

# Inside Gallaudet

## City Year volunteers give KDES and MSSD a facelift on Make A Difference Day

By Susan M. Flanigan  
Photos by Timothy Worthylake

What a difference a day can make--along with some paint and lots of elbow grease! Fans of TV programs like "Extreme Makeover" recognize how a team of people working together can transform a space in a short turn around. On Saturday, October 25 over 350 volunteers from [City Year](#), Gonzaga High School, and Gallaudet University, working side-by-side with Clerc Center teachers, staff, families, and students formed a mighty team to tackle over 35 projects at Kendall Demonstration Elementary School (KDES) and the Model Secondary School for the Deaf (MSSD).

City Year is a youth service corps funded through the AmeriCorps program that attracts young people ages 17 to 24 for a year of community service. City Year volunteers periodically come together as a group for service days, and this fall they chose to participate in *USA Today Weekend's* "Make a Difference Day," the nation's largest single day of volunteerism, through community service at KDES and MSSD. Now in its 18th year, the event is about bringing young people together to serve their neighbors and, in the process, help them develop civic pride and responsibility.

City Year volunteers in their trademark bright red jackets could be seen around the schools leading the project teams. They inspired the other volunteers with their energy and great ideas. For many of the City Year volunteers, this was their first opportunity to work alongside deaf and hard of hearing people and experience deaf culture. During the morning kick off, Clerc Center staffers Roberta Gage and Juniper Sussman gave the volunteers a crash course in deaf awareness and demonstrated a group of "survival signs." Using these communication tips, volunteers



Photo: Timothy Worthylake

Volunteers join together at the end of the morning kick off for a City Year "spirit break," an inspirational cheer before breaking into project groups.



Photo: Timothy Worthylake

These boots were made for working! Timberland donates work boots for every City Year volunteer to wear as part of their uniform. They are displayed at Make a Difference Day, an event that brought together over 350 volunteers from the program City Year, Gonzaga High School, Gallaudet University, and the Clerc Center.

had fun practicing and learning some sign language as they worked on projects with the other volunteers.

By the end of the day there were enough transformations to make everyone proud—eye-popping new paint schemes in the girls’ dorms, inspirational messages on walls, cool math, science, and geographical murals painted in hallways and on exterior walls, rejuvenated landscapes, sets constructed for the MSSD fall play, greenhouses revitalized, and lots of good old fashioned “spring” cleaning, among other projects.

The event helped the KDES and MSSD communities realize how the power of volunteering can help energize a community into action. The enthusiasm ignited on “Make a Difference Day” has fired up the volunteers, making them want to come back and complete tasks that could not be finished due to the rainy weather and time constraints. Some of the younger student volunteers are considering joining the junior division of City Year, called City Heroes, and becoming community volunteers themselves. During the final closing celebration at MSSD’s Theatre Malz, KDES Principal Shaitaisha Winston expressed great appreciation for the work of the volunteers, saying, “This may have been only one day for you, but your work here will have a long-term effect.”

There were many calls from teachers, staff, and students to have more opportunities to work together to make improvements on Kendall Green. The Clerc Center is grateful for all the work that went into planning for Make a Difference Day and to everyone who participated. As Winston said at the closing celebration, “This one day of work will benefit our schools and our students for years to come. I hope you enjoyed the day as much as I did!”

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Photo: Timothy Worthylake

A City Year volunteer sketches out a mural for the Support Services hallway at KDES.



Photo: Timothy Worthylake

Almost done! Volunteers add finishing touches to the Support Services mural.



Photo: Timothy Worthylake

MSSD students teach a City Year volunteer (second from right) some ASL signs during a banner making project.