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## VISTA Volunteers Combat Summer Reading Loss for Local Children

Winthrop University

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# VISTA Volunteers Combat Summer Reading Loss for Local Children

## Quick Facts

- The volunteers were: Ray McKetty '17; Caressa Fernandez '17; and elementary education major Mike Cahill.
- Most of the children the volunteers worked with increased their reading capacity by more than 20 words per minute.



ROCK HILL, SOUTH CAROLINA—The [National Summer Learning Association \(NSLA\)](#) says that due to a problem known as “summer learning loss,” teachers end up spending a significant amount of time re-teaching material at the beginning of the school year.

New Winthrop University graduates **Ray McKetty** and **Caressa Fernandez** and student **Mike Cahill** helped combat that issue by volunteering at the [Boys and Girls Club of York County](#) through the **Americorps VISTA Summer Reading Program**.

In fact, the three didn’t combat summer reading loss; they demolished it.

“Most of the children increased their reading capacity by more than 20 words per minute within the nine weeks they were here,” said Rashan Thornton, director of the Boys and Girls Club’s Fort Mill branch. “That is awesome!”

Cahill, an elementary education major from Indian Land, South Carolina, volunteered as a reading coach so that he could help children in the community and strengthen his skills as a future educator.

“The most rewarding part of volunteering was building relationships with the children,” he said.

McKetty, a 2017 English major from Greenville, South Carolina, follows a personal philosophy that “we are at our best selves when we are serving others.”

“What better way is there to serve, than to do so for the youth of our community?” he said. “I worked as a Summer Reading Associate because it gave me an opportunity to simultaneously fulfill my desire to serve, as well as give me a glimpse of the structure and processes of the nonprofit sector, which I have a passion to be a part of one day.”

Like Cahill, McKetty enjoyed the personal interactions with the young students.

“What it taught me was that we have a generation of bright, talented and young people coming after us, and that we need to do everything we can to help them succeed academically,” he said. “They are

our future, and we need to invest in them, just as our parents, teachers, coaches, pastors, etc. invested in us....It was enormously rewarding, and I know I speak for my colleagues when I say that there is no better feeling than playing a role, no matter how small, in a young person's path to success."

The program is made possible through a grant from South Carolina Campus Compact, which is housed at Winthrop. For more information on the VISTA program, [visit the website](#).

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