

Stockton University Joins With Community In Three Counties for MLK Day of Service

About 1,000 Participate in Southern New Jersey's Largest Event

For Immediate Release; with photos, captions on [flickr](#)

Monday, January 18, 2016

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Galloway, NJ - Community members from throughout southern New Jersey joined Stockton University students, faculty and staff today on service projects designed to make a difference both locally and globally during the university's 12th annual Martin Luther King Day of Service.

Bob Rothhouse, from Egg Harbor Township, N.J., was among those assembling prosthetic hands made by 3D printers for e-Nable, a non-profit volunteer organization. He said this was his first time putting together the plastic components, held together with pins and synthetic string similar to fishing line. But he noted that Ken Tompkins, Stockton Professor of Literature Emeritus, sitting next to him, was "a good teacher."

The flexible prosthetic hands are comprised of about \$30 in materials but would cost about \$20,000 if made commercially, said Robert Heinrich, Stockton's chief information officer. Lowering the cost makes it possible for children to get new prosthetics as they grow.

Heinrich is helping to spearhead the project here, along with Lynne Kesselman, wife of President Harvey Kesselman and herself the president of the New Jersey Computer Science Teachers Association. Melissa Krupp, a member of the association who teaches at Southern Regional High School and is a Stockton graduate and adjunct, said, "It's really pretty cool that it's a grassroots effort and more than a Band-Aid. It's sustainable and ongoing."

Students in Computer Science will continue working on improving the prosthetics' design while faculty from the Occupational Therapy and Physical Therapy programs will provide consultation and online therapy services once patients are fitted with the prosthetics.

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The prosthetic hands assembled today are going to adults and children in Panama - a connection made by Stockton alumni Mickey Keats, who teaches in Panama.

About 1,000 participants took part in projects at locations in Atlantic, Cape May and Ocean counties - the largest Martin Luther King Day of Service in the region.

"Dr. King once said that life's most persistent and urgent question is, 'What are you doing for others?' Today each and every one of us answers that call by demonstrating in a significant way our commitment to our various communities," said President Kesselman in his welcoming remarks. "Thank you for realizing Martin Luther King's dream."

Juniors Ashley Cruz, a Biology major from Holmdel, and Michelle Feasel, a Biology and Psychology major from New Egypt, have been friends since freshman year. They volunteered with Books Without Borders, a student organization led by Dr. Melaku Lakew, professor of Economics, to sort and package books that will be sent to disadvantaged schools in developing countries. In 2014, Stockton sent 18,500 books in a 53-foot trailer to the Kogi State Polytechnic Institute in Nigeria, enabling the school to become accredited and issue degrees.

"It was more fun than I expected. I feel accomplished," said Cruz, who woke up early on her day off to serve the community.

Other projects included barn/stable chores and feeding and cleaning animals at South Jersey Horse Rescue in Weekstown, N.J.; a social activism and fund-raising project for the Women's Center of Atlantic County, in Linwood, N.J.; learning hands-on CPR and making peanut butter and jelly sandwiches for local distribution.

Kelly Warantz, a Nursing major from Marlborough, N.J. and lieutenant in the Stockton EMS, explained to volunteers learning CPR on dummies that, with a real person, "it's a little different." But in either case, "it's a real workout....You should get to 100 or 120 beats a minute for as long as you can go."

Melissa Ferrara of Manahawkin, N.J., a senior Hospitality major who was making sandwiches, had never volunteered on Day of Service before. But she was inspired this year to return to school the day before classes begin "to do some community service."

Projects organized by Stockton throughout the region also included:

- producing arts, crafts and baked goods in collaboration with the Atlantic City Housing Authority, and public art installations from the Noyes Arts Garage, both in Atlantic City;
- creating a resources directory for the Migrant Workers Organization and creating Valentine's Day cards for Hammonton Cares, both at Stockton's Kramer Hall in Hammonton. N.J.;
- a technology workshop with one-on-one technology assistance, making cards for hospitalized children, a food drive and writing letters to veterans at the Manahawkin Instructional Site;
- clean-up and museum display at the Tuckerton Seaport and Baymen's Museum in Tuckerton, N.J.;
- community projects, such as making Valentine cards for those in senior citizen facilities, at the Stockton's Sam Azeez Museum of Woodbine Heritage and Anne Azeez Hall in Woodbine, N.J.

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A traveling exhibit on Martin Luther King was presented by Ralph Hunter, founder and president of the African American Heritage Museum of Southern New Jersey, which has four locations throughout the region, including at the Noyes Arts Garage of Stockton in Atlantic City and in Newtonville in western Atlantic County.

Stockton was an early stop and part of a larger traveling exhibit on African American history that will visit close to 100 schools, churches, libraries and community groups from January through March, Hunter said.

Various speakers pointed out that Stockton is committed to making community service a habit of a lifetime for students, faculty and staff.

"Today you're going to make a huge impact on your community," said Student Senate President Carl Archut Jr., of Paulsboro. "But I do challenge all of you to make sure that after today, you continue to go back and build relationships with these partners, and do what you can to make a continuous impact in your community, the Stockton community and the world in general."

Organizers from Stockton's Office of Service-Learning said that a program on overcoming adversity will be attended by students from area high schools later this week, and the university also is sponsoring a trip to the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial on Jan. 23. Service-Learning projects with community partners are incorporated into classes throughout the year.

"The Day of Service is the seed, and we cultivate it from there into semester-long projects," said Daniel Tome, director of Service-Learning.

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