Volunteers do more than rake leaves or renovate buildings. In one-on-one interactions, they help kids gain confidence and self-esteem. Dana Hale knows: She saw it happen!

My experience with the boys at Elk Hill broke my heart and gave me hope. The boys are precious; the challenges they face are heartbreaking. I met the boys through FutureEdge@Work, in which Capital One employees visit Richmond area non-profits to learn about community needs.

One aspect of the project included conducting mock job interviews with the boys. The counselor explained the obstacles the boys have to overcome just to make it to school: lack of transportation, no parent to help get them out of bed, no breakfast.

When the introduction concluded, and the boys slowly paraded into the classroom, I was struck at how little eye contact they made. They were cautious and diffident. During the interviews, the boys began to transform.

Before we began, one boy sat hunched over at the front of the room. His sadness seemed palpable. He offered a weak handshake and stole a quick glance at each of us. He spoke softly but in earnest, answering our mundane questions with deliberation and care, as if something really rode on the answers. His physical transformation was compelling. He began to sit up a little taller and lean into the conversation. Most of all, he began looking us in the eye and smiling a bit.

Resiliency factors can mitigate the negative impact of adverse childhood experiences. Some are as simple as feeling that a non-familial adult is there to help, or seems to like the child, or notices the child is capable and able to get things done. I was honored to provide some of those resilience factors in my two-hour visit to the school, but Elk Hill provides them every day – and it shows.
Martin Luther King Jr once said that “Life’s most persistent and urgent question is, ‘What are you doing for others?’” Through Elk Hill’s nationally accredited volunteer program, many people have been able to affirmatively respond to that question! Hundreds of volunteers from corporations, businesses, organizations, and college fraternities and sororities have given their time, expertise, and labor in support of Elk Hill’s mission. Volunteers have painted buildings, taught financial literacy classes, provided workforce development seminars, built playgrounds, done landscaping, offered “cool jobs” experiences, wrapped Christmas gifts, and delivered “welcome” packages for residential kids.

Through their efforts, volunteers have a positive impact on our children that goes way beyond the volunteer activity. Through contact with adults (and some children) who believe in the spirit of “giving back”, our kids experience the value of kindness, which leads to opportunities for them to be the “helper” rather than the person who always needs help.

During the holidays, a group of volunteers from a garden club worked with our children to create holiday arrangements. The kids then volunteered to take the arrangements to a local senior citizen’s center and spend time with the residents there. Kindness does beget kindness!

**Because of you Jeremiah is gaining an edge in the job market**

Jeremiah still has a year of high school to complete, and then he hopes to attend college. But people like you are already helping him prepare for the career he aspires to.

Because of your support Jeremiah has the opportunity to participate in Elk Hill’s Education for Employment program. From employment readiness skills to paid job opportunities, this program is an essential part of increasing positive life outcomes.

This past semester a group of volunteers from Capital One developed and taught eight job-readiness classes, like financial education and resume writing, to students at Elk Hill’s Goochland campus.

For the last session, students had the opportunity to tour one of Capital One’s Facilities and participate in Mock interviews. Elk Hill’s youth were able to envision a future of possibilities; one with hope and success. For Jeremiah, it was life changing. With a face filled with pride he said, “I saw I could work at Capital One. They (Capital One employees) said if it had been a real job interview they would have offered me the job!”

Much of the good work we do at Elk Hill couldn’t be accomplished without the time and commitment of community members like you. Thank you for creating **invaluable opportunities for countless students**, especially for Jeremiah.

**The Richmond Montessori School community made home no-sew fleece blanket kits to support Elk Hill’s youth.** These blankets mean a lot to our residential students - It gives them hope that they are in a safe place, where they will be comfortable and receive the individualized care they need and deserve.

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**Volunteers make our youth feel welcome**

The Richmond Montessori School community made home no-sew fleece blanket kits to support Elk Hill’s youth. These blankets mean a lot to our residential students - It gives them hope that they are in a safe place, where they will be comfortable and receive the individualized care they need and deserve.
How does a 10-year-old deal with things no child should have to? She suppressed her feelings. She shut down, detached; she became isolated and depressed. She became explosive and impulsive, putting herself and others at risk.

Two years later, India is in the seventh grade. Thanks to a helping hand from people like you, she’s learned how to face her challenges. Because you help make Therapeutic Day Treatment (TDT) possible, India has learned strategies and coping skills that help her deal with her traumatic experiences. She has been properly educated about her mother’s mental health, and increased her self-esteem to express herself in a healthy manner.

Today, she’s focused on a goal: getting into a good private high school. “Despite everything she’s experienced,” says Christa Benton, her TDT therapist, “India is not afraid to try something new. In the last two years, she has really come out of her shell and is an inspiration to many.”

India always wanted to please others and strived to be a perfectionist,” Christa says. “When that vision felt out of alignment to what she was actually experiencing, she’d have a setback. She was emotionally unstable, had low self-esteem and often disconnected with how to appropriately express herself.” During her periods of emotional instability, she would often mirror behaviors of her mother or express herself to have similar mental health issues to her mother.

Through therapy made possible by your support of Elk Hill programs, India is in a comfortable place where she can verbalize what’s on her mind. She journals and practices self-affirmations that she often shares with her peers.

“One once she realized that she was not a bad kid, that there was nothing seriously wrong with her, she began responding normally,” Christa says. “I see so much progress. She committed to doing the work to change the trajectory of her life. There were plenty of things that easily triggered an outburst of her at the beginning of TDT. Now she knows techniques and strategies to help her self-regulate independently and she often shares her knowledge with peers when they experience difficult moments.”

“Sometimes the focus on helping kids get out of a bad environment or situation becomes so prominent,” Christa adds. “But things can change. I’m an optimist and big advocate for meeting kids where they are, helping them face their challenges to become the difference within their environment.”

Will you help support scholarships?

For Mike a scholarship to Elk Hill was a life-changing experience. Since his graduation from Elk Hill in June 2016, we are proud to report he is thriving. Mike is working and living on his own. This spring he enrolled at John Tyler Community College. One of the courses he finds most interesting is, “Introduction to Substance Abuse Counseling”—a topic which interests him as a possible career path. Your support made the difference. Thank you!
Elk Hill students on the Goochland campus will soon have the opportunity to explore career opportunities through the new Elk Hill Farm program. “With our Workforce Development program, all of our Goochland kids will have jobs to sample when they get here,” says Pete Glessman, Farming Program Director. “One eventual highlight for them will be the farm’s small-scale agriculture setting.”

Students who get involved in the farm program will learn how seeds grow, transplant seedlings, contribute produce to the campus dining hall and possibly even market a crop on a small scale.

“We’ll be giving them things they can do with guidance and assistance,” says Pete Glessman, Director of the Elk Hill Farm. Seedling transplants, for instance, may be used in raised beds planned for each residential cottage and day school building.

The Elk Hill Farm is part of a long tradition at the school, which was a farm before it was a school. A terrace vegetable garden is being recreated by retired Elk Hill teacher Grant Sherk and plans are underway for the creation of a chicken coop.

The activities of planting and cultivating are therapeutic, he adds, and also highly practical. “Not every student is going to be a farmer, but there are a lot of good lessons to be learned on the farm,” Pete says. “I think it will be a good way to prepare kids for life beyond Elk Hill.”

In honor of MLK day, team members from The Frontier Project spent the day in Goochland painting our day school class rooms and gymnasium.

Volunteer Opportunities:
Imagine what we can do with your help! Whether you are one person or a large group- Elk Hill has many opportunities for you to make an impact. Here are just a few:

- **Painting** the inside of a Residential Home or Classrooms.
- **General Landscaping**—pruning, mulching, prepping flower beds, and clearing brush.
- **June Games**—The annual outdoor “June Games,” Elk Hill’s rendition of a summer Olympics. We always need help coordinating several of the events including; Frisbee golf, face painting, long jump, etc.
- **Summer Camp Prep**—prepping classrooms for summer camp games and activities.
- **Summer Camp Carnival**—Our end of summer carnival with all our summer campers! This includes coordinating several fun indoor and outdoor carnival activities.
- **Building** raised garden beds.
- **Gift Wrapping** and decorating for the Holidays.

Want to learn more or sign up today? Contact Danee Hudson at DHudson@elkhill.org or 804.457.4866X 336

**Elk Hill Farm**
growing new opportunities for students

**Planned Giving**

**Join Elk Hill Society**

The Elk Hill Society recognizes individuals whose foresight and generosity ensure the long-term stability of Elk Hill for future generations. We encourage you to consider joining a very special group of Elk Hill supporters – Elk Hill Society members. Society members are those friends who express their support for the future of Elk Hill by including a bequest or other life income gift for the Foundation in their estate plan.

It’s a simple gift that cost nothing during your lifetime – but makes a world of difference in a young person’s lifetime. Let us answer your questions! Contact: Michael Farley, CEO (804)-457-4866 ext. 311 or Mfarley@elkhill.org

Sign up to receive regular updates via email:
Elkhill.org or email Gillian Kunkel, Development Coordinator @ GKunkel@elkhill.org (804) 457- 4866 ext. 312

**Elk Hill is going digital!**
Find us on...
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**VOLUNTEERS**
MAKE A DIFFERENCE

“Life’s most persistent and urgent question is, ‘What are you doing for others?’”
— MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.