

Press Release

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Rattlesnake Tank paint recognizes high school seniors

FALLBROOK – For anyone who has ever wondered why the water tank up the hill from South Mission Road is painted with numbers each year, here’s a little Fallbrook history. Every year, the Fallbrook Public Utility District changes the paint numbers on “Rattlesnake Tank” to reflect the year the incoming seniors at Fallbrook High School will graduate.

On Monday, FPUD staff will paint over the “11,” changing it to “12,” to welcome the graduating class of 2012.

The reason for the annual external makeover? For more than 30 years, FPUD has painted the tank as the ultimate tribute to Fallbrook’s high school seniors. And as much as this recognizes the class of Fallbrook’s future, it has more to do with Fallbrook’s past.

In the years before we began painting the tank, seniors – taking on a dare – would climb up the hill in the middle of the night, scale the tank and then paint it themselves. Since it’s a long way down, our staff of more than 30 years ago became concerned for their safety.

So we installed a fence around the tank. But that didn’t deter the lively bunch: They just began jumping the fence in the middle of the night. So we struck a deal: If they would stop risking their safety for the dare, we would paint the tank every year to commemorate them. And we’ve been doing it ever since!

It takes district staff about 6 hours to paint the 25-foot-tall numbers onto the 3.6 million-gallon tank. Since the tank shares the space with Verizon’s cell tower, we make arrangements with Verizon to power-down the tower. We give Verizon two weeks’ notice that we want to paint, and they give us a block of time, Monday from 7 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., for our painting crews to hoist themselves up to the tower and get to work.

Rattlesnake Tank was built in the early 1950s and is one of FPUD’s oldest and most visible water tanks.

