

## Love Riverbank, Touching Lives

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There was love in the air throughout the Riverbank community on Saturday, April 5 with volunteers buzzing about doing their part to Love Riverbank.

The day started off at 9 a.m. at the Community Center on Santa Fe Street where leaders Mario and Sylvia Jimenez and a group of volunteers gathered to take part in the service project, Love Riverbank. Mayor Richard O'Brien gave a brief speech to the attendees and shortly after that everyone dispersed to their designated project area.

"So many great people came out to help with a sincere heart for Riverbank," stated Jimenez.

The projects included clean-up at Jacob Myers Park, Community Gardens, Neighborhood Beautification, Senior Citizen Care, Library, and delivery of cookies to public servants to show appreciation for what they do.

A new addition to Love Riverbank was the presence of Delta Blood Bank's mobile blood drive that set up shop at California Avenue Elementary School.

Mayor O'Brien and Vice Mayor Cal Campbell decided to make their first stop at the mobile blood drive to donate blood.

"Much more (donations) was needed for this project but we look forward to more community awareness next year," said Jimenez.

After the blood donation, O'Brien made his way to Jacob Myers Park to assist in the clean-up and Campbell assisted the volunteers at the Community Gardens.

The hard working volunteers at Jacob Myers Park made progress along the river and the ramp removing weeds.

Community Garden's project leader, Terri Spezzano had several volunteers on hand including city councilmember, Jeanine Tucker and several youngsters that pulled weeds, swept the trimmings, and bagged up the weeds.

Police Chief Erin Kiely arrived at the Gardens after painting the graffiti in the alley to mow the rest of the property to prepare it for weed prevention paper so that it will be

ready for the schools and public use, explained Jimenez.

The job at the Community Gardens has not been completed so several volunteers will be returning on Saturday, April 12 at 9 a.m. to finish the project. Members of the public are invited to join the other volunteers in the project.

Sno-white Drive-in owner, Daryl Daniel did his part and provided free beverages to anyone that stopped by the drive-in and mentioned, "Love Riverbank."

Cookies were delivered by councilmember, Darlene Barber-Martinez and a few other volunteers from Central Valley Community Resources, as a "thank you" to the public servants like the Riverbank Police Services and the Fire Department on Friday and Saturday.

A condemned house that had graffiti all over it was part of the Neighborhood Beautification project where Cardozo Middle School leadership students and members of the Community Praise Tabernacle painted the entire house, mowed, pulled weeds, picked up trash, and many other duties.

"The difference from start to finish was night and day," stated Jimenez. "Neighbors who passed by were impressed by the change that the group made in just a few hours."

Senior citizens were also shown kindness on Saturday when Project Leader Angie Timpone, City Manager Jill Anderson, and several members from Living Grace Church visited several senior citizen homes that needed front yard and backyard care. The lawn care included mowing, weeding, edging, trimming, and other tasks.

The volunteers worked until 5 p.m. that day to make sure all the homes were completed.

"All came out with a heart to bless and make an impact for those who were unable to do so on their own any longer," stated Jimenez. "Several are planning to return to maintain the yard for them as well."

"This is about giving back," said volunteer Patricia King. "Bottom line is these communities are so small, it's not hard, so why can't we do it."

The Riverbank library was given some love by volunteers of all ages that dusted shelves and books.

"Mario and I were extremely pleased with this year's involvement," expressed Jimenez. "Our volunteers all came in with a heart to help in any area needed, and gave each project their all while there."

"The atmosphere each volunteer united to create was beautiful, as we work as a community to improve our community. We look forward to next year's event."

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