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Girl Scout helps line Hacienda Business Park with American flags Amanda McKenzie's patriotism keeps flags flying through July 4

by Nicole Stahl

Amanda McKenzie has always loved the distinctive wreaths that decorate the Hacienda arches during the winter holiday season. So when it came time for the life-long Pleasanton resident to pick a project for her Girl Scout Gold Award, the iconic image -- "everyone knows it," she enthuses -- came to mind as an inspiration.

"I'm artsy, and I like to have different decorations for different holidays," said the freshman at Amador Valley High School. The holiday she had in mind was the Fourth of July, and the project she developed focused on encouraging a wave of patriotism throughout the community. In particular she envisioned an American flag display in the park.

McKenzie fleshed out her proposal and approached Pleasanton City Councilwoman Karla Brown, who referred her to Hacienda. In collaboration, McKenzie and Hacienda came up with the idea of hanging 3-foot by 5-foot flags from the lampposts along Hacienda Drive from I-580 to West Las Positas Boulevard, and on Stoneridge Drive from Hopyard Road to Santa Rita Road. A total of 50 flags -- "one for each state," McKenzie notes -- were installed by Flag Day, June 14, and will be taken down after the Fourth of July.

"My goal is to get people excited about patriotism," she said. "I would like all Pleasanton residents to put out an American flag on July 4th."

Following the seven steps to the Gold Award, the highest achievement in Girl Scouting, McKenzie crafted a campaign, giving it a snappy name -- Pleasanton United in Patriotism, or PUP -- and creating a red, white and blue banner with a little dog as a logo. The banner is on display on the booth she hosted at the First Wednesday Street Fairs in May and June and will host again July 3 to reach out to the community.

Her natural gift for promotion is in evidence not just in the artistic appearance of the booth but in the assortment of children's activities available, from temporary flag tattoos to coloring pages. The craft projects keep the youngsters amused while McKenzie urges parents to put out a flag over the upcoming holiday. McKenzie also prepared a flier for the Pleasanton Downtown Association to distribute and has arranged for PUP to be promoted by Pleasanton Mayor Jerry Thorne.

PUP is not McKenzie's first venture in community activism. For her Girl Scout Silver Award, in seventh grade, she put on a talent show to raise money for a piece of equipment for the nonprofit Hoofprints on the Heart in Livermore.

In her "free" time, she is a springboard diver on the Amador varsity diving team and this summer will run an art camp for children.

While undecided about future career plans, ultimately McKenzie hopes to combine her artistic talent and flair for promotion in the business arena, building an impressive resume to offer future employers.

For more information, pick up a PUP flier at Pleasanton's Friday night Concerts in the Park or at the Farmers

Market on Saturdays.

--Nicole Stahl writes for the Hacienda Business Park newsletter. This article appeared in Hacienda NETWORK on June 18.

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