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## Making a difference

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# Making a difference



*The author is a junior religion major from Boone, N.C.*

**A**s a volunteer, a coordinator and now as student director of the Max and Trude Heller Collegiate Educational Service Corps, I have seen and experienced the power of sharing oneself with others. And I am not alone. Because of CESC, thousands of Furman students have grown to understand this simple truth.

On a weekly basis, CESC volunteers visit nursing homes, serve as role models in schools and after-school programs, work as translators, and assist at hospitals and medical clinics, just to name a few of the types of programs in which we participate. CESC also provides opportunities for our neighbors in the community to come to Furman for special events such as trick-or-treating, a Valentine's Day dance for exceptional adults, and the ever popular May Day Play Day.

Furman students, faculty and staff benefit from CESC-sponsored educational opportunities, such as a banquet to raise awareness of hunger and poverty. CESC also offers the campus community the chance to become involved by donating items and money, as we do each Christmas season with our "Holiday Giving Tree."

CESSC is not about numbers and impersonal philanthropy. We are about making a one-on-one difference in individuals' lives — and deepening young people's understanding of life's lessons and meaning.

How do I know? Let me tell you a story. It is my story, but it is also just one of thousands of testimonies that CESC volunteers through the years could share about people helping people.

My freshman year (2000-01), as a new CESC volunteer, I walked through the halls of Greenville's Oakmont Nursing Center and met a resident named Buddy. Because his particular Furman friend had recently graduated, I decided to try to keep him company in her absence.

As the weeks passed, Buddy's conversations with me and with other students grew longer and more meaningful. Before long, he would wait out in the hall to meet us on the days that we visited, and he would joke with us if we were a few minutes late or if we visited other people first without at least saying hello to him. We talked about current events, about his life, about God, and about things on our minds. The Furman students put on a birthday party for him, with a homemade cake and party hats. Buddy shared with me that I was like the daughter he never had.

After his heart attack last spring, several carloads of students visited him at Greenville Memorial Hospital, and we drove to Pickens for his funeral a few weeks later. Members of his family came up to us and said, "Oh, you're the Furman students! Buddy talked about you all and appreciated your visits so much."

Through my tears, I realized that I was crying because I was living fully, embracing relationships and embracing the emotions that come with them. This experience reminded me that there are more lessons in life than those I learn in my classes and that I, a single individual, can make a positive difference in the world.

— Lindley Sharp