

## Children First/Community In Schools' Learning Center at Pisgah View is Dedicated to Supporting Children!

As one of the Asheville City school-busses rounds the hill and stops in front of the Children First/Communities In Schools (CIS) Learning Center at 16 C & D in the Pisgah View apartments, the excited sound of children's voices fills the air. They rush off the bus and head toward the Learning Center in 16 C & D. Inside the converted apartment that is now a two-story after-school space are Children First/CIS site leaders and a number of volunteers waiting to check in with them about school and home, celebrate their victories, and help guide them through the rest of their day.

The after-school program is available to any elementary-school age child living in the Pisgah View Apartments. For almost 10 years, this space has been providing a health snack, homework help and enrichment activities to 20+ children enrolled in K-5th grade. While this program is provided at no cost to the families, parents do contribute volunteer hours at the learning center. Operating Monday thru Thursday from 3:00-5:30, the children have a daily schedule that is structured, but also allows room for flexibility and spontaneity. The after-school routine begins with a healthy snack, followed by an hour or more of homework time where staff and volunteers work either one-on-one or in small groups with the children to help guide them through their lessons, followed by reading time, finished by an enrichment activity that ranges from soccer to hip-hop dance, to yoga and riding horses.

Just a few weeks ago, the Pisgah Explorers Club, the outreach portion of the Cradle of Forestry in America Interpretive Association brought in their Naturalist to talk to the children about wildlife and birds of prey and even brought in a rehabilitated screech owl

"While we know that providing homework assistance is an important part of our program, we also know how vital it is to open up as many opportunities for the children as possible," says Children First/CIS Learning Center Coordinator, Barbara Norton. "Through our partnerships with so many great organizations, we are able to introduce art, dance, science, animals, sports, Zumba, yoga and more. It is so wonderful to see a child come alive with excitement when they discover a skill or passion for something."

So if you hear a lot of bustling energy coming from 16 C & D in Pisgah View Apartments, now you know why. And the center doesn't stop after the academic year. There is also a free-of-charge 6-week summer camp where rising 3rd-6th graders spend the day hiking, swimming, rafting, zipling, biking and more. Along with these programs, parents of children enrolled in the after-school learning center are also eligible to receive other services provided by Children First/CIS. These services include food boxes, a clothing closet, financial assistance, school supplies, and parenting classes.

Both the after-school learning center and summer camp program are very popular, and oftentimes there is a waiting list, so if you have an elementary-school aged child and would like to find out more about the Children First/CIS Learning Center/Summer Camp program at Pisgah View Apartments, go by 16 C & D on Stewart Street and speak with one of the team leaders between 2:30-3:00 or call 828-620-9098 or call 828-778-2073.

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Children First/Communities In Schools is a local non-profit that believes that all children deserve to reach their full potential. We help achieve this by surrounding children and their families with supports that help them succeed in school and life. With staff placed in schools and communities, we help children and families meet their basic needs, provide educational supports and teach parenting and resiliency skills. We are unique in that along with our direct services we also provide strong advocacy to local and state leaders to ensure public policies are in place to support families.