

The Patriot-News

Thousands honor founder by serving communities Students, staff and alumni spent the day on projects such as painting and creek cleaning in Dauphin, Lancaster and Lebanon counties.

PAUL CHAPLIN

Daniel Basilio-Reed, born more than a century after Milton Hershey, wishes he had met the man for whom his school and his town are named.

"Milton Hershey spent a lot of time in community service," Basilio-Reed, 16, said Sunday after he and more than 2,000 other students, staff and alumni of Milton Hershey School did community service in Dauphin, Lancaster and Lebanon counties. "We wanted to do that, too, in honor of him."

Joined by employees of The Hershey Co., the school community on Sunday celebrated "Milton Hershey National Volunteer Day" with projects including a cleanup of the Quittapahilla Creek and work at a homeless shelter.

"Milton Hershey was an extraordinary visionary," said Charlene Binder, Hershey senior vice president. "Not only was he a titan of industry, creating the largest chocolate company in North America, but he also had a tremendous spirit of helping others."

Milton Hershey School offers a free, private home and school for children from families of low income, limited resources and social need. Anthony Colistra, Milton Hershey School president and a 1959 graduate, said that part of their founder's legacy was "his selfless giving and caring for others in need."

Basilio-Reed shared that legacy by cleaning a shed, trimming bushes and painting doors and a room at Seventh-Day Adventist Church in Derry Twp.

"I did a lot of work today," said Basilio-Reed, a junior at the school. "It was worth it. We get a lot at Milton Hershey School and wanted to give back. Milton Hershey gave us a place to live and an education to be successful in life. I would have liked to have met him."

The Milton Hershey School junior said the church members were very welcoming. "We had morning prayer together," he said. "They gave us pizza for lunch. I want to go back to that church whether to listen to the word of God or to help with the fall cleanup."

Another student, sophomore Adam Andrews, also helped at that church. "I liked it," he said. "It was a good chance for us to give back to the community. The church people were really nice to us."

Deborah Amis, their house-parent, said 23 students from the Gro-Mor and Wyandot student homes worked at that site.

"It was a wonderful experience for our boys, who are from seventh through 11th grades," she said. "Community service helps the students grow. They made new friends, too."