



*More than 130 members of the Triton Family gathered for the Service Day activity at Ross Elementary. Photo credit: Xavier Bailey*

## Tritons Give Back with Day of Service

### More than 130 volunteers show pride at Ross Elementary

Grabbing a quick snack and a fresh white volunteer T-shirt, more than 130 members of the Triton Family, including alumni, students, staff, children and more enjoyed their last few minutes in the shade. For the next two hours, volunteers of all ages would spread mulch, build planter boxes, and restore two murals with a fresh coat of paint—all as part of Alumni and Community Engagement's San Diego Promise.

The Service Day event kicked off Sunday morning with Armin Afsahi, associate vice chancellor and chief alumni officer for Alumni and Community Engagement, asking the crowd to imagine the positive impact that alumni, students, staff, and their vast network of friends and colleagues could have on the San Diego education community.



*Councilman Chris Cate (center) joined UCSD Alumni President Jerrilyn Malana (left) and Associate Vice Chancellor for Advancement Armin Afsahi (right) at the Service Day event, part of the San Diego Promise. Photo credit: Xavier Bailey*

“Nothing gives me greater pride as an alumnus than to see the greater Triton Family support our efforts in local schools through service,” said Afsahi. “There are so many ways the UC San Diego community can impact the promise of a higher education by partnering with our local schools. Together, we can make a difference.”

With the rollout of Chancellor Pradeep K. Khosla’s Strategic Plan, one of the goals that emerged was to cultivate a diverse and inclusive university community that challenges itself to take bold actions to ensure learning is accessible and affordable for all.

The San Diego Promise, a sustained commitment to education in local K-12 schools, was developed by Alumni and Community Engagement to connect campus and community partners with alumni and contribute to student success. Events started in the fall with “An Evening for Educators” at Morse High School and continue to gain enthusiasm from volunteers who share their unique talents and expertise through tutoring, classroom presentations, school beautification projects, and more.

Jerrilyn Malana, president of UCSD Alumni, the university’s alumni association, was one of several volunteers who stenciled buildings with the seven principles from Dr. Stephen R. Covey’s *The Leader in You*, a program that the school has adopted.

“Our institution touches many lives. We are the beneficiaries of a world-class education, and it’s incumbent on our students to give back to our communities,” said Malana. “This is just one small way, locally, that we can make a difference as part of the San Diego Promise.”

Ross Elementary has about 350 students, nearly all of whom participate in the Free and Reduced Price Lunch program. About 200 students are English language learners, and many students attend both before and after-school programs, from about 6 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Rosemary Cruz, principal of Ross Elementary, saw the service project as an opportunity to give her diverse student population a more nurturing environment that fosters academic success.

“I keep hearing about ‘pride’ today. That’s what we want for our kids. That every day that they step foot on our campus, they are very proud to be here, and that they become the leaders of tomorrow,” said Cruz.

Volunteers of all ages formed groups and performed varied tasks such as spreading mulch and building planter boxes for a beautiful new garden, or restoring murals with a fresh coat of paint. The school’s fading red handball walls were also repainted a vibrant blue.

With upbeat tunes keeping energy high, and plenty of water to keep them hydrated, the smiling volunteers worked proudly and seemed unfazed by the hot sun. San Diego City Councilman Chris Cate, who volunteered his time at the event, lent his hands to shoveling mulch in the new garden.

“I believe in making sure that we are doing what we can to move San Diego and our neighborhoods forward, and part of that is by doing our best to look after each other,” he said. “That’s something that we hope to instill in others throughout our district and the city—that when everyone comes together, they can do a lot of great and amazing things.”

The Service Day event was a partnership with Alumni and Community Engagement, EducationCorps, Facilities Management, the UC San Diego Reading & Math Tutor Program, and Volunteer50.

This spring, volunteers with the San Diego Promise will participate in more education-based outreach activities—learn more about how you can contribute at [alumni.ucsd.edu/sdpromise](http://alumni.ucsd.edu/sdpromise).



*Volunteers gathered mulch for the school's new garden. Photo credit: Xavier Bailey*

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