

Published August 10th, 2016

## Environmental 'Green Screen' Will Protect Springhill Elementary Students

By Cathy Tyson



Ivan Dikov plants at Springhill. Photo Cathy Tyson

It took a village, or rather a trifecta of interested parties, to transform a chain link fence at Springhill Elementary school to a lush green hedge: a scout in search of an eagle project, a Green Team mom and the school superintendent.

Ivan Dikov and fellow boy scouts from Troop 224 raised the money, finagled discounts and provided the labor to install over 40 lady bank roses that will work as a sponge to reduce the amount of car exhaust students breathe while on the school playground that is directly adjacent to busy Pleasant Hill Road. The barrier will act as a noise buffer and give some privacy to students.

Dikov wanted to give back to his former elementary school, and provide a natural barrier for kids on the playground and baseball field. Through a GoFundMe effort, called Ivan's Eagle Scout Project, he was able to raise \$850 of a total requested amount of \$1,000 to get the job done. He and fellow scouts, along with non-scout friends, were hard at work over the weekend of Aug. 6 and 7, digging and planting.

Elizabeth Dietsch, chair of the Springhill Elementary School Green Team, came up with the idea of a green screen fence years ago to provide cleaner air when her oldest son was a first grader; he's now entering seventh grade. She was concerned about the high volume of traffic and the school's field and playground next to the street with only a fence separating the children from car exhaust. She figured there has got to be a better way. There's evidence that "green" walls can reduce pollutants and particulate matter.

Collaborating with both Dikov and Dietsch, Superintendent of the Lafayette School District Rachel Zinn was very supportive of the project, especially since adjustments needed to be made anyway to the irrigation system near the fence.

Requirements for selecting the type of plants presented some hurdles. A fair amount of research went into selecting hardy, vigorous, low-maintenance, drought-tolerant, deer-resistant plants that don't attract tons of bees, don't have thorns and are reasonably lightweight to not damage the fence.

Lady bank roses are the perfect fit: robust climbing rose vines with clusters of miniature white or yellow flowers that profusely bloom in the springtime, which will benefit the school and the community for years to come. The Moraga Garden Center offered the plants and soil at a substantial discount.

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