



Bonita Unified

SCHOOL DISTRICT

115 W. Allen Ave. San Dimas, CA 91773 ★ (909) 971-8200 ★ do.bonita.k12.ca.us/

NEWS RELEASE

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Bonita Unified Elementary School Beautification Project Brings Community Together

SAN DIMAS/LA VERNE – Roynon Elementary School students crowded around the garden bed with rakes, shovels and hoes, breaking up dirt clods, pulling up weeds and roots, and expelling invasive species like grubs. Meeting every Tuesday after school, the students are proudly upholding a grand tradition at the school: the ongoing and successful Roynon Beautification Project.

With nine garden beds to work with, Roynon student volunteers – nearly always accompanied by peers from Oak Mesa and La Verne Heights elementary schools, as well as Ramona Middle School – tend to crops such as tomatoes, zucchini, strawberries, peppers, sage, oregano and green beans. When ripe, the produce is distributed to students, staff and local residents.

“The Roynon garden is a place where students can come and find a sense of belonging,” Roynon Principal Tammi DiGrazia said. “It introduces our students to a new experience, brings them in contact with other students with the same interests, and provides a healthy outlet. It enhances our campus and our community, which has been the goal of the beautification project since the beginning.”

The Roynon Beautification Project began in 2001, when former Roynon kindergarten teacher and current Beautification Committee president Karen Huigens initiated a fundraiser to irrigate a dry dirt patch in front of the school’s E Street entrance. That fundraiser, supported by parents, teachers, staff and alumni, brought in \$60,000, enough money to restore the front lawn, purchase trees and shrubs from a local nursery, and hire a local landscaper to do the work.

Future years saw additional beautification projects, including installing vine-covered arbors and pergolas with concrete benches in multiple locations on campus, a shade tree and mural over the exterior of the Roynon library, student-made tiles adorning the kindergarten classroom, new sidewalks and curving benches along Eighth Street, trees, shrubbery and jasmine plants outside its multipurpose room, purple trumpet vines along all of its chain-link fencing, garden beds along Sixth Street, and other creative touches, such as succulent gardens, rock gardens, topiaries, and a friendship garden.

“Our first project was to irrigate the front lawn and make it green and inviting,” said Huigens, who retired as a teacher in 2010. “From there we continued to fundraise to complete annual projects. We have received help from so many different sources – the community, the District, alumni. It’s amazing to think how far we’ve come with these projects. I feel that Roynon Elementary is a true jewel of our community.”

MORE



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The Roynon garden beds were installed at the inception of the beautification project, but had fallen into disrepair by 2020 when David Scarborough, then a Roynon fourth-grader, asked his mom, Suzanne Scarborough, if he could begin a garden renovation project that would replace the old and rotted wood, update the irrigation system, and give David, now a Ramona Middle School seventh-grader, and his friends a project to do that would benefit the school.

At a time when Beautification Committee fundraising had almost completely stopped due to the pandemic, David raised \$900 on his own by selling mistletoe, sage and lavender at local farmer's markets and galleries, to help buy the supplies needed for the project. David also proved to be a shrewd negotiator, convincing a hardware salesman to sell him wood at cost, even though the price of wood had tripled in the earliest days of the pandemic.

"David was so eager to do this and I told him that I would support him all the way," Suzanne Scarborough said. "But we knew nothing about gardening. So we went to places like Amy's Farm and the Fairplex to learn. Really, it was a way for David to have fun outdoors with his friends. David recruited all the student volunteers, and they did all the work. Before long, students from other schools came to help. Now, Roynon has a garden that is a community treasure."

Since fundraising has its peaks and valleys, Roynon has implemented other methods of collecting donations. Every Friday morning, students and community members alike are invited to bring all their recycling from home and drop it off at Roynon, which has manned stations at the north and south ends of the school and workers to sort through the waste and deliver it to a nearby recycling station. The money collected goes into the general beautification fund.

"The Roynon Beautification project is an extraordinary example of a community coming together to ensure that their children have a beautiful, engaging and nurturing learning environment," Bonita Unified Superintendent Matt Wien said. "The work they have done over the last 20 years is awe-inspiring and a testament to what can be achieved when we work together. Thank you to all who have contributed their time, financial support and talent over the years. It is an effort that has paid dividends for our students."

To donate to the Roynon Beautification Committee, visit their website: www.roynonbeautification.com.

PHOTO CAPTIONS:

BUSD_BEAUTIFICATION1: Students from Roynon and Oak Mesa elementary schools, as well as Ramona Middle School, tend to the Roynon vegetable garden as part of the school's ongoing Beautification Project, that has seen the school raise funds for a number of improvement projects over the last 20 years, turning the campus into a jewel of the community. Students volunteer to help maintain the garden during weekly afterschool sessions.

BUSD_BEAUTIFICATION2: A pergola adorned with trumpet vines, along with a brightly colored mural featuring a quote from Dr. Seuss, welcome visitors to the Roynon Elementary School library, one of the many projects completed as part of the Roynon Beautification Project, an ongoing volunteer effort between Roynon staff and community members to provide an aesthetically pleasing and nurturing environment for students.

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