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CESC: A retrospective

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LONG BEFORE STUDENT VOLUNTEER WORK BECAME A HOT ITEM ON COLLEGE CAMPUSES, THERE WAS FURMAN'S COLLEGIATE EDUCATIONAL SERVICE CORPS.

Started 34 years ago, when a handful of students began working in six local agencies, CESC today involves more than half of Furman's 2,600 students as regular volunteers in over 80 Greenville agencies serving children, adults, the sick and the displaced. In the process, it provides a direct link to a world that many Furman students might otherwise never know.

CESC is volunteerism in its purest form. Students administer the program, which offers no pay or academic credit — just the kind of education that they could never get in a classroom. By invoking the values of respect, kindness and concern for others, Service Corps is an advocate for justice and human dignity at Furman and throughout Greenville County.

The program has received much well-deserved recognition. A past winner of the South Carolina Governor's Award, CESC was also a two-time finalist in the National Center for Voluntary Action's program recognizing volunteer service and

achievement. Most recently, CESC received the 1998 Volunteer of the Year Award from the South Carolina Health Care Association for its contributions to the nursing home industry, and the 1999 Outstanding Program Award for private institutions from the South Carolina College Personnel Association. Seven colleges have visited Furman to learn how to establish a similar service program.

While thousands of Furman students have passed through Service Corps, one person has remained a constant. Betty Alverson — Miss A — has been the director of CESC since its inception. In her caring, no-nonsense way, she has provided students a supportive blend of direction, encouragement and inspiration.

The conclusion of the 1999-2000 school year marks the close of Miss A's career at Furman — and the end of an era both for CESC and for the university. With this in mind, we felt it appropriate to take a retrospective look at CESC, and to ask

three individuals close to the program to provide their perspective on its impact and legacy.

To accompany their reflections we have included a sampling of photographs, some of which you may remember from past publications, that represent various aspects of Service Corps through the years. We have chosen to use captions sparingly and to let as many photos as possible speak for themselves.

While reviewing our files, we were also struck by the remarkable number of Service Corps photographs that show students working one-on-one with others. And we realized anew that this direct, personal connection serves as the essence of CESC — and represents the program's true, enduring value.

— **Jim Stewart**