

# The Bristol Press;

2012 New England Newspaper of the Year | Saturday, May 17, 2014 | BristolPress.com | \$1.00

## Volunteers reach out to the community



Mike Orazzi | Staff

General Electric's John Pollman cleans up the grounds at the New England Carousel Museum on Riverside Avenue in Bristol as part of the United Way Day of Caring Friday morning.

By **STEVE COLLINS**  
STAFF WRITER

**BRISTOL** – Friday's rain didn't dampen the spirits of hundreds of volunteers who fanned out across the community as part of the United Way's Day of Caring.

To offer a helping hand to hard-pressed nonprofits, the volunteers painted walls, shoveled mulch, swept floors, dunked plastic toys into buckets of bleach and much, much more at many locations.

At the New England Carousel Museum, 30 General Electric workers from Plainville worked side-by-side with a group of high school students to spruce up the Riverside Avenue destination's outside appearance.

Despite the sometimes heavy rain, "it was like an ant farm out there" with people scurrying in every direction, said Louise DeMars, the director of the museum. "You can't beat that kind of

**United Way's  
Day of Caring**

**See LIKE, Page 3**

# Like an ant farm, volunteers scurried in every direction

Continued from Page 1  
dedication," she said.

Mike Seabrook, a systems engineer at GE's Plainville branch, said he shoveled a lot of mulch with his colleagues, allow who "were here to do work" as they have for the Day of Caring for many years.

"It's like having an Army. I want all of these people to move in and stay with us," DeMars said.

At the homeless shelter on Upson Street, students from both of the city's public high schools and a couple more from Plainville

High School were busy painting hallways and more.

"It's so nice to give back to the community that does so much for us," said Bristol Central High School junior Athena Giannopoulos while standing on a ladder inside the St. Vincent DePaul Society's shelter.

Giannopoulos said she didn't mind missing school to help out. "AP exams are over. My work is done," she said.

Nahndi Ali, a Bristol Eastern High School junior, said it was "pretty nice" to get out of class

and chip in with the community-wide effort. Ali said she'd painted a radiator and a hallway at the shelter.

"We've all been painting," said William Young, a United Way representative at the shelter. He said plans to work on the outside of the building were shelved because of the rain, which happened at several other spots as well.

But the work went on anyway.

"We are incredibly lucky to have so many dedicated volunteers who were willing to brave the rainy conditions today to help out our community," said Donna Osuch, president of the United Way of West Central Connecticut.

Day of Caring began in 1992 as a way to help employees of local corporations interact with human service agencies and has grown since then.

"The nonprofit organizations that benefit from the work of these volunteers often do not have the resources themselves to complete these projects and they rely on this event each year to get this work done," she said.

DeMars said small organizations such as the carousel museum don't have the money or staff to do so much work themselves.

She said that the timing is impeccable to get things cleaned up to "kick start" the summer season when more visitors show up at

the museum's doors.

At the Imagine Nation, 26 Cigna employees and a handful of students were busy cleaning up all sorts of things.

Jena Doolittle spread thousands of tiny plastic toys out to dry after washing them in a bucket full of bleach.

"I am disinfecting all the toys," she said. "I don't think I'll get the smell of bleach out of my hands for a while."

Three Plainville students – sophomore Ally Bernier and freshmen Luc St. Pierre and Erin Kordik – swept up dust and tiny rocks around a first floor exhibit neary.

"I like helping out," Kordik said.

"Everyone's doing their fair share. It's pretty impressive," said

Jessica Abate, a social worker for the Plainville school who advises the town's chapter of the United Way's youth board.

Doolittle said the Cigna workers, whose company has moved out of Bristol, still come to the event because they live in town and love the chance to chip in and get together.

"You feel good that you're helping out," she said.

Osuch said the many volunteers each year, many of whom return annually, "exemplify the true spirit of what it means" to follow the charity's "Live United" motto.

*Steve Collins can be reached at (860) 584-0501, ext. 7254, or at [scollins@bristolpress.com](mailto:scollins@bristolpress.com).*



Mike Orazzi | Staff

Brothers Matt and Shawn Fonseca work on the grounds at the Bristol ARC on Lake Avenue during the United Way Day of Caring Friday morning in Bristol.