By Kristin Luciani   Jan 24, 2013

Campus Celebrates Dr. King's Legacy with Parade and Day of Service

Photos by Erik Jepsen/UC San Diego Publications

Embracing the theme "Freedom through Education," hundreds of members of the UC San Diego community participated in San Diego's 33rd annual Martin Luther King Jr. Parade Sunday.

"The parade and Day of Service are important campus traditions and an opportunity to reflect on Martin Luther King Jr.'s life and contributions," said Chancellor Pradeep K. Khosla. "Dr. King strengthened communities, empowered individuals and promoted social justice and equality. It was an honor to march alongside our UC San Diego campus members to celebrate his legacy and demonstrate our commitment to his values."

Students, staff and faculty representing all six colleges marched in the parade, passing out blue and gold balloons and T-shirts to the crowd in a show of university pride and community support. UC San Diego has been involved with the parade for more than 20 years, with campus participation continually increasing.

Vice Chancellor of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Linda Greene, who joined UC San Diego earlier this month, expressed enthusiasm for this community-building opportunity. "We honor Dr. King's legacy through our participation in community events and service programs, and also through our commitment to the expansion of higher education access for African Americans, Mexican Americans, Native Americans and other historically underrepresented groups," she said.

Many of the participants from UC San Diego had just finished a service project at nearby Zamorano Fine Arts Academy, an elementary school in southeast San Diego, as part of the MLK Day of Service. Led by UC San Diego's Volunteer50 and the Center for Student Involvement, the annual Day of Service provides an opportunity for the campus to honor Dr. King's legacy by engaging with the local community and making a positive impact. More than 125 UC San Diego volunteers participated in this year's Day of Service.

"It's amazing to see how many students turned out to volunteer their time on a Sunday morning," said Matthew Evrard, a graduate student intern at the Center for Student Involvement. "There is so much positive energy here—a sincere desire to make a difference in the community."

Volunteers joined students and parents of Zamorano Fine Arts Academy to rejuvenate the school's community garden and paint educational murals. On one wall, volunteers painted large numbers with corresponding handprints to represent the value of each number. The mural would be used as a teaching tool to help students learn multiplication, school officials said.

"I remember when I was in elementary school and I saw a new mural on the wall, I was awe-struck," said Keili Fernando, a freshman at Sixth College who worked on painting one of the murals. "This is my first community service project with Volunteer50—I find it so rewarding to help others and make an impact in the community."

Vice Chancellor of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Linda Gr

Another group of volunteers was busy writing cards for the San Diego Food Bank's Food 4 Kids Backpack Program. The program provides weekend food packages for elementary school students from low-income households who are at risk of hunger during weekends when free school meals are unavailable. The cards written by the volunteers, offering caring and encouraging messages, will be added to the backpacks.

"We hope that this one-day service project plants the seed for an ongoing relationship with Zamorano," said Ryan Crawford, community service coordinator at the Center for Student Involvement and a Volunteer50 committee member. "We've been able to do that in the past with other service sites, with UC San Diego students returning to volunteer on an ongoing basis."

The Volunteer50 initiative, originally established in honor of UC San Diego's 50th Anniversary, encourages students, staff, faculty, alumni and friends to perform 50 hours or more of community service during the academic year. The program aims to showcase the widespread and diverse contributions of the campus, which has been ranked first in the nation by the *Washington Monthly* for three consecutive years based on its positive impact on the country.

For more information about Volunteer50, including upcoming service opportunities, visit volunteer50.ucsd.edu.

Keep up with campus news by subscribing to *This Week @ UC San Diego*