

# Students spend summer learning stewardship and leadership

By JB Miller

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Showing a little more sun and muscle tone than everyone else, 10 students graduated from a strenuous six-week internship program led by staff from Borderlands Restoration.

The graduates learned conservation work skills, team building and leadership with the goal of training the next generation of land stewards.

Held at the Patagonia Community Garden last Friday, the graduation ceremony began with an introduction by Caleb Weaver, program coordinator for the 2015 Earth Care Youth Institute. He thanked supporters, including many local organizations and individuals, for helping the group this year both financially and through mentorship.

“They learn from us. They learn from community members, and that’s probably what is most exciting about this program,” Weaver said.

Getting up before the crack of dawn to take advantage of the early morning temperatures, interns focused on a variety of restoration projects throughout the Sonoita Creek watershed. Those included the development of the Watershed Living Laboratory at Patagonia Union High School, native plant nursery management, permaculture design process and sustainable living, native seed collection by federal protocols, as well as sustainable farming and ranching techniques.

Interns also spent a week at the Windsong Peace and Leadership Center near Patagonia Lake, where they learned leadership skills while coming up with an independent community restoration project that they were required to present as part of the graduation ceremony.

Projects ranged from pollinator and medicinal gardens that will also enhance the community’s beauty, to



## Borderlands Restoration

Borderlands Earth Care Youth Institute graduates include, front row from left: Annika Coleman, Grace McGuire, Danny Miranda, Carlos Mingura and Eden Lattanzio. Second row: Carly Schmidt (NAU graduate student), Gaby Bueras, Iliana Castro, Kat Miller and Caleb Weaver (program coordinator).

a documentary film project (a work in progress) about monarch butterflies and how they have brought nations together in North America. Water harvesting projects are also being initiated at the Patagonia Youth Center and the Patagonia Montessori School. Finally, a herbarium project is being created for both the Appleton-Whittell Research Ranch and the Canelo Hills Cienega Preserve in order to help future researchers.

The Earth Care Youth Institute program has now completed its third year. Writer, rancher, and conservationist Richard C. Collins, who was in attendance, said he noticed that each year students gain more confidence in what they are learning, and the program is consequently gaining popularity among local youth.