



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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LOCAL BUSINESSES DONATE PRODUCTS, TIME AND EFFORT FOR NATIONAL SERVICE MEMORIAL

Charleston, W.VA. – Volunteers gathered last Saturday to clean up litter along Washington Street in honor of National AmeriCorps Week. Following the clean up, a memorial ceremony at the United Way of Central West Virginia honoring three AmeriCorps members that passed away during their term of service this year.

Volunteers gathered to honor the service and lives of Donna Bonnell, Nick Haynes and Richard Holder. The memorial included brief comments from Kim Tieman, executive director of Volunteer West Virginia, Betsy Southall, program director of LifeBridge AmeriCorps, and a benediction from John Ballengee, executive director of the United Way of Central West Virginia.

A living memorial in the form of a garden was created to honor the members and included several flowers, a tree, a ceramic sculpture, a bench and a memorial plaque.

Several local businesses donated their time, efforts and products to the memorial. James H. Dingess and Cary Levenson, both from Valley Gardens, helped the LifeBridge AmeriCorps program plan and create the memorial garden. Scott Means, owner of Means Stone in Elkview, helped plan and supply flagstone for the garden. Dave Harless of Sears Monument helped with the planning and creation of the memorial stone in the garden, the United Way of Central West Virginia donated the land for the garden and allowed staff to dedicate their time to planning and building the garden, and Noel Slowikowski created and donated the ceramic sculpture that now sits in the garden.

“The garden was a combined effort of our staff here at the United Way and of so many local businesses,” Betsy Southall, program director for LifeBridge AmeriCorps, said. “We truly

could not have pulled off the creation of this memorial without all of the support we got from these local businesses. Now the memory of our AmeriCorps members can live on.”

AmeriCorps Week is a national event that takes place each year in May. This year’s event begins on May 8th and continues through May 15. The event provides an opportunity for AmeriCorps members, alums, grantees, program partners, and friends to shine a spotlight on AmeriCorps and motivate more Americans to serve.

Other AmeriCorps efforts that took place during the week included a Volunteer Night kick-off event at the Appalachian Power Park on Friday, May 7th and a celebration ceremony from the Mountain State Leaders program, which is a leadership training program provided to all AmeriCorps members throughout West Virginia on May 12th. Graduates of the training program gathered in Charleston to celebrate the service projects they’ve completed as a result of their participation in the program.

For more information about AmeriCorps in West Virginia, contact Todd Goddard at 304-558-0111 or email todd.a.goddard@wv.gov.

AmeriCorps West Virginia is a program of Volunteer West Virginia, the state’s Commission for National and Community Service. The agency challenges West Virginians to strengthen their communities through service and volunteerism by identifying and mobilizing resources, promoting an ethic of service, and empowering communities to solve problems and improve the quality of life for individuals and families.

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