



## City Year Team Volunteers are Working Toward Change

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MANCHESTER – City Year team member Kyle Rodenbach volunteered to serve because he believes in a level playing field. Manchester native Jade Michaud volunteered to serve for those who need help and Vilma Rodrigues-Silva volunteered to serve because there is no greater feeling than working towards change.

These City Year team members and the 52 others who are giving the rest of the school year to mentor and tutor city elementary school students gathered at City Hall yesterday to announce why they decided to serve and to take the City Year pledge.

The City Year team members kicked off the event by running and high-fiving their way into the aldermanic chamber. Team members demonstrated how they start their day with physical training, stretching and cheering to energize their bodies and minds. Their enthusiasm was contagious and soon Mayor Ted Gatsas and Superintendent of Schools Thomas Brennan joined the team members in their warm up stretches.

Gatsas thanked the volunteers for the work they've begun at the city's five schools in the most need of improvement and pledged to bring 55 more volunteers in next year to begin work at the middle schools and one high school.

To help fund this year's volunteers and inspire others to contribute to next year's team, Gatsas presented City Year with a check for \$460,000, made up of donations from two dozen companies and local organizations, including Catholic Medical Center, Brady Sullivan Properties and Centrix Bank.



Led by City Year New Hampshire Board Member, Patrick Duffy, City Year Corps Members take their pledge to dedicate a year of service to Manchester and the surrounding communities.

This round of City Year volunteers has been in Manchester since August focused on training, forming their volunteer teams and now working with students. The pledge ceremony is held each year after members have undergone this training and earned a spot in the organization. Following the event, the City Year corps members headed to the City Year New Hampshire new state headquarters located at 848 Elm Street for a lunch reception.

Rodrigues-Silva, from Bridgeport, Conn., said she volunteered with elementary school children as a student at the University of Connecticut and decided to join City Year so she could continue with that work. She's found her work at Parker-Varney rewarding because the children are so excited to have them there, she said.

"It makes you want to try even more," Rodrigues-Silva said. "They are definitely the reason we are all here."

Jose Villanueva, from San Diego, Calif., joined City Year as a way to give back between college and graduate school. English is his second language and by volunteering in an inner city school, Villanueva feels he can help these children overcome the language hurdle.

"I can relate to them. I immigrated from Mexico and I didn't know English,"

he said. "I wanted to help kids going through the same ordeal."

Ricardo Esquivias, from Richmond, Calif., is serving at Henry Wilson School. He said he joined after graduating from college because City Year "embodies the values I've carried with me all my life."

"I'm so proud to be part of a movement, striving for a common good," he said.

City Year is bringing its national In School and On Track initiative to Manchester to target students at risk of dropping out of high school, at Bakersville, Beech Street, Gossler Park, Parker-Varney and Henry Wilson Elementary Schools. Although elementary school may seem young to begin this work, City Year Co-Executive Director Alex Allen said students show signs of dropping out long before high school. Children who miss school often, have trouble behaving in class or fall behind in academics are 80 percent more likely to drop out if these issues are not addressed before the 10th grade.

The goal of the program is to reach 50 percent of Manchester's students who show signs they are at risk of dropping out and to get them back on track through mentoring and academic tutoring.