



college forward

POINTS OF LIGHT
&
HANDS ON NETWORK

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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◆ 100% of College Forward's students have been **accepted into colleges nationwide**

◆ College Forward students' **ACT scores increased** by an average of **22%**

◆ College Forward's high school graduates are awarded an average of over **\$16,000 each in scholarships and grants**

Underserved Youth Carry Out Dr. King's Legacy of Service

Local nonprofit College Forward mobilizes students for volunteer projects

AUSTIN, Texas — Martin Luther King believed that "everybody can be great, because everybody can serve," and each year, thousands of people across the country celebrate his legacy by volunteering in their community. On January 19, 2008, College Forward, an Austin-based educational nonprofit, will join this national movement by leading over 50 low-income student volunteers in carrying out environmental restoration projects.

The Martin Luther King Day of Service has grown steadily from a local project to a national movement led by the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) in partnership with national organizations such as Points of Light & Hands On Network. The recently merged organization, which has a presence in hundreds of communities nationwide, awarded College Forward a "Building the Beloved Community" grant to fund their effort.

Michelle Nunn, CEO of Points of Light & Hands On Network, said, "Dr. King's legacy was bringing people together across racial and socio-economic lines through meaningful activity that resulted in a better and more unified country. All of us can build on that legacy by reaching across artificial barriers to serve our neighbors and address community needs."

College Forward will accomplish this by leading restoration projects at four sites, reflecting the geographic diversity of the population they serve:

- Del Valle High School students will work at County Club Creek Trail in southeast Austin
- Travis and Crockett High School students will work at Williamson Creek on South 1st St.
- Georgetown and Stony Point High School students will work at Copperfield Nature Trail in northeast Austin
- Lehman and Hays High School students will work at Steeplechase Park in Kyle

Their activities will range from litter removal and invasive species control to a mosaic art project. The projects will last from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

"This project is about much more than picking up trash," said College Forward Executive Director Lisa Fielder. "Everyone deserves access to

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clean, usable public areas. By working together to improve our communal spaces, we're helping narrow the disparities between advantaged and disadvantaged neighborhoods."

After the project, the students, almost all of whom are low-income and will be the first in their families to go to college, will engage in a 30-minute service-learning reflection session. "It's very powerful for these students to see the difference they can make in one day," said Fielder. "They will carry that feeling with them long after finishing our program."

All College Forward students perform 20 hours of community service each year. They complete these hours through individual volunteering and through group activities scheduled on the five National Days of Service. The Martin Luther King Day of Service is College Forward's largest volunteer project.

College Forward has partnered with the Austin Parks Foundation, Keep Austin Beautiful, the City of Kyle Parks and Recreation, and local neighborhood associations to secure training and resources for the project. The event is generously supported by Constructive Ventures and Thundercloud Subs.

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