



The Riverbank News

Wednesday, April 06, 2011

Church Members Love Their Community

By JOHN BRANCH

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Jeff Brown of Riverbank's Church of the Nazarene plants flowers at the city museum along with church members of many denominations on Saturday's Love Riverbank Day. His crews were also spread out throughout the downtown clearing trash from alleys and planting other areas. JOHN BRANCH/THE NEWS

Volunteers from a number of local churches turned out Saturday to show appreciation for their town in an event that also occurred that same morning in Modesto, Escalon, Ceres and other neighboring cities.

In an event dubbed Love Riverbank, an estimated 150 to 200 people gathered in the Plaza del Rio to get their marching orders, then dispersed around town to tackle a variety of projects.

They cleared trash and planted flowers at Jacob Myers Park and in the downtown area; held a food and toy drive to gather items for foster care children; and started planting a community garden adjacent to Crossroads Elementary School.

Carnations in hand, they visited senior citizens at home to chat with them and have children tell stories; they brought homemade cookies to emergency workers such as firefighters at the station, police in their squad rooms and ambulance crews at staging sites; and composed posters and thank-you notes for teachers at an arts and crafts class at Crossroads.

"I'm very happy this event went off so well," said Riverbank coordinator Eric Bjerke. "It was very successful for a first event. The idea started a couple of years ago in Modesto."

This is a twice a year event, he added. The church members plan to return on June 25.

Youths of St. Frances Catholic Church in Riverbank, Cesar Soto, Jose Diaz, Joel Ramirez, Saul Fernandez and Martin Casas grabbed rakes and shovels and cleared dead leaves in Jacob Myers Park.

Jeff Brown of the Riverbank Church of the Nazarene was planting bright blue pansies outside the city museum on Santa Fe Street while Robin Bjerke and others tended the flowerbeds outside City Hall South.

Three-year-old Mave Gianelli with an older friend Stephanie Bates was prodding the earth with a trowel in the flowerbed surrounding The Rocket at Jacob Myers Park.

Overlooking the river, Moses Valdez and his son Caleb of Big Valley Grace Church in Modesto, Logan Sisco from that city's Calvary Church and Alex Nabors of Riverbank were landscaping the access site for the disabled in wheelchairs.





The members of the various churches - who often can be found doing good deeds - brought them together this one day for a concerted effort all over town.

Logan Sisco of Modesto's Calvary Church, on the left, and Alex Nabors were wielding shovels while young Caleb Valdez of Big Valley Church uses a trowel. They were preparing the ground for planting at a river viewpoint in Jacob Myers Park. JOHN BRANCH/THE NEWS

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