

Governor awards \$5M to raise profile of zero-emission vehicles

By The Business Journal Staff

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The governor has awarded a \$5 million to a pair of organizations to improve consumer awareness of zero-emission vehicles.

The Governor's Office of Business and Economic Development, or GO-Biz, announced the awardees of the Zero-Emission Vehicle (ZEV) Consumer Awareness Grants Friday.

The ultimate purpose of the grant program is to increase access to ZEVs in priority communities by converting awareness into decisions to drive or ride in such vehicles.

Sacramento-based Valley Clean Air Now will receive \$2.5 million to scale up community-based solutions that help low-income and minority community members learn about, purchase, and fuel zero-emission vehicles and connect to ZEV-related workforce opportunities.

According to Executive Director Tom Knox, "The GO-Biz award creates an opportunity to directly address some of the barriers to zero-emission vehicle adoption in the communities where they are most needed. Our partners have developed a slate of innovative projects, and we expect to create quantifiable progress toward making zero-emission vehicles more accessible to low-income residents of priority communities, making EV charging more convenient for residents of all types of housing, and helping to create 'green collar' jobs for tomorrow's transportation innovators."

Sacramento-based Veloz will receive \$2.5 million to expand the Electric For All campaign, making key investments to raise zero-emission vehicle awareness in hard-to-reach communities through strategic partnerships and community outreach efforts that compliment targeted, multilingual media messaging.

With \$5 million in available funding, more than \$23 million was requested with nearly \$35 million in match funding proposed by applicants.

"The interest in this grant program demonstrates the untapped potential and rich opportunities that remain to advance ZEV consumer awareness in California," the Governor's Chief Economic and Business Advisor and Director of GO-Biz Dee Dee Myers said. "There is much to do to reach our 100% ZEV targets and we are proud of these projects we were able to fund to help get us there."

United Way, Aera Energy join forces for latest Born Learning Trail

By Perry Smith

Bakersfield Californian, Thursday, Feb 10, 2022

United Way staff, Lamont students and Aera Energy employees all joined in the effort Thursday to promote early childhood literacy at Weedpatch Park.

The largely volunteer effort was in place to create Kern County's 10th Born Learning Trail, which is a 10-station circuit course that features learning activities in English and Spanish designed for parents and caregivers to share with children ages 5 and under.

About two dozen children from Sunset Middle School helped provide the trail's education decor, which is in line with one of United Way of Kern County's primary goals, supporting education in the community. The students worked carefully matching the stencils on the ground and then filling them in with colorful informational messages meant to engage preschool-age students.

Their work will be celebrated at a wider community event 10 a.m. Saturday with a ribbon-cutting at the park, according to Gabriel Adame, marketing manager for the United Way of Kern County.

"It's a way to get families out with their kids, spend quality time with them, go on a walk — but also to have that education piece as well while going to the park," Adame said.

“And one of our pillars is education, so it’s huge to be able to partner with different partners here in Kern County to be able to provide these Born Learning Trails for our children.”

The California Air Resource Board and California Climate Investments provided 10 shade trees that were planted Thursday, and Aera Energy provided a number of volunteers, in addition to help with planning and paying for the supplies that made Thursday’s educational art possible.

“Aera believes in the power of these trails to make a quick trip to the park fun and a chance for families to learn and grow together,” according to a statement from Aera information manager Jorge Haiek, who’s part of the Aera planning committee for the trail. “Aera is happy to have a role in making this happen for local families in the Lamont community — as Kern County is home for many of our employees and their families, too.”