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Ability First Helps Mayor's "Million Trees LA" Event

Where there is a will there is a way and a Girl Scout from Granada Hills made it happen

By **Ed Crowe**
West Valley News

The day was just right, the sky was clear and blue, the temperature was mild and the sun was shining bright. The ideal setting for planting trees. How about 5,000 trees in the Valley.

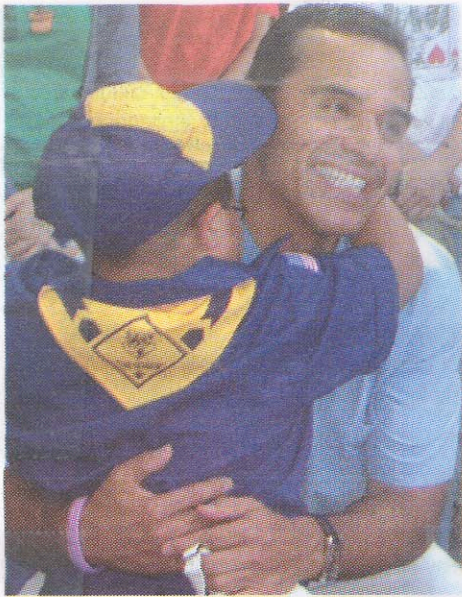
Althea Gaffney, a senior Girl Scout from Granada Hills was the name recommended to **Tessa Charnofsky**, West Valley Area Director from the Office of Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa. She could help Tessa find a location and round up volunteers to plant the first batch of her stated goal of 5,000 trees in the San Fernando Valley.

On Saturday, August 4th, Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa's "Million Trees LA" program, in conjunction with the Girl Scouts of the San Fernando Valley, planted 20 trees on the grounds of the AbilityFirst Paul Weston Center in Woodland Hills. In addition to the tree planting,



Ed Crowe / Crowe Marketing Design

Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, accompanied by senior Girl Scout Althea Gaffney (Center) and Jeffrey Richards, Center Director of Ability First, happily informs the attending public about the positive record the City of Los Angeles has when it comes to environmental issues.

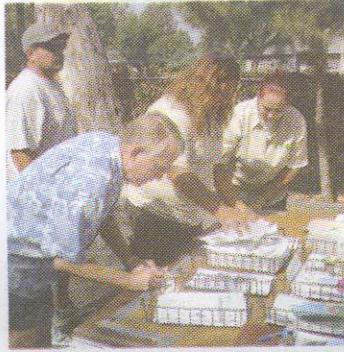


there was information available on recycling and the opportunity for community members to adopt trees. At least 200 trees were given away.

Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa praised the efforts of senior Girl Scout Althea Gaffney, in contacting **Jeffrey Richards**, AbilityFirst Center Director, to allow the trees to be planted in front of their facility; and for going the extra mile in her Granada Hills neighborhood putting up signs to get 40 of her friends and neighbors to help plant and adopt a variety of beautiful trees.

AbilityFirst in Woodland Hills provided the ideal setting for getting the Valley community involved behind Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa's "Million Trees LA" initiative to plant one million trees in the City of Los Angeles over the next several years.

AbilityFirst Paul Weston Center offers



Local residents came out to adopt a tree. Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa helps plant a tree at AbilityFirst.



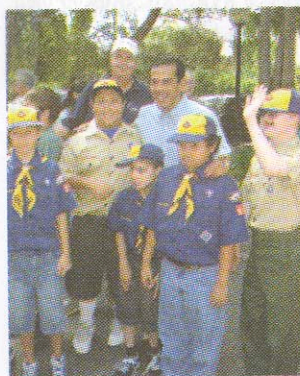
programs for children and adults with developmental disabilities, such as autism, cerebral palsy, Down syndrome, and epilepsy. The center serves the San Fernando Valley region of Southern California, including the communities of Woodland Hills, West Hills, Reseda, Tarzana, Encino, Van Nuys, Sherman Oaks and Studio City. The center features two computer labs, a children's learning lab, and an accessible outdoor play area.

Nurturing a greater sense of community and developing a common purpose is what the San Fernando Valley is all about.

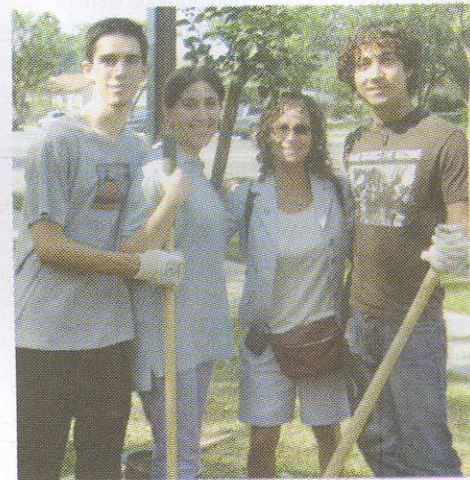
What **Tessa Charnofsky** from the Mayor's Office did, in reaching out to a local neighborhood council about getting the community inspired about planting trees in the Valley (and subsequently meeting **Althea**, the senior Girl Scout from Granada Hills who was looking to get involved in a project that would have a direct impact on the community) created that sense

of common purpose that brought many people together.

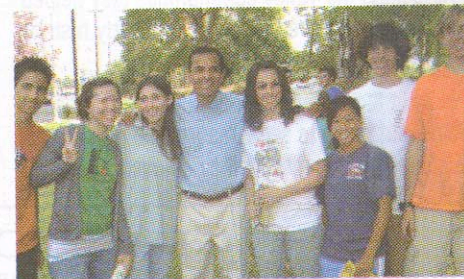
Inspiration for all of this cooperative effort came from Mayor's Villaraigosa "**Million**



Trees LA" initiative, and he came out to Woodland Hills, the morning of August 4th,



Justin Hallquist, Althea Gaffney, Tessa Charnofsky, and a volunteer take a short break for a photo-op.



Mayor Villaraigosa poses with Althea and her friends.

to cheer the volunteers and help plant a tree.

It is amazing what a vision for a greener Los Angeles can do to bring a community together.

Make your tree one in a million! Register your newly planted trees and make them count!

Visit www.milliontreesLA.org or call 3-1-1 for more information.