

Myrtle Alston Summers is a science teacher at The Fayetteville Academy. She began her career as a kindergarten teacher at Alma Eason Elementary and taught for 30 years in Cumberland County Schools. Mrs. Summers joined the CCF board in 2015. She has served on many committees, including Education Grants, Community Grants, and Scholarships as Chair. She is the founder of the *Myrtle Alston Summers Endowment for New Teachers*, an endowment that helps new teachers get ready for their first day with classroom materials and teaching supplies.

Mrs. Summers recently shared thoughts about her board service.

How did you first get involved with CCF?

My late husband, Joseph W. Summers, was a big advocate for the community foundation. His fraternity, Alpha Phi Alpha, started a scholarship endowment at CCF and he always spoke about that partnership. He said that working with CCF made it possible to grow their scholarship and keep it going forever. Every year they help more students go to college. He liked that the scholarship was their legacy. Then, I got involved because I wanted to help make Fayetteville a better place for everyone. CCF helps do that.

What has volunteering at CCF meant to you?

So many times projects are over in a year. Working with the community foundation, I see we are building something that will always be there. It will always be part of the community.

I also like working on CCF's scholarship committee. You realize the impact on the students as well as the community around those students. You are teaching them to give others a hand up. It is not about "I" it is about "We" ... we can make the community better together. It is a continuation through the next generation of people.

What have you learned while on the board of CCF?

Being a board member lets you see all the things going on in Fayetteville. You get a first-hand view of projects growing from an idea to completion. John Q. Public sees the finished children's garden [at Cape Fear Botanical Garden], but we were involved when it was just an idea. It is a lot like watching a child develop... we see every step and often provide the startup funding.

Tell me about your personal philanthropy. Why do you give? How does it make you feel?

I created my endowment at CCF because I know a beginning teacher needs so much. I had family who helped me get on my feet. Not everyone has older brothers and sisters like me. I want to make sure that no child will be left behind because the teacher didn't have resources. My endowment makes sure that a child will arrive and have a desk with a folder that looks just like the kid beside him. A new teacher has rent, bills, and needs help setting up her classroom with supplies and learning centers. Teachers have to start out equally with the seasoned teachers, with markers, highlighters, teaching tools... everything.

Giving takes many forms. What was the best gift you received along the way?

The best gift I ever got was the car that my sister gave me when I graduated college. I was able to get back and forth to work. My parents paid my rent for the first six months. My family made sure that I had what I needed to become a good teacher and get my feet on the ground.

Before I started teaching kindergarten, I went to Mel-Pat School Supplies. With the support of the school, I was able to buy whatever I needed for my first day teaching kindergarten. I got my housekeeping center, blocks, book corner... everything. Teachers from Alma Eason went with me. It was wonderful. Not every school can do that. I set up my endowment so that teachers in under-resourced schools could get that same kind of help.

What would you tell others to encourage them to give through CCF?

Just do it. It is like anything else you do. You just get started and figure it out along the way. Look at it as how many lives you will touch. And how you will make life better for others. Teachers don't make a lot. But, I did it and you can, too. Someone along the way helped me. You can help someone yourself.