



STEPP PROGRAM

Spring 2015 Newsletter

SUPPORTING TRANSITION AND EDUCATION THROUGH PLANNING AND PARTNERSHIP

Here in the Walter and Marie Williams STEPP Program and at ECU, we just wrapped up an exciting and productive academic year. In the summer months ahead we will be involved in the rewarding work of interviewing and selecting the 2016 cohort, developing transition resources for families and middle school students, and continuing to work with the College STAR initiative. But first, we want to share with you some of the highlights of our spring semester.



Our new name is official

It's official! On March 26, 2015 we started using our new name - the Walter and Marie Williams STEPP Program. This gave us the opportunity to make two important changes. We dropped the "Project" part of our former name, something we felt now sounded too temporary or experimental. More importantly, we celebrated the generosity of Walter and Marie Williams by naming the program in honor of their support, which began the program in 2006. They provided a leadership gift when we offered only a good idea and a passion for students with learning disabilities, and they continue to be supporters of our work and our students. Thank you, Walter and Marie, for your early commitment to our vision and to an outstanding group of Pirates.



STEPP Program Highlights

Community Building



Halloween Dress-up Booth



Fall Soup Day!



All Birthdays



Spring Picnic STEPP Style

Each month the STEPP Program selects a day for community building, a time when we pause to relax for a few hours and enjoy one another. We encourage our upperclassmen to join us to connect with first-year students and staff, and it's always a great excuse to have fun food in the STEPP Cove. We thought you might like to see a few pictures from community building days this year and enjoy the lighter side of STEPP in this newsletter.

Eye to Eye Art Show

On April 24th elementary and middle school students from Building Hope Community Life Center and the Oakwood School, along with their mentors from East Carolina University, gave their families, teachers, and ECU staff members a glimpse into the Eye to Eye Art Room. The ECU chapter of Eye to Eye hosted its fourth annual Art Show, giving students the opportunity



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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

September 26, 2015 - Family Weekend Tailgate

February 10, 2016 - All Birthdays/Valentine's Day Celebration

October 29, 2015 - Halloween Treats and Photo Booth

April 6, 2016 - Picnic STEPP-style

November 18, 2015 - Soup Day

April 22, 2016 (evening) - Eye-to-Eye Art Show

December 8, 2015 - Cookies & Cocoa in the Cove

April 29, 2016 - End-of-Year Celebration

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to display projects they created throughout the year. The projects were on display in the ECU



Joynier Library Faulkner Gallery. Eye to Eye campus leaders Becca O'Hea and Emily Bosak presented certificates to students who participated in the after-school program, and National Program Coordinator, Katie Long, empowered all in attendance to be ambassadors for the mission of Eye to Eye and encourage students to pursue their goals.

College STAR Update

College STAR is a multi-campus grant-funded initiative that is helping participating campuses raise awareness of the many different ways in which students learn and become more welcoming places for students with learning differences. This year East Carolina University partnered primarily with Appalachian State University and Fayetteville State University for this exciting project. One of the highlights of the 2014/2015 College STAR activities was a series of Shared Learning Summits held across North Carolina. These three summits brought together over 240 individuals from public schools, community colleges, universities, and other settings for engaging discussions about promising practices and potential barriers during the transition to college for students who have learning differences. The initiative also supported additional activities such as a wide range of professional development opportunities, continued direct student support, opportunities to bring student voices to the table, and interesting learning technologies. Check out the College STAR website to see resources and news updates from that project (collegestar.org).

Alumni Spotlight – Tyler Clark

In 2006, we began exploring a model of recruiting, admitting, and supporting a new group of ECU Pirates in what eventually became the Walter and Marie Williams STEPP Program. We realized that the program was innovative, and we needed students willing to take a risk and learn together with us. Tyler Clark was the first student to do just that. Tyler started working with the STEPP Program in 2006 and helped pioneer the way for more to come.



Now an ECU alumnus, Tyler lives with his family in Greenville, NC and works in the Physical Education Department at St. Peter's Catholic School. He married Laura Beth White in August of 2013, and they welcomed their first child, a son, to their family in February. Tyler puts what he learned in his ECU Recreation and Park Management major to good use through his service on the Greenville Recreation and Parks Board of Commissions as well as volunteering with St. Peter's baseball team. He enjoys being outside as much as possible, and still regularly cheers on the Pirates during ECU sporting events. He and Laura Beth recently joined St. James United Methodist Church and are active members of the community. When we asked Tyler to reflect on his experience with STEPP, he shared that, "The STEPP Program is a great opportunity and a great program. It helped me with school and gave me a place and time to get support and succeed. I would not have been able to do it [graduate] without the STEPP Program." Tyler now finds opportunities to be an ambassador for the mission of STEPP. His work in elementary school athletics enables him to be there for students who experience academic challenges and offer encouragement. Thanks so much, Tyler, for the positive difference you are making!

Thank you to our supporters!

The Walter and Marie Williams STEPP Program could not exist without the generous support of those who are helping us meet our \$4 million endowment goal. Once complete, this endowment will sustain the program and enable us to continue serving students long term. Moreover, it will ensure that we can do so without charging students and their families extra fees for the supports provided through STEPP, which is a critical feature of the program. We still have much work to do to fulfill the endowment, but we are extremely thankful for those who have contributed thus far. In this spring newsletter, we would like to take a moment to extend a very sincere thank you to those who have financially supported the STEPP Program. You are making such a direct and positive difference for students through your generosity!

Our thanks to:

Contributors of \$50,000+: Walter & Marie Williams, The Harold H. Bate Foundation, William R. Kenan Jr. Charitable Trust, Oak Foundation, Sam & Sandra Wornom. **Contributors of \$25,000+:** Ann & Edwin Clark, Edwin & Betsy Gray. **Contributors of \$5,000+:** Kathie & Pete Guild, Rebecca Flowers, Peter J. Frenkel Foundation, Tim Morris, Garry & Nancy Pegrarn. **Contributors of \$1,000+:** Austin & Wanda Bunch, James Chesnutt, Drs. Rossana and Peter Ciampi,

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We also found a new way of saying thank you to our supporters this year, with a recognition display outside the STEPP Cove that acknowledges those who have contributed at the \$1,000 level or higher. If you are ever on campus stop by and check it out. Thank you again for your amazing support for our program and a very deserving group of students.

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