



The Learning Centers Volunteer Information

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Thank you for your interest in volunteering with Children First/Communities in Schools Learning Centers! Children First has existed for 37 years and began as a part of United Way. Over the years we have grown tremendously with the mission to empower children and their families to reach their full potential through advocacy, education and services. In 2003, Children First acquired the local affiliate of Communities In Schools, a national dropout prevention network of 181 local affiliates serving nearly 1.3 million students in 25 states and D.C. As Communities In Schools, we surround students with a community of support, empowering them to stay in school and achieve in life. In 2012, we achieved Communities In Schools national accreditation.

The following is a list of our programs to give you an idea of the several services we provide:

Family Resource Center at Emma

The Family Resource Center at Emma (FRCE) improves the financial stability of families by providing emergency assistance through a food pantry; clothing closet; emergency financial assistance for rent, utilities; ongoing case management; a community garden; parenting classes; and holiday assistance. We work with families individually to bring them out of crisis and to a point of financial stability. These services are available to both English-speaking and Latino families living in the Emma community.

Latino Outreach

The Latino Outreach Program helps strengthen Latino community residents to live independently and self-sufficiently and reduce the social isolation of new immigrants to the community. The program is located at the FRCE and offers all the services available at the FRCE.

Success Coordinators in Johnston and Emma Elementary

The CIS Success Coordinator is like a “Family Resource Center in one person.” The school-based **CIS Success Coordinator** connects students and their families to critical community resources, tailored to local needs with the goal of empowering students to stay in school and achieve in life.

Project POWER/AmeriCorps

Project POWER (Putting Opportunities Within Everyone’s Reach)/AmeriCorps provides tutoring and enrichment activities to youth living in the both the Asheville city and Buncombe county school districts. Members are placed in positions to recruit and support volunteers for area schools and non-profit organizations, provide one-on-one tutoring services, organize community service projects, and work as enrichment specialists in local schools.

Learning Centers

This program offers free homework assistance, a healthy snack and enrichment programs for 60 elementary school-aged children living in two public housing and one low-income community. The program is located on-site and free of charge to families living in these communities to alleviate financial and transportation barriers. There is emphasis placed on parent involvement, and a 6-week Summer Camp program.

Advocacy

Improving the lives of children, youth, and their families requires public policy advocacy. Decisions made at all policy levels – US Congress, NC State Legislature, Buncombe County Commissioners, Asheville City Council, and local school boards – impact community resources, family programs, and children’s lives everyday. Children First/CIS uses tools like research, education, community engagement, and lobbying to build a strong, local advocacy voice for our children and youth.

The Success Equation

Children First/Communities in Schools has launched a multi-year initiative called the Success Equation to inspire and sustain a local movement to reduce the incidence of poverty and its impact on children in Buncombe County through education, collaboration, and public policy advocacy, resulting in a community where all children thrive.

Want to learn more? Join us for a Mind the Gap tour, a one-hour informational tour of Children First/CIS. The tour will educate you about our programs and inspire you to help us close the gaps and realize a brighter future for our children. Contact Kaitlyn Breiten at KaitlynB@childrenfirstbc.org or 828-259-9717 to reserve your seat today!

Volunteer Basics

The Children First/CIS Learning Centers are open Monday through Thursday from 2:30-5:30 throughout the school year. We ask volunteers for a minimum commitment of **one hour a week** for three months, the most important hour being between 3:00-4:00, to assist the children with their homework. There may be periodic Fun Friday Field Trips. **If schools are closed for holidays, teacher workdays, early release, or inclement weather, the Learning Centers are also closed.**

Schedule of a typical day: Children arrive on the bus at approximately 2:45PM. They come in, put down their book bags, wash their hands, and receive a snack. They have snack and focus time (a short activity or discussion) until 3:15. They split up into homework groups for about an hour and staff & volunteers are paired with one-to two children or small groups to help with homework. Around 4:15 they begin enrichment activities, which could include ABYSA soccer, music/dance with LEAF Schools and Streets artists, games, or art projects. Pick-up time is at 5:00PM.

The main responsibilities of volunteers at our learning centers are snack preparation, child supervision, homework assistance, and clean-up. Volunteers will be asked to participate in all of these activities. If you are uncomfortable with any of the tasks that you are asked to complete, pull a staff member aside and notify them. They will assign you other duties.

Dress Code: Please wear comfortable clothes. Tennis shoes or flat shoes are helpful when playing games and outside. Please no: ripped or dirty jeans, tee shirts featuring alcohol or drug paraphernalia, halter tops, midriffs, or cleavage and/or undergarments showing.

We try to match the skills and interests of our volunteers with the needs and opportunities of The Learning Centers. If you are unsatisfied with your position at a Learning Center, please let Kaitlyn Breiten know and we will try to make suitable changes.

Because of our commitment to our mission and quality programs, we ask all long term volunteers to attend a more in depth monthly informational tour, a “**Mind the Gap Tour**” conducted by Children First/Communities in Schools in order to acquaint volunteers with our wider organization. Please contact Kaitlyn Breiten at (828) 259-9717 or KaitlynB@childrenfirstbc.org to reserve your seat on an upcoming tour.

Daily Activities

- **Arrive and sign in to the VOLUNTEER LOG.** We use this data for our grants so we can continue to receive funds for this wonderful program, so it is very important that you sign in!
- **Put away your items in the provided secure, locked space.** If you cannot remember where this space is located, ask a site leader or another volunteer who has been there before you.
- **Put on your name tag.** Please wear this every time you come in. They see many volunteers throughout the week and it is difficult for them to remember all the different names.
- **Check in with either a site leader.** Try to get a quick overview of the day’s agenda, that way you will be prepared for each activity and can even start setting up for the activity before the children get there. Check the white board for a listing of the day’s activities.
- **Interact positively with the children.** One of the most valuable impacts you can have is to go over to a child who is either working on their homework, reading a book, or working on an activity and positively interact with them. Ask them questions about what they are doing, respond with praise to their accomplishments, or compliment their work and their behavior, if it is positive. If you are having behavior issues with a child, please alert the site leaders and they will manage it.
- **Ask the site leaders if there is anything you can do.** If you see they are too busy to respond or are dealing with a behavior issue, please feel free to look around and do whatever you feel needs to be done, whether it is cleaning, setting up for the next activity, etc.
- **When you are ready to leave, make sure the child you are working with is integrated back into the group.** Let the site leaders know you are leaving but do not wait for their permission to leave. If you are only signed up to stay for an hour, then feel free to leave after your hour is completed.
- **Sign out of the Volunteer Log.** Please know that even if a staff member is too busy or distracted to say thank you, that **you are appreciated!!! You are VITAL** to the success of the children enrolled in this program, and we could not do our work without you!

- **Please notify Kaitlyn Breiten (KaitlynB@childrenfirstbc.org) if you will not be able to volunteer on your assigned days if you are sick or going on vacation.** This helps the leaders to plan activities.

Volunteer Rules and Guidelines

- No child is allowed in the kitchen.
- No child is allowed to go into a file cabinet, art supply cabinet or sports equipment closet.
- The child needs to tell you if he/she is leaving the room for any reason—they cannot just get up and walk out of the room.
- If you see a child wandering the Learning Center, ask him/her where they are going and help lead them back to their group.
- A child can never leave the Learning Center alone while the center is operating.
- At 5:00, a child 8 years or younger must be accompanied by an adult or designated person stated by the parent when they go home. This is not your responsibility to enforce, but is good information to have.
- It is always greatly appreciated if you would like to bring in snacks or food, but if you do so, please ask the leaders first as another snack may have been prepared, therefore the staff may serve it at another time. We also need to make sure there is enough for everyone.
- When working on homework with a child/children, please check their homework and sign their homework notebooks.
- Never be alone with a child. Keep doors open if you are in a room with a group of children.
- **No guns, knives, swords, or weapons are allowed at the Learning Center at anytime.** We also do not allow any toy guns, knives, swords, etc. at our Learning Centers. If you are in need of a knife to use as a tool or for food preparation, please discuss this with the staff. Knives are to be used by the adults only. They are located in the kitchen, well above the children’s arm length in the dish cabinets. Please make sure if a knife is used that it is handled with care and is put back into its designated storage location and not left out on any counters, desks, or in arms reach of the children at any time.
- Display a positive attitude. Participate in activities. We want to create an encouraging atmosphere.
- Use child appropriate language; cursing, foul language, or saying “stupid,” “dumb,” or “shut up” will not be tolerated.
- Involve a staff member if you are ever uncomfortable about a situation.
- Be kind but firm when enforcing rules. If a behavior guidance issue arises, try to diffuse the situation and notify the site leaders about the problem. Although we expect for you to reinforce the rules, it is not your responsibility to be a disciplinarian. Corporal punishment is prohibited.

- Establish boundaries with the children. You are a role model and mentor, not a peer.
- Do not bring any outside food or drink. Gum chewing is not allowed at our Learning Centers.
- **Do not use cell phones, iPods or earphones while volunteering.**
- If you suspect abuse or neglect of a child, notify the staff privately or report it to Child Protective Services. If you suspect a staff member is abusing or neglecting a child, please contact Barbara Norton, Learning Centers Coordinator at 828-778-2073 immediately.
- Always remember to sign in and out on our volunteer log!

Snack Preparation: Snack preparation is very basic. **Wash your hands before preparing snack.** Preparation usually just includes mixing up juice or putting water into pitchers, getting out napkins, and counting out pre-packaged snacks for the children. **Ask the leaders which snacks you should prepare.**

Homework Help: All children are expected to do homework. If they say they do not have any, ask to see their homework folders. If a child asks for help, make sure they are asking you specific questions and that they have tried first. **Have children read the question out loud and guide them to solve it** (don't do their work for them). Keep the children on task and **double check their work to make sure they have completed it and that it is done correctly.** **If there is a place in the homework log for your signature, please sign your name and write Children First/CIS; this will verify that the child completed his/her homework.** If no one at the Learning Center understands the homework, please note that in the log and state that the child tried their best. Please let the staff know, so they can contact the teacher.

Clean Up: Clean up as you go, and encourage the children to pick up after themselves. Put away supplies and games. Wipe down all surfaces. Sweep the floor after the children have left. Wash any dishes that may have been used. Take out the trash if it's full. If you enjoy cleaning, feel free to clean anything before the children have arrived or after they have left.

General Rules for children, staff, and volunteers: listen to adult instructions and follow their directions, children must do their homework, no violence or threats of violence, no rough housing, no destruction of property, no foul language or demeaning comments to others, please notify staff before you leave.

I have read, understand and agree to uphold the above.

Print name of volunteer _____

Signature: _____ Date _____

Directions to The Learning Centers

Deaverview Learning Center, Deaverview Apartments, Apt. 2-C & D, 275 Deaverview Rd. Asheville, NC

28806: Take Patton Avenue away from downtown. Pass Leicester Highway and Johnston School Rd. Pass the Groce Funeral Home on the right. Turn right (after the bank) onto Deaverview Rd. Go past the intersection with Ample Storage and the rock bldg. on the right (Deaverview offices and Community Center). Take the next right into the apartments. Take the first left into the parking lot. The Learning Center is directly in front of you. It is apartment 2-D. They also use the next door apartment C. You will see AmeriCorps posters (Large A) in the windows.

Pisgah View Learning Center, Pisgah View Apartments, Apt. 16 C & D, Stewart St., Asheville, NC 28806:

Take 240 or Haywood Rd. to West Asheville, next to the 240 overpass, you will see a B & B Pharmacy on the corner, Turn Right onto Hanover Street. Go straight through a few intersections. At the Stop sign Turn Left onto Stewart Street, follow this up the hill, (do not go in the One Way street on the right), keep following Stewart street until it curves to the right, We are at: 16 C & D, Stewart Street. You will see AmeriCorps posters (Large A) in the windows.

Woodridge Learning Center, Woodridge Apartments, Apt. 26-F, 61 Bingham Rd. Asheville, NC 28806:

Take Patton Avenue away from downtown, toward West Asheville. Turn Right on Louisiana Avenue (at the K-Mart and Wachovia bank) going North. After the railroad tracks and at the light (there isn't a sign); Turn Right onto Emma Road. Go past the mobile home park on the left and then Turn Left onto Bingham Rd. (sign is crooked). Then Turn Right onto Keith. You will make a curve to the right and make a Left to the Woodridge sign into the apartment complex. The Learning Center is the third brick building on the right in the apartment marked with a sign that says Community Center. There is an AmeriCorps symbol (large A) and a Children First/CIS sign in the windows.

Directions to the Family Resource Center at Emma: Take Patton Ave. West, Turn Right (at Kmart and Wachovia Bank) onto Louisiana Ave. (going North), Go over the railroad tracks, At the Light – Turn Left onto Emma Rd., Take the next Right turn onto Brickyard Rd., Go up the hill and over, Turn Right into Emma Elementary School, When you see the school, Turn Left and go past their playground, We are in the back on the left – there are two trailers next to the garden, The Family Resource Center is the tan trailer in the back.

Our Main Office of Children First/Communities In Schools: 50 South French Broad, Suite 246, Asheville, NC 28801 (the Red Brick Building off of S. French Broad – 2nd Floor)

If you have any Questions Please Call:

Learnings Center Coordinator: Barbara Norton - (828) 778-2073, barbaran@childrenfirstbc.org

Resource Development Coordinator: Kaitlyn Breiten - (828) 259-9717, volunteerc@childrenfirstbc.org

Deaverview Learning Center: - 828-620-9096

Deaverview Success Coordinator: Courtney Crenshaw - (828) 545-8478, courtneyc@childrenfirstbc.org

Pisgah View Learning Center: “Lex” McCombs,
(828) 620-9097

Pisgah View Parent Coordinator: Alixes “Lex” McCombs, (828) 620-9097, alixesm@childrenfirstbc.org

Woodridge Learning Center: - (828) 620-9098

Latino Outreach Coordinator: Norma Brown – (828) 252-4810, normab@childrenfirstbc.org