University Students Embark Upon Scholarship by Giving Through Service

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University students embark upon scholarship by giving through service

Andrews University—During Andrews University Freshmen Orientation Week, held Aug. 15–22, new students spent less time mulling over their college plans and anxieties and more time serving others.

On Friday morning, just three days before the start of the 2010–2011 school year, nearly 350 student and University volunteers boarded the buses and headed to various locations in the community to tackle service projects. The projects covered a wide range of needs, including yard work, cleanups, moving boxes, painting and childcare, among others.

“Volunteer service is such an important part of what the world needs,” says Charlotte Smith, events coordinator for the Office of Social Recreation & Athletics at Andrews University. “We like to expose our students to its importance their very first week on campus.”

The Volunteer Day was organized by Smith and her department’s student workers in conjunction with the Office of Campus Ministries and their Outreach volunteers. Following conversations with various businesses in the area and the Volunteer Center of Southwest Michigan, cleanup projects were created and assigned to group leaders and students. The service projects were not mandatory; and yet, nine busloads of volunteers were sent out.

Groups who chose to serve in Benton Harbor worked on projects at Six Degrees Resale Store, Child & Family Services, Consequential Minds, Kid Zone, the Orchards Mall, and several other locations in the city.

“We went to a charter school in Benton Harbor and put mulch on the playground and gravel around the building,” says Christian Tchamba, a group leader. “The man that we helped was very grateful. He said that the work usually takes 3–4 weeks to complete himself and he hasn’t had help in over two years. Everyone was willing to work and no one was complaining. It was a really good experience.”

Another group was sent to Fernwood Botanical Garden and Nature Preserve in Niles, and another still to St. Joseph to paint at the Volunteer Center of Southwest Michigan. “They did a great job painting our office, and now it looks fresh and clean,” says Debra Panozzo, adult and family volunteer coordinator, Volunteer Center of Southwest Michigan. “It was good to speak to them about volunteering and for them to support us in our effort to promote, support and connect volunteers who work to build a strong, caring community. Volunteering is a good way to fulfill the mission of Andrews University as the students seek knowledge and affirm faith in order to change the world.”

Another group got messier than most at Arthur Dodd Memorial Park in Cassopolis, Mich. Students worked along the Dowagiac River shoveling mud, building fences, staining wood, filling the playground area with wood chips, and removing trees and branches that had fallen in the river.

“The pleasure was all ours in hosting those wonderful young adults at Dodd Park...,” says Scott Wyman, director, Cass County Parks and Recreation. “Their enthusiasm and energy were so much appreciated by my staff; and to be honest, they worked so hard that I ran out of projects toward the end of the day! I am hopeful that this newfound partnership has a chance to flourish for many years to come.”

Personal service projects were also taken on, and volunteers helped local families in need by doing yard work, cleaning houses and playing with children. In Berrien Springs, students cleaned buildings at the Historical Center at Courthouse Square and completed odd jobs for the local public schools.

In the end, nearly 14 major projects were completed.

“Thank you to all of you who made this day possible and please keep our students in your prayers,” says Smith.