Students earn right to paint principal’s truck pink

By Kathryn Reed

See that pink Ford F-150 cruising around South Lake Tahoe. It belongs to an elementary school principal. It’s not that he can’t afford a professional paint job, it’s just that his students are so smart.

Sierra House Elementary School Principal Ryan Galles smiled and shook his head as Girl Power, peace signs and hearts were painted on the hood of his 1992 truck.



Principal Ryan Galles, pink shirt, watches his truck become bright pink. Photos/Kathryn Reed

Pink paint was everywhere as most grades, including sixth-graders who came back Sept. 22, took brushes to every open spot except for windows, chrome and tires.

Malia Alexander, a fifth-grader, took her time to fill in the brown parts on the side that still showed through.

Pedro Chavez and Jesus Zepeda, sixth-graders, climbed into the bed of the truck to reach the roof.

Galles was trying to convince himself the original brown paint mixed with the pink created a camouflage look of sorts. He wasn’t convincing anyone within earshot.

This is the vehicle he drives to work most days.

“The paint is magenta, but it’s drying pretty pink,” Galles said.

The students were rewarded with this bit of mischief because they exceeded expectations on the statewide test scores that were just released. Last year he had to shave his hair into a Mohawk because these South Tahoe kids did so well.

“It’s getting harder and harder to top the previous year,” Galles said. “I’ve told the kids to put on their thinking cap for what to do next year.”

Galles’ philosophy is education needs more ways to motivate kids. The thought of painting the principal’s truck did the trick this year.

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