

September 14, 2017

HOW CHANGE DAY CHANGED ME

With almost 1,600 students, staff and faculty involved in a hands-on effort to actively change the community around them, a wide breadth of projects received attention on Change Day. This momentous step of Andrews University towards a mission of service did not occur without the guidance and hard work of key individuals, two of whom are Lorraine London Polite and Desmond Murray.

Lorraine Polite has been with Andrews University for three years. She currently works as project manager for the provost, as well as with programming and operations for the School of Graduate Studies. She stated that “the goal was to start to create a culture of service,” and on Change Day, that mentality was jumpstarted.

“We did 62, 63 sites!” she exclaimed, “If we could touch 63 sites in the first year, it could truly be Andrews moving forward in service. It takes intentionality, passion, joy

and it takes time. But we could be known as a community of service.”

In line with this idea of a bigger collective, Lorraine Polite and her team are part of a larger group known as the Community Engagement Council, headed by Desmond Murray, associate professor of chemistry, who has been teaching at Andrews since 1995. According to Murray, “The Community Engagement Council is a way for Andrews to become more deeply engaged, more deeply connected, with our neighbors.”

An initiative of the Office of the Provost, the Community Engagement Council has been in place for nearly two years. The council has a number of subcommittees, each overseeing a different aspect of outreach, such as education, health and wellness, diversity, entrepreneurship, and interfaith relations. One of these subcommittees is the “Change Day” or originally, “Service Day” committee.

In the creation and implementation of

Change Day, Murray also experienced a fair number of obstacles. “If you’re trying to change anyone, any group, any culture, there are going to be obstacles. We know that from history. That’s nothing new,” he said.

“Our motto says ‘Seek Knowledge, Affirm Faith, Change the World.’ We are trying to change the entire culture of Andrews University; we are trying to change ‘Change the World’ into not just words, but actions,” Murray smiled.

For those interested in being involved in change, it begins with a daily mindset. Murray emphasized, “Moving forward, we want to build on what we have accomplished in the past year. We are inviting more people to get involved and to understand why we are doing this. Everyone is needed in helping to create this new Andrews spirit.”

by Brandon Shin, IMC student writer

Students from Scott Moncrieff's ENGL 115 class reflect on their experiences



HOW CHANGE DAY CHANGED ME



Amber Kwon (*freshman, pre-nursing*)

When I woke up and saw the thick fog draped outside my window, I definitely reconsidered participating in Change Day. Instead, I shook the thoughts away as I got ready for my day. I love being able to participate in service projects like this because it gives me the opportunity to focus on the people around me instead of myself. In college, it's easy to get caught up with doing things for your own benefit, but I knew I really needed step back from that mentality.

I volunteered at Ruth Murdoch Elementary, mostly because I missed being around small kids. I was assigned to help out the 5th grade teacher, Mrs. Bailey. Although I didn't get to interact with the kids, I enjoyed doing the behind-the-scenes work of a teacher. All I did was write down computer usernames/passwords for the students, put them on index cards, and fill out a few IOWA test assignments. To me, I felt like I didn't accomplish a lot, but as I was walking back, I considered what a big impact our group as a whole made. I realized that if a large group of people came together and each person contributed only a little, all of that will add up to something huge. Here we see the power of teamwork and a different perspective behind the verse in Matthew that says, "When two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."



Zoe Myers

(*freshman, animal science*)

I volunteered for Change Day at the Animal Control Center in Benton Harbor. I cleaned cat cages. There were many cages, and the work was very strenuous, but enjoyable as well. Most of the cats were either strays or drop-offs from owners. They were mostly older cats and, sadly, that means it's harder to get them new homes.

One cat in particular just broke my heart. She was completely shut down in that little cage, stuffing her head into the back corner and not budging from that spot. There were other cats that were dying for some affection. As soon as you would open their cage, they would bang their heads against your hand and flop on their backs in desperate need of love. I would have loved to take them out one by one to snuggle with them, but there was a lot of work to be done, so I had to limit the petting to only a few strokes per cat.

I am extremely grateful for participating today. Not only did I get to interact with the cats, I know that I helped them as well, and that's such a good feeling. Seeing the differences in the way certain cats reacted to being caged showed how certain situations can really affect them. It displays that cats have emotions of sadness and happiness, and animals in general need to be cared for and loved. I think I will definitely be returning to volunteer at the Animal Control Center.



Angelina Leacock (*sophomore, biology*)

My Change Day experience was surprisingly enjoyable. I arrived to the flag mall at 8 a.m. I approached table after table of options, but everyone was turning me down because all of my first choices were full. I ended up joining the group for Harbor of Hope church in Benton Harbor. We entered the church and I was one of the staff that helped to clean the kitchen. The kitchen started out as a huge mess. I was the washing machine cleaning all the dishes, and I cleaned all the dishes for about an hour. At the end of Change Day I left seeing the kitchen sparkling, and I was wet from head to toe. My heart was filled with joy when the pastor expressed his exuberant joy towards us.

DUDU KAKHU

(*freshman, international agriculture development*)

"They are here! They are here!" shouted out these vibrant little boys leaping out of their chairs, and then suddenly the whole class at MLK Elementary in Benton Harbor burst into cheers. Little faces exploded with happiness, little feet tapped and little hands clapped with excitement. With the great energy already in the room, my group and I elevated the mood by telling tales and fun facts about our cultural backgrounds, in my case about my home country of Botswana. With every new word they learned in my language it became a new cool thing and with every picture of the safaris and cities displayed their eyes beamed with amazement. When I paused for a moment to absorb everything, my heart rushed with this impeccable joy. With those few hours we didn't have much to say to those young kids, mostly from rough backgrounds, but we left them with simple personal experiences and words of encouragement. With only that, I believe it made a great impact. As Abhijit Nasr said, "There is no religion better than love, no color better than the color of happiness and no language better than the language of compassion."



Kanani Grady
(freshman, animal science)

When I first walked into the 2nd grade classroom at Mars Elementary School, I was a bit out of my comfort zone. There in front of me were 25 random kids that I was supposed to help. The two main things that I did with them were supervising their playing with “Little Bits” and helping them write a letter to their parents about upcoming field trips. Little Bits are basically connecting pieces that conduct electricity when attached to a battery. After just a few minutes to get myself acquainted with the strange contraptions, I received a couple kids eager to play around with them. And boy, were they smart! One of the kids, a little boy, was connecting different parts like a pro. It was hard to believe that this was only the second time these kids had played with Little Bits. While he was going to town, I worked a little more closely with a girl who had more questions than her friend. Some of the parts weren’t connecting correctly, and therefore didn’t conduct the electricity quite as smoothly as desired. However, when the little light attached to the power source finally did turn on, it was quite exciting.

Grant Drew

(freshman, medical Laboratory science)

Change Day is a new event my university is trying out that offers the students a day off normal classes to go help their community and make a change. As a student, you get to choose from many different locations to volunteer. I chose to go to the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services because the hosts looked the friendliest. I had no idea what the department actually dealt with or what I would be doing there. We were shuttled in busses over to the location we would be working at and I found out it was in Benton Harbor. I learned that the department building that I would be helping dealt with people coming from broken homes, foster children, people that needed health treatment, and people who needed protection. It was sobering to step outside my Adventist community and to see such a building. I got to work in the rooms designed for children to meet their parents under surveillance. Cleaning these rooms felt good because the rooms were perhaps the only places where a child and their real-life parents could meet. After we finished cleaning we were thanked very warmly by the staff there. I liked what I did and I enjoyed being thanked for doing it.

Joanna Martinez

(freshman, pre-nursing)

I decided to go to the Campus Ministries backpacking project. We made student planners for high school students from Benton Harbor and then backpacks for Syrian refugee children. We started with the planners and made cards to go into them. We wrote words of encouragement and thanked them for coming to our campus. Then we went

to PMC, where we were told stories of the child refugees and how they somehow escape and are on their own. It made us actually assemble the backpacks with our heart in it. The backpacks had notebooks, writing utensils, toiletries and a blanket.

The best part was when we were all gathered together in a circle around the boxes of backpacks ready to be shipped off. We took the time

Christian Van Schaik

(freshman, pre-physical therapy)

When I woke up on Change Day, I was surprised to see how much fog was outside my window. I could barely see 50 yards. I wanted to go help with beach cleanup, but after seeing the weather I was having my doubts. I decided to stick with my original plan and at the end of the morning I was glad I did. I went to Rocky Gap Park to help clean a section of their Lake Michigan shoreline. I had the opportunity to help a staff member from Andrews move some of the bigger logs that were scattered along the beach that no one else had done yet. This guy told me that whenever he went on service projects like Change Day he would try to do the one thing that no one else could do or wanted to do. As I looked around I realized that he was right: either people were not able to physically lift the logs or they had no interest in getting a little sandy. It impressed me that he was willing to take this initiative at every service project. Looking back on the morning I came to the conclusion that Change Day was meant to change me, not just for me to make a change. This staff member left a bigger impression than he realized, just by doing a simple deed, and I hope that I can pass on the statement he made through his actions.



to stop the hustle and bustle and prayed over them. We asked God to be with every single child that gets the backpacks, and that they will be blessed. We don’t know what they are going through and can only imagine. We take a lot of things for granted and this Change Day helped me realize that I am blessed to help those in need.