Connections
CPCC SERVICE-LEARNING NEWSLETTER

Cupcake Wars!
CPCC Baking and Pastry Arts students face off to benefit BCC Rally, a Service-Learning community partner

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Last year I was honored to join CPCC’s work study program after applying for a position with one of the Service-Learning Department’s community partners. There were a number of exciting opportunities, but I was excited by the idea of helping local homeless and impoverished children by working with Bright Blessings.

Bright Blessings began as a family project by the founders, John and Amy Cervantes, and their children in 2005. John and Amy were looking for a way to assist needy children while also teaching their own children about community service. The initial program was Bless-A-Birthday, and the Cervantes’ held their first birthday party celebration for homeless children at the Salvation Army Center of Hope in Charlotte, North Carolina. Since then, the organization has grown significantly and more programs have been added.

The Bless-A-Birthday program is provided at local schools, shelters and housing programs. The parties at shelters and housing programs offer meals, cupcakes, games and activities, special gifts for the birthday child and treat bags for all attending. For transient homeless students, children who have no “home” to speak of and are frequently moving from place to place, birthday and care packages are delivered anonymously to their guidance counselors at school. In addition to birthday gifts, elementary children are given party treats to share with their classmates and middle school/high school students are given special treats to take “home” and share with their family.
To assist with the children’s basic needs, all transient students also receive care and comfort sets with blankets, pillows, stuffed animals, hygiene kits and snack packs. Additionally, each student receives a portable lap desk, new books and school supplies and tools to help support their learning and literacy skills as they try to keep up with schoolwork while dealing with the challenges of inconsistent housing.

The Bless-A-Baby program is provided to mothers and their babies at local homeless shelters, housing programs, domestic abuse facilities and crisis pregnancy centers. New mothers are blessed with a basket of most needed items for basic care of their infant or young toddler. This program is one that really touched me because I didn’t realize what a huge need there is for this. I was surprised to learn that Bright Blessings provides these services to more than 400 babies and toddlers each year, sending out well over 30 baskets a month for new babies in need.

The Gift of Literacy program helps homeless and disadvantaged children achieve academic success by providing them with items such as portable lap desks, school supplies, new books and more. Additionally, new books are provided several times during the year to all children staying at the shelters Bright Blessings serves.

The Gift of Care program provides warm blankets, pillows, stuffed animals, healthy snacks and hygiene kits for the children Bright Blessings serves. Many of the children do not have bedding and are sleeping on floors or even in cars, and many of them are unable to maintain proper hygiene due to limited family resources. Bright Blessings has also launched a new pilot program with a dozen local schools offering a “Care Cupboard” that provides a monthly supply of hygiene kits as well as snack packs for teachers to distribute to homeless and needy students.

I have worked in several areas for Bright Blessings. When I began, I sorted and stocked donations in the back. When Bright Blessings moved to a much-needed new facility, I became the receptionist. As the receptionist, I was able to meet and greet hundreds of volunteers, take in donations and develop a relationship with our regular weekly volunteers. It was moving for me to see so many people that wanted to help in any way they could. Even small children held birthday parties and donated their gifts to children in need. Being able to take in and process donations helped me see how quickly Bright Blessings goes through these items. Tons of donations come in the door, are processed, and are out the back door usually within the same week! It is truly amazing to see how much work is done here.

I have also helped to develop and maintain new spreadsheets that keep up with the donations that come in and the products that go out, in addition to developing other spreadsheets to help improve program logistics. Currently I am the program coordinator for Student Services. This means I organize the preparation of student packages, coordinate and work with volunteers and schedule the weekly deliveries to schools. This is another opportunity for me to see how many donations come together and are sent out each week. When I was at the reception desk it amazed me to see everything come in and I thought that it should last forever, but working in programming side of the organization has really showed me how much of this we use, how quickly we do so and how many kids benefit.

I love seeing how the community rallies around our children. Without these people, we would not be able to do to all that we do and it just amazes me that so many people are willing to donate their time, money and efforts to us. Being a volunteer-led organization means the volunteers do the majority of the work here. We have regular weekday volunteers who are like part of the Bright Blessings family, and we also have a large variety of group volunteers who come in from area schools, churches and businesses to help make sure everything gets done.

One of my favorite moments with Bright Blessings was when I was able to attend a shelter party for the children. It was truly a rewarding experience to be able to go in and do projects with them, serve cake and ice cream, deliver birthday gifts and sing to the birthday children. One of the birthday girls, probably 10 or 11 years old, seemed to go back and forth not knowing if she should laugh or cry. I guess that it really what brought it all together for me - seeing how everything Bright Blessings and their volunteers do can affect just one child.

In 2015, Bright Blessings brought joy, care and hope to more than 5,000 local children, and they are on track to impact more than 7,000 children this year. I truly love my internship with Bright Blessings because I know we are making a difference here.
During Harris Campus’s Fall Fest in October 2016, Baking & Pastry Arts students competed in the Service-Learning Center’s first ever Cupcake Wars. Students Ashley Berry, Jillian Burquez, Natalia Herrera, Benjamin Jenkins and Joshua Wilkerson baked and decorated cupcakes. These cupcakes were then scored based on both appearance and taste by a panel of four judges, including two judges from Service-Learning’s community partner, BCC Rally.

BCC Rally is a local, Ballantyne-based breast cancer awareness organization which does fundraising primarily for Susan G. Komen Charlotte. They have been a CPCC Service-Learning community partner since spring 2016. They have raised more than $1,600,000 for Susan G. Komen since they began in 2004.

In celebration of Breast Cancer Awareness Month and BCC Rally’s mission, competing students decorated their cupcakes to be “pink” themed. Six dozen cupcakes were reserved for judging and tasting during the People’s Choice Award and 12 dozen were donated to BCC Rally for a fundraiser at Joe Gibbs Fan Fest. Carol Aaron with BCC Rally says the cupcakes “were appreciated by all the participants.”

Cupcake Wars had a great turnout, with nearly 40 voters in the People’s Choice Awards, four judges and five bakers. Congratulations to Ashley Berry who took home the Overall Best prize for her spiced cupcakes!
Service in Action

Service-Learning Service in Action events are individual service opportunities that span the spring and fall semesters. Fourteen to 16 service projects, ranging between two and eight hours in length, are organized by the Service-Learning Department.

The Service in Action calendar of events is released during the first week of classes in the spring and fall semesters, and students can pre-register for these service experiences directly through the Service-Learning website.

Students enjoy the diversity of options the Service in Action calendar of events provides, and they also appreciate the ability to pre-register for the events through the Service-Learning Department rather than contacting community partners to schedule their own activities.

Service in Action service opportunities for fall 2016 included serving lunch to veterans during the Honor the Warriors and Patriot Military Family Foundation Bike Event, assisting children with crafts and activities at the Canine Companions for Independence DogFest, maintaining the fleet of 50 mountain bikes at Trips for Kids Charlotte, helping lead the celebration activities at the breast cancer survivor ceremony during the Susan G. Komen Race for the Cure, preparing a pancake breakfast for residents of the Hospitality House, preparing meals for Friendship Trays and serving lunch at St. Mark’s Soup Kitchen, among many others.

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CPCC’s Service-Learning department has consistently worked to serve local veterans and active military in the local community. When the opportunity to apply for the 9/11 National Day of Service and Remembrance grant in August posted, the Service-Learning department applied right away. The Service-Learning department received the grant of $4,500 from the National Points of Light Military Initiatives Project and the Travis Manion Foundation and was able to develop the first ever, week-long remembrance through service for active-duty military and veterans at Central Piedmont Community College.

September 11, 2016 was the 15th anniversary of the September 11 attacks, a tragic day in American history that changed the direction of our nation as a whole. Since CPCC’s Service-Learning Center received this grant opportunity, we combined our efforts with the CPCC Center for Military Families and Veterans to create a week of remembrance through service to honor our military and veterans. The goal of this week was to change the perception of September 11 from a day of tragedy into a week of service and remembrance by connecting veterans and community members with CPCC students, staff and faculty through volunteer service.

importantly, a dialogue was created that promoted support of our military and brought attention to the challenges service men, women and their families face.

The Service-Learning team also recruited members of the military community who gave of their time to serve at each event and would like to extend a sincere thank you to Jeremy Marts, USMC veteran; Captain Kenneth Greer, USMCR; and Nicholas Riggins, Army veteran.

The schedule of events spanned an entire week, September 9, 2016, through September 12, 2106. During this week, more than 190 individuals donated more than 370 hours of their time to support service men and women.

**Tuesday, 9/6/16:** This event took place at Central Campus by the Zeiss Building and 64 students, staff, faculty and community members came out and helped make care packages that were sent to active military members overseas currently deployed from the Charlotte area.
**Wednesday, 9/7/16:** This event took place at Central Campus in the Overcash Building, and 21 students, staff, faculty and community members created activity and goody bags for the children attending Eagle Rock Camp with their military family.

All items were provided through the grant to create the packages. Eagle Rock Camp was grateful for CPCC’s assistance in achieving their mission of reconnecting military families at holistic retreats that are therapeutic, build spiritual resiliency and strengthen family bonds.

**Thursday, 9/8/16:** All CPCC campuses participated in creating a Wall of Remembrance for students, staff, and faculty to come together and share their feelings, have an opportunity to express themselves about the September 11 attacks and express their gratitude for our armed forces. These remembrance walls were shared at each campus.

Captain Kenneth Greer, USMCR, also visited Elizabeth Traditional Elementary School and read a book about patriotism to four third grade classes. The children made thank you cards for military members that were included in care packages mailed to military members currently deployed from the Charlotte area.

**Friday, 9/9/16:** CPCC’s Service-Learning department and Center for Military Families and Veterans joined forces to support the Military Family Lifestyle Charitable Foundation, Inc.’s “Honor the Warriors Bike Ride.” This event includes two days of bicycle riding through Charlotte and Mint Hill and consists of veterans with disabilities and their support groups and advocates. The ride stops at two schools with CPCC’s Central Campus being one of the stops.

At this event, 40 students served lunch, spent time with the veterans and learned about the positives of cycling to help overcome life’s challenges. This opportunity allowed Service-Learning students to connect with veterans and offer a small token of appreciation for their sacrifice.

It was an honor to host these events in remembrance of September 11 and to thank veterans and active military. Service-Learning hopes to continue the Observe and Serve Week in the following years while increasing participation and expanding service projects to include even more community members, staff, students and faculty.

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**Project Vote: Voter Engagement at CPCC**

**Contributor: Kay Printy, Service-Learning Coordinator**

Every presidential election year, CPCC Service-Learning and Student Life team up to host Project Vote, a series of civic engagement and political awareness activities. This year’s Project Vote events consisted of partnering with Campus Compact Voter Engagement Fellows, Ben and Jerry’s Ice Cream and several local political engagement organizations. The goal of Project Vote is to engage and educate students on the voting process.

Two CPCC-based Voter Engagement Fellows, sponsored through Campus Compact North Carolina, coordinated campus canvassing and voter registration throughout the months of September and October. Additionally, Service-Learning and Student Life hosted a voter registration event on September 27, where students registered to vote as well as looked up their polling location. Ben and Jerry’s Ice Cream also provided EmpowerMINT ice cream to all students who registered.

On September 29, CPCC hosted the 2016 Project Vote Festival, where students were invited to speak with local organizations, learn about the voting process, register to vote and look up their polling location in preparation for the November election.
On November 11, 2016, 14 CPCC student leaders traveled to Asheville, N.C. to attend the annual CSNAP conference, focusing on citizenship, service, networking and partnerships.

CSNAP is a collective part of North Carolina Campus Compact, which intends to promote civic engagement and to strengthen community relationships among college students.

The goal of this conference is to bring together college students in North Carolina to enhance skills to become more effective leaders in their designated communities and to encourage college students to “raise their voice, and take initiative.” The annual CSNAP Student Conference brought more than 160 students, faculty, staff and community advocates together for a day of reflection and learning.

True to its name, the event touched on topics related to “citizenship, service, networking, and partnerships” in 14 morning workshop sessions and an afternoon social change showcase featuring eight organizations that mobilize college students to address community issues.

Every year, CPCC Service-Learning nominates one of its students for the Community Impact Award, which is announced at the CSNAP conference. This year, the chosen student was DaQuane Cherry. DaQuane was also awarded the Marshall Alternative Service Experience (ASE) Scholarship which supports the participation of Community Impact Award honorees in an alternative break program organized by a North Carolina Campus Compact member school.

A second year marketing student from Elizabeth City, N.C., Cherry has been an active leader across the spectrum of civic and community engagement at CPCC. He is a SGA Senator and serves as the Election Engagement Fellow on Central Campus, working to engage his peers in the 2016 election. As a Rotaract member, he has been part of many community-based service projects, and as a Service-Learning Program work study student, he has helped other students become involved in service-learning. He is also a frequent performer in CPCC plays and musicals.

Dr. Jenn Marts, CPCC’s director of Service-Learning, says Cherry “has been a fantastic addition to the Service-Learning team,” and she praises his “outgoing, energetic, inclusive” leadership style.

North Carolina Campus Compact, the state affiliate of the national Campus Compact organization, builds the capacity of colleges and universities to produce civically-engaged graduates and strengthen communities. Started in 2002 and hosted by Elon University, the statewide network includes 36 public, private, and community colleges and universities. CPCC was the first community college to join the network in 2002.
As a senior in the American Sign Language (ASL)/Interpreter Education Program, I have had the opportunity to experience American Deaf Culture through various service-learning events with the Deaf Community. One of the most important lessons I have learned during my time with the community is the value of reciprocity. Our program offers many service-learning opportunities that allow students in the program to work with and show their appreciation for the Deaf Community. Even though we have access to these opportunities, I have always envisioned a cultural awareness opportunity that was available to all the students and staff of Central Piedmont Community College.

Approximately a year ago, I learned about a simulation workshop known as "It’s a Deaf, Deaf World" that was first offered in 1974 by the Rochester Institute of Technology. It has since been conducted worldwide to provide an actual "hands on" experience for individuals to experience a world where the tables are turned and the concept of sensory sensitivity is explored in a truly unique environment.

By working with faculty members in my program and the Department of Services for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, we were able to host our inaugural event on September 16 during Deaf Awareness Day at Cato Campus. The workshop provided different stations, including a deaf-blind simulation, community college and hospital scenarios, a lip-reading simulation and many more, each with unique and challenging activities designed to simulate some of the barriers people who are deaf, hard of hearing or deaf-blind will experience in environments typically designed to only meet the needs of people who are hearing. We had 10 volunteers working the stations, with 30-40 students participating and interacting at the various stations.

Although this workshop is designed to be fun and enjoyed by the participants, the challenges we simulate directly correlate with real-world circumstances deaf, deaf-blind and hard of hearing people experience every day. The goal of this workshop is to emphasize the importance of understanding the diversity of our community, how people communicate differently, to become familiar with Deaf history and experiences, to learn about civil rights for the Deaf Community and to learn about local resources dedicated to access and equality.

One participant, Melissa Hagler, said, “this workshop was a significant learning experience because it gave me a new perspective on how Deaf people have to maneuver through the world - from hospitals, to banks, and even access to emergency announcements. It made me realize the importance of being more aware of those around me and how people, right here in our community, have different communication needs.”

Shannon Cooley, a volunteer at the workshop and a lab assistant in the ASL Program, who is Deaf, advises students, “if you seek the beauty within Deaf culture through a kaleidoscope, you shall find it.”

Professor Martha Ingel plans to incorporate this workshop in the Interpreter Education Program as a service-learning event for future students to host annually. My goal is to host another workshop in the spring 2017 semester for any CPCC students and faculty members to attend. More information will become available through Service-Learning once the semester begins.

Service-Learning Center Welcomes New Coordinators

Contributor: Savannah Greer, Service-Learning Coordinator

CPCC’s Service-Learning Center welcomed two new service-learning coordinators in fall 2016. Lindsey Graves, pictured left, splits her time between the Levine and Harper campuses. Rebekah Hackney, pictured right, covers the Cato and Merancas campuses. Lindsey and Rebekah have already developed great programs at their respective campuses and are jointly planning the 2017 Regional Alternative Spring Break trip to Chattanooga, Tenn. The addition of these two service-learning coordinators enable CPCC’s Service-Learning Center to assist more staff, students and community partners and are a welcome addition to the Service-Learning team!
National Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week is held each year the week before Thanksgiving. This is a time for us all to start thinking about what we are thankful for, a perfect time to share our compassion with our neighbors who are experiencing homelessness and work toward a world where no one has to experience hunger and homelessness.

The Service-Learning Center hosted the second annual week of educational programming that allowed our campus communities to unite around a common cause. The goal of these events was to spur conversations around how each of us can serve as a catalyst for making our local communities free of hunger and homelessness.

On Friday, November 18, CPCC students at Merancas Campus made nearly 100 peanut butter and jelly sandwiches for the homeless served through Urban Ministries of Charlotte. Students ate pizza and listened to music as they made sandwiches that were later donated to Urban Ministries of Charlotte, an organization that serves lunch 365 days a year to the hungry and homeless in Charlotte.

The Cato Campus observed Hunger and Homelessness Week in many ways, including participation in an Oxfam Hunger Banquet. Students did not know what they were walking into when they signed up for the Oxfam Hunger Banquet at Cato on Tuesday, November 15. After being assigned to a high-, middle-, or low-income group, students were served a delicious hot lunch and sat at a linen-covered table, some were given peanut butter and jelly sandwiches with a bottle of water and sat in chairs, while others were required to make their own sandwiches and sit on the floor to eat! This activity illustrated the food disparities that accompany different socio-economic statuses in the United States. After completing the activity, students participated in reflection and discussion about poverty, hunger and social justice globally and in Mecklenburg County.

The Cato ESS staff also served the homeless and hungry in Charlotte on Thursday, Dec. 1 at St. Mark’s Lutheran Church Soup Kitchen. Staff cooked and plated food in the kitchen while others served as waiters in the “restaurant” area. Alice Pough, ESS education support specialist at Cato, said, “it was an awesome experience. The team seemed to enjoy going to the soup kitchen and helping others who are less fortunate and giving back to the community.”

-Alice Pough, ESS Education Support Specialist at the Cato Campus

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“...”

Panel member was given time to tell their heartbreaking and compelling stories of homelessness and resilience in Charlotte and around the country. One panel member became homeless after running away from home at the age of 15. After suffering from mental illness and addiction, he found housing with the Housing Works program through Urban Ministry Center and has made a full recovery from chronic homelessness. Another panelist lost his job soon after the national recession began and found himself homeless for four years in Charlotte. Rather than forgetting his time on the streets, he uses his voice to advocate for the homeless and educate the community about issues related to poverty and homelessness. Hearing these and other stories from panel members brought one student to tears as she explained that she now wants to work with homeless youth when she graduates with a degree in social work.

Students, faculty and staff at the Levine Campus came together to donate more than 170 pounds of goods to the Matthews HELP Center. Donated items included canned vegetables and beans, boxed pasta and pasta sauce, juice boxes, cereal bars, laundry detergent and deodorant. The Matthews HELP Center serves the Matthews community by providing short-term assistance to families during a financial crisis. Donations were taken to the center by several Levine Rotaract Club members. They spent two and a half hours sorting donations and helping stock the Matthews HELP thrift store.

The Harper Campus collected more than 230 pounds of nonperishable food for Loaves & Fishes during the “Meet Hunger Head On” food drive. Construction Technologies, Applied Technologies and the Middle College competed to see which department could collect the most items. Applied
Technologies won the bragging rights as they collected more than 200 pounds of food. Following the competition of the drive, students participated in the CANstruction contest where students built Thanksgiving themed structures using the nonperishable food.

The Central campus participated in a Civic Engagement Film screening for the film "Food Stamped" on November 17. "Food Stamped" is an informative and humorous documentary film following a couple as they attempt to eat a healthy, well-balanced diet on a food stamp budget. A meaningful discussion and reflection took place after the screening. Central Campus also hosted a Lunch and Learn panelist discussion on Hunger and Homelessness with one of Service-Learning's long-time community partners, the Relatives.

The third annual Harris Hunger Games coincided with National Hunger and Homelessness Week and was held from October 24 through November 18. This food drive is a campus-wide competition to collect food items for the Service-Learning community partner Loaves & Fishes. Loaves & Fishes provides a week's worth of nutritionally balanced groceries to individuals and families, so the canned goods donated from the food drive at Harris Campus assisted families located throughout Mecklenburg County with their Thanksgiving meals.

This year the Fire Protection Technology Department won with a donation of more than 1,800 items. There was participation from 100 percent of departments at the Harris Campus and a total of 2,600 items were donated to Loaves & Fishes!

Each campus observed Hunger and Homelessness Week 2015 in a different, but equally meaningful, way. The students, faculty and staff who participated in these events plan to continue this annual observance.
Toys for Tots
Contributor: Savannah Greer, Service-Learning Coordinator

CPCC’s Service-Learning Center collected toy donations from CPCC faculty, staff, and students throughout November and December 2016. More than 500 toys were collected for Toys for Tots, a non-profit organization that aims to deliver, through new toys at Christmas, a message of hope to less fortunate youngsters that will assist them in becoming responsible, productive, patriotic citizens. More than 20 stuffed animals were also collected for Bright Blessings, a nonprofit organization that serves the greater Charlotte region.
Many of CPCC’s Fire Protection Technology students are current Charlotte Fire Department firefighters or volunteer firefighters in their communities. With a combination of a full time work schedule, and enrolled in college courses, they do not have the time to commit to an on-site service-learning project. Partnering with the American Red Cross to deliver a service-learning project online gives another opportunity for students in our program to serve their communities.

The service-learning project our students will complete through the Red Cross trains the student in Disaster Responder Basic Training. This online training consists of six modules:

- Concepts of Operations Overview
- Direct Client Assistance Fundamentals
- Disaster Cycle Services: An Overview
- Feeding Fundamentals
- Mass Care: An Overview
- Shelter Fundamentals

Students are also required to register with the American Red Cross. Once the student completes this online training, they are qualified to assist in disaster response in the event of a disaster within their community or nationwide. Red Cross will contact the students that have completed the training to assist in disaster response in the event of an emergency when assistance from the Red Cross is necessary. Additionally, since the majority of our students are currently career and volunteer firefighters, or pursuing a career in the fire service, this service-learning project enhances their skills as a first responder.

This training also gives our students insight into the care of individuals and families after an incident. As an example, once the fire to a house is extinguished, the firefighter leaves. The event is over for the first responder; however, the impact of families losing their home has just begun. This training with the Red Cross gives the first responder an understanding of the needs of those involved in the disaster and the skills to help those affected by the tragedy. Disasters range from small scale, such as a house fire, to large scale natural disasters, such as hurricanes or tornadoes. This training gives the students the skills, knowledge and compassion to assist those in need.

This online service-learning project gives an opportunity to those students who are completing their studies online the flexibility to pursue a service-learning project that fits their schedule. The flexibility to complete the modules throughout the semester enables our students to train, then serve their communities, when they may not have previously had the opportunity.

Students who complete this project also give themselves the edge over their competition in the job market. Employers are seeking candidates who pursued other interests during their college careers. This is particularly important in the fire service. Students pursuing a career in the fire service who have completed a service-learning project that provides them with the skills and experience to help others in need enhance their chances to be hired by fire departments within our community.

This service-learning project has the possibility to benefit all students at CPCC. In the near future, this project should become available to all students wishing to complete an online service-learning project. This benefits the students in helping their community during a time of crisis, as well as creates a larger pool of volunteers the American Red Cross can call upon to assist others in the Charlotte area after a disaster strikes.

Brad Newcomb, Disaster Program manager with the American Red Cross, says, “We greatly appreciate the partnership that we’ve developed with the Fire Protection Technology group as they complete our Disaster Responder basic training program. The Red Cross has strong relationships with local emergency response agencies like the Charlotte Fire Department and MEDIC, so we’re excited to introduce our disaster programs to CPCC students who will later work for these organizations. These future firefighters and emergency responders will already be aware of the role that the Red Cross plays during disaster responses, which ultimately helps us achieve our mission. Our first semester has been a great success and we look forward to continuing this collaboration.”
Trips for Kids Charlotte (TFKC) was founded 18 years ago by Charlotte individuals who believed cycling is an empowering sport and can help kids achieve breakthrough results. They adopted the tagline “share your love of cycling with someone smaller than you.” With a mission of providing transformative cycling experiences for under-served youth in the Charlotte area, the organization introduces 10-15-year-olds to the healthy, lifelong activity of mountain biking and uses biking as the tool to help kids learn life lessons. TFKC is an all-volunteer nonprofit and has been fortunate to build essential partnerships with countless organizations including the CPCC Service-Learning program.

TFKC’s largest program, with more than 800 participants in 2016, is their Saturday morning and summer weekday mountain biking Ride Program. Every Saturday morning from February through mid-December, 15 10-15 year olds and their adult “Ride Buddies” take on the challenge of the mountain biking trails at Colonel Francis Beatty Park, or one of the other trails in the Charlotte area. CPCC students play a significant role in keeping the kids pedaling!

When groups from Title I CMS schools, after-school programs, children’s homes, scout troops, etc. arrive at the ride site, they find all the equipment needed for an awesome ride. Each ride begins with the adult “Ride Buddies” fitting the kids with a helmet and a mountain bike, ensuring they understand the rules of the trail and can safely ride their bikes. The group then hits the appropriate level of trail for their experience, typically riding more than 10 miles in a little more than 2 hours. The morning wraps up with a healthy lunch and a discussion focused on “How is life like a bicycle?”

Understandably, the 50 TFKC Ride Program bikes see a great deal of action and must be properly maintained to enable the kids to comfortably ride and not be stopped with a frustrating bike issue. That is where the CPCC volunteers play another critical role. Nearly once a quarter, 10-15 CPCC students travel to Colonel Francis Beatty Park in Matthews where the two TFKC Ride Program bike trailers are parked. These CPCC “mechanics” give each bike a thorough cleaning and drying before lubing the chain on each bike. They then ride each bike to ensure there are no issues. Their work not only allows the kids to totally enjoy upcoming rides, but also saves the organization time and money since the Charlotte Re-Cycler staff does not need to handle that maintenance.

The Charlotte Re-Cycler is a component of TFKC and is Charlotte’s award winning used bike shop; it serves as a funding source for Trips for Kids Charlotte. Here, the organization’s only paid staff refurbishes all types and sizes of donated bicycles. Any bikes appropriate for TFKC kids are set aside and all other bikes are sold at very reasonable prices. The income from those bikes allows even more kids to participate in Trips for Kids Charlotte.

In addition to maintaining the Ride Program bikes, CPCC volunteers recently played an important role in improving the Charlotte Re-Cycler’s efficiency. On Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, a large CPCC contingent traveled to the Re-Cycler bike storage facility where hundreds of used bikes are kept until they can be refurbished. CPCC volunteers organized the bikes by size and type. When the Charlotte Re-Cycler inventory of a particular size or type of bike is depleted, the same size/type of bike can quickly be pulled from the storage area to be refurbished! This group of students completed the cleaning and break down of 600 bikes! This effort was a huge help to the organization.

The Charlotte Re-Cycler also houses the Trips for Kids Charlotte Earn-A-Bike Program classroom. TFKC realized that many of the kids riding the trails on Saturdays could not ride at any other time because they could not afford their own bike. Therefore, Trips for Kids Charlotte began the Earn-A-Bike Program in 2006, teaching kids bike maintenance, basic repair and bicycle safety in three, two-hour sessions. Upon completion, each student earns a bike, helmet and lock; approximately 100 students per year ride away on their own bike!

TFKC could not be successful without wonderful partnerships like the CPCC Service-Learning program. In addition to enabling kids to have positive mountain biking experiences and helping the Charlotte Re-Cycler be more profitable, numerous CPCC students have joined rides as a “Ride Buddy” and many have purchased their own bike from the Charlotte Re-Cycler. Hopefully, through the process, CPCC students develop a greater appreciation for biking and an expanded view of the non-profit world.
"CPCC students play a significant role in keeping the kids pedaling!"

Paula Fricke, Trips for Kids Volunteer Coordinator
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