

City Council Meeting: January 29, 2015

My name is _____

- Thank you for giving us time to speak to you this evening.
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- We are here to report about the 2015 city-wide MLK Day of Service referred to in City Council Resolution #62
- This was our 5th Annual Cambridge Martin Luther King Day of Service.
- We've grown from 500 our first year to well over 2000 volunteers last year this year! Volunteers who came to Central Square on their day off to spend the afternoon honoring Dr. Martin Luther King's memory by working together to make a difference in the lives of others.
- This day of service only happens because of partners throughout the community including Cambridge Arts Council, the DPW, the City Manager's Office, the Police Dept, the YWCA, Cambridge Community Foundation and many area businesses like Whole Foods, Trader Joes, Gentle Giant, Cambridge Trust, Fresh Pond Market and many more.

I want to give you a sense of what took place on this year's MLK Day of Service

On Monday January 19,

a crowd of more than a thousand people gathered in front of City Hall for the Welcome Gathering at 2pm

It was cold but sunny

There was no snow yet

- The Mayor welcomed them.
- The Amigos School Chorus sang Child of Peace.
- Reverend Brenda Brown from Massachusetts Avenue Baptist Church addressed the crowd.

- Past Cambridge Poet Populist Jean Dany Joachim read poems he had written
 - reflecting on justice and equality and the recent events in Ferguson and Staten Island.
- A trio of CRLS students led the crowd in *This Little Light of Mine*.

Then the volunteers headed to *City Hall, the Senior Center, the YWCA and St. Peters Episcopal Church* to get to work.

- they made thousands of Valentines for homebound elders and Cambridge veterans (many are festooning the windows of City Hall but will come down next week to be delivered on Valentines Day)
- they made blankets and scarves for homeless children, teens and adults
- they made activity kits for children waiting in hospital emergency rooms
- they made personal care kits for homeless teens and adults from toiletries **donated by every hotel in Cambridge**
- they made bookmarks for literacy projects
- they sorted donated food, winter clothing and childrens books

These gifts will reach almost 10,000 people helped by more than 70 non-profits in Cambridge and Somerville.

My name is []

[] and I would like to tell you two stories.

The First Story

This MLK Day of Service we wanted to try to collect more food for the city's 12 food pantries.

Mayor Maher and his office helped organize a new neighborhood food drive. 20 high school students fanned out to deliver 1500 grocery bags donated by Whole Foods to houses in Huron Village and Haggerty School neighborhoods the week before MLK Day.

The ask was simple. Fill the bag with non-perishable food and leave it on your doorstep MLK Day morning.

On MLK Day morning those 20 high school students and 4 adults with cars returned to those neighborhoods and found more than 500 bags of groceries waiting for them. Enough food to fill 5 DPW trucks. The bags were brought to City Hall sorted and distributed out to the 12 food pantries in the City.

This was so successful, we are hoping it will be replicated again and again in all of Cambridge neighborhoods over the course of the year!

This initiative is critical in helping to fill the shelves of the city food pantries and raise awareness of those that are hungry among us.

My name is []

The Second Story

As you know, MLK Day volunteers designed and made hundreds of blankets and scarves for homeless children, teens and adults in the city.

In the 6 days after MLK Day more than dozens of volunteers worked hard to finish those blankets and scarves in their homes.

The intention was to deliver them this week . . . but then the blizzard was forecast.

Many Helping Hands put out a call for volunteers to help make deliveries on Monday, the eve of the storm.

More than two dozen people fanned out across Cambridge and Somerville to deliver more than 400 – yes more than 400 – handmade fleece scarves and blankets to homeless children, teens and adults before the blizzard hit.

There are many, many more stories like these that took place on MLK Day and will take place in the coming weeks as we finish and deliver the some 2500 Valentines to elders and veterans.

Martin Luther King Day of Service itself is a story of people from across our community coming to work together to help others in need.

It is a story of many helping hands.

Thank you very much.