

# A Day To Help, A Day To Care

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More Than 200 Volunteer In Event

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**Immerge Technologies employee Nicole Martorana (right), 23, and Raquel Ortiz-Turner, 23, a Cargill Timberville employee, paint the front door of the Big Brothers Big Sisters office in Harrisonburg on Wednesday. The pair were volunteers in the 17th annual United Way Day of Caring.**

Photo by Pete Marovich

**HARRISONBURG** - More than 200 volunteers traded in their neckties and work clothes for T-shirts and blue jeans to participate in this year's Day of Caring on Wednesday.

For the entire day, employees from Harrisonburg and Rockingham County businesses planted grass, fixed fences, cleaned out attics and painted just about everything. They hosted parties for children, hung out with senior citizens, washed windows and planted flowers.

Basically, organizers said, they did anything and everything they could do to help.

The event, sponsored annually by the United Way of Harrisonburg and Rockingham County, organized about a dozen service projects for nonprofit agencies around the area, said Beth Bland, the event coordinator.

The project, now in its 17th year, is designed to promote volunteerism by hosting a special day of service.

Teams of employees from local businesses met at Court Square Theater at 8 a.m., put on their free "Live United" T-shirts, and went to work.

"Don't just wear the T-shirt, live it," said Betsy Hay, United Way executive director. "Today's challenge is to get your T-shirts dirty and go to work."

### **The 'Flash Mob'**

The group kicked off the event by creating what they called Harrisonburg's first "flash mob" on Court Square.

Flash mobs are groups that organize on the Internet or via text message, then quickly assemble in a public place, do something bizarre and quickly leave. Generally speaking, the term is usually limited to gatherings organized by way of social media - such as Twitter or Facebook - or viral e-mails.

More than 150 of Wednesday's 200 volunteers walked out of Court Square Theater to the west side of the courthouse, held wacky poses for 90 seconds and then dispersed to their various assignments.

"We are so excited about this day," Bland said. "We really appreciate the volunteers. They make a really big difference."

### **The Work**

After the "mob" was over, the real event began.

In Harrisonburg, BB&T employees spent all afternoon at Mercy House redoing the shelter's lawn.

"We believe in helping the community that we live and work in," said volunteer Tracie Dickson, a Luray resident and BB&T employee. "It's part of our mission."

Among the projects, volunteers painted the Big Brothers Big Sisters' office, planted a garden at Camp Still Meadows, washed windows at the Center for Marriage and Family Counseling and did yard work at First Step, Generations Crossing, Blue Ridge Legal Services, Skyline Literacy Coalition and the Plains Area Daycare.

They did work in Harrisonburg, Broadway, Grottoes and Elkton.

Tom Boller would have spent Wednesday fixing machines at RR Donnelley. Beth Crites would have spent the day sitting at a desk, ordering supplies.

"This is much better way to spend the day," Crites said.

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