



resident life

Kids for King: Youth Inspired by Civil Rights Leader

Martin Luther King, Jr. once said, "Life's most persistent and urgent question is: what are you doing for others?" And on January 18, students, parents, and teachers in Pulaski, Virginia were able to answer that question with multiple examples.

In conjunction with the Beans and Rice afterschool program and CHP AmeriCorps members Kathryn Bennett and Kali Williams, middle and high school students from Meadowview Apartments spent 3 months organizing this year's MLK Day celebration with a theme of "Kids for King".



Above: AmeriCorps member Kathryn Bennett (far left) and youth residents from Meadowview Apartments in Pulaski, Virginia helped organize a day of service honoring Martin Luther King, Jr.

This year, multiple locations around town were chosen as volunteer sites, and AmeriCorps members planned, along with the youth participants, to recruit at least 30 middle-school volunteers.

The organizers

were pleasantly surprised to discover that over 60 children were interested in volunteering. To accommodate everyone, service locations were expanded to a total of 6 and volunteers were evenly assigned to sites of their choice.

“We were not expecting such a huge turnout from the kids and were really taken aback by their commitment to do service,” said AmeriCorps member Kali Williams.

Because of the volunteer turnout, AmeriCorps members were able to partner with **Pulaski County Public Schools**, which arranged for volunteers to be bused to the school and service sites for the day. **Pulaski Middle School** also provided auditorium space and a hot lunch for volunteers after their service.

In only one day, the Kids for King volunteers served many locations. At **The Daily Bread**, youth served over 100 lunches to those in need; at the **Pulaski Humane Society** volunteers assisted in cleaning the facility and cages to prevent disease from spreading to the animals. Young workers helped organize over 4,000 books at **Friends of the Library** after their annual book sale; other volunteers at the **YMCA** assisted with cleaning the gym and different areas within the center. At the **Habitat Restore**, helpers assisted with cleaning and moving furniture to make more room for more donations; and at Beans and Rice, elementary-aged volunteers made cards for the sick and infirmed at Meadowview Apartments.

AmeriCorps member Kathryn Bennett said, “The intention of this day was to introduce students to the concept of service. We wanted to help them understand the purpose of service and to recognize that giving back to the community can be a fun and rewarding experience.”

“I believe we accomplished this goal because the students want to continue serving in the community and can’t wait for next year’s MLK event!” added Bennett.

A total of 67 youth volunteers participated in the MLK Day of Service. In addition, an evening program was held to honor and celebrate the day’s volunteers and to reflect on the life of Martin Luther King, Jr.



Above: A young volunteer participates in a day of community service by coloring a get-well card for a Meadowview Apartment resident.