The Story of How EcoServants Began

Two friends. A shared mission. A story of leadership, loss, resilience and service.

2020 | The founders and the roots of EcoServants in Southeast San Diego.

SEE A PROBLEM. BRING PEOPLE TOGETHER.

EcoServants® began not in an office or conference room, but in the neighborhoods of Southeast San Diego.

In 2020, two friends, Robert Trumper and Jason Joslyn, came together around a shared belief that meaningful change could begin at the community level. Rather than waiting for someone else to address the litter, neglected spaces, and environmental challenges they saw around them, they began working alongside residents and community partners to improve the neighborhoods around them.

Much of that early work took place in Valencia Park and the surrounding Southeast San Diego communities, including routine cleanup efforts at the historic Four Corners intersection of Euclid and Imperial avenues.

For many years, that intersection had been known as the "Four Corners of Death" because of the gang wars and violence historically associated with the area. By the time EcoServants began taking shape, residents, neighborhood leaders, and community organizations had already been working to reclaim the area and build a different future for the surrounding community.

Robert and Jason became part of that continuing spirit of neighborhood action. Working with community partners, they routinely organized cleanups at the Four Corners and throughout the surrounding neighborhoods.

2021 | Hands-on neighborhood environmental cleanup.

During the same period, residents and volunteers were revitalizing the Valencia Park Community Council, creating new opportunities for neighbors to organize around the needs of their community. San Diego Realtor Rob Iuliucci also played an important role in the early effort, helping with door-to-door outreach, community organizing, and cleanup campaigns.

Those early days were grassroots in the truest sense. People knocked on doors, spoke directly with residents, organized cleanup efforts, and went into the neighborhoods themselves to do the work.

The effort was about more than removing litter. It was about demonstrating that residents, volunteers, businesses, and community organizations could come together and take responsibility for improving the places where they lived.

Out of those experiences, the Ecological Servants Project came to life.

The organization formally incorporated in California in October 2020, but the story of EcoServants had already begun on the streets of Southeast San Diego, with two friends, community partners, local residents, and volunteers working together to make their neighborhoods better.

A New Generation of Leadership

Early community work in Southeast San Diego.

As EcoServants grew, so did the responsibilities required to lead it.

Jason initially served as Executive Director, helping guide the organization through its formative years. A few months before one of the most difficult moments in EcoServants' history, Jason made the decision to step away from day-to-day executive leadership and entrust that responsibility to his friend and co-founder, Robert.

For Jason, the transition opened a new chapter. He turned his attention toward completing The Ways of Eden, a book he had been writing, and toward forming a new church, the Assembly of Eden.

For Robert, it marked the beginning of his own chapter of leadership.

The organization that had started with two friends cleaning streets and organizing neighbors was now being placed in his hands. Robert stepped forward to lead EcoServants as its CEO, carrying with him the same community-centered values that had shaped the organization from the beginning.

Neither founder could have known how quickly that new leadership would be tested.

03 / APRIL 2023

The Fire at North Anza Street

April 2023 | The North Anza Street fire aftermath.

In April 2023 as the EcoServants were still underway with Earth Day preparations, tragedy struck at 939 North Anza Street in El Cajon, California, a location that served as an important home and operational base during this chapter of EcoServants' history.

A devastating fire engulfed the property.

Robert nearly lost his own life as he attempted to save members of his family. The fire resulted in an unimaginable personal loss, while also destroying the place from which a significant part of his life and EcoServants' work had been operating.

In a matter of hours, a new CEO who had only recently stepped forward to lead the organization found himself confronting circumstances far greater than organizational challenges, strategic plans, programs, or projects.

He was confronting grief, displacement, and the task of rebuilding his life.

It could easily have marked the end of the story.

Instead, it became another defining chapter in it.

Rising From Tragedy

2024 | EcoServants continued organizing community service.

Robert's path as CEO would not begin from a position of comfort or stability. It began through survival and loss.

Yet EcoServants continued.

The organization endured because its foundation had never truly been a building. It had been built around people, service, perseverance, and the belief that meaningful change begins when someone chooses to act.

The same spirit that had once brought Robert and Jason into neighborhoods carrying cleanup supplies now carried the organization through one of the darkest periods in its history.

Robert continued moving forward as CEO while rebuilding his own life. EcoServants continued developing its programs, welcoming volunteers and interns, expanding its environmental work, and finding new ways for people to serve their communities.

His rise into leadership therefore became inseparable from a story of resilience.

He did not simply inherit an organization during a period of growth. He assumed responsibility for it shortly before experiencing profound personal tragedy and then helped carry it forward through the aftermath.

That history became part of EcoServants.

From Neighborhood Cleanups to a Growing Organization

2026 | Continued environmental service and community participation.

From its beginnings in Southeast San Diego, EcoServants® would grow far beyond its original cleanup efforts.

Over the years that followed, the organization expanded into environmental education, conservation, community service, internships, environmental research, technology development, and systems designed to document measurable environmental impact.

But expansion has never erased where the organization came from.

Its history includes neighborhood cleanups and community organizing.

It includes two friends who believed they could make a difference.

It includes a founder stepping aside so another could lead.

It includes a CEO whose leadership was tested by tragedy almost as soon as he stepped into the role.

It includes loss, survival, rebuilding, and continuing to serve.

And through every chapter, the principle at the heart of EcoServants has remained closely connected to those early days at the Four Corners:

See a problem. Bring people together. Serve the community. Serve the planet.

What began with two friends and a community cleanup effort in Southeast San Diego has grown into an organization providing people from many different backgrounds with opportunities to contribute to environmental stewardship and measurable community impact.

EcoServants' story is therefore not simply a story of organizational growth.

It is a story of people who continued serving when circumstances changed.

A story of friendship becoming an organization.

A story of leadership being passed from one founder to another.

A story of tragedy that could have ended everything, but did not.

And a story that continues to be written.