

Iowa students honor M.L. King through service

Martin Luther King Jr. once said, "Life's most persistent and urgent question is: 'What are you doing for others?'" While some are planning to rest this Martin Luther King Day, college students will answer Dr. King's call and come together to serve Des Moines.

These millennials are bucking stereotypes about their generation, not spending the day sleeping late or shopping but instead joining other citizens, young and old, to meet community needs in tough economic times.

Iowa Campus Compact member schools Drake, Simpson and Grand View, along with Des Moines Area Community College, the Des Moines "I Have a Dream" Foundation and Children and Family Urban Ministries are coming together to engage more than 250 college students. Focusing on the theme of healthy futures, participants will assemble hygiene kits and write letters of encouragement to veterans in the VA Medical Center.

The Corporation for National and Community Service, working with the King Center, leads the national effort to make the MLK holiday "a day on, not a day off." Americans of all backgrounds will fulfill that promise by delivering meals, refurbishing schools and community centers, collecting food and clothing, signing up mentors, supporting veterans and military families, promoting nonviolence, and more. Many projects start today and will last throughout the year.

Many of those serving will be millennials — the generation of young people born after 1982. In 2010, 11.6 million millennials dedicated 1.2 billion hours of service to communities across the country, according to the Corporation for National and Community Service report, *Volunteering in America*. Iowa millennials ranked fourth in the nation, with a volunteer rate of more than 30 percent.



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Finding a service project has never been easier. Service has become more accessible to young people, as technologies like the volunteer search engine Serve.gov and Facebook make it easier for young people to make a difference — whether across town or around the world. Great local organizations like the United Way of Central Iowa provide countless service opportunities for people of all ages.

Service is also a great way for all generations, whether millennials, Generation X, or baby boomers, to come together and give back, helping strengthen the health and security of our communities. When we serve, we are role models of civic participation that can inspire other citizens to serve and be part of solutions in our communities.

The needs are great, many Americans are hurting and government can't do it alone. We need citizens to help renew our nation and expand equality and opportunity for all. Service is a powerful way for citizens, nonprofits, the private sector and government to work together to meet needs and advance King's dream.

Follow the example of Iowa millennials and act to help others on MLK Day and throughout the year. By joining together in service, we can help realize King's dream and build America's new foundation.