



DON'T FORGET THESE VIRTUAL LEARNERS

Ashley Scott's Carmel roots run deep. She says her "claim to fame" is being the oldest granddaughter of her "Papa" - Don Bouldin (Carmel's Sr Pastor from 1976-1989). Ashley also comes from a long line of educators. This fall, she put her passion for teaching to use assisting a local ministry partner serve at-risk families with virtual learning.

Project 658 is an outreach ministry whose mission states: "We believe that Christ's love compels us to change the world through serving our neighbors. We are a Christ-centered, holistic ministry providing services for at-risk families in Charlotte, moving them toward sustainability; with a key focus on the international and refugee communities."

During a typical year, Project 658 helps children and families through sports ministry, after school programming, clothing drives, health and wellness services, and much more. This year, COVID-19 has made a tremendous impact on the educational needs of the families that Project 658 serves. Now students who would typically go to school to receive both food and education are stuck at home while their parents are gone all day to work, or are exhausted from working third shift.

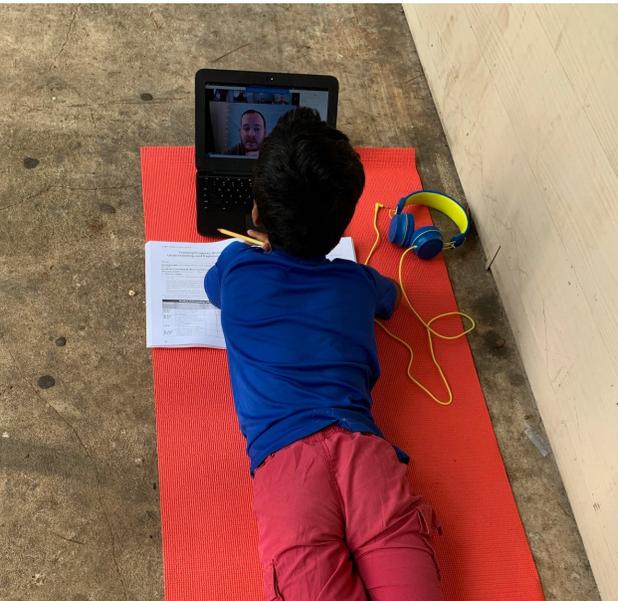


It's evident that these children and their families are tremendously impacted by Project 658 and its ministries. As followers of Jesus, we can be a part of that impact by living out 1 John 3:18 "Dear children, let's not merely say that we love each other; let us show the truth by our actions."



These children are expected to learn how to navigate online school platforms and complete all of their assignments with a lack of sleep and resources, and with educational or language deficits as well. To address this issue, Project 658 began renting an apartment in a complex they serve, which houses mostly refugee families. They painted the apartment and set it up with desks and chairs so that students from the complex can come each day to get help completing their school work and get healthy meals and snacks.

As a former teacher at a Title 1 school, I have been burdened for at-risk students since the pandemic began. I knew how difficult virtual school was for me and my children, and we have access to all kinds of resources. I couldn't imagine what life was like for low-income families.



Angela Schlottman helped my mom and I get plugged in with Project 658, and it has been a wonderful experience. One of the things that struck me most was how sacrificial the girls are who work for Project 658. Many of them are in their late teens or early twenties, and they live in this apartment complex with the families. They make themselves available to the parents and children twenty-four hours a day, often feeding the children dinner from their own kitchen, or answering phone calls or knocks on the door in the middle of the night. During the morning they manage a packed schedule of Zoom meetings and online school assignments for 20-25 elementary aged students while also feeding them both breakfast and lunch. In the afternoons they open their doors to middle and high school students.





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I work in the kindergarten and first grade room during the mornings I volunteer. I organize phonics games and activities, practice math skills, read books aloud, and help students complete online work. I also supervise their outdoor break time where they run around outside, playing tag and kicking soccer balls. It is hands-on, busy, and ever-evolving as school plans and protocols are constantly changing, but Project 658 does their best to manage each child's individual workload.

Program Director, Sarah Atwell, told me that Project 658 is still desperate for volunteers. These children really need one-on-one attention, but they are only able to get one adult to 5-7 children if volunteers are not present. They also need lots of prayer. Pray for the children served by Project 658. Pray for their health and educational needs, but also for their spiritual needs. Pray for their home life. Pray that their parents would be impacted by the relationships they build with Project 658 and would choose to follow Jesus. Pray for rest and energy for the employees, who have sacrificed their time, money, comfort, and lots of sleep to be available to this community.



Carmel is committed to making disciples of those Nearest, our Neighbors and the Nations.

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