



The Escalon Times

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Dozens Join In Love Escalon Day

By MARG JACKSON

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Focusing on ways to help the community - and offer gratitude to those in service - the 'Love Escalon' effort took flight on Saturday, making the day brighter for all.

Volunteers by the dozens gathered at the Trinity Church in Escalon early Saturday morning to get their instructions for the day and pastor Jim Davis also read a letter of support, encouragement and thanks - from President Barack Obama on official White House stationery - prior to the groups heading out for a day of difference making.

Various groups split up into projects ranging from a food drive to benefit the local C.A.R.E. Center, to those delivering baked goods to public service personnel, another crew heading to the C.A.R.E. Center on Second Street for some rehabilitation work and cleaning, and still others splitting up to spend time visiting, delivering flowers and singing with residents at Escalon's Paddock Manor and Heritage House senior communities.

"We're members at Big Valley Grace Church in Modesto and two years ago, my wife, daughter and I did the kids outreach at the SOS Club for Love Modesto," explained Escalon Fire Chief Rick Mello, who said he was happy to be taking part in the first official 'Love Escalon' day. Neighboring communities of Riverbank and Modesto had similar efforts on Saturday.

Mello said he hoped it was the first of many such days of service for the local community.

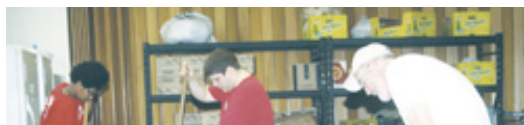
"Hopefully this gets everyone involved," he said.

Aquas Bottled Water donated 29 cases of water for the volunteers to drink during their day of service. They didn't use it all, and were told to keep the rest on hand for the next scheduled project day, June 25.

Pastor Davis, who offered the welcoming remarks and instructions to get the day started on Saturday, said though there have been other smaller activities through the Love Escalon effort, this was the first official "project day" that brought dozens of volunteers together to make a difference.

"We mimicked some from Love Modesto," he said of the various community

One of the youngest volunteers, 19-month-old Mia Hoyt holds a note her mom wrote to be delivered with baked goods to local public servants, with police, fire and ambulance personnel thanked for their efforts.





efforts. "But we also fine tuned it, asking 'what are the needs here?' and we kept them simple so people can get a feel for what this is all about."

The effort was publicized via signs around town, newspaper articles and ads and through the various churches in town.

"We had 128 people sign up on line and we gave all the churches in town sign up sheets," Davis said.

Putting some muscle into their work, from left, Janette Cortes, Jake Sgamba and Tom Love helped clean and refresh the Escalon C.A.R.E. Center on Second Street, site of the weekly food distribution for the area's needy.

Coordinators helping groups get started on their work were Robin Jones and Dana Corbin, both of whom were thrilled with the turnout.

Davis said with everyone on line and signed up at local churches on board, there were more than 150 volunteers for Saturday's 'Love Escalon' event.

"I'm pretty happy with that," he said.

Police, fire and ambulance personnel received deliveries of homemade treats, many with handwritten notes attached.

"We just want to let everyone know we love them," Davis said. "We appreciate them."

Senior citizens at Heritage House and Paddock Manor received fresh flowers and sang hymns with volunteers, while the local food cupboard not only got a thorough cleaning of its floors and shelves, but a crew also put together brand new stainless steel tables to replace the dilapidated tables inside the building.

"I just think it's really important to help the community out," said volunteer Janette Cortes, mopping the floor at the Second Street C.A.R.E. Center. "It's fun and you do it with people you like."

C.A.R.E. Director Chris Larson said he was overwhelmed by the help.

"This is great, I just didn't expect this many people," he said. "Everybody coming in, working together, gets it done. And we really needed the tables replaced."

Escalon Presbyterian Church pastor Troy Onsager headed up the works crew at C.A.R.E.

"We got six new stainless steel tables," he said. "It's to help with the sanitary distribution of food, we had a crew assembling those and a crew cleaning. The goal is to have a clean assembly line for the distribution and I had around 20 in my crew, a really good turnout."

Teams of volunteers collecting food were canvassing local neighborhoods and Gayle Madsen, teamed with Jennifer Hoyt and her young daughter, Mia, were going door to door in the North, Stanislaus and Sierra streets area.

"We've got quite a variety," Madsen said of canned goods for the local pantry. "It has been very cheerful and we're happy it's not raining."

Cloudy skies prevailed on Saturday morning but there was no rain.

"It's a really great start to helping our community with service projects," said Onsager. "Our vision for Love Escalon is to continue to think of the needs of the community."

"The enthusiasm to help has really been neat to see, especially the kids and young adults, they showed up and asked 'what can I do to help?', they really want to be involved."