



**August 17, 2011**

**STEPPING UP  
HOME DEPOT VOLUNTEERS HELP REPLACE STOLEN BLEACHERS**

**BY BEATRIZ E. VALENZUELA STAFF WRITER**

APPLE VALLEY • The heat of the day was still bearable at 7:30 a.m. when Sal Aceves and a team of volunteers began working at the athletic field of the Academy for Academic Excellence charter school Tuesday. Aceves, department supervisor for the Home Depot on Bear Valley Road in Victorville, learned through a Daily Press article that someone had stolen the aluminum bleachers from the school during summer break. Upset by the situation, Aceves decided to act. “I took (the story) to my manager, and since we’re always doing community projects I told him I thought we needed to do something for the school,” Aceves said. He and his team of volunteers will be anchoring the metal frames left behind by the thieves into concrete slabs and replacing the metal slats with wooden ones. The work will be a temporary fix until money can be raised to purchase metal slats, Aceves said.

Students and staff learned someone made off with most of the metal slats and one entire set of baseball bleachers when they returned to school earlier this month. Devastated by the loss, valued at about \$8,000, school officials began to plan events to raise money to replace the bleachers.

But once the story went public, people began to contact the school and staff has been overwhelmed by the outpouring of support.

“We’ve had people as far away as Pittsburgh calling us up,” athletic director Scott Gormley said. “But to have these guys from a business as large as Home Depot willing to help us out is great. We couldn’t ask for anything more.”

Gregg Boehm with Watson Land Company out of Carson pledged to donate \$ 6,000 toward replacing the parts or bleachers, Gormley said.

“We’ve also had parents and grandparents willing to help with the money,” school spokeswoman Cheryl Thompspon said.

Most likely, the slats and bleachers were stolen to be sold for scrap metal, San Bernardino County Sheriff’s officials said. Thieves would likely only get a small portion of what the bleachers actually cost.

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JAMES QUIGG,  
DAILY PRESS  
LAYING A  
FOUNDATION: Tom  
Neavill, left, places  
concrete forms for  
bleacher foundations  
at the Academy for  
Academic  
Excellence's softball  
field.

HELPING OUT: George Ghafari, right, scoops dirt as a crew of Home Depot employees prepare forms to pour  
concrete footing for bleachers at the Academy for Academic Excellence's softball field.

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