NEWS

"You perceive with your mind, that's the inner"
CLINT EASTWOOD GORILLAZ

Students volunteer for New Haven nonprofits on day of service

BY ASHLEY TORRES JIMENEZ
CONTRIBUTING REPORTER

Over 100 students gathered in Dwight Hall on Saturday to spread out and volunteer for nonprofits across New Haven.

The day of service, hosted by Dwight Hall and the Yale College Council, gave students opportunities to volunteer for diverse activities ranging from food pantries to cleaning up the New Haven Green to refugee nonprofits. Volunteers could work multiple two-hour shifts within a variety of nonprofits.

Alexandra Ruiz '28, the New Haven engagement chair for the YCC, told the News in an interview that "obviously I don't want this to be just a one-time thing, but hopefully it's an introduction to sustain partnerships," adding that she hoped the event would be "a stepping stone for people to continue to develop whatever that relationship is."

Jonathan Chen '30, who volunteered at the event, wrote in a text message to the News that he wanted to participate because he felt he didn't do enough volunteering in high school. Chen volunteered with Loaves and Fishes, a food pantry and clothing closet, and the New Haven PAUSE project, a Yale-affiliated charity that provides footwear and podiatric care for homeless people.

"I also wanted to go out into the New Haven community and help people rather than just staying in the Yale bubble," Chen said.

One of the volunteer opportunities available was helping clean up the New Haven Green. Ward 1 Alder Elias Theodore '27, who participated in the cleanup, wrote in an email to the News that "picking up trash on the Green reminds you just how vast the space is and how much plastic we as a society go through — the small pieces are especially common and easy to miss."

"Yale should be a university community where people are active members of this community, of this city, and see themselves as real participants and contributors," Theodore said.

Saturday was deliberately chosen to coincide with National Park Cleanup Day, which was also on Sept. 19, Ruiz said.

The next day of service will be held on May 8, according to the Yale Alumni Association website.

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JACK ENNIS / CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHER
More than 100 students participated in the Saturday volunteering event hosted by Dwight Hall and the Yale College Council. Participants could choose to do work ranging from aiding food pantries to cleaning up the New Haven Green.

A thousand plants take root at West Rock school in community dig

BY KELLYN KOLBER
CONTRIBUTING REPORTER

Yale students, local educators, environmental advocates, families and other volunteers worked together to place 1,000 plants around the Elm City Montessori School in West Rock on Saturday.

The planting event was organized in partnership with Save the Sound, a regional environmental nonprofit focused on protecting local waterways and wildlife. It represented the culmination of months of planning and reflected the ongoing relationship between the two organizations that began over a year ago.

"It has been shown that regular exposure to nature in the outdoors is good for kids and their forever-growing brains," Lys Gant, a project coordinator with Save the Sound, said. "Having exposure to native plants engages kids more in having those conversations about why native plants are important, why invasive species remediation is important."

The partnership between the nonprofit and the school gained momentum last year after a donor supported the planting project and demand among school leaders for green infrastructure increased.

According to Gant, Elm City Montessori was initially looking to improve their parking lot spaces by making them more sustainable.

"There was an interest expressed in doing something with parking lot islands as a way of making them more environmentally friendly, as opposed to just being grass covered areas," Gant said, adding that grass alone cannot always absorb excessive stormwater.

Last fall, Save the Sound assisted in planting 800 native species in these parking lot islands to support the space's resilience.

This year, the nonprofit and Elm City Montessori expanded on that project by introducing more native plants into the school's playground spaces, not only to benefit the environment but to provide a learning opportunity for students.

"We want this space to be filled with native plants that provide habitat and food for animals, and we want our kids to be a part of stewardship work and care for the environment in a variety of important ways," David Weinreb, one of the event's organizers and the leader of Elm City Montessori school operations, said.

Some parents said the educational aspect of the planting event motivated them to attend with their children.

"I was just talking to my kids in the car about how we are helping make the world better, and I think it's important to model that for them," Laura Salazar, a mother of three and a teacher at the school, said. "By planting trees, we're giving back to the Earth, and that is really a core value for Montessori."

A crew of Yale students worked diligently alongside other volunteers. Tenzin Youdon '28, who interns at Elm City Montessori and is a New Haven native, emphasized the importance of interacting with the city as a Yale student.

"A lot of what public school interns do is building bridges between Yale and the New Haven Community, and that's what I hope to do," she said. "In the role that I'm in, I want to be able to funnel resources from Yale into New Haven public schools and the greater community."

Brendan Kaminski '28 and Wynter Radey-Morgan '29, members of the Yale College Council, said that events like Saturday's planting help narrow the distance between Yale and its home city, often referred to as the town-gown divide.

"I think a lot of times people talk about the Yale bubble, but they don't realize you can easily do something about it," Radey-Morgan said, referring to the perception that students are separated from the city around them. "Making the choice to come out and do this is a way for you to pop that Yale bubble and make an impact on the place we're calling home for the next few years."

"When you enter as a Yale student, you're not just a citizen of Yale; you're a citizen of New Haven," Kaminski added.

Along with various volunteer groups, the event brought together members of Emerge, a personal development program that supports formerly incarcerated people as they integrate back into their communities.

Reinaldo Cruz, Co-Executive Director of Emerge, said that Save the Sound helps participants in his program become more informed about environmental issues.

"It's been a beautiful situation because our people can learn about invasive species, how we impact the sewer system and green skills in relation to creating gardens and taking care of them," Cruz said in a phone interview.

By the time the event wrapped up, volunteers had spent hours transforming the school's outdoor spaces. But organizers said the plants themselves represented only part of the project's purpose. Elm City Montessori Principal Julia Webb said the event reflected a central tenet of the school's educational philosophy.

"The principles of Montessori are that as human beings and as educators we are responsible for having children understand their place in the universe and the world," Webb said. "A huge part of that is about living in peace and understanding with the environment around us."

Connecticut has around 1,700 native plant species, according to the state's Department of Energy and Environmental Protection.

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KELLYN KOLBER / CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHER
A Saturday volunteer event saw Yale students, nonprofit leaders and elementary schoolers take up trowels to place 1,000 native plants at the Elm City Montessori school. Organizers hope the greenery will nurture growing young brains.

Largest ever Jewish gathering on Old Campus held for Shabbat

BY SASHA CABRAL
STAFF REPORTER

Chabad at Yale, a Jewish cultural organization on campus, hosted about 700 attendees for Shabbat under a big tent on Old Campus on Friday.

In its second run, the event, dubbed "Lux et Shabbat," is an annual celebration of Jewish life for students at Yale and New Haven residents. The Thursday event was the biggest gathering of Jews on Old Campus in Yale's documented history, according to organizers.

"The first Jewish students enrolled at Yale a little bit later in the 18th century, and while not without ups and downs and challenges, the Jewish community at Yale has continued to grow and thrive since that time," Yale College Dean Pericles Lewis said in a speech.

Lewis also spoke about the Hebrew origins of Yale's motto: Lux et Veritas. The motto is a rough translation of the Hebrew phrase, "Urim v'Thummim," which means "lights and perfections."

Event organizers provided attendees with small cloth bags to place their phones in, hoping to foster in-person connectivity and celebration.

"The idea was that if you disconnect from technology for a while, you might find that the real connection with those around you is strengthened, and that's what Shabbat is all about," event chair and general board member Joshua Danziger '28 said in an interview.

Danziger said his goal for the event was to "inspire weekly attendance" at Chabad at Yale's weekly Shabbat dinners on Friday nights and other programming throughout the year.

"I hope this was really a catalyst for greater participation in Shabbat dinners and other community events throughout the year," Danzinger said before recalling the sense of community fostered during a performance by the Maccabeats, a Jewish acapella group, during the event.

"I come back to this scene of everybody standing there dancing and singing, those same songs they sang as children, and the laughter and the joy, and that's what it's all about on Shabbat."

Old Campus is located at 344 College St.

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CRYSTAL HUANG / CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHER
The second iteration of the annual "Lux et Shabbat," hosted by Chabad, boasted around 700 attendees, according to organizers. The event focused on fostering community and featured speakers including Yale College Dean Pericles Lewis.