

Wesley Palms Creates Monarch Haven for Butterflies

At a young age, Naomi Sobo loved animals. Her passion for conservation and saving endangered species continued to grow when she became a volunteer at the San Diego Zoo 25 years ago. There, she learned about endangered species and how to educate the public about how to help preserve these animals in the wild.



Now, Naomi is known for her efforts in conservation and she is the spokesperson of the Wesley Palms Butterfly Garden Group. There, she helps spearhead the efforts to save a species close to extinction — the Monarch butterfly.

Self-educated in the plight of the Monarch and having learned much from other members of the Wesley Palms Butterfly Garden Group, Naomi requested Wesley Palms plant milkweed to form her community's first butterfly garden, aptly called "Monarch Haven." Milkweed is the sole host plant for the Monarch. "Monarch Haven" will soon be recognized as an official waystation meeting all required certification requirements. A waystation serves as a habitat for Monarchs to rest, breed, lay eggs, obtain nectar, and provides food for their caterpillars.



The butterfly garden has brought Naomi's love of conservation together with her gardening friends. "As group members, we share proud moments like finding a caterpillar and tracking its progress," resident Pauline Chang said. "It is nice interacting with fellow residents who share the same interest as you."

The conservation effort began when residents noticed several monarch butterflies fluttering back and forth along the patio area due to another resident's milkweed plants on his back patio. As they learned more and became enthusiastic about protecting the dwindling monarch population, they each purchased their own milkweed plants for their patios, in the hopes of attracting more monarchs. Interest grew by word of mouth and they soon realized there were several monarch experts at Wesley Palms. Now organized as the garden group, members meet via Zoom or email to discuss the Monarch Haven and share their monarch experiences.



“Trying to save the planet by conserving nature in our own little way has been very rewarding, fun, and keeps us busy during the pandemic,” added resident Barbara Hammitt. “Butterflies are so whimsical, and we hope to preserve them for a long time.”

The garden group has big plans for the future. “Our goal is to continue advocating for the conservation of the monarch butterfly by eventually expanding the Monarch Haven to other areas around Wesley Palms,” Naomi said.

The Wesley Palms Butterfly Group also encourages their families and friends to plant milkweed in their gardens.