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Students walk path of service on King Day



Northeastern University students paint a mural as part of the King Day of Service and Leadership. Photo by Mary Knox Merrill.

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On the 25th anniversary of the holiday honoring Martin Luther King Jr., about 250 Northeastern University students and other volunteers joined for a day of service projects and leadership workshops on campus and in Boston's neighborhoods.

For more than a decade, Northeastern has held the King Day of Service and Leadership, which celebrates King's life by dispatching volunteers and working with the community to create positive outcomes through service. For the past three years, Northeastern has partnered with the Massachusetts Promise Fellowship to integrate leadership workshops into the service day. The organization, which is headquartered in the University's **Center**

of Community Service, places fellows who commit to a year of service at nonprofits, schools and city agencies across Massachusetts to develop, lead, and manage youth development projects.

During the opening ceremony at Curry Student Center, John Tobin, Northeastern's vice president of city and community relations, told volunteers, "We honor Dr. King's legacy by walking on his path, by acting as he acted, and by being the change we want to see in this world." Tobin said this commitment is also an extension of the daily work conducted by the Center of Community Service.

The ceremony's keynote speaker, Esteniolla Maitre, a high school senior at Boston Arts Academy, urged participants to make service a part of their everyday lives. "Community service is not something that you do. The act of serving is something that you are," she said.

After the ceremony, volunteers dashed off to projects in four of Boston's neighborhoods. At St. Stephen's Episcopal Church in the South End, participants led engaging classes in science and dance for a host of beaming elementary students.

Northeastern senior Nadia Alvarez said this was her fifth year participating in the King Day of Service. Not only is it rewarding to connect with children in the community, she said, but the event gives Northeastern students a chance to discover the neighborhoods beyond campus.

"Students come together and learn more about the community around campus, and they can also meet new classmates and find out about other organizations that exist on campus," Alvarez said.

Back on campus, one of the service projects—organized by the Northeastern Mural Club—involved painting murals to be donated to the John Winthrop Elementary School in Dorchester and the Yawkey Boys and Girls Club in Roxbury.

Susandi Htut, a Northeastern freshman originally from Burma, continued her passion for community service by taking a paint brush to canvas. "I think this is a good way of honoring (Dr. King), and if he were alive today, I'm sure he'd like seeing people giving back to the community through service," Htut said.

The King Day of service also highlights Northeastern's commitment to urban engagement, a central part of the University's mission. Northeastern students collectively perform 110,000 hours of community service annually, and the University has built strong relationships with 200 partner community-service organizations.

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