



MLK holiday brings out community in Marin City

Jim Staats

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Dr. Lois Moore said she was so touched by the words of a Marin City boy, she wanted his poetry to help kick off a daylong celebration of Martin Luther King Jr.

"But this King, even in death, even today, stands strong, stands proud, stands tall, and we remember," Moore said, reading a poem by Stephen Louis, an eighth-grader at Martin Luther King Jr. Academy.

Moore of Novato, a longtime instructor and civil rights advocate, spoke at a breakfast forum Monday at the Manzanita Recreation Center in Marin City, where some 150 people gathered to celebrate the late civil rights leader's birthday.

"We know without him we would not be here," Moore said. "We have a King to thank for being here."

The Marin City celebration, presented by the Grassroots Leadership Network of Marin in conjunction with other local organizations, featured discussion groups on how the community could continue to build on Martin Luther King's progress. Other Marin events Monday included an annual interfaith evening of music and artistic expression in honor of King, presented by the Marin Interfaith Council at the Mill Valley Community Center in Mill Valley.

In the morning program, numerous community leaders were honored with leadership service awards.

"It may be a new generation, but challenges are still with us," said keynote speaker Dan Daniels, a Bay Area director of the NAACP, citing national politics as a harbinger of change.

"We may have a black president or we may have a female president," Daniels said. "It is time for a change, and it is time to move forward. Let's not let Dr. King's message die."

As community leaders and local politicians mulled over the future, a gathering of more than 50 volunteers of all ages spent a wet morning planting roses, plucking weeds, painting concrete stepping stones and clearing trash in surrounding gardens of the Marguerita Johnson Senior Center in Marin City.

The beautification project, overseen by about 30 members of the Marin Conservation Corps, was part of an effort to revitalize the George "Rocky" Graham Memorial Garden, dedicated on Martin Luther King Jr. Day in 2005, with native plants.

Parents and students from Santa Venetia Valley in San Rafael, Sinaloa Middle School in Novato and others joined students from local schools Bayside Elementary School and Martin Luther King Jr. Academy.

"It's good to know you're doing something to help the community," said 13-year-old Will Orwig of Kentfield, as he and his 10-year-old brother, Nate, sat side by side painting stone slabs to be used for garden steps. Will said the brothers came with their parents on their own to help.

Mill Valley resident Liz Arnold, who has been involved with the annual gardening project for three

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years, was pleased to be doing the dirty work of yanking out weeds.

"I just think on Martin Luther King Jr. Day it's nice to be part of a group, doing something to honor Dr. King," she said.

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