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A touching tribute built at Moraga care home

By Cathy Dausman



Moraga Retreat Care Homes owner Ana Blaj, left, enjoys the new planter box with residents Joan (in pink) and Nora. Photo Cathy Dausman

Grant Larsen always enjoyed his grandfather Vince Jones' company - whether he was mowing his grandfather's lawn or chatting with him after a Campolindo High School football game. The two continued to meet even after Jones suffered a stroke and went to live at Moraga Retreat Care Homes.

It was while visiting him there that Larsen formed an idea that would become his Eagle Scout project. He decided to beautify the care home landscaping and build a wheeled, raised planter box for its residents.

"I hoped to complete the project while he was there so he could enjoy and watch my work," Larsen said, "but his health deteriorated and he passed away before I could start."

The proposed grandfather/grandson bonding time became instead a memorial.

In July Larsen, his "football buddy" Kyle Leutenaker (himself an Eagle Scout) and Scouts from Larsen's Troop 249 cleared out overgrown vegetation and replanted. Two weeks later they assembled the project centerpiece - a planter box on wheels.

The project was surprisingly time consuming, when design draft work, purchase of materials and final on-site construction were included. Larsen estimates he and his fellow scouts committed over 50 hours to the project.

Larsen worked closely with owner Ana Blaj, whom he called "extremely supportive" and grateful. Blaj returned the compliment, insisting, "I only have nice things to say about him. He could have chosen something else to do," Blaj continued, adding, "not many high school kids are involved with their grandpa."

"I hope that my project will be able to make the home more appealing and help out the residents by adding some things for them to do," Larsen said.

The residents assembling at the planter on the day photos were taken seemed delighted at the pansies peeking out from the soil. And Larsen's mother, Emily Larsen, is certain her son's project would have meant a lot to Jones because he, like his grandson, was an Eagle Scout.

"He touched my heart," said Blaj.



From left: Andrew Logan, Kyle Leutenaker, Kyle Davis, Grant Larsen, Spencer Larsen, and Isaac Pugh Photo provided

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