

Volunteers “spruce up” dozens of Orange public schools

Lauren Roth, Orange County schools, School budget cuts, School finances — posted by Iroth on November, 9 2012 12:27 PM

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A girl "spruces up" at Walker Middle

Cutbacks in landscaping staff for Orange County schools has meant that school greenery sometimes gets overgrown on the district's 184 campuses. Over the past few weeks and finishing up this weekend, volunteers performed a "Fall Spruce-Up" at nearly thirty of those campuses.

The students, teachers, parents and community members mulched, weeded, pruned bushes and cleaned the pavement, with most "Spruce-Up" events happening at the end of October. Since many schools didn't participate this time around, there will also be a similar "Spring Clean" event at other schools in May.

"This effort demonstrates the pride our students have in their schools," OCPS Superintendent Barbara Jenkins said. "It also demonstrates how teachers, students, and their parents value the facilities paid for by Orange County taxpayers."

The schools participating in the Spruce-Up included Apopka Elementary, Apopka Memorial Middle, Apopka High, Citrus Elementary, Clay Springs Elementary, Dommerich Elementary, Edgewater High, Fern Creek Elementary, Frangus Elementary, Gotha Middle, Hidden Oaks Elementary, Jones High, Lakeville Elementary, Lake Whitney Elementary, Lockhart Middle, Maxey Elementary, Meadow Woods Elementary, Moss Park Elementary, Olympia High, Pershing, Elementary, Piedmont Lakes Middle, Rolling Hills Elementary, Sunrise Elementary, Walker Middle, Wekiva High, Wheatley Elementary, Windermere Elementary and Zellwood Elementary.

"Shrinking budgets have stretched our abilities to maintain school grounds," explained School Board Chairman Bill Sublette. "Our minimal crews are kept busy with the bare essentials of keeping lawns mowed, trees trimmed and buildings structurally safe. These volunteers appreciate their schools and know a little elbow grease can make the difference in how their neighborhood campus looks."