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Volunteers help spruce up community center

By Sarah Arnquist

FAIRFIELD - Pat Woodbridge used the Martin Luther King Jr. vacation day from her nursing job at Kaiser Permanente in Vacaville to teach her granddaughters a lesson in community service.

Woodbridge woke her granddaughters up early on their day off from school and brought them to volunteer at the Mission Solano Homeless shelter where they gave the sanctuary a face lift.

"Martin Luther King was about working for the community and helping the community help themselves," Woodbridge said.

Today, it's up to the older generations to teach young people about community and service, she said. Woodbridge's granddaughter, Genessa Nabors, 13, said she didn't mind getting paint all over her hands and old jeans. She was glad to help.

"We have lots of stuff, and the people who don't have a lot of stuff need help," she said.

Woodbridge was one of 10 Kaiser Permanente employees and their children who volunteered Monday to paint Mission Solano's community outreach center.

Mission Solano is a Fairfield homeless shelter that provides a place for up to 60 people to sleep each night.

Jennifer Simmons, Mission Solano volunteer coordinator, said she hoped this year will be the first of many Martin Luther King Day volunteer projects. Simmons coordinates with businesses like Jerry's Painting Company and Kaiser Permanente that are looking for community service opportunities.

Fairfield's newest city councilmen John Mraz and Frank Kardos stopped by the Mission Monday to applaud the volunteers' service. Homelessness is a growing problem in Fairfield, the councilmen said.

"It's great for the community to come forward and do this," Mraz said.

Kardos and Mraz said they hope to start a Boys and Girls Club in Fairfield that might steer at-risk youth away from a path to drug abuse and homelessness.

"We need to catch these kids before they start on drugs," Mraz said.

Carl Solomon, a Kaiser employee and Suisun City resident, brought his 11-year-old son, Daniel, to volunteer Monday. It's important to serve in your own community, Solomon said.

"This is very humbling because we realize how blessed we really are," he said.

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