

Mission Arlington invites community to give back on day off

- By Andrea Gonzalez and Steven Shaw, The Shorthorn staff
- Jan 16, 2023



Young volunteers carry medical equipment to clean during Zeb Strong Jr. MLK Day of Service on Jan. 16 at Mission Arlington. Participants of all ages volunteered to honor Martin Luther King Jr. [Photo by Christine Vo](#)

Instead of taking Martin Luther King Jr. Day as a “day off”, members of the community celebrated the holiday as a “day on” at Mission Arlington, sorting clothes, stocking shelves, loading trucks and performing other acts of service.

Tillie Burgin, executive director of Mission Arlington, said the MLK Day of Service started because the community wanted to serve people and honor Martin Luther King Jr. She said between 700 and 800 people showed up to help.

The Arlington MLK Zeb Strong, Jr. Day of Service is named after Zeb Strong, a board member of the Arlington MLK celebration committee who started the MLK Day of Service, according to previous Shorthorn reporting. After Strong passed away in 2019, members of the committee voted to name the day after him.



Alpha Kappa Alpha member helps empty out a storage container during Zeb Strong Jr. MLK Day of Service on Jan. 16 at Mission Arlington. The volunteers sorted the clothes and toys found within the boxes. [Photo by Christine Vo](#)

Advertising senior Drew Allen was among the volunteers, and said she wasn’t expecting so many people to turn out to the event. This year, Allen wants to be more focused on community service, she said.

“We need to be present in the community and keep giving back even after MLK Day is over,” Allen said.

Luis Garcia is the program coordinator for the TRIO Educational Talent Search Program at UTA, one of the organizations volunteering at the event. He spent the day helping move inbound donations so they could be sorted and put into the Mission Arlington store. Garcia said giving back to the community teaches responsibility and commitment.



Clean crutches lay alongside a storage container during Zeb Strong Jr. MLK Day of Service on Jan. 16 at Mission Arlington. The unit contained wheelchairs, walkers, prosthetics and other hospital items.
Photo by Christine Vo

“It teaches people how to show up even though it’s something that you may not want to do,” he said.

The day saw players from the D.C. Defenders, an XFL team from Washington, volunteering at the event and loading boxes onto trucks. The league consists of eight teams nationally, and describes itself as a fan-first league reimagining the game of football, according to the XFL’s website.

Defensive back Reggie Stubblefield said the holiday is a day of service and remembering Martin Luther King Jr. The XFL is about opportunity, and they want to exemplify that by giving back to the community, he said.



Volunteers pass along boxes during Zeb Strong Jr. MLK Day of Service on Jan. 16 at Mission Arlington. Around 700 to 800 volunteers showed up to offer their service.
Photo by Christine Vo

Stubblefield said that in their position as athletes, it’s good to show kids that want to be in their shoes that the job is bigger than just playing football.

Defensive lineman Davin Bellamy said celebrating the day together is similar to how the locker room is: no matter a person's color or background, everyone is one. Being able to have the community together in his name is pretty big, he said.

“What a lot of people forget now is to serve. Everybody wants, wants, wants and everybody thinks about what's best for them,” Bellamy said. “I think the most important thing is to be able to serve. It's a humbling experience, and when you're humble you have no ego.”