



Armijo High School football players volunteer at the new school garden, Tuesday, Aug. 21, 2019. (Robinson Kuntz/Daily Republic)

Teens spruce up Armijo's garden for open house

By [Amy Maginnis-Honey](#)

FAIRFIELD — Volunteers spent the past two days helping Armijo High's Garden of Hope prepare for its showcase at the school's open house next month.

The 2,400-square-foot plot is the dream of Sylvia Herrera, a 21-year teaching veteran at the school.

The idea was planted in her mind a few years ago. She credits principal Sheila Smith for her support in the venture.

Brothers Isaiah and Isaac Powell were there early Tuesday to help out. Isaiah, who will be a junior, also helped out in the garden during the spring semester.



Armijo High School football players plant flowers in Armijo colors at the new school garden, Tuesday, Aug. 21, 2019. (Robinson Kuntz/Daily Republic)

"I like the outside," he said of returning to volunteer. "I like the beautiful plants."

He did a school project on the three barrels that are used to collect water for the garden.

Helping out has been a growing experience for him as well as the plants.

"I learned you don't have to be cooped up and you can enjoy nature for what it is," he said.

It was Isaac Powell's first time pitching in. He has some background in agriculture: The family has two peach trees in their yard.

The Garden of Hope has several purposes, Herrera said.

Teaching healthy habits is among them. She hopes students will come to think about opting for a piece of fresh fruit over a bag of potato chips.

All grades are welcome to help. But digging in the dirt is a reward, Herrera said.

High school gardeners will also get to see nature at work, from planting the seed to a full blossom or piece of fruit or vegetable.

Harvested crops are given to Armijo students in need.

Herrera also hopes some of the students will pay it forward and start a garden at home and share their bounty.

Herrera picked an artichoke from the garden Monday, looked up a video on how to cook it and prepared it for dinner.

Sustainable Solano and Home Depot have been major supporters of the garden that's near the school's library and media center.

"We started with three little containers," Herrera said.

Now, she has an outdoor classroom setting complete with seats and benches carved from trees.

The school also has the Lettuce Grow Garden Club that meets every other Thursday.

Several departments have stepped forward to help, Herrera said. The Art Department painted the rainwater barrels. The football team helped out Tuesday.

Herrera also gardens at home. She has big plans for the garden. One goal is for it to yield at least 713 pounds of food in its first five years.

She also wants to pen a bilingual children's book about the garden.

You can learn more at <http://sustainablesolano.org/project/armijo-high-school>.

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Amy Maginnis-Honey joined the staff of the Daily Republic in 1980. She'll tell you she was only 3 at the time. Over the past three decades she's done a variety of jobs in the newsroom. Today, she covers arts and entertainment and writes for the Living and news pages. She also covers Suisun City and general assignment. Reach her at 427-6957 or amaginnis@dailyrepublic.net. Follow her on Twitter at www.twitter.com/amaginnisdr.

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