

# Neighbors, multiplied

By [THE DAILY PROGRESS](#)

Published: September 27, 2009

We like what Cathy Train had to say about the Day of Caring.

“This is old-fashioned neighborhood caring,” said Ms. Train, president of the local United Way. “This event is all about the way it used to be when people took care of each other, mowed lawns for people, helped out the older folks and generally looked out for one another.”

Sponsored by the United Way-Thomas Jefferson Area and named in memory of local media figure and community leader Laurence E. Richardson, the Day of Caring is in its 18th year of looking out for people.

It's one of the best things about this community, one of many examples of cheerful generosity.

An estimated 2,500 volunteers from about 70 companies and organizations gave their time to numerous area nonprofits, doing everything from painting and cleaning to preparing kits for pre-school children. Some volunteers read to children, cared for nursing home patients or walked dogs at the SPCA.

Many of the projects, though, are designed to be one-shot boosts, tasks that non-profit agencies may not have gotten around to because they are busy with their day-to-day activities — walking dogs or reading to children — but that volunteers can accomplish in a single, concentrated effort.

It may seem counterintuitive that such a massive and highly organized project could retain a sense of old-fashioned neighborliness. But this is indeed the case. A sense of camaraderie abounds.

Volunteers bond with their fellow workers, who are generally people from the same company or organization; the project thus provides team-building benefits for participants. And of course volunteers who do on-site work get to know, and serve, staff and clients at the nonprofits they assist.

The program also benefits both sides just by the very act of placing volunteers in non-profit settings. By learning firsthand about the support agencies that are needed to make our community healthy, volunteers understand the community better and are sensitized to its needs. That knowledge may translate into further volunteerism or into more informed decisions about public policy.

Hats off to the organizers and volunteers in last week's Day of Caring — a new-fashioned way of maintaining an old-fashioned tradition.