

## Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Days of Service

### in NW Philadelphia Parks

For the 17<sup>th</sup> consecutive year, volunteers led by PPR Volunteer Coordinator David Bower participated in the Martin Luther King Day of Service, annually the largest service event in the Philadelphia region. We were among about 125,000 volunteers at 1,800 projects throughout the city and suburbs. This year, we worked at two sites.

First was at a meadow restoration project in Carpenter's Woods in West Mount Airy. Volunteers removed invasive exotic vegetation that had overgrown a rare meadow habitat.

Second was at Thomas Mansion in Germantown. Volunteers and staff are renovating the park house and grounds. On MLK Day, we removed more invasive exotic vegetation and picked up roadside litter.

Both projects will lead to more diverse habitats for wildlife and also to more picturesque landscapes for park users.

Partners included Friends of the Wissahickon, Friends of Carpenter's Woods, PPR Operations District 4, Fairmount Park Historic Preservation Trust, Vanguard Group, Blue Bell Hill Civic Association, PHS Tree Tenders, Boy Scouts, Springside Chestnut Hill Academy and Germantown Friends School.

Participants were a diverse group of 75 people of all races, religions, and ages, from nearby neighborhoods and from outside the city.

During orientation and discussion at the beginning of the event, we were inspired by the reading of these words from Dr. King: "Every man must decide whether he will work in the light of creative altruism or the darkness of destructive selfishness. This is the judgment. Life's most persistent and urgent question is: 'What are you doing for others?'"

We reflected on what Dr. King's response would be to the issues of war, terrorism, racism, hatred and more that still cause injustices of all kinds in today's world. We also called for all of us to respond to these issues and to take action to make the world a better place.

We then read these words from author James Baldwin: "Either we love one another, either we hold on to one another, or the seas will engulf us. And all of the lights will go out. We – you and I – have an awesome responsibility. We must keep the lights shining."

As we worked together, we demonstrated that Dr. King's dreams are still alive. We showed to each other that people of different ages, races and faiths can indeed unite and shine their inner lights and change the world. We changed these small parts of our world during our service. We'll go on to do much more in the future.



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