-Creator for Community Action Fellowships

Daniel Melo Morales, Community Action Fellow

Dean Lovett, Facilities Repair and Maintenance

Dulcemaria Carranza, Student Artist for “Clean Cuyama” logo design competition

Edson Rosales, Student Artist for “Clean Cuyama” logo design competition

Ellie Hall, Outpost Studio Resident

Eric Fonseca, Co-Creator for Community Action Fellowships

Francisco Castro, Student Artist for “Clean Cuyama” logo design competition

Garrett Gerstenberger, Clean California Designer

Graciela Dueñas, Panelist and Co-Creator for Community Action Fellowships

Ismael Garcia, Welder/Fabricator for L88 Sign Project & Vehicle Maintenance

Jean Gaillard, Interviewee for Partners for Rural Transformation profile

Jim Mitchell, L88 Advisor

John Coats, Cuyama Home Energy Survey Tester

Instituto de Lengua S.C., Language Skills Teachers

Irene Guzman, Assistant for the Victory Gardens Workshops

Jake Furstenfeld, Cuyama Home Energy Survey Tester

Jadira Cortez, 2nd Place Prize Artist for “Clean Cuyama” logo design competition

Jesus Ruiz, 3rd Place Prize Artist for “Clean Cuyama” logo design competition

Jimmy Johnson, Co-Creator and Co-Host for Community Action Fellowships

Joseph Fonseca, Panelist and Co-Creator for Community Action Fellowships

Josué Muñoz, Community Action Fellow

Jovani Ojeda, Interpreter for Partners for Rural Transformation profile

Kevin Shaw, L88 Circle Member

Kiana Toossi, visitcuyama.com & Annual Report Graphic Designer

Magic Sumter, Community Action Fellow in partnership with Amplify Arts Project

Maria Carpenter, Translator and Tester for the Cuyama Home Energy Survey

Maria Carranza, Leader for the Victory Gardens Workshops & Interpreter for Hydropanels Info Session

Margarita Zamora, Leader for the Victory Gardens Workshops

Michael Kent, L88 Circle Member

Minh Phan, Outpost Studio Resident

Nancy Schunke, L88 Circle Member

Nick Eichert, Student Artist for “Clean Cuyama” logo design competition

Nick Shaw, Facilities Repair and Maintenance

Noé Montes, Arts Advisor for the Community Action Fellowships and Creative Corps

Noelle Brunelle, Cuyama Resiliency Working Group Member & Cuyama Home Energy Survey Tester

Norma Soto, Interviewee for Partners for Rural Transformation profile

Pamela Baczuk, Panelist, Co-Creator, and Co-Host for visiting artists; Cuyama Home Energy Survey Outreach Assistant; & Interviewee for Partners for Rural Transformation profile

Pete Mendiburu, L88 Maintenance and Groundskeeping

Raul Monzón, Groundskeeper, Victory Gardens Fabricator, & Hydropanel Installer

Raul Pena, Panelist for Community Action Fellowships, Assistant for Event Hosting, & Cuyama Home Energy Survey Tester

Rosalba Fonseca, Panelist, Co-Creator, and Co-Host for Community Action Fellowships; Spanish Interpreter; Dessert Chef for “Celebrating Rural Resilience”; & Cuyama Home Energy Survey Tester

Rowdy Russell, Student Artist for “Clean Cuyama” logo design competition

Rubi Villalobos, Student Artist for “Clean Cuyama” logo design competition

Rubyann Marquez, Student Artist for “Clean Cuyama” logo design competition

Rural Community Assistance Corporation, Made in Cuyama and Sustainability Planning Consultant

Samantha Uribe-Deloya, Assistant and Leader for the Victory Gardens Workshops and for Event Hosting

Sandy & Bill Barnstead, Co-Hosts for Community Action Fellowships

Sara Nuñez, Co-Creator and Co-Host for Community Action Fellowships

Savannah Fox, Copyeditor for the Caltrans Roadside Display Panels

Sociocracy For All, Sociocracy Consultant

Socorro Heredia, Caterer for the Posada Event

Suarez Dance Theater, Community Action Fellowship Partner

Susana Rósaes, Posada Event Assistant

Tyler Holbert, Student Artist for “Clean Cuyama” logo design competition

Valeria Garcia Nuñez, Student Artist for “Clean Cuyama” logo design competition

Wayne Brett, Groundskeeping

Yuritze Fonseca, Assistant for Event Hosting

Zale Morris, Panelist for the Community Action Fellowships & Interviewee for Partners for Rural Transformation profile

Zoe Hertz, Outpost Studio Resident



Ambassadors

An Ambassador is a professional volunteer role at the Blue Sky Center. BSC has ongoing special projects that can benefit from the experience and insight of our Ambassadors. In addition to their technical and strategic support, Ambassadors commit to be advocates for the organization, sharing BSC resources, updates, and impact with their circles of friends and contacts. If you're interested in this opportunity, visit blueskycenter.org/ambassadors and contact us!

Cecilia Lopez, Language Access Ambassador

Chris Cohen, Ventures Ambassador

David Kietzman, Communications Ambassador

F. Paul Chounet, Partnerships Ambassador

Steve Sappington, L88 Airstrip Ambassador



From the Director

Abundant pozole and rosca matched the abundant optimism of the new year for the leaders and families who gathered at the “posada” event held here on January 6th (Día de Reyes). Just three days later, heavy rains washed out roads (of which there are only three in and out of the Cuyama Valley). Cuyamans were stuck in the Valley and some stuck outside. And then again in February, more rain, more closures, and, for a brief moment, snow. With the power out and once again all roads in and out washed out, everyone stepped outside into the crisp stillness, in tune with our collective isolation and interdependency.

In late 2022 Blue Sky Center was selected by Santa Barbara County as a pilot “resilience hub.” Over the course of this past year, we continually were asked — and asked ourselves — *what really is resilience?* And more specifically, *what is Cuyama resilience?* “Resiliency” is the newest codeword for accessing community development resources. We welcome this shift in focus. Our vision statement since 2018, after all, has been to “build models of resilient, thriving, and inclusive rural economies” in the Cuyama Valley. With our partners at Santa Barbara County and Community Environmental Council, we formed a new community working group of local residents and organizations who focused on understanding the terminologies of big new government resiliency grants and collecting data to create community-defined goals. Framing Blue Sky’s initiatives as resiliency work is just the newest lens for our work, which otherwise we generally frame as: **we do what needs to happen.**

With key partnerships at the county, state, and federal levels, we are bringing attention and funding to Cuyama. As a pilot resilience hub, we’re navigating what can be done both to our property as well as within the community to advance food resiliency (see the “Foraging Friendships with

Victory Gardens” section below), energy resiliency (see the “Sowing Seeds for Rural Resilience” section), and water resilience (see the “Water from Thin Air” section). In 2023 we were also awarded a USDA Rural Business Development Grant to continue our one-on-one assistance with local entrepreneurs, a Creative Youth Development grant from the state arts council to bring out-of-school creative enrichment for Cuyama youth, and a Community Economic Resilience Fund award to partner with fellow Cuyama nonprofit Quail Springs to engage Cuyamans in conversations regarding our economic future. And this past May we awarded the first two \$1,000 “Made in Cuyama” scholarships to local graduating Cuyama Valley High School seniors, the funds having been collected from a 3% tax on lodging we began assessing to guests of our campsite and event spaces.

Unfortunately though, all of this is in context to our community’s threatened access to water. We’re now in our second year of adjudication, a legal process to quantify both the Cuyama Basin’s sustainable water supply and each water user’s rights, and to impose a solution. At the conclusion of the litigation (likely years into the future), a judgment will be entered which will be binding on all land in Cuyama and — through court oversight — any issues of any pumping or use that is not consistent with the judgment will be addressed. The lawsuit was initially filed by Grimmway Farms and Bolthouse Farms, who were and are voting members on the 11-member board that created Cuyama’s Groundwater Sustainability Plan, which took many years and lots of compromises to create. Now all parties that claim a right to the groundwater supply have been joined to the action. Other landowners such as Harvard have caused expensive delays in the litigation. Grimmway and Bolthouse are among the largest pumpers in the basin, together using approximately 64% of water in the central Cuyama Valley farming area.

As a party to the litigation, to date Blue Sky has incurred \$7,187 in legal fees to defend our water rights for the 267 acres we steward. We estimate that the legal fees, technical expert fees, and other litigation costs for all parties surely now exceeds \$1 million, with several phases (years) of litigation

expected. We've heard of Cuyama farmers and landowners having to dip into retirement accounts, mortgages, or profits to cover legal bills instead of what we believe is actually needed: agricultural research into more appropriate crops for our arid region, irrigation system improvements, and asset-based economic development alternatives, among other things. Frustrations have run high with a group of local Cuyama neighbors calling for a carrot boycott, seeking to publicly shame the plaintiff carrot grower entities for their failure to keep their promise they made to be "good neighbors."

Through it all, we keep moving. Ever forward. Intentional in our steps and durational in our outlook. We try our best to do what needs to happen in ways that bring people along, build on what and who is here, and treat any issue at hand as best solved with an interdisciplinary approach. Work here — in all rural communities — is complex; resources are stretched and bent, but not broken. Let's get things done, together.

Neighbor to neighbor,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jack Forinash". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with some loops and flourishes.

Jack Forinash



Del Director

El abundante pozole y la rosca acompañaron el abundante optimismo del año próximo para los líderes y las familias que se reunieron en la "posada" celebrada aquí el 6 de enero (Día de Reyes). Apenas tres días después, las fuertes lluvias arrasaron las carreteras (de las que sólo hay tres para entrar y salir del Valle de Cuyama). Los cuyamanos se quedaron atrapados en el Valle y algunos fuera de él. Y de nuevo en febrero, más lluvia, más cierres y, por un breve momento, nieve. Sin electricidad y, una vez más, con todas las carreteras de entrada y salida cortadas, todo el mundo salió a la crujiente quietud, en sintonía con nuestro aislamiento e interdependencia colectivos.

A finales de 2022, el condado de Santa Bárbara seleccionó Blue Sky Center como "centro de resiliencia" piloto. A lo largo del año pasado, nos preguntaron continuamente, y nos preguntamos, *¿qué es realmente la resiliencia?* Y más concretamente, *¿qué es la resiliencia de Cuyama?* "Resiliencia" es la palabra clave más nueva para acceder a recursos de desarrollo comunitario. Acogemos con satisfacción este cambio de enfoque. Después de todo, nuestra declaración de visión desde 2018 ha sido "construir modelos de economías rurales resilientes, prósperas e inclusivas" en el valle de Cuyama. Con nuestros socios del Condado de Santa Bárbara y el Community Environmental Council, formamos un nuevo grupo de trabajo comunitario de residentes y organizaciones locales que se centraron en comprender la terminología de las nuevas y grandes subvenciones gubernamentales para la resiliencia y en recopilar datos para crear objetivos definidos por la comunidad. Enmarcar las iniciativas de Blue Sky como trabajo de resiliencia es solo la lente más nueva para nuestro trabajo, que de otra manera generalmente enmarcamos como: **hacemos lo que tiene que suceder.**

Con asociaciones clave a nivel del condado, estatal y federal, estamos atrayendo atención y financiamiento a Cuyama. Como centro piloto de resiliencia, estamos analizando lo que se puede hacer tanto en nuestra propiedad como dentro de la comunidad para promover la resiliencia alimentaria (consulte la sección

“Cosechar Amistades con Jardines Victoria” a continuación), la resiliencia energética (consulte la sección “Sembrando Semillas para la Resiliencia Rural”) y la resiliencia hídrica (consulte la sección “Agua del Aire”). En 2023, también recibimos una subvención para el desarrollo de empresas rurales del USDA para continuar nuestra asistencia personalizada con empresarios locales, una subvención para el desarrollo juvenil creativo del consejo estatal de las artes para brindar enriquecimiento creativo extraescolar a los jóvenes de Cuyama y una Premio del Fondo de Resiliencia Económica Comunitaria para asociarse con Quail Springs, una organización sin fines de lucro de Cuyama, para involucrar a los habitantes de Cuyama en conversaciones sobre nuestro futuro económico. Y en mayo pasado otorgamos las dos primeras becas “Hecho en Cuyama” de \$1,000 a estudiantes del último año de la Escuela Secundaria Cuyama Valley que se gradúan localmente; los fondos se recaudaron de un impuesto del 3 % sobre el alojamiento que comenzamos a evaluar para los huéspedes de nuestro campamento y espacios para eventos.

Pero, desafortunadamente, todo esto se enmarca en el contexto de la amenaza que pesa sobre el acceso al agua de nuestra comunidad. Nos encontramos en nuestro segundo año de adjudicación, un proceso legal para cuantificar tanto el suministro sostenible de agua de la cuenca de Cuyama como los derechos de cada usuario, y para imponer una solución. Cuando concluya el litigio (probablemente dentro de varios años), se dictará una sentencia que será vinculante para todos los terrenos de Cuyama y -mediante supervisión judicial- se abordarán los problemas de cualquier bombeo o uso que no se ajuste a la sentencia. La demanda fue presentada inicialmente por Grimmway Farms y Bolthouse Farms, que eran y son miembros con derecho a voto en la junta de 11 miembros que creó el Plan de Sostenibilidad de las Aguas Subterráneas de Cuyama, cuya creación llevó muchos años y muchos compromisos. Ahora todas las partes que reclaman un derecho al suministro de aguas subterráneas se han unido a la acción. Otros propietarios, como Harvard, han provocado costosos retrasos en el litigio. Grimmway y Bolthouse se encuentran entre los mayores bombeadores de la cuenca, y juntos utilizan aproximadamente el 64% del agua de la zona agrícola del valle central de Cuyama

Como parte del litigio, hasta la fecha Blue Sky ha incurrido en honorarios legales por \$7,187 para defender sus derechos de agua para los 267 acres que administramos. Estimamos que los honorarios legales, los honorarios de los expertos técnicos y otros costos del litigio para todas las partes seguramente ahora

superan el millón de dólares, y se esperan varias fases (años) de litigio. Hemos oído hablar de agricultores y propietarios de tierras de Cuyama que han tenido que recurrir a cuentas de jubilación, hipotecas o ganancias para cubrir facturas legales en lugar de lo que creemos que es realmente necesario: investigación agrícola sobre cultivos más apropiados para nuestra árida región, mejoras en el sistema de riego y gestión de activos. alternativas de desarrollo económico basadas en ellas, entre otras cosas. Las frustraciones han aumentado con un grupo de vecinos locales de Cuyama que piden un boicot a las zanahorias, buscando avergonzar públicamente a las entidades productoras de zanahorias demandantes por no haber cumplido la promesa que hicieron de ser “buenos vecinos.”

A pesar de todo, seguimos avanzando. Siempre adelante. Intencional en nuestros pasos y duradero en nuestra perspectiva. Hacemos todo lo posible para hacer lo que tiene que suceder de manera que atraiga a las personas, aprovechamos qué y quién está aquí y tratamos cualquier problema que tengamos entre manos para que se resuelva mejor con un enfoque interdisciplinario. El trabajo aquí (en todas las comunidades rurales) es complejo; Los recursos se estiran y doblan, pero no se rompen. Hagamos las cosas juntos.

De vecino a vecino,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jack Forinash". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Jack" and last name "Forinash" clearly distinguishable.

Jack Forinash



Route to Beauty

Camino a la Belleza



For over two years the Cuyama Valley Townsites Beautification and Wayfinding Working Group has worked to develop a roadside beautification project funded by a \$1.2 million investment by the state department of transportation (Caltrans). The effort has resulted in a total of 65 dry-native palo verde trees and four palm trees being planted, and the two wash bridges at the highway entrances to New Cuyama received “CUYAMA VALLEY” steel structures that announce your arrival. Additionally, Primero Street now has two viewsopes and four new display panels that share the stories of our local history and economy. The project will bring shade and year-round desert beauty to the side of the road, buffering the boundary between the fast-moving Cuyama Highway and the quieter roads in town.

In parallel as part of the project, we partnered with High Desert Print Co. and the Cuyama Valley High School to host a logo design competition to celebrate the unique identity of the Cuyama Valley. The winner of the competition, 10th-grader Arturo Cruz Solorio, had his design printed by HDPC onto T-shirts and a commemorative poster, while Arturo and the 2nd- and 3rd-place entries received a cash award. Garrett Gerstenberger, owner of HDPC, provided in-class instruction for the students as they developed their designs, speaking to how he started his business at just 19 years old to serve his passion for making unique prints. The high school students took two field trips to HDPC's print shop (located here at Blue Sky) to see the process of designing and to actually print the T-shirts themselves!

A big thank you goes to Garrett and his team at High Desert Print Co., Superintendent Gamino and Mr. Lebsack at the Cuyama Valley High School, to the Working Group Members Pam Baczuk, Meg Brown, Melanie Shaw, Ferial Sadeghian, and Amber Rahe, and to Corby Kilmer at Caltrans.



THE FIRST PEOPLE

Native Americans

Native Americans lived in the region for thousands of years. They were skilled hunters and gatherers, and they built large, multi-story pueblos. The Anasazi, Hohokam, and Moghon cultures were the most prominent. They left behind a rich legacy of art, architecture, and agriculture. The region is now home to several Native American tribes, including the Navajo, Hopi, and Zuni. The National Monument is a testament to their enduring presence and the natural beauty of the region.

THE WILDER COUNTRY

The Wilder Country is a region of rugged beauty and rich history. It is home to some of the most spectacular natural scenery in the state, including the Grand Canyon, the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument, and the Capitol Reef National Park. The region is also home to a variety of unique plants and animals, and it is a popular destination for outdoor recreation. The Wilder Country is a true gem of the state, and it is well worth a visit.

Durante más de dos años, el Grupo de Trabajo de Embellecimiento y Señalización del Valle de Cuyama ha trabajado para desarrollar un proyecto de embellecimiento de los bordes de las carreteras financiado con una inversión de \$1.2 millones del departamento de transportes del estado (Caltrans). El esfuerzo ha dado lugar a un total de 65 árboles nativos secos de palo verde y cuatro palmeras que se plantan, y los dos puentes de lavado en las entradas de la carretera a New Cuyama recibido "CUYAMA VALLEY" estructuras de acero que anuncian su llegada. Además, la Calle Primero cuenta ahora con dos miradores y cuatro paneles expositivos que comparten las historias de nuestra historia y economía locales. El proyecto aportará sombra y belleza del desierto durante todo el año al lado de la carretera, amortiguando el límite entre la rápida autopista de Cuyama y las carreteras más tranquilas del pueblo.

Paralelamente, como parte del proyecto, nos asociamos con High Desert Print Co. y el instituto Cuyama Valley High School para organizar un concurso de diseño de logotipos con el fin de celebrar la identidad única del valle de Cuyama. El ganador del concurso, Arturo Cruz Solorio, del decimo grado, hizo que HDPC imprimiera su diseño en camisetas y un póster conmemorativo, mientras que Arturo y el segundo y tercer ganadores recibieron un premio en metálico. Garrett Gerstenberger, propietario de HDPC, instruyó a los alumnos en el desarrollo de sus diseños, explicándoles cómo puso en marcha su empresa con sólo 19 años para satisfacer su pasión por hacer impresiones únicas. Los estudiantes hicieron dos excursiones a la imprenta de HDPC (situada en Blue Sky) para ver el proceso de diseño e imprimir las camisetas.

Muchas gracias a Garrett y a su equipo de High Desert Print Co., al Superintendente Gamino y al Sr. Lebsack del Cuyama Valley High School, a los miembros del grupo de trabajo Pam Baczuk, Meg Brown, Melanie Shaw, Ferial Sadeghian y Amber Rahe, y a Corby Kilmer de Caltrans.





Foraging Friendships with Victory Gardens

**Cosechar Amistades con
Jardines Victoria**

Jardines Victoria, also known as Victory Gardens, have a historical role in strengthening community bonds during challenging times, fostering resilience, and promoting self-sufficiency. Now in its fourth year, the program has installed backyard gardens for 45 families and in this past year conducted diverse workshops and events such as grape grafting, seed planting, garlic cultivation, nopales canning, bordado (embroidery), and a Posada.

In 2023 we installed eight new beds and hosted 183 community members across all Jardines Victoria events. Led by land steward Sandra Uribe, Jardines Victoria received funding in 2023 from [The Fund for Santa Barbara](#) and [Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians Foundation](#) to deliver its programming to the community.

We're proud to announce that recently awarded grants from [The Fund for Santa Barbara](#) and the [Strategic Growth Council's Transformative Climate Communities](#) grant will allow us to further deepen the program's impact in 2024!

[Special thanks to our donors that supported our 2023 programming, especially The Fund for Santa Barbara and the Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians Foundation.](#)

“Nuestras familias del grupo Jardines Victoria disfrutaron los diversos talleres educativos que se ofrecen en Blue Sky Center, donde tienen la oportunidad de traer a sus hijos con ellas y aprender juntos. Somos la familia de Jardines Victoria en Cuyama.”

Sandra Uribe, Cuidadora de la Tierra de Blue Sky

“Our families from the Victory Gardens group enjoy the various educational workshops offered at Blue Sky Center, where they have the opportunity to bring their children with them and learn together. We are the Jardines Victoria family in Cuyama.”

Sandra Uribe, Land Steward at Blue Sky

Jardines Victoria, también conocido como Victory Gardens, tiene un papel histórico en el fortalecimiento de los lazos comunitarios en tiempos difíciles, el fomento de la resiliencia y la promoción de la autosuficiencia. Ahora, en su cuarto año, el programa ha instalado jardines de traspatio para 45 familias y en este año pasado llevó a cabo diversos talleres y eventos como injerto de uva, plantación de semillas, cultivo de ajo, enlatado de nopales, bordado y una Posada.

En 2023 instalamos ocho jardines nuevas y recibimos a 183 miembros de la comunidad en todos los eventos de Jardines Victoria. Dirigido por la administradora de tierras Sandra Uribe, Jardines Victoria recibió financiación en 2023 de The Fund for Santa Barbara y Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians Foundation para ofrecer su programación a la comunidad.

¡Estamos orgullosos de anunciar que las subvenciones concedidas recientemente por The Fund for Santa Barbara y la subvención Transformative Climate Communities del Strategic Growth Council nos permitirán profundizar aún más el impacto del programa en 2024!

Un agradecimiento especial a nuestros donantes que apoyaron nuestra programación de 2023, especialmente The Fund for Santa Barbara y la Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians Foundation.

Sowing Seeds for Rural Resilience



**Sembrar Semillas para
la Resiliencia Rural**

As part of Blue Sky Center's long-term mission to strengthen our rural community, invest in entrepreneurs, and build the capacity to weather any storm, we have been leading efforts to make our home more resilient.

With \$15,000 in pilot funding from Santa Barbara County, we were able to convene and establish the Cuyama Resiliency Working Group with the county and other pilot organizations. This group — a collective of local residents as well as representatives of local and regional organizations including the Community Environmental Council, Quail Springs, County of Santa Barbara, Cuyama Valley Family Resource Center, and the Cuyama Joint Unified School District — are working together to bring resources into Cuyama Valley for both disaster and community resilience.

In just the first year, we have already received funding from the U.S. Department of Energy and the Strategic Growth Councils' Transformative Climate Communities grant.

Our former Co-Executive Director, Emily Johnson, transitioned to a new position as the Director of Climate Resilience at Community Environmental Council and has been able to advance resiliency efforts at a regional scale, while still advising on key projects for Blue Sky Center.

Special thanks goes to our partners at Santa Barbara County's Sustainability Division as well as the U.S. Department of Energy and the California Strategic Growth Council for their financial support.



Como parte de la misión a largo plazo de Blue Sky Center de fortalecer nuestra comunidad rural, invertir en emprendedores y desarrollar la capacidad de capear cualquier adversidad, hemos liderado los esfuerzos para que nuestro hogar sea más resiliente.

Con \$15,000 dólares de financiación piloto del condado de Santa Bárbara, pudimos convocar y establecer el Grupo de Trabajo de Resiliencia de Cuyama con el condado y otras organizaciones piloto. Este grupo, formado por residentes locales y representantes de organizaciones locales y regionales como el Consejo Medioambiental de la Comunidad, Quail Springs, el condado de Santa Bárbara, el Centro de Recursos Familiares del Valle de Cuyama y el Distrito Escolar Unificado Conjunto de Cuyama, trabaja conjuntamente para aportar recursos al Valle de Cuyama, tanto para la resiliencia ante desastres como para la resiliencia de la comunidad.

Solo en el primer año, ya hemos recibido financiación del Departamento de Energía de Estados Unidos y de la subvención Transformative Climate Communities de los Consejos de Crecimiento Estratégico.

Nuestra anterior codirectora ejecutiva, Emily Johnson, pasó a ocupar un nuevo puesto como directora de resiliencia climática en el Community Environmental Council y ha podido impulsar los esfuerzos de resiliencia a escala regional, sin dejar de asesorar en proyectos clave para Blue Sky Center.

Un agradecimiento especial a nuestros socios de la División de Sostenibilidad del Condado de Santa Bárbara, así como al Departamento de Energía de EE.UU. y al Consejo de Crecimiento Estratégico de California por su apoyo financiero.

Art in Action



Arte en Acción

Our arts programming was consistently strong throughout the year, filled with inspiration, creativity, and magic. Funded by a California Arts Council [Impact Projects grant](#) and an [Arts Making Impact grant](#) from Santa Barbara County Office of Arts and Culture, we hosted six artists between February and June who created work with community response to the [Community Action Plan](#), a document of prioritized interests of the Cuyama Valley. In total there were 993 engagements between artists and community members during the course of the grant period. Visiting artists lead workshops in English, Spanish, and Spanglish, reaching the diverse needs of our community. Creative projects included zines, a mindful media guide, a sound-map of Cuyama, and a summer community party!

We also welcomed independent artists who took advantage of our [Outpost Studio](#) program, which provides space and time for artists and creative professionals. Videographers [Ellie Hall](#) and [Zoe Hertz](#) created a number of videos showcasing Blue Sky Center and [Made in Cuyama's](#) very own [High Desert Print Co.](#) and [Warrior Wagons](#). We also hosted Michelin Star chef [Minh Phan](#)!

Supported by a generous grant awarded by [Central Coast Creative Corps](#), we have hired artists to work directly with youth, adults, and elders across demographics in the Cuyama Valley to collectively pursue community priorities of community health, economic access, and climate resilience. This grant has supported a new full-time position at Blue Sky focused on executing work with a creative and inclusive lens.

In October we partnered with [Amplify Arts Project](#) for a second time to host resident artist [Majestic "Magic" Sumter](#) for a 3-week session in the Cuyama Valley. This residency fosters



creative growth for any female/gender-expansive artist ready to expand their perspectives through positive mentorship. As part of her residency, Magic hosted a variety of fiber arts workshops for local students and residents of all ages. Workshops included knitting, crochet, and yarn dying.

In the fall of 2023, we kicked off our newest series of artist residencies, generously supported by a Creative Youth Development grant from California Arts Council, with visiting artist Anna Dulaney. Anna worked with a cohort of Cuyama 13-to-18-year-olds to identify, design, and create wayfinding and point-of-interest flags throughout the Cuyama Valley as part of the community's beautification and wayfinding initiative. Students also learned how to dye fabric, screenprint, and construct their final flags.

Looking forward to 2024, we will host Jan Smith and the Muddy Daughters for a song camp focused on songwriting and performances centering groundwater issues in Cuyama. We're also excited to welcome back Ash Hanson and Alex Barreto Hathaway of PlaceBase Productions to work with the youth to inspire civic engagement using theater.

Our Community Action Fellowship was generously supported by a California Arts Council Impact Projects Grant and a Santa Barbara County Office of Arts and Culture Arts Making Impact Grant. Our new Creative Youth Development residency is supported by a California Arts Council Creative Youth Development Grant. Additionally, our Creative Coordinator role is made possible by a Central Coast Creative Corps grant. Finally, a special thank you to our Partner Amplify Arts Project for supporting our fall residency!

Nuestra programación artística fue consistentemente sólida a lo largo del año, llena de inspiración, creatividad y magia. Financiado por una subvención de [Proyectos de Impacto](#) del Consejo de Artes de California y una subvención de [Impacto de las Artes del Condado](#) de Santa Bárbara, hospedamos a seis artistas entre febrero y junio que crearon obras con la respuesta de la comunidad al [Plan de Acción Comunitaria](#), un documento de intereses priorizados del Valle de Cuyama. En total, hubo 993 interacciones entre artistas y miembros de la comunidad durante el período de la subvención. Los artistas visitantes dirigieron talleres en inglés, español y Spanglish, atendiendo a las diversas necesidades de nuestra comunidad. Los proyectos creativos incluyeron fanzines, una guía de medios conscientes, un mapa de sonido de Cuyama y ¡una fiesta comunitaria de verano!

También dimos la bienvenida a artistas independientes que aprovecharon nuestro programa [Outpost Studio](#), que proporciona espacio y tiempo para artistas y profesionales creativos. Las videógrafas [Ellie Hall](#) y [Zoe Hertz](#) crearon varios videos destacando Blue Sky Center y la propia [High Desert Print Co.](#) y [Warrior Wagons](#) de [Made in Cuyama](#). ¡También recibimos a la chef con estrella Michelin [Minh Phan](#)!

Respaldados por una generosa subvención otorgada por el [Corps Creativo de la Costa Central](#), contratamos artistas para trabajar directamente con jóvenes, adultos y ancianos de diferentes demografías en el Valle de Cuyama para perseguir colectivamente las prioridades comunitarias de salud comunitaria, acceso económico y resiliencia climática. Esta subvención ha respaldado un nuevo puesto a tiempo completo en Blue Sky enfocado en llevar a cabo trabajos con una perspectiva creativa e inclusiva.

En octubre nos asociamos por segunda vez con [Amplify Arts Project](#) para recibir a la artista residente [Majestic "Magic" Sumter](#) durante una sesión de 3 semanas en el Valle de Cuyama. Esta residencia fomenta el crecimiento creativo para cualquier artista femenina/expansiva de

género lista para ampliar sus perspectivas a través de una mentoría positiva. Como parte de su residencia, Magic organizó una variedad de talleres de artes textiles para estudiantes locales y residentes de todas las edades. Los talleres incluyeron tejido, ganchillo y tenido de hilos.

En el otoño de 2023, lanzamos nuestra serie más reciente de residencias artísticas, generosamente respaldada por una subvención de Desarrollo Creativo Juvenil del Consejo de Artes de California, con la artista visitante Anna Dulaney. Anna trabajó con un grupo de jóvenes de 13 a 18 años de Cuyama para identificar, diseñar y crear banderas de señalización y puntos de interés en todo el Valle de Cuyama como parte de la iniciativa de embellecimiento y señalización de la comunidad. Los estudiantes también aprendieron a tenir tela, serigrafar y construir sus banderas finales.

Mirando hacia el 2024, recibiremos a Jan Smith y las Muddy Daughters para un campamento de canciones centrado en la composición y actuaciones que abordan los problemas del agua subterránea en Cuyama. También estamos emocionados de dar la bienvenida de nuevo a Ash Hanson y Alex Barreto Hathaway de PlaceBase Productions para trabajar con los jóvenes e inspirar el compromiso cívico a través del teatro.

Nuestra Beca de Acción Comunitaria fue generosamente respaldada por una Subvención de Proyectos de Impacto del Consejo de Artes de California y una Subvención de Impacto de las Artes del Condado de Santa Bárbara. Nuestra nueva residencia de Desarrollo Creativo Juvenil cuenta con el respaldo de una Subvención de Desarrollo Creativo Juvenil del Consejo de Artes de California. Además, nuestro rol de Coordinador Creativo es posible gracias a una subvención del Corps Creativo de la Costa Central. ¡Finalmente, un agradecimiento especial a nuestro socio Amplify Arts Project por apoyar nuestra residencia de otoño!

Water from Thin Air



Agua del Aire

Thanks to a \$50,000 “green solutions” grant from Pacific Western Bank, we led a pilot project that installed cutting-edge hydropanels at four Cuyama homes as well as a demonstration site at Blue Sky Center. These independent, off-grid water sources were installed by our technical partner SOURCE Hydropanels. This technology is driven by solar power, delivering pure drinking water from the air, bypassing the need for groundwater or bottled water deliveries. This initiative not only addresses environmental concerns but also empowers residents in a drought-affected community, reducing utility bills, upgrading homes, and ensuring a reliable source of clean drinking water. In the year to come, we’ll monitor the production of the hydropanels to measure any cost savings and test the technology to see if it can reliably provide clean drinking water from the thin high desert air!

We are thankful for the support of Pacific Western Bank and the technical expertise of SOURCE for this pilot project.

“Already the Hydropanels have been saving us money, and we feel good about making a difference helping our environment with this project.”

Nayely Caro, Hydropanel pilot demonstration volunteer

“Los hidropaneles ya nos han ahorrado dinero, y nos sentimos bien por marcar la diferencia ayudando a nuestro medio ambiente con este proyecto.”

Nayely Caro, voluntaria de la demostración piloto de Hydropanel

Gracias a una subvención de \$50,000 dólares para "soluciones ecológicas" del Pacific Western Bank, dirigimos un proyecto piloto que instaló hidropaneles de última generación en cuatro viviendas de Cuyama, así como un centro de demostración en Blue Sky Center. Estas fuentes de agua independientes y aisladas de la red fueron instaladas por nuestro socio técnico SOURCE Hydropanels. Esta tecnología funciona con energía solar y suministra agua potable pura desde el aire, sin necesidad de aguas subterráneas ni agua embotellada. Esta iniciativa no sólo responde a preocupaciones medioambientales, sino que también capacita a los residentes de una comunidad afectada por la sequía, reduciendo las facturas de servicios públicos, mejorando los hogares y garantizando una fuente fiable de agua potable limpia. El año que viene supervisaremos la producción de los hidropaneles para medir el ahorro de costes y probaremos la tecnología para ver si es capaz de suministrar agua potable limpia a partir del aire del desierto.

Agradecemos el apoyo del Pacific Western Bank y los conocimientos técnicos de SOURCE para este proyecto piloto.



Eventful Skies, Cozy Huts: Cuyama's Charm

A photograph of a wooden fence with a patterned blanket and a hat hanging on it, set against a teal background. The fence is made of vertical wooden planks. A blanket with a geometric pattern of dark and light shapes is draped over the fence. A wide-brimmed hat is hanging on the fence to the right of the blanket. The background is a bright, slightly hazy outdoor scene with trees and a clear sky.

**Cielos Festivos,
Cabañas Confortables**

“Such a wonderful stay at this beautiful lil hideaway! Everything you could want and more...”

Teal G, Florida

At Blue Sky Center we take pride in our home: a place to arrive by slowing down, the hidden valley of enchantment. Here, in the middle of the desert, we share what we love by inviting others to visit and stay. With our partners at the [Cuyama Buckhorn](#), we are continuing to lay the groundwork to establish the Cuyama Valley as a treasured regional tourist destination through shared efforts and the [Visit Cuyama](#) campaign.

On our 267-acre property, we have expanded our capacity for the types of events and gatherings that we can host. Whether it's a runway for corporate teams to plan their next year of growth or a wedding aisle under the sky for newlyweds to walk down, we've been able to help host and plan memorable experiences.

After six years of service our Shelton Huts have been recently renovated, ensuring that guests can stay warm and cozy in the crisp air and under the night stars for years to come. Like our skies, the Cuyama Valley is always open. Learn more at blueskycenter.org/gather and book your special event for 2024!

Thanks to our friends, neighbors, partners, and the [Cuyama Buckhorn](#) for all of their support.



L88 Continues to Take Flight

A hot air balloon with a blue and white striped pattern is floating in the sky. The balloon is positioned in the center of the frame. Below it, a small basket is visible. The background consists of a vast, flat, blue-tinted landscape that stretches to the horizon. In the distance, a range of mountains is visible under a clear, blue sky. The overall scene is serene and expansive.

L88 Continúa su Vuelo

“The L88 airstrip is an asset to both professional pilots in training as well as private pilots who enjoy camping at Blue Sky and dining at the Buckhorn. I fly in for a burger and a night of stargazing whenever I can.”

Sam Omiotek, pilot and regular visitor

“La pista de aterrizaje L88 es un activo tanto para los pilotos profesionales en formación como para los pilotos privados que disfrutan acampando en Blue Sky y cenando en Buckhorn. Siempre que puedo vuelo para comerme una hamburguesa y pasar una noche mirando las estrellas.”

Sam Omiotek, piloto y visitante habitual

Now in its second year of operations, the newly resurfaced L88 Airstrip continues to expand its reputation as a regional destination for pilots, aviation enthusiasts, events, and photoshoots. Owned and managed by Blue Sky Center, the [L88 Airstrip](#) is stewarded by a dedicated team of volunteers who have been focused on the maintenance and expansion of service offerings.

The airstrip has not only been used as a stop for pilots on their routes. Hot air balloons floated above the valley, gliders swooped through, supersonic drones tested their capabilities, R/C hobbyists showed off their remote-controlled model airplanes, and muscle cars flexed their wheels on our pavement!

The future of our L88 Airstrip leads towards the horizon, full of possibilities. With planned upgrades and maintenance, it is only made possible by the support, time, and dedication of volunteers and donors. Please consider making a donation of money, time, maintenance equipment, or supplies. Visit and learn more at visitcuyama.com/l88.

We appreciate all our generous volunteers, donors, and supporters that make the L88 Airstrip possible.



En su segundo año de funcionamiento, la pista de aterrizaje L88, recientemente renovada, sigue ampliando su reputación como destino regional para pilotos, entusiastas de la aviación, eventos y sesiones fotográficas. Propiedad del y gestionada por Blue Sky Center, la pista de aterrizaje L88 está dirigida por un equipo de voluntarios que se han centrado en el mantenimiento y la ampliación de la oferta de servicios.

La pista de aterrizaje no sólo se ha utilizado como parada para los pilotos en sus rutas. Los globos aerostáticos han sobrevolado el valle, los planeadores se han lanzado en picado, los drones supersónicos han puesto a prueba sus capacidades, los aficionados al aerodelismo han mostrado sus maquetas de aviones teledirigidos y los muscle cars han rodado sobre nuestro asfalto.

El futuro de la pista de aterrizaje L88 apunta hacia el horizonte, lleno de posibilidades. Con mejoras y mantenimiento planificados, sólo es posible gracias al apoyo, el tiempo y la dedicación de voluntarios y donantes. Por favor, considere hacer una donación de dinero, tiempo, equipo de mantenimiento o suministros. Visite y obtenga más información en visitcuyama.com/l88.

Agradecemos a todos nuestros generosos voluntarios, donantes y simpatizantes que hacen posible la pista de aterrizaje L88.



Effervescence of Cuyama



Efervescencia de Cuyama

The Juju-bee Sour

*as developed by Bartender Sam
at the Cuyama Buckhorn*

The Juju-bee Sour is a classic egg white sour cocktail modernized with a spritz of Cuyama Beverage Co. mead that sources local honey and jujube fruit from Rock Front Ranch. It drinks light and refreshing, while still having more body and ABV than a traditional spritzer. Jujube fruit is harvested in the fall, having dried to a deep red on the tree, from which a “tea” is made during brewing and added to the recipe, giving the Juju-bee Session Mead its pink color and natural sediment. Since the mead is made year round, this versatile cocktail works in any season!

- 2 oz New Western Gin (we like Ventura Spirits’ “Wilder”)
- 3/4 oz fresh lemon juice
- 3/4 oz crème de cassis (or sub another fruit liqueur, ideally blackberry, pear, or raspberry)
- 2 dashes of wormwood bitters (or any floral, botanical bitters)
- 1 egg white
- 4 oz Juju-bee Session Mead by Cuyama Beverage Co.

Mix all ingredients except the mead into tin and shake dry, emulsifying the egg white to give body and velvety sour microbubbles.

Next, add one large and one smaller rock and shake, chilling the drink and emulsifying further. In a clean glass, add a large rock and pour in the mead, then double strain the egg white mixture on top into the glass.

Twist with lemon peel, adding the twist to the drink as a garnish. (Or instead if you have it, a dehydrated lemon wheel on the rim!)

Take a breath, think of the warm sun and blue skies of Cuyama, and sip.

The Cuyama Beverage Company continues its commitment to community-driven entrepreneurship. Now in the third year of production, our refreshing Juju-bee and Desert Sage meads are made from locally sourced honey in Cuyama Valley, cultivated with water-smart agricultural practices unique to our region. We take pride in producing distinctive small-batch beverages, knowing that our prosperity is intertwined with the success of our local farmers and producers.

Our friends at the Cuyama Buckhorn have created a special cocktail using our Juju-bee Session Mead: the Juju-bee Sour! We've included the recipe (on the previous page) so that you can make it at home. Better yet, order one (or two) in-person on your next visit to the Buckhorn!

If you'd like to try our champagne-style meads in an intimate desert setting, book a Sunset Sips event and we'd be delighted to host you on our campus. We will provide a tasting as well as other local sustainable products from the Cuyama Valley, including Rock Front Ranch honey and jujubes and Santa Barbara Pistachios' flavored nuts. Book now at blueskycenter.org/sunsetsips.

You can pick up a bottle near where you live from one of our retailers or order directly to your doorstep from our website at cuyamabeverage.com. Cheers to another year of crafting exceptional beverages and supporting local communities!

Thank you to all of our customers, retail partners, Rock Front Ranch, the Apiary, and the Cuyama Buckhorn.



Cuyama
SAGE HONEY
SESSION MEAD
100% ALL-NATURAL MEAD

Cuyama
JUJU-BEE
SESSION MEAD
WITH JUJU-BEE FRUIT
100% ALL-NATURAL MEAD

2023 Financials

“A place for everything, everything in its place.”

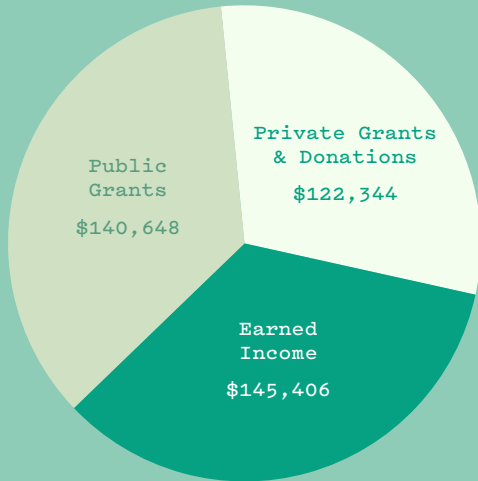
– Jack Forinash, Executive Director & Bookkeeper

The financial year 2023 settled back to a more typical year for Blue Sky Center. A total of \$408,398 was received in income, of which we divide as is common practice into three main “buckets”: 1) private grants from corporations, foundations, and individuals that receive tax benefits for investing in 501(c)(3) organizations; 2) public grants from county, state, and federal governments; and 3) income from mission-aligned programs and activities we undertake, also called “earned income.”

Matching the prior two years, our earned revenue programs accounted for a third (36%) of our total income, while private sources shifted down to a lower share at 30% as public sources grew to 34%. Income for 2023 by category is shown via the following charts:

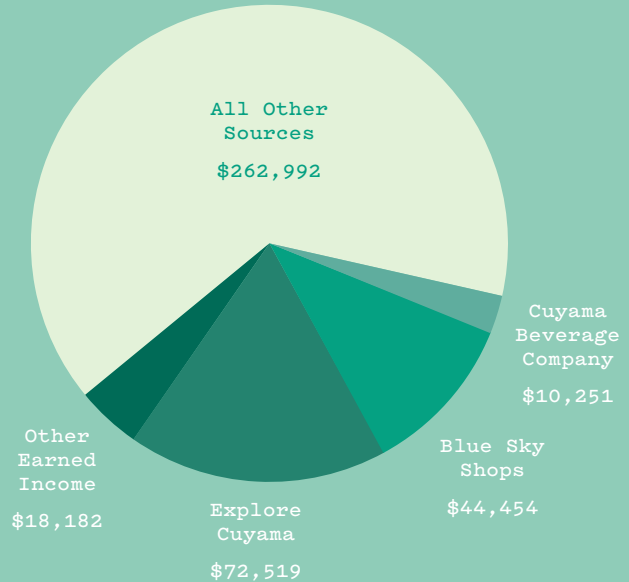


2023 Total Income by Category

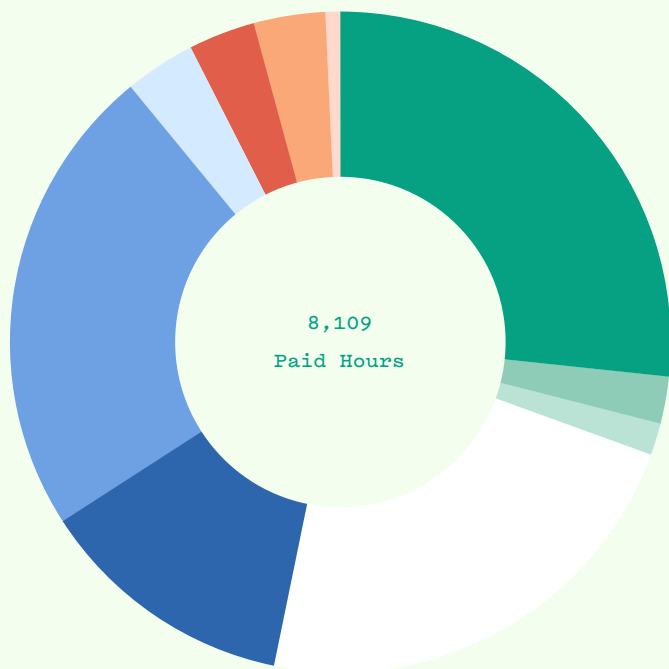


Total Income: \$408,398

2023 Earned Income by Share



Time Spent by Activity



- Program Activities (27%)
 - Made in Cuyama (2%)
 - Victory Gardens Network Programming (6%)
 - Creative Arts Programming (15%)
 - Community Resiliency and Planning (4%)
- Blue Sky Ventures (2%)
- Community Meetings (2%)
- Facilities Management (23%)
- General Operations (13%)
 - Administrative Tasks (2%)
 - Financial Management (2%)
 - Human Resources, Orientation, & Team Building (2%)
 - Office Meetings (2%)
 - Communications, Web, & Social Media (5%)
- Hospitality Operations (23%)
- Professional Development (3%)
- Paid Time Off (3%)
- Resource Development (4%)
- Travel (1%)

For expenses in 2023, common to nonprofit organizations, a significant percentage of our costs are in employing our staff (42% of 2023's expenses). Additionally, we spent another 24% for the time and expertise of contractors: artist and designer fees, professional expenses, groundskeeping, and housekeeping. The following page provides a list of income and expenses by category as well as our balance sheet.

As a community organization our main “product” we offer is our time and effort; in 2023 we tabulated 8,109 paid hours performed by staff members and our co-creators!

In total since our 501(c)(3) IRS designation in July 2014, **Blue Sky Center has invested \$3,496,000 into our rural development initiatives that envision resilient, thriving, and inclusive rural economies for the Cuyama Valley.**

The charts and figures we present in this report are as we know them to be as of early January 2024; as we work with our third-party accountant to assess things such as depreciation and to organize our data for official annual reporting, things may and do change. For the most up-to-date information, view our finances from this and every year at blueskycenter.org/disclosures.

Income

Private Grants	\$94,027
Public Grants	\$140,648
Donations	\$30,112
In-Kind Contributions	\$12,782
Interest Income	\$124
Other Income	\$3,219
Program Income	\$145,406

Total Income

\$408,398

Cost of Goods Sold

\$4,800*

Expenses

Salaries & Wages	\$156,100
Fringe Benefits	\$19,923
Payroll Expenses & Fees	\$15,476
Consulting & Professional Services	\$39,945
Artists Honoria & Stipends	\$23,744
Housekeeping	\$27,307
Groundskeeping	\$20,105
Accounting, Bank Fees, Legal Expenses	\$9,817
Booking Fees	\$3,131
Depreciation Expense	\$34,000*
Facilities, Equipment, Construction Expenses	\$27,901
Fundraising Expenses	\$347
Insurance	\$9,141
Licenses & Permits	\$577
Operations Expenses	\$12,151
Property Tax	\$7,999
Supplies	\$56,477
Travel & Meetings	\$8,600
Utilities	\$19,787

Total Expenses

\$492,496

Net

(\$88,898)

* Estimated

Assets

Cash	\$85,281
Accounts Receivable	\$17,504
Inventory Assets	\$28,005
Prepaid Expenses	\$2,922
Property	\$482,146
Buildings	\$564,124
Dwellings	\$17,192
Equipment & Furniture	\$37,509
Vehicles	\$55,000
Accumulated Depreciation	\$192,338

Total Assets**\$1,097,346**

Liabilities & Net Assets

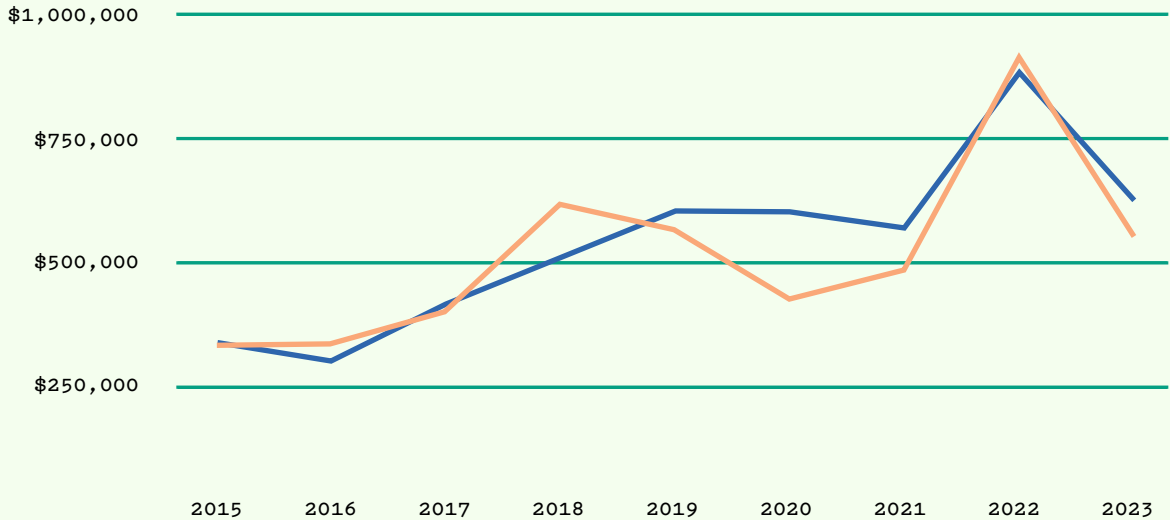
Deferred Revenue	\$8,420
Payroll Liabilities	\$1,021
Sales Tax Payable	\$508
Net Assets & Income	\$1,089,439

Total Liabilities & Net Assets**\$1,097,346**

Income & Expenses

Historical

Income
Expenses



Including L88
Resurfacing Project

Our Vision

Envisioning resilient, thriving,
and inclusive rural economies in
the Cuyama Valley.

Nuestra Visión

Visualizando economías rurales
resilientes, prósperas e inclusivas
en el Valle de Cuyama.

In the Press

“Corporate growers’ carrots are soaking up water. Locals are fighting back with a boycott”

LA Times, Ian James, November 13, 2023

<https://www.latimes.com/environment/story/2023-11-13/cuyama-valley-carrot-boycott-groundwater-depletion>

“Couple Take Lead on Reopening New Cuyama Airport”

Flying Magazine, Grant Boyd, October 30, 2023

<https://www.flyingmag.com/couple-takes-lead-on-reopening-new-cuyama-airport>

“40+ Cozy Cabins and Tiny Homes that Are the Perfect Escape for Your Next Friendcation”

Venue Report, November 10, 2023

<https://www.instagram.com/p/CzeUckDpJAz>

“Cuyama Valley ag producers call for carrot boycott over groundwater fight”

The Bakersfield Californian, John Cox, August 12, 2023

https://www.bakersfield.com/news/cuyama-valley-ag-producers-call-for-carrot-boycott-over-groundwater-fight/article_5157e5b8-3921-11ee-b035-c790d42f4231.html

“Santa Barbara County Planners Deflect a Cuyama Valley ‘Water Grab’ by Harvard University”

Melinda Burns, Santa Barbara Independent, April 5, 2023

<https://www.independent.com/2023/04/05/santa-barbara-county-planners-deflect-a-cuyama-valley-water-grab-by-harvard-university-2>

“California Getaway: Wildflowers, condors and gorgeous Cuyama Valley”

The Mercury News, Amber Turpin, March 27, 2023

<https://www.mercurynews.com/2023/03/27/california-getaway-wildflower-condors-cuyama>

“11 Things to Do in This Hidden Roadside Town Bursting With History (and Wildflowers)”

The LA Times, Raef Harrison, March 22, 2023

<https://www.latimes.com/travel/list/things-to-do-cuyama-valley-history-wildflowers>

“Cuyama Valley airstrip, in Santa Barbara County, is back open after years of disrepair”

KCLU, Caroline Feraday, January 5, 2023

<https://www.kclu.org/2023-01-05/a-santa-barbara-county-communitys-airstrip-is-back-open-after-years-of-disrepair>

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1000	1000	1000	1000
2000	2000	2000	2000
3000	3000	3000	3000
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7000	7000	7000	7000
8000	8000	8000	8000
9000	9000	9000	9000
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Price of Ceylon variety



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Price of Ceylon variety

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