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Where

*the volunteer center*  
BRINGS SPECIAL OPPORTUNITIES  
AND SPECIAL PEOPLE TOGETHER

*civil clubs*  
HAVE LONG MADE IT THEIR  
MISSION TO SERVE

*nonprofits and  
community groups*  
STRIVE TO IMPROVE  
QUALITY OF LIFE

# WE ARE DURHAM

THE MAGAZINE

## People making a Difference

Count  
The Culture

The  
Recreation

Go  
Education

august 2011



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close calls  
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People  
Dis...

The staff of the Volunteer Center  
of Durham, from left to right:  
Executive Director, Kim Olson EGGS  
adult volunteer coordinator, and  
Bobbie Ann, executive director  
responsible for the youth volunteer  
program. (The photo is not pictured)

Volunteer Center  
connects those  
wanting to serve  
with opportunities



volunteer  
CENTER OF DURHAM  
volunteering together

VOLUNTEER CENTER OF DURHAM  
By Melody Guyton Buitts  
mbuitts@heraldsun.com

## A City in Pursuit of Common Good

DURHAM — There's something special about Durham people that binds them together in pursuit of a common good — something about this old tobacco town that binds its people together in pursuit of a common good. It's an average of 91.4 hours each year, according to the Corporation for National and Community Services. "It's a way to give back," said Kim Shaw, executive director of the Volunteer Center of Durham. "They feel like they have a lot to be thankful for, and that feeling of giving back to the community is an important part of their ethos."

It was that demand by eager Bull City volunteers and the great need of area nonprofits that in 1972 inspired the incorporation of the Volunteer Services Bureau of Durham, the precursor of the Volunteer Center. Now, nearly 40 years later, the center helps connect between 4,000 and 5,000 volunteers with more than 800 agencies each year. Most of those nonprofits are in Durham, but agencies come from as far as Mecklenburg and Cumberland counties as the center's help in identifying volunteers.

The Volunteer Center, a United Way agency, works with nonprofits to post opportunities on its website, <http://www.volunteercen.org>, on which potential volunteers can search for agencies and activities that match their interests and skills. The center offers a variety of volunteer opportunities, from one-time engagements to those that require long-term commitments. There are also opportunities for a range of demographics, from children, to college students, to retired people. In addition to its website, the center posts opportunities

in the newspaper and offers one-on-one consultations for folks who need guidance in finding a volunteer opportunity. The tough economy has forced many nonprofits to be more frugal, Shaw said, and that's why volunteerism is becoming even more important — emphasizing the agencies' human capital by 80 percent in some cases, to be able to achieve their goals," she said. "The feeling of gratification after helping others is all that some volunteers are after. They have ingrained in them from an early age to give back," Shaw said. "It's part of who they are."

But volunteerism has other rewards, too, like the opportunity to try out a new career or to exercise a personal passion, she continued.

The Volunteer Center rewards its most outstanding and dedicated volunteers in tangible ways as well, through its Governor's Award for Volunteer Service and Tomorrow's Community Leaders events.

The Tomorrow's Community Leaders ceremony recognizes the contributions of youths who have participated in the center's Mayor's Award program, in which students spend 100 or more hours of their summer providing community service. Student Action Board, in which high school students plan and implement school-year service projects, and Hard Core Award program, in which students contribute 50 or more hours of community service during the school year.

The youth involved in Volunteer Center programs last year contributed a total of more than 35,000 service hours, Shaw said. That figure is poised to rise this year, with nearly 600 students participating in the Mayor's Award program — almost 200 more than in 2010. It's important to instill a love of service in youths early in their lives — both for the community's benefit and for their own, she said.

"For young people, volunteering is a way to nurture their leadership skills," she continued. "I call it a legacy of leadership."

While the Volunteer Center is best known for making service programs and connections, it also offers human resources they need to be successful, Shaw said. Social Services on such Durham traditions as Share Your Christmas, a program in which community members help make disadvantaged families' holiday wish lists

WE ARE DURHAM



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