



CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

Young Leaders Society who volunteered at Blue Ridge Elementary School from left, include, Nancy Green, Wells Fargo; Curtis Callaway, Shaw Industries; and Kristin Ghare, Shaw Industries.

United Way celebrates 17 years of Making a Difference

SUBMITTED BY UNITED WAY OF NORTHWEST GEORGIA

How would you describe this year's Make a Difference Day?

"Awesome," "difference-making," "great things happened" — these are just a few ways to define this year's United Way Make a Difference Day in Northwest Georgia. On Oct. 21 and 22, 638 volunteers invested 2,448 hours of service to the community on 16 projects. That's worth \$58,262.40 to the community based on The Independent Sector value of a volunteer's time!

Thank you to sponsors Brown Industries and Phenix Flooring for making great things possible. Not only did Brown Industries and Phenix Flooring make a financial investment so that project supplies such as paint, mulch and building materials were available, but they also made a physical investment by rolling up their sleeves and getting to work to help with many of the projects. In all, 30 volunteers from Brown and Phenix participated.

Lynn Whitworth, co-owner of Brown Industries and United Way board member, said "Brown Industries is thrilled to be able to support this for our community. It's a great way to do team building and to give back to our community at the same time." Brown participated in three of the Make a Difference Day projects — Boys and Girls Club, Dalton-Whitfield Library and United Way of Northwest Georgia.

Robbie Slocumb, CEO of the Boys and Girls Clubs serving Chattooga, Gordon, Murray & Whitfield Counties, had this to say about Make a Difference Day: "United Way of Northwest Georgia did it again! We are so very thankful for their willingness to support our organization at every level. We are truly blessed to have businesses like Brown Industries and Phenix Flooring partnering with United Way to support this wonderful day of volunteerism for our community."

Phenix Flooring focused their attention on the Meals on Wheels building project in Murray County. The team repainted the



Phenix Flooring workers who volunteered at Meals on Wheels in Murray County included, from left, Gene Threet, Mark Clayton (president of Phenix), Jared Warnack, Darrell Edwards and John Hall.

entire building including adding a much-needed logo, designed by Brown Industries, so residents could easily identify the Meal on Wheels location.

"In the past, many people would drive past our building with no signs to easily identify

us," said Brian Young, program director for Senior Life Services. "We greatly appreciate Phenix's time and efforts in refurbishing the Murray County Meals on

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Wheels facility. The work done is truly amazing and goes a long way to help our facility get the word out to the Murray community that Meals on Wheels is here, supports our community, and provides services to local seniors in need."

Jared Warnack, director of Sales Support Services at Phenix, coordinated the project and also serves on the United Way Corporate Volunteer Council.

"It was heartwarming to see so many Phenix employees support the Meals on Wheels project," he said. "Phenix, along with the United Way, truly Made a Difference in the lives of hundreds of families in the Chatsworth and Murray County area. This project is another example of how a few people can have a positive impact on the lives of numerous individuals within our community. I would like to thank Mark Clayton and all of the support teams that participated in making this project a huge success."

Curious as to what types of Make a Difference Day projects took place this year?

■ **Carter Hope Center:** Volunteers installed steps in-between the parking lot and the women's housing.

■ **Pleasant Grove Elementary School:** Dalton State College's social work majors gave a special education classroom a makeover by brightening up the walls, creating sensory tubs, making a cozier reading nook and by installing raised bed gardens for classroom learning.

■ **Roan School:** Volunteers assembled raised bed gardens for classrooms to use.

■ **Women's Enrichment Center:** Volunteers painted two classrooms and put sealant on a brick wall to keep it from deteriorating.

■ **United Way of Northwest Georgia:** Volunteers painted the bathrooms, replaced carpet tile and spruced up the grounds of United Way of Northwest Georgia.

■ **North Georgia Healthcare Partnership:** Volunteers sanded and painted four old newspaper boxes to transform them into book boxes. These boxes will be placed in the community for people to put books in or take a book to enjoy.

■ **Northwest Georgia Family Crisis Center:** Volunteers assisted in decorating and hosting a fall festival for the former and current clients on the



Brown Industries employees who volunteered at the Dalton-Whitfield County included Eva Fraire, left, and Rachel Ripley.

crisis center.

■ **Dalton-Whitfield County Library:** Volunteers decorated bags and stuffed them with a blanket, a stuffed animal and several books. These bedtime bags will be given to children at the Whitfield County-Dalton Day Care Center.

■ **Murray County Meals on Wheels:** Volunteers painted the entire building and applied two logos onto the building so that it can now be identified. Prior to this, there were no signs to indicate that the building is a Meals on Wheels location.

■ **Blue Ridge Elementary School:** Volunteers built a see-through planter for the school garden. This will allow the students to observe the growth of a living plant under the soil.

■ **Boys and Girls Club:** Dalton and Chatsworth Clubs: Volunteers completed an expansion of the mountain bike park at the Carl Rollins Unit and completed site prep at the Chatsworth unit to prepare for adding recreation areas.

■ **New Hope Middle School:** Volunteers planted butterfly bushes, put up bird houses and spread mulch.

■ **Northwest Georgia SORBA:** Volunteers cleaned up the entrance to the Raisin Trails Park. They also built a bike rack and added on to the existing bike trails.

■ **Young Leader's Society:** Volunteers repainted the USA maps at Cohutta Elementary and City Park Schools. They also created two new maps at Woodlawn Elementary and Eastside Elementary Schools.

■ **Southeast Whitfield High**

School: Volunteers created books in French that will be published and put into elementary schools to encourage younger students to learn a new language.

■ **Conasauga River Watershed Clean-Up:** Volunteers removed more than 5 tons of trash from seven different sites in Whitfield and Murray counties.

United Way Board Chair Karen Townsend said, "Thank you to Brown Industries, Phenix Flooring and all the volunteers for impacting our communities by investing in volunteer service. I enjoyed touring some of the sites to see the impact that will be sustainable for years to come. It takes everyone in our community working together to make this a great place to live, work, and raise our families. Our community is a special place, and I am proud to be a part of United Way of Northwest Georgia's work to improve lives."

Created by USA Weekend, Make a Difference Day is an annual volunteer event that takes place on the fourth Saturday of every October. Millions of Americans across the country will spend Make a Difference Day doing volunteer projects to improve their communities and helping neighbors in need.

The day is the largest community service effort in the nation, symbolizing the ongoing volunteer efforts of corporations, government leaders, charitable organizations and concerned citizens by focusing on projects that can be implemented on that one day.