

## Volunteers and Partnerships Needed for Communities In Schools' Expansion to Ashe County

Communities In Schools (CIS) of Northwest North Carolina is working to build partnerships and has applied for several grants to serve students attending schools in Ashe County. Volunteers are needed to serve as mentors or lunch buddies, and local businesses and community agencies are being asked to consider becoming a partner in various capacities.

Nationally, Communities In Schools is the leading drop-out organization proven to keep students in school and on the path to graduation. Its mission is to surround students with a community of support, empowering them to stay in school and achieve in life. Communities In Schools of Northwest North Carolina is one of 37 affiliates statewide of Communities in Schools of North Carolina. This is the first time that Communities In Schools of Northwest North Carolina has been asked to lead the efforts of starting the program in Ashe County.

Through affiliates, Communities In Schools works directly inside more than 300 public schools across the state, creating tailor-made plans for those students with the greatest risk of dropping out. CIS empowers 1.5 million students nationally to stay in school and on the path to graduation each year. CIS trained student-support specialists do this by partnering with school leadership, mobilizing the community to offer students extra support and doing whatever it takes to help them succeed.

Communities In Schools of Northwest North Carolina has been serving students and their families in Wilkes County since 1983. It started with a small group of students by providing each student with a mentor. Current programs and services include Lunch Buddies, Friends of Youth, dance classes and school supplies, all offered through site coordination. In 2012, the organization expanded services into Alexander County.

Recently the organization was asked to expand their services to Ashe County. They were invited to meet with key stakeholders in Ashe to explore the possibility of bringing evidenced-based programs and services into the school district.

“Jamie Little, Student Services Coordinator for Ashe County Schools, initiated a meeting with Communities In Schools and Ashe County Schools’ Superintendent Phyllis Yates,” Executive Director Glendora Yarbrough said. “Mrs. Yates invited me to present Communities In Schools during a school board meeting in November. The Board gave Communities In Schools permission to proceed with forming a task force of community leaders with the goal of placing a full-time site coordinator in each of the elementary schools and a part-time site coordinator in the middle school.”

The job of site coordinators is to connect students and their families to basic and critical community resources that are tailored to each student’s specific needs. By providing students with a one-on-one relationship with a caring adult, the program works to create a safe place to learn and grow, a strong start to a healthy future, a path toward marketable skills upon graduation and a chance to give back to peers and the community.

Volunteers, funders, board members and community partners are all needed for this community endeavor. If you are interested in empowering a student to succeed in school and achieve in life, contact Glendora Yarbrough with CIS of Northwest NC at [336-651-7830](tel:336-651-7830) or Jamie Little with Ashe County Schools at [336-846-7175](tel:336-846-7175).

Data for sidebar graphic -

**2015-16 school year data:**

2 school districts served

26 schools served

12,061 students were served with school-wide supports

503 students received targeted/intensive supports

82% improved attendance goal

95% improved behavior goal

91% improved coursework goal

98% of students were promoted to the next grade level

96% of seniors who received targeted/intensive supports graduated