

The Incredible Prophetic Reason Hundreds of Mayors, Pastors and Churches Across the World United

Bound only by a desire to serve people outside their buildings, 409 churches on six continents mobilized their members on Saturday, sending tens of thousands of uniformed volunteers into the streets with actions and words designed to communicate a message: We're here for you beyond today.

Across the United States and at 26 international locations, teams wearing red "SERVE" shirts connected with people and civic and non-profit groups at thousands of sites within 19 countries for SERVEDay17 or—as it's called—a "servolution."

Pastors and leaders enlisted, too, meeting people who said they didn't know their churches existed until Saturday, when teams wearing the same colors performed free acts of kindness and service bigger than the large cities they serve as spiritual leaders.

A New Orleans-area mayor joined 43 members of NOLA Church—including 13 kids—at a public park in Harahan, Louisiana, where they removed graffiti from bathroom walls and sanded and applied fresh paint to metal and plastic playground equipment.

"Any mayor, city, community, parish or county is fortunate to have service-minded people like these," said Mayor Tina Miceli, a cancer nurse who is privileged to see good deeds done for patients on a regular basis.

Miceli said she welcomes future partnerships between the City of Harahan and NOLA Church, pastored by Monte and Olga Young.

SERVEday17 coordinators for NOLA Church, Michael and Christine Baamonde, have planned other projects with the mayor and city council, demonstrating a commitment to a culture of service around New Orleans, rather than a one-day act of benevolence.

Pastor Corey Williams, who leads a predominantly African-American congregation in Savannah, Georgia, proved once again that his church is committed to its community by picking up trash, visiting a nursing home and partnering to feed and care for those less fortunate in the inner city on SERVEday17.

As an African-American pastor representing Impact Church, Williams collaborated with his friend and fellow pastor—the leader of a largely Caucasian church—mediating racial reconciliation between law enforcement and the larger Savannah community last year when tension gripped the nation.

Prophetically, Williams and worship leader Tobe Frierson said Impact chose to focus Saturday on cleaning up a two-mile stretch of highway in Savannah named Chief of Love Road.

“We realized in walking and praying along the road that anybody can pick up trash,” Williams said. “We chose to believe that this represents people whose lives need picked up.”

As demonstration of its commitment to Savannah, Impact plans to serve the city in a new way this year—the establishment of a mobile outreach to help meet the relational, spiritual, emotional and physical needs of its neighbors.

As part of the Dream Center Network and the Association of Related Churches (ARC), which helps plant a new congregation nearly every six days, Impact’s mobile outreach will mirror others with the same name including one near downtown Los Angeles, the LA Dream Center, founded by Pastors Tommy and Matthew Barnett.

A Dream Center near New Orleans is also on the hearts and

minds of the Baamondes after NOLA ServeDay17 was so favorably welcomed by members of the Harahan City Council and the city's mayor.

In the nation's heartland, love filled the hearts of some children and teenagers living in foster homes after Centerpoint Church, a partner with SERVEday17, paid for their new tennis shoes, haircuts and lunch in rural Ohio.

For some, there was a supervised reunion with their estranged parents.

Centerpoint Church is located in Chillicothe which, like other communities across the U.S., has been hard hit with illegal drug use by adult parents, resulting in their incarceration and/or rehabilitation.

So Pastors Chris VanBuskirk and Matt Kysor decided to serve the kids and both their foster- and biological-parents over the weekend.

A licensed social worker who attends Centerpoint Church, Vicki Bartlett said parents and kids were deeply moved by kindness and service from people they met for the first time on SERVEday17.

"We are beyond thankful for the new shoes and haircuts," said a parent who insisted on anonymity. "I just can't thank [Centerpoint] enough.

"There are still good people out there. I didn't think others cared anymore," she said.

Also in Ohio, 250 other SERVEday17 volunteers worked on 30 projects, winning the hearts of leaders in government and nonprofit-sectors for the sacrificial and unconditional displays of good citizenship by church members over the weekend.

In Rio de Janeiro, Brazil where four SERVEday17 projects were

offered, Pastor Samuel Brum Sr. served on the street near his church and within walking distance of both a house of prayer and a house of prostitution.

Meanwhile, his son Samuel Brum Jr. joined 48 unrelated churches extending kindness to cities and towns in Colorado, where the younger Brum is also a pastor.

Brum and Pastor Jonathan Wiggins at joined members from varied denominations in three cities with populations close to 100,000 and more, including Fort Collins, Colorado, home of a large Assembly of God congregation.

In Loveland, Colorado, Wiggins and a small group to which he belongs provided maintenance and clean-up at a non-profit serving individuals and families seeking alternatives to violence.

The Dream Center in Birmingham, Alabama, conducted 10 projects—one of which was a heart-warming display of the transforming power of service for its outreach coordinator Tori Townley.

On SERVEDay17, the tables turned as those served at the Dream Center's Tuesday and Thursday outreaches became volunteers who offered free lemonade and jewelry around the city.

Also in Birmingham, Church of the Highlands (COTH) members across its 16 campuses provided an estimated 613 outreaches through its network of small groups and about 25,000 people who served.

Of the 408 churches that participated in SERVEDay17, its members are in North and South America, Europe, Asia, Africa and Australia.

An unofficial event occurred in Russia with support from the Dream Center in Mobile, Alabama.

Three hundred eighty-seven churches represented SERVEDay17 in

the U.S.

A volunteer firefighter and outreach pastor, Derick Zwerneman said Celebration Church and Lead Pastor Joe Champion are already praying and preparing for their SERVEday18 at home in Austin, Texas, and its other locations in Italy and Mozambique.

SERVEday was the inspiration of Pastor Chris Hodges at COTH in 2008. Through the “Servolution” movement—adapted from Pastor Dino Rizzo’s 2000 book by the same title—ARC has combined efforts with COTH, church networks Grow, Next Level Coaching and Relate, all part of a worldwide movement. {eoa}