

ShareFest, Big Sunday events to put volunteers to work this weekend

By Melissa Pamer Staff Writer

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This coming weekend is an important one for altruistically minded local residents: two major events will put thousands of volunteers to work on hundreds of projects.

On Saturday, Torrance-based ShareFest Community Development will send workers from churches, schools and local nonprofits to clean, beautify and generally improve sites across the South Bay and Harbor Area on its seventh annual Workday Saturday.

"It's pooling community resources to have a tangible impact on people's lives," said ShareFest spokesman Jeremiah Dobruck.

And Big Sunday, a Los Angeles-based group that says it runs the largest regional service event in the country, will put volunteers to work all over Southern California throughout the weekend.

Projects in both efforts range from repairs at L.A. County's Carson animal shelter to painting and weeding at the San Pedro Math Science

Technology Center, and from restoring the historic Morrell House in Redondo Beach to cleanup at Cabrillo Beach.

"There's something for everyone," said Rachel Schwartz, spokeswoman for Big Sunday. "It's not just about the well-heeled folks going down and helping the poor. It's about everyone helping everyone."

The main focus this year for ShareFest is more than a dozen projects at Banning High School in Wilmington, including the construction and landscaping of a large new quad area - an improvement that's estimated to be worth \$400,000.

The 35-year-old campus

became a focus when some 600 students and parents showed up at the school to paint murals for ShareFest last year.

"When we got that kind of response, it motivates us. These guys are looking for a way to better their community," Dobruck said.

A huge flagpole was delivered to the campus on Thursday, said Assistant Principal Windy Warren, who has been working on the project all week.

"We had 600 last year, we could have a thousand show up" this weekend, Warren said.

ShareFest, founded by a coalition of churches in 2004 and incorporated as an independent

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nonprofit in 2006, estimates it has accomplished \$4.6 million worth of projects during its workdays - largely through donated labor and material.

Big Sunday, which has grown exponentially since it began in 1999, has a focus of getting residents into other neighborhoods, crossing social barriers. Schwartz said that's in part to counteract the fabled "balkanization" of the Los Angeles area.

"The key goal is community building through community service," Schwartz said. "It uniquely cuts across all these barriers in Los Angeles."

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How to help

Two organizations are hosting volunteer projects all over the South Bay and Harbor Area this weekend. Sign up at sharefestinc.org/workday2010 or my.bigsunday.org. To reach ShareFest by phone, call 310-626-8106. For Big Sunday, call 323-549-9944.

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