



## **CROSBY SCHOLARS COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP HISTORY**

The Crosby Scholars, a program that has graduated nearly 9,004 students, all started with a simple conversation.

The CROSBY National Celebrity Golf Tournament had moved in North Carolina in 1986 and focused much of its efforts on drug abuse prevention. In fact, more than half of the \$9 million raised in its first six years of play at Bermuda Run Country Club had gone to organizations involved in drug abuse education and prevention. A few people involved in the tournament felt there should be a specific program that could become a legacy in the local community.

That's what led Paul Fulton, former president of Sara Lee Corporation, to ask experts in the field of drug abuse prevention what could be done to make a lasting difference for young people in Forsyth County. He was fortunate that one of the people in the group was Elizabeth (BJ) McConnell, who has been a member of the National Commission for Drug Free Schools and a consultant for the White House Conference for a Drug Free America. McConnell had an idea that could change the lives of local students as well as impact drug abuse.

***“Teenagers with a clear connection to their community, a sense of value, and who have hope for the future are less apt to use drugs”. BJ McConnell***

McConnell truly believed that providing young people with the opportunity to serve others in some capacity coupled with the opportunity for higher education would create a reduction in drug use and also create a stronger community today and for the future.

After consultation with a variety of scholarship programs throughout the country, work with experts at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, input from local educators, and discussions with community leaders, the Crosby Scholars Program was formally announced in November 1992. It had a simple mission: to assure every qualified high school graduate in Forsyth County an opportunity to pursue some form of higher education.

***“I don't think there is anything more noble to try to do in this community than to give the kids the idea that they can go to college.” Paul Fulton***

The program began at two high schools – Carver and Glenn – and met its goal of being in every high school by 1996. Those involved in the on-going development of the effort also understood the need to reach down to the junior high school level, so the program has served students in grades six through 12 for more than 25 years.

From the beginning, the Crosby Scholars program has focused on preparing students academically and personally, as well as financially, for post-secondary education. The Crosby Scholars Academy provides academic and personal enrichment workshops. High school students must participate in an alcohol and drug-screening program. All students are given the responsibility of demonstrating good citizenship in their schools and their communities, including performing community service.

With the support of volunteer advisors and the Crosby Scholars staff, students and their families receive support with college admissions, the financial aid process, and identifying available scholarships and grants. In addition to the more than \$6.7 million in last dollar grants the program has awarded since 1993, Crosby scholars have benefited from \$58 million in other financial aid that was leveraged through the program.

Throughout its history, the Crosby Scholars have benefited from staff and volunteers who have been committed to supporting students on their journey to higher education. RaVonda Dalton-Rann, the first permanent executive director, built a strong foundation for the program. When Mona Lovett joined Crosby Scholars twenty years ago, she took on the challenge of expanding the program and has increased student participation at all the local middle and high schools while making the changes necessary to maintain relevance for the students, parents, educators, volunteers and the community. Understanding the importance of sustaining the Crosby Scholars, Mona has worked diligently with her staff and volunteers also to ensure that the funding necessary was available to ensure on-going outstanding results.

So, a conversation that spawned an idea has led to a program that changes the lives of students who participate and change the lives of their families, as well as the life of the communities where the scholars will eventually live and work.

Of course, the Crosby Scholars program was built on a history of giving back to the community. Award-winning actor and singer Bing Crosby started that tradition in 1937 with a golf tournament that became the longest running charity golf tournament in America. His widow, Kathryn, moved the tournament from California to North Carolina in 1986 and the charitable aspect expanded with all proceeds from the tournament going to charity. During its 18 years in North Carolina, the tournament raised more than \$18 million for nonprofit organizations in the Triad, the state and across the nation.

***“The Crosby Scholars Program has helped continue the tradition of giving that Bing established with his golf tournament way back in 1937. It is a part of his legacy and a part of the legacy of all who have made it possible.” Kathryn Crosby***