

# SMALL STEPS, BIG IMPACT

*CRO is on a mission to meet the needs of school children and their families to make a big change in their lives*



Life has a way of bringing unexpected challenges and Cliffs Residents Outreach (CRO), a 501(c) (3) nonprofit, wants to help meet those obstacles head on.

Each of the five CRO chapters annually budget funds for health, nutrition, and emergency family situations so that they can make a difference in the lives of families across the many schools CROs support.

### SMALL ACTS OF KINDNESS WITH DIGNITY

A teacher noticed a third-grade student struggling to see the blackboard and papers, so the school tapped into **Glassy CRO's** emergency funds and arranged for an eye exam and glasses. This small CRO grant greatly impacted a family who didn't have the means to meet an immediate need.

When CRO became aware that some children's lunches were different — purchased lunches differ from state-funded lunches — funds were provided to ensure every child gets the same lunch. No child is different and no child is hungry.

Another way CRO meets school children's needs is by stocking school closets with supplies and clothing.

### SOMETIMES IT TAKES A VILLAGE

Usually, it's quiet during the Christmas holiday, which is why **Keowee Vineyards CRO** was surprised when a local elementary school principal called the day after Christmas. Seven children who were living with their

grandparents became homeless when fire from a vacant camper spread to their home.

The school principal orchestrated a communitywide response. CRO covered the cost of temporary hotel rooms and Keowee Vineyard's Men's Bible Study Group provided gift cards for repair materials and funds to remove the camper's remains. United Way of Pickens County coordinated with the electric company to restore the home's power and Pickens Middle School collected money and replaced all the damaged mattresses.

Likewise, when a single mother of two school-age children became sick and lost her job, CRO covered her electric bill for two months, so the lights and heat stayed on. Small grants...big impact.

### GROWING UP WITH CRO MENTORS

Children who experience high poverty and attend a school supported by a CRO usually benefit from at least one of the nonprofit's programs. Haley Moody, who attended school in Oconee County, has a unique story as she has "grown up" with several **Keowee Falls CRO**-programs and volunteers.

While she wasn't aware of the snacks, books, or technology provided by CRO to her Tamassee Salem Elementary School, Moody fondly recalls participating in CRO's Stargirls' program as a fifth-grader. Each week, CRO volunteers led discussions about bullying and friendship and shared insights about the importance of education.

In middle and high school, Moody participated in CRO Women On the Way (WOW) girls' program, in which mentors discussed topics from career options to the impact of social media. They also offered advice on challenges Moody faced

*"I cherish each memory, each life lesson and each volunteer that has helped me become the young adult I am."*

— HALEY MOODY

and provided "safety-net" access to clothes, school supplies, and hygiene items from Grace's Closet, sponsored by CRO.

"Throughout my journey in school, the volunteers and the CRO programs have helped prepare me for the workforce and for starting my own business," Moody says. "I cherish each memory, each life lesson and each volunteer that has helped me become the young adult I am."

Moody now works at The Cliffs at Keowee Falls Wellness Center and attends cosmetology school.

Similarly, **Keowee Springs CRO** establishes enduring relationships through its volunteer school mentor program. Nearly 40 volunteer mentors meet weekly with their "at risk" students from Six Mile Elementary School, R.C. Edwards Middle School, and D.W. Daniel High School. The goal is to "grow up" with your mentee and be there until the student graduates from high school. And the friendships go beyond school with many mentors hosting outings like movies, mini golf, and ball games.

Justin Petesen, R.C. Edwards Middle School's assistant principal, believes the program has a profound impact on students. "When this kid is 26 years old, he will say that the biggest influence on me at school was not my teachers. It was this guy who saw me once a week and just talked to me," Petesen says.

Pickens County YMCA administers the program, providing training and working with the schools to assign mentors to students.

### NUTRITION FOR AFTER-SCHOOL ATHLETES

Like many Upstate schools, Travelers Rest High School has a high percentage of students living at or near the poverty level who don't have access to healthy nutritious snacks outside of school lunch. **Valley/Mountain Park CRO** stepped in to meet that need — particularly for students participating in afterschool sports.

All 200 students who use the school's training facility daily have access to chocolate milk, sports drinks, peanut butter, fruit, and protein bars provided as needed by CRO.

"Post-workout nutrition really helped us get enough calories to gain muscle and get stronger," says Caleb, a student who uses the training facility. "I have seen a difference both physically and in confidence in myself and classmates. We are extremely thankful for the generosity of the CRO."



Haley Moody with mentors Sara Holler (left) and Colleen Delahunty



**INFORMATION** > TO LEARN MORE, DONATE, OR GET INVOLVED WITH CRO CHAPTERS SERVING OUR SIX SOUTH CAROLINA COMMUNITIES, VISIT [CROCOMMUNITIES.COM](http://CROCOMMUNITIES.COM).