

Soquel Elementary gets free face-lift courtesy of Home Depot

By Austin Walsh
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SOQUEL -- Volunteers in orange shirts swarmed one of the county's oldest elementary schools Thursday armed with paint rollers, shovels and power tools to give the campus a makeover.

Workers stood on ladders and scaffolding applying a fresh coat of white paint on the front of Soquel Elementary, while others cut redwood planks and pounded nails to make new planter boxes for the school's garden.

The effort came courtesy of Home Depot's Celebration of Service: 30 Years of Giving Back, where employees from stores throughout the area volunteer to beautify the community.



Eighty Home Depot employees, coming from Watsonville, Seaside, Salinas, San Jose and Soquel, participated in the effort. They used nearly 60 gallons of paint courtesy of Behr Paints to cover the front of the school and touch up walls across the campus.

The school's renovation, which took place from 6 a.m. until 4 p.m., cost an estimated \$10,000 in labor and materials, all courtesy of Home Depot.

"I feel so excited and grateful," said Soquel Elementary Principal Eric Gross. "They just dropped out of the sky and got to work."

The school, built in 1921, has 20 classrooms and 430 students in kindergarten through fifth grade.

On Thursday, volunteers painted, replaced benches, fixed the chain-link fence and built planter boxes, among other projects.



"We basically had no chance of doing any of this on our own," Gross said. "It was just going to continue to deteriorate, Advertisement

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but they came in here and took care of it all in one day."

The Soquel Home Depot competed with 10 other stores in the region to win the renovation bid for the school. The store's decision to volunteer to do the renovation came as a surprise to school officials.

"We really work on building a sense of community within our stores with the community we operate in," said Home Depot District Manager Ben Bearden. "Any time we have the opportunity to connect with a not-for-profit organization of a local

school, we are very excited to do that.”

Families of children enrolled in the school were pleasantly surprised by the renovation, especially in the context of the current economic climate.

“In this economy, I’m shocked,” said Joel Dison, a resident of Capitola and parent of two children at the school. “I am overwhelmed. I think Home Depot, taking the time and money to do something like this, is beyond commendable.”

District officials stopped by to watch the renovation and appreciate the effort donated by Home Depot and the volunteers.

“It’s so exciting to see a business to go above and beyond,” said Judy McGooden, Soquel Union Elementary school board president. “It’s really spruced up and looks a lot nicer.”
Editor’s note: This article has been corrected to reflect that Eric Gross is the Soquel Union Elementary School Principal and to correct the spelling of the parent Joel Dison.

