

"Life's most persistent and urgent question is:

"What are you doing for others?"

— Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. devoted his life to advancing equality, actualizing social justice and availing opportunity for all. Nations, communities and citizens were challenged to build more perfect unions between themselves and were taught that everyone has a role to play in making America what it ought to be. With his leadership, our nation made great strides against racial discrimination and the availability of civil rights to and for all.

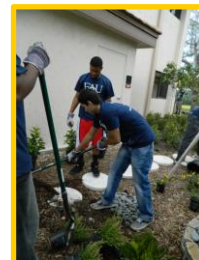
More than 40 years after his death, the examples Dr. King set continue to guide us in addressing our nation's most critical needs and issues. In 1994, Congress designated the Martin Luther King, Jr. day holiday as a national day of service. The Corporation for National and Community Service was charged with leading this effort. Taking place on the third Monday of January, the MLK Day of Service is the only federal holiday observed as a national day of service.

The MLK Day of service empowers individuals, strengthens communities, bridges barriers, addresses social problems and moves us all closer to Dr. King's vision of a "Beloved Community"



Making it a day on, Not a day off.....

January 16, 2012 marked the observance of Martin Luther King, Jr. day across the nation. Americans of all backgrounds came together in service to honor Dr. King and to build lasting change in their communities. For the majority of the working population, the MLK holiday offers a one day reprieve from the return to work after recent winter holiday vacations. However, MLK Day is also an opportunity for volunteers and AmeriCorps VISTA members nationwide to "make it a day on, not a day off", giving back to the communities where they serve. In Palm Beach County, the perfect service project presented itself at the soon to be opened, Homeless Resource Center (HRC). Through a generous grant from the Quantum Foundation, a serenity and vegetable garden was planned for the Center. AmeriCorps VISTA staff at the Homeless Coalition of Palm Beach County used this opportunity to coordinate and organize a service project planting the serenity garden at the HRC utilizing community volunteers, students and other local AmeriCorps members. Future clients and guests of the HRC will have access to the serenity garden, as it serves to be a natural world environment where the stresses of homelessness can be alleviated.



Neighborhood Debris Clean Up

As a measure of goodwill between the site and the community, volunteers were sent out into the neighboring community to clean up litter and debris. Teams of five people each, canvassed nearly two square miles of residential area in the surrounding Northwood Hills neighborhood. Neighborhood beautification occurred concurrently with the landscape renewal and planting in the serenity garden.



"Thank you for organizing the cleanup on Windsor Avenue. After the volunteers picked up, we had a neighbor trim back the vegetation in the medians, and it looks great!" — Bob Beaulieu, President, Northwood Hills Neighborhood Association



A Perfect Day for Planting!

Clear sunny skies, absence of rain, cool breezes and mild temperatures perfectly set the backdrop for the 109 volunteers, who came to the 45th Street location of the Homeless Resource Center to establish the Serenity Garden. In total, 379 native plants were given a new home at the HRC by community hands coming together in the fresh air to build upon the foundation of the Ten-Year Plan to End Homelessness in Palm Beach County. An early start at 7:00am led the all day tasks of removing grass, planting, mulching and watering. Volunteers were provided with a free t-shirt and picnic lunch for their enthusiastic contributions and efforts.



VOLUNTEERS VOLUNTEERS VOLUNTEERS!

HRC Serenity Garden planting could not have been possible without the generous help of the 109 volunteers who "made it a day on" in service. Volunteers came from Florida Atlantic University, FAU Weppner Center for Civic Engagement and Service and SAVI, NCNW FAU, AKPSI FAU, Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, South Tech Academy of West Palm Beach, three members from the Homeless Coalition Board, Literacy Coalition AmeriCorps staff, Palm Beach County Facilities Department volunteers, community and Homeless Coalition volunteers. Big thanks to AmeriCorps VISTA staff Michelle Howell for coordinating the event and all volunteer attendance.

Planting, Giving, C.A.R.E. ing....



As a result of the outreach efforts of The Homeless Coalition, AmeriCorps VISTA and Florida Atlantic University volunteers' participation, our community better understands that homelessness does not define an individual or family. It is a temporary crisis that can happen to any of us. As a community of neighbors, we can reach out, lend a hand, plant seeds of growth and find solutions. We applaud the efforts in our community to change a life for the better. Just one small item can mean everything to someone else. The generous commitment to helping is greatly appreciated!

Thank you to Publix of Palm Beach for their charitable donation of sandwiches for the volunteer lunch.

The Homeless Resource Center



For the first time ever, Palm Beach County's Homeless Resource Center will be a single point entry location to connect individuals and housing in an effort to end their homelessness. From the time a guest enters the front door, they will receive a diverse offering of quality services, referrals and a menu of housing options. All guests will have access to the serenity garden. Commemorative bricks will be laid in the walkways of the garden leaving a lasting mark by paving the way to end homelessness.



Community Partnerships and Collaborations

Thanks to a \$24,000 grant from The Quantum Foundation, the Homeless Coalition is able to establish the Serenity Garden and a Community Vegetable Garden at the HRC. Studio Sprout, Inc. landscape design abundantly contributed their time to furnish plans, design and oversee both projects. The vegetable garden planting will take place at a future time in 2012.



HOMELESS COALITION STAFF

- Marilyn Munoz, Executive Director
- Ato Robinson, Clerical Support
- Michelle Howell, AmeriCorps VISTA staff Volunteer Coordinator
- Yolanda Kennedy, AmeriCorps VISTA staff FOH/Social Media and Web
- Oudeline Narcisse, AmeriCorps VISTA staff PHC Coordinator
- John Allison, AmeriCorps VISTA staff, Faces of Homelessness



- C**ontribute our resources
- A**dvocate
- R**each-Out by Volunteering
- E**ducate and Empower

