

# April is National Volunteer Month

*Maureen McGarry/For the Times-Standard*



"Civic engagement is multi-generational. Whatever your age, you develop a sense of ownership and feel invested in the outcome when you are involved in making it happen," said Mark Wheatley, mayor of Arcata, after a successful volunteer workday in Arcata.

A collaboration of the Fish Action Council, the Arcata School District and the city of Arcata's Environmental Services, 38 volunteers showed up on March 29 despite the threat of rain to help place crushed rock on top of weed matting to cover a winding path of newly-revealed soil after volunteers chopped away at a long-established grassy area. Volunteers came from Humboldt State University's Natural Resources Club, a Humboldt State fraternity, California Conservation Corps' Fortuna Center and Arcata Elementary families.

"I come at this from my career being in coastal and watershed management," said Wheatley. "The value of volunteerism cuts across all age groups. I have worked with many community-based groups in the past where many of our hard-working volunteers were retired people with a wide range of skills."

In collaboration with the National League of Cities, the Corporation for National Community Service, and Cities of Service, mayors across the country are spotlighting the impact of volunteers and thanking those who serve by participating in the second annual Mayors Day of Recognition for National Service.

Proclamations were presented to the Retired Senior Volunteer Program by Eureka Mayor Frank Jager, Arcata Mayor Mark Wheatley and Crescent City Mayor Rick Holley designating April 1, 2014, as National Service Recognition Day.

There will be two RSVP Volunteer Recognition Events in April thanking volunteers for their many hours of service to their communities. In Del Norte County, RSVP volunteers will be

recognized at a brunch at the Elk River Casino on April 19. The following weekend, Humboldt RSVP volunteers will be celebrated at the Morris Graves Museum on April 27.

The mission of RSVP is to engage citizens who are 55 and older as community resources in planning for community improvement. Retired volunteers put valuable skills and experience back into their community by volunteering with RSVP. Volunteers are matched with organizations that fit their interests. Currently, there are 63 active “stations” where RSVP volunteers help out with a multitude of community needs. Between the two counties, there are 377 active RSVP volunteers.

Mayor Wheatley encourages community members to continue volunteering for the restoration and trail-building project at Arcata Elementary School. Finishing the trail, removing invasive plants and establishing an outdoor learning area are the goals. Work on the 250-foot interpretive nature trail will resume on April 26. Wheatley said he is hoping for another good turnout of volunteers.

“We place a high value on volunteerism. We couldn’t do many of the things we do in our forest, at the marsh and with our creeks without volunteers. We recognize that this attitude needs to be built in at a young age. We want to encourage and engage youth as well. They are to become ambassadors of the city.”

Wheatley said he feels this can set a standard for all citizens throughout their life. “You’re never too old or too young to be a volunteer,” he said.

For more information about the workday on April 26, call 825-2163. For more information about RSVP or Volunteer Center of the Redwoods, call 442-3763.

-----

Maureen McGarry is the project director for VCOR and RSVP, programs of the Area 1 Agency on Aging.