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Students Learn the Value of Service for Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

OLYMPIA – Friday, January 15th more than 700 students from Komachin Middle School will participate in one of the many service-learning projects arranged for the second year by the Volunteer Center of Lewis, Mason and Thurston Counties for the Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service.

“The Volunteer Center brought Rachel's Challenge to our school in December as a kickoff for this season of service which has already had a positive impact on the climate in our building. Students and parents have communicated that they are very happy we are choosing to make this an annual experience,” said Komachin Middle School Principal Joyce Ott.

A wide variety of volunteer opportunities are offered as part of the national day of service commemorating Dr. King and his commitment to make a difference in society. Between the hours of 11 a.m. and 2 p.m., students will be participating in one of a variety of service-learning projects sponsored by the Volunteer Center including sorting books, gardening, financial literacy training, and habitat restoration.

“We see service-learning as an integration of various skills that students may learn at school, crossed with the affective component that also builds character. Students are able to internalize the meaning, passion, and emotion of the impact that service has on the community by actually doing it,” said Ott.

New this year is the involvement of community volunteer leaders. Sara Ballard, Executive Director of the Volunteer Center explains, “These opportunities aren’t always accessible to students and if we can teach a group of people how to design and execute service-learning projects that focus on relevant issues to these kids and their neighborhood, the more students can have the experience.”

A few of the organizations that are involved with providing or hosting opportunities include the following:

1. Catholic Community Services – making cards for volunteers
2. Circle Hawk Farms – gardening
3. Family Support Center of South Sound – organizing a diaper drive
4. GRUB – gardening
5. Habitat for Humanity – working in a restore shop
6. Hands on Children's Museum – behind the scenes work
7. Left Foot Organics – gardening
8. Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge – habitat restoration
9. Olympia Federal Bank – financial literacy training
10. South Sound Reading Foundation – sorting books
11. The Volunteer Center's New Mural – designing and painting it

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“These activities not only help the community in many different ways, but they also open up the students’ minds to being a contributing part of society, learning new skills, and experiencing the rewarding feeling of helping others,” said MLK Day of Service Program Coordinator, Megan Walker-Richards.

The mission of the Volunteer Center of Lewis, Mason and Thurston Counties is to support volunteer efforts to address community needs; and inspire, engage, and mobilize volunteers. The Center accomplishes this mission by connecting people with opportunities to serve, offering volunteer management training and the promotion of volunteerism. The Center also provides more than 3,000 volunteer referrals per year, works with more than 250 nonprofit and public agencies in its service area and offers more than 650 volunteer opportunities through its Web site at www.volunteer.ws.

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