

Students Transform Desolate Courtyard Into Whimsical Outdoor Classroom

Students from Team Everest at Alan Shawn Feinstein Middle School performed a beautification project in the school's courtyard, which will allow classes to use the unique space for outdoor lessons.

Posted by [Lauren Costa](#) | July 9, 2013



100 sixth grade students from Team Everest at Alan Shawn Feinstein Middle School wrapped up their school year with a ceremony celebrating the Grand Opening of the outdoor classroom and common area that they created from the overlooked and overgrown courtyard in the center of the school.

The student-driven idea was presented to Team Everest teachers who helped them formulate a plan and organize donations, supplies and parent volunteers to make students' vision a reality. The goal of the outdoor classroom was to create a fun, relaxed and creative environment that not only improves the ASFMS community, but also protects local wildlife like birds and butterflies.

Students, teachers and volunteers worked hard leveling surfaces, spreading mulch, planting flowers, repainting the surrounding walls, hanging a variety of wind chimes made of recyclables, clearing off an overgrown cement patio, constructing a butterfly garden and installing picnic tables that will allow classes going forward to reserve the space for outdoor lessons and special events. To address their wildlife goal, Everest students partnered up to assemble, paint, and decorate 50 wooden birdhouses which they hung throughout the courtyard. In addition, they added several bird feeders and constructed a butterfly garden to attract a variety of butterflies to the area.

During the grand opening event, which began with a ceremonial ribbon-cutting, many Team Everest parents stopped by to witness the transformation for themselves. Students presented their team teachers with memory books to thank them for helping and supporting them in the endeavor, as well as

parents for volunteering their time and resources, without which, the project would not have been such a success.

Teacher Lisa Lachance livened up the morning when she led a team sing-along consisting of several patriotic songs such as "America the Beautiful", "My Country Tis of Thee (America)", "Grand Old Flag" and "This Land is Your Land", before performing the Billy Gilman tune, "Hero", herself. Several students presented poems written during the school year, before the crowd broke off to explore the new space.

Everest students Madison Cote, Ellie Dionne, Megan Greenstein and Megan Marigold, who were the original driving force behind the undertaking, expressed their excitement about seeing their ideas come to fruition and creating a space the the school can enjoy for years to come. They shared their hopes that future sixth grade classes will add their own touches to the whimsical area, perhaps in the form of gardens or painted murals.

"We're excited that this part of the project is done, and we want to see people use it next year," said Madison.

"This is a big space so it was kind of overwhelming when we first started," said Ellie. "Next year we want to talk to the new sixth graders about how they can add to it, and if we show them how much we did, hopefully they'll think 'if they can do it, we can do it'".

Team Everest Resource teacher Kerri Silverman praised the students for their drive and dedication to completing the project which will benefit the entire school for years to come.

"The kids took it upon themselves to start small and beautify our school, not just for themselves and other students, but also for wildlife by making it animal-friendly," she said. "They worked so hard and we're interested to see what kind of ideas future classes can come up with for their outdoor classroom."