



NH students hit street to honor Dr. King

By STAFF REPORT
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MANCHESTER -- Nearly 200 young people hit the streets Monday to honor Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and some pledged their weekends to serve their communities.

The City Year New Hampshire Young Heroes held its opening ceremonies at the Manchester Police Athletic League building Monday morning, welcoming 110 middle-school students from Manchester, Nashua and the Seacoast area into the program.

During the next five months, these students will learn about the needs in their home communities and come up with service projects to aid the homeless, the elderly and people with disabilities. Projects in the past have included doing yard work for elderly residents and canvassing Portsmouth businesses to gauge how many were handicapped-accessible.

The majority of the students -- about 70 -- hail from Manchester schools.

"It's a really big commitment for middle-school students," Paula Sullivan, resource development manager for City Year New Hampshire, said.

After the morning ceremony, the middle-school students, joined by more than 50 City Year corps members who now serve in the Manchester schools, marched from the MPAL building to St. George's Greek Orthodox Cathedral on Hanover Street, where they greeted guests attending the Manchester Martin Luther King Day Celebration.



Young Hero Mike Vitale stands with City Year corps member Ker Lor as he holds his sign proclaiming, "I have a dream, that Manchester can be clean."

The Young Heroes program began in Boston, Mass., when City Year corps members were asked by the middle-school students there about how they could get involved in their community.

In New Hampshire, students learn about the Young Heroes program from City Year volunteers. Students must apply and get recommendations from adults before being accepted. The program includes a range of middle-schoolers, from honor roll students to those deemed at risk of dropping out, Sullivan said.

During the next five months, students must complete 100 hours of service to finish the program, at which point they are given the Presidential Volunteer Service Award.

This award is an initiative of the Corporation for National and Community Service and is administered by the Points of Light Institute.