

Ojai Valley

neighbors

Linda Harmon

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Mike Daley, who owns an Ojai landscaping company, was born and raised north of Chicago.

Daley moved to California to help his parents settle in Ventura in 1987, and moved to Ojai in 1990. Daley, who started work in a nursery at age 15, had worked on construction for many years, until the earth drew him back.

"I've always enjoyed working with the earth," said Daley, who worked for an Ojai landscaper contractor, started his own business, Daley Landscaping, Inc., two years later. After 16 years he has an eight-man crew working north to Goleta and south to Santa Monica.

Daley has been married for three years to his wife, Elana. The two met while driving in an auto club race at Willow Springs Raceway.

"It's kind of an unusual way to meet your wife," said Daley, who now owns three Mustangs,

down from five.

Today, the proud father of 2-year-old Samuel, lets his son totter around as he works, or should I say volunteers.

"I unplugged it," said Daley, referring to the electric shovel he is using to plant trees on this Saturday morning. "I want him to touch things."

Samuel has come with his mom to watch dad volunteering, planting 11 trees for a neighbor as part of Ojai Trees' fall planting.

Volunteering is something he does a lot. Besides donating time to Ojai Trees, the nonprofit volunteer tree planting organization, Daley also participates in the Adopt a Highway litter removal program, removing litter along highways 33 and 150.

"I wanted to do something to give back to the valley. At first, it was just my dad and I doing it," said Daley of his involvement, "but now my crew and I go out on the weekends; they like the extra hours. Now when I'm driving and I see



Mike Daley

litter, I feel like somebody has littered my road."

Together, Daley and his wife both give time to the Ojai Community Nursery School, a 50-year-old cooperative school, which their son attends. They also volunteer together as members of Ojai's California Emergency Response Team. After completing an eight-week course, the Daleys took part in the CERT emergency readiness drill last month.

"It a great thing," said Daley. "It makes you aware how fragile our society really is and how we all can get together and take care of our own neighborhood."

During this week of Thanksgiving, I'm glad there are neighbors like the Daleys.