

TO ALL 9/11 Sylmar Clean-Up Volunteers and SF Valley Community Stakeholders,

Reflecting back on Sunday's 9/11 Sylmar Beautification Day, I do not even know where to begin because there were so many things to be overcome by and grateful about!

But let me start by saying to everyone who participated.....**Ya'll are the BOMB!!!!** At 7 am (or 8am) on a Sunday morning you could have been catching up on sleep, going to church, chilling at the casa and getting ready for some pro football, or heading out with the family. Instead, you all committed and followed through with getting yourself to Sylmar Park to take part in one of Sylmar's most historic days!

Yes, this event was historic with an estimated 200 volunteers, mostly youth!!!! It was historic because during the 10th Year Anniversary of 9/11 we elevated our state of mind and transcended our painful memories by honoring the moment and our community with a day of service. However, I truly feel Sunday's beautification effort was historic because of the amount of youth that represented. From an empty and tranquil park with morning dew eventually became the central headquarters of lively high school students coming from all directions. Some youth came in groups and some came as individuals, but when they arrived at the park they were **ONE** and focused on the task at hand. It was an absolute memorable and beautiful sight to see!!!! I was **EXTREMELY PROUD** of our kids and I was truly blessed and honored to be a part of it while in the presence of so many amazing people!

It seems like the attempts so far to identify all the amazing people who participated have fell a bit short. So here is my attempt to piece us all together (and of course my apologies in advance if I leave any one or group out). Let me begin by acknowledging the heart and soul of this historic day and that is the youth. Sylmar High School, Options for Youth, Kennedy & Chatsworth HS - **ya'll ROCK!!!!** I know there were other high schools present but not sure from where at the moment. I must say though Sylmar HS brought out an army of students and represented with such pride as they wore their school colors with the Spartan mascot. To name the few I am aware of: The Spartan Football & Baseball Teams, LinkCrew, Leadership Class, Cheer and EduCare After-School Program. A special shout out to the Sylmar HS staff that spread the word and rallied their kiddos....Assistant Principal Freddy Ortiz, Teacher/Coach/SNC Councilmember, Don Neal, Varsity Baseball Coach Ray Rivera and Assistant Coach, Jennie Carey from LAEP, Mr. Nunez, Mr. G, Steve List, Mary McLeod, Dan Loscos, and EduCare After School Program Site Director Marco Durazo, and staff Joseph Montesdeoca and Venesha Acosta. I know there were others!

A special thanks to Options for Youth – Burbank/Hermosa Beach Charter's Regional Supervisor (Principal), Valerie Brennan, and Lead Teacher (Assistant Principal), Cassie Fowble for supporting this clean-up and giving our kiddos the green light to join forces! Paul Dumont from the North Hills West Neighborhood Council along with his six (seemed like more) sober-living community members and volunteers. Can you believe that?!?! These folks came out from North Hills to join us. They even covered a key clean-up location on SF Rd. when I thought we did not have a team to cover that area and there they were sweeping, scooping and hacking away at all the weeds – ya'll were a blessing! LA City Councilmember Ricard Alarcon's newest Sylmar Field Deputy, Maria Ochoa – Welcome! And his young "City Ambassadors", Brenda, Mariela, Amy, and Liz, and student volunteer Judith Meza.

A SPECIAL-SPECIAL-SPECIAL THANKS to those who were directly involved with the planning of this event or who played key roles on the day of.....Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa and his most awesome-st East Valley Area Director, Angelica Ayala, for being a lead in this project and guiding us through all the right channels, Luis Sanchez also from the Mayor's office for bringing your wisdom, experience, and guidance and your father-in-law who really knows how to tie trash bags down so they don't fall off the back of the truck, Maria Sheets from the LA Board of Public Works for her guidance while pushing all the right buttons in providing all the tools, Manny Sabedra, Tom Weissbarth and staff from the Sylmar Graffiti Busters, thanks for all you do each and every day in our community, the Sylmar Neighborhood Council for your continued support, especially Councilmembers Neal, Kelly, Benitez, Bhakta, Vo-Ramirez, Lincoln, Krall, and Jenkins, and for the funds necessary to feed all the volunteers – that by itself was amazing, Assemblymember Felipe Fuentes (and daughter), for his inspiring speech and hands-on participation, along with staff member, Tania Soto and interns. As aforementioned, LA City Councilmember Richard Alarcon (CD 7) for providing the HUGE trash bin, as well as staff Manny Figueras and Maria Ochoa. To the Valley Panthers Youth Football organization's President, Brian Irvine and First Lady, Toni Irvine for their dedication to the well roundedness of our young athletes, and of course to the Panther parents and young athletes who came out to support our efforts, especially my brother/sis-n-law Miguel/Jennifer Lujan and family who drove all the way out from Palmdale. Also, LOL to Leeza Piano from the Valley Panthers for jumping on board with us and handling all the food shopping that kept our young troops energized. Anna Camacho and Diane Armstead who also assisted with the food tables. Sherry Lincoln for helping at the registration tables. Lastly, a HUGE shout out and thank you to the Team/Street Captains who managed the safety of our kids in each of the designated clean-up areas: Carlos and Lidia Cervantes, Ricardo Benitez, Mariah Sotelo, Steve List (and any others who stepped it up while on the streets). As you can see there was well beyond just a few people that made this event a success!

This is all I can come up with for now and I think I'm all out of breath! Sorry for such a long email but I had to get it all out to honor all the efforts that were made for our 9/11 Sylmar Beautification Day! I must say that although this was a great effort, there is always room for improvement. We must acknowledge we only covered a few main areas. There are many more areas that need our TLC! Let's remember the force we were able to rally in a three week period and the amount of work accomplished in three hours! Let's keep the momentum going.....until the next **SYLMAR BEAUTIFICATION!!!!**

Much Love and Gratitude,

-Javier Lujan

P.S. Please forward to anyone I may have missed!