

COMMUNITY SERVICE

Honoring Cesar Chavez



IJ photos/Jeff Vendsel

Islay Fossett, 11, puts debris in a bag held by Marin Conservation Corps member Tracey Holler while cleaning trash from the tidal flats near Pickleweed Community Center in San Rafael on Saturday.

Students clean up park, remove weeds

By Jennifer Upshaw
Marin Independent Journal

MIDDLE SCHOOL students from San Rafael and Novato pulled weeds, picked up trash and made art in San Rafael on Saturday as part of a community service project saluting Cesar Chavez.

Sponsored by the Marin Conservation Corps, about 12 student members of Cesar Chavez after-school service clubs turned out at Pickleweed Park in San Rafael's Canal neighborhood.

The students spent the morning wrestling with invasive foxtails, scouring the park for litter, selling jewelry to benefit charity and laboring over a colorful mosaic that spelled out the inspirational Spanish phrase "si, se puede!" The artwork will be displayed at San Jose Middle School.

"This really ties in a lot with Cesar Chavez's values," said Marilee Eckert, Marin Conservation Corps executive director. "What we're trying to do is get youth involved and helping their community. We're trying to get them engaged in proactive activity early so that becomes one of their values."

"It's good for them and good for their community," she said.

Founded in 1982, the Marin Conservation Corps aims to foster youth development while helping



Merone Eckert (right) joins fellow volunteers as they make a 'si, se puede!' sign in the picnic area of Pickleweed Park in San Rafael. The phrase is translated as 'yes, it can be done.'

the environment. Marin Conservation Corps' Youth in Environment Service Program enlists AmeriCorps members to bring environmental education and community service experiences to middle and high school students.

Matt Gunn, an AmeriCorps volunteer, is a Cesar Chavez club coordinator at San Jose Middle School.

Chavez, whose March 31 birthday is a California state holiday, died in 1993. Despite being a

well-known civil rights activist, migrant worker labor leader and co-founder of the United Farm Workers, Gunn said he remains somewhat obscure.

"He is really kind of one of the under-recognized icons in California history," Gunn said. "I think it's really important to mark this day and get the word out to the community that this is someone we should celebrate."

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IJ photo/Jeff Vendsel

Marin Conservation Corps member Erin Flynn, 23, of San Rafael pulls non-native plants adjacent to the bike path near Pickleweed Community Center during the Cesar Chavez day of service on Saturday.

CHAVEZ: Honoring labor leader

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Islay Fossett, 11, a student at San Jose Middle School, was happy to spend the day honoring Chavez's emphasis on service to others.

"I learned about the environment and how it helps to recycle and clean up," she said. "It helps the community who live around here — they don't want to live in trash."

Also hard at work Saturday

was Eric Marx, 13, a student at San Jose Middle School, who spent the morning picking up garbage "so the animals won't eat it and choke on it."

There's another reason to get the litter off the ground, he added.

"Polluting," he said. "Not good."

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