

Oakland, CA Unificationists celebrate Martin Luther King Day

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The Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service in Oakland, California is sponsored by Service for Peace and the Corporation for National and Community Service. Bill Richie, an Ambassador for Peace, and Markus von Euw, a local Unificationist, have promoted MLK Day as a day of service throughout Oakland and the East Bay for years, and have initiated many projects that are now taking place annually in various areas of the community. This day presents an opportunity for many schools to make a commitment to a year of service. The idea of completing “40 Days of Peace” also emerged from this initiative.

Bay Area Family Church Boy Scout Troop 818 and many local Unificationist families participated for a fifth year of service on Martin Luther King Day at the Morcom Rose Garden. Joined by a hundred others, volunteers beautified the rose garden, pruning the roses, weeding, and fertilizing the gardens with elephant manure from the Oakland Zoo. Mayor Libby Schaaf came to address the volunteers at the morning kickoff of the MLK Day of Service and encouraged the youth to serve not only today but throughout the year. She credited her experiences volunteering as a child as a factor that helped her become mayor of Oakland today. In acknowledgment of the many years they have served at the rose garden, our Boy Scout Troop 818 were also specially recognized by the mayor and took pictures together with her.

Next Generation Academy (NGA) again sent 30 volunteers to support projects at three locations, where they made a great impression on the organizers through their enthusiastic spirit of serving.

Johannes van Galen instructed volunteers at the Life Academy of Health and Bio Science, a high school, on how to build benches that were needed for the school grounds.

Other Bay Area Family Church members supported the effort of Councilman Noel Gallo to beautify the community. Over the three-day weekend, more than 16 tons of garbage were collected and disposed.

The projects in Oakland are conducted in partnership with Oakland Public Works, Oakland Unified School District, Oakland City Council members, AmeriCorps, Civicorps, East Bay Regional Park District, Keep Oakland Beautiful, Friends of Sausal Creek, Urban Releaf, and many other community organizations.

This year, more than 1500 volunteers turned out to service sites at the Lakeside Park Gardens at Lake Merritt, the Morcom Rose Garden, the Fruitvale District, the Peralta Hacienda Park, Brookfield Elementary School, the Sobrante Park and the Oakland Animal Shelter. A tremendous amount of work was accomplished.

In the words of Coretta Scott King, “Martin Luther King Jr. Day is not only for celebration and remembrance, education and tribute, but above all a day of service ... it is a day of volunteering to feed the hungry, rehabilitate housing, tutor those who can't read, mentor at-risk youngsters, console the broken-hearted and a thousand other projects for building the beloved community of his dream.”