

When There Are Things To Fix...

By LINDA WELLS

Hayward, Calif., Sept. 14

“Turning this area into a garden is like human revolution,” said Michael Reichle, who was one of 75 SGI-USA volunteers renovating Mount Eden Park’s rose garden in July. “It’s an ugly process; you’ve got to get dirty and fight with the roots, but eventually you end up with a beautiful thing.”

Born of a desire to unite their headquarters and contribute to the community, Hayward Headquarters members joined with interested citizens to refurbish the rundown garden over one weekend. The project included removing old trees and rose bushes, grading, creating pathways, installing irrigation and planting new roses, cherry trees and annuals.

“It’s better than sitting at home on a Saturday,” said 13-year-old Paul O’Neill. Paul’s uncle, John Sweeney, said he brought along his nephew to let him see that when there’s things in the neighborhood to fix, they should do it themselves instead of waiting for someone else to do it. “It’s a good lesson not only for the kids but also for ourselves,” Mr. Sweeney said.

The group called itself PEACE (People Engaged in Action for the Community and Environment). Darrell Jones, Mount Eden Park caretaker, supervised and assisted the replanting efforts. Afterward, he praised the group. “You guys are great,” he said. “No one complained. I was surprised. It was a real group effort.”

Seeing the work being done, neighbors caught the spirit of the volunteers and got involved. One, J.W. Brown, even donated two cherry trees in memory of his recently deceased wife. “The people in this neighborhood will admire the SGI’s work for many years to come,” he said.

Local teenagers joined in, too. And Hayward Headquarters was invited to return next year to participate in the annual Hayward Pride Week, a week of volunteerism to improve the city.

On Sept. 7, city officials officially dedicated the park. Mayor Roberta Cooper expressed her appreciation, calling the day a special one, thanks to the members’ efforts. General Director Zaitso sent a message and two books of photography by SGI President Ikeda. The local Brass Band and jazz band also supported the ceremony, which was attended by about 150 guests.

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