

Volunteers spruce up park

BY GAIL COLE, Gazette-Times Reporter

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Assigned to weed Scotch broom from the hillside of Martin Luther King, Jr. Park, Jes Pearce, an AmeriCorps volunteer based in Eugene, stuffed the uprooted plants into her sweatshirt pocket before disposing of them in a larger pile.



“Good thing I wore a hoodie today,” she said.

Pearce joined a group of 15 volunteers Saturday morning at the park for the annual Make a Difference Day. More volunteers gathered as the morning went on. Besides weeding invasive Scotch broom, volunteers also tore out blackberry bushes and made progress on a trail construction project.

Make a Difference Day was launched by USA Weekend Magazine, part of USA Today. Now in its 20th year, it has become one of the nation’s largest daylong public service events, involving an estimated 3 million people across the country in a day of volunteer service to their communities.

Steve McGettigan, volunteer coordinator for Corvallis Parks and Recreation, said different organizations hold work parties at Martin Luther King Jr. Park 10 to 15 times a year.

“Volunteer help is indispensable,” he said.

Keenan Tvedt, another Eugene-based AmeriCorps volunteer, worked alongside Pearce on the hill. The two, joined by a handful of AmeriCorps volunteers, have worked together since January and will complete their assignment Nov. 5. For them, Saturday's work party was bittersweet.

"This is our last big project as a group," Pearce said.

Their AmeriCorps group has spent much of the last year traveling throughout Oregon and Northern California to restore meadows and trails, and Pearce has pulled her share of Scotch broom.



"I'm as much as an expert as you can be at pulling weeds," she said.

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