

City Year. Give a Year. Change the World.



Have you ever watched TV programs like “Extreme Makeover:Home Edition” and seen how a team of people can transform a house in a very short amount of time? Have you ever wondered what it would be like to participate in something like that? Read on about how a community service organization called City Year came to Kendall Demonstration Elementary School (KDES) and the Model Secondary School for the Deaf (MSSD), on the campus of Gallaudet University in Washington, D.C., and transformed visual spaces around the schools!

About City Year

City Year is a youth service corps of people from 17 to 24 years old who give a year of service to their local communities. They have a motto, “Give a Year. Change the World.” On October 25, volunteers from City Year, Gonzaga High School, and Gallaudet University worked side-by-side with Clerc Center teachers, staff, families, and students for “Make a Difference Day.” The volunteers tackled over 35 amazing projects at KDES and MSSD.

Getting Ready for “Make a Difference Day”

A few days before the event, City Year leaders came to check out the schools to look over the project spaces, measure things, and figure out what tools they needed. On Saturday, they arrived with buckets of paint as well as supplies for wood working, gardening, theater set building, and cleaning jobs. City Year volunteers, wearing bright red jackets, white t-shirts, work pants, and tan work boots, could be seen around the schools leading the project teams. They inspired the other volunteers with their energy and great ideas.

Ready, Set, Go!

For many of the City Year volunteers, their day at Gallaudet was their first time to work alongside deaf and hard of hearing people and experience Deaf culture. During the

morning kickoff, volunteers were given a crash course in deaf awareness, including a demonstration of some “survival signs” for them to use. Volunteers had fun learning and practicing some sign language as they worked on the projects.

The day was rainy, but it did not dampen the spirits of the volunteers. By the end of the day there were enough visual 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; freshened up landscapes; theater sets constructed for MSSD’s fall play; greenhouses repaired; and lots of good old fashioned “spring cleaning” among other projects.

Want to Volunteer for City Year?

Would you like to become a City Year volunteer to make a difference in your community? City Year has a volunteer organization called Young Heroes and City Heroes that middle school and high school students can join. For more information, check out the City Year website, <http://www.cityyear.org/youthleadership.aspx>.