

HeraldTimesOnline.com

Volunteers help local agencies during United Way Day of Action

By Dann Denny
April 6, 2011

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Balmy weather and a blue sky made things more pleasant for the more than 200 volunteers who swept across Bloomington Wednesday — painting, planting, cleaning and landscaping at 25 different local social service and childcare agencies.

More than 90 of the volunteers were associates from the combined group of Old National Bank and Monroe Bank, who volunteered at 12 nonprofit organizations.

It was all part of the 16th Annual United Way Day of Action. Here is brief look at what took place at three of those agencies:

WHEN: 10:15 a.m.

WHERE: Monroe County United Ministries.

WHAT: One volunteer from University Information Technology Services is reading to a class of four -year-olds.

Hal Jankowski, a business manager with University Information Technology, is reading a book called “The Tiny Seed” to a group of four-year-olds sitting cross-legged in the Otter classroom.

The book traces the life of the seed, from its initial stages under the earth to its transformation into a flowering plant. The energetic children sit in surprising silence, paying rapt attention to the story.

“We love having visitors come read to the kids, particularly males,” said Rebecca Stanze, MCUM’s development coordinator. “Many of our kids come from single-parent households and crave a positive adult male role model in their lives.”

Jankowski reads a number of books to the children, such as “The Surprise Garden” and “Planting a Rainbow,” each of which has a gardening or springtime theme. Then he helps them plant marigold seeds in a greenhouse.

“We’re hoping that by Mother’s Day the marigolds will have sprouted so the kids can take them home as Mother’s Day gifts,” he said.

WHEN: 10:45 a.m.

WHERE: Girls Inc.

WHAT: Eight Rogers Group employees are doing brush clearing and flower bed weeding at the club.

Ed Entrekin, Andrew Effinger and Trent Carney are unclogging a drain under the sidewalk that is preventing water from draining from the club's parking lot to the street.

"We were cleaning away leaves and debris from that area when we discovered the clogged drain," said Entrekin, an accountant with Rogers. "We like to help out whenever we can. It's part of our corporate culture to give back."

Erin Policinski, Girls Inc.'s program director, said her club, like most small non-profits, relies heavily on community volunteers.

"This Day of Action brings in people with areas of expertise that can really help us," she said. "These guys diagnosed our blocked drain for us and are unclogging it."

In addition to beautifying the club's outside campus by clearing brush, weeding flower beds and trimming tree limbs, the volunteers cleaned the club's gym, benefitting the various sports programs that take place there.

WHEN: 11 a.m.

WHERE: New Hope Family Shelter.

WHAT: Nine volunteers from Printpack and six from Vectren are doing renovation work at the shelter.

Working with the intensity of an ant colony, the 15 volunteers are pulling up flooring and carpeting, removing old fencing and rotted wood from the property, cutting tree limbs, getting rid of trash from the basement, and pressure washing the front porch.

"They far exceeded our expectations," said Kerry Greer, a New Hope volunteer who is in charge of renovating the house. "They brought us skilled labor and showed a lot of initiative in overcoming several obstacles."

Randa Powers, construction supervisor with Vectren in Bloomington, said the volunteer workers are used to hard manual labor.

"When I took up the linoleum floor and said, 'What do you want us to do now?' they said, 'I can't believe you did it that quickly.'" she said. "We had the tools and the expertise to do a lot of work in a short amount of time."



Hal Jankowski reads "The Tiny Seed" to a group of four-year-olds at Monroe County United Ministries. Dann Denny | Herald-Times



Andrew Effinger (left) and Trent Carney unclog a drain at Girls Inc. Dann Denny | Herald-Times



Hunter Starling, of Printpack Inc., sweeps the floor in the basement of a house at 409 W 2nd Street during the United Way Day of Action. The house will be used for the New Hope Family Shelter.
Jeremy Hogan | Herald-Times

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