

Community unites to Love Madera

By Annarosa Salazar
THE MADERA TRIBUNE

The way Mark Lacave sees it, there is no better way to love your community than by helping beautifying it or helping those who are in need.

Love Madera is a church-led initiative to get citizens involved in community service. "Love Madera is exactly what it sounds like, we love Madera," said Lacave, pastor of Grace Community Church and director of Love Madera. "Our goal is to love our community through acts of kindness."

Love Madera volunteers visit residents at convalescent homes, donate blood for the Central California Blood Center, make bagged lunches and deliver them to the homeless and clean up local parks.

Love Madera has two community service projects a year, in the spring and fall. The spring community project is on April 5. Participants can

choose from cleaning up school grounds, giving blood, holding a carwash fundraiser, and bagging sacked lunches for homeless people. A full list of projects can be found on lovemadera.com.

"How this works is for every project there needs to be a project leader," Lacave said. "For example if a project is to clean up a school, the leader would be the principal or vice principal."

The day of the community service event, every volunteer for each project meets at 9 a.m. in Courthouse Park for a quick rally before heading out to do his or her service.

April Molina led the volunteers delivering baked goods to public servants during Love Madera events.

"This project was about giving back to public officials and thanking them for all they do," Molina said. "People brought dozens of baked goods and we went out and gave them to firefighters, police officials, paramedic stations and to local businesses. We wanted them to know how grateful we are for all that they do."

Molina was excited when she volunteered to donate blood to the Central California Blood Center bank.

"I've never given blood

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Love Madera volunteers gather in October at Courthouse Park to get instructions for projects.

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before and when it was all done one of the workers informed me I was O negative, which is the universal blood type," Molina said. "She said my blood would be going to the Children's Hospital and that made me feel really good." Love Madera had its inspi-

ration 38 miles north from a similar program, Love Modesto. The director of Love Modesto approached Lacave in 2011 and suggested Madera start its own. Love Madera was created in spring 2012.

Lacave pointed out that Love Madera is always looking for new projects and new project leaders.

"If anyone is interested and wants to start up a project

they can either contact me via email or through the Love Madera website," Lacave said.

Molina and her family are active volunteers for Love Madera.

"My family is always involved in it," Molina said. "Either my kids or I pick a project to stay involved. Love Madera is a great experience."