



# The Ceres Courier

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## 500 turn out to Love Ceres

• Church based effort attracts workers from all walks of life

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Approximately 500 volunteers turned out under cool overcast skies to pull weeds, pick up trash, clean up parks, visit rest homes and deliver cookies to firefighters Saturday morning for the first annual "Love Ceres" event.

"It was unbelievable," said Becki Nicholes, who organized the event with her husband, Fire Chief Bryan Nicholes. "For our first time ever doing it it was awesome. People from every walk of life showed up. I get choked up thinking about it."

Work crews tackle the weeds and debris in the flower beds of the roundabout at Fourth and North streets Saturday morning during the first annual Love Ceres event.

The event was sponsored by Ceres and Modesto churches and carried out by members who attend them as well as other community members and the city of Ceres. Bryan Nicholes said 676 signed up in Ceres, far exceeding expectations of about 175 persons.

"It was just awesome, it was a great outpouring," said Nicholes, who is also Ceres Fire Chief. "We got a lot of stuff done."

The group gathered at 9 a.m. at the Community Center for prayer and instruction. Crews were dispatched for work assignments all over Ceres. Most of Ceres' parks were cleaned up while a weed pulling crew of about 113 worked properties opposite the Community Center and in the city roundabouts. Approximately 25 Boy Scouts troop 9 members guided by Brandi Meyer went to the Howard Stevenson Grove at Ceres River Bluff Regional Park to clean up debris and paint benches.

Others went to visit with senior citizens at Ceres Christian Terrace and the Hale Aloha Convalescent Hospital. Some went to chat with seniors while others painted the fingernails of ladies with polish while another played the harp.

"One lady commented that she had not had her nails painted in years," said Becki Nicholes. "The crews did such a super job working together," she added.

Volunteers also helped assist elderly and disabled residents trim their yards and other household chores.

"One elderly lady at Ninth and Lawrence was in tears," said Bryan. "She couldn't believe people would show up to mow her lawn and pick up tree debris that fell on her lawn from the recent storms."

Others donated blood, while others donated food and toys. A bin at the Community Center was half filled with food collected for a Ceres church food bank and lots of toys for the Stanislaus County Foster Parent Association.

"I think that project was a complete success," said Bryan.

A number of uniformed Ceres firefighters spent the morning with children in the Tiny Tots baseball program.

Another crew spent time working at the Faith Home Teen Challenge Ranch.

One group stayed at the Community Center to offer prayer support for the workers.

The event was initiated by the Nicholes's, who attend Big Valley Grace Church in Modesto and learned about the Love Modesto which was initiated in 2007. Since the couple lives in Ceres, they asked if the effort could be expanded for outlying cities like Ceres. The church decided to promote a Love Ceres event as well as Love Escalon and Love Riverbank all on the same Saturday. Ceres churches joined in as well. Modesto church leaders were surprised at the numbers who turned out in Ceres, said Becki.

Another Love Ceres day will be planned for June 25. Persons interested in the jobs offered during Love Ceres may sign up through its website, [www.loveceres.com](http://www.loveceres.com) or <http://ceres.lovemodesto.com>.

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