



Santa Monica Daily Press

**MANNY HEADS WEST
SEE PAGE 14**

Since 2001: A news odyssey

THE MAKING MOVES ISSUE



Brandon Wise brandonw@smdp.com

EYE OF THE BEHOLDER: The Butterfly Garden at Edison Language Academy illustrates the life cycles of butterflies. More than 40 parent volunteers, led by a core team called the Garden Crew, painted the murals last summer for the purpose of creating an outdoor classroom. It is an example of parents coming together to beautify campuses around the school district.

Parents help beautify campuses

BY MELODY HANATANI
Daily Press Staff Writer

SAMOHI The academic successes within classroom walls here have long been a source of pride for the school community, boasting high marks on state tests and college entrance exams, its students perennially getting accepted to the nation's top universities.

Outside is a different story. "I think it's a good school, but the cam-

pus doesn't reflect the achievements of the school as well as it could," Azia Calderhead, a sophomore at Santa Monica High School, said. "Graffiti could be prevented and cleaned up, the trash could be limited and the bathrooms should be cleaned up too."

In an effort to tidy up a campus whose appearance has been criticized for undermining its educational excellence, a group of parents, teachers and students are launching a clean-up campaign, called "Operation

Beautification."

The founding members of the new coalition held its inaugural brainstorming session at Samohi on Wednesday, their discussion involving different ways in which the school can be improved, ideas including a major campus clean-up event.

Their efforts are among the many taking place in schools throughout the district, which operates on a less than fruitful maintenance budget every year, parents filling in

the holes through donated time and money, whether it's painting murals in bathrooms or planting native gardens.

"Parents are a great resource and great supporter of schools in many different ways," Dr. Hugo Pedroza, the Samohi principal, said. "This is a huge campus so they're a great force in allowing it to get a little bit better."

SEE BEAUTIFICATION PAGE 7

Candidates beat the streets to qualify for November races

BY ALEXANDRA BISSONNETTE
Special to the Daily Press

CITYWIDE With the deadline looming, aspiring candidates for public office are scouring the streets in search of signatures to qualify for the November ballot.



Rob Rader, an incumbent running for the Santa Monica College Board of Trustees, has developed a strategy to gather signatures.

"When people see me walking toward them with a clipboard, they run away," he joked.

As an incumbent, Rader has the odds as well as volunteers on his side, and uses a variety of techniques to get the 100 minimum signatures needed to run for office. The deadline to file with the City Clerk's Office is Aug. 8.

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District planning major clean-up at high school

FROM BEAUTIFICATION PAGE 1

The Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District spends roughly \$5 million a year on the maintenance and operations department, approximately \$3.5 million of which goes to ongoing repairs.

"This is not as much as we would like to spend on it, but we can probably say that about many of the instructional areas also," Jan Maez, the district's chief financial officer, said, adding that another million dollars or 20 percent increase would make the maintenance budget more sufficient.

Samohi, which is expected to undergo renovation under Measure BB construction bond money in the next few years, has been a recipient of several parent-driven projects, including gardens in front of the Administration Building and in the Science Quad.

"I think the challenge is that in California, public schools are so underfunded that something like beautifying the campus is so under the barrel," Elizabeth Stearn, the PTA president at Samohi, said.

Such projects have also been common at the Edison Language Academy where parents have long complained about the condition of the campus, which is also slated to be reconstructed under the bond measure.

The most recent undertaking took place last year when the parents completed the Butterfly Courtyard in the kindergarten wing, painting bungalows a sky blue and affixing large wooden butterflies to the classrooms.

The volunteers also raised more than \$85,000 to renovate the main courtyard a few years ago, commissioning an artist to paint a mural and planting a garden to fix an irrigation problem.

"The main problem was the lunch area where the kids ate, where it didn't drain," Grace Phillips, a parent, said. "In the winter, it turned to Lake Edison and built up and flowed into the cafeteria."

The projects have temporarily ceased at Edison, mainly because of the future extreme makeover.

Lori Orum, the principal at Edison, said the district's maintenance department does

a fine job, but pointed out that campuses are heavily impacted sites, used by hundreds of students almost every day.

"We're not asking (parents) to do maintenance," Orum said. "The district does all the boilerplate type things, it's not replacing anyone on maintenance and operations."

Parents said the improvements give students a sense that the community cares, helping them cultivate pride in their school.

The PTA at Roosevelt hired David Legaspi to paint several murals throughout the campus the past few years, including in all four bathrooms. Legaspi is responsible for the murals at many of the district's schools, including the Viking at Santa Monica High School. The parents are planning a community event at the end of August in which they will paint the entire blacktop with educational games.

"The district is a little stretched," Jon Kean, the PTA president at Roosevelt, said. "We've got great maintenance guys, but they're overwhelmed."

"It's up to us to keep the campuses looking nice."

Most projects require approval by the district, depending on how large. Big undertakings like courtyard renovations, which would require cooperation from the district's maintenance, would have to go through the central office. Smaller improvements like a new bench could be put in with a clearance by the school principal.

The projects can get costly. Duilio Cascio, an outgoing parent at John Adams Middle School, estimates that the PTA has spent about \$20,000 a year on improvements, which includes a new paint job, bathroom clean-up, and a new garden.

"Kids notice when the environment of their school is changing," Cascio said.

While parents are brainstorming ways to improve Samohi, the district is also planning a major clean-up project later this month.

"We are putting a huge effort to clean the campus," Maez said. "We want it to be free of gum and free of a lot of things."

Stephanie Taft contributed to this report
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North of Montana	= \$ 4,260,074	\$ 2,184,476
Between Wilshire & Montana	= \$ 3,559,750	\$ 1,032,831
South of Wilshire	= \$ 973,564	\$ 680,106
Sunset Park	= \$ 1,400,879	\$ 783,222
Ocean Park	= \$ 1,790,000	\$ 1,181,714

Statistics Updated Every Monday



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1 in 16,000

ODDS OF A CHILD BEING DIAGNOSED WITH AUTISM:
1 in 166



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