Wilmington Friends, Serviam students honor Martin Luther King Jr.’s memory with a day of service at the Delaware Center for Horticulture

Nearly 40 students and staff from the Serviam Girls Academy in New Castle and the Wilmington Friends School showed up to the Delaware Center for Horticulture (TheDCH) demonstration gardens in Wilmington’s Trolley Square neighborhood to honor the memory of Martin Luther King Jr. with a day of service.

“We very much appreciated the students coming out to TheDCH on MLK Jr. Day. The plantings really thrive by having a layer of mulch, and the volunteers worked so hard to help get our gardens and nearby public landscapes looking great,” said Special Events Coordinator Marcia Stephenson, who oversees volunteer activities at TheDCH.

School officials called it a win-win.

“In Latin, Serviam means ‘I will serve,’ and we hold true to that,” said Rachael Romond, a Public Ally at Serviam. “We strive to make sure our students understand the importance of serving others throughout the year. If Dr. King were alive today, I think he would be ecstatic to see youth participating in acts of service. By volunteering with TheDCH, Serviam students worked together to accomplish a task, while learning about themselves, the organization, and the impact that they can make.”

Friends School leaders agreed – a commitment to Quaker principals is why they organized a morning of service throughout the lower, middle and upper schools; and to honor a man truly dedicated to service and his cause.

“As a Quaker school, service is at the heart of our core values,” said Behnaz Varamini, Friends Upper School Spanish teacher and Community Service Coordinator. “Quakers believe that they have a responsibility to the good of all. Our principles are: integrity, community, equality, peace, stewardship, simplicity.”

Photo Courtesy of Emma Beatty Howells / TheDCH

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Service venues for the MLK Jr. day of service were chosen carefully, Varamini added.

“It is essential for students to make connections that are near their communities yet outside their comfort zones,” she says.

The weather also took students outside their comfort zones, and they handled it beautifully.

"It was cold at first but I got really into it after a while,” said Junior Emily Horwitz, who helped with a mulching project at TheDCH. “I really could work for a long time once I got started. I really enjoyed it."

Friends students and staff also held a worship meeting before they dispersed to serve at TheDCH, Latin American Community Center, Urban Promise, Gilpin Hall, Sunday Morning Breakfast Mission and East Side Charter School, in order to remind themselves of King’s work and their purpose for the day.

Founded in 1748, Wilmington Friends School challenges students aged 2 – 18 to seek truth, to value justice and peace, and to act as creative, independent thinkers with a conscious responsibility to the good of all.

Serviam, a 501(c)3 school, was started in 2008 by a group of dedicated parents, teachers, and Ursuline Sisters. Modeled after the Ursuline tradition, the Academy instills the importance of service with the overarching goal of encouraging them to become catalysts of positive change in their communities.

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TheDCH cultivates greener communities by inspiring appreciation and improvement of the environment through horticulture, education and conservation. TheDCH plants thousands of trees and leads regional projects to enhance Delaware’s urban forests; supports dozens of community gardens, urban farms, and school gardens; organizes city park improvement projects; beautifies Delaware’s roadsides with native vegetation; maintains the landscaping of many traffic medians and streetscapes; and provides educational programs for children, teens, and adults. Founded in 1977, the Center’s headquarters in Wilmington’s Trolley Square hosts weddings and corporate events in its public demonstration garden that backs up to Brandywine Park, an art gallery, lecture hall, and a greenhouse. Members and nearly 800 volunteers power TheDCH programs and events.