

THURSDAY, AUGUST 12, 2010

1,500 taking day to help community

CAITLIN JOHNSTON
The Journal Gazette

Local volunteers are teaming up to work on about 55 service projects throughout the Fort Wayne area today for the 18th annual United Way Day of Caring.

About 1,500 volunteers making up teams from 45 different business and organizations will take part in service activities to better the community, such as sanitizing toys, painting rooms, washing windows and landscaping.

"I think it really helps to connect our donors and our volunteers with the community that they are trying to make better," United Way spokeswoman Mary Tyndall said.

Tyndall said the event is a little bigger than previous years, and the participants are enthusiastic to get started on their various projects. The teams met with the agencies they are helping in advance to determine what needs to be done. Often times, Tyndall said, the volunteers will add things to the list, doing more than just the minimum service project.

"A lot of the teams really go above and beyond what is expected," she said.

Trelleborg Sealing Solutions will spruce up and landscape around the Southeast Family YMCA, while the Bair CPA Group and Heritage High School Cheerleaders will paint, landscape and clean Nebraska Elementary School. Other agencies that volunteers will help with include SCAN, Safety Village and the Red Cross.

Certain volunteer groups, such as GE, have participated in the event for several years now. At times, the volunteers will take their work beyond the Day of Caring and come back throughout the year to finish or improve on projects.

"We work with a lot of these partners all year round," Tyndall said. "United Way is often that bridge between the companies, business and the social service agencies."

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BUSY DAY OF CARING



By Ellie Bogue of The News-Sentinel

Kathie Schoewle, right, of OmniSource and Pam Wolfe of the Fort Wayne Fire Department unload plants Wednesday morning in preparation for today's United Way Day of Caring project at Safety Village. OmniSource planned to install a rain garden and do some landscaping today as its project. The rain garden should help with runoff from the instruction building at Safety Village. Fire Chief Peter Kelly is glad for the help and says he has really appreciated all the efforts of past Day of Caring projects at Safety Village. It was Wolfe of the Fort Wayne Fire Department who came up with the idea for the project after watching all the water runoff at the new teaching and office facility. The Day of Caring began this morning with a breakfast at Headwaters Park. Nearly 1,500 volunteers will be involved in the communitywide service projects this year. Teams from 45 local businesses, organizations and local labor are handling 55 service projects.

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WATCH YOUR FINGERS!

GE team members Mark Rottinger, left, and Jeremy Woods build a small bridge Thursday at the Early Childhood Alliance, 516 E. Wayne St., during the United Way Day of Caring. GE was one of 45 teams from businesses, organizations and local labor handling 55 service projects.

By Ellie Bogue of The News-Sentinel



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'Caring' more than a word

Volunteers pitch in around town

AMANDA IACONE ■ *The Journal Gazette*

About 1,500 volunteers braved the heat and humidity Thursday to give back to the community as part of the United Way of Allen County's 18th annual Day of Caring.

Those volunteers were expected to tackle 55 service projects that ranged from pulling weeds to sanitizing toys at places in need of an extra hand across the city.

Here's a look at just a few of the projects completed Thursday:

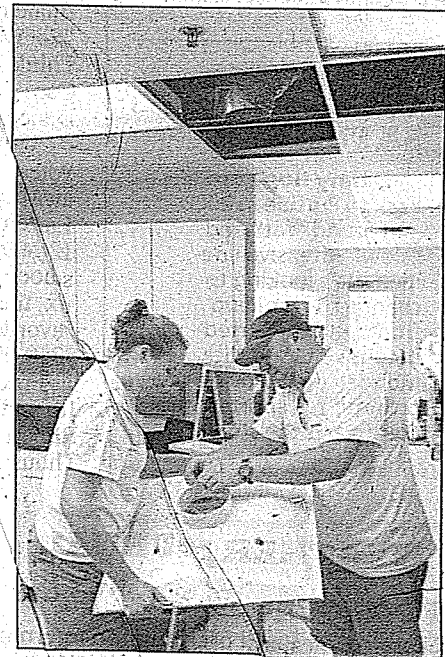
Building bridges

A group of engineers from the local motors division and other employees at General Electric dug into the mud outside of Early Childhood Alliance, 516 E. Wayne St., to clear room for a tricycle bridge.

The engineers designed the wood-and-composite structure to carry tots from the tricycle track up and over a frequently traveled stretch of lawn that had become a mud pit, volunteer and engineer Dave Smith said.

The volunteers brought their own power tools, plans and coolers to help them tackle a day's worth of chores at all three alliance sites.

GE employees try to focus their volunteer efforts on organizations that benefit children and often hold fundraisers to help. And the staff haggles with suppliers to provide appliances or child-proof fire alarm panel covers for groups GE works



Kate Katrana and Wayne Hughes of GE hang a ceiling vent in the Early Childhood Alliance building in East Wayne Street.

ON THE WEB

■ See a photo gallery from the Day of Caring at www.journalgazette.net.



Photos by Samuel Hoffman | *The Journal Gazette*

Katie Reichert of Trelleborg Sealing Solutions collects hedge clippings Thursday at the Southeast Family YMCA.

CARING

Continued from Page 1A with, said volunteer Jim Scott, an engineering manager.

"It gives employees a chance to see what the area offers," Scott said. "We're just trying to reconnect with the community. GE's got a long history in Fort Wayne, and we're still here."

A hand up

Pat Skilbred has seen homeless patients come into the burn and wound center she manages at St. Joseph Hospital for frostbite.

She was glad to learn more about a refuge for homeless families as she helped weed the grounds around Vincent House, a homeless shelter in southeast Fort Wayne.

About 55 volunteers from various divisions of Lutheran Health Network mulched, painted and even removed furniture at various Vincent Village properties in the Pontiac Street area.

The shelter has only four maintenance workers charged with tending both the shelter and its network of 32 single-family homes. And the extra hands make a big difference, said Kelley Gray, administrative assistant and housing coordinator.

Greg Griffis wanted to give back and pitched in to remove old concrete from behind the shelter, where he and his wife are staying as they wait for a house to become available.

"I appreciate everything everyone's done for me. It's nothing compared to what they've done for us," Griffis said of his cleanup efforts Thursday.

Hoops and pride

The pungent smell of fresh mulch hung in the damp air outside Nebraska Elementary School off Osage Street, where office staff members from Bair CPA Group had made quick work of spreading it across the playground and under the bushes that line the small school west of downtown.

But it might be the new paint job that the students will notice the most.

The volunteers planned to repaint the lines on the basketball courts, trimmed with new nets on the hoops, volunteer Burt Brunner said.

Principal Carrie Kennedy said their work benefits the children who live nearby and play year-round on the basketball court and playground.

"When the school looks good, it helps the neigh-

borhood look good. It promotes pride," Kennedy said.

In the shade

Shrouded under trees, the Southeast Family YMCA offered one of the coolest spots in the city Thursday as temperatures were expected to reach 90 degrees.

Still, employees with Trelleborg Sealing Solutions broke a sweat pulling weeds, raking debris and cutting small trees from the thick green bushes that encircle the building on Werling Drive.

This was the first year the company has pitched in to help, said Lori Replin, who works in human resources.

"We're enjoying a day of fresh air out of the office," she said. "We'd definitely do it again."

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