

Crafton Elementary celebrates new planter surrounding 100-year-old eucalyptus tree

By Kristina Hernandez, Redlands Daily Facts

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REDLANDS, Ca – A 100-year-old eucalyptus tree at Crafton Elementary is now surrounded by Cougar pride.

On Monday, the school held a ribbon-cutting ceremony on the school quad for a new planter adorned with tiles created by students, Crafton families and local businesses.

Each tile is different but all do two things — spread school spirit and help raise funds for campus programming.

“We’re hoping to make this into a nice reception area for Crafton parents and our students,” said Principal Patti Buchmiller. “The tree has been always special to us, but this made it even more so.”

The tiles were purchased through a PTA fundraiser, which has netted about \$3,000 so far. Monday’s ribbon-cutting signaled the first phase of the project. A second phase is expected to take place soon, said Amy Strong, a PTA member and former Crafton parent.

Students, families or businesses who purchased a tile were invited to TuckerWorks Art Studio in downtown Redlands to work with Lisa Tucker, the shop’s owner. For the first project phase, about 80 tiles were created.

Tucker said working with project organizers and designers was a lot of fun, especially since she, too, is a former Crafton parent.

“I think once you’ve become part of the Crafton family, you’re always part of the Crafton family,” she said. “I love working with kids, so this was a lot of fun for me. Plus, I love watching the artistic process take form.”

Daltile, a company specializing in tile, stone wall and flooring, provided materials, while Tucker provided additional materials found at her shop.

Tile work was installed in mid-May.

The new tile work and planter replaces a deteriorating planter that had surrounded the tree, which an arborist determined was planted around the time the school opened in 1888.

Seeing the need to replace the fixture, the school received help from the Redlands Unified School District and launched the fundraiser to improve the ambiance, Strong said.

“It’s a very old tree that we love and it’s kind of an iconic piece of the school,” she said. “We knew (the planter) had to be as nice as the tree we were trying to save.”

Buchmiller estimates the second phase of the project could be installed in the 2017-18 school year.

Tiles range between \$60 and \$200.

To learn more about the project, call the school at 909-794-8600.