Young People Rock Conference

There is a youthful wind blowing through the volunteer and service movement and on Monday its gusts were felt throughout the National Conference.

The positive impact of “Generation Y” and “Millenials” was on vivid display yesterday at several sessions. For the first time, the National Conference included a Youth Leadership Academy, drawing nearly 50 middle school students from throughout Metro Atlanta for a day of training and service at the inspirational King Center. Kimberly Boyd, who directs school-centered community revitalization for HandsOn Network, designed a program with two local AmeriCorps members that showed students how to create a service project and equipped them with tools like the new Student Volunteer Leader Manual.

For special inspiration, the students heard from modern “abolitionist” Zach Hunter, the 16-year old founder of Loose Change to Loosen Chains. After watching Hunter receive a President’s Volunteer Service Award, the students went on to work on a service art project at the Krog 10 Warehouse.

“I wish I were him,” said Michael Minter, Academy participant from Miller Grove Middle School, after hearing Hunter talk about his mission to end global slavery. “He wanted to change the world… and he got a letter from the President!”

In the afternoon, the focus on youth shifted to a slightly older demographic, as roughly 100 conference attendees of driving age boarded buses and headed to Spelman College for a session entitled “Leaders of Tomorrow: Dream, Act.”

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Martin Luther King III Headlines Faith and Community Day

As CEO of Realizing the Dream, King is now at the forefront of efforts to combat poverty and to fulfill the dream of his father. Following King’s keynote, attendees are invited to share their thoughts on the topic of “Poverty and the Service Agenda” in a discussion led by Dr. Charles Phillips, President, Service for Peace.
CEOs Stress Benefits of Service

CEOs of major American companies – including Accenture, Booz Allen Hamilton, Ben & Jerry's, ChoicePoint, and Manning Selvage & Lee – gathered yesterday morning to discuss the importance of inspired corporate leadership around civic engagement, even amidst difficult economic times. Moderated by CNBC's Trish Regan, the “CSR Now!” roundtable set the tone for one of the most robust business tracks in conference history.

The session speakers confirmed that companies have a responsibility to focus on not just profit, but also the positive impact they can have on the lives of employees, customers and their communities. The role of technology emerged as a key tool to help make that impact, with sites such as Facebook creating innovative platforms to engage and empower people. Yet as much as technology has helped enable networking for the social good, Booz Allen Hamilton CEO Ralph Shrader also stressed the continued necessity of personal involvement.

A commitment to social responsibility (CSR) even leads to recruitment benefits. “We are in the war for talent... and the best and the brightest will ask you ‘what are you doing to give back?’” said Accenture’s Managing Director, Ed Flise. More than one speaker stressed that Millennials are deciding where to work based, in part, on the strength of a company’s CSR commitment.

Later in the morning the conversation turned to the benefits of skills-based volunteering, as more and more corporations apply the talents of their workforce to tackle social problems. Deloitte – which recently announced a three-year, $50 million commitment to pro bono services – will bring the commitment to life this Friday when it deploys employees across the country for its IMPACT Day.

“This is the time to take risks,” said Derek Smith, CEO of ChoicePoint, summing up the spirit of the business track. “We can create social progress and economic value.”

Volunteer Spotlight

AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps alums Ashley Sloan, Greg Loushine, and Jack Smith created Live St. Bernard, an organization that renovated a home for Hurricane Katrina relief volunteers. Together they raised $15,000 to fund the project and led a team of 50 volunteers in renovating the home. More than 10,000 AmeriCorps members have served in the Gulf since Katrina, providing hope and help to millions of storm survivors.

What is AmeriCorps?

Each year, AmeriCorps offers 75,000 Americans opportunities to give intensive service to their communities.

AmeriCorps members serve with more than 4,000 local and national non-profits, helping them expand their reach and impact. They tutor and mentor youth, build homes, preserve the environment, respond to disasters, and meet other critical needs. In addition to their direct service, AmeriCorps members also mobilize and manage community volunteers – more than 1.7 million last year alone.

To learn more about how AmeriCorps can help your organization, visit www.AmeriCorps.gov.

Beautiful Inside and Out!

While enjoying their complimentary makeovers from the expert makeup artists of L’Oréal Paris, we asked recipients to share stories of how they are making a beautiful difference in their communities.

One such volunteer, Angela Bonet, assists low-income Latino students and parents with the college admissions process, including SAT preparation and financial aid application. Recently, her work resulted in a student being admitted to Columbia University and NYU, who had no initial plans for higher education. “These experiences let me know that I am doing the right thing” said Angela, “one student at a time.”