

Hermosa Beach



Eric Stitt can be reached at estitt@tbrnews.com

Valley students create The Strand's first native plants garden

by Eric Michael Stitt

Now that elementary students have given new life to a once-neglected planter box at 22nd Street and The Strand, folks are able to get a small glimpse of what early Hermosa Beach settlers saw when they first walked along the impressive coastline.

Before houses, streets and various buildings covered the wide-open landscape, the city's predecessors were certain to have walked through seaside daisies, black sage, buckwheat, California poppies, coyote bush and ceanothus, which are just some of the native plants that Hermosa Valley students dropped into the city's beachside garden for everyone to enjoy. The students are also hoping passers-by will grasp their little message, too.

Earth Savers, a branch from Valley School's Grades of Green group, wants residents to know that more native plants should be placed throughout the city to help wildlife, preserve water and keep alive a special part of local history.

"I thought it was a really cool concept and it supports the local ecosystem," said Elizabeth Riley, co-chair for Grades of

Green. "It teaches people to put native landscaping in their own yard."

More than 30 people, including students and their parents, dug dirt, poured water and placed California-born plants into the 400-square-foot planter box March 20. Riley said 65 percent of people's water usage goes to watering their plants and lawns, but native plants don't need watering after one year and hardly any maintenance, she said.

Native plant specialist Anne Kershner, who helped with the project, explained one of the benefits to having an abundance of these plants.

"Only locally native plants provide the nutrients necessary for the survival of the beginning of the food chain: fungi, insects and winged wildlife," Kershner said. "For example, we planted two California fuchsias,



Students from Hermosa Valley School gathered to create a native plants garden on The Strand.

(photo by Chris Miller)

because they provide bright red tubular flowers from summer through late fall. This is an important nectar source for hummingbirds at a time when there are not

many other blooms."

Riley got the project idea after attending a Surfrider Foundation event last fall that
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