

A good read

CheeReaders program reaches out to young children
by Danielle Jackson



Cheerleader Dallas Faison reads to a camper. Since its inception, CheeReaders' reach has spread into 41 states and Canada.

“CheeReaders is a win-win situation, because cheerleaders get their service hours accomplished and we’re hitting the emerging-reader age group.”

To learn more

For more information on CheeReaders, a nonprofit organization launched by Hannah McRae Young of Kernersville, visit www.cheeReader.com.

Hannah McRae Young, right, is founder of CheeReaders, a nonprofit that gets cheerleaders involved in the community by reading to students.

When Hannah McRae Young had to determine a service project during her freshman year of high school, she decided to combine her two passions: cheerleading and reading.

But even Young — now a sophomore at East Forsyth High School in Kernersville — couldn't have predicted that her required 15 hours of service would turn into a successful 501(c)3 nonprofit that since has spread into 41 states and Canada.

“Basically, what I tried to do was get cheerleaders involved in the community by reading to students in kindergarten

through second grade,” says Young, who’s also involved with Cheer Extreme Allstars in town.

“It’s a win-win situation, because cheerleaders get their service hours accomplished and we’re hitting the emerging-reader age group.”

Three cheers for success

Young knew she was onto something when she started CheeReaders, so she gathered a group of friends to join her. Some of them began suggesting that she create a real program out of it.

In order to achieve 501(c)3 status, Young spent many hours on the phone with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and wrote several letters to the agency. While she had some help from Whitney Collins of Collins Law Office in Kernersville, it was her persistence that finally got the organization’s attention.

“The status usually takes about a year; for us, it took three to four months,” she says. “I guess we pestered them enough.”

Since its inception, about 200 coaches and cheerleaders have registered online for a starter booklet to be able to



Girls select books to take home during the organization’s summer camp.



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duplicate CheeReaders elsewhere. Each group’s progress is charted by submitted photos of cheerleaders reading to students, as well as through the help of teachers and coaches, who sign off on the girls’ service hours.

While the program is still in its infancy, Young hopes that it will continue to grow. One day, she hopes to establish camps in different states to encourage both reading and community service.

A bright future

As for her own future, Young actually has a third passion beyond cheerleading and reading. While most people her age are wading through future career options, hers is quite clear.

“I just know I really want to go into law; I want to be a defense attorney,” she says, adding that she hopes to attend Wake Forest University in Winston-Salem.

“But we’ll see once I’m a little older.” ❁

Danielle Jackson is editor of Triad Living, Wake Living and Fifteen501 magazines.

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