Friends of Young Achievers Science and Math Pilot School

News

FOYA News "Serving and Learning in Our Community" Spring 2013



A 7th grade student paints a mural of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

First Mattapan Day of Service

by Sherri Miles

Community service prompts us to think beyond ourselves, work together, and strengthen our community.

It is a familiar term, particularly in a mid-winter month honoring Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. with a National Service Day on a Saturday, and the MLK Day of Service on a federal Monday holiday. On Friday, January 18, students and teachers from an urban school in Mattapan answered the call of Dr. King and grew as leaders in the process.

The first Mattapan Day of Service at Young Achievers Science and Math Pilot School K-8 sent 527 students and more than 100 teachers and staff throughout Mattapan to volunteer at community organizations. Participants raised the spirits of hospitalized children, initiated a town cleanup campaign, constructed animal enrichment toys at Franklin Park Zoo, made displays for the local library, visited seniors in elder care, beautified neighborhoods, and improved their school building.

"Martin Luther King gave his life to make the world a better place, and more fair for all of us," Young Achievers Principal Virginia Chalmers told her students. "Part of honoring his legacy is giving service to our community. Today is a day that we commit all of our time and energy to make the world a better place close to our school."

Volunteering for an average of four hours each for a school total of more than 2500 hours of service, Young Achievers students and teachers spent the day answering what Dr. King called life's most persistent question: "What are you doing for others?"

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Save the Date — You are Invited!

Sunday April 28 4-7pm

Community Rowing Boathouse Brighton, MA

The Second Annual Young Achievers Science and Math Pilot School Spring Celebration

This event sustains the development and delivery of innovative, rigorous and experiential curriculum to connect Boston students to their local community and environment.

- Cocktails and Hors d'oeuvres
- Silent and Live Auctions
- Exhibitions by Young Achievers Students
- A viewing of the nationally broadcast documentary, "Schools that Change Communities." This video prominently features Young Achievers Science and Math Pilot School.

Invitations will be mailed in early March. For more information contact Cynthia Upchurch at Friends of Young Achievers: (617) 296-1120 foya@youngachieversschool.org



Fifth-grade student Samantha Torres (right) interviews Young Achievers graduate and first-time voter Mynan Adams at the Morning Star Baptist Church polling station in Mattapan on election day. Fifth-grade students visited four Boston area polling stations on this day to learn about the polling process.

Clockwise from right: 4th grade student Dariel Gonzalez plays chess with a resident of Foley Senior Residences; Mikayla Coleman works with her 2nd grade classroom to paint "Keep Young Achievers Clean" posters; 6th grade students worked at Boston Nature Center building wildlife habitat in a field next to the education center.

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The community gets involved

Students had clear ideas about what they wanted to do, and community organizations opened their doors, including Boston Family Boat Building, Boston Nature Center, Boston Police Department B-3, Boston Public Library – Mattapan Campus, Boston Public Schools Science Department, City Councilor Charles Yancey's Office, City Year Boston, Colorado Street Neighborhood Association, District Attorney Daniel Conley's Office, Foley Senior Residences, Franklin Park Zoo, Haitian Adult Day Center, Hearth at Olmstead Green, Margaret Shea Day Health Program, Mattapan Community Health Center, Mattapan Food and Fitness, Mattapan PACE, Roxbury Cool Smiles, Mattapan Small Smiles, Perfect Family Dental, and the Suffolk County Sheriff Department.





At the Boston Nature Center, 6th grade students constructed wildlife habitats, painted furnishings for a new preschool, and painted flags representing the dozens of countries of origin for Young Achievers families. It was important to have all the flags represented, said teacher Jenna Hadley and her students, because Martin Luther King wanted everyone to be together. "Everyone should be equal," said a student, "so we display the flags of all and everyone is united."

Second graders at the Mattapan Community Health Center greeted visitors, served them hot chocolate and coffee, and read them stories. In the bright community room near the front door of the clinic, students huddled around tables, reading aloud to strangers from the pages of their favorite books. Other students stirred sweeteners or creamer into coffee and packets of cocoa into water as they prepared hot drinks for people coming and going on this frigid day.

Student Michael Collins showed a visitor his book about professional wrestler and actor John Cena. "Can I read it to you?" he asked. She nodded, and they sat on a cushioned bench along the wall as she sipped her coffee and listened to the story about his hero.

"People are leaving a lot happier," said Elijah Rooks, security officer in the lobby at the center, noting the affect the students had on guests that morning. "I think seeing the kids makes people smile."

Students as mentors

Eighth grade students played a leadership role throughout the day, helping teachers and students at each service site. Working with the second graders at the health center, eighth grader Dimitri Moore was impressed. "They're very energetic, but they like using their energy to help people" he noted. "Most of them were not afraid to approach people. I think that's what leaders of the future really need. It inspires me. These kids have so much confidence in themselves, and they have so much change in them—it shows me that I'm still young and I can still change the world as I am."

"Our experience on Service Day is an important reminder of how significant an opportunity it can be for middle school students to be a mentor for younger ones," noted Chalmers. "Their most mature and pro-social behavior can emerge in these contexts. It was moving to see each and every one of the eighth graders stepping up to the leadership opportunity



Clockwise from right: Avion Adamson shows off healthy food presented by Mattapan Food and Fitness and made centerpieces with other 1st graders for the organization's upcoming fundraising event; Ifatayo Onifade paints a mural that will be used to improve the aesthetic appeal of the Young Achievers boys bathroom; 8th grade student Dimitri Moore is in charge of a group of 2nd graders who invited patrons at the Mattapan Community Health Center to have coffee, hot cocoa, and listen to a story.

> "They are sharing their spirit and their youth and engaging with the audience. Service can mean so many different things."

afforded by the day. It is one of the opportunities that being a K-8 school ought to provide frequently, but somehow we are unable to fit it in too often."

Connecting with elders

At the Haitian Adult Day Health Center on Frontenac Street in Dorchester, third grade students from teacher Caroline Alexis' class worked side-by-side with Haitian elders to prepare health kits for students in Haiti. Many of the retirees have grandchildren back in their home country. At long tables in a packed meeting room with Haitian music playing in the background, they made a hundred kits, filling each plastic bag with a coloring book, post-it note pad, a box of crayons, a pencil, and a handmade card written in both English in Haitian Creole, stating: *Dear Friend. Someday I would like to meet you. I live in the U.S. Your new friend….*

Supplies for the kits were donated by the Boston Police Department District B-3, which also contributed time and resources to the overall success of Service Day. They provided two police vans to transport the students to various sites, suggested partner sites that could be included in the day, and participated at the school, with two officers arriving Friday morning to help with painting projects.

Third grade teacher Rina Wolok took her students to Hearth at Olmstead Green to practice reading skills, make "Keeping Mattapan Green" signs, and have lunch with the residents. After a morning of reading together, sharing stories, and eating, the conversations flowed between students and seniors. "The students love the one-on-one attention," said Wolok. "The older adults have a very positive influence on them."

The benefits were mutual. An elderly man with serious aliments said the students helped him feel that getting up was worth it, and made him thankful for another day.

At another senior residence, dance instructor and choreographer Gina Jones' fourth grade students performed an Indian Bollywood dance infused with the latest gangnam-style moves.

Approximately 20 residents of the Foley Senior Residences in Mattapan watched the performance in a sunny community room. Resident Gerri Wooten danced from her chair during the performance, and reminisced about doing the cha-cha in her youth. "It's beautiful. We see the joy in the students' faces, and they see that they're making us feel good," she said. "They're doing something important. They put a smile on all our faces today."

"This shows the scholars how to give back in a way that isn't materialistic," said Jones.

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Clockwise from right: Charshara Harris paints the school habits of mind onto middle school lockers; 7th grader Elijah Linton displays the mural he painted with classmates and City Year corps members; Javier Rodriguez plays dominoes with Mattapan senior citizens; Leander Emrick shares a moment with a resident of Foley Senior Residences; students make bracelets with residents at Pace Elder Care Center and find a large display recognizing MLK's call to service.

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"They are sharing their spirit and their youth and engaging with the audience. Service can mean so many different things." Jones noted that this was live, traveling performance for the students. "It shows you can do service through being artistic."

Service at school

Chalmers spent Service Day at the school participating in school-based projects. "The school was abuzz with positive energy," she said.

Seventh grade students stenciled lockers with the school's "habits of mind" words—creativity, perseverance, equity, investigation, evidence, and connection. They constructed wood blocks for use in dramatic play, and worked with City Year Corps members to paint murals for the school building.

Younger students made cards, necklaces, and blankets for patients at Children's Hospital, painted vegetable signs, and made flowerpots for Mattapan Food and Fitness. Students initiated a "Keep YA Clean" campaign, cleaned up the yard and cleared out a basement closet for a new school store.

Becoming leaders

"We work hard to teach students the idea of responsibility so it not only strengthens their learning but also strengthens their sense of community," said Carol Murray, assistant principal at Young Achievers. "We develop projects so kids become and see themselves as leaders in their community. Then when there is a problem in the community—rather than internalize and feel poorly about it—they have a means for thinking about ways they can participate in changing it."

Chalmers' goal for Service Day was met. In one day, students felt the connection their classes made with community groups. "They experienced the difference that collective action can make in their communities," she said.

"Our students brought such joy to the communities they visited, and what they gained individually and collectively can't be measured on any standardized test," said Murray. "One only had to watch to know that it impacted our students deeply."

At the end of Service Day, José Ruiz, in the Sheltered English Immersion classroom for students whose first language is Spanish, had a question. Upon returning to class, he asked, "Mrs. M., what is the word for...*peña*? Wait; it is not *peña*...I know! It's love sadness. Yes, that's what I feel. That's how I feel when we had to go. And you did too, Mrs. M! When can we go back?"











Young Achievers Staff Achievements

Working in Our Community, Growing Professionally

Art teacher **Matt Poirier** received the "Teachers as Artists" fellowship from the Boston Arts Academy. He is using the fellowship to bring local artists into the classroom and to bring students to see art in the community.

2nd grade teacher **Annie Shah** and 7th grade Math teacher **Bryan Wallace** were featured on WBUR's radio show *Con Salsa*. Annie and Bryan spoke about the Boston Teacher Residency program, what it has done for them as teachers, and why other working professionals should consider this program as a pathway to teaching in Boston Public Schools.

6th grade Social Studies teacher **Jessica Tang** was featured in *Harvard Magazine*'s "New Social Entrepreneurs" section. Jessica discusses her passion for teaching and social justice as a means to advocating for stronger education policy.

7th grade Geography teacher **Zadina Cadyma** facilitated the *Restorative Social Justice Circles Taking Over Boston* field learning experience. The event included five 7th grade students who presented to the Boston Women's Fund.

2nd grade teacher **Heidi Fessenden** is teaching "Integrated Science Curriculum in Early Childhood" at Lesley University Graduate School of Education and is a teaching fellow for "Teachers, Leadership, and Power" at Harvard Graduate School of Education.

PE teachers **JoJo Barros** and **Mike Correia** were recognized as "Wellness Champions" by the Boston Public Schools Health and Wellness Department for their creation of two-minute online workouts for teachers as short physical education breaks in class.



Jaheem Daniels considers the laws of physics at the Boston Museum of Science during a 2nd grade field learning experience.

Young Achievers Featured in Nationally Televised Documentary

Young Achievers is one of five schools in the *Schools that Change Communities* documentary currently airing across the country on WGBH's World channel. Our staff and students stand out prominently in a 13-minute segment at the middle of the one-hour documentary. Visit the WGBH website to find out if the video will be aired by your cable provider as broadcasting times vary.

Congratulations!

The staff and students would like to congratulate the following staff who have had babies this year or are expecting.

- **Lisa Carter**—baby girl
- **Liana Cosgrove**—expecting
- **Priscilla Higuerra**—baby girl
- **Tasheena Jones-Burnett**—baby girl
- **Kelly Keyes**—expecting

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Spotlighting Organizations that Support Academic Success for All Our Students



2012-2013 City Year corps members serving at Young Achievers

City Year Boston

For each of the past four years, City Year has provided Young Achievers with 14 young adults who role model leadership for our students and enhance academic programs. They staff our before and after school programs, provide one-to-one tutoring and serve as extra adults in classrooms.

Corps members complete projects around the building such as playing a leadership role for the planning and implementation of the Mattapan Day of Service, implementing student parties recognizing positive behavior, and painting inspiring murals.

City Year site supervisor Myk Malesardi notes, "Corps members are dedicated to their work and want to connect to the school where they are placed. YA has been welcoming and as a result our corps members are invested."

We look forward to a continued partnership that benefits the school in so many ways.



2012-2013 BELL staff supporting Young Achievers Extended Learning, Enrichment and Academic Programs.

Good Sports

In early October, we asked our school PE teachers and basketball team coaches: "What improvement could we make to the gym to best support our students and the basketball teams?"

They unanimously said get rid of the dingy basketball backboards from the 1950s and replace them with state of the art glass backboards. Coach Correia pointed out, "We want our kids to play on a court that shows we respect the hard work they put into being student athletes and team players."

About that same time, Young Achievers received an invitation sent out to Boston Public Schools from Good Sports to apply for capital improvement funding. We could not believe our "good fortune."



Tehjia Kerr of the Young Achievers girls basketball team warms up prior to the team's frist scrimmage of the year.

Upon receiving notice that Good Sports would fund the purchase and installation of glass backboards, our coaches and students could hardly contain their enthusiasm. Coach Barros noted, "Word travels fast, we have never had so many students and staff stop by the gym just to take a look at our backboards. The sense of school pride is awesome!"

The students and staff look forward to their first game on what is now a very official looking basketball court.

BELL – Building Educated Leaders for Life

The Young Achievers partnership with the BELL program started six years ago as a way to expand our summer school services.

When our funding was cut back for the school year Extended Learning, Enrichment and Academic Programs (ELEAP), we were thrilled to have BELL step in and run our before school curriculum. Their great work inspired an ever-growing partnership.

"BELL has a great track record of running our summer programs," said ELEAP Director Venecia Mumford. "They know our kids and know our teachers. It was a real win for us."

Running a before school program is a pilot initiative for BELL. In addition to providing seven core staff members to the program, they are partnering with City Year and an environmental organization called "e" inc. to add staffing and experiences for students.

BELL plans curriculum for the morning with teachers to support what is happening during the school day. They plan enriching experiences such as "college day" for the students, and jump in where needed, such as helping with regular school day arrival in the cafeteria.

The Young Achievers staff and students are hugely grateful for the many contributions BELL makes to our school.

The K-8 students at Young Achievers Science and Math Pilot School thank the following for their generous contributions to our education

Individuals

Anonymous—7
Asheesh Advani
Helen Anderson
Janis & Dominique Aubin
*Kevin Barry
*Kait Blehm
Clair Boskin
Peter Brad
David & Sarah Broughel
*Zadina Cadyma
**Dorothy Carver
Fredi & Alan Carver
Jim & Josie Chalmers
Caroline Chalmers
*Virginia Chalmers
Stephanie Cheney
Matt Damon
Mel & June Davis
Franz Peter & Ann P. Demong
*Michael Dower
Kingsley & Joan Durant
Brenda & Monroe Engle
*Heidi Fessenden
*Julia Rose Finkelstein
Steven Gag
Laura Gang
Jason Goloboy, C.P.A.
*Jessica & Bo Hoppin
Christian Hosford
Eric S. Janus
David Vernon Jones Jr.
**Herbert & Lois Lemelman
Michael Lesburg
Peter Lewenberg
Maureen & Thornton Lewis
*Meg Loughnane
**Allan & Suzanne Mann
Daniel McCarthy
Peter and Jeannette McGinn
Paul S. Merker Estate
Beth Miller
Roberta A. Miller
Lorna Miller-Strassler
Joanie Parker
*Alisa Primavera
*Annette Rand
Helen Rosenfeld
Janis Rothbard
Mary Ryan
Smith Saintis
Dennis Scannell Jr.
**Ray Shurtleff
David Sobel
Jonathan & Chitra Staley
Laura Sylvan
Dr. & Mrs. Edward Thieler III
*Cynthia Upchurch
David Vernon Jones Jr.
Shakera Walker
*Rebecca Winkler
Jerrold Wishnow
Sheldon & Elisabeth Wolf
Geraldine Zetzel
Center for Arts in Education
Center for Collaborative Education
Darling Family Trust

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Organizations

Member Alliance for Inclusion and Prevention Inc.
Amelia Peabody Foundation
Appalachian Mountain Club
Arnold Arboretum
Barr Foundation
Bob Gliner Documentary Filmmaker
BELL
Berkelee School of Music
Boston After School and Beyond
Boston Children's Hospital
Boston Family Boat Building
Boston LEAH Mentors
Boston Natural Areas Network
Boston Nature Center
Boston Police Department B-3
Boston Pretzel
Boston Public Library – Mattapan Campus
Boston Public Schools DELTAS
Boston Public Schools Office of English Language Learners
Boston Public Schools Science Department
Boston Schoolyard Initiative
Boston Teacher Residency Program
Boston University Dental School "Smart Smiles"
Boston University Wizards
Boston Youth Environmental Network GOAL Program
Brookview House
Cabot Family Foundation
Carlson Apple Orchards
Children's Services of Roxbury
Chinese Progressive Association
City Councilor Charles Yancey's Office
City Fresh
City Year Boston
City Schools
Clark Cooper Community Gardens
Colorado Street Neighborhood Association
Community Servings
Darling Family Foundation
District Attorney Daniel Conley's Office
Drumlin Farm
Durant Family Foundation
"e" inc.
Encuentro Diaspora
Family Service of Greater Boston
Franklin Park Zoo
Friends of the Children
Foley Senior Residences
Food Project
Forrest Hills Cemetery
Generations Incorporated
Girls Leap
Good Sports
Home Inc.
Iggy's Bread of the World
Jamaica Plain WIC
Latin American Health Institute
Linde Family Foundation
Long Island Shelter
Nellie Mae Education Foundation
Playworks Metro Boston
Haitian Adult Day Center
Hearth at Olmstead Green
Margaret Shea Day Health Program
Massachusetts Department of Education
MassPEP
Mattapan ABCD
Mattapan Community Health Center
Mattapan Food and Fitness
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Mattapan Small Smiles
Mattapan United
Mildred Avenue Community Center
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Perfect Family Dental
Pinnacle LTD
Plimoth Plantation
ReVision House
Roxbury Cool Smiles
Sinha Capoeira Boston
Sportsman's Tennis Club
Strong Women Strong Girls
Suffolk County Sheriff Department
Tech Goes Home
The Boston Foundation
Thompson Island Outward Bound
Urban Improv
U.S. Department of Education
Villa Victoria Center for the Arts
Visiting Iceland Teachers
WBUR Public Radio
Wediko Children's Services
Women's Lunch Place
Young Achievers Parent Family Council

Friends of Young Achievers

20 Outlook Road
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7th grade students worked with City Year corps members to paint a mural of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. during Young Achievers' First Mattapan Day of Service

Send a Young Achievers 7th Grade Student to Study Rainforests in Costa Rica

Each year 15 of our students and 3 teachers spend their April vacations in Costa Rica conducting field research with O2 For Life. Students live on an island, study rainforest ecology, plant trees to help the forest, and meet students at a local school.

Our students fundraise and families contribute to make this amazing learning opportunity possible.

Please consider helping by sponsoring one of our students!

Sponsorships are $250. You will receive:

- An introduction to your student
- A copy of the field guide students make prior to the trip with individualized artwork
- Daily updates written by the group while on the trip
- A reflection of the field learning experience written by the student you sponsored
- Access to the slideshow and video teachers produce at the end of the trip.

To sponsor a student please contact us at
foya@youngachieversschool.org or call 617-296-1120

