

Ship Community Outreach
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PROFILE

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UNC CHAPEL-HILL STUDENTS PARTNER WITH NONPROFIT TO FIGHT FOOD
INSECURITY IN RALEIGH

Aleece Spalding, Ship Community Outreach's executive director, is passionate about fighting food insecurity, poverty, and sex trafficking the South Park community. Over the past three years, a partnership between University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill students and Ship Community Outreach has helped to make that happen.

In 2019, Spalding and Ship Community Outreach joined forces with APPLES Service-Learning, a student lead-program that combines academic learning with public service at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Every semester, Ship Community Outreach receives student volunteers who assist Spalding with social media, event coordination and public relations.

Although anyone is welcome to donate or sign up to volunteer through Ship Community Outreach's [website](#), having the support of student volunteers with backgrounds in public relations helps Spalding to dedicate time to new ideas and initiatives.

For student volunteers who grew up in poverty, the work is especially meaningful.

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STUDENTS PARTNER WITH LOCAL NONPROFIT

“My dad was a single parent, and we didn’t always have groceries in our fridge,” said Jahrell Hammonds, an APPLES student volunteer. “Looking at Ship and seeing how they help low-income individuals by giving them food and different resources, it hits close to home, because I know what it feels like to not have the resources you need.”

Student volunteers are always needed, but they are especially important this year because of the introduction of Ship Community Outreach’s anti trafficking program. Ship Community Outreach is developing resources and programs to provide trafficked women with the support necessary to leave their abusers.

“We’re trying to establish a day center where women can go to be safe and to get away from the craziness of the streets and have counseling,” Spalding said. “It would be a clean, safe place to stay and to be able to ponder what it would be like to change their conditions, to take steps towards that and then have people to support them in that journey.”

In addition to the benefits Ship Community Outreach gains from APPLES volunteers, Spalding hopes the experience of volunteering benefits and expands the mindsets of students. Prior to her work with Ship Community Outreach, like many other Raleigh residents, Spalding wasn’t always aware of the struggles that inner-city communities face.

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STUDENTS PARTNER WITH LOCAL NONPROFIT

“Living in a suburban neighborhood, my circles, before being introduced to Ship Community Outreach, were largely my church, my kids’ schools and my neighborhood,” Spalding said. “We were not very integrated with what was going on in our community as a whole.”

That all changed 15 years ago when Spalding began volunteering at Ship Community Outreach. At the time, she was a stay-at-home mother raising her children, but she was captivated by the organization’s mission. After her youngest child graduated from high school, Spalding joined the Ship Community Outreach staff.



Aleece Spalding, executive director of Ship Community Outreach, is passionate about spreading the word to prevent food insecurity, poverty, and sex trafficking in Raleigh.

“When I was introduced to Ship, I felt like my eyes were opened to an area of our community that I didn't even know was happening,” Spalding said. “When you are plunged in the middle of it, you can't help but feel like you need to accept that responsibility and do something. When you've been given so much, it's so important to give back.”

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STUDENTS PARTNER WITH LOCAL NONPROFIT

Spalding hopes students' experiences partnering with Ship Community Outreach will impact the way they view volunteer work for the rest of their lives.

“Unless the student has been raised in that environment, or has friends in that environment, they probably haven't been introduced to it,” Spalding said. “I think it could change their desire to serve their communities for a lifetime, which I think is probably the biggest impact that this program could have.”