

On Saturday, evidence of community love for our planet was out in full force on the streets, in the hills, the valleys, the schools, the parks, the parking lots and along the waterways of Pacifica as individuals, families, school children and businesses rolled up their sleeves and picked up trash, pulled weeds and planted. This year the Pacifica Beach Coalition's Earth Day efforts were dedicated to the California Gray Whale.

The number of 2011 volunteers expected in Pacifica was 10,000. While the day's volunteer head count along with the amount of trash and recyclables removed will be forthcoming in your Pacifica Tribune — this article focuses on some of the individuals donating their care to the earth.

Ron Ragland, a Master at Coastside Masonic Lodge, headed up the group of volunteers in the alleyway behind Pacific Manor Plaza.

"This is my fourth year out here for Earth Day and I do this because I love this city and I like to see it clean," Ragland said. "This year about 95 percent of what we are picking up is cigarette butts, along with a car seat, a car jack and then miscellaneous litter such as Starbucks cups and McDonalds wrappers." Volunteer leader Helen Nicely explained why she was cleaning up the Mussel Rock parking lot.

"I live near Mussel Rock and all my friends come here," Nicely said. "I've brought my dogs here for seven years. The area is a wonderful resource for people who like hiking, or paragliding, or walking their dogs or just enjoying the beautiful view. The type of trash we get here is food wrappers, cigarette butts, condoms and broken glass. Because of that glass, my dogs have needed a lot of work on repairing their feet. Many of us come out here frequently to clean up and we have also found bullets in couch cases, which the police department has been made aware of." Along the promenade of Sharp Park Beach, Shelly Reider headed up a group of IBL students who have adopted the Sharp Park Beach. She was also joined by a number of adult volunteers.

"I'm here specifically to help the IBL students," Reider said. "It's a way to help the community to contribute and to help prevent litter from going down our storm drains and out to the ocean where it affects marine wildlife along with the environment in general. I am a Pacifica Beach Coalition volunteer every year and always, no matter the location, cigarette butts are the number one item. Here we also find bits of paper, cans, bottles and little pieces of Styrofoam. Styrofoam next to never breaks down and unknowingly wildlife, especially marine wildlife, ingests it." Along Lakeside Drive, Kevin O'Rourke and a buddy loaded up their bags with trash.

"I just moved here a little while ago but I know about the red-legged frog who lives in a creek nearby," O'Rourke said. "I was riding my bike in this area the other day and I saw a pond with a whole bunch of junk in it. And that's why I'm here today — I want to do my part for Mother Earth." In the Mori Point area, Marisa Ryan worked with other volunteers from POOCH (Pacifica Organization of Canine Helpers).

"Jana Lane is the chairperson for our group out here today and we are happy to be involved with keeping our city clean," Ryan said. "We are picking up trash, which includes the dog poop that others have left behind. Some of us have brought our dogs today. We are very much about promoting responsible dog ownership and good canine citizenship." Todd Ewell started his Earth Day cleaning up around Rockaway and then headed up Fassler.

really beautiful place and I like to keep it clean. Sure I would rather be surfing — but this is important. Here we pick up a lot of cigarette butts. We have also found tennis balls and shoes and things that might have blown out of the back of trucks as they head up the hill." Christina Romero grew up in Pacifica and she was volunteering at the Cabrillo site, where retrieved garbage and recycling was weighed and tallied, and trash was separated for recycling and compost.

"Every year I tell myself I will go out and help on Earth Day and I never do," Romero said. "I'm the assistant manager at Palmetto Organic Grocery and my friend Deirdre Finnegan (Vice President of the Pacifica Beach Coalition), shops there. She asked if I would be here today, and I couldn't say 'no!' But I'm really glad to be a part of this." As promised, baseball great Rugger Ardizoia, age 91, was at the Cabrillo site logging in the names of the groups and individuals and the weight of the garbage, recycling and compost they brought in.

"This is my third year and I meet a heck of a lot people," Ardizoia said.

Among those that Ardizoia met was one of the younger volunteers, 4 year old Malika McClain who arrived with her bag filled with plastic bottles and trash. Both Malika and Rugger agreed that helping Mother Earth was extremely important.

So many others were caught in volunteer action including Pacifica Mayor Mary Ann Nihart, Pacifica Resource Executive Director Anita Rees, the members of Brownie Troop 62050, filmmakers Steve Brown and Bob Twigg, and 95-year-old Dante Santora who, along with Rugger Ardizoia, is a member of The Baseball Old Timers.

"Pacifica is a beautiful place," Santora said. "And Rugger and I are honored to be a part of this day." San Mateo County Supervisor Adrienne J. Tissier (Fifth District) offered her thoughts on the day's events.

"I came here to see what Pacifica does in the way of volunteerism in cleaning up their community," Tissier said. "And I am overly impressed with the number of volunteers and the commitment in this community to make sure that it is a great place to live, work and play by keeping it a clean and healthy place — and it is wonderful."