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May 3, 2007

## Area opens its heart on Day of Caring

### Thousands volunteer time, elbow grease to help others

Jim Memmott  
Senior editor

Thousands of volunteers picked up rakes, hammers and saws Wednesday for the annual Day of Caring organized by the University of Rochester.

And those who weren't building and planting, scrubbing and painting, volunteered in other ways, helping the old and the young.

"I'm enjoying my day," said Ty Stewart, the director of study abroad at Rochester Institute of Technology. "I'm making a list of books to read. I'm reading lots of books."

Stewart and five other staffers from RIT were at School 22 on Zimbrich Street in the city, reading to kindergarten pupils who each got a book to take home.

The activity fit right in with the school's mission, said T'Hani Pantoja, the school principal.

"We make a big deal out of reading," she said. "Literacy is a huge deal for us."

Certainly, reading is important to Eddie Rodriguez, who's 5 and in kindergarten.

He informed Faye Modeste, an administrative assistant to RIT's vice president for academic affairs, that he likes to do his homework.

He also likes stories about SpongeBob, Spiderman and Scooby-Doo.

Employees from Xerox Capital Services were at School 22 working on improvements to the playground.

Staffers from the Center for Community Health at the University of Rochester Medical Center helped students practice their math skills at community businesses as well as to their teachers.

Karen Guidarelli, executive director of Buddies, Bridges and Brains, a nonprofit organization that connects Victorians with the city, said the day had gone well.

"The kids were just delighted," she said. "The real paradigm shift comes when people are involved eyeball to eyeball."

In all, more than 11,000 volunteers from nearly 130 companies and institutions took part in what was the 15th annual Day of Caring.

They worked on more than 500 projects.

The conditions were ideal — clear skies, brisk temperatures in the morning but warmer as the day went on.

A team from Bank of America arrived about 7 a.m. to help put up a gazebo in the Otto Henderberg Square Park southeast Rochester.

The gazebo, which arrived in pre-cut pieces, took about four hours and 30 minutes to erect — a quick turnaround volunteers claimed any expertise in gazebo construction.

"I usually just give them the money to build things," said Mardy Fox, who is in commercial real estate lending at t things."

The park is the site of neighborhood gatherings and concerts, said David Chappius, president of the Swillburg N spearheaded improvements in the area.

"Our goal is to become a neighborhood of choice," said Chappius, who has lived in Swillburg for seven years.

The money for the gazebo is from a \$125,000 mini-grant established by Bank of America for the United Way. Th neighborhood revitalization.

"A project like this contributes to the vitality of core urban neighborhoods," said Peter Carpino, the United Way's gazebo go up.

Carpino said that the value of all the Day of Caring efforts was about \$1 million.

"Contributing time in many cases is as valuable as contributing dollars," he said.

[JMEMMOTT@DemocratandChronicle.com](mailto:JMEMMOTT@DemocratandChronicle.com)



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