

MLK Day of Service, 2016 in New York

Edner Pierre-Louis

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Brooklyn, New York - Habitat for Humanity

Volunteers gathered in Brooklyn for the Habitat for Humanity “Brush With Kindness” project to brighten up the Bushwick Cornerstone Community Center with new paint and a mural of Martin Luther King’s famous quotes and to paint ceramic flower pots and building planters that would be donated to the community center and Critical Home Repair families.

Kaye Allen and Olga Mojitova, members of the National Ministry Team, spent the day painting the pots with five people of different ages and professions. Everyone came to the table with no background or experience in art. “I still felt like an artist,” said Olga, “carefully crafting a piece someone would later enjoy in their home.” Everyone enjoyed assembling wooden boxes in pairs afterwards. Each pairing competed with each other to assemble their flower box nicely, but also faster than the others. “It’s interesting how an hour activity done together can create a close connection with another human being you’ve just met” Olga observed. Volunteering even for this short time gave a sense of accomplishment and desire to do it again.



Harlem, New York - Abyssinian Development Corporation

Thirteen members of the National Ministry Team and five of their kids went to the Abyssinian Development Corporation for the MLK Day of service event called “Let’s Share Our Story: Inter-generational Celebration.” The stories shared by senior citizens in Harlem encapsulated the true meaning of the day.

The morning began with a session of introductions of the different organizations that were there to help volunteer. Then some of the senior citizens were asked to share and many of them had such incredible stories! The senior citizens shared how so many of them there walked with Dr. Martin Luther King in many of his marches. They shared how we are all able to live the way we can today because of his efforts, and how it was not just a fight for the equality and justice of all races but all nations and all cultures, as we are “all children of God.” They reminded the volunteers that like Martin Luther King even one person can ALWAYS be the change and make a difference.

One senior citizen spoke about the importance of inter-generational work and communication, specifically between seniors and youth. Our seniors are blessed to have lived through and learned from many experiences, “We can learn from each other,” she shared. “Seniors can learn from youth, youth can learn from seniors. It is so important for the past and the future to come together and work together to make a difference somewhere, somehow. I encourage everyone to open up and widen your circle of people you know. Get to know other people, young and old; learn from each other, share with each other your experiences, love one another—that’s the most important thing.” She continued to say there are more commonalities rather than differences that connect each of us; we all need to breathe, eat, drink water to live, etc., —we all come from the same God.

All the volunteers served lunch to the senior citizens and mingled about sharing stories together and

getting to know one another. Then everyone participated in fun activities like card games, dominoes, bead/bracelet making, making a vision board (making collages and putting together a “vision” of the future (using inspiring Oprah magazines). The highlight of the day was spontaneous dancing and dance offs between the seniors and the youth. Everyone had a really great time dancing together to songs both generations knew. (the Electric slide, the Macarana, etc.) Mari Ota, a member of the National Ministry Team, brought her son along. He dance-uffed with a senior lady and everyone adored him!

The day closed with two volunteers and one senior reading the MLK “I have a dream” speech. It was really moving as when it came to the end, the seniors knew the end of the speech by heart and recited the following all in unison:

...And this will be the day — this will be the day when all of God’s children will be able to sing with new meaning:

My country ’tis of thee, sweet land of liberty, of thee I sing.

Land where my fathers died, land of the Pilgrim’s pride,

From every mountainside, let freedom ring!

And if America is to be a great nation, this must become true.

And so let freedom ring from the prodigious hilltops of New Hampshire.

Let freedom ring from the mighty mountains of New York.

Let freedom ring from the heightening Alleghenies of Pennsylvania.

Let freedom ring from the snow-capped Rockies of Colorado.

Let freedom ring from the curvaceous slopes of California.

But not only that:

Let freedom ring from Stone Mountain of Georgia.

Let freedom ring from Lookout Mountain of Tennessee.

Let freedom ring from every hill and molehill of Mississippi.

From every mountainside, let freedom ring.

And when this happens, and when we allow freedom ring, when we let it ring from every village and every hamlet, from every state and every city, we will be able to speed up that day when all of God’s children, black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual:

Free at last! Free at last!

Thank God Almighty, we are free at last!