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## Volunteers spruce up pottery studio at Loveland's Our Place

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Volunteering at Loveland's Our Place was a win-win situation for Mona Elkady on Saturday during Make A Difference Day activities.

"I got to do it with my friends and I got to help people," the Poudre High School junior said of sharing her time.

This was the sixth year Elkady has participated in the Make A Difference Day event. Our Place, is the day activity center for Colorado Life-Sharing Community Initiative in downtown Loveland, for developmentally disabled people.

Before the volunteers arrived Saturday, Colorado Life-Sharing Community Initiative volunteers, staff members and clients cleaned the Our Place café, and helped transform its back room into a pottery studio.

Six student volunteers from Loveland and Fort Collins then spruced up garage walls with bright orange paint. The garage is where the day program's art and pottery projects take place.

Elkady enjoys painting, and on Saturday she and her friends worked fast while listening to music, she said.

"It was really fun, tiring yet fun," she said. "We all love painting. We were going pretty fast.

"It felt really good. We were just all really happy. This was probably the best activity we did, it was at least for me."

Saturday's event dubbed "Make it Our Place" was part of United Way's 10th annual Make A Difference Day.

"It was like an old garage, and now it looks like a clay studio," said Karen Tripp, day program director at Our Place. "They (student volunteers) were really sweet. We finally got this project done."

Hana Shatila, a junior at Colorado State University and volunteer Saturday at Our Place, has volunteered for six years during Make A Difference Day.

"I absolutely love volunteering and this was for a good cause, it was for adults with disabilities," she said. "You always feel good afterwards that you've helped out."

Shatila said even when volunteering in the community for one day, a couple hours of work does make a difference.

“We still had a small impact, and it adds up,” Shatila said.

Before volunteers arrived on Saturday, clients and staff cleaned the store at Our Place and put primer on the garage walls.

Workers also washed windows, organized and helped store items, including 1,000 teacups.

With the pottery studio nearly ready to roll at Our Place, clients at the facility one day will sell their pottery.

Colorado Life-Sharing Community Initiative has participated in Make A Difference Day for 10 years, and will continue to take part in the project, Tripp said.

Last year, Hewlett Packard renovated Our Place’s basement and turned it into a craft studio as part of the Make A Difference Day project.

Make A Difference Day happened in Larimer County from Oct. 19-24. United Way of Larimer County coordinates the event each year.

Projects at other organizations in Loveland included: Thompson Valley PreSchool, New Vision Charter School & Boys & Girls Club, Friends of the Loveland Public Library Foundation, Inc., Hearts & Horses Therapeutic Riding Center, United Way of Larimer County: Pathways Past Poverty – Chilson Center, and Novo Restoration, Inc.

“Make A Difference Day was a wonderful success this year,” said Adam Molzer, United Way of Larimer County volunteer center director. “The outpouring of support from the thousands of volunteers that participated reflects the spirit of service in our community. We are very grateful to everyone involved with this community-wide service event.”