

## **DAILY PROJECT DIARY**

By Don Larson

### **Tuesday, October 11**

General trash pick-up. This was to acquaint them with our street. We collected about forty (40) bags of trash and leaves. They found a very dangerous Drug Kit with needles and drugs ready to go. It was immediately apparent that these people are genuinely happy to work and are good at it. They are, in fact, the best working group we've ever had. At the end of this first work period we had breakfast at Joyce's Coffee Shop.

### **Wednesday, October 12, 2016**

At 8 AM, we had breakfast at Joyce's for fourteen (14). After a quick breakfast, we go to the sidewalk and review the work project for that day. This work day was spent mopping the hand painted sidewalks end-to-end and washing all the yellow furniture, fire hydrants and hand painted trash cans.

Twelve (12) mops and six (6) buckets for the sidewalks and four (4) one-gallon pails for all yellow fixtures. We used two (2) gallons of Simply Green cleaning solution - City approved. Again about two hours total time. Then, we walked to the SFV Rescue Mission for some talk. The post-project talk time is very important to work out the many issues each participant is dealing with. This is usually directed by Jim Brown and Wade Trimmer. At the end of the talk, we review the next day's work.

### **Tuesday, October 18**

The group was two hours late due to problems out of our control. Our clients were right on time, but the van had problems. A few of our clients get here under their own power. So, after breakfast for the two that were on time we went to work. It was not as planned, but we had to complete the task laid out. A gas drilling auger was rented to dig fifteen (15) holes in the empty sidewalk planters on Reseda near Plummer.

We completed for two full hours on digging, with the two punctual team members. It is not easy, but it's fast. After the rest of the team arrived at 10 AM, we went to work planting fourteen (14) Birds of Paradise and one (1) tree. Finished work at 11:30. Back to Mission for the post-work talk. Another great work day.

### **Wednesday, October 19**

Team was late again by an hour. We had three guests for breakfast. Andrea Alvarado, Northridge Sparkle Founder, Nicole Bernson, Deputy Chief of Staff for CD 12 and Semee Park, former Legislative Deputy with CD 12. They spoke to the group during breakfast about the program and the ultimate goal of having the participants placed in jobs.

This day of work was devoted to pruning and trimming trees and plants. Weeding was performed where necessary as was the general maintenance of planters, sidewalks, gutters, and the Bike Path, north of Nordhoff up to Plummer and back again. Six (6) new hand pruning clippers were purchased as were two (2) big branch tree loppers. We collected about thirty (30) bags of debris.

### **Wednesday, October 26**

Today we washed and cleaned all the Yellow Furniture and hand painted Art Trash Cans. We also mopped all the hand painted sidewalks, again. Even for 10 people this is a 2 hour job. This always includes trash pickup. But today we were able to finish the cleaning of the alleys behind Reseda Blvd on the East side. A few shop owners came out and brought water, sodas and granola bars, talked with us and thanked us for the good work.

We started work at 8am and ended the street work at 11am. We used 2 gallons of Simply Green cleaning product. A good work day. I should add that we all started out the morning at Joyce's Cafe for breakfast. At the end of the street work we all walked back to the Mission for our general talk. It was decided that everyone would now show up for work under their own power - by bus mostly. They are all looking for the opportunity to meet the other workforce agencies soon.

### **Tuesday, November 1**

This is the first week that we are requiring the crew to get to Northridge on their own. It worked. In fact most were early. A quick breakfast for all and we started work on time at 8am. Split the group in two. Small group of 3 went for a good long walk up to Plumber and back to collect trash. 15 bags collected in all. Trash group circled around and found the main group working alongside the city working team who are presently landscaping the center median on Reseda at Parthenia. The team spent the morning working on the embankments, trimming and weeding. Most importantly we have cleared the concrete gutters at the bottom of the embankments of dirt and debris. Hard shovel and pick kind of work but the end product is well worth the effort. At 10am we all walked back to the Mission to work out some issues of training and transportation. Sparkle will now buy tap cards for bus and train tickets.

### **Wednesday, November 2nd**

We were able to begin work at 8am after a quick breakfast at Joyce's Cafe. We spent 2hrs working around the underpass. We have cleaned and cleared out the complete concrete draining gutters along the sidewalk at the bottom of the dirt embankments. Today we moved to the south side of the bridge and turned the corner on to Parthenia. That bus stop area just at Parthenia has always been very dirty, but today it is clean and clear. I divided the team into 2 groups. One team pulled and cut all of the big nasty green tumble weeds off of the embankments on the Parthenia corner. Made two big stacks of these weeds and asked CD12 for some help to take it away. Sanitation will soon dispose of it. We also did some light clean up in the center median with our LACITY crew, who are working on our landscape and flag pole project. All and all I continue to be very proud of the team we have put together for this project. Everyone is happy to go to work and they feel good about what they are doing. At 10am we all went back to the Mission to talk over the issues.

### **Tuesday, November 8**

This morning we moved around the corner on Reseda Blvd to Parthenia and finished another 100 yards of the gutter at the bottom of the embankment. We also worked hard to clean up the bus stop at that corner. With the dirt cleared away the sidewalks are free of rocks and trash. It's a hard job but worth fixing. At the end of our digging and cleaning I sent the whole crew up the embankment to pick up trash on the bluff above. The entire area has turned a corner. It is clean and walkable.

Several other issues have come to my attention from this crew related to their homelessness. Many will stay up all night, maybe collect cans, maybe looking for self-medication. It's a tough life but this crowd has stayed together now for 5 weeks. They work hard. Today I had one young guy throw up from his bad habits but kept working. He is getting better and he says that. The work is healing them in so many ways. I can see it. Tomorrow we wash and clean the yellow furniture and mop the painted sidewalks.

### **Wednesday, November 9**

We are now repeating some of the jobs we did in the first 4 weeks, looking for different work leaders to step out. About half the group is ready to lead. The other half easy to follow the lead. We worked on the straight forward jobs of mopping the painted sidewalks, washing down all the yellow furniture including the art trash cans and replacing the liners. I separated the team into 3 working groups and appointed the lead. It worked out well. The leaders enjoyed the respect and the work went smoothly and on time. I continue to hear from the group about their concerns for employment at the end of the program at the end of November

**Tuesday, November 15**

We finished clearing the brush and much of the gutter on Parthenia at Reseda. Only had 4 crew members, but we got a lot done in 2 hrs. Our after talk was interesting. We had 3 visitors from another council office. They asked Wade if they could come and observe. I was SO HAPPY to meet them in the underpass across from our new Flag pole. They were very impressed with all our work and hope to duplicate in North Hollywood.

**Wednesday, November 16**

Today was a good day of work, but there have been some adjustments for some health and childcare issues. Due to a scheduling conflict, our after talk was cancelled. This made a change for the street work resulting in a much easier trash patrol and planter clean up. So it was an easy two mile walk for all.

We worked on details on the street. Clean edges. Pulling down any illegally posted signs. Tidy is the order of the day. Everyone was present, but I am making lighter duty work adjustments for 2 or 3 people. So our day was spent on the details of our street. It looks great.

**Friday, November 18**

Report Addendum Friday morning. 1) The advantages of having all the extra hands available for work on the street gave us the opportunity to get so much more done. You can not underestimate the value of a steady work force for just a few hours a week. I was clearly able to work ahead of the regular maintenance load and dive into other labor intensive projects, especially around the underpass. We have removed more than a hundred bags of trash from that area and made great progress over the whole area. (We removed some 30 drug needles and bags of hard drugs from around the tracks and underpass.)

We not only made a clear difference to the Reseda Blvd Great Street but also around it in the alleys and on the tracks. I am very proud of this team and the good work produced. And this adds up to my second point. 2) The end result of the work produced also made a change in personal character and general mental and physical health issues. For some the pace of the work made them aware of how out of shape they had become and that continued use of drugs and alcohol were now in the way. They were looking forward to the work and wanted to be physically and mentally ready for it. Their own testimony become inspirational to the rest of the group and made some interesting changes in character. (We actually got one of our members into a drug and alcohol facility at the Tarzana Medical Center.) 3) Many different stories began to emerge about sobriety and responsibilities. This is what we were after, but this 8 week program cannot be the end, but the beginning of a new life for them.