

Oregon youth work to 'make a difference'

By Kathryn Godsiff
Correspondent

A group of hard-working youth put their labors to use to make a difference in their community on Make a Difference Day in Sisters last Friday. Volunteers and participants from Heart of Oregon Corps/Youth Build, Kiwanis, Rotary and the community descended on Harmony Farm Sanctuary and the Seed to Table garden to tackle a host of projects.

Make a Difference Day is a national event, officially taking place on the fourth Saturday of October, involving millions of volunteers and thousands of projects. It is an initiative of *USA Today*, backed by Points of Light and Newman's Own.

This year in Sisters, Heart of Oregon Corps staff decided to make a difference at two organizations they had volunteered at previously, and they wanted to include the community in their efforts. The action happened on a weekday because that was when the energetic and skilled youth were available. Youth Build is one of five programs providing vocational training that Heart of Oregon Corps

offers to youth ages 16-24. Community service is one of the requirements of the program.

On Friday the young people and community volunteers at Harmony Farm were working on building a shelter for some newly acquired sheep and had been toiling at digging in a fenceline for the rabbit pen when they ran into a layer of rock. The nearby horses, goats and pigs provided a welcome diversion from their labors. The animals are rescues and assist therapist and farm owner Robine Bots in her psychotherapy practice.

Jen Binks, staff member of Heart of Oregon Corps and volunteer at Harmony Farm said, "This is our third work party here, and everyone was all smiles. It's because of the animals."

Sky Nelson is a Youth Build participant from Redmond who loves coming to Harmony Farm.

"This is my favorite service project of the year. It's one of the best places we've been," Nelson said.

Indeed, the animals certainly appeared happy to be hosting a busy group of hammer- and shovel-wielding volunteers. A small paint pony



PHOTO BY KATHRYN GODSIFF

Youth Build participants working on the new sheep shelter at Harmony Farm.

named Cowboy sighed in contentment as Youth Build participant Clinton Seidel stroked his face. At lunchtime, a couple of pot-bellied pigs sidled hopefully alongside the table, aiming for a scratch or scrap of pizza.

Harmony Farm owner Bots was pleased to see the interactions between the volunteers and with the animals.

"This is like a dream come true. It's the kind of community I've wanted to build," she

said. The actual building happening through the day was a happy bonus.

Meanwhile, over at Seed to Table, a greenhouse took shape and the garden beds were tucked in for the winter. The greenhouse was made possible by a grant from the Meyer Memorial Trust. Once again, work done by Youth Build was appreciated by the organization they served.

Audrey Tehan is the director of Seed to Table. She said,

"This is one of our favorite groups to have here. They are making a huge difference in the community."

Seed to Table has partnered with Youth Build previously, providing science education and donating some fresh vegetables in the process.

The Make a Difference Day participants went home knowing they had accomplished their purposes, plus they scored great lunches and fine fellowship throughout the day.

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