

Helping hands band together

Day of Caring draws about 9,000 volunteers from across region

ERNST LAMOTHE JR.

Staff writer

Years ago, when he began working at the Community Place of Greater Rochester, Evan Green started getting a greater appreciation of the organization's impact on the community. The agency, which has three locations in the city, provides senior programming, rental assistance,

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food cupboards and other neighborhood-based services to residents in northeast Rochester regardless of social or economic background.

There were stories of

young men becoming the first family members to graduate college, elderly couples living independently in the same home after more than 50 years, and an entrepreneur opening a new business in a neighborhood storefront — all tales of success that occurred with the help of Community Place.

On Wednesday, Green, who now works at Rochester Institute of Technology, was among approximately

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Volunteer Sandy Whitmore of Chili and RIT paints Wednesday at the Community Place of Greater Rochester during the Day of Caring. JAMIE GERMANO/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER



Volunteers offer their help at the Community Place. JAMIE GERMANO/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Caring

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9,000 volunteers who participated in Rochester's annual Day of Caring activities. He chose to come back to Community Place.

"Helping in any way from painting to planting was something I wanted to do. In our daily lives, we don't always realize how much organizations appreciate even a little bit of help from others," said Green, who volunteered at the 145 Parsells Ave. location.

Five hundred different projects took place during the area's largest single-day volunteering event, as businesses, schools and community groups donated their time, talents and energy.

Some went to Mt. Hope Cemetery for cleanup efforts, while others planted gardens at the Catholic Family Center. Other activities included reading to students at area schools and even performing coun-

try line-dances to entertain seniors at St. Ann's Community.

"We call the day of caring an example of sweat equity with volunteers going to agencies that really need help," said Essie Calhoun, 2011 United Way campaign chair and retired Eastman Kodak Co. vice president.

The United Way of Greater Rochester set its annual fundraising goal at \$28 million — the same financial goal as the past two years — to continue funding critical programs that address the Rochester area's most pressing needs. The organization's community fund helps almost 80 local programs in five key areas: early childhood, school-age youth, aging, disability services and crisis services. Last year, \$16.7 million was used from United Way's Community Foundation to fund programs.

"I remember a few years back, there was new equipment in Maplewood Park made of wood that needed to be stained because that

is what helps it last. And another year we helped put a new roof on a school that caters to children with developmental disability," said Calhoun. "These are often things that needed to be done but weren't budget priorities, so the community stepped up and made it happen during the Day of Caring."

YMCA's Camp Arrowhead, located in Powder Mills Park in Perinton, also received a face lift courtesy of volunteers Wednesday. They re-lined the baseball field and performed some spring cleaning and gardening.

"I am always looking at ways to be involved in the community, not just for one day but throughout the year," said Erin Puidokas, team leader for PAETEC Holding Corp., participating in her fourth Day of Caring.

"It just feels good to go outside and do good work that is going to help kids have so much fun in the summertime." □