

MLK book drive yields big harvest

Book Harvest's annual Dream Big Book Drive collects books for Durham and Orange counties.

By Maddie Marshall
The Durham Voice

Under the large shelter at Durham Central Park, a crowd is gathered for Book Harvest's annual Dream Big Book Drive.

For seven years, Book Harvest has been holding the event in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and his legacy.

The drive started after Book Harvest founder and executive director, Ginger Young, began collecting books with a small group of volunteers as a Martin Luther King Jr. Day service project.

"The event started in 2011 when our founder, Ginger Young, organized a group of volunteers on MLK Day to collect books to fuel Book Harvest's early work. It has grown every year since," said Daniele Berman, the community partnerships manager for Book Harvest.

Book Harvest started in Durham in 2011 as a nonprofit organization.

As stated in Young's biography on the Book Harvest website: "As her children outgrew their books, Ginger began puzzling over ways to share the hundreds of books in her home with children who needed books most. In January of 2011, she organized a book drive to test her ideas and the floodgates opened."

And the rest is in the books.

On the chilly January afternoon, at least 500 volunteers helped Book Harvest on the day of service. The volunteers aided Book Harvest in their mission through various tasks such as signing in participants, organizing donations and packing books to be shipped.

Many of those hardworking volunteers were wearing Carolina blue under their volunteer vests.

Areej Hussein, UNC student and North Carolina LiteracyCorps member, said: "The below freezing weather did not take away from the rewarding feeling of help-



Briana Riegler (left) and Areej Hussein (right) prepare to help volunteers sign in to begin an afternoon of service. Like Hussein, many volunteers come from UNC's Student Coalition for Action in Literacy Education.

ing others know the joy of reading. A bit of cold is not a struggle compared to the struggle for families without the resources to get books."

"The below freezing weather did not take away from the rewarding feeling of helping others to know the joy of reading."

— Areej Hussein

For six years, the North Carolina LiteracyCorps of the UNC Student Coalition for Action in Literacy Education has been providing volunteers for the Dream Big Book Drive.

"The LiteracyCorps has actually

volunteered with them every year but the first year," said Michaela Ashworth, SCALE Program Assistant. "We partnered with them the second year. We are sort of the main volunteers for the day of."

Longstanding connections have been made between UNC and Central Durham.

Ashworth said: "I'm pretty sure the history of it was that the some of the LiteracyCorps members in Durham actually went with some of their students and fostered that connection that way. Then the program director [of UNC SCALE] at the time reached out to Book Harvest

and was like, 'Hey, I have group of 30 to 40 LiteracyCorps members and we would love to help out in any way we can.' It has since grown."

Over 30,000 books were collected on Martin Luther King Jr. Day. The total amount collected will be tallied once the Dream Book Drive concludes at the end of January.

The collected books will go to Book Harvest's core programs, including Books on Break, Community Book Bank and Books to Go.

The impact of the event can be seen through much of Durham.

"I have been in the waiting room of Lincoln Community Health Clinic and watched kids take a book to read," Ashworth said. "They would not be able to do that without Book Harvest sponsoring a bookshelf."

Get Involved

You can donate books to Book Harvest at any of the locations listed on their website: <http://bookharvestnc.org/support/donate-books/>