

UC San Diego

# UC San Diego News Center

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By Kristin Luciani

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## Volunteers Partner with Father Joe's Villages for Day of Service



*Photos by Erik Jepsen/ UC San Diego Publications*

Hundreds of UC San Diego community members attended annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Parade and Day of Service

More than 125 UC San Diego campus community members came together Sunday to make a difference in the lives of homeless men and women in San Diego. At Father Joe's Villages—San Diego's largest homeless services provider—volunteers helped with much-needed painting, repairs and cleaning as part of UC San Diego's annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service. Afterward, volunteers joined nearly 500 campus members marching in the Martin Luther King, Jr. Parade.

“We look forward to this event every year as an opportunity to join San Diego community members in celebrating the life and legacy of Dr. King,” said Chancellor Pradeep K. Khosla, who attended the San Diego County Educators’ Breakfast on Saturday. “It’s a tradition that reflects our vision as a university that provides opportunity for all.”



The campus has been involved with the Martin Luther King, Jr. celebration for more than 20 years. The Day of Service, organized by UC San Diego’s Volunteer50 initiative and the Center for Student Involvement, was established in 2002 as a way for UC San Diego to give back. It also serves to educate campus members, particularly students, about the need for volunteers in the community.

Upon arriving for the Day of Service, volunteers were warmly welcomed by Deacon Jim Vargas, president and CEO of Father Joe’s Villages. Vargas thanked volunteers for taking time out of their weekend and spoke about his organization’s mission.

Father Joe’s Villages offers housing, rental assistance, healthcare, food, clothing, education, job training, mental health services, addiction treatment and more in a “one-stop shop” approach. In 2014, the nonprofit served nearly 15,000 homeless adults and children.



*Volunteers take a photo with Father Joe.*

“I applaud the students, staff, faculty and alumni of UC San Diego for their commitment to be a positive force in the community of San Diego,” said Vargas. “I appreciate their partnership with Father Joe’s Villages in their passion of transforming lives and ending the cycle of homelessness.”

Equipped with paintbrushes, gloves and ladders, volunteers divided into groups to tackle a number of projects to help maintain and improve the facilities. One team painted stairwells while another replaced broken

window screens in the residents’ bedrooms. Others helped to pick up trash around the facilities and local neighborhood. In between projects and during breaks, volunteers made Valentine’s Day cards for the clients of Father Joe’s Villages.

For Dominick Suvonnasupa, a fourth year UC San Diego economics major and president of Associated Students, the most gratifying part of the Day of Service was getting to know the broader San Diego community.

“It’s really easy to get stuck in your own bubble,” he said. “Community service is a chance to work alongside others in your community whom you might not otherwise have met.

“It also helps put your own life in perspective. Learning about the struggles of others makes you realize that the problems you may think are overwhelming are not that big, in the grand scheme of things.”

Later that afternoon, volunteers joined Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs Juan González; Vice Chancellor for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Becky Petitt; college provosts; academic deans; faculty, staff and students to represent UC San Diego in the 36th annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Parade. Campus members handed out blue and yellow balloons as the parade wound along Harbor Drive, celebrating the enduring theme of “Freedom through Education.”

