

## Canyon Middle School staff, students get unique Valentine's gifts

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Balloon Man LLC in Canyon Lake ensured Valentine's Day was very uplifting at Canyon Middle School.

Submitted photo

Canyon Middle School students and faculty were lighter than air this Valentine's Day when they were surprised with a very unique gift.

The campus ditched the usual bouquet of flowers for a heartfelt arrangement of floral balloons.

Whether it was a single stemmed helium rose or a stunning display of flowers, one couldn't deny the weightless feeling of love and appreciation throughout the school.

"Any little thing that can come into the school that's just a surprise for our students and staff is just great," said Alina Smith, senior associate at Canyon Middle School. "Anything that can make somebody smile or makes somebody's day is going to impact them, and that's exactly what it did."

The special gifts were made possible by balloon maestro Bill Allen, owner of Balloon Man LLC in Canyon Lake.

It all started when he wanted to do something unique for the holiday and decided to partner with schools to see if they were interested.

Canyon Middle School answered the call and the balloon man, along with his staff, got to work producing a number of options for parents to give their children and employees to gift one another.

Gifts ranged from \$5 for a long-stemmed rose to a \$15 candy cup topped with a festive heart-shaped balloon flanked by smaller balloons of pink, gold or red.

"It's ... about wanting to give everybody an option to do something a little more unique," Allen said.

Altogether Allen and his team made about 260

roses, which were made with animal balloons, and 100 candy cups with a few floral centerpieces thrown in.

The balloons were delivered to their recipients, who didn't have a clue what was going on until they began handing them out, toward the end of the school day.

"Some of them were embarrassed to have that attention brought on them, but they were all smiles and full of giggles (wondering) who's gonna get one," Smith said.

Allen gave back 10% of sales to the school in hopes it would be used to benefit the arts programs.

This isn't the first time the balloon man has lent his expertise to the community.

With help from nearby businesses, Balloon Man erected a balloon arch at Mountain Valley Middle School using one he had on hand then outfitted with more to make it big enough for buses to pass through.

The small token of appreciation to some of the district's most valuable and hardworking employees was just the start for the business looking to help support the district, especially the kids.

"We need to be in the schools, knowing what's going on and helping them to promote a solid education," Allen said. "(We want to) utilize our skills as business leaders, as community leaders, to help these kids grow up to be the same — to be community leaders."

Comal ISD administrators, board members and parents of students have expressed that community outreach and involvement has been one of the district's greatest strengths.

Allen, who has future holidays on the brain, wants to continue working with the schools to provide balloon services that benefit the campuses.