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Keeping the dream alive



Northeastern students and Boston youths listen to opening remarks in the Curry Student Center ballroom for the kickoff of MLK Day of Service on Monday.

January 19, 2010

With the life of Martin Luther King Jr. as their guidepost, more than 400 Northeastern students and Boston youths fanned out across a snow-covered city on Monday during the University's annual MLK Day of Service.

"Dr. King has inspired me to have a passion for leadership," said Fantasia Lewis, a Roxbury resident and graduate of Another Course to College in Brighton, who delivered the morning's keynote address in the Curry Student Center.

Lewis told volunteers briefly about her work with Sociedad Latina in Mission Hill and with My Town, which conducts tours of Roxbury.

"Anyone can become a leader like Dr. King," she said "I hope you all leave your mark on the world today."

After Sara De Ritter, associate director of Northeastern's Center of Community Service, reminded volunteers that "Dr. King walked these same streets" during his student days in Boston, teams fanned out to lend a hand at local nonprofit organizations for the day; some younger volunteers stayed in Curry for seminars on leadership and service.

Northeastern student Daniel Soszynski, who led a cleanup crew at Community Builders 'Back of the Hill elderly housing complex in Mission Hill, said he has joined previous service days at the University. "I love to volunteer," the senior history major said, adding, "It's always good to give back."

Under the supervision of building manager Julia Tonelli, the team of Northeastern students worked to organize the complex's community room.

In Malden, a team led by sophomore Mike Becker took on a variety of tasks at the Refugee Immigration Ministry (RIM), which provides services to refugees and asylum-seekers. RIM's Jennifer Guterman said she had 15 Huskies doing maintenance, assembling training booklets, preparing English as a Second Language class materials and cleaning up the computer system and donor data base. "We're a very small organization and this is a great help," she said.

While sophomore Justin White pored over a bank of computers, Becker said he had taken part in earlier Northeastern service days as well. "I really enjoy community service," the business administration major said.

The MLK Day of Service is organized by the Center of Community Service and the Massachusetts Promise Fellowship, an Americorps program based at Northeastern. The event is one of two annual service days sponsored by the University; the other happens in October.

Other service partners included Spontaneous Celebrations, St. Ambrose Family Shelter, Project Bread, YWCA Boston, the Madison Park Development Corporation, Volunteers of America and Franklin Park Apartments, all in Boston.

To learn more about the Center of Community Service at Northeastern University, visit: http://www.northeastern.edu/communityservice/

(Homepage photo: Sophomore computer engineering major Justin White begins work on Refugee Immigration Ministry's donor database on Monday during MLK Day of Service.)

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