

# SANTA BARBARA NEWS-PRESS



RD YEAR ————— SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 21, 2008 —————

## Volunteers turn out for Day of Caring



ROBBY BARTHELMESS / NEWS-PRESS PHOTOS

Tanner Stevens, left, and his sister Taryn roll paint onto the side of the CASA building located behind the Figueroa Courthouse as part of the Day of Caring. Below, Aba May leaves a red handprint on the side of the CASA building along with other members of the team that helped paint.

### More than 1,000 pitch in to help nonprofit organizations

By JEREMY FOSTER  
NEWS-PRESS STAFF WRITER

More than 1,000 volunteers pitched in to help their communities Saturday as the United Way of Santa Barbara County launched its 17th annual Day of Caring.

Teams of volunteers gathered at 48 nonprofit organizations and three schools in the county to do landscape work and planting, painting, office work and general repairs as part of what United Way calls "the largest single-day volunteer event in Santa Barbara County."

Organizers estimate that the dollar value of the work done totaled \$150,000 to \$200,000. Saturday's kickoff featured a hot breakfast

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Participants of the Day of Caring work on the CASA building. Below, Michele Talkington paints the lower part of the CASA building.

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### ■ CARING

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for volunteers, prepared by members of United Way. The teams then went to their assignments in Carpinteria, Santa Barbara, Goleta and Santa Ynez.

Volunteers at one project spiffed up the exterior of the new South County office of Court Appointed Special Advocates of Santa Barbara County, which works to find abused, neglected, and/or abandoned children safe, permanent homes.

About 20 volunteers, sweating on a warm sunny day, painted the walls, railings and paneling of CASA's new office, which adjoins the Archives Division office of the Santa Barbara County Superior Court.

"We've been getting a lot of help over the years from United Way to get this building and the generosity of the volunteers who have helped finished this off really means a lot," said Maria Long, the nonprofit organization's executive director.

Goleta residents Rosario Terrazas and her 10-year-old daughter Ava applied fresh khaki-colored paint to the office that had become weathered over the years.

"There are so many things that need to get done that don't get done, and we can help out in four hours and get this place painted," Ms. Terrazas said. "It's very rewarding."

Ava, flecked with paint, said she loved doing community service. Ms. Terrazas said her daughter had been asking her about the Day of Caring event for months. "She is starting to get into volunteerism," she said. "It's a great experience for her and a good opportunity."

Santa Barbara County 1st District Supervisor Salud Carbajal, in his second consecutive year at the event, said volunteer work "is the essence of what communities are about."

"It's inspiring to see the community involved to help some of those agencies that help improve our quality of life," he said. "We should push



ourselves to do a day of this type of volunteer work, so that at the end of the day we say to ourselves, 'I wish I could do this more often.' It's just so reaffirming."

One location that drew a swarm of volunteers Saturday was Dos Pueblos High School. Between 9:30 and 10:30 a.m., about 200 volunteers from Westmont College and Santa Barbara Bank and Trust did landscaping, including weeding, trimming, mulching and planting 27 trees at the high school.

"It's really cool to see in the beginning how barren the school was and how it's shaped up with the progress we've made," said Hannah Gustavson, a Westmont sophomore, who was pulling weeds. "We want to leave this beautiful."

When the work was over, two large Dumpsters were full of weeds and palm tree fronds.

Mike Bennett, a Westmont senior, said he has been fortunate enough to be in a giving community that has filled him with a sense "of wanting to

give back."

"It's important that we not lose sight of the local community in light of some terrible things going on around the world," he said. "We shouldn't neglect the places close to us. That's how things get better."

Among the sites improved with the help of volunteers on Saturday were Santa Barbara City College's Life Fitness Center, where the new president Andreea Serban helped; several Boys & Girls Club locations; the Council on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse in Santa Barbara; and Child Abuse Listening and Mediation (CALM).

Paul Didier, president and CEO of United Way of Santa Barbara County, said he was pleased with this year's turnout, though he said that the number of volunteers had decreased, likely because of a faltering economy.

"We're down 10 percent in number of volunteers," he said. "But I think for a group of this size to come together and donate their Saturday is pretty impressive."