



FUNDACIÓN LA PUERTA, A.C.

ANNUAL REPORT 2024



Table of Contents

Mission and Vision	3
President's Message	4
Community Engagement and Transformation	5
Priorities for 2024	6

Programs

How our work takes root	7
Environmental Education	8
Family Garden	9
Youth Leadership and Volunteerism	10
Summer Camp	11
Olimpiaguas	12
River Clean-Up	13
Nuestra Sombrilla Verde	14

Parque del Profesor	15
Seasonal Festivals	20
E3: Expo Eco Startups	21
New Alliances	22
Academic Alliances	23
Local Funding	24
Financial Summary	25
Our gratitude	27



Mission

To restore and honor the **environmental, cultural, and social** heritage of the Tecate River watershed, embracing a **sustainable way of life** that thrives on collaboration, respect, and the joyous celebration of natural and human communities.



Vision

The Tecate River watershed will become a **model region** for sustainable environmental practices, fostering the growth and preservation of its cultural heritage.





President's message

2024 has been an extraordinary year. Cultural change happens little by little, and it is a great moment when deep wells of patient education and community activism fill to overflowing and we can see clearly how many lives are lifted by our work.



This year Parque del Profesor received the Environment and Sustainability award by the National Association of Parks and Recreation of Mexico "ANPR" (*See page 17 to learn more*). Our Park was recognized for being a model of sustainability in our region for 35 years, for the beauty of its design and for our community engagement. In 2024 with more than 90,000 visitors to the Park, we continue to be the heartbeat of the community.

Our radio show "Corriente de Cambio" (River of Change), ranks among the top 3 programs in California Medios lineup, the news channel with the greatest coverage in Tecate. We host environmental education topics, interviews with regional leaders, community calls for cleanups and river work, and promotions for all of Parque del Profesor's Seasonal Festivals. It is available on FM radio in Tecate, Tijuana, and Rosarito through SUPERKT 88.5, and in Mexicali and San Diego through POWER98. It is also streamed live on all California Medios' digital platforms, including Facebook, YouTube, and its website.

The long years of advocacy and urban planning for the Tecate River have led to a collaboration between municipal, state and federal agencies to develop a master plan along 7 miles of urban river. The Tecate River Park has become an integral part of the city's identity.

Our collaboration with universities and other NGO's allow us to provide models for nature-based solutions and to pioneer innovative wastewater treatment in the region.

For almost fifty years, Fundación La Puerta has made significant progress in protecting local ecosystems, fostering environmental leadership, and designing innovative educational programs that inspire new generations to live in harmony with nature.

Care for the earth is demonstrated in Tecate by the robust enrollment in our urban gardening program, the ongoing community-based river clean ups, the resilience of our community gardens and the commitment to hold zero waste cultural events such as our Day of the Dead Festival with the participation of 14,000 people.

We hope you will enjoy reading about our accomplishments this year. With your support we will address new challenges as they arise in our border town. We are immensely grateful for your generosity.

Sarah Brightwood Szekely

Community Engagement and Transformation



Fundación La Puerta A.C. was established in 1977 with the vision of supporting and contributing to the holistic well-being of the Tecate community, responding to the emerging needs of a region undergoing profound social, cultural, and environmental change. From the very beginning, the organization has championed accessible, multigenerational, and transformative environmental education as a driving force for social change.

Key actions include clean-up campaigns, habitat restoration, promotion of sustainable agriculture, educational workshops for children and adults, youth leadership development to cultivate future environmental leaders, volunteer initiatives, and summer programs. These activities foster practical skills such as recycling and composting while nurturing a strong sense of belonging and shared responsibility within participating communities.



Priorities for 2024

The year's main objectives included:

- Expanding environmental education outreach
- Enhancing hands-on learning in urban horticulture and family self-sufficiency;
- Consolidating youth leadership through collaborative projects and volunteer campaigns
- Ensuring the safe and functional operation of the Parque del Profesor as a community space;
- Continuing the city's reforestation through the "Nuestra Sombrilla Verde" program,
- Integrating nature-based solutions into urban areas.
- Participating in master planning, design and advocacy for the River Park.





How our work takes root

Our educational programs take place in Las Piedras Environmental Education Center an open-air where children and youth connect with nature through hands-on experiences and activities that promote environmental stewardship, healthy living, and a sense of belonging to their surroundings.



Environmental Education

At Fundación La Puerta, environmental education is a key tool for building an aware, active, and engaged community committed to caring for its surroundings. Through programs designed for children, youth, and adults, we promote knowledge, appreciation, and protection of local ecosystems encouraging sustainable practices that strengthen the bond between people and nature.

2,832
children participated in workshops





Family Garden

Fundación La Puerta's Family Garden is an educational space that teaches sustainable home gardening practices, promoting self-sufficiency, health, and a deeper connection with the land. Through workshops and accessible learning materials, participating families learn how to plant, care for, and harvest food responsibly integrating environmental values and community collaboration into their daily lives.

706

Children in workshops

47

Saturday workshops
held
(No age requirement)

35

Preschools
benefited

40

Workshops conducted in
preschool institutions



Youth Leadership and Volunteerism

Through our Youth Leadership and Volunteer Program, young people and participants of all ages develop sustainable initiatives that strengthen community development, protect the natural environment, and promote collective well-being.

45

active volunteers

6,520

volunteer hours

8

special projects

35

collaborations with
local institutions

66

community volunteer
activities

**Including environmental campaigns, cultural celebrations, educational activities, communication strategies, and reforestation and public space restoration efforts.*



Summer Camp



This coeducational day camp is the only one of its kind in our region devoted to learning about the environment and appreciating the natural beauty of Baja California, Mexico. For three weeks, the children are exposed to different ecosystems in the State—desert, beach, and forest—helping them to know and value the diversity of the region. For many Tecate children Summer Camp makes possible their first visit to the sea.

3

Fun and Learning
Weeks

60

Children

14

Different
Environmental
Focused Workshops

3

Excursions:
Ensenada Beach, Museums,
Local Organic Gardens

Olimpiaguas



Every year, the State Water Authority (CESPTE) hosts the “Water Olympics”—the Olimpiaguas—at our Parque del Profesor. Through more than 100 workshops made possible by the voluntary participation of 30 organizations, including museums, art centers, environmental groups, artists, and institutes, the event brings elementary school children from across the city to better understanding the importance of carrying for water.

100

Workshops

30

Binational
Organizations

+1,000

6th Graders

14

Elementary Schools

River Clean-Up

During the World Environment Day celebrations, every year we head to the Tecate River, calling on the entire community to help clean nearly 4 kilometers of riverbed, removing close to one ton of waste. These efforts have become models of inspiration for cities such as Ensenada, which now carry out river and coastal cleanup campaigns during their own environmental festivals.

+3.5 km

River Area
Attended

118

Volunteers

999.6 kg

Collected
Waste / Trash





Nuestra Sombrilla Verde

“Our Green Umbrella”

90

Active Participants



4

Community Groups



57

Sessions Conducted

13

Sites Assessed for
Reforestation



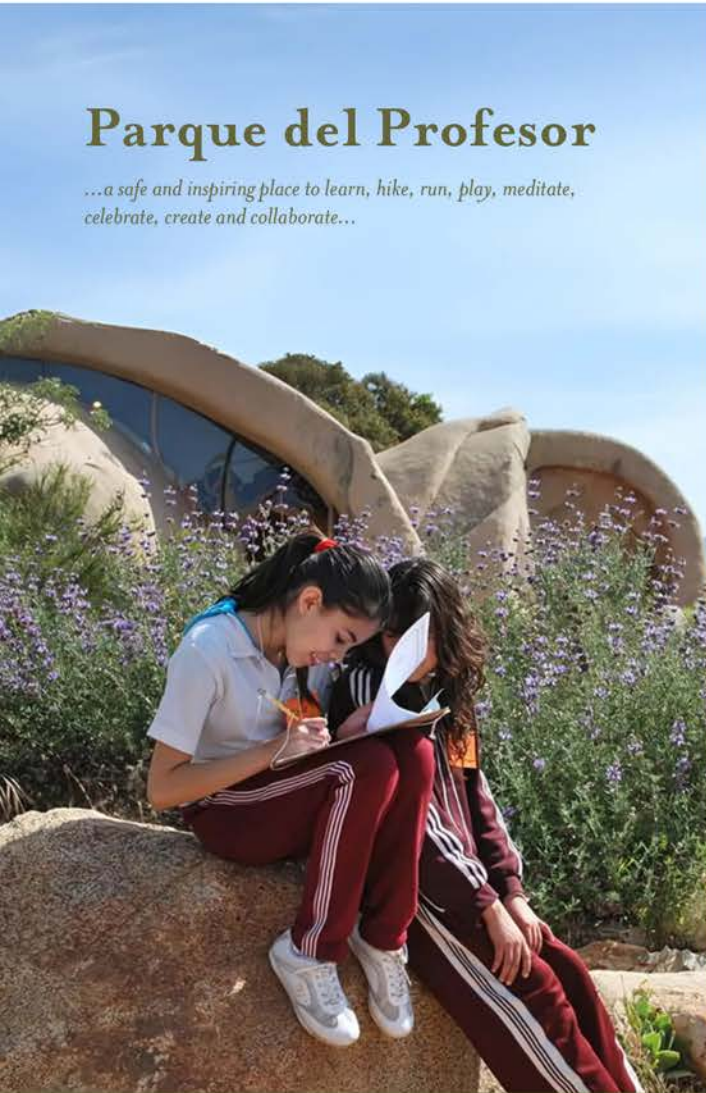
Parque del Profesor

...a safe and inspiring place to learn, hike, run, play, meditate,
celebrate, create and collaborate...



Our Park is a living classroom brimming with inter-generational regenerative practices and celebrating the creativity of our community. Created and maintained by Fundación La Puerta, it consists of a natural space of approximately **28 acres** that welcomes around **100,000 visitors** each year. Open 365 days a year for 12 hours a day, Parque del Profesor offers the community a safe place for recreation, promoting an active lifestyle and the sustainable use of public spaces. In northern Baja California, it is one of the few places where children and families learn about our native ecosystem, study water conservation and participate in caring for the natural world.

In the past 25 years, over **100,000 elementary school children** from the public schools in Tecate have benefited from our environmental education programs. Many of these children return as volunteers and become the leaders who inspire new generations.



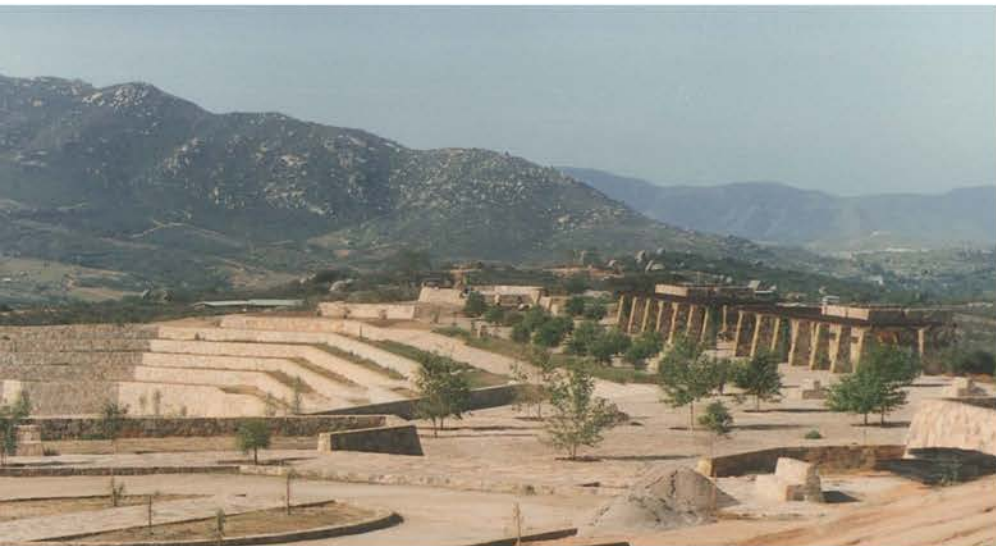


...in this epidemic of loneliness, community is healing.

The cultural life of the city is served by a shady paseo lined by pepper trees and a plaza for community gatherings. We are the home of important civic events and festivals, as well as a memorable venue for weddings, graduations and quinceñeras. Families engage in river clean ups, tree planting, summer camp, growing their own food gardens, recycling, art projects, soccer games, yoga and meditation.

In 2000, we held the first Festival for Day of the Dead, honoring a tradition that was dying out in the border region of northern Mexico. Today, tens of thousands attend annually and this Festival has become Tecate's most important cultural event.





**National Parks and Recreation Association of Mexico*



Parque del Profesor has been honored with **national recognition** "for excellence in architecture and landscape design, for innovation and sustainability and for fostering biodiversity and community well-being."

The park was created as a tribute to **Edmond Szekely**, co-founder of Rancho La Puerta. He was a teacher of ancient wisdom and, as a cultural anthropologist, he was fascinated by the Pre-Columbian cosmology of the Americas. He understood that our spirits are uplifted by beauty, our souls enriched through mystery, meaning and inspiration, and that a deep connection to nature is essential to our physical and emotional wellbeing. He encouraged us to draw nourishment from our ancestors, from ancient wisdom, and to understand the archetypal forces that shape us.



Upper left: Parque del Profesor, 1989

Lower left: Parque del Profesor, 2024

Testimonials

Through our youth volunteer and leadership programs, young people discover their talents, explore their inner world, participate in vibrant Festivals and find solace in nature. Our work is intergenerational, and is captured by the words of Georgina Pérpuli and her daughter Stefany.



"Parque del Profesor is part of the Tecate scenery. From their early years, our children have chased a ball there, or have attended a workshop or a cultural event; and we know for sure that in a few years, they will be walking the stone paths in a "quinceañera", and that, even without us realizing how much time has elapsed, they'll be walking on the same rocks to celebrate their graduation from college, and maybe even their wedding."

Parque del Profesor is a mirror that reflects the history of a city built on stone. There, we share an honest commitment to maintain and conserve the environment while we see as many smiles on our children's faces as there are rocks surrounding the space. It is our natural sanctuary because we keep our valued treasures there—the memories that shape our identity as a city and its natural wealth. In the quiet of the Park we can see our past as a community and reflect upon our future as a planet."

— Georgina Pérpuli, 2010.

Our work is intergenerational...

"Since I can remember, Parque del Profesor has been a central part of my life—a place where my personal growth and community involvement began. Family outings, summer courses, and countless events shaped my worldview and showed me how dedication can transform a space into a symbol for the city. Now, as I help organize those same events, I see the value of legacy and continuity. Watching new generations learn and grow here reminds me that this park is more than just a physical space—it's where identity, memory, and community are built. For me, Parque del Profesor remains a place where personal and collective histories meet, and where we can shape a more conscious and committed future together."

— Stefany Maldonado Pérpuli, age 22, 2025



Summary of Activities in 2024

at Parque del Profesor



18

Private Events

45

Photo sessions

450

Open Recreational
Activities

80

Soccer Matches

The Park was designed in 1980 by Ron Lovinger. It took ten years to build, and is inspired by the Toltec Ball Game, "the Game of Gods", as Professor Szekely called it. For thirty-five years, two generations of soccer players have competed here, and Olympic coaches have visited to scout talent.



Seasonal Festivals



Recibe a la Primavera
Welcoming Spring

800

Attendees

25

Activities

12

Partners



Día Mundial del Medio Ambiente
World Environment Day

2,200

Attendees

40

Activities

40

Partners



Día de Muertos
Day of the Dead

14,000

Attendees

40

Activities

65

Partners

E3: Expo Eco Startups

**Recently added*

In recent years, Tecate has emerged as a vibrant participant in national and international Science and Technology gatherings. While these events traditionally focus on students enrolled in high schools and universities, this 2024 marked an important shift. With funding from the **Economic Development Council (CDET)**, Fundación La Puerta set out to create a science and technology competition of our own—one designed for everyone. No age requirements, no enrollment restrictions, no limitations on background. Just an **open invitation** to curiosity, creativity, and problem-solving.

Even more inspiring, we framed the entire competition around solutions to climate change, offering three distinct pathways for innovation:

- Eco-Entrepreneurs 11 projects
- Green Technology 8 projects
- Sustainable Management 6 projects

52

Contestants
with projects

77

Volunteers and
Colaborators

+1,600

Public Attendance

Upper left: UABC Rector Joel Palafox visiting projects

Upper right: Project: "Electrocoagulation for the Corn Industry in Mexico"

Lower right: Each category winner received seed funding to help advance their project



New Alliances



Connections and collaborations were strengthened with several key institutions to expand the reach of our environmental, educational, and cultural.



California Medios

Top 3 Radio Program focused on environmental awareness



Un Mar de Colores

Sharing Fundación La Puerta's Curriculum certified by UCSD



Proyecto Socioambiental del Río Tijuana

Contribution to a film and discussion series focused on environmental and social issues.



PRONATURA

Coordination with the regional office for the update of the Conservation and Management Program of the area, as part of the ADVC certification process.



Iniciativa Río Tijuana

Presentation of a Proposal for the Tecate River before the Mexican Hydraulic Association in Mexico



SEMARNAT

Partnership in the "Back to School with a Tree" program



Savimbo

Institutional outreach to learn about climate credit strategies linked to fair trade.



CONANP

National Commission of Natural Protected Areas. Participation in an academic visit to San Pedro Mártir National Park.



North American Development Bank

Collaboration in organizing the bank's first semiannual Board of Directors meeting in Tecate.



Smart Border Coalition

Participation in a meeting of binational leaders from the public and private sectors of San Diego and Tijuana.



ADMICARGA

Integration of the tourist train into the Day of the Dead Festival as part of a cultural and tourism outreach strategy.



Academic Alliances

Collaboration on three different campuses of the
State of Baja California's University system



Rector of the Autonomous University of Baja California Joel Palafox Maestre and
Fundación La Puerta's President Sarah Livia Brightwood

UABC

Autonomous University
of Baja California



FCITEC

Nature-Based
Solutions Manual

FCIAS

Masterplanning to include greenspaces,
teaching garden and recreational
infrastructure

FCH

Nuestra Sombrilla
Verde Program



Local Funding

We thank the following organizations for their support throughout the year!

- Colegio de Abogados Rubén Armendáriz
- Rotary Club of Tecate
- Lion's Club of Tecate
- JCI: Junior Chamber International
- Lomitas del Cuchumá Neighborhood Association
- CDET: Tecate Economic Development Council
- CANACINTRA: Nacional Chamber of the Manufacturing Industry
- AVADI: Medical Center in Tijuana
- CANACO: National Chamber of Commerce
- CESPTE: State Commission for Public Services of Tecate
- Legislative Branch of the State of Baja California
- ADMICARGA: Administrator of the Tecate–Tijuana Short Rail Line





Financial Summary

Total income in 2024
\$580,120 USD

Legend

- 1. ● **9.75%** Park Revenue \$56,568.00 USD
- 2. ● **10.95%** Grants \$63,512.00 USD
- 3. ● **17.24%** Szekely Family Foundation \$100,000.00 USD
- 4. ● **17.24%** Rancho La Puerta \$100,000.00 USD
- 5. ● **44.83%** Rancho La Puerta Guest's Donations \$260,040.00 USD





Financial Summary

Total expenses in 2024
\$614,914 USD

Legend

- 1. ● **11.43%** Community Outreach \$70,270.00 USD
- 2. ● **11.60%** Administration \$71,317.0 USD
- 3. ● **76.97%** Programs \$473,327.00 USD



A woman stands on the left side of the frame, wearing a vibrant red, off-the-shoulder gown with a black shawl draped over her shoulders. She is adorned with a crown of red roses and has her face painted as a sugar skull. The background features a vast, mountainous landscape under a sky with scattered white clouds and a bright sunburst effect on the left. The overall mood is one of resilience and cultural celebration.

Our gratitude

Fundación La Puerta would not exist without Rancho La Puerta's decades-long commitment. In these times of challenge and uncertainty, we draw strength from the generosity of Rancho La Puerta's guests and the Szekely Family. With shared purpose we deepen our capacity for resilience and cultivate the courage needed to carry our mission forward.

"To cultivate courage means to live with a full heart: to consciously embrace our insecurities and fears, to voice our truth knowing it is never the whole truth, to move towards risk and lean into faith. As we learn to trust our ever-present vulnerability as a strength, we build our bravery muscles. We become agents of healing, be it as close in as families and friends, or as vast as cultures, communities, and countries in flames."

Kathy Altman

With your support we can continue to do our work for many generations to come!



Your donation is tax deductible in the United States.

Checks payable to:

San Diego Foundation - Friends of La Puerta

Mailing address: The San Diego Foundation,
2508 Historic Decatur Road Suite 200
San Diego, CA 92106

email: info@fundacionlapuerta.org

www.fundacionlapuerta.org/donate



Thank you from the staff of Fundación La Puerta