



Giving back to the community

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PORTAGE | John Tuomi rolled bright pink paint Friday on the walls of a ladies washroom at Portage Adult Education Center.

It was a way he and his employer, JP Morgan/Chase Bank, could give back to the community, he said.

And for Tuomi, it was a homecoming of sorts. He'd used the center's services before to brush up on math skills.

"It feels good," Tuomi said about helping out the organization.

He was one of dozens of volunteers who helped various community organizations in Portage and Valparaiso on Friday as part of the United Way Day of Caring. The two-day campaign will continue today with some 400 volunteers fanning out to various nonprofit agencies.

Down the hall, Lowe's employees were painting two classrooms, two offices and a hallway.

"We try to give back to the community as much as we can," store manager Scott Pearson said. Eight others from the Portage store gave their time Friday and Lowe's donated the supplies as part of its Lowe's Heroes program.

On the first floor volunteers from Porter hospital were completing a brightly painted mural outside the center's day care room.

"It is so important to what Porter County is about and what we are able to get done in the spirit of volunteerism," said Deb Butterfield, vice president of marketing and public relations.

Hospital production assistant Maria Braun-Perez designed the mural and outlined it on the wall before her eight co-workers took brushes in hand to complete the project.

This is the third year the center has been beneficiary of the Day of Caring, Robbin Kern said.

"We're overwhelmed with the community support. We feel so fortunate," she said.

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