

Published September 11th, 2013

200 SMC Students Start the Year by Volunteering

By Chris Lavin



These fruit pickers are just a few of the 200 Saint Mary's College students who gave back to their community Aug. 31 for the WOW Saturday of Service. Among other projects, students picked fruit at participating Lamorinda homes for donation to a food bank. Posing with apples from their first house (from left, back row): Moraga homeowner Chris Merlin, Jose Rodriguez, Makana Ward, Guy Whittall-Scherfee, Hailey Zummo, Megan Zummo (twin freshmen), Ollie Maggi, Kiara Grey, and Jordan Lampi. Front row: Sarah Dempsey, Rachel Hartley, Raegina Mafnas, Alondra Gallardo, Lyric Kadir, Viviana Garcia, and Alakoko Kailahi. Photos Chris Lavin

social problems in this country, and we feel deeply that we need to help people learn to confront them. Problems like hunger and access to healthy food and quality of education ... these are issues that Saint Mary's students come here to help solve someday. So this is a good start."

An enthusiastic intern grabbed hold of a microphone. The 200-some students standing before him sounded as if they had just graduated from high school - but they had already done that. Instead, Saint Mary's College students were cheering about getting their hands dirty in the real world.

Students teamed up with local neighborhood groups in Lamorinda, Oakland and Alameda Aug. 31 to pick fruit, rake parks, design preschool materials and more for the college's annual Weekend of Welcome (WOW) Saturday of Service. The event is coordinated by CILSA, the academic center at Saint Mary's, which promotes a culture of service and social justice education that integrates the three traditions of the college: Catholic, Lasallian, and Liberal Arts.

"We have a great turnout, and it's a lot of freshmen," said Danny Viera, after he put down the microphone and sent his volunteers off to their transportation. "And that's really good. They get to meet other students and give back to the community at the same time."

One group took off to pick fruit from homeowners participating in the Urban Farmers project, in which residents register their fruit trees and offer their bounty to food banks. At one house on Larch Avenue in Moraga, students picked 179 pounds of apples.

"And that's just from one tree," said Urban Farmers organizer Siamack Sioshansi, before they moved on to other Moraga and Lafayette homes.

WOW students not picking fruit were working on the Campus Legacy Garden at Saint Mary's, a garden with the Alameda Point Collaborative, a park in West Oakland, and with Jumpstart Preschool to design and package materials for under-served preschoolers.

"It's a good way to start off the academic year," said Ryan Lamberton of CILSA. "A lot of important learning happens outside the classroom. We face a lot of complex

Reach the reporter at: info@lamorindaweekly.com

[back](#)

Copyright © Lamorinda Weekly, Moraga CA