

# Hermosa Beach Patch

## 'Summer of Color' Breaks Cycle of Gloom

This lifeguard tower art project brightens up the foggy landscape.

Posted by Rena Ragimova September 07, 2010

Without the public art program that transformed lifeguard towers, it would have been a very gray summer indeed.

Since May, bright flowers, abstract geometric shapes, waves and colorful fish have adorned lifeguard towers that are usually painted a simple light blue shade. Through the thick morning (and all too often, afternoon) fog, the splashes of color have livened up the landscape.

This public art project, the biggest in the U.S., is entitled "Summer of Color" and spans the shoreline from Point Vicente in Palos Verdes all the way up to Leo Carillo State Beach in Malibu.

It is an offshoot of a worldwide project called Portraits of Hope, which was founded by brothers Ed and Bernie Massey as a way of creating public art while also building collaborative relationships in a community.

This particular project drew upon the contributions of nearly 6,000 children in schools and hospitals, and the help and guidance of more than 2,500 volunteer adults. For six months before the installation, Portraits of Hope brought together teams of adults to paint the towers on site.

"People from my office helped out with these," said Danny Bilikas, 40, who works at Merrill Lynch in Manhattan Beach. "A bunch of them came out here, got assigned a tower, painted it and put up the panels."

The project leaders also worked with the Braille Institute, Special Olympics, rehabilitative centers and other organizations on the project. Because many of the young participants have physical or mental disabilities, special brushes and sometimes even specially formulated textured paint were used.



As a result, the kids were able to have their work seen by millions of Los Angeles area beachgoers at the peak of tourist season.

"It's awesome to have some more color out there," said Sharkeez promoter Adam Van Waardenburg, 34, who recently saw a news report on the project.

But what do the lifeguards themselves think?

Redondo Beach lifeguard Patrick McGoldrick, 34, likes the bright paint clashing with the fog. "It's nice that you can see some color in this bummer of a summer," he said.

He said that the freshly painted panels don't always fit right when you try to close up the tower at night, but he doesn't mind. "It's something we could fix if we wanted, but it's all right. This is just for the summer and will be gone in a couple of months."

In October, the panels will be taken down from the lifeguard towers and sent to many of the participating organizations and schools to grace their interior and exterior walls. Some of them will even be shipped to Haiti for rebuilding efforts there.

When the panels are removed, the bright paint on the rails will be also. Back to baby blue, and blending in with the scenery.