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**DREW HAIR DRIVES A** screw into a roof truss on a new shed with help from Collin Milligan as students from Montgomery Ridge Intermediate School volunteered at a Habitat for Humanity site Wednesday. MRIS students worked at six United Way programs this week as part of the school's first SERVE Days: Students Engaged in Rewarding Volunteer Experiences.

## Montgomery Ridge students go into community to SERVE

**BY AMY BETH MILLER**

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As a result of seeds planted last year in two Maryville schools, about 600 intermediate students are volunteering in the community this fall.

Coulter Grove Intermediate School began HALO Days, for Helping And Leading Others, with seventh-graders last year and expanded its program to include sixth-graders last month.

Meanwhile Montgomery Ridge Intermediate School this week launched SERVE Days, Students Engaged in Rewarding Volunteer Experiences.

The seventh-graders who participated this week read the book "Pay It Forward" in school last year, and Montgomery Ridge teachers were eager to expand the volunteer program to their school.

Both intermediate schools have partnered with United Way of Blount County to place student volunteers in multiple locations for half a day this fall.

"They may think, 'I'm too young to give back,' but they can," said United Way President and CEO Jennifer Wackerhagen.

Students have called the experience "amazing" and "fun," and they aren't the only ones enjoying it.



**AYLA HEADRICK DIGS OUT** the base of the new shed to put in a rain barrier.

"It's one of my favorite things I've ever done," said Brad White, who moved from CGIS last year to assistant principal at Montgomery Ridge this year.

SEE STUDENTS, 5A



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**SCOUT VISITS MONTGOMERY RIDGE** Intermediate School seventh-graders Anna Henneke (left) and Eliza Bonneville as they clean fences around the stables at Mane Support during Wednesday's SERVE Day, Students Engaged in Rewarding Volunteer Experiences.



**BROOKE SANDERSON MAKES A** journal Wednesday for participants at Mane Support to write their thoughts, as Montgomery Ridge Intermediate Students volunteer throughout the community this week.

## STUDENTS: Youths learn they can have an impact on community while having fun

FROM 1A

White said he always has been a servant and enjoys seeing students realize the world is bigger than their small part of it.

"Hopefully we've sparked something they will do long-term," White said. Parents already have told Montgomery Ridge teachers that their children are talking about volunteering again.

Students are learning at an early age they can make an impact in their community, White said.

The Montgomery Ridge students wore T-shirts designed by students Mari Higgins and Tristan Swank, which included the word SERVE spelled out in sign language on the front.

### MANE SUPPORT

At Mane Support this week, the students helped clean stables, brush horses, reorganize the tack room and make paper journals for clients to express themselves when it is easier to write than talk.

"They have such a drive



**COULTER GROVE INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL** students and Gate participants play a game of UNO to learn about students with disabilities as part of a HALO (Helping And Leading Others) Day last month. Players are (from left) Hailey Weitz, Terry Jenkins, Arowyn Casenhiser, Gate participant Viera, and Courtney Geiger.

to learn and serve," said Mane Support founder Kim Henry.

"It's a great opportunity for them to learn about their community," she said, and by exposing students to service at an early age the community will be stronger a decade from now.

When Henry asked stu-

dents what they learned Tuesday, they told her, "When we work together we get more things accomplished."

Mane Support also invited all the students to paint on its walls, which it does with clients and volunteers, so that everyone knows they always have a place there.

Chloe Hendrix chose Mane Support for her volunteer location because, "I love horses."

Riley Moberg plans to be a veterinarian, so Mane Support was a good fit for her.

"It's totally fun to be here," said their classmate, Brook Sanderson.

Riley said the volunteer-

ing was such a good experience, she'd like to see every grade do it.

At the Meals on Wheels office Wednesday, Montgomery Ridge students prepared meals, moved stock and even prepared some crafts, which the usual volunteers might not have time to do.

"I really like helping people," said Addison Leonard, who was scooping coleslaw with Gracie Frank. "It's also a lot of fun."

"I'm able to get food every day, but not everyone can do that," Addison said.

Students were surprised to learn that Meals on Wheels serves about 650 seniors in Blount County.

The volunteer days allow students to see what makes their community work, said Lynnda Manville, senior nutrition program director. She said she would love to see the students return to volunteer again with their families.

"The seniors would be overjoyed to have a junior show up at their doors,"

Manville said.

At a home repair site with Habitat for Humanity, the students had cleared a pile of brush taller than they are and were completing a new shed.

Coulter Grove sixth-graders started working at the house, which included tearing down an old shed and building the first two walls, during their HALO Days.

By Wednesday morning Montgomery Ridge students had finished the walls and were adding the roof trusses.

"They've been working hard and getting a lot done," said Jason Brown, Habitat's housing repair coordinator.

"I've always liked helping people out," said Will Madison.

"It's a lot of fun," said Michael Colligan. "I love building things."

"It's a fun way to get out and help people," agreed Drew Hair.

"Just because we're young kids doesn't mean we can't do things adults can do," said Coen Lovin.