

### **“One day, all children in this nation will have the opportunity to attain an excellent education.”**

*--Vision of Teach For America*

This year, Teach For America celebrates its 25<sup>th</sup> year of partnership with North Carolina. As a partner, Teach For America has committed to maximizing our contribution to the state by recruiting, training, and supporting excellent, diverse teachers and growing our number of alumni living and working in North Carolina. We are also committed to strengthening the North Carolina Teacher Corps.

In the second quarter, Teach For America celebrated Veterans Day. Teach For America aims to become a part of the broader effort to help veterans and military families find their next opportunity to launch a new career in the service of this great nation. We recognize this day as a time to take a moment to celebrate our military veterans and spouses who bring their selflessness, leadership, determination, and passion to classrooms across North Carolina.

One of those veterans is Anthony Notte. Having served in the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division, Anthony is currently a Teach For America corps member teaching sixth grade science. Reflecting on his classroom experience, Notte explains how being an Army veteran impacts his classroom. He writes:

*Nearly 7,000 miles from Afghanistan, I now teach sixth grade science at Eastway Middle School in Charlotte, North Carolina. I joined the Army at 20 to protect my country and to challenge myself to grow. Motivated by the hard yet rewarding work of my military service, I left the Army and my unit, the 82nd Airborne Division, appreciative of the shared, meaningful bond I had forged with my fellow soldiers to pursue a new career with the same sense of service and shared responsibility.*

*The ‘work hard, never give up on yourself’ mentality the military instilled in me is as meaningful in my classroom as it was in Afghanistan. While virtually no infantry skill correlates to the classroom, my approach to teaching, methods to motivate my students, and passion for developing their critical thinking skills derive from my Army experiences. I work to inspire in my students the discipline and commitment it takes to succeed both in school and also in life.<sup>1</sup>*

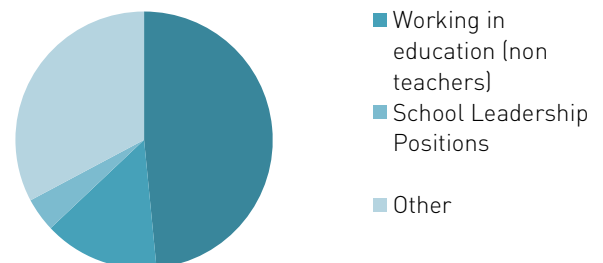
Anthony is just one example of the many veterans who have continued to serve our county and the state of North Carolina through teaching. There are nine veterans who are Teach For America corps members or alumni living across North Carolina (see Appendix C for a spotlight on six of them). We are honored to see more and more veterans choosing to continue to serve our nation through teaching and we are grateful for the North Carolina General Assembly’s continued support of our work in this and other areas. We are excited to provide an update on our progress since the first quarter as well as share our annual metrics (see Appendix A).

### **Statewide Impact**

This fall our state-wide presence approached 2,000 individuals. Of these, 835 are teachers with nearly 500 in their first or second year of teaching. Another 336 are working in education including 58 in school leadership positions. Our alumni base across the state has grown from 1,208 last year to 1,358 this year—a growth of 12%. This growth includes both individuals who completed the corps in North Carolina as well as those who we have actively recruited from out of state.

### **Statewide Impact**

*Nearly 2,000 Strong*

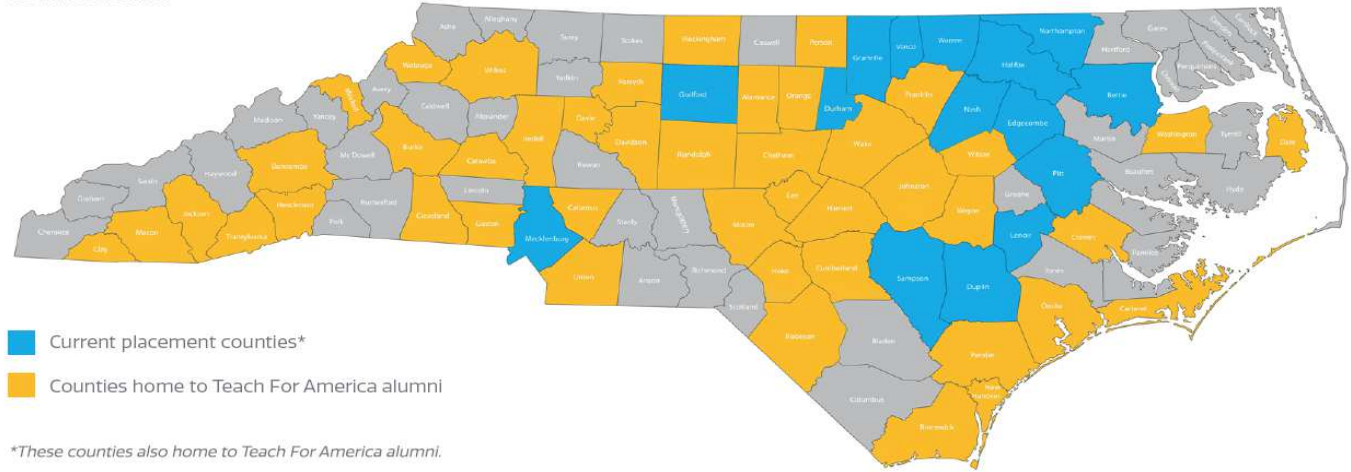


<sup>1</sup> Notte, Anthony. “The Spirit of Service.” *Teach For America – Charlotte; Heroes, Teach!* 11 November 2015. <http://us8.campaign-archive1.com/?u=6a6e0d3364746a3304d2b3b84&id=56151af241&e=5f33782bd3>. 17 December 2015. See Appendix B.

December 2015

### Teach For America Partnership Map 2015–2016

North Carolina



Our current teaching corps is our most diverse corps to date. Among our current corps:

- The average GPA is 3.42
- 46% come from a low-income background<sup>2</sup>
- 42% are people of color
- 37% are teaching math or science
- 28% are the first in their families to graduate from college
- 7 served in the military

Other alumni are impacting education outside of the classroom. We are honored to report that *Charlotte Magazine* recently named Amy Hawn Nelson, a Baltimore 2001 corps member, as Charlottean of the Year for her work on segregation in schools with UNC Charlotte's Urban Institute.

Though Amy taught in Baltimore, she moved back home to Charlotte to continue her work in education. Currently, she is the director of social research at UNC Charlotte's Urban Institute and head of the university's Institute for Social Capital, Inc. She manages a database, facilitates research, and helps people in the community share data.

*Charlotte Magazine* explains:

*She [Hawn Nelson] knows this because she has spent years analyzing the data. As an educational researcher, her mission is to help people make decisions based on numbers, rather than perceptions. Her approach is especially powerful this year, as Charlotte and cities around the country struggle to address the inequity in their neighborhoods and classrooms.<sup>3</sup>*

We are proud to see Amy positively contributing to the education landscape in Charlotte and beyond.

<sup>2</sup> As identified by receiving a full or partial Pell Grant

<sup>3</sup> Rab. Lisa. "Charlotteans of the Year 2015: Amy Hawn Nelson." *Charlotte Magazine*. 19 November 2015.

<http://www.charlottemagazine.com/Charlotte-Magazine/December-2015/Charlotteans-of-the-Year-2015-Amy-Hawn-Nelson/> 17 December 2015. See Appendix D.

### ***Spotlight on Alumni Recruitment & Retention***

We are working hard to make sure that we are retaining our best talent and attracting capable leaders from other states. We have launched a number of initiatives to support this effort.

- **North East Leadership Academy (NELA):**  
NELA is a graduate program through North Carolina State University which focuses on preparing participants to become principals in high-poverty, rural schools. Teach For America alumni make up the majority of NELA's graduates. There are currently two Teach For America alumni NELA applicants, and we have a goal of four in 2016.
- **Rural School Leadership Academy (RSLA) and Rural Principals Fellowship (RPF):**  
RSLA supports Teach For America alumni exploring school leadership positions in rural regions. Participants in the year-long program learn early school leadership skills, deepen their exposure to the role of the principal, and build a national network of aspiring school leaders in rural communities. North Carolina has five RSLA applicants, and we have a goal of adding ten in 2016.
- **Alumni Teacher Leadership Initiative:**  
Eastern North Carolina has developed and recently launched the Alumni Teacher Leadership Initiative, which develops alumni educators after their initial two years of service. The initiative will include monthly professional learning communities, an education book club, classroom observations, individual meetings with staff, focused support of teachers who are alumni of color, sub-regional informal/social gatherings, and local "classrooms to learn from" tours.
- **Leory "Pop" Miller Fellowship:**  
The Charlotte region launched the Leroy Pop Miller fellowship in 2015. Through the fellowship, Teach For America alumni commit an additional three years to Charlotte public education, for a total five-year commitment. There are currently 16 fellows in the program. Our goal is to recruit 20 candidates a year, working toward a total cohort size of 75 in three years.
- **Aspiring Leaders:**  
The Aspiring Leaders program provides corps members the opportunity to explore careers in Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools (CMS) as part of an overall retention and leadership development strategy. Selected candidates participate in seven weeks of job shadowing with a mentor and other executive staff members at CMS. The annual program has a cohort of nine to twelve teachers.
- **School Leadership Summit:**  
The Charlotte region will host 10-15 Teach For America alumni from out of state who are interested in becoming school leaders in North Carolina. The summit is open to alumni currently living in Charlotte. Participants will meet other alumni in school and district level leadership positions and learn about the application pool process as well as different leadership pipeline programs.
- **Recruiting at the Teach For America Anniversary Summit:**  
Teach For America is partnering with Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools and Project LIFT to recruit teachers at Teach For America's 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary summit, where nearly 15,000 alumni will be in attendance.

### **North Carolina Teacher Corps (NCTC)**

Teach For America has committed to partnering with the state to inspire more North Carolinians to teach and lead as educators in our state. While we know great teachers exist across the nation, we believe that teachers with personal ties to North Carolina can make a unique contribution to our state, bringing a special sense of urgency and commitment to educating North Carolina's children.

Since the state's investment, we have increased the percentage of North Carolina connected corps members by over 20%. Nearly 40% of our current corps members are North Carolinians or attended college in North Carolina.

December 2015

We currently have 190 corps members who identify as part of the North Carolina Teaching Corps. One hundred and thirty two of them graduated from a North Carolina college or university and 123 of them are North Carolina natives. Our NCTC corps members represent 71 colleges across the United States including the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, North Carolina State University, Duke University, Yale, and Princeton. Our North Carolina connected corps members make up a diverse group of teachers and leaders across the state:

- The average GPA is 3.4
- 55% come from a low-income background<sup>4</sup>
- 53% are people of color
- 40% are teaching math or science
- 34% are the first in their families to graduate from college
- 2% served in the military

We are building on this success by supplementing Teach For America's national recruitment methods with strategies tailored to North Carolina candidates. Tailored strategies include:

- **One-on-One Outreach:** We have conducted over 20 individual conversations with final round applicants from North Carolina. North Carolina staff and alumni use these calls to inspire applicants to choose to teach in North Carolina rather than choosing to teach out of state.
- **NCTC Webinars:** We have hosted four webinars for both North Carolinians moving into final round of interviews as well as those who are just beginning their application. Over 40 registrants and applicants have attended these webinars thus far. These webinars highlight stories of current corps members and alumni with North Carolina ties who chose to lead in our state. Our data shows that candidates who attend one of our webinars are significantly more likely to preference one or more of our North Carolina regions when making their regional assignment decisions.
- **Registrant Recruitment:** For the first year ever, we have opened up our NCTC activities to applicants who are just beginning an application to join Teach For America. By doing this, we are exposing applicants to the opportunity to teach in North Carolina at a much earlier stage in the application process.
- **School Visits:** In partnership with our recruitment team, we have hosted two school visits across the state for prospective applicants to Teach For America. These school visits give applicants a line of sight into the work they would be leading as a first year teacher in North Carolina. Applicants had the opportunity to ask questions of Teach For America alumni and staff and provide an excellent lever for helping prospects complete the final stages of their application.
- **Holiday Social:** We hosted a holiday social in Durham for both admitted candidates as well as applicants with North Carolina connection. The social allowed incoming corps members and prospective applicants the chance to meet with current corps members, alumni, and Teach For America staff members.

### Regional Updates

We are grateful for the continued investment from the state which allows us to operate in three regions across North Carolina. This year, the Eastern North Carolina region celebrates its 25<sup>th</sup> year in the state, Charlotte sees its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary, and the North Carolina Piedmont Triad enters its second year.

- **North Carolina Piedmont Triad**

A survey was administered to principals who employ Teach For America corps members in our North Carolina Piedmont Triad region. The results from the 2014-15 school year—its charter year as a region— are impressive.

- 100% of principals said they would hire another Teach For America corps member if they had a teaching vacancy at their school

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<sup>4</sup> As identified by receiving a full or partial Pell Grant

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- 80% of principals said they would definitely recommend hiring a Teach For America corps member to a fellow school leader
- 80% were satisfied with the support their corps members receive from Teach For America.

We are encouraged by these results and are excited about the new work being led in this region of the state.

- **Eastern North Carolina**

In 2016, for the first time in our history, we will train our corps members in Eastern North Carolina through the ENC Residency program. Like many Teach For America regions, Eastern North Carolina's teachers have been trained in national institutes. While the national preparation model enabled our teachers to consistently be the state's most effective early career educators, we believe our redesign will fundamentally change the way teachers are trained in North Carolina and have a lasting impact on top-talent retention in the state.

This summer, the Eastern North Carolina region will host its first summer residency teacher training program for their incoming teachers. Building on 25 years of providing the state's most effective teachers, Teach For America- Eastern North Carolina is committed to strengthening our impact by creating a scalable, best-in-class teacher preparation program that will better prepare our teachers for the unique needs of our students and communities. Serving as the first rural teacher pre-service training of its kind, ENC Residency has the potential to provide even more effective teachers, transform the way teachers are trained in North Carolina, and influence Teach For America's teacher preparation nationally. ENC Residency will provide an enhanced curriculum, increase the number of pre-service training hours, and deliver critical summer school programming for over 1,000 students. It will be completely based in Eastern North Carolina, so our teachers can gain valuable local context.

We look forward to updating the state on the progress of our first ever summer residency.

- **Charlotte**

An increasing number Teach For America alumni across Charlotte have started their own education non-profits. Often stemming from the gaps they saw in the classrooms they led as Teach For America teachers, these entrepreneurial leaders are identifying needs in the community and creating solutions for them. Currently, Charlotte alumni have founded six education nonprofits. These include: Proufound Gentleman, HEART Tutoring, PATCH, Digi-Bridge, UrbanPromise, and F.L.O.C.K. Three of them are highlighted below.

- **Digi-Bridge**

David Jessup was a Miami-Dade corps member in 2009 who moved to Charlotte after his initial commitment in Florida. When Jessup began teaching, he quickly realized the major disconnect between student needs and access to technological resources in schools and homes. This realization motivated David to launch Digi-Bridge. Digi-Bridge works to bridge the digital divide in our communities of learning.

- **UrbanPromise**

Jimmy McQuilken, a Charlotte 2009 corps member, worked as a summer camp director with the program UrbanPromise Honduras. Through his work with the youth in Copan Ruinas, he realized that the UrbanPromise model would be a perfect fit for Charlotte. As a result, Jimmy launched UrbanPromise Charlotte in the fall of 2013. The launch of this program came out of a fierce belief that high school students have a strong potential to lead when given the opportunities.

- **F.L.O.C.K.**

Ian Joyce, a 2014 social studies teacher at Eastway Middle School, was recently accepted as a member of the 2016 SEED20 fellowship. SEED20 is a highly competitive social entrepreneurship program that aims to identify, spotlight, and support twenty of the region's most innovative ideas for tackling pressing social

challenges. Ian has been working to develop a non-profit that gives middle school students one-on-one leadership and counseling services to provide greater access and opportunities for college and career.

We are thankful for the continued investment from North Carolina which allows us to support incredible teachers and leaders, like the ones highlighted above, throughout the state.

#### **Financial Reporting**

Teach For America is committed to maximizing the state's investment through fiscal responsibility and working diligently to inspire private donors to invest in our work in North Carolina. For the last 12 years, Teach For America has received Charity Navigator's (the leading charity evaluator in America) four-star rating for sound fiscal management. Less than one percent of the charities rated by Charity Navigator have received 12 consecutive four-star evaluations. As such, Teach For America outperforms most U.S. charities in carrying out its mission in a fiscally responsible manner (see appendix E).

We remain grateful for the state's investment and are committed to making every public and private dollar work hard for students across our state. We look forward to updating the state on our progress in our March quarterly report.

#### APPENDIX A

#### North Carolina Annual Legislative Report

In addition to our quarterly reports, the state has requested an annual update on the information below. This chart contains information regarding Teach For America's operations from June 1, 2014- May 31, 2015.

Legislative Language	Teach For America Results
Total number of applications received nationally from candidates seeking participation in the program	Teach For America received 43,432 applications
Total number of applications received from candidates who are residents of North Carolina and information on the source of these candidates, including the number of (i) recent college graduates and the higher institution the candidates attended, (ii) mid-career level and lateral entry industry professionals, and (iii) veterans of the United States Armed Forces	<p>Teach For America received 1,991 applications from North Carolina residents. Nine hundred and fifty six of these candidates were recent college graduates representing a range of colleges. UNC-Chapel Hill was the largest source of applications from recent college graduates, followed by North Carolina A&amp;T, NC State, UNC-Greensboro and UNC-Charlotte.</p> <p>Additionally, 179 candidates recently obtained a graduate degree representing a range of universities and programs.</p> <p>Nine hundred and forty eight were mid-career level and lateral entry industry professionals. Sixteen of these candidates were veterans of the United States Army.</p>
The total number of North Carolina candidates accepted by TFA	Teach For America accepted 288 candidates from North Carolina.
The total number of accepted candidates placed in North Carolina, including the number of accepted candidates who are residents of North Carolina	Three hundred and thirty nine applicants were matriculated. Two hundred and fifty three were teaching on the first day of school. One hundred and forty six of these candidates were North Carolina residents and were matriculated. Of these, 98 were teaching on the first day of school.
The regions in which accepted candidates have been placed, the number of candidates in each region, and the number of students impacted by placement in those regions	Eastern North Carolina had an incoming corps of 135 teachers and a total corps size of 269 impacting over 19,900 students. Charlotte had an incoming corps of 91 teachers and a total corps size of 172 impacting over 12,700 students. The North Carolina Piedmont Triad had an incoming corps of 27 teachers and a total corps size of 51 impacting nearly 4,000 students.
Success of recruitment efforts, including the Teach Back Home program and targeting candidates who are (i) working in areas related to STEM education, (ii) mid-career level and lateral entry industry professionals, and (iii) veterans of the United States Armed Forces	Ninety-six incoming teachers are STEM teachers, representing 38% of the incoming corps. Four teachers are veterans. Eighty-four teachers in the incoming corps were mid-career level and lateral entry industry professionals.
Success of retention efforts, including the Teach Beyond Two and Make it Home programs, and the percentage of accepted candidates working in their placement communities beyond the initial TFA two-year commitment period and the number of years those candidates teach beyond the initial commitment	Our alumni base across the state of North Carolina has grown from 1,208 last year to 1,358 this year—a growth of 12%.



# TEACHFORAMERICA

## North Carolina · Quarterly and Annual Legislative Report

December 2015

Category	Eastern North Carolina	Charlotte	North Carolina Piedmont Triad
Funds expended by region of the state	\$3,314,306.00	\$2,185,694.00	\$500,000.00
Recruitment, candidate selection, and placement	\$272,578	\$164,282	\$52,302
Preservice training and preparation costs	\$381,026	\$174,912	\$120,714
Professional development and support	\$1,757,892	\$1,107,833	\$304,767
Alumni Support	\$340,456	\$338,712	-
Information & Technology	\$208,352	\$144,264	-
Human Assets	\$93,937	\$65,121	-
Finance & Administration	\$77,225	\$52,682	-
Public Affairs & Engagement	\$69,808	\$72,258	-
Office of the CEOs	\$36,698	\$23,819	-
Development	\$76,334	\$41,812	\$22,216
Funds received though private fundraising, specifically by sources in each region of the state			
	Eastern North Carolina	Charlotte	North Carolina Piedmont Triad
Foundation	\$2,526,500	\$1,027,613	\$795,720
Individual	\$482,530	\$1,006,616	-
Corporate	\$276,004	\$538,528	\$2,500
National Fundraising	\$747,275	\$585,222	\$98,665



## APPENDIX B

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Teach For America • Charlotte | Heroes, Teach!

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TFA Family,

As this busy day comes to a close and we settle in for our evening, we wanted to take a final moment to celebrate our military veterans and spouses who bring their selflessness, leadership, their determination and passion to classrooms across Charlotte. One of those veterans is Anthony Notte. Having served in the 82nd Airborne Division as MOS 11B (Infantry) at the rank of E4 (Specialist), Anthony is currently a Teach For America corps member teaching 6th grade science at Eastway Middle School in Charlotte. Read Anthony's reflection on his continued call to serve.

General Colin Powell once said, "The celebration of Veterans Day is a vivid reminder of the price which has been paid for the liberty we enjoy. It is also an appropriate time to reflect on the burden we all share in ensuring our children, and their children, enjoy that same liberty."

Education is freedom.



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## **The Spirit of Service**

### How Being an Army Veteran Impacts My Classroom

Nearly 7,000 miles from Afghanistan, I now teach 6th grade science at Eastway Middle School in Charlotte, NC. I joined the Army at 20 to protect my country and to challenge myself to grow. Motivated by the hard yet rewarding work of my military service, I left the Army and my unit, the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division, appreciative of the shared, meaningful bond I had forged with my fellow soldiers to pursue a new career with the same sense of service and shared responsibility.

The “work hard, never give up on yourself” mentality the military instilled in me is as meaningful in my classroom as it was in Afghanistan. While virtually no infantry skill correlates to the classroom, my approach to teaching, methods to motivate my students and passion for developing their critical thinking skills derive from my Army experiences. I work to inspire in my students the discipline and commitment it takes to succeed both in school and also in life.

Like most teachers I started this school year with specific goals for my students’ academic progress, knowing large chunks of my effectiveness as a teacher would be measured by numbers. But I also believe that the process is just as important as the outcome. For example, my school community is economically and ethnically diverse. Many of my students speak primarily Spanish, with English as their second language bringing with them a dual language asset that we can build on. Through group work and interactive lessons, my students are learning across lines of difference, and thus developing life skills that prepare them for future success. As I’ve witnessed what is possible when diverse people come together in pursuit of common goals, I want my students to experience the benefits of diversity for themselves.

I also expect my students to continually seek out new information, analyze it and increase their critical thinking skills. The ability to analyze a problem and make an informed decision is crucial in whatever career path they pursue. As Veterans Day approached, the topics of career paths and freedom were front and center in my classroom. I took moments to discuss the spirit of service that has shaped my life as well as the sacrifices many others have made for our country. Because they’re still young, when discussing my military service, the first question is often, “*Were you ever shot or did you ever shoot anyone?*” As a Veteran, there are details I never plan to share with my students, yet I want them to understand the value of service, the sacrifices of others and the incredible possibilities ahead of them.

My commitment as a teacher is to provide my students with academic and life skills that will prepare them for the future. As my students grow into adulthood, I'm hopeful they'll follow their own spirit of service and embrace learning opportunities along the way. Whether that path leads them thousands of miles from home or right back to the very community where they grew up, I am confident they will find their way as the future leaders of our nation.

# Teach For America Veterans Recruitment Initiative

## North Carolina Veterans



**Antonio Smith, Jr.**

*2014 Charlotte Corps Member*

**Current Position:** Math Teacher  
Rocky River High School, Charlotte, NC

**Military Affiliation:** Enlisted in the United States Air Force Reserves in 2010 as a Maintenance Aircraft Scheduler. Began with the 512th Maintenance Group at Dover Air Force Base before changing stations. Currently assigned to the 440th Airlift Wing at Pope Army Airfield.

**Favorite Thing About Military Life:** The different life experiences, the welcoming environment, and the opportunity to become a better world citizen.

**Jacqueline Smith**

*2008 Charlotte Corps Member*

**Current Position:** Science and Math Interventionist  
Albemarle Road Elementary School, Charlotte, NC

**Military Affiliation:** Personnel Service Specialist/US Army

**Favorite Thing About Military Life:** The best part about my military life was the natural feeling of community and collectivism, "the group is more valued then the individual." I loved meeting and relating to people of various ethnic backgrounds and socioeconomic classes. This experience helped me to approach situations and people with different personalities in different ways.



**Brett Jenkins**

*2007 Phoenix Corps Member*

*Currently stationed in Eastern North Carolina*

**Current Position/Military Affiliation:**  
CW2 Brett Jenkins  
UH-60M Blackhawk Aviator  
2nd Battalion (Assault) 82nd Airborne Division

**Favorite Thing About Military Life:** I'm continuously astounded at the degree of diversity around me - people from all walks of life performing scores of different jobs and tasks to accomplish a single mission. When you place service before yourself, it's surprising how easily everything else falls into place.



# Teach For America Veterans Recruitment Initiative

## North Carolina Veterans



### Sequoia Aldridge

#### *2015 Eastern North Carolina Corps Member*

**Current Position:** 7th Grade Science Teacher  
EB Frink Middle School, La Grange, NC

**Military Affiliation:** Chief Warrant Officer-5, U.S. Marine Corps (Ret)

Served from 1984-2014. Duty assignments included Quantico, VA, Okinawa, Japan, Corpus Christi, TX, San Diego, CA, Camp Pendleton, CA, Camp Lejeune, NC, Iwakuni, Japan, Iraq, and Arlington, VA

**Favorite Thing About Military Life:** The sense of camaraderie and relationships that I've developed over the years. I was also continuously energized by the daily opportunities to improve the quality life for other service members and their families through assistance, mentorship, and encouragement or by implementing systemic changes that improved customer service.

### Matt Westbrook

#### *2015 North Carolina Piedmont Triad Corps Member*

**Current Position:** 7th and 8th Grade Math Teacher  
Mendenhall Middle School, Greensboro, NC

**Military Affiliation:** SGT Matt Westbrook

Enlisted into the United States Army in 2006 as a Combat Medic/ Practical Nurse; served two deployments to Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom.

**Favorite Thing About Military Life:** Everyday was a learning experience. I am constantly amazed at what individuals from all walks of life could complete collectively when simple barriers were broken down. There is a JFK quote "What unites us is far greater than what divides us;" it made me a better world citizen.



### Anthony Notte

#### *2015 Charlotte Corps Member*

**Current Position:** 6th Grade Science Teacher  
Eastway Middle School, Charlotte, NC

**Military Affiliation:** Army, 82nd Airborne Division.  
MOS 11B, Infantry. E4, Specialist.

**Favorite Thing About Military Life:** My favorite thing about military life was the sense of sharing a meaningful burden with fellow soldiers.

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# Charlotteans of the Year 2015: Amy Hawn Nelson

Half of our schools are segregated by race. Nelson, a researcher and CMS graduate, uses a passion for children and powerful data to show why that needs to change



PHOTOGRAPHS BY LOGAN CYRUS

**NEARLY EVERY** time Amy Hawn Nelson gives a speech—and she gives a lot of them—she talks about her daughter. Fincher Louisa Nelson is a blond, smiling toddler who's often seen in photos wearing a sticker that says, "CMS Class of 2032."

For such a small person, Fincher has a big legacy. She's named after the first female resident at Carolinas Medical Center, Dr. Louisa Littleton, who happens to be her great-great-aunt. Her great-grandfather founded Trinity Presbyterian Church on Providence Road. Both of her parents attended Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools from kindergarten through 12th grade. Her mother is one of the proudest CMS graduates you'll ever meet, and she's upset about what's happened to the school district in the past 15 years.

"Are we a community where we are OK with having segregated schools?" Amy Hawn Nelson, 36, asks one October afternoon in her cramped office at UNC Charlotte Center City. "Is that OK for you? It's not OK for me."

The question, which Hawn Nelson poses again and again in speeches around town, is a personal one. She graduated from South Mecklenburg High School in 1997, when the school district was still under a court-ordered desegregation plan that earned it a reputation for being a national model of racial integration. In the 16 years since the court order ended in 1999, much of that integration has been reversed.

Today, half of CMS schools are segregated by race—meaning at least 80 percent of their student population is one race—

and a third are segregated by poverty. The long-term consequences of such isolation are dire. Residential segregation and struggling elementary schools contribute to Charlotte's lack of economic mobility. Studies show that students who attend racially isolated schools are more likely to be arrested and land lower-paying jobs. Those who attend diverse schools develop more complex thinking skills and are better prepared to work in an increasingly multicultural society.

"The data and the research is really clear that diverse schools benefit all children," Hawn Nelson says. "White children, middle class children—there's disproportionate benefit for poor children and for children of color, but they benefit all children."

She knows this because she has spent years analyzing the data. As an educational researcher, her mission is to help people make decisions based on numbers, rather than perceptions. Her approach is especially powerful this year, as Charlotte and cities around the country struggle to address the inequity in their neighborhoods and classrooms. Sometimes her data contradicts long-held beliefs about what's best for kids. When she presents her findings in churches and lecture halls around Charlotte, people gasp.

Hawn Nelson is deeply invested in this quest. Charlotte's schools educated her, her husband, and her parents, and they will shape the future of the little blond girl who's smiling in all of those photos.

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**Amy Hawn Nelson and her husband, Allen, live in east Charlotte with their daughter, Fincher.**

**THE SCHOOLS HAWN NELSON ATTENDED** as a child looked very different from CMS classrooms today. Beginning in the 1970s, Charlotte-Mecklenburg was forced to comply with a federal desegregation order. Prominent white leaders such as the billionaire C.D. Spangler, who lived in Eastover, voluntarily sent their children to formerly all-black West Charlotte High School. In most other areas of the city, black schools were shut down and the children who attended them were bused to formerly white schools.

By the time Hawn Nelson entered kindergarten in 1984, diverse schools were embedded in Charlotte's landscape. Even her mother, who attended all-white Myers Park High School in the 1950s, didn't question it. "It was just what you did," Hawn Nelson recalls her mother saying. "It never dawned on me not to send you."

Hawn Nelson rode the bus for 45 minutes to attend Barringer Elementary near West Boulevard and Clanton Road. She did this for three years before returning to her south Charlotte neighborhood for middle school and high school. Meanwhile, many of her black classmates rode the bus for 45 minutes for 10 years, leaving their west Charlotte neighborhoods to attend school with her.



She and her friends had no idea they were participating in a court-ordered policy. Hawn Nelson performed in a play with students from West Charlotte High School and attended that school's prom. She graduated from college at North Carolina State University and joined Teach For America. Through it all, she thought diverse schools were the norm.

Then Teach For America placed her in a second-grade classroom in Baltimore. On her first day with students, she was shocked by what she saw: All of the children in the room were black. "How is this legal?" she thought.

That question would shape her career. Over the next 11 years, while teaching, working as a school administrator, and earning graduate degrees, she gathered data. All of her personal research, from her PhD dissertation to the book she recently co-edited, focuses on Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools. She studies students who grew up during desegregation. She knows what the experience meant to them, and how much it benefitted both white and black kids. She also knows that it was controversial—many parents didn't like busing their kids, and black children often had to ride the bus for longer distances over a longer period of time than their white classmates. "Although it wasn't perfect and there are lots of issues with it," she says, "it's better than anything else we've done."



2015 Charlotteans of the Year Award Luncheon

December 18, 2015

11:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.

Tickets on sale now!

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**TODAY, SHE'S A NUMBERS-CRUNCHER.** Her job titles are a mouthful: director of social research at UNC Charlotte's Urban Institute and head of the university's Institute for Social Capital, Inc. By day, she manages a database, facilitates research, and helps people in the community share data. But in her free time, she's always pushing for better schools.

For much of the past year, she's been presenting data about the re-segregation of Charlotte's schools to civic leaders and church groups. She's worked with Sandra Wilcox Conway, a local business consultant and public school advocate with marketing expertise, to hone the message and build media coverage. Their efforts were timed to coincide with the school board elections in November and next year's scheduled revision of the district's student assignment plan. The more community leaders learn about how segregated the schools have become, the more inclined they are to take action.

"I think a lot of people end up being shocked," says Justin Perry, co-chairman of OneMECK Coalition, a newly formed group that advocates for more diverse schools. "Denial can be a comfortable place. It's harder once you become aware of it."

Hawn Nelson knows the city can't return to the 1970s. Although she'd love an "audacious" change, she's not counting on it. Instead, she believes the district will make some improvements—whether it's lowering the concentration of poverty in *some* schools from 99 percent to 90 percent, or deciding that no school should have more than 80 percent of one racial or economic group. "That would still be such an improvement for that school and for those children," she says.

School board members are already discussing incremental changes in magnet programs and attendance zones that could help some kids become less isolated in high-poverty, segregated schools.

"There's a million ways to reduce concentrated educational disadvantage, and I am confident that we'll do something other

than what we're doing," she says.

" 'Cause we gotta do something."

*Lisa Rab is the articles editor of this magazine. Reach her at [lisa.rab@charlottemagazine.com](mailto:lisa.rab@charlottemagazine.com) or on Twitter: [@lisayrab](https://twitter.com/lisayrab).*

## AMY HAWN NELSON'S RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CHANGE

1. Hire someone to revise the CMS student assignment plan. There are national experts in this field.
2. Take a hard look at the placement of magnet schools. Most of the full magnet schools are located within a few miles of center city, which limits school assignment options for families in those inner-ring neighborhoods.
3. Look at pairing schools again. During desegregation, majority white schools were paired with majority black schools, and students were bused from one area of town to another. However, long bus rides are not required. Today, some schools of concentrated wealth are right next to schools of concentrated poverty.
4. Let's build some political will here, people, and let's re-draw some boundaries."

## FAST FACTS

**1 in 2:** CMS schools are segregated by race

**1 in 3** are segregated by poverty

**It's not about busing.** We bus more miles now than we did at the height of desegregation.

**Read more:** *Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow: School Desegregation and Resegregation in Charlotte*, edited by Roslyn Arlin Mickelson, Stephen Samuel Smith, and Amy Hawn Nelson.

**Online:** Read *Charlotte* magazine's 2014 series on school segregation, "In the Rearview Mirror," [here](#).



### Lisa Rab

Lisa Rab is the articles editor at *Charlotte* magazine. Reach her at [lisa.rab@charlottemagazine.com](mailto:lisa.rab@charlottemagazine.com) or follow her on Twitter: [@lisayrab](https://twitter.com/lisayrab).

#### Also by Lisa Rab:

- Lines of Duty: Chief Rodney Monroe
- The Disciplined Life: Jimmie Johnson
- The Fall of the Lions
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December 1, 2013

Elisa Villanueva Beard  
Teach For America  
315 West 36th Street  
7th Floor  
New York, NY 10018

Dear Elisa Villanueva Beard:

On behalf of Charity Navigator, I wish to congratulate Teach For America on achieving our coveted 4-star rating for sound fiscal management and commitment to accountability and transparency.

As the nonprofit sector continues to grow at an unprecedented pace, savvy donors are demanding more accountability, transparency and quantifiable results from the charities they choose to support with their hard-earned dollars. In this competitive philanthropic marketplace, Charity Navigator, America's premier charity evaluator, highlights the fine work of efficient, ethical and open charities. Our goal in all of this is to provide donors with essential information needed to give them greater confidence in the charitable choices they make.

Based on the most recent information available, we have issued a new rating for your organization. We are proud to announce Teach For America has earned our twelfth consecutive 4-star rating. Receiving four out of a possible four stars indicates that your organization adheres to good governance and other best practices that minimize the chance of unethical activities and consistently executes its mission in a fiscally responsible way. Less than 1% of the charities we rate have received at least 12 consecutive 4-star evaluations, indicating that Teach For America outperforms most other charities in America. This "exceptional" designation from Charity Navigator differentiates Teach For America from its peers and demonstrates to the public it is worthy of their trust.

*Forbes*, *Business Week*, and *Kiplinger's Financial Magazine*, among others, have profiled and celebrated our unique method of applying data-driven analysis to the charitable sector. We evaluate ten times more charities than our nearest competitor and currently attract more visitors to our website than all other charity rating groups combined, thus making us the leading charity evaluator in America. Our data shows that users of our site gave more than they planned to before viewing our findings, and in fact, it is estimated that last year Charity Navigator influenced approximately \$10 billion in charitable gifts.

We believe our service will enhance your organization's fundraising and public relations efforts. Our favorable review of Teach For America's fiscal health and commitment to accountability & transparency will be visible on our website as of December 1st.

We wish you continued success in your charitable endeavors.

Sincerely,

Ken Berger  
President & Chief Executive Officer