



London, England



Bangalore, India

Celebrating

By Kathryn H. Olson
Welfare Services

Cleaning buildings, mopping floors, teaching students, collecting food, helping immigrants, visiting widows, weeding grounds, and painting schools. These are just a few of the many service projects carried out last year by Church members responding to the First Presidency's invitation to perform a day of service in commemoration of the 75th anniversary of the welfare program. These projects have profoundly affected those who served and those who were served. Many communities around the world have been changed for the better.

London, England

Church members in London celebrated the anniversary by helping clean up Tottenham, a city that experienced the August 2011 riots. In a regional park, volunteers weeded, built flower beds, and cleared litter.

Members also served at a children's hospice, where they cleaned garden pathways and made the hospice grounds more accommodating to the children and their families. Charlotte Illera helped coordinate the project. "It was really hard work, but it was really sort of joyful work as well," she said. "Even a little thing like sweeping up can be such a benefit. You don't need to have any great skills. Just little things can make a difference to other people."

Rudi Champagne shared his view on the inspiration behind the First Presidency's invitation to serve: "I think this revelation was to bring us closer together—to bring us out in the community, to meet new people." He continued, "To see the Church getting involved in the community is a wonderful thing. To be a part of it is even more special. It has strengthened my testimony, and it has given me the desire to do more."



Bujumbura, Burundi

a Day of Service

Hong Kong, China

Adult leaders of the youth in the Hong Kong China Stake asked the youth council to choose their own service project. After the youth looked into their community's needs, they decided to teach children from low-income families at a local school. Around 125 youth taught over 80 schoolchildren about developing talents, making healthy food, holding family gatherings, and creating true friendships.

"This was not just a one-time influence," said Anita Shum, stake Young Women president. "What the youth have done with the kids could have a lasting effect." She added that the youth now have good memories and experiences that will bless them forever.

Accra, Ghana

Members in Accra, Ghana, participated in a day of service by painting schools, sweeping

streets and gutters, and cleaning the grounds around hospitals and clinics.

Emma Owusu Ansah of the Accra Ghana Christiansborg Stake was involved in planning their day of service. "Coming together as members of the Church unifies us and makes a principle like service easier to obey," she said. At the end of the project, members gathered to share their testimonies. Sister Ansah remarked, "After listening to the individual testimonies, I realized how much we are missing when not serving others."

When President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency, issued the invitation to participate in a day of service, he spoke of the unifying effect the projects would have: "A . . . gospel principle that has been a guide to me in welfare work is the power and blessing of unity. When we join hands to serve people in need, the Lord unites our hearts."¹



Falls Church, Virginia, USA



FEELINGS OF CHARITY

“The Lord is keeping His promise to you as you keep yours. As you serve others for Him, He lets you feel His love. And in time, feelings of charity become part of your very nature. And you will receive the assurance of Mormon in your heart as you persist in serving others in life that all will be well with you.”

President Henry B. Eyring, First Counselor in the First Presidency, “A Witness,” Ensign, Nov. 2011, 68.

Córdoba, Argentina

Despite the rain on an October day, 1,601 Latter-day Saints from five stakes in Córdoba, Argentina, donated a combined 10,234 hours of service at a nursing home. Members delivered previously collected clothing, food, and hygiene kits. They also gardened, painted walls and benches, and performed talent shows. A number of sisters also volunteered hair, foot, and hand care services.

“I know that project was a help not only for them but for me too,” said 14-year-old Rocío B. after the project. “I knew I was doing the right thing and that Heavenly Father was pleased with me.”

São Paulo, Brazil

Members of the São Paulo Brazil Stake felt inspired to collect sugar, oil, rice, and beans and donate the food to two charities. Then they trained representatives from the charities in the basics of food storage. Members also volunteered to present education, finance, and employment training to stake and community members to help them develop the skills necessary to compete for available jobs.

“The community we invited was delighted

with the work of the Church. Many did not know us, but they went away with good feelings,” said stake member Kátia Ribeiro. “Among the members, there was a spirit of unity and service, and among those who were served, there was a spirit of deep gratitude.”

Falls Church, Virginia, USA

Members in Falls Church, Virginia, USA, felt the joy of serving together at two homeless shelters. Scrubbing a wall, Adeana Alvarez told a fellow ward member, “I’ve had a frustrating

week, and it feels good to just take out the frustration on this wall! We all need service at some time in our lives, and it’s good to do it for other people.”

Another ward member, Anne Sorensen, remarked, “It’s a great way to be connected with your community. I now feel more invested in what is going on with that organization. Every time I drive by here, I’ll think about the people who attend classes here and hope that the work we did gives them a tangible way to feel like they aren’t alone in what they are doing to improve their lives.”

Tokorozawa, Japan

At an elementary school in Tokorozawa, Church members presented a seminar on food storage to 50 parents and educators. Because of the March 2011 earthquake, community members were eager to learn how to prepare for natural disasters, especially how to put together a long-term food supply.

“Even though the great east Japan earthquake occurred, I hadn’t done anything to prepare,” said one participant. “I was glad I was able to learn this. I want to find a place to store food, and I want to do this to protect my dear family.”

TOP: PHOTOGRAPH BY TODD SCHWANEVELDT

Musashino Japan Stake member Akihito Suda observed that the Light of Christ touched the community as members showed the preparations they had made in case of a crisis. “Christ is the Light of the World,” he said. “His teachings illuminate the community.”

Tallinn, Estonia

Church members in Tallinn spent a day helping needy community members perform maintenance on their homes. Some participants chopped wood and shoveled coal, while others cleaned carpets, changed curtains, and washed windows and walls.

Maila Chan went with her family to visit an older woman and chop wood for her. “As a mother I am so happy that our family had such a wonderful experience,” she said. “How great it is that while serving others, you forget your own problems completely. I know that while serving others, we only serve our God.”

Margit Timakov also observed, “Putting aside my own duties and committing myself wholly

to helping somebody, I understood what power sacrifice really has. We do not need to ask why or whether we could have done something else. We just reach out and help. We help because we care. We help because we want to follow Christ’s example.”

The Fruit of Your Labors

The testimonies of those who served their communities around the world teach us that by serving, we feel better about ourselves and our testimonies grow. President Eyring affirmed that we are blessed for our service: “For the Master I extend thanks for your work to serve the children of our Heavenly Father. He knows you, and He sees your effort, diligence, and sacrifice. I pray that He will grant you the blessing of seeing the fruit of your labors in the happiness of those you have helped and with whom you have helped for the Lord.”² ■

NOTES

1. Henry B. Eyring, “Opportunities to Do Good,” *Ensign*, May 2011, 25.
2. Henry B. Eyring, *Ensign*, May 2011, 26.

ANSWERING QUESTIONS

Seeing Mormon Helping Hands in the community, some may wonder if Church members are helping fellow Latter-day Saints only or those of other faiths as well. We are, of course, helping both. We strive to follow the Savior’s example in serving, whether that’s raking leaves in a neighbor’s yard or sending and distributing tons of supplies to respond to a natural disaster. We seek to help others, regardless of their faith or culture.

RECOGNITION IN COMMUNITIES

One of the common attributes of the worldwide day of service projects was the effect they had on local communities. Many passersby stopped to ask project participants questions about the Church, and members shared their testimonies.

In several parts of the world, government officials recognized the efforts of Church members. For instance, in a radio interview about the day of service, the chief from the Kisanga quarter of Lubumbashi, Democratic Republic of the Congo, called on people of other religions to follow the example of “the Mormons” in serving the community.

Of the service given by 300 members of the Church in the greater London area, the mayor, Boris Johnson, remarked, “Now, more than ever, it is great to see community-minded Londoners—volunteers—who turned out in droves.”

Governor Dannel Malloy of Connecticut, USA, and Governor Robert McConnell of Virginia, USA, issued proclamations to honor the days of service in their states. Governor Malloy said in his proclamation, “We are thankful to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints for their service to others and [for their] invitation to all of the residents of all faiths and backgrounds to join with them as they celebrate their anniversary year of service.”

