Volunteers Spend The Day Helping Those Who Help Others To Commemorate Sept. 11

By COURTNEY COLLINS

Volunteers work on a mural during “Freedom Day” that will adorn the lobby of the service dog training non-profit “Patriot Paws.”

COURTNEY COLLINS / KERA NEWS

Close to 1,500 volunteers scattered across North Texas Wednesday to tackle service projects in honor of 9/11.

A team dispatched to Rockwall was determined to clean, organize — and beautify. "Freedom Day" is a Communities Foundation of Texas initiative. Volunteers show up each Sept. 11 to help organizations that help people.

Like Patriot Paws, the Rockwall nonprofit that trains service dogs for disabled veterans.

"Overall, we have placed about 215 service dogs," said Sharon Satterwhite, director of development with Patriot Paws. "And right now program-wide, we have about 85 dogs that we're currently training."

Satterwhite says training each dog takes about two years and costs about $35,000. The veterans receive the dog at no cost, which is why having volunteers to pull weeds and clean is so valuable.
"We tried to keep our paid staff small, and so as a result we're all wearing different hats and doing a million different things," she said. "So there are things we don't have time to do."

The Freedom Day volunteers are with Bioworld Merchandising and the artists on staff are painting a custom mural in the lobby. Bioworld's Shelly Reid says they designed the star-spangled dog and veteran themselves.

"[We] saw the website and just kind of came up with this concept, and the ladies here at Patriot Paws were just overwhelmed and thought it was great, so we decided to give it a shot and it's turning out really well," Reid said.

The flag outside the building may be at half staff while they work, but the volunteers plan to leave something beautiful behind.

*Communities Foundation of Texas is a funder of KERA's One Crisis Away project.*