

HOMEBLOG

Honoring Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. By Planting the Seeds of Service and Citizenship

JANUARY 18, 2016 AT 5:02 PM ET BY WENDY SPENCER AND ATASHA JAMES

Summary: To honor Dr. King, the President and the First Lady participated in a service project at an elementary school that is home to many students from military families.



President Barack Obama leads a cheer with students, mentees, staff and volunteers during a Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service event at Leckie Elementary School in Washington, D.C., Jan. 18, 2016. (Official White House Photo by Pete Souza)

Today, to honor the Martin Luther King, Jr. National Day of Service, President and Mrs. Obama participated in a community service project

at Leckie Elementary School on MLK Avenue in Southwest Washington D.C., joined by their mentees in the White House Mentorship and Leadership Program, AmeriCorps members and students, parents and teachers at the school.

The President and First Lady helped construct moveable planters with grow lights, planted vegetables, and created labels to place in the planters, which will be part of a long-lasting “MLK Garden” at the school. They also assembled backpacks filled with books related to healthy eating and Dr. King's life story for all 530 Leckie students. Other students and mentees joined in physical fitness activities led by AmeriCorps members that demonstrated how play is used to help youth resolve conflicts and develop leadership skills.



President Barack Obama plants vegetable seeds with students during a Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service event at Leckie Elementary School in Washington, D.C., Jan. 18, 2016. (Official White House Photo by Pete Souza)

Leckie Elementary is located near the Joint Base Anacostia-Bolling, which houses Air Force, Navy, and Army service members, and about 30 percent of the students are from military families. Like many schools across the country, Leckie is the nerve center of community involvement. Long after the final bell rings, parents work with staff on school activities, ranging from robotics competitions to community gardens to art projects to fitness classes.

And like 10,000 other public schools across the country, Leckie is a shining example of how national service programs—combined with the buy-in of school leadership, parents, and community leaders—help students achieve their academic goals and learn lifelong skills that make them healthier.



First Lady Michelle Obama packs bags with books during a Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service event at Leckie Elementary School in Washington, D.C., Jan. 18, 2016. (Official White House Photo by Lawrence Jackson)

City Year and FoodCorps AmeriCorps members have helped Leckie improve student attendance and behavior while increasing literacy skills, physical activity, and healthy eating habits. In fact, Leckie is proud to be recognized for closing the achievement gap for students of color in both math and reading for three consecutive years.

Tomorrow, as students pick up their new backpacks and walk passed the additions to the school garden, they will be inspired to become the engaged citizens that Dr. King envisioned and the President described in his [final State of the Union of Address](#):

“We need every American to stay active in our public life -- and not just during election time -- so that our public life reflects the goodness and the decency that I see in the American people every single day. It is not easy. Our brand of democracy is hard. But I can promise that a little over a year from now, when I no

longer hold this office, I will be right there with you as a citizen, inspired by those voices of fairness and vision, of grit and good humor and kindness that helped America travel so far.”



President Barack Obama, with First Lady Michelle Obama, gets a hug from a mentee during a Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service event at Leckie Elementary School in Washington, D.C., Jan. 18, 2016. (Official White House Photo by Pete Souza)

Since the earliest days of his Administration, President Obama has worked to foster social innovation, expand opportunities for Americans to serve, and increase the impact citizens have in our communities and across the nation. Engaging citizens in addressing our country's biggest challenges is a cornerstone of the Obama Administration and is reflected in key Administration initiatives, such as [Let's Move!](#), [Joining Forces](#), [Reach Higher](#), [Better Make Room](#), and [My Brother's Keeper](#).

To find out how you can get involved in your community, visit serve.gov.

Wendy Spencer is the CEO of the Corporation for National and Community Service, a federal agency that administers AmeriCorps,

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