

A healthy tribute to Martin Luther King

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Kids needing community service hours could also get them fulfilled here, according to Pam Creekmur, medical center administrator. Everyone, from the youngest of volunteers to the 40 physicians on call, were unpaid.

"This is a signature event, a day of service for Martin Luther King's birthday," Creekmur said. "What better way to serve than what we do best?"

Between 200 and 300 patients were expected, Creekmur continued. They scheduled their appointments through the Prince George's Health Department, after hearing about the event through TV, radio and newspapers, Kawamura found through interviews.

The Prince George's County screening department consisted of asking patients questions about their medical history, drug history, and conditions, employees said. This allowed for administration to know how many specialists they might need, and to cut back on forms patients would have to fill out on site. Though at least 25 patients were walk-ins, according to Kawamura.

Overall, 300 basic physicals were scheduled, according to Donald Shell, health officer for Prince George's County. "Kindness and proximity" were the reasons he gave for the county/Kaiser partnership; Prince George's County Health Department's offices are mere blocks away from the Largo Medical Center.

This year, Kaiser Permanente in

Springfield, Va., is joining them and they hope to expand to Baltimore by next year, Kawamura said.

Last year's event attracted national attention, Largo Medical Center employees said. They won the R.J. Erickson Diversity Achievement Award at the Kaiser Permanente National Diversity Conference, making Largo Medical Center the first in the region to receive a diversity award from Kaiser Permanente headquarters.

County Executive Jack B. Johnson and Howard Burnett, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer of Health & Human Services were scheduled to attend briefly as well.

But mostly, this day was for the patients.

Though most simply needed a basic checkup and an optional boxed lunch, services like mammograms, diabetic retinal screening, pap smears, STD testing and others were offered, Creekmur said.

Thirty days of free prescriptions were offered as well, Kawamura added.

According to Kawamura, 10 percent of last year's patients required serious follow up care, which is provided through Prince George's County checkups.

The trend carried into this year, as at least one stretcher was brought in to evacuate a patient in need to a hospital.

"What's important is if they find further health issues and need care, we can make sure they are contacted, and connect them to resources," Kawamura said. "They may come in today perfectly healthy or they may need follow up care."