

Volunteers get dirty for the community

By Kathy Haight

PUBLISHED IN: LOCAL NEWS

More than 1,200 Wells Fargo employees gave up their Saturday morning to plant maple trees, paint classrooms and clean birdcages as part of the company's biggest one-day volunteer effort ever.

The first "Day of Caring" is the latest example of corporations helping the community in tough economic times - help that includes not only financial contributions but work involving shovels, rakes and mops.

"It doesn't always have to be writing a check," said Kendall Alley, Wells Fargo's Charlotte regional president. "It can be good old-fashioned hard work."

At more than 30 nonprofit organizations in 11 area counties including Mecklenburg, volunteers vacuumed floors, stocked shelves and even taught free financial education classes.

At the YWCA on Park Road, volunteers Carolyn Spencer, 62, and her daughter Courtenay, 34 - both Wells Fargo employees - helped dig a trench to keep mulch in place before planting a maple tree.

"My youngest daughter learned to swim here," Carolyn Spencer said. "I thought it would be nice to give something back."

In addition to its pool, fitness center and other programs, the YWCA provides housing for more than 100 people who were once homeless - most of them women and children.

"The families and women being served here have many times not been in a place where they felt safe and well cared-for," said YWCA Central Carolinas CEO Kirsten Sikkelee. "To have members of the Wells Fargo family make such an effort on their behalf really shows them that our entire community cares."

As Sikkelee spoke, more than 50 volunteers from Wells Fargo and Home Depot - which donated materials - grabbed rakes and shovels and began spreading mulch and planting monkey grass.

"I see it as a responsibility," Wells Fargo employee Shelley Young said, as she set monkey grass in freshly turned soil. "I believe in the importance of working in the community."

As the economic crisis continues, Charlotte has seen growing

Related Stories

Related Images



support from Wells Fargo and other corporations.

Project LIFT, for example, an effort to improve graduation rates and shrink the achievement gap in westside schools, has drawn millions of corporate dollars from Wells Fargo, Bank of America and Duke Energy foundations.

The Day of Caring was a collaboration between Wells Fargo, the Arts & Science Council, United Way of Central Carolinas, Charlotte Community ToolBank, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools and Home Depot.

Though Saturday's work involved sweat instead of dollars, the agencies that benefited were more than pleased.

"It would take us forever to do what they're doing today," said Sarah Porter, communications director for the nonprofit Classroom Central.

It's a free store for teachers where 20 volunteers spent Saturday morning pruning bushes, dusting shelves and packing school supplies.

Wells Fargo employee Stephanie Mundy said she volunteered because she used to be a fourth-grade teacher in the days before Classroom Central opened.

"I used to spend a lot of my own money on stickers, pens and markers," Mundy said as she mopped the floor. "Teaching is a really tough job."

Anything she can do to help teachers, she said, is more than worthwhile.

 [Subscribe to The Charlotte Observer.](#)