

# Whittier teen gains leadership experience in Eagle Scout project

By Sandra T. Molina, Staff Writer

WHITTIER - Sixteen-year-old Christopher Gaarder went back to his kindergarten years when thinking of a project to earn him the rank of Eagle Scout - the highest level in Boy Scouts.

The Whittier resident, who is a member of Troop 985, planned the landscaping project at Murphy Ranch Elementary School, which was completed earlier this year.

"I contacted the principal at the time, Steve Dorsey, and met with him and we eventually decided that my project would benefit Murphy Ranch for a long period of time," said Gaarder.

There were several planning meetings with the grounds crew from the district.

The project, which consisted of removing existing soil from an empty lot in front of the school, replacing the soil with new compost and planting 38 new bushes, was completed over two days and involved 82 volunteers. A Cinnamon Camphor tree was also planted.

"Chris has had the opportunity to learn and demonstrate leadership skills and increase his confidence by serving in various leadership positions," said his mom, Susan.

The younger Gaarder agreed with his mom's assessment.

"Boy Scouts offers unique opportunities to gain invaluable leadership skills that I would not have otherwise acquired," he said. "Having led a group of my peers has given me a unique perspective on leading for the future."

Only 2 percent of all Boy Scouts attain the rank of Eagle. Gaarder was following in the footsteps of his father, Tom, who received the rank in 1954.

"Scouting has many role models that the boys look up to, both in the community and in the country," Tom Gaarder said. "It prepares young men for the future by teaching them moral lessons and practical skills they can use in everyday life."

Christopher Gaarder, who's earned 37 merit badges, will attend the 100th Anniversary of Scouting National Jamboree at Fort A.P. Hill, Virginia next July.

