

Students Volunteer Time and Experience to Community

BY JOE NARON

In this season, students have a tendency to become self-centered with the solid brick of classes, WebAssigns or college applications. Rightfully so as their futures are at stake, most students's volunteer spirits expired after the sixtieth hour of summer service. But for a select few giving back to the community is constant regardless of scholastic demands. This is evident in NCSSM students that volunteer as tutors for the Pioneer Scholars Program at the Emily Krzyzewski Family LIFE Center.

Founded in memory of Duke Coach Mike Krzyzewski's mother, the Emily K Center serves the community in many functions, one of the most crucial being the Pioneer Scholars Program. The program targets K-8 economically disadvantaged students in the Durham community, selected students are provided with intense after-school tutoring, character education and career development, with the goal that "students [learn] to dream big, act with character and purpose, strive for academic excellence, and reach their highest potential as our future generation of citizen leaders," according to the program's official objectives.

Senior Jessica Anderson is responsible for organizing a group of students that volunteer with the program, some going once and others twice a week. Volunteers work under lead tutors who mentor and instruct the volunteers in



The Emily K Center from the outside.

Photo credit www.emilyk.org

teaching methods. The early grades program is focused on one-on-one or one-on-two teaching, with one person working with a group of three student and tutoring in reading and math.

Senior Isabella Bellon is a reading tutor at the center. She describes her experience tutoring Hispanic students and compares it to her own experience as an immigrant to the U.S.

"We are not allowed to speak in Spanish with the kids, I kind of relate to my experience coming to the United States, so I want to give back to those kids who need that sort of assistance," she said.

According to Bellon, tutoring at the center is activity based, as the attention of a first grade student is hard to keep for long, however for students motivated through the Pioneer program education is not a struggle.

"They are really attentive, they're always happy to be there," said Bellon.

The one-on-one tutoring provides a way for tutors to really get to know the students and tailor learning activities to individual needs.

This also allows tutors to push students in the right direction needed for academic success, speaking of one particular student

"I know Verissa, the girl I was working with, she was pretty smart, I don't think I was that smart in first grade, so it's helpful for her to have this support in this way," said Bellon.

Some of her best experiences have been in realizing how the students come to strive for success. Bellon said, "Whenever [students are] so excited when they get the word right, or if it's wrong they're like 'Uhh, I knew that!'"

Junior Eli Hornstein's focus is more in math tutoring than English, and is based on what the students are actually studying in school. His tutoring is based more on independent learning than repetition.

"I'm trying to teach them to innovate, to take what they know and to create something without needing to be spoon-fed, and then to get help from others with their idea and to develop that and not take their ideas and put them away," said Hornstein.

Like Bellon's student Verissa, Hornstein's work has led him to encounter intelligent motivated students who are only held back by life's circumstances.

"I especially like Jeffrey, he was my first student, we were teaching him greater than/less than/equal to/not equal to. We did the lesson, he got it, he was really smart. Then

he was actually asking me questions and he was able to go beyond what we were doing. He's a smart kid and his only barriers were really social and economic," said Hornstein.

The Pioneer program's impact has been quite positive given its relatively brief existence. Based on independent research from the Research Triangle Institute, before enrolling in the program, 66% of the first Pioneer class was performing below grade level in reading, 13% at grade level, and 21% above. Those statistics have improved to 62% of students performing above grade level and 38% of students performing at grade level. The center's emphasis on parental empowerment has also been felt. 100% of parents agreed that attending the program has helped their children do better in school.

Perhaps the most positive result of the program is the character development transmitted from tutors to students. If she could impart one personal quality to her students, Bellon says it would be work ethic. "Everything is possible pretty much, it's doable as long as you work hard for it," she said.

With this type of work done by NCSSM students in the community, the school's reputation can be one of service as well as academic rigor.

Opinion: Too Few, Too Many, or Just Right?

BY KATHLEEN BOUDREAU



Photo by Kara Tinker

What makes this school great? That is a simple question with one simple answer. It's the people that make this school amazing and worthwhile. It is the differences that each person brings to

the NCSSM community. It is the cultural differences, political differences, alternative lifestyles, and different interests. Nowhere is this better represented than in the numerous clubs that are active at NCSSM.

The ability to create or be a part of clubs for just about anything that you are interested in is an opportunity that many students take advantage of. In clubs, students can learn the art of pen spinning or how to play the harmonica. They can state their views for either party in the Teen Democrats or Teenage Republicans clubs. Students can also get ready for spontaneous dance parties by going to DYAO or joining the DDR Club, which are also great for exercising. Any random or crazy interest that you may have, be it fashion design, organ donation, or pasta, can be incorporated into a club. Clubs are a chance for students to show what they love and see how many other students feel the same.

School clubs are not only a priceless mode of free expression, but they are also a great way to meet people. There is no better way to get to know other students than by hitting each other with foam bats at Shire of Avondale or watching an Indie film together and then talking about the insane twist at the end. Students can become part of a team through joining the Dance Ensemble or Colours, the gospel choir. Students all come from different backgrounds and different places. The ability to be part of a club can make friends out of people who have very little else in common.

In a school that is filled with stress and worrying about the next essay that you have to write, the test you have this week, or the college application that must be sent in by next week, clubs offer a chance to relax. They give students the ability to have fun doing something other than trying to memorize chemical compounds and the importance of Transcendentalism. The chance to relax is something that most students dearly need here. Clubs may mean the difference between breaking down and flourishing at NCSSM. As far as the insane amount of clubs goes, the more the better. With the amount of clubs here at NCSSM, everyone is sure to be able to find one that suits them.