



Shearn Elementary Receives A Face-Lift

By Dian Kidd

Through the Whole and Healthy Children's Initiative, MissionHouston leads congregations to work cooperatively to impact neighborhood schools with at-risk students. A commitment to be involved through the Whole and Healthy Children Project involves mentoring, prayer, makeovers, and fundraising.

On Saturday, October 18, forty-two members of Willow Meadows Baptist Church joined volunteer workers from other area congregations to provide a makeover for Shearn Elementary School. Jeff Peters, the Shearn Project Coordinator for the Willow Meadows groups, notes that they were planning on a reduced work day hoping to field 40 volunteers because of stresses resulting from Hurricane Ike. Almost twice that many showed up as 75 workers from cooperating congregations came and went throughout the day.

Says Peters, "This whole project began through the vision, coordination and financial support of Mission Houston. The Shearn Beautification Work Day was a unique opportunity for the churches in southwest Houston to transform a public school through community action. Despite the impact of time and money that Hurricane Ike put on our community, over seventy five believers left the sanctuary of their churches to touch the lives of our most important resource, our neighborhood children.

Over 200 hours and several hundred dollars were donated to revitalize the school buildings and campus through some simple landscaping and painting. What an amazing blessing to watch over half a dozen churches, of different denominations, through their shared love of Christ, work together to help in transforming this small part of southwest Houston to be more like His Kingdom."

Adults, teenagers, and children showed up to sweep, paint, mulch, dig, and plant together. Lacking scrapers, some made do with shovels to knock peeled and curling old paint off the curbs. One man with some difficulty bending swept and re-swept tirelessly behind as the paint chips fell. Workers knelt or bent over curbs applying fresh red and yellow paint to faded fire lanes and parking zones, some stopping periodically to straighten their backs and give a little moan, as seldom-used muscles began to protest. Others grabbed a paint brush to do touch-ups.

All the while, others were digging up old flowers beds, hauling and spreading new mulch, and painting an interior classroom. Big smiles on faces were the order of the day. Throughout the day, cheerful greetings and pleasant introductions marked the personal satisfaction that people received from being a part of a cooperative community service.

At the end of the day, 75 people had given 200 hours of labor reports Peters. Four churches and two organizations had participated: Willow Meadows Baptist Church, Crosspoint campus of West University Baptist Church, Houston Chinese Church, Bellaire United Methodist Church and St. John's Presbyterian as well as Mission Houston and Shearn Elementary staff.

Cooperative Leadership Whole & Healthy Children

MissionHouston

Steve Capper, President

Southwest Houston Area Leadership

Bob Chenoweth
Area Facilitator

Cade Burks
Area Project Coordinator

Karen Juul-Nielsen
Area Prayer/Mentoring
Coordinator

Pastor Fred Tow
Area Church Coordinator

Willow Meadows Baptist Church Shearn Project Coordinators

Jeff Peters
Project Coordinator

Ginger Hill
Prayer Coordinator

Becky Day & Hazel Dow
Mentoring Coordinators

Was it all worth it? Catherine Nelson, Shearn Elementary Teacher, certainly thinks so. She writes in her e-mail thank-you note:

On Monday when I got out of the car I smelled the mulch. The wonderful smell of working with hands, gardening, growing. Everything here feels softer, gentler. Most of our students have relatively hard lives. They live in apartments without yards, plants, and nature. All the greenery you put in has shifted the color of our place, and the "People" you put in are shifting the color also.

The volunteer mentors are giving our kids some connection to other adults who are awesome role models, good citizens, good listeners and people of faith. They see that inner strength, that peace that leads us to reach out. We do that because of God at work in our lives.

The volunteer who helps me in the Library, Jean, provides me a chance to breathe by helping check out books and restoring books to their shelves. She is a little bit of the "cool waters" He provides.

One of my favorite quotes is by St. Francis of Assisi. He said "I always preach the Gospel, sometimes I use words." What you do for the least of these is surely a blessing. That work for an hour a week reverberates throughout each school day, each school hour and then.....it goes home. It will begin to work in so many ways and so many lives that the ripples will pass our horizon, certainly.

I thank you for your dedication, your time, for I know it is precious, your love.

For information about becoming involved in a Whole and Healthy Children's Initiative in your neighborhood, contact Steve Capper, Director, Mission Houston at 713.374.1214 or at <http://www.missionhouston.org/contact/default.aspx>



for more photos go to <http://www.wmbc.org/356055.ihtml>