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Good Morning! Wednesday, June 24, 2009
 
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Girls Club volunteer Evelyn Hanes works with Jasmine Salinsky Monday at the Girls Club to make gifts for Meals on Wheels volunteers. (Contributed to the Press / )

## Week of caring set to make a difference

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United Way company teams spread out and got down to work across the Tri-Cities Monday on a series of hands-on service projects and activities at the nonprofit agencies their contributions support year round.

Board members from the United Way agencies of Johnson City, Kingsport, Bristol and Washington County, Va., and from United Fund of Bluff City kicked off the annual United Way Week of Caring with a large round of maintenance and educational activities with the day campers at Girls Inc. of Kingsport.

Lester Latany, president and CEO of the United Way of Washington County, said the Week of Caring projects give United Way companies and their employees "an opportunity to volunteer and find out first-hand the quality services United Way partner agencies provide." He said the projects also demonstrate what can be accomplished when area residents and businesses work together for the benefit of their communities.

Sponsored this year by Regions Bank, United Way Week of Caring projects began in 1992 as a single day of corporate volunteering. Seventeen years later, the service projects now extend over several months before and after the official week-long observation to better accommodate the schedules volunteer teams' and the agencies they assist.

While Monday's service blitz at Girls Inc signaled the mobilization of the volunteers at nonprofit agencies around the Tri-Cities, the work actually began several weeks ago with projects including a pre-season clean-up day held in advance of the summer opening of the Frontier Health Adventure Program's ropes challenge course on Greenwood Drive.

In addition to cleaning, landscaping, painting and minor construction projects, Week of Caring companies and their volunteer teams will be giving monetary support and donating needed item to the United Way's partner agencies. They'll be distributing health and safety information for the American Red Cross, hosting a sock hop for the clients Adult Day Services, putting on a picnic for seniors served by the Salvation Army, and creating a Web site for the Keystone Dental Care clinic for those who

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They'll be staging "A Day of Play" at the Boys and Girls Club of Johnson City/Washington County. They'll be manning the grill for barbecue lunch with Frontier's Adventure Program teens. And they'll be creating a "Shady Place" outdoor classroom at Girls Inc. of Johnson City to go with the new play center. Week of Caring volunteers put together for the girls last year.

Businesses participating in this year's Week of Caring include Citi, Johnson City's Target Store, Eastman, Bank of Tennessee, BB&T, General Shale Brick, Regions Bank, the Johnson City Fire Department, Atmos Energy, WebsiteAssist.com, Johnson City Press and the Johnson City Power Board.

In addition to the services and gifts Week of Caring volunteers provide, Latany said involving employees in the hands-on projects pays other dividends as well. "Participation in Week of Caring builds company pride, understanding of community needs and a renewed willingness to financially support United Way agencies through annual (United Way) campaigns," he said.

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