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Soldiers volunteer to help clean-up effort in Olympia

Spc. Loren Cook/5th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

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Soldiers were sweeping sidewalks and trimming bushes. A few were using grass trimmers on tall grass lining the sidewalk. Others were on their knees, pulling grass growing through a concrete parking lot.

It's a scene frequently witnessed on Joint Base Lewis-McChord. Area beautification is a mission Soldiers know well.

These Soldiers, however, were not cleaning their company area. They weren't in uniform, and they weren't on post. No one even ordered them to clean.

Thirty-two Soldiers from the 593rd Sustainment Brigade volunteered to help clean up downtown Olympia Oct. 1, in preparation

for the city's semiannual Arts Walk, an event held in the spring and fall in which artists display their work in front of downtown businesses.

Soldiers joined volunteers from the Olympia Boys and Girls Club, local high schools, and other organizations and citizens who wanted to help make a difference for their community.

Cleanup organizers assigned the Soldier volunteers a four-block area to clean. Splitting themselves into smaller teams, the Soldiers cleaned their area and soon asked for another area to clean.

"(Soldiers) have attention to detail that civilians often don't," said Sgt. Christina Phillips, a Soldier with the 593rd Sust. Bde.

The cleanup lasted about three hours. At noon, all volunteers were invited to a free barbecue lunch catered by Ramblin Jack's, a local restaurant. The mayor of Olympia, Doug Mah, stopped by and thanked the volunteers for their time and labor assisting in the cleanup.

"I just wanted to help out," said Spc. Steven Hill.

Soldier volunteers were doing more than cleaning. They were also representing the Army and the post to the local community.

"We love seeing them here," said Vida Zvirzdys-Farler, event and volunteer coordinator for the Olympia Downtown Association. "It's nice having the involvement of the military."

The 593rd has built up a long and cordial relationship with the ODA. The brigade has been assisting with the downtown cleanup for at least 10 years, according to Connie Lorenz, the executive director of the ODA. The 593rd also participated in the holiday parade and tree lighting ceremony last November.



Spc. Loren Cook
Spc. Priscilla Kazaka, a Soldier with the 593rd Sust. Bde., dumps a shovelful of weeds into a trash bin Oct. 1. Soldiers from the 593rd volunteered to help clean up downtown Olympia in preparation for the city's semiannual Arts Walk.

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