

# DAILY PILOT

## Volunteers freshen up Save Our Youth facility

Nonprofit youth gang prevention program gets some help from SOY alumni and community members.

February 09, 2013 | By Anthony Clark Carpio



Members of the National League of Young Men and Save Our Youth help clean and paint at SOY in Costa Mesa on Saturday. (SCOTT SMELTZER)

She never thought she would return to the place that gave back so much to her and to the Costa Mesa community, but for Angel Aragon some things were just meant to be.

"The last time I was here was in 1997," said the 34-year-old Costa Mesa resident about the nonprofit organization Save Our Youth's facility behind Rea Elementary School. "I didn't know this place still existed."

Before she knew it, Aragon was accompanied by her husband, children and about 60 volunteers from the National League of Young Men and helped the youth gang prevention program repaint their office and move furniture Saturday morning.

Children, teens, parents and members from both SOY and NLYM spent the day repainting doors, cabinets, office walls and cleaning various rooms in a beautification project, said Vicki Wadman, vice president of philanthropy for NLYM.

"Community service is very important to me," said Kyle Zimmerman, a 16-year-old NLYM member from Newport Harbor High School. "We're pretty fortunate in our lives, especially in Newport Beach, so sometimes it's good to come down to less-fortunate areas and help out."

Zimmerman, a two-year member of NLYM, said he couldn't think of a better thing to do on a Saturday morning and was happy to give back to the community.

"Why play video games when you can come and help some kids' lives," he said.

While Zimmerman swept the back portion of SOY's gym, others grabbed brushes and rollers to help paint doors and walls of SOY's offices.

It's because of Wadman that Saturday's community even came to fruition.

Knowing her involvement with NLYM, Wadman was approached by SOY board member Mary Cappellini's brother-in-law three months ago and asked her if she knew any NLYM members willing to help train the boys at SOY's gym, Wadman said.

Wadman decided to visit the facility and upon arrival decided she would do more than send a few volunteers to the nonprofit.

She initially wanted to help paint their front room, but Newport Mesa Unified School District had already finished the job before she could gather volunteers from NLYM, Wadman said.

But SOY operations manager Silvia Rosales told her that more could be done and the two organized a community event people could participate in, Wadman said.

"I was a little stressed out about these small rooms and I asked my painter that was painting my daughter's room to help me make a supply list," she said.

When Wadman's painter discovered NLYM was helping repaint SOY's facilities, he told her his children were SOY alumni and was willing to do anything to help, she said. He, too, helped paint the offices Saturday morning.

She then took her list to Home Depot and was assisted by Aragon, who works for the paint department.

Aragon, too, was surprised to find out that the youth gang prevention center was being given a touch up.

"It just brings back memories; the things we used to do and the rambunctious trouble-making," Aragon said.

She thanks SOY for everything the program has done for her and would have sent her children there had she known it was still live and functioning prior to participating in Saturday's event.

"They want to change your life. This is what they were out to do," Aragon said. "They volunteer to tell you what you can do with your life...and they would help you."

Aragon is convinced that running into Wadman wasn't a fluke and believes fate is what brought her back to SOY.

"This is something that has been there for everybody," Aragon said. "Things like this are always supposed to happen. [Programs] like this should never struggle. We should always be there, especially if you've been a part of it."



(SCOTT SMELTZER, Daily Pilot / February 9, 2013 )

Bobby Briggs, 15, with the National League of Young Men paints a ceiling at Save Our Youth in Costa Mesa on Saturday.

(SCOTT SMELTZER, Daily Pilot / February 9, 2013 )

Timmy Strader, 17, left, Campbell Woods, 18, right, and Angi Evans, back, all members of the National League of Young Men help clean the floor at Save Our Youth in Costa Mesa on Saturday.



(SCOTT SMELTZER, Daily Pilot / February 9, 2013 )

Andy Strader, 14, and his mom Camille, both members of the National League of Young Men help clean the floor at Save Our Youth in Costa Mesa on Saturday.



(SCOTT SMELTZER, Daily Pilot / February 9, 2013 )

Members of the National League of Young Men help paint at Save Our Youth in Costa Mesa on Saturday.