

TUESDAY JANUARY 18, 2011

Hard-working holiday

Service projects honor the legacy of Martin Luther King Jr.

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Monday's observance of the birthday of Martin Luther King Jr. in Lancaster was anything but a day off.

More than 320 local volunteers from local colleges, businesses and community organizations fanned out across the city to participate in approximately 30 small service projects.

They joined hundreds of thousands of volunteers across the country in the nationwide Day of Service campaign, which promotes volunteerism in honor of Martin Luther King Jr. Day.

Monday's activities kicked off with about 650 guests attending the annual breakfast held at the Lancaster County Convention Center.

"Celebrating Dr. King's legacy each year gives us a refreshing reminder to recharge and renew our commitment to compassion," said Cheryl Holland, executive director of Crispus Attucks Community Center, which hosted the breakfast. "It's reminiscent of how far we've come, as well as how far we still must go."

Award-winning journalist and author Joyce M. Davis was the keynote speaker at the breakfast.

"Where are the Martin Luther Kings of today's world?" Davis asked the audience.

"He called upon his countrymen to a movement based on his philosophy of equality and that this nation could rise to the highest ideals of forgiveness," she said.

Students at School District of Lancaster did not have classes scheduled on Monday.

But that didn't stop a group of 20 students from honoring King's legacy by joining forces to clean classrooms, windows and storage areas at Bright Side Opportunities Center, 515 Hershey Ave.

"This is a time for people of different ages and backgrounds to work together for the same common goal," volunteer and former SDL board member Susan Thomas said.

A mother of three, Thomas led the cleaning effort. She brought her children along to work at the center.

"If we don't train them to be involved now, they will not do it as adults," she said.

Nearby, at the YWCA, 110 N. Lime St., 160 children gathered to learn about the life of the civil rights leader from playwright and artistic director Amanda Kemp.

"We have to plant the seed of service and contribute to the whole instead of concentrating in self-absorption," Kemp said.

"We tend to celebrate the dream but not the work, and there needs to be a sense of being part of something larger," she said.

A few blocks away on East Chestnut Street, a group of volunteers that partnered with the American Red Cross of the Susquehanna Valley walked in the morning chill, knocking on doors to promote fire

safety.

"This is about going out of your individual circle. It's about getting together to work on something to benefit everyone," volunteer Diamond Edmonds said.

At Lancaster House North, 335 N. Prince St., a group of older adults worked with students from Millersville University and representatives of the Threshold Foundation in a sewing project to create handbags out of recycled fabrics.

"I'm grateful for an opportunity to work with people from a different background and culture, as we come together for a good cause," Millersville student Kendora Laney said. The bags will be sold at an exhibition on April 23 at the Crispus Attucks Community Center, 407 Howard Ave.

"This should encourage us to live his dream not only this day or week, but to make efforts to share the aspirations of Dr. King year-round," Holland said.

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