

Alumni News



Something BIG is happening

BY JESSICA SAVOIE ('14), *alumni relations assistant director*

On April 8, over 20 alumni chapters across the U.S. participated in the Big Event, JMU's universitywide day of service. While student organizations on campus were busy serving the JMU and Harrisonburg communities, alumni were in solidarity, bringing the JMU spirit of service to their local communities as well.

Chapter service projects embodied JMU's commitment to citizenship and helped local communities in a variety of ways. Projects ranged from cleaning river banks and spending time with individuals with disabilities, to volunteering at food pantries and donating dry goods to pet shelters.

Zachary Lane ('11) helped to clean up the banks of the James River with fellow Richmond, Virginia, Dukes. Service is a desire that was instilled in Lane while a student at JMU. "I participated in the JMU Big Event because I am a huge advocate for community service and giving back," he says. "This passion was ignited while I was a freshman at JMU and participated in the Alternative Spring Break program. This week of community service truly sparked my passion for serving others. From that point on, I decided to perform community service on a regular basis. When I was made aware of the JMU Richmond Big Event opportunity, I knew that I wanted to participate."

(Above): JMU alumni put their "Be the Change" commitment to work in their respective communities by cleaning, farming and packing – all to benefit their neighbors.

Lane isn't alone in his desire to give back. Bobby Baughan ('81), a graduate and dad to a current JMU student, participated because "I enjoy giving back to the university that gave a lot to me." Baughan also enjoys meeting fellow Dukes who have similar passions, while improving the Richmond community.

In Durham, North Carolina, the Triangle Dukes volunteered at the Goodwill Community Foundation Farm. Taylor Gustafson ('14) looks forward to the event every year. This event not only has a direct impact on his community, but also brings together alumni of all ages and backgrounds to show a little Purple Pride. "I find great value in being part of such a positive movement," Gustafson says. "It makes a lasting impression on my community about my alma mater's reputation, pride and influence in the community. We gather together—alumni of all graduation years, majors and accomplishments—to help the communities we now call home."

Alumni know that JMU is a unique place, where we hold doors for one another, but by participating in chapter service projects like the Big Event, Dukes can show others what "Be the Change" really means.