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Temple hosts MLK Day of Service for the record books

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Temple students, faculty and staff joined with Philadelphians of all ages Monday to mark Martin Luther King, Jr. Day by engaging in an array of service projects in the Liacouras Center and throughout the surrounding community.

The program drew volunteers from the city and region to participate in more than 150 projects at the Liacouras Center. For the event's signature project, Temple students joined with YouthBuild Philadelphia Charter School, HOPE worldwide, One Day at a Time and other volunteers to assemble an environmentally-friendly playground, including picnic tables and park benches. The equipment will be

installed at the Winchester Recreation Center, located near Temple at 15th Street between York and Dauphin streets.

Other Liacouras Center activities included a health fair, home weatherization seminars, donation sorting, pie making and an indoor children's carnival.

In greeting participants at the event, Temple President Ann Weaver Hart said, "We welcome the thousands from throughout the Greater Philadelphia region to Temple to join us in saluting Dr. King's legacy... Dr. King said that 'we are all tied [together] in a single garment of destiny, and what affects one directly affects us all.' Today, that 'garment of destiny' is symbolized by our shared work in service to others."

The Liacouras Center served as a launching pad for activities throughout Philadelphia and the surrounding region. Taken as a whole, the events represent the largest King Day service event in the nation, said Todd Bernstein, president of Global Citizen, the non-profit organization that organized the day. The 14th Annual Greater Philadelphia Day of Service drew a national record 65,000 volunteers to participate in nearly 900 service projects region-wide.

Members of the university community also volunteered for a range of projects in the areas surrounding Temple. Volunteers with Temple's University Community Collaborative of Philadelphia (UCCP) held a cleanup project at Penrose Recreation

Center, at 12th Street and Susquehanna Avenue; the Department of Nursing offered health screenings and activities for youth at Norris Homes, at 11th and Berks Streets; and the School of Social Administration held a "knit in" event on campus in which faculty and staff knitted and crocheted scarves for men, women and children in area shelters.

The day's service theme took on special significance in light of the historic inauguration of President Barack Obama, who called on Americans across the nation to volunteer.

"On election night," said Bernstein, "(President-elect Obama) said 'So let us summon a new spirit of patriotism, of responsibility, where each of us resolves to pitch in and work harder and look after not only ourselves but each other.'"

In that spirit, Bernstein said, Global Citizen has launched a year-long initiative known as "MLK 365," which will promote sustainable civic engagement and connect volunteers with ongoing service opportunities.

The national King Day of Service was created in 1994 through federal legislation co-authored by former Pennsylvania U.S. Senator Harris Wofford and Georgia Congressman John Lewis, both veterans of the Civil Rights movement with Dr. King. The act called for the transformation of the King federal holiday from simply a "day off" into a "day on" of active citizenship and service.

Martin Luther King Day activities at Temple launched a year-long celebration of the university's 125-year anniversary.